

Shakin' Out the Smiths: Researching a Common Surname

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Interviews with living relatives

- Ask for dates, places, names for pedigree charts and family group. "Flesh out the bones."
- Do repeat visits.
- Ask about photographs, Bibles, documents. These are valuable resources and also prompt memories.

Use standard resources

- Publications: marriages, wills and probates, county histories, military service, city directories, cemeteries.
- Online resources: Local, military.
- Documents: Death, social security, land, marriage.
- Use the "experts" or persons knowledgeable about the area.
- Professional researchers.

Go to the scene

- Travel to locality. "Follow the land": People often went to areas similar to where they came from in climate and soil.
- Visit cemeteries. Who is buried near?
- Visit local libraries. Look for local resources and family files.

Play the "Name Game"

- Use surnames associated with family:
 - In laws, marriages: Milraney, Mavety, Collins.
 - Neighbors, friends: Gribble, Black, Polk, Miller.
- Look for other family members to confirm find.
- Tie them to the geography.
- Search using more unusual given names if their name is common.
- Naming patterns

Find other relatives doing research

- Databases
- County Genweb sites
- DNA

Double your documentation

Is this really mine? Does it:

- List names of other family members?
- List other locations where you know this individual lived.
- Look for in laws with less common surnames.
- Double check dates and ages

DNA

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