TURNING FOLKLORE INTO FAMILY HISTORY

Genie Club, Sierra Vista, AZ.
November 7, 2012
Grandma said….

“I met the General – he was in the Civil War – at the Old Soldiers Home, and I didn’t much like him because of his salty language…”

Folklore or Family History ???
The truth is....

• Warren W. Hastings was a Sergeant in the regular U. S. Army.
• He enlisted in Wisconsin, not Minnesota, 2 years before the start of the Civil War.
• He was in a War Veterans Home in Minneapolis, MN., not Oregon where he died.
• Warren came to live with Jewel’s in-laws in Oregon at age 92, and died there.
Evidence vs. Opinion

- **Evidence** - Information that can be reasonably confirmed by collecting documents or data, such as . . . .
  - E.g. Birth, marriage, death, court records that are created at time of event
  - E.g. Records created when land transferred

- **Opinion** – Rumor, speculation, or folklore
  - E.g. We’ve always spelled our name that way
  - E.g. Our family came over on the Mayflower
  - E.g. You’re going to find our great-great-uncle was hung as a horse thief
Primary vs. Secondary Evidence

- **Primary** = Created with first hand knowledge, very near the actual event; eye-witness or participant.
  
  E.g. Govern. birth / marriage / death records

- **Secondary** = Typically created after the fact or from a second-hand report. May be less reliable because of lapse of time, memory, or person not at the event.
  
  E.g. Family account passed down through generations; accounts of family
Facts about Warren Hastings ~

Sources used: [Primary or Secondary?]

- Oregon state death record
- Cemetery headstone (with military unit)
- U.S. Federal Census – 1890 Vet. Census
- Military pension records, with Warren’s personal account (at age 68 & 82)
- Minn., MN. Soldiers Home records
- Correspondence between family members
Original vs. Derivative

- **Original Evidence** = Material in its original form
  
  E.g. Will prepared & signed by the testator
  
  (... I have here unto set my hand and Seal... actual signature & seal follow nearby)

- **Derivative Evidence** = Material produced by copying an original or manipulating its contents
  
  E.g. Will abstract by researcher, or transcribed by court official
  
  (Hint – all documents are prepared in same handwriting)

**Note:** Exception might be when source of derived material is widely accepted as accurate, such as records compiled by a county clerk, or information presented by a respected researcher. Don’t forget - Although a widely accepted source, it may still have errors!

  E.g. Early New England town records.

  E.g. “Encyclopedia of Quaker Genealogy”
  
  compiled by respected researcher William W. Hinshaw
Acknowledging this only to be my Last Will & Testament, In Witness whereof, I have hereunto set my hand and Seal the day and year First above Written:

Signed, Sealed, & Acknowledged in the Presence of

John Allison, Seal

John Ray, Seal

Martha Allison, the widow qualified as Tie to the written
I do hereby revoke all former Wills by me made from time to time and acknowledging this only to be my last Will and Testament, in witness whereof I have hereunto set my hand and seal the day and year first above written.

John Allison (Seal)

In presence of

John Ray
Andrew McBoon

Orange County, February 1796

The execution of the foregoing last Will and Testament of John Allison deceased was duly proved in Open Court by the Oaths of John Ray and Andrew McBoon subscribing witnesses thereto and Ordered to be Recorded—at the same time Martha Allison Lawrence therein named qualified according.
Consider the Source ~

- Evaluate for bias, fraud, memory or time lapses, contradictory evidence, other factors
- Is the document self-serving?
- What would cause the writer to misrepresent the facts?
- Was there motive to delay/hasten reporting the event?
Cite your source !!

• So you can give credit where credit is due ~ it’s the right thing to do
• So others can evaluate your research
• So you can compare quality & reliability of your resources
• So you know where you have looked before & the results, including the date & location of the source
Basics for Citation:

- **Who** = Author, editor, or government official’s title
- **What** = Complete title, including edition or volume number and page(s)
- **When** = Date, or time period, source was created
- **Where** = Location of publisher or creator, if self-published, or government agency
- **How** = How did you find the source, such as Internet site, library reference or microfilm number; date you reviewed the source, and if you made a copy or abstract of it
Some nice details to include ~

- What was the quality and condition of the source?
- Why is the source reliable and/or credible, or not?
- Why was the document or information created?
- Are there other sources available that can confirm or dispel the information?
- Finally,

  When doubt use: It is “possible”, “likely”, “probable” that ...because....
  (then state reasons for your conclusion)
Personal Account of Samuel Asiel Silo Moore McCaleb
[a.k.a. Samuel Moore McCaleb] Circa 1886, Putnam County, Tennessee

When my great-grandparents (McCaleb) immigrated to this country, they settled in Pennsylvania, where they lived and raised their family and died. One of their sons, my grandfather (John McCaleb, Sr.) married a woman by the name of Nicholas, who had three children by him. He then went into the War of the Revolution and never returned. She then came to Orange County, North Carolina and John McCaleb (Jr.), my father, was bound an apprentice to Andrew McBroom on the 12th of March 1784 aged about four years. She then married a man by the name of Chapman and had a son named Thomas.

(Signed) S. M. McCaleb

Source: “Maid of Cane Creek Memories Putnam Co., TN. - Memoirs of Margaret Arizona Allison Maddux”
UCGA (Upper Cumberland Genealogical Association, Inc.) Vol. XVII, No. 3 Fall, 1992 pg. 9196.
Another version.....

- John McCaleb Sr. came from Scotland and settled in North Carolina
- John McCaleb was an officer in the NC Line during the Amer. Revolution & drew pay for his service
- (Family) tradition states John married a French lady, but couldn’t speak her language.

Source: Ira A. McCaleb, great-grandson of John McCaleb Sr., in a letter to Katy McCaleb-Headley, for inclusion in her surname book. (1964)
Resolving Conflicts…

• Which account is closest to the events?
• Did the reporting individual witness the event, or just hear about it?
• Are there documents that will best support the claim? Primary or secondary?
• How important is it to resolve the conflicting accounts? Will it change prior conclusions, advance the research, have no effect?
Analysis of Samuel & Ira accounts...

- Samuel Moore was 1 generation removed, thus closer; Ira was 3 generations removed.
- Both heard family stories. Samuel’s account is more likely since he would have heard about his grandparents and his father’s childhood from his father, while Ira heard about events that occurred 75 years earlier, which may have been embellished.
- Available records? Yes - NC marr. rec.; Co. court rec.; PA / NC military rec.; PA / NC land records.
- Important to resolve - to take line further back.
RESULTS (to date) ~

1. Court records confirm that John McCaleb Jr. was “bound” (like adoption) to Andrew McBroom Sr., at age 4, in Aug. 1782; his brother & sister went to live with other families.

2. County marriage records confirm Catherine “Calop” married Benjamin Chapman Aug. 1786

3. NC Revolutionary War pay records show a “John McCalop” was paid between Sept. 1, 1784 & Sept. 1, 1786 (after Catherine married Benj. Chapman)

Next Step – Resolve that NC John McCalep is not ancestor; find parents of John McCaleb Sr. (where in PA ?)
How much do you trust the source?

• Frank Maloney (my father) reported: “My sister was born on a dirt floor in a cabin where our mother was the camp cook. Our father deserted us. I was only a toddler, 18 months old, and we would have all died if the men didn’t begin to wonder where their cook was after 3 days…”

• Frank’s sister, Jean (Maloney) Allen: “I was born in the Fresno California hospital, on February 16, 1922. My mother was working there at the time to pay for the delivery costs, and a neighbor watched Frank for free since my father had deserted us.”
Conflict resolved

• Fresno County, CA. – Copy of Laura Jean Maloney’s birth certificate, with the hospital and doctor’s name listed.

• Follow-up story: Per his sister Jean, “Frank was born on an Indian reservation near the (Madera, CA.) lumber camp because our mother didn’t make it to the hospital. The doctor took a wrong turn, and Mother had to deliver the baby and tie off the cord herself !!!.” True???? Hummmmm