

# **From Clues to Conclusions: Applying the Genealogical Proof Standard**

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What is the Genealogical Proof Standard (GPS)?

- Minimum level of credibility for any genealogical conclusion
- Professional genealogists earn certification by applying the GPS
- Everyone can apply the GPS to:
  - focus on a specific question
  - identify clues, patterns, and conflicts
  - evaluate sources, details, context of clues
  - incorporate new research info
  - interpret clues to form conclusions with high confidence

GPS consists of five elements:

1. Reasonably thorough research (formulate a specific question to guide research, consult a variety of sources, use multiple sources for key details, prefer primary data, prefer original sources, think creatively, consider time/money/distance)
2. Complete/accurate source citation (footnotes for family history, show which sources were consulted, help you or others retrace and extend your research; Family Search and other sites have sources ready for you to copy and insert)
3. Data analysis and correlation (examine all data for the question, compare/contrast details, evaluate source quality and credibility, look for patterns/conflicts, understand context of sources, see how data fit with what is already proven; check originals where available; don't assume anything)
4. Resolution of conflicting data (review question to be answered, summarize "facts" and interpretations, weigh credibility and relevance, note contradictory or missing data, note corroborative data, examine overall patterns, explanations/implications, likeliness that explanation fits, come to a conclusion)
5. Soundly reasoned proof (summarize the question, present evidence logically, explain reasoning via data-based or narrative-based presentation, show conflicting evidence fairly, thorough research/analysis, convincing proof argument linking clues to reach a conclusion with confidence, include sources cited)

## Have you checked these genealogical sources of information for your ancestors?

Compiled by Marian Wood, <http://climbingmyfamilytree.blogspot.com>

- Address books
- Advertisements
- Audio recordings
- Autograph books
- Awards
- Baby books
- Bankruptcy records
- Baptismal/christening records
- Bible
- Birth announcements/records
- Biographies
- Burial records
- Business cards/filings
- Cemetery records
- Charity records
- Church records
- Citizenship records
- Club membership/records
- Contracts
- Court records
- Criminal records
- Death records/notices
- Deeds
- Diaries
- Diplomas
- Divorce records
- Draft records
- Employment records/bonds
- Envelopes from letters/cards
- Engagement notices
- Family tree records
- Funeral books/cards
- Genealogical society records
- Graduation records
- Gravestones
- Greeting cards
- Health records
- Heirlooms and artifacts
- Historical society records
- Home movies/slides
- Job-related records
- Immigration records
- Income tax records
- Institutional records
- Insurance records
- Interviews
- Land records
- Letters and postcards
- Licenses
- Lineage society records
- Maps
- Marriage notices/records
- Military awards/artifacts
- Military records
- Mortgage records
- Naturalization records
- Newspaper clippings/mentions
- Obituaries
- Passenger tickets/lists
- Passport(s)
- Pension records
- Personal photographs and albums
- Prison/jail records
- Professional certificates
- Property tax records
- Real estate transactions
- Religious records
- School records and publications
- Scrapbooks
- Service records
- Social Security application
- Social Security notices
- Tax records (personal/business)
- Union records
- Video recordings
- Visas
- Voting cards/records
- Wedding notices/invitations
- Wedding albums
- Wills and probate records
- Writings/publications
- Yearbook