

Getting Organized and FOCUS

Research Questions

Everything we do in genealogy starts with a good Research Question. The Research Questions help to keep us focused on solving the genealogical problems we face.

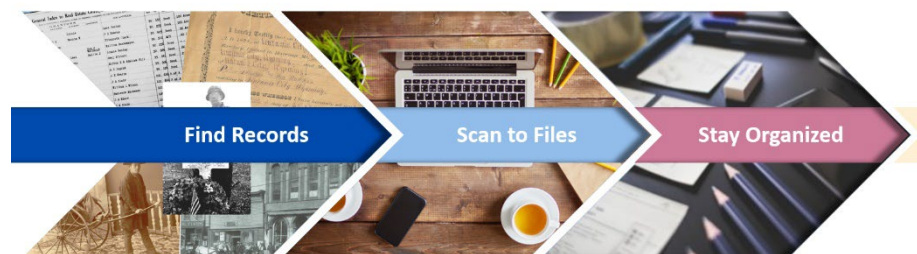
Research Questions do not need to be rocket science. It is simple. Think of the 5W's from high school journalism. Who, What, Where, When, Why, and How. However, we'll throw a couple extra twists in there.



- Who is it? (Who is the ancestor or clan?)
- What is it? (What do you want to know about?)
- Where did this occur? (To the best of your knowledge, where is this ancestor live or where did the event occur).
- When did they live or when was the event in question?
- Why does it matter? (This speaks to focusing on the importance of your research. Is this worth your time to chase down?)
- How are you going to find the answer? (This is not part of your Research Question, but part of your Research Plan.)

Get Organized

The trick to really breaking down brick walls starts with keeping your records organized and adding them to your Research Notes.



Organize (Research Question) Documents First

Focus on the Target Ancestor's family, the records, and evidence related to the Research Question. You do not need to reorganize your entire family history archives. It's an ongoing process. As you work on each Target Ancestor's family, clean up your records, digitize and preserve as you work through the research process and create Research Notes on the Target Ancestor.

Scanning Documents & Photos

Documents

Scanning documents does not have to be hard or time consuming. I find scanning cell phone apps to be excellent and fast. I use Turbo Scan. I have been using it for years. You can snap a picture in the app which can convert to a PDF document instantly, and then you can email it to yourself with one click. You do need to set up your email address in the app to do this quickly.



[Here is a link to a video I did on YouTube](#) a while back about how to use Turbo Scan if you want to see it in action before purchasing. The cost is a few dollars and so worth the price.

Photos

Know that Turbo Scan or other apps that create PDF's, are not good for photographs.

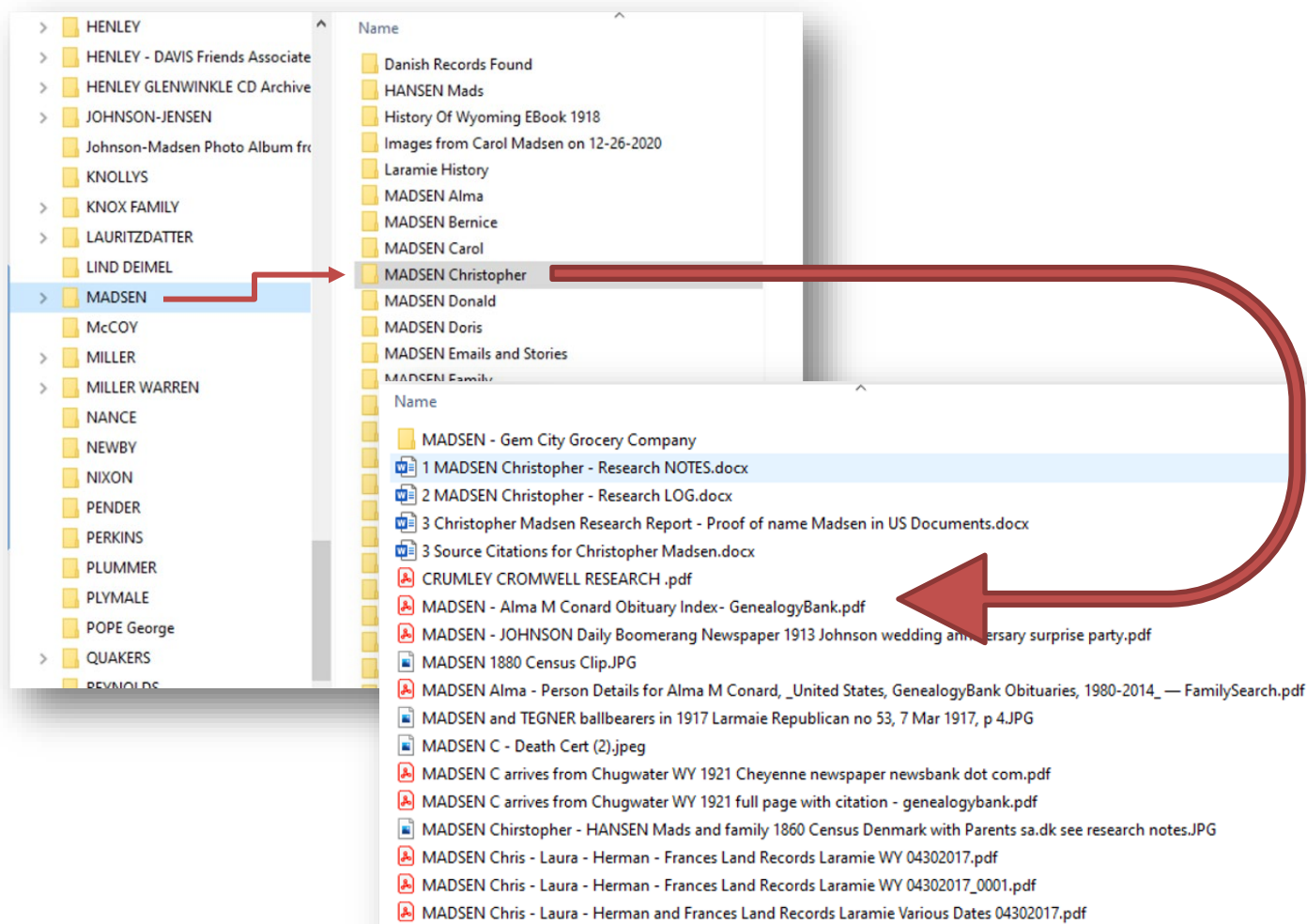
If you are copying photos, just use your camera in good lighting conditions and try to avoid glare.

Try not to use a flash if the photo has a shiny surface. At family reunions, I've been known to take photos outside, as the sun is the best lighting... and it's free!



Filing Your Documents & Photos

This is the method I have used for decades. It works beautifully and is easy for anyone to navigate. I use Surname Folders first, then individual ancestor folders within the Surname folder, then documents, photos, notes, and everything within the individual ancestor's folders.

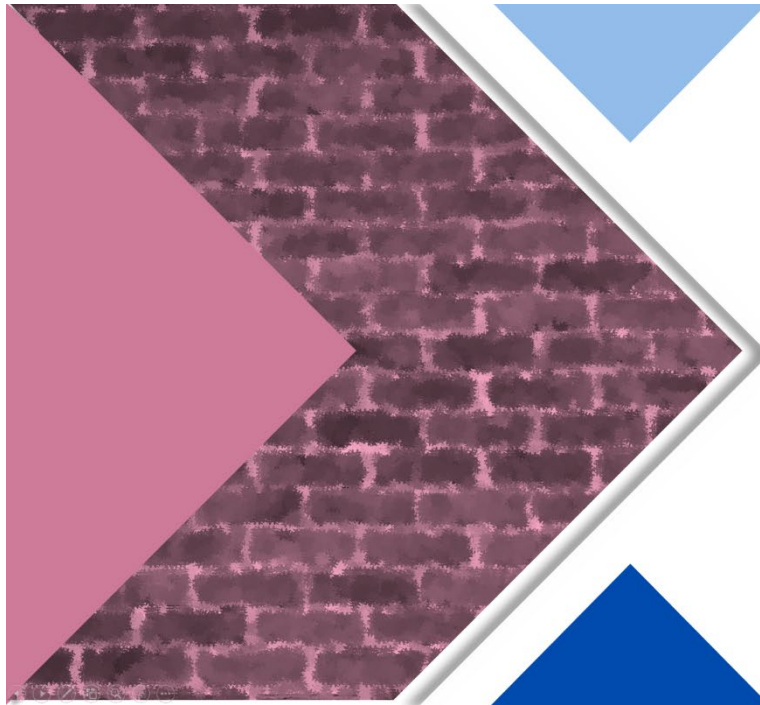


The **200 Year Rule!**

Can someone, 200 years from now, navigate your records without a finding aid?

FOCUS

FOCUS is an acronym and a mantra. Focus on the research question and nothing else. This acronym will help you answer your research questions.



The Trick to Breaking Down
Brick Walls...

... Is FOCUS

- > Focus on the Research Question
- > Organize the Records
- > Cluster Research
- > Understanding the Records
- > Solving Conflicts (Resolving)

Focus on the Research Question

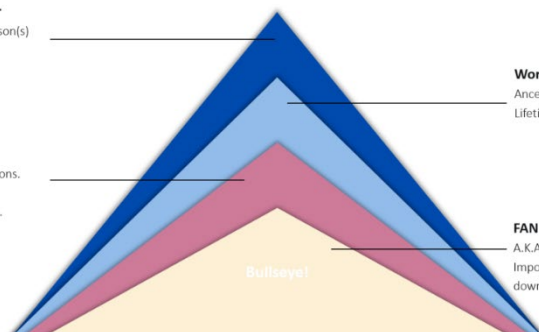
- Gather Everything as it pertains to the Research Question and the Target Ancestors
- Organize, Scan and File all Documents and Photos.
- Abstract all the data into Research Notes.



Target Ancestor
This is the key person(s)
in your Research
Question.

Geography
Homestead Locations.
Migration Routes.
Push/Pull Reasons.

What is Your **Goal?**



Working Backwards
Ancestors in Backward Order
Lifetime in Reverse Order.

FAN Club
A.K.A. Cluster Research. Most
Important part of breaking
down brick walls.



Get all of that done for
your research question
and target ancestors... and
then you're ready to start
the next phase... creating
a research plan and
tackling the rest of the
research for your
Research Question.