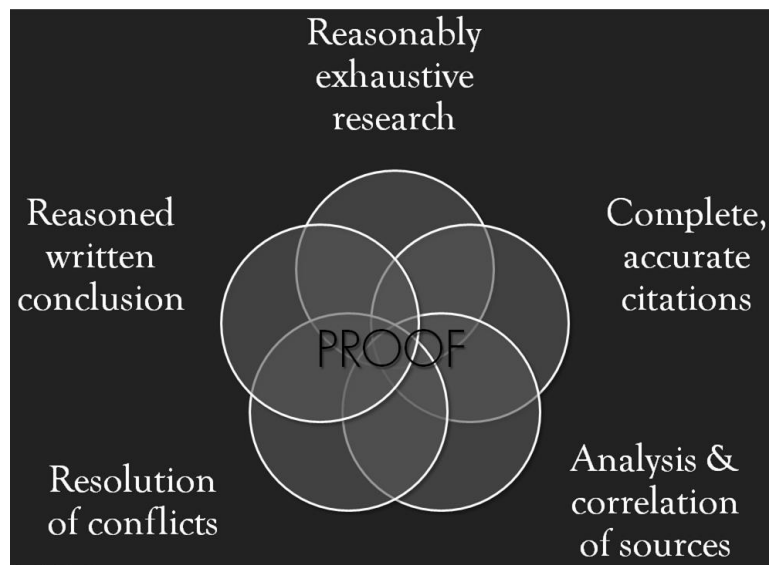

Applying the Genealogical Proof Standard to Researching Enslaved Families

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The Genealogical Proof Standard

The Genealogical Proof Standard is the “measuring stick” by which we assess the accuracy and reliability of our genealogical conclusions. Each of the following criteria must be met; the GPS cannot be partially met because each point is tied to each of the others.

- Reasonably exhaustive research—emphasizing original records providing participants’ information—for all evidence that might answer a genealogist’s question about an identity, relationship, event, or situation[;]
- Complete, accurate citations to the source or sources of each information item contributing—directly, indirectly, or negatively—to answers about that identity, relationship, event, or situation[;]
- Tests—through processes of analysis and correlation—of all sources, information items, and evidence contributing to an answer to a genealogical question or problem[;]
- Resolution of conflicts among evidence items pertaining to the proposed answer[;]
- A soundly reasoned, coherently written conclusion based on the strongest available evidence.¹



¹ Board for Certification of Genealogists, *Genealogy Standards*, 2nd ed. (Nashville, Tenn.: Ancestry, 2019), 1-3.

For more information, read:

Board for Certification of Genealogists. *Genealogy Standards*, 2nd ed. Nashville, Tenn.: Ancestry, 2019.

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Devine, Donn, J.D., CG. "Evidence Analysis." In Mills, Elizabeth Shown, CG, CGL, FASG, ed. *Professional Genealogy: A Manual for Researchers, Writers, Editors, Lecturers, and Librarians*. Baltimore, Md.: Genealogical Publishing Co., 2001.

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Merriman, Brenda Dougall, CG. *Genealogical Standards of Evidence: A Guide for Family Historians*. Toronto: Ontario Genealogical Society, 2010.

Mills, Elizabeth Shown, CG, CGL, FASG. *Evidence! Citation & Analysis for the Family Historian*. Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co., 1997.

———. *Evidence Explained: Citing History Sources from Artifacts to Cyberspace*. Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co., 2009.

Rose, Christine, CG, FASG. *The Genealogical Proof Standard: Building a Solid Case*. San Jose, California: CR Publications, 2014.

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For more case studies using the principles of sound and thorough research, utilizing the *Genealogical Proof Standard*, read:

National Genealogical Society Quarterly (published by the National Genealogical Society since 1912, <http://www.ngsgenealogy.org>)

The American Genealogist (published since 1922, <http://www.americangenealogist.com/>)

The Genealogist (published since 1980; by the American Society of Genealogists since 1997, <http://fasg.org/TheGenealogist.html>)

About the Case Study

In 2010 the U.S. National Park Service discovered the underground remains of slave cabins that formerly stood on land now part of Monocacy National Battlefield. This land had once been part of a plantation owned by the Vincendiere family, French refugees from Saint Domingue who became the largest slaveowners in Frederick County, Maryland, with both 1800 and 1810 federal censuses reporting 90 slaves owned, including several brought with them from Saint Domingue.

Enslaved persons discussed in this presentation:

Pierre Louis. Brought from Saint Domingue to Maryland. Ran away and recaptured. Successfully sued for his freedom.

Manuel. Brought from Saint Domingue to Maryland. Bequeathed by will. Sold to Louisiana. Inherited from intestate estate. Appears in mortgages and probate records.

Carolyn Ridgely. Manumitted with an infant daughter while adult sons remained enslaved. Appears in numerous records.

For published works documenting research, see:

Bailey, Megan M. *Memory and Power at L'Hermitage Plantation: Heritage of a Nervous Landscape*. Gainesville, Fla.: University Press of Florida, 2024.

Hait, Michael G. "Chapter 11: A Summary of Genealogical Research into Descendants of the L'Hermitage Slave Village Community." In U. S. National Park Service, National Capital Region. *Archaeological Investigation of the L'Hermitage Slave Village*. Occasional Report no. 20. Washington: U. S. Government Printing Office, 2014.

———. "In the Shadow of Rebellions: Maryland Ridgelys in Slavery and Freedom." *National Genealogical Society Quarterly* 100 (2012): 245–66.

———. "Tracing Seventeen Enslaved African Americans of the 'Second Middle Passage' from Maryland to Louisiana." *National Genealogical Society* 108 (2020): 21–42.

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———. "Etienne¹ Bellumeau de la Vincendiere, Planter-Refugee from Saint-Domingue: French Origins and American Descendants," *The Genealogist* 37 (2023): 166–91; 38 (2024): 59–92 [to be continued].

Stone, Robin D. "A Legacy of Love & Pride." *Essence Magazine*. Feb 2011.

Other Published Case Studies Documenting Enslaved Families

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- Brasfield, Curtis G. "Tracing Slave Ancestors: Batchelor, Bradley, Branch, and Wright of Desha County, Arkansas." *National Genealogical Society Quarterly* 92 (2004):6-30.
- Cox, William A. "From Slavery to Society: The Jerry Moore Family of Virginia and Pennsylvania." *National Genealogical Society* 103 (2015):281-304.
- Garrett-Nelson, LaBrenda. "Searching for the Slave Owners of Isaac Garrett: Expanding Research Beyond Online Sources." *Columns: The Quarterly Newsletter of the International Society of Family History Writers and Editors* (June 2014):15-23.
- . "Parents for Isaac Garrett of Laurens County, South Carolina: DNA Corroborates Oral Tradition." *National Genealogical Society Quarterly* 108 (2020): 85-112.
- Hait, Michael G. "An African American Diggs Family of Prince George's County: Issues Unique to Research of Enslaved Families." *Maryland Genealogical Society Journal* 54 (2013):269-96.
- . "Free and Enslaved: John and Melinda Human/Newman of Talbot County and Baltimore, Maryland." *National Genealogical Society Quarterly* 103 (2015):115-27.
- Hollister, Morna Lahnice. "Goggins and Goggans of South Carolina: DNA Helps Document the Basis of an Emancipated Family's Surname." *National Genealogical Society Quarterly* 102 (2014):165-76.
- . "Using Freedman's Bank Registers to Trace Enslaved Families: A South Carolina McFall Example." *National Genealogical Society Quarterly* 99 (2011):125-32.
- Jupiter, Del E. "Matilda Madrid: One Woman's Tale of Bondage and Freedom." *National Genealogical Society Quarterly* 91 (2003):41-59.
- Peters, Nancy A. "Hiram Cochran, Freedman of Abbeville County, South Carolina." *National Genealogical Society* 106 (2018):165-80.
- Randall, Ruth. "A Family for Suzanne." *National Genealogical Society Quarterly* 95 (2007):281-302.
- . "Family Lore and Effects of Slavery on the Black Psyche: Rose Grammar's Choice." *National Genealogical Society Quarterly* 97 (2009):85-96.
- . "Notes and Documents: Washington and Lewis Giboney, Company G, 102nd Regiment, United States Colored Troops: Runaway Slaves or Free Men of Color?" *National Genealogical Society Quarterly* 99 (2011):227-33.