

FUNDAMENTAL MYSTERIES II

Instructor Mike Garrambone

Family History Center

FUNDAMENTAL MYSTERIES 2

Eight Short Stories

Hints, Intuition, Synchronicity & Persistence



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Family History Jamboree
Saturday, 28 March 2026
Kettering, Ohio

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What is this all about?

Purpose: To make beginning researchers aware of some very simple and very helpful genealogical concepts

The Big Idea

- There are some basic, fundamental ideas that all genealogists should know
- These ideas are easy to learn, but are never taught in a simple fashion



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Agenda



- The Secret of Index
- Keep a Log to Cut the Fog
- The Secret Helper
- Persistence in the Graveyard
- The Story of the Ledger
- Black People Have No Records
- So Where is Sandy Hook
- Shooting through the Gap

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The Story of the Ledger

So what do you know about paper?

It comes in different Sizes

Width x Height in Inches


Digest 5 1/2 x 8 1/2	Letter 8 1/2 x 11	Legal 8 1/2 x 14	Tabloid 11 x 17	Ledger 17 x 11	Electronic Media 18 x 12
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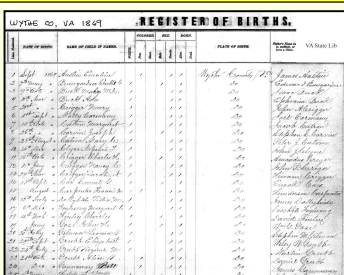
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Why is Ledger Paper Important?

It is the most original information document of them all



Typical Certificate




Typical Ledger Entry

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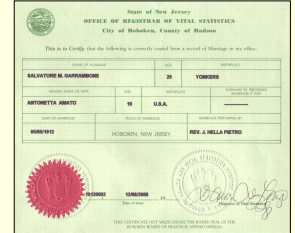
How did you learn About this?

I went to Hoboken, New Jersey and Found Two Angels



The Clerk

Office of the Registrar of Vital Statistics
City of Hoboken, County of Hudson, State of New Jersey



8 Dec 2000

Marriage Certificate Antonetta Amato & Salvatore M. Garrambone, 5 May 1912

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And Then the Strange Comments Come

- I heard you were hunting _____. I know all about those rascals.
- Yes, I know the whole family, we lived in _____ for many years.
- I am a blood relative of _____ I have a reunion photo.
- And there was a terrible fight and then _____. Oh, what a story.
- I am retired, I sit at the computer and track folks from that town 24/7.
- There was an argument at the funeral, that person almost got buried twice!
- Yes, I knew him and honestly “he was mean as a snake.”
- There were many more marriages for her than there were divorces.
- The saying was, “They Kill’em in Gilliam”

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The Information Gathers

- Photos
- Census Records
- Marriages Records
- Newspaper Clippings
- Draft Cards
- Military Records
- Death Certificates
- Sibling accounts
- Oral Histories
- School Records



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The Records Gather

WWI Draft Card

1920 VA Census

1930 VA Census

Slave Cited in a Master's Will

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The “No Records” Results

There are over **100 records** for the family of this individual right now
There are **4 generations** before him and **2 generation** after him on the books

- He descended from slaves
- He is the oldest of his clan alive
- His life was in different times and thoughts
- He has taken to religion
- He continues to think of things
- He reads the records I found and sent to him
- He enjoys seeing and having these records
- His “comment” was the impetus of the search



The tree
is bushy and
growing bushier

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Some Quirks of “Black” Records

- Records **split locations** close to state and county boarders
- Certain cities overrule counties in keeping certain records
- Older blacks did **not read or write** their own records
- Blacks could **not marry** before 1865 and had separate entries
- Blacks did not become “blacks” for many years but could be “C”
- The Services were segregated till the end of WWII (1947)



Thank you Uncle Van

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So Where is Sandy Hook?

All genealogy begins with talking to folks about what they heard

Whether it was correct or not!



- Yes, our family is from Italy, a place they called **Sandy Hook**
- No, I don't know where that is, and that is all I know
- Yes, we lived in Hoboken, around the corner from Frank Sinatra



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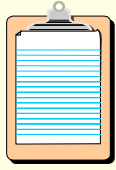
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Where is Sandy Hook?

It must be in Italy somewhere ! But nobody knows

But searches continue

- Track the Amato's to Hoboken
- Find Grandma as a young girl
- Find Grandma's wedding information
- Do the phone thing and then the trip thing



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The Search Begins

- Great Grandpa Amato lived and worked in NYC with his family
- Around 1906 his NYC business disappeared
- Rumore is "he died, and the family moved to a big apartment house in Hoboken"
- "The entire family now lived in Hoboken"

Where were they in 1910?

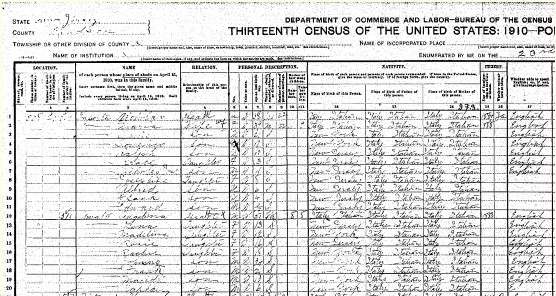


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Yes, Everyone is There

The Amato's lived at 508 Grant Street (around the corner from Frank Sinatra)

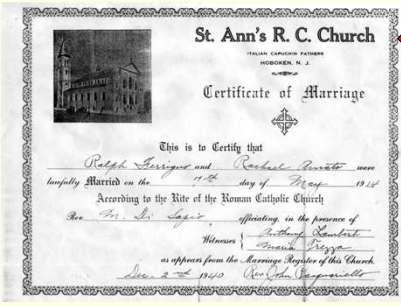


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Check out the Catholic Marriages


I receive in the mail a Marriage Certificate from an Amato cousin



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I Called the Church, and WoW



Church Volunteer

- The phone is answered by a volunteer (possibly winged?)
- She verifies the Amato's were married there
- She cites five marriages from this family
- Time permitting, she will send me a copy of all the records
- She asks if I have any further questions
- I told her I am still bothered about the family coming from some place called Sandy Hook

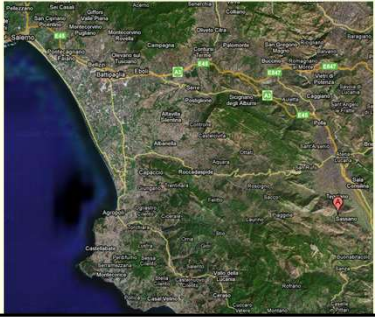
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She knows all!

Of course she says, "My whole family is from Sandy Hook"

- "Sandy Hook" comes from a town in Italy called **Monte San Giacomo**, Salerno, Campania, Italia
- When written it looks like San G or "Sante" with a "hook"
- After I recovered, I checked this out



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Too Hard to believe?

Italians from Monte San Giacomo came to the US ending up in Hoboken, NJ.
They called themselves "Sante Hooks." Yeah right. Give me a Break.



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Shooting through the Gap

The vital records for the state of Virginia have a time gap

Run 1700 up to 1894



Begin again in 1912

The vital records for Afro-Americans already have "pre-Civil War" gap

The crux of many links of the Family are hidden in the Gap

The State defaults to the Cities for information, and The Cities default to the State

Need Some Help

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The Church Barbeque

- I visited Wytheville, VA to talk to the eldest citizen about our family
- He was not at home, but said to be attending a church Barbeque
- I found him there devouring chicken and pie, but knowing very little about the family
- Sitting next to another gentlemen I casually asked what his interests were. He said, "Local Native Virginia Black History."



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What Are You Researching He Asked?

- I told him I was hunting two family names from the area. I can hardly find anything on these folks.
- He said, I am recording all black cemeteries in the area
- I am copying funeral home and doctor's records
- I am looking at unpublished Freedmen Records
- I have lived here all my life and work part time at the WCHGA



Mike and Mr. John Johnson

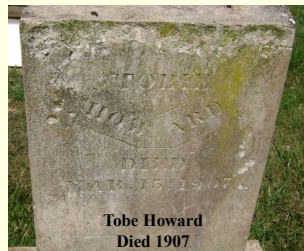
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Records from Mr. Johnson

- Cemetery records of my Relatives
- Linkages to the Historical Society
- Doctors notes on Births and Deaths
- Linkages to Funeral Homes
- Access to Court House Records
- Photographs of several relatives
- Linkage to the family Reunion
- Transcribed Freedmen Records



I guess I was supposed to meet Mr. Johnson

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Freedman's Record

Wythe County, 27 Feb 1866

- Fathers Who Claim His Children to be His Own
- Colored Persons "Cohabiting" Together as Husband and Wife
- Free Negroes of the County
- Slaveholders and Their Locations

Extract of Compilation by John M. Johnson

GANNAWAY, Edmon, Sr., age 55. Wythe County, VA was living at Wythe Co., VA. Occupation: farmer. Last Owner: Wm M. Scott, Smith [Smyth] Co., VA.

Wife: **FISHER, Ellsie [Elsie]**, age 47, b. Wythe Co., VA, was living at Wythe Co., VA. Last Owner: David Goss [Gose], Wythe County, VA, Date of commencement of cohabitation: 1 Sep 1835. Names of children with age of each: **Lemend J.**, 19, **Nancy E.**, age 22, **James H.**, age 24, **Edmon Jr.**, age 16.

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A Chance Meeting with the Society

- I was directed to the Wythe County Genealogical and Historical Society.
- I visited their center in Wytheville.
- They are into research and publishing
- In joining, I got the grand tour and mailing lists of publications
- They have an on-going project along with Mr. Johnson in **filling the gap.**



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Death Records from the Society

A record right on the edge of the Gap

B. ~1809

✓ LUCY HOWARD COLEMAN: Black, female, married, housewife; b: in Mt. Airy, North Carolina. d: August 13, 1912 in Lead Mines, Wythe County; Age at death: near 103; Time of death: 6:00 p.m.; Cause of death: chronic nephritis, old age & general debility. Physician: Dr. J. S. Clark; Father: Solomon Howard, born in North Carolina. Mother: "Do Not Know" born in North Carolina; Informant: David Howard (son, 72 years old), Ivanhoe; Burial site: Red Bluff, Virginia; Date of burial: August 14, 1912; M. M. Price Funeral Home, Ivanhoe (Bureau of Vital Statistics, Reel #2, Death Certificate 5584).

"Lucy Howard is child of Solomon who is father to "Tobe Howard"

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A Gold Mine Record from the Gap

Annotated Wythe County Death Records

EDMOND "EDD" GANNAWAY: Black, male, married (3 times), hearse driver for J. L. Porterfield; b: in Virginia; d: September 02, 1911 at residence on 12th Street, Wytheville; Age at death: about 60 years old; Time of death: 1:30 p.m.; Cause of death: paralyzed; Physician: Dr. Thomas; Father: Edd Gannaway, born in Virginia, Mother: (No name), born in Virginia (believed to be Elsy or Elcy); Burial site: Oakwood Cemetery; Date of burial: September 04, 1911 at 3:00 p.m., service held at A.M.E. Church ("Porterfield Records," Vol. I., Record 262).

Notes: In the 1910 census, Mr. Gannaway had been married six years to his last wife, whose name was not legible. She was 55 years old and had also been married three times. She was the mother of four children; 3 were living (1910 Wythe Census).

The Masons and St. Luke's ordered the funeral goods including \$70.00 for a casket, a burial robe for \$8.50, preserving body for \$10.00, lining of grave (\$2.00), and 40 cents for 4 hat bands. The Masons and St. Luke's each paid \$25.00 toward the funeral bill. There was a note: "No charge for balance". There was no tombstone in Oakwood Cemetery.

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Don't Give Up – Gaps are Constantly Being Filled

- Use the phone and do the talk
- Do **foot coordination**
- Watch for unforeseen encounters
- **There are Mystery People**
- Work to close those gaps



Persistence + Determination + Mystery = Discovery

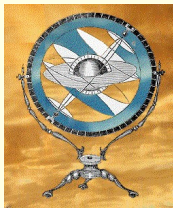
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Summary

- Many fundamental things to know
- So simple -- we forget to see them
- There are quirks to every system
- People are people
- Beware of human factors
- There are Fundamental Mysteries
- Pass on the secrets



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Abstract

If you caught any of the Fundamental Mysteries presentations, then you are ready for more. If you didn't, no problem, since they are all standalones, and just as mysterious. The idea remains that genealogists know there are some fundamental ways to research that will help them make their most wonderful finds. These ideas are simple but are always overlooked and could make tremendous contributions to their research. In a storyteller fashion, these eight stories describe how to make interesting discoveries. You will hear about those enlightened thoughts and the hidden quirks that provided those wonderful breakthroughs that researchers all embrace. Again, no smoke, no mirrors, just more fundamental mysteries and amazing ideas for you to learn about and enjoy..

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