

When Your Research Hits a Brick Wall

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Search Strategies

- Have a specific goal to solve
- Obtain copies of all records for the person and his/her extended family
- Create a timeline
- Check for alternate spellings
- Expand your search area
- Use cluster research – search for friends, associates and neighbors' records
- Contact your relatives to collaborate research
- Take a DNA test

Common Places to Find Clues

- Finding clues largely depends on your search question and time frame
- Helpful records that often provide clues
 - Probate records
 - Cemetery and funeral home records
 - Obituaries and death notices
 - Church records
 - Bible Records
 - Land records
 - Tax records
 - City or trade directories
 - Military records, especially pensions
 - Genealogical and/or historical society collections
 - Library collections
 - Manuscripts
 - Photos / scrapbooks

Some tips

- Search for records for a whole family
- Check when record collections start – you might not find a record because the records weren't kept at that time
- Boundaries change over time – know when you are searching and where, records are filed by where they were recorded at that time
- Obtain copies of all vital records for each person – this might cost money but it's worth it
- Not all records are on FamilySearch and Ancestry.com – sometimes you have to search locally by contacting courts or hiring someone to get the records you need
- If you have an idea where someone is buried but no proof, call the cemetery and ask if they can check to see if your person is buried there. Most will check free of charge, and some will send you copies of the records for free or minimal cost
- Track census records for each person on the family group records
 - Elderly parents often live with children, especially if widowed

Further reading

Elder, Diana & Nicole Dyer. *Research Like a Pro: A Genealogists Guide*. (Family Locket Genealogists, 2018).

FamilySearch <https://www.familysearch.org/en/help/helpcenter/search?q=brick+walls>

FamilySearch Learning Center: <https://www.familysearch.org/en/help/helpcenter/learning-center>

Family Tree Editors. *101 Brick Wall Busters*. (Family Tree Books, 2010).

Morgan, George & Drew Smith. *Advanced Genealogy Research Techniques*. (McGraw Hill, 2013).

RootsTech

<https://www.familysearch.org/en/rootstech/session/wanted-seeking-the-identity-of-unknown-parents>

<https://www.familysearch.org/en/rootstech/session/brick-walls-real-or-created-through-faulty-research>

<https://www.familysearch.org/en/rootstech/session/brick-wall-ancestors-need-a-search-party>

<https://www.familysearch.org/en/rootstech/session/researching-enslaved-ancestors>

<https://www.familysearch.org/en/rootstech/session/five-reasons-to-choose-familytreedna-to-break-through-your-brick-walls>

<https://www.familysearch.org/en/rootstech/session/beyond-the-brick-wall-strategies-for-pre-1850-u-s-research>

<https://www.familysearch.org/en/rootstech/session/using-newspapers-to-break-down-brick-walls-and-add-details-to-your-tree>

<https://www.familysearch.org/en/rootstech/session/the-lost-child>

The Publishers of Family Chronicle Magazine. *500 Brickwall Solutions to Genealogy Problems*. (Moorshead Magazines Ltd., 2003).

The Publishers of Family Chronicle Magazine. *More Brickwall Solutions to Genealogy Problems*. (Moorshead Magazines Ltd., 2004).