

Problems & Solutions

[Live Show on Genealogy TV \(YouTube\) 6-30-22](#)

To solve your genealogical problems or questions comes down to good research skills, planning, and paying attention to the details. It's in the details where you'll find the most success in solving your family history mysteries.

Genealogical Meandering

I call it "Raking the Leaves," which is really chasing the leafy record hints. Raking the leaves means you're meandering around your tree chasing hints with no real purpose or focus.

Keeping the leaves cleaned up on your tree is good, but it's not everything... in fact far from it. There is so much more to find.

No matter what platform you are on, researching the hints that the platform is providing is a great

place to start because it is just the low hanging fruit. This raking of the leaves is not a targeted and methodical research method. Let's get focused!



Identify the Problem

What is Your End Game? What do you want to know?

Confirmation Bias

Be Aware of Confirmation Bias. This is where you might try to make the evidence fit your hypothesis. You have an idea in mind, and you try to force fit the evidence.

Instead, let the evidence speak for itself and you can draw your conclusions from it. Keep in mind all possible conclusions.



A good genealogist will try to disprove a hypothesis as much as they do to prove it.



Plan

Now the research begins! This is where you take the information you found and start crafting ideas of what to look for in new records the leafy hints didn't provide. This is the difference between "researching" and just "searching."

In my hunt, I took my research notes and highlighted in red the areas that prompted me to wonder if there were more records. From that I created a list of information found and then what to look for next.

RESEARCH NOTES FOR JOSEPH MITCHELL VANHOY B. 1867 IN WILKES CO. NC

1870 US Census - Pine Swamp Township, Ash County, North Carolina. Roll M593, 122, page 551A, James Vanhoy, 33 years old, mail, white, farmer, real estate value 500, personal property 200, born in NC, United States citizen over the age of 21.

1880 U.S. Census - Edwards Township, Wilkes County, NC, line 30, dwelling 241, Joseph M Vanhoy, white, male, 12 years of age, born about 1868, relationship to the head of household is son, single, living in the household of John and Jane Vanhoy.

1900 U.S. Census Edwards Township Wilkes County, North Carolina, line 15, dwelling #49, Joseph M Vanhoy (and family) is the head of household, white male, born December 1866, age 33, married, **14 years married (married approximately 1886)**, birthplace North Carolina, father's birthplace North Carolina, mother's birthplace North Carolina,

1910 U.S. Census Edwards Township, Wilkes County, NC, Line 82, Dwelling, 233, Family 237, Joseph M. Vanhoy and family, head of household, male, white, 43 years old, estimated birth 1867, **married for 23 years (married approximately 1887)**, born in NC, father and mother born in NC, native tongue is English, farm, can read and write, **owns farm, free of mortgage**. Living with him is his wife Sarah M, George W. son, Mary E. daughter, John F. son, William M. son, Thomas R. son, Ada V. daughter, and a white servant named Elmer K. Laster.

21 Jun 1919 Death of his Wife Melvina Vanhoy, age 51, born 31 May 1868. Melvina's husband is named as "Joe M. Vanhoy" on her death certificate. She died of the measles. Her father's name was John Wagoner born in NC, and her mother's maiden name was Jane Money born in NC. Certificate no. 15273, 537, registrar no. 27, registration district no. 97-8124.

1920 U.S. Census for Edwards township, Wilkes County, North Carolina. This is a farm, dwelling #198, family #206, 4 Joseph M. Vanhoy, head of household, **owns, mortgaged**, male white **52 years of age widowed**, can read write, birthplace North Carolina, father and mother born in North Carolina, speaks English, is a farmer, general farm, is **listed on a farm schedule #179**.

1930 U.S. Census, for Edwards Township, Wilkes County, North Carolina. **Joseph Vanhoy is listed as the father-in-law in the household of Clifton M Laster**. Clifton M Laster household 46 family 50, owns the household, is living with wife Martha and children Mary, Lexi, Maggie, Paul, Nellie, and Ruby. Joseph is a white male 62 years old, widowed, was 19 when he first married, did not attend school in the last 12 months, can read and write. He and his parents are all born in NC. His occupation is **listed as a helper, on a general farm**. He is employed.

1939 Marriage Certificate for John Franklin Vanhoy to Janie Myrtle Hawkins, naming Joseph Mitchell Vanhoy as his father. Certificate no. 29930.

1940 U.S. Census, Edwards Township, Wilkes County, North Carolina. Joseph M. Vanhoy listed as the head of household at "Little Elkin Church on **Tucker Road**," he is the head of household, male white, **72 years old, widowed**, no school, highest grade completed 7, code 7, born in North Carolina, was in the **same house in 1935**, county and state left blank (implying

RESEARCH NOTES FOR JOSEPH MITCHELL VANHOY B. 1867 IN WILKES CO. NC

same place), farm yes, is employed for profit, all other employment lines ---, farming, number of weeks worked 50, did not receive other income, **farm schedule 246**.

29 Nov 1953 Death Certificate - certificate number 30859, stamped January 6th, 1954, registrar certificate number 125, registration district number 9204. This is a death certificate for Joseph Mitchell Vanhoy, place of death Wilkes County, Edwards Township, length of stay life, Wilkes County North Carolina, city or town is Ronda [sic], North Carolina, RI, not in city limits, died at home, male, white, widower, date of birth 24 Dec 1868, **he was 85 years old**, retired farmer, birthplace Wilkes Co. NC, citizen of the US, **father's name John Vanhoy, mother Juggie Settle**, was deceased ever in armed forces - no, no SS#, informant **Miss Mary Laster** of Ronda, NC R1, died from Bronchial Pneumonia and hypertension CVD, interval between cause and death 2 days, hypertension 7 years. Other significant conditions Osteo **Arthritis 2** years. Signed Ralph M. Castle, MD, Elkin, NC, **burial 1 Dec 1953, Little Elkin, Wilkes Co, NC**. Funeral Director Alexander & Stevenson Funeral Home, Elkin NC.

29 Nov 1953 Death Index - Joseph M. Vanhoy, age 85, birth 1868, death date 29 Nov 1953, death place North Carolina, Source NC State Archives, NC Deaths, 1908-67.

29 Nov 1953 Find A Grave - Joseph Mitchell Vanhoy, male, born 24 Dec 1868 in Wilkes Co., NC, USA, died 29 Nov 1953 in Ronda [sic], Wilkes, NC, USA, **cemetery is Little Elkin Baptist Church Cemetery, in Ronda, Wilkes, NC**, spouse is Sarah Melvina Vanhoy, children George Washington Vanhoy, John Franklin Vanhoy, **Martha Lucinda Laster**, Thomas **Rastus** Vanhoy, William McKinley Vanhoy.¹

U.S. Social Security Applications and Claims Index - Joseph M. Vanhoy, male, spouse Melvina Wagoner, child George Washington Vanhoy. This is an index only on Ancestry. Drilling through to the son George Washington Vanhoy, this has a social security number for | George of 239-30-1999. This was likely an **application for George** where he named his parents, thus Joseph and Melvina are showing in the index too.

¹ https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/70599162/joseph-mitchell-vanhoy?_gl=1*scvust*_ga*MTY3MTY3NDE2LjE2Z2E3NzAzAQ%3A*_*_ga_40T8FMEX30*MTY1NTkxODM2OS44MCAxLjE2NTU5MjM2MTUwMjE2

Work the Problem

Combine Your Sources and New Facts

Here I took the source found from the hints, pulled interesting details, and created a list of new facts found.

Sources	New Facts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1870, 1880, 1900, 1910, 1920, 1930, and 1940 U.S. Census 1919 Death Certificate of Spouse 1939 Marriage Certificate for son John F. Vanhoy 1953 Death Certificate for Joseph. Find A Grave for Joseph and Melvina Social Security Applications and Claims Index for son George naming father and mother. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Approximate Marriage Date in 1886/87. Owned a Farm Wife died in 1919 1910 no mortgage. 1920 has a mortgage, farm schedule #179. 1930 living with father-in-law Clifton Laster. 1940 living on Tucker Road, farm schedule 246.

What did we learn...
...from what we started with, from online research?

From that, I then could create a list of new records to look for that might hold more information.

New Places to Look

- Marriage Record
- County Tax Records
- Death, Burial or Church Record.
- Land Deed
- 1920 Land Record
- Research the Laster's
- 1940 Deed or tax records

Card Catalog Searches

Getting beyond the hints involves learning how to do Card Catalog searches. Doing Card Catalog searches (in addition to searches from the ancestor's profile) give a different set of results. Additionally, when searching the Card Catalog, you're searching everything that platform has available.

Get Outside the Box

Once you have exhausted what you can find on the platform you are researching in, get outside that box. Go to other platforms that you're not subscribed. This doesn't mean you have to pay for these services, **most of them have free options**. You might not be able to see the record if it is behind the paywall, but you will know if something is there and, in some cases, see some of the detail, like what is found in an index. Look on Ancestry, FamilySearch, MyHeritage, FindMyPast (European records), Find A Grave, Fold3 (military records), WikiTree, Geni, state or national archives, and Google search for others.

Where to Look for Records

Part of your plan is to figure out where the records are located. A quick resource is to look at the [FamilySearch Wiki](#) (you'll need a free account).

Drill into the location you are researching. Once there, you'll likely **see a list** either on the left or right of the screen with **categories or record sets you can search**.

In many cases, the **wiki has a hyperlink** to take you there.

I recommend open each one in a new tab (using a right click). Then work the tabs and close each tab as you finish that research.

FamilySearch Wiki

Wilkes County, North Carolina Genealogy
(Redirected from Wilkes County, North Carolina Genealogy)

United States • North Carolina • Wilkes County

Guide to Wilkes County, North Carolina ancestry, genealogy and family history. Birth records, marriage records, death records, census records, family history, and military records.

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County Information [edit] [edit source]

Description

Wilkes County was named in honor of the English political radical John Wilkes, who lost his position as Lord Mayor of the City of London due to his opposition to the American Revolution.

Linking Dates for Major County Records [edit] [edit source]

Birth*	Marriage	Court	Land	Probate	Census
1913	1778	1761	1778	1777	1784

*Statewide registration for births and deaths started in 1913. General compliance by 1920.

FamilySearch.org/wiki

Seek Help from Local Organizations

- 1 Libraries
- 2 Courthouse
- 3 Genealogical Societies
- 4 Historical Societies
- 5 Social Media Groups



Correlating Evidence

This is what we call **Correlating Evidence**.

You want to compare the **records, names, dates, ages, and locations** throughout the ancestor's life.

This will help you visualize the details, facts, relationships, locations, and piece together the lifespan of your ancestors.

In the video, I showed the correlation of just census records, but you should correlate all evidence for a thorough review.

Family:		Age of Person								
Name	Place	1870	1880	1890	1900	1910	1920	1930	1940	1950
James Vanoy (1870)	Pine Swamp, Ashe, NC	33								
Rebecca Vanoy (1870)	Pine Swamp, Ashe, NC	31								
Laura Vanoy	Pine Swamp, Ashe, NC	4								
Joseph Vanoy	Pine Swamp, Ashe, NC	2								
Thomas	Pine Swamp, Ashe, NC	1								
John Vanhoy	Edwards Twnshp., Wilkes Co. NC 1880		67							
Jane Vanhoy (est. b. 1824)	Edwards Twnshp., Wilkes Co. NC 1880		56							
Joseph M. Vanhoy	Edwards Wilkes 1880+		12		33	43	52	62	72	82
Sarah M Vanhoy (wife)	Edwards Wilkes 1880+				34	43	d. 1919			
Martha Vanhoy (daughter)	Edwards Wilkes 1880+				11			42	53	61
George W. Vanhoy (son)	Edwards Wilkes 1880+				9	19				
Mary E. Vanhoy (daughter)	Edwards Wilkes 1880+				6	16				
John F. Vanhoy (son)	Edwards Wilkes 1880+				3	13				
William M. Vanhoy (son)	Edwards Wilkes 1880+				6 mo.	11				
Jane Vanhoy (Mother, wd. b. 1827)	Edwards Wilkes 1880+				73					
Thomas R. Vanhoy (son)	Edwards Wilkes						18			
Ada V. (daughter)						5	15			
Mary E Laster										41
Clifton Laster (HOH, husband of Martha Vanhoy)								42	53	63
Joshuay F. Phillips (Boarder)	Edwards Wilks 1880 Only				35					
Elmer K. Laster (servant)	Edwards Wilks 1910 Only					21				

Weighing Evidence and Facts

When reviewing the evidence, especially conflicting facts, think about the source. Is it a primary or secondary source? Did the informant witness the fact/event? How likely is it this person has it right? Census records, newspaper articles, and death certificates, for example, are considered a secondary information because it is likely the fact the informant is reporting about did not witness the event. A birth certificate where the mother was the informant would be a primary source since she witnessed and participated in the event of her child's birth. A death certificate is almost always a secondary source about the birth and parent facts contained within the death certificate.

Also, was it an original or a copy of the original record. Indexes, marriage registries, etc., are often considered copies or derivative records because they are copied from the original source and could have transcription errors.



Evaluate Your Sources

- Primary vs. Secondary Source
- Original vs. Copies

What Now?

In the process of research, you may find records that directly answer your research question. If so, fantastic.

Additionally, you will likely trip across other records you didn't expect to find. Again, fantastic, add those to your Research Notes as well.

Lastly, you will likely discover that you need to go on location to the area your ancestor lived to do additional research at the county library, courthouse, cemetery, etc. I suggest you pick up the phone and call these locations for advice, help, hours of operation, and trip details.

Conclusions

Share your conclusions with family and friends. If you tell your ancestors story (speaking it out loud), you will hear and see new facts you didn't notice before. This too helps resolve some of your family history mysteries.

When looking at each fact in your ancestors profile, ask yourself... How do I know that? What evidence supports that fact.



Share Your Conclusions

- Talk it over with family or friends.
 - When you speak the story out loud, you'll find out if the bucket holds water.
- Compare facts within the sources.
- Does your conclusions make sense?
- What evidence do you have to support the findings?
- **UPDATE YOUR RESEARCH NOTES!**