

# "Fleshing Out Your Ancestors Using Periodicals" Or "Hidden Records in Periodicals" by Vera Meek Wimberly

When asked what the title of my talk was going to be, they misunderstood me and asked, "Flushing ...?" So we can do both we can flush out and flesh out your ancestors. In other words, we are gonna try to put some meat on those bare bones.

I know that most genealogists are not satisfied with just an ancestor name, date, and place. I know I'm not. I want to know everything I can find out about my ancestor – what made him tick, how he made a living, and his personal achievements, if any. A lot of this is usually picked up as serendipity as you research courthouse and census records for "proof" of your ancestor, but most of it will have to come from other sources – such as the periodicals.

**PERIODICALS:** Webster's: "published at regular intervals of more than one day. A publication appearing at intervals." Thus, the quarterlies published by historical societies, genealogical societies, and other organizations are called periodicals. They are an on-going publication.

What I will attempt to do is to call your attention to the absolutely fantastic amount of information that can be found in periodicals.

I began to become aware of the various phases of information when I began to index the topical information from the periodicals on the shelves at our library.

The idea of indexing the periodicals came about when the Federal archives quit loaning film and I accidently found some census records I needed in one of the periodicals – actually in a publication I never would have thought to research for those records.

There are several hundred bound periodicals on the shelves at this time. There are over 100 volumes at the bindery. Our Society now exchanges periodicals with about 200 other societies all over the United States. When a volume has been completed, it is presented to the library which in turn has it bound for the use of all patrons. The only periodicals not indexed in the Topical Index are those that are indexed in Swems, i.e.: Tylers, Virginia Magazine of History & Biography, and William & Mary. Later issues of these periodicals are not being included in the topical index.

**Back to the Topical Index.** The bound periodicals have been indexed on approximately 10,000 catalog cards. They have been indexed according to general information, state, county, and record – such as: Birth records, cemeteries, census records, church records, death records, land records, marriage records, military records, newspapers, and school records. There is also a surname index. This is not an every name index. It includes family histories, bible records, ancestor charts, and anything that might give a family genealogy that cannot be put into one of the categories of the Topical information. This index will be kept current as new periodicals are put on the shelves – or as long as I can hold out to do it. Hopefully it will be continue to be kept current if I get to where I can't.

I would like to tell you how to go about using this topical index. (Show where it is) Two bottom rows of card catalog. Top row has the topical index, bottom row the Surname index.

Each entry on the card will show a code number. This code number will tell you in which periodical the information may be found, and a volume and page number. To find the periodical, check the code number against the cards in the first drawer of the topical information. These

code numbers are also listed on the handout of the periodicals on the shelves of our library.

When you have your information from the card catalog, then find your periodical on the shelf. The first digits of the code number will give you the state where the periodicals will be found. After you have found the periodical, then you have your page number – and viola – you have your information.

### **What Is The One Most Important Key To Genealogical Literature? *The Index.***

To speed your research and to prevent you having to read the entire article – look in the index of this periodical. A word of warning about indexes. Be sure you read the heading for the index. Most periodicals are indexed in the last issue of the volume; however, you will find some indexes in the first issue of the next volume. Be sure you are looking at the right index for the right volume or you might miss your guy. Some periodicals are indexed in each issue. Be sure you don't overlook your ancestor by not having the right index.

**Regarding The Surname Catalog.** The page number that gives a reference to your relations may not be the only reference to your ancestors. Check the indexes in these volumes as well.

I understand there are approximately 290 genealogical periodicals being published in the U.S. alone. This does not include exclusively historical publications or family history publications. So we exchange with a fair amount of societies.

There are **Several Different** kinds of periodicals being published.

**1. Those Periodicals Which Cover Mostly Courthouse Records.** Nearly every society who publishes a quarterly is publishing their county records or surrounding county records – some even statewide.

We publish almost exclusively – Montgomery County records in *The Herald*. I have heard some criticism regarding this, but no one comes across with anything to be published from other counties or states. If anyone wishes to submit records or something outside of Montgomery County, I will be happy to include them in *The Herald*. All I ask that the material be original and unpublished.

Some societies publish not only their own county records, but records from all over. There are some publications that set out to publish other state records than their own. For instance – the *Georgia Genealogical Magazine* has and is publishing all the courthouse records of the southern counties of South Carolina. It would probably never occur to most of us to go to Georgia to look for South Carolina records – but they are there.

Courthouse records consist of: Marriage Records, Land records, Probate Records, Court minutes, etc.

### **2. Publications Devoted To Family Information.**

These publications have all sorts of good information:

a. **Bible Records.** Many genealogists have very carefully tried to preserve bible records by submitting them to different publications for publishing. I understand Rosamond Stewart recently found a bible record in a periodical that she had been searching for several years. If you have any bible records that you have not submitted for publication – do submit them to some society for publication in their quarterly – preferably to an area where these people named in the bible record lived. Or, naturally, we will be happy to publish any bible record in *The Herald*.

One of these days you will be an ancestor and one of your descendants will think it was real neat of great-grandma or great-grandpa to be thoughtful enough to publish those bible records.

b. **Family Stories & Genealogy.** More often than not, the family stories submitted to a periodical for publication has a tie with that particular county or state, but not always. These family stories sometime consist of complete family lines back to the emigrant or beyond – sometimes just records on a single family, but they are all important.

These family records sometimes include generation and Ahnentafel charts. Have you checked the periodicals in the area of your research for a family history or generation chart of your family?

Some publish the charts in the form they are compiled on – others list them by generation numbers (which I find difficult to decipher – though it does save space). Bear in mind that these ancestor charts may not necessarily be published in the area from which your ancestor lived, but most probably where the person submitting the chart resides. Don't hesitate to check a California publication for an ancestor chart that might have your New York ancestor name shown.

c. **Cemetery Records.** You may find the same cemetery published in more than one periodical; surveyed by different persons – and perhaps a wide time span. It would do well to check both listings for differences or added information. As you know, some cemeteries are deteriorating rapidly and one surveyor may have a record that the other doesn't. In some cases the surveyor may add bits of information that he has knowledge of to the cemetery record, i.e. marriage dates, relationships, etc.

Check your older periodicals – they may have cemeteries which may have been since vandalized or overgrown & lost forever.

**Do you know where you are most likely to find records of unmarked graves? – *The Periodicals.***

d. **Queries.** Most periodicals carry query sections. Check this section, for you can get many good clues from the queries. Remember – the query regarding your ancestor may not necessarily be found in the state where your ancestor resided. Most all will originate where the submitter resides, unless the submitter finds a periodical in the area of his then ancestor's residence to publish his query.

Most queries are free to members only, but well worth the minimal cost if you are looking for an ancestor in a given locale. If you wish to submit a query to any particular publication, please check the periodical query section for cost, if any, and how it should be submitted. Some have a very definite form. And – if you answer a query, and wish to exchange information, don't forget the SASE.

The Car-Del Scribe periodical is nothing but queries.

e. **Census Records.** A great many census records are being published in periodicals. Many societies have taken the 1850 census, for example, and have pulled out all the people in their county who were born, say in Tennessee, and have published articles on these listings. Chances are that the census records of your area of research have been published by some genealogical society or other. It would be prudent for a researcher (since you have the topical index at hand) to check to see if a particular census has been published before spending two or more hours reading a county census on microfilm. They will also probably be indexed saving valuable research time.

f. **Death Records.** How did your ancestor die? This information can be obtained from death certificates, mortality schedules and funeral home records. Many selected death certificates and mortality schedules are being published in periodicals. Funeral home records are crammed full of genealogical information. These records show: name, date of death, time, where, usual residence and how long. Birth date and where. Husband or wife of. Parents names and where

born. Doctors' name and cause of death. Names all surviving family members and where residing. Details about the funeral: where, when. Cemetery where buried. And pallbearers. In nearly all funeral home records, you will find at least three generations listed and sometimes more.

Other sources of death records are newspaper abstractions and we will get to that in more detail in a minute.

g. **County History.** If your goal is to reconstruct a family history, then an intimate knowledge of the local history of an ancestral home becomes mandatory. County periodicals at one time or another include histories, though most times brief. Read these to help recreate mentally the actual experiences of your ancestors to understand the driving force in their lives and what helped to shape the family unit. To find these in the topical index look under the State/County/History – or you might check State/County/General.

**3. The Third Type of Periodical Being Published That You Will Find In The Genealogical Section Of A Library Is The Historical Reviews.** They give you very good background material. There may be no genealogical information as they are very scholarly dissertations regarding history, but remember, it takes people to make history. This is a good source to find out the history of the area where your ancestor was born, lived and died. A feeling of the area and times around your ancestor puts a little more life into him. Please remember when using periodicals seeking information in a particular state – do not confine your search to periodicals published by organizations in that state. As I mentioned, you will find South Carolina records in Georgia publications; Kentucky records in Tennessee publications.

The following are records that you may not have thought of or were not aware that they were being published by some industrious genealogy society somewhere:

**Research in Foreign Countries?** Want to know how to do research in England, France, Ireland, Germany, and many other foreign countries? Want to know how to do research in any state in the U. S. A.? What records are where? Want to know how to do Ethnic Research? You'll find these articles in the periodicals.

**Maps.** What about early maps of the USA (states & counties)? Practically every publication will have a map showing the area covered by their publications. And periodicals such as William and Mary have many early maps of the original colonies and the frontier as it moved westward.

**Would You Like To Know What Legal Holidays** were being celebrated in the early days? Or in a certain time period of your ancestors life? *William & Mary*, Series 2, Vol. 23, page 517 gives a complete list.

**Do You Want To How?** How to compute birthdates from tombstone records? So many years, months & days? *Orange County California Gen. Soc. Quarterly* Vol. 18, page 18 will give you a mini-course on how to do this.

What about Calendars to compute days of the week?

The *Oregon Gen. Soc. Bulletin*, Vol. 19, page 60 gives a naming pattern:

- 1st son named after father's father;
- 2nd son named after mother's father;
- 3rd son named after father's eldest brother;
- 1st dau named after mother's mother;
- 2nd dau named after father's mother;
- 3rd dau named after mother's eldest sister.

*Oklahoma Pontotoc Co. Qtr.* Vol. 12 #4, page 3 has articles: "What's in a Name?"; What names Mean; Nicknames; & What Children's names reveal about ancestors." This is a very interesting article – and very informative.

**Would You Like To Know What Was Going On In The World When Your Ancestor Was Born, Married Or Died?** You will find Chronological World Events; Chronological Calendar of Wars and Chronological Calendar of Battles in Wars in various periodicals.

The International Gen. Exchange has an article on handwriting to help you unravel those hen-scratches of the early documents. There are any number of handwriting articles found in these publications.

**Would You Like To Know What Records Are In The Various College Libraries?** These records are more likely to be of a more personal nature like letters, accounts, diaries, journals, etc. If there is a university in the area where a quarterly is being published, there will probably be a listing of these holdings. If it has not been done, that might make a very good project for some society.

**Would You Like To Know What The Various Archives, Libraries, And Genealogical Societies Charge For Research And Copies?** It is in the periodicals.

**Did Your Ancestor Go To School?** Where? When? If after 1900, you may very well find a school picture. Was your ancestor a teacher? Many school & college records are being published in periodicals.

**Did You Know That** the 1890 Census (partial) of Nacogdoches Co. Texas has been published. The *Chinquapin* publication has published these.

**Would You Like To** have some very good vacation research tips? Check the Thorny Trail, Texas Vol. 9, pg. 116.

**Some Periodicals Are Publishing Church Records.** Was your ancestor religious? Did they attend church? Which one? Was he dismissed (which meant he moved his membership to another town)? Was he baptized? Did he preach? Teach a Sunday school class? Serve on the board of Elders? Was a deacon? Did he help build a church? Have you checked the church records published in the periodicals for an elusive birth, marriage or death date?

**Was Your Ancestor A Doctor?** Treated by a doctor? Many doctors' ledgers have been published. You may also find Medial Registrations (filed in county he planned to practice) published, naming date your doctor ancestor got his doctor's degree, which in some instances will give you his birthplace, birth date, and where he took his degree. There are also hospital histories.

**Was Your Ancestor A Lawyer?** Did he perform a Civil Service? Was he elected to office? Periodicals are publishing City and in some instance County directories as well as telephone books which indicate what your ancestor did for a living. Who of your ancestors had the first telephone?

**Auto Registrations?** Some early auto registrations are being published. Who of your ancestors owned the first car? What kind was it?

**Did Your Ancestor Belong To A Fraternal Society?** Oddfellows, Masons, Elks? In 1897 there were 1,833,304 members belonging to fraternal organizations. These fraternities were forerunners of the American Insurance business. *The Oregon – Beaver Briefs*, Vol. 10, pg. 70 gives a selected list & addresses. There is also "*The Cyclopaedia of Fraternities*" by Albert C. Stevens that may give you a clue.

**Railroad Man?** The United States of America Railroad Retirement Board, 844 Rush St., Chicago IL 60611 will answer pension questions, if you provide identifying information and SASE.

If he was a Railroad Conductor, he may be listed in the "Order of Railroad Conductors." Check the article published in the *Dallas Quarterly*, Vol. 22, pg 33.

**Could Your Ancestor Write?** If he could, he wrote letters: to relatives, war letters, etc. Many of these have been preserved and published in various periodicals.

**Unclaimed Letters.** After a period of time and the letters not been called for, the addressees were published in the local newspaper advising that if they were called for by a certain time, they would be committed to the dead-letter office. These lists are being picked up and published in periodicals. These unclaimed letters may give you a clue as to when your ancestor may have "moved on," or may have died.

**Was Your Ancestor A Member Of The Lumbermen's Association?** There is a Lumbermen's Monument in Michigan cemetery. These names are listed by the Ohio, Genealogical Aids Bulletin Vol. 9, pg 39.

**If Your Ancestor Owned Land,** then he most probably owned cattle. If he owned cattle, he had a cattle brand. These cattle brands are found in the courthouse records, but many are being published by the local genealogical societies. Did you know that they usually kept the same brand as they migrated? You may, in some instances, be able to trace the migration trail of your ancestor, by tracing the cattle brand.

**Was He A Jockey?** The Jockey Club records of 1785 have been published. I'm not sure of the publication, but look under Virginia – Petersburg County.

**Was Your Ancestor A Circus Performer?** In the *Yellow Jacket, IL* (Great River Genealogical Society publication) you will find a clue where to find a 360,000 name index of Circus people. This includes not only the performers, but anyone connected with the circus. Wouldn't it be neat to find one of your ancestors to be a Lion Tamer?

**If You Can't Find Your Fellow,** he may well have ended up in the State Penitentiary for some reason or other. *The Tip-O- Texas quarterly*, Vol. 19, pg 71, lists persons incarcerated in Alabama in 1850.

One of the very first lectures I attended when I first became interested in genealogy was given by Mary Ulmer, and I'll never forget one thing she said. I cannot quote her exact words, but she said in essence that we could not hold ourselves responsible for anything our ancestors did, and if we found they had engaged in some unsavory act or behaved themselves in an unacceptable manner, remember that we had no control over his actions, and should not condemn him for it. That ancestor above all needed someone to love him. I vowed right there and then if I ever found a horse-thief that I would frame him and hang him on the wall. I haven't found any horse-thieves, but the ancestor I have had the most fun tracing down was an old rascal who left a wife and seven children in Arkansas without a word and ended up in Louisiana with another wife and six more children. He died thinking he was a bigamist – but I have the records to prove he was divorced by his first wife one month before he married his second wife – but he didn't know it. I do think he needs a lot of love. Back to the periodicals...

**Petitions.** Did your ancestor sign a petition? Petitions serve to place an ancestor in a certain geographical location in a given time period. Check these petitions. It may give an insight to his religious or political convictions. He may have signed a petition to lay off county lines; open a saloon; construct road, courthouses; for replacement or removal of a public official.

AS EARLY AS 1893, Domestic Money orders were being used to transfer monies. These money order records will show the name and to whom paid, and how much. *Black Hills Nuggets Quarterly SD* have published some of these in Vol. 14:11

**Was Your Ancestor Wealthy?** Or did he reside on the Poor Farm. Some Poor Farm records have been published. In the *Schule Rite Periodical*, Ill., Vol. 9, pg 109 you will find Letters to Santa Claus. The genealogical items found: Ages of children, nearly always mention younger brothers & sisters who cannot write. Sometimes relates one of the parents' deaths, sometimes where they moved from. Wouldn't it be great to find a letter one of your ancestors wrote to Santa Claus. These have been pulled out of newspapers.

**Speaking Of Newspapers** (and I told you I would), Newspaper abstractions are very important to genealogical research – and especially in putting skin on the bones of your ancestors. He may have been the host or she the hostess of a party naming his friends and neighbors or relatives. He may have advertised for letters of administration. You will find obituaries, marriages, births. Fair results: Did your ancestor own a prize pig? Racehorse? Win a prize for apple jam at the local friar? Did he sue somebody? Did somebody sue him? You can bet it will be in the newspapers. When he moved from one locale to another or was he a newcomer to the area, it was news in those days.

**Did He Advertise His Wares As A Merchant?** Did he advertise to sell or buy a piece of property. Did he claim no more responsibility for the debts of his wife?

**Did Your Ancestor's Animals Ever Stray From Home?** They advertised in the papers for their return, usually giving the brand.

**Was Your Ancestor Culturally Inclined?** Did he play a musical instrument? Teach music? Did he paint? What kind of sports did he engage in? The local soft– ball team? Horse–shoe pitching champ? Did your Confederate Veteran attend an annual reunion? These lists were published in the newspapers and are being reprinted in periodicals. These records usually give the company, regiment, state enlisted, and lets you know that your ancestor was still living and kicking to be able to attend these reunions. Some came from long distances to be able to attend.

In some periodical newspaper abstractions you may find if your ancestor owned a general store, a mill, a blacksmith shop.

**Check Those Newspaper Abstractions.** You may be surprised at what you find – and every little item you can find just puts more life in the old boy.

**Circuit Court Records.** These may be found in the courthouses (usually not indexed), but are being published in some periodicals. Did he prove ownership of land? Did he steal his neighbors pig? His daughter? His wife? Serve on a jury? Was he sued or did he sue? Did he carry a pistol?

**Travel.** Did he sign a hotel register? Did he get a passport? These are being published.

**Did Your Ancestor Change His Name?** Was he an orphan and changed it to the family name in which he was adopted? Did he change it to inherit? Did he get a divorce? These records may be found in the State & Local Law Books. The 1871 State & Local Law Books of Illinois families to Wisconsin have been published in the IL *Where the Trails Cross*, Vol. 11, page 2. Many others are being published.

**Military Records.** You will find Military Records – where they are and how to get them is discussed in informational articles. *The Dallas Quarterly*, Vol. 22 gives over 400 Revolutionary War Ancestor Genealogies of both men and women. This is worth investigating. In some instances selected pension records of a certain area have been published. Lists of

Military persons buried in a certain area have been published. Lists of county people serving in particular wars are being published – giving you an area where he resided at the time.

**Was He Or She A Postmaster, Postmistress?** When? Where? How long served? Was the post office in the home of an ancestor? Many were. Was he an overland mail carrier? Did he ride for the Pony Express?

**What Do You Want To Know About Heraldry?** There are exceptional Heraldry articles in some of the periodicals. Law Terms Glossary – in the *Florida Ancestry Quarterly*, Vol. 16, pg 10 is a glossary of law terms. Sometimes you must know what the term means before you can decipher a legal document. Don't guess at what it might mean – look it up. It may make a difference in the relationship of the ancestor involved. TO GO ALONG with the Law terms, there is an article *in TX Stalkin Kin*, Vol. 7, page 166 entitled "Words Used in Old Documents." This might be of some help.

**Naturalization Records.** Some naturalizations records are being published by local county and parish societies. The *OR Genealogical Society Bulletin* has an article on Naturalization Records – what they include and where to find them. Vol. 19, page 171.

**Ship's Lists** are also being published.

I am sure that I have not covered **everything** that can be found in periodicals, but have tired to touch on those that were brought to my attention as I indexed the Topical information.

Don't use the excuse, "I don't have the time to plow through all those periodicals." Do take the time. You do have the Topical & Surname Index to help you. You might be pleasantly surprised. Use them and – have fun putting some skin and flesh on those poor old ancestor's bones. Thank you.