

Mission Possible

[Video Link](#)

Sometimes it feels like we have hit a brick wall. We just cannot get any further back in our family history research. Sometimes it feels like Mission Impossible. I am here to tell you that if you follow these steps, it might be Mission Possible.

Keep in mind this is a process. Some steps you may need to repeat over again as you work through each document and through each ancestor.

Just like cooking a recipe, I would suggest that you read the document first before jumping in. Then, work the checklist.

DEFINE THE MISSION - Define the problem in detail. Who is the last known ancestor and where are they? What is it you seek?

COLLECT - Gather all the documents that you have regarding the problem that you outlined in the step above.

ONE ANCESTOR AT A TIME – Work one ancestor at a time or a married couple. Start with just one person then add the spouse as you go.

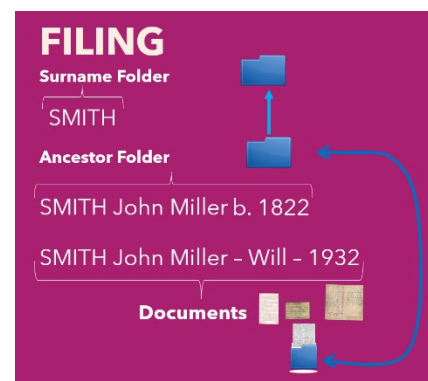


ONE DOCUMENT AT A TIME

- It is important to *not* get overwhelmed.
- Manage just one document at a time.

FILING - Filing your documents electronically would follow similar naming structure as the folders.

- Create a surname folder for SMITH.
- Then within that folder, create a folder for your ancestors i.e., SMITH John.
- File all documents within this folder for this specific ancestor. The files are named similarly. For example, a death certificate document would be named **SMITH John – Death Certificate 1921**.



SAVE DOCUMENTS – Save and name the documents and transcriptions starting with the surname in all caps followed by the first name and then what it is along with the year of the document. If there is room add a simple source at the end of the file name such as Find-A-Grave.



For example, John Jones's Will dated 1832 would be **"JONES John – Will 1832 – NC State Archives."**

- If you have a document that names several people, copy it into each of their folders. It only takes a minute and space is cheap.

RESEARCH NOTES - Create one set of research notes for each of your ancestors. I do this in Word. ‘

- Name it with a 1 in front of it, followed by the surname and the first name, then Research Notes. For example, **"1 JONES John Research Notes."** The reason you do this is so that it always rises to the top of the list when you are sorting your folder and documents in alphabetical order.

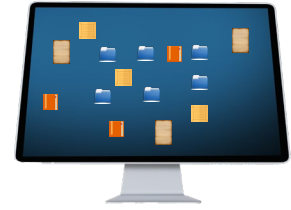
"Your Research Notes are the most important document in your ancestors file.

It is a living breathing document that is constantly being updated."

Connie Knox

- Use headers and footers.
 - In the header title the document as John Jones Research Notes.
 - In the footer put your contact information if you desire.
- **I do not recommend sharing your research notes online because it is a living, breathing document that you are constantly updating.** As more information becomes available, even if you finished doing a workup on this ancestor, you may come back to that document later and add more information.
- Source Citations –
 - **MS WORD** - Use the **Reference** tab in Word to add a reference to a source citation. Personally, I do not care how you create your source citation, so long as you do something to identify where you got the document.
 - **GOOGLE DOCS** - To add a source citation in Google Docs, use **Tools**, then **Citations** in the sidebar menu, click **Add +** and follow the prompts.
- Continue this process by adding abstracted information in chronological order.
- Each entry should start with a **date**. Then a brief description of what it is.
- The whole idea behind research notes is that you have a quick way of jumping from point to point within the lifetime of your ancestor without having to read the entire document. These **research notes are your ancestors timeline**.
- You may find documents that relate to multiple people at one time. There are times when I may have multiple research notes open for each of my ancestors so that you can copy and paste the same information into each ancestor that was mentioned in the document. A good example of this is when you have a will that names a lot of people.

❑ **TIP!** - As you go through the research process, sometimes you may find that you have too many documents and websites open. Close all unnecessary documents, e-mail, everything that is not necessary so that you can stay focused on the research question at hand.



❑ **Transcribe** – Transcribe the records even if it has been transcribed by someone else previously. Why? Because it forces you to pay attention to the details. You want to accomplish this mission, right? You want to solve the problem, right? This is a huge step in the process.

TRANSCRIBE

WILL FOR VALENTINE BLOSS D 1850

Date Found: 4 February 2023

Where it was found: Ancestry

Who Found it: Connie Knox

What is it? Will transcribed in record book and microfilmed

Additional Information: One page

Is there more to this story than what is in the document?

Mentions his children including spouses, Sarah Bloss and husband Benjamin Garrett and others., This is clearly a typed copy of the original in a book. [Find the original if possible.](#)

Note: Will was written 20 Mar 1846 and was delivered to Isaac Bloss on 27 November 1850.

Source Citation:

Wayne County, West Virginia, Vol 1-3, 1843-1917, Valentine Bloss, 1850, database with images, Ancestry (https://www.ancestry.com : accessed 4 February 2024, image 79 ("West Virginia, U.S., Wills and Probate Records, 1724-1985").

Abstracted Information from Transcription Below:

November the 26th 1850

I Valentine Bloss of the County of Wayne and State of Virginia being hereby make this my last will and testament the 20th day of March one thousand eight hundred and forty-six. I have previously given to my daughter Hanna, James Bolts wife on hundred dollars worth of property. I have previously given to my daughter Sarah, Benjamin Garrett wife fifty dollars. Christopher Keeser, wife fifty dollars. I have previously given to my son Hiram Bloss fifty — I have given to my daughter Nancy, John Piles wife fifty dollars. I have given to my daughter Polly, John Durney wife fifty dollar. I have given to my son John Bloss fifty dollars. I have given my son Ezekiel Bloss fifty dollar. It is my will at my death that all my estate be equally divided among my eight children now living or their heirs. Now as it respects my daughter Hannah deceased, she has received her full share in her lifetime therefore it is not my will that her heirs shall have anything more at my death. It is also my will that at a proper time my children all meet and make an equal division of all my estate with themselves signed and delivered from under my hand the day and date above written.

His
Valentine X Bloss (Seal)
mark

Attest
Joseph Neuman)
John Cassidy) A copy Teste H Bowen Clk
John Carterbury J'
[End of will and transcript!]

Valentine Bloss

Attest
Joseph Neuman
John Cassidy
John Carterbury'

H Bowen Clk

Wayne County, West Virginia, Vol 1-3, 1843-1917, Valentine Bloss, 1850, database with images, Ancestry (https://www.ancestry.com : accessed 4 February 2024, image 79, ("West Virginia, U.S., Wills and Probate Records, 1724-1985").

Separate Document

WILL FOR VALENTINE BLOSS D 1850

Transcription:

Note: Written sideways in the book says "Delivered to Isaac Bloss November 27th, 1850"

"November the 26th 1850

In the name of Almighty God, Amen.

I Valentine Bloss of the County of Wayne and State of Virginia being in common health of body and possessing soundness of mind and being of disposing memory do hereby make and ordain this my last will and testament in the following words figures on the 20th day of March one thousand eight hundred and forty six [sic]. I have all ready [sic] previous to the date of this will given to my daughter Hanna, James Bolts wife on hundred dollars worth of property. I have also previous to the date of this will given to my daughter Sarah, Benjamin Garrett wife fifty dollars worth of property I have all ready [sic] previous to the date of this will to my daughter Margaret, Christopher Keeser, wife fifty dollars worth of property, I have also previous to the date of this will to my son John Bloss fifty dollars worth of property I have also previous to the date of this will given to my son Hiram Bloss fifty — worth of property I have also previous to the date of this will given to my daughter Nancy John Piles wife fifty dollars worth of property I have also previous to the date of this will given to my daughter Polly, John Durney wife fifty dollar worth of property I have also previous to the date of this will given to my son John Bloss fifty dollars worth of property, I have also previous to the date of this will given to my son Ezekiel Bloss fifty dollars worth of property and now it is my will that at my death that all my estate be equally divided among my eight children now living or their heirs now as it respects my daughter Hannah deceased, she has all ready [sic] received her full share in her life time [sic] therefore it is not my will that her heirs shall have anything more at my death it is also my will that at a proper time my children all meet and make an equal division of all my estate with themselves signed and delivered from under my hand the day and date above written.

His
Valentine X Bloss (Seal)
mark

Attest
Joseph Neuman)
John Cassidy) A copy Teste H Bowen Clk
John Carterbury J'
[End of will and transcript!]

Valentine Bloss

Attest
Joseph Neuman
John Cassidy
John Carterbury'

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- Create a cover sheet with the information about the document.
- Transcribe the document.
- Add a picture of the document on the last page of the transcription.
- Add a source in footnotes.

❑ **ABSTRACT** - From the transcription of your documents, you should be able to easily create an abstract. There is a proper way to do abstracts, and that is lining out all the boilerplate language and what is remaining is your abstract. There is an episode on [How to Transcribe and Abstract](#) on the [Genealogy TV YouTube channel](#).

- Do not give up now...** I know this is a lot of work and it seems like it is not worth the effort, but I promise you by going through this process you will have much better odds of finding the answer you seek.

You've Got This!

RESEARCH - You've gotten to this point, and you are now organized. You have created research notes, and you are ready to roll up your sleeves and really start digging into additional research that you have not already accomplished.

Reread Your Research Notes –

- As you review the research notes, you can be proud of your accomplishment thus far.
- **THE PLAN** - It is time to formulate a plan. I do this right in my research notes. As I go through the documents, I realize that there may be more to find.
 - Insert your thoughts about next steps into your research notes in **red font** for *what you need to research*. For example, if you find the 1880 census shows the head of the household owned real estate, **that is a clue** that you need to find the land records.
 - Insert a **“Find Statement”** immediately after an entry in red font so that it jumps out at you.
- **FIND STATEMENTS** - Once you have several “find statements,” you can then begin the research to look for those documents.

1791 Patrick County, VA was established on 1 June 1791 from the western portion of Henry County, VA. Benj. Garrett Sr. might have been from this area per the Family History and Descendants of Benjamin Garrett.¹

First Marriage to Catherine Kattie McComas (1772-1777) The only source for this is Geneanet.²

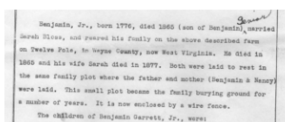
Look for evidence of marriage to Catherine and her death in 1777.

1809 Cabell County, Virginia was formed from Kanawha County, VA.

1810 U.S. Census – There is one Benjamin Garrett in the Shandoah area, which is no where near Cabell County. By car it would be a four-hour drive.³

1816 Marriage to Sarah Bloss Marriage

There are four sources for this marriage. One is the U.S. and International Marriage Records Index (derived from a variety of sources including family group sheets), 1560-1900



- Evaluate** – This step is an important skill. Learning how to evaluate each record individually and their sources will help you understand how valid the content is. Evaluate each record.

- Compare & Analyze** – Part of the evaluation process is comparing the documents you found with other documents. This helps you analyze all documents and resolve conflicting facts, such as which date for a marriage is accurate.

- Rinse and Repeat for Every Document** – Continue the transcription, abstract, and adding the abstract to your research notes for every document found. Continue to do this as you find more documentation and sources as you do your research. This way it does not become overwhelming. Additionally, when you take a break from your research, you know exactly where you left off.

Reasonably Exhaustive Research – As the famous Judy Russell (the Legal Genealogist) once said, “It is not exhaustive research, but *reasonably* exhaustive research.” In other words, you have looked everywhere possible, but you do not kill yourself trying.

The concept here is to collect all evidence that can answer the research question.

Along the way, you *likely* found the answer to your research question.



After all that research, if you cannot answer the question... It might be...

- You need to go to the location and visit the places that your ancestor lived to find more.
 - Visit the libraries, archives, and cemeteries.
 - Talk to the local experts.
- Did you look everywhere?
- It could be that the paper trail has run dry.
- It could be that there is not enough evidence that has survived to support your hypothesis.



My Money is on Resolving the Conflict

If you truly have followed this process and done exactly everything as I have outlined, you are likely going to find the answer to your research question. The question now is, how badly do you want it?

Benefits of This Process - If you have gone through this process and you have evaluated the records, transcribed them, and abstracted them into your research notes. Look at what you have accomplished.

- You have the beginnings of a book or a manuscript, or a Facebook post at minimum.
- You have created a document that can live on for future generations to find.
- By the time you finish the process of this research, you have created a structure for which others can build on in the future should more records become available.

You have revived the lives of your ancestors and given them a written legacy.

It is Mission Possible!