

## Informants and Witnesses in Genealogical Records

### [Video Link](#)

Often overlooked in records are the informants and witnesses in our documents. The reason you want to look for these people in your genealogical records is because they are often family members or at minimum part of the F.A.N. Club. F.A.N. is an acronym for Friends, Associates and Neighbors.

Included in this group could also be bondsmen (found on marriage or bastardy bonds), administrators of wills or probate records, church congregations, event attendees (like weddings, wedding anniversary parties, funerals, and religious events). Look for guest registry books for extra witnesses to events.

Date *Aug. 23, 1955* Organization *MORSE'S GOLDEN WEDDING* PAGE 2

Guests	Address
<i>Stephen Madson</i>	<i>5347 Harco</i>
<i>Ronald Madson</i>	<i>11 "</i>
<i>Carol Ann Madson</i>	<i>5347 Harco</i>
<i>Sandra Lynn Karmin</i>	<i>653 Grand ave.</i>
<i>Dennis Dearmin</i>	<i>653 Grand ave. 2B.</i>
<i>Christie Anderson</i>	<i>10207 14th ave. Longwood</i>
<i>Barbara Anderson</i>	<i>" " " "</i>
<i>Henry Marion Tomber</i>	<i>10100 Orange Ave. Southgate</i>
<i>Geneva Tomber</i>	<i>" " " "</i>

### Where to Find Informants and Witnesses

Census Records

Birth Certificates

Marriage Licenses

Marriage Bonds or Bans

Death Certificates

Delayed Birth Certificates

Newspaper Articles

Court Records

Adoption Records

Wills & Probate Records

Land & Property

Obituaries

Religious Records

Cemetery Records

Business Records

And more!!!



[GenealogyTV.org](http://GenealogyTV.org)



[YouTube.com/GenealogyTV](https://www.YouTube.com/GenealogyTV)

## Vital Records

Keep in mind that vital records will almost always have witnesses. In this example a delayed birth certificate had several witnesses including the informant's name, and relationship to the applicant.

Birth certificates, in the United States, didn't start until around 1909 -1910 (depending on the state). Some states didn't come into compliance until the late 19-teens (i.e., 1918).

Delayed Birth certificates were often created around the 1930s (for those born before birth certificates were mandated) when people were trying to prove their age to obtain a social security card.

Department of Health  
Bureau of Vital Statistics

STATE OF WYOMING  
DELAYED CERTIFICATE OF BIRTH

File No. 1908  
Reg. No. D-1-9

Print Full name at birth: **Alma Marie Madsen** Date of birth: **May 3 1908**  
 Color of hair: **White** Sex: **Female** Birthplace: **Laramie Wyoming** (City or Town) (County) (State)  
 Father: Full name: **Herman Madsen** Age at time of this birth: **27** Birthplace: **Wyoming**  
 Mother: Maiden name: **Frances Johnson** Age at time of this birth: **27** Birthplace: **Denmark**

AFFIDAVIT: I hereby declare upon oath that the above statements are true. (To be signed by registrant if possible.)  
 Signature (use ink): **Alma Marie Madsen (Conard)** Relationship to registrant: **Self**  
 Address: **16312 Vanowen Blvd** Subscribed and sworn to before me on: **April 7th 1942**  
 Notary Public: **W. E. Mosher** For State of **California** County of **Los Angeles**

Do NOT write below this line ABSTRACT OF SUPPORTING EVIDENCE Do NOT write below this line

Name and kind of document (including by whom issued and signed and date of issue)	Date Original Document Issued
Certified copy California Birth Certificate File No. 11807 Date: 1901	1901
Re Glen Allen Hensley born Aug. 30, 1901 Los Angeles, listing mother, Alma Marie Madsen. Original signed by Hensley. Notarized 2/27/42	8/26/2 1931
Neighbor's affidavit, signed Frank K. Fischer dated at Los Angeles Cal. 5/2/42	5/2/42
Mother's affidavit signed Frances Madsen and father's affidavit signed Herman Madsen, both records dated at Los Angeles Co., Calif. 5/2/42	5/2/42
Copy school enrollment record, signed A.A. Slade, Supt. Schools, Laramie notarized Albany Co., Wyoming; 3/26/42.	School entry Sept 6 1921

Birth Date or Age	Birthplace	Name of Father	Full Name of Mother
Age 23 years	Wyoming	- - -	- - -
May 3, 1908	Laramie, Wyoming	Herman Madsen	Frances Johnson
May 3, 1908	Laramie, Wyoming	Herman Madsen	Frances Johnson Madsen
May 3, 1908	Laramie, Wyoming	Herman Madsen	- - -

Additional information:

Statement of Reviewing Official  
 I hereby certify that I have reviewed and filed the evidence above and that the information contained therein is as noted in the preceding abstract and there was no previous registration found for this person in the Bureau of Vital Statistics.  
 Signature of Reviewing Official: **G. Grimshaw 3-13-42, J. Anderson 4-16-42** Date filed in Bureau of Vital Statistics: **April 17, 1942**

Delayed Birth Certificate

Informants and Relationship

Son  
Mother  
Neighbor  
School Superintendent

## Census Informants

### 1930 U.S. Census

In the 1930 U.S. Census, while the informants were not noted on the census record, in the Enumerators Instructions, enumerators were told to put the age of a person even if the informant was guessing at the age. Therefore, don't always assume the information given by the informant is perfectly accurate.<sup>1</sup>

50. Definite answers.—Try to get a definite answer to each inquiry according to the instructions herein given. But, if after every effort has been made, you can not obtain the desired information write "Un" (for unknown). For questions like that on age of year of immigration, however, enter an approximate figure, if one can be obtained, rather than "Un." For example, if your informant says that she does not know how old a person is but that he is about 45, enter "45" rather than "Un."

<sup>1</sup> U.S. Department of Commerce Bureau of the Census *Instructions to Enumerators*, 1930, online publication, NARA (https://www.census.gov : accessed 22 June 2022), p.9, item 50, Bureau of the Census Library, Washington, D.C.



## 1940 U.S. Census

In the 1940 U.S. Census the informant was noted with an X with a circle around it. This helps the reader evaluate the strength of the information.

Take note of who the informant was. Think about how knowledgeable the informant was about the ages and other information of the members of that household. Was it a mother-in-law or grandmother who might not know all the ages of the people in the household?

### From the 1940 Enumerators

#### Instructions

"446. Identification of Persons Furnishing Information. Write

an X with a circle around it (⊗) in col. 7 after the name of the person who furnishes you with the information concerning

the members of the household. (See illustrative example.) If you find it necessary to obtain the information

from a person who is not a member of the household, write

the name of this person in the left-hand margin, opposite the

entries for the household, thus: "Information from John Brown, neighbor."<sup>2</sup>

Lawrence	412	30	R	8	70	Scott, William G	Head
						— Kate B.	Wife
						Figgins, Thomas O.	Son
						— Rebecca	Daughter
	917	31	R	25	70	Davis, Anna R	Head
						— Jess W.	Son
						— Hazel L.	Daughter
						— Glenna D.	Daughter
	927	32	R	25	70	Jones, Judy, Ann	Daughter
						Grippich, Estella ⊗	Head
					Washcott, Mabel	Daughter	
					Grippich, Maria	Daughter	
					Edwards, Elizabeth	Mother	
					Watts, Robert	Son	
					Finster, Mabel	Sister	

## Cemetery Records

If you can find them, cemetery records often have signatures of other family members when they made the arrangements for the funeral.

## Wills and Probate Records

Keep in mind that not all family members may inherit from the deceased estate but may be named as witnesses or administrators in the deceased probate packet. Estate packets may contain more than a will (if there was one), but also the deceased's household inventory and item sold as part of the estate. The accounting of the items sold, often names other family members as well as neighbors.

## Marriage Records

Frequently, other family members are named as witnesses on marriage licenses and marriage bonds. Look for surnames that are common to your family.

## Conclusion

There is a lot to learn from the witnesses and informants in our family history records. Just evaluate the accuracy of the information given.

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Department of Commerce Bureau of the Census *Instructions to Enumerators*, 1940, online publication, NARA (<https://www.census.gov> : accessed 22 June 2022), p.42, item 446, Washington, D.C.