Genealogy

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 Hug. 23, 1955	Organization Manserie Golden Wenning Prace 2
Guests	Address
Stephen Madsen	5347 Harro
Bonald Madren	11 21
Corol Chan Madown	5349 Harris
Sandra Lynn Dearmin	653 Grand ave.
Dennis Daamin	653 Grand ave, 2B.
Christine anderson	10207 12 Aposes are Inglesood
Barbara anderson	
Honger Marign tombers	_10100 Change am. Sauthgate
Lenara Frankuse	

Where to Find Informants and Witnesses

Census Records Adoption Records

Birth Certificates Wills & Probate Records

Marriage Licenses Land & Property

Marriage Bonds or Bans Obituaries

Death Certificates Religious Records

Delayed Birth Certificates Cemetery Records

Newspaper Articles Business Records

Court Records And more!!!







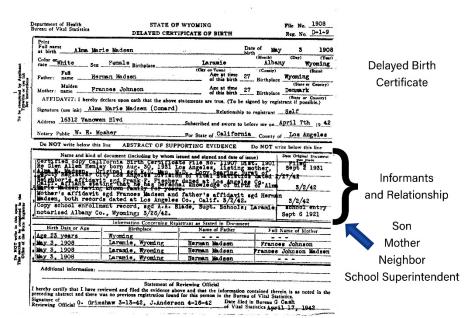
Vital Records

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 where mandated) when people were trying to prove their age to obtain a social security card.

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 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 or 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."



age. Therefore, don't always assume the information given by the informant is perfectly accurate.1

¹ 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 (x) 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.""2

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						- Kate &	Wife
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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.

² 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.