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SILICON VALLEY COMPUTER GENEALOGY GROUP

# PastFinder

## Use the right tools for the job

By Janet Brigham

A theme keeps emerging in the classes we teach and attend. If we were learning how to fix things, it would go like this:

“I’ve been using a wrench to take off some bolts, but I can’t get the wrench to hold onto screws in the same way. The wrench works well holding the nut while I loosen the bolt, but I can’t get it to work with screws.”

Well, yes. Or another one: “The paint brush works fine for applying stain to my unfinished cabinet, but it does a lousy job of getting stains out of the carpet.”

Wrenches, screwdrivers, paint brushes, and stain removers all serve valuable functions and help us do tasks more effectively and quickly than if we didn’t have them. Imagine holding a nut or bolt with your teeth to loosen it or slathering stain onto an unfinished shelf with your bare hand.

Genealogy tasks also have numerous suitable tools. The trick is in knowing which tool to use for which task. Here are some popular tasks, along with common misconceptions.

### **Task: Organize my genealogy information**

For this, you need a tool that will help you categorize information and link it appropriately. Today’s amazing database software packages are designed to help you do this task readily and painlessly. You need look no further than PC or Mac software (such as Legacy, Ancestral Quest, Reunion, RootsMagic, or even the old standby Personal Ancestral File) to find a powerful organizing tool.

An online tree cannot do this. A wrench cannot do it. Your gardener

cannot do it, even with a new rake or a strong trowel. You cannot do it with an online family tree.

If you have a computer of almost any fairly recent vintage, you can find database software that will help you organize and document your family history information. If you want to take a road trip to family history sites, your database can generate a list of names linked to places.

Database software is the right tool for organizing and centralizing your family history. Don’t let anyone try to convince you otherwise.

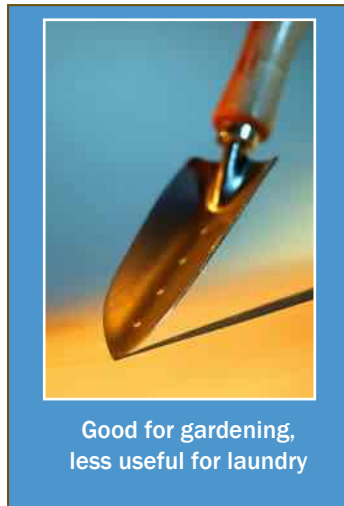
### **Task: Share my family history with family members and others.**

You can accomplish this task several ways, using different tools.

If you want to display your research in an accessible, easy-to-grasp way, you can use your database (see previous task) to build a blog or a website that goes on the Web. This is neither as difficult nor as simple as it may sound. The database software takes care of the technical part of website building. It is your job (yes, you are a tool) to clean up the database and prepare it for display.

Some people prefer a blog that allows them to feature a different ancestor each week or month, with a GEDCOM file sitting somewhere on the blog, awaiting

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Good for gardening,  
less useful for laundry

### **Outside and Inside**

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# Use the right tools for the job *(continued)*

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download by anyone who's interested. Some bloggers celebrate an ancestor's birth day, death date, or other life event by featuring that ancestor on an anniversary of the date.

Another way to share your information is to display it on a tree. You can build a tree at several Web locations, including (but not limited to) Ancestry.com, FamilySearch.org's Family Tree, MyHeritage.com, and many others. Ancestry is appealing because you can build your tree using information you find on Ancestry. Family Tree is appealing because you can tap into others' research. In fact, you can modify that research — and others can modify yours (which you may find unappealing).

A tree is fairly easy to build; some tree sites let you upload a GEDCOM file from your database (see that all-important first task), and download a GEDCOM from your tree, so that you can export your most recent findings back into your database. Or you can share the GEDCOM with others, who can open it in whatever genealogy database software they have.

However, you cannot generate reports from a tree. If you plan to drive to Stonington, Connecticut, this year to see where your New England ancestors lived, you won't be able to pull that list from a tree.

If you want to verify information in your tree, you won't be able to do the kind of error checking that helps you find people who are (for example) listed as being married to their great-grandmothers—or listed as being born long after their children were born.

We wish those errors weren't so common, but they are. The other day, we found someone listed as being married to himself. Twice. As if once weren't enough! Sometimes even the best software can't save us from ourselves.

The point is, errors creep in, and database software is designed to help make those errors visible so that we can find them and correct them, either at the point of entry or during a data clean-up. Trees can't catch errors that a database can catch.

Another hazard with online trees is that they tend to replicate like so much bamboo. Some types of bamboo spread so aggressively that they are outlawed in built-up locations. Errors in an online tree spread that way — underground; above ground, peo-

ple copy other people's trees without checking the information, and errors perpetuate.

A case in point is an ancestor of mine (mentioned in Richard's "How I found it" this month). I saw a death entry for her in an online tree and tracked down a microfilm of the original death record; the details did not match my ancestor at all: Wrong age, wrong life circumstances. However, that entry in an online tree has been copied and perpetuated in numerous other online sites and trees.

I tracked it to the man who appeared to be the original perpetrator and asked him to please correct it. I offered my documentary proof that the death information was incorrect. He refused to change it, with the excuse that he was simply too busy-busy-busy doing genealogy to take time to change it.

I waited a year and asked again, and he again refused. Still too busy.


I have given up on him. The best I can do is provide correct information in my own locations, with explanations as to why the popular date and location are incorrect.

Database software also provides several ways for you to view the information. Most databases allow you to view pedigrees, name lists (sorted in a variety of useful ways), and family groupings. Trees may have different views, but they are not as flexible and powerful as database software views.

## **The big secret**

The big secret is that you don't have to choose between a database and a tree, or a tree and a blog or website. You can do them all. You don't even need to select one place for your tree. You can put trees in multiple places. You can create GEDCOM files that your relatives can open in whatever software they want to use. Using a database, you can create a separate GEDCOM for each branch of the family.

This is a time of unparalleled opportunity for building and sharing family history. Who among us could have envisioned the powerful software, the free websites, the free blog software—and the proliferation of junk information?

We can be the anti-junk. A carefully populated database — no matter what software you choose — is the basis for getting the information right and linking photos and documents, so that however else you share it, it will be accurate. 

**The big secret is  
that you don't have  
to choose.**

# Military Records Casebook clarifies documents


The new *U.S. Military Records Casebook* published by the Silicon Valley Computer Genealogy Group is unlike any other tool for understanding military records.

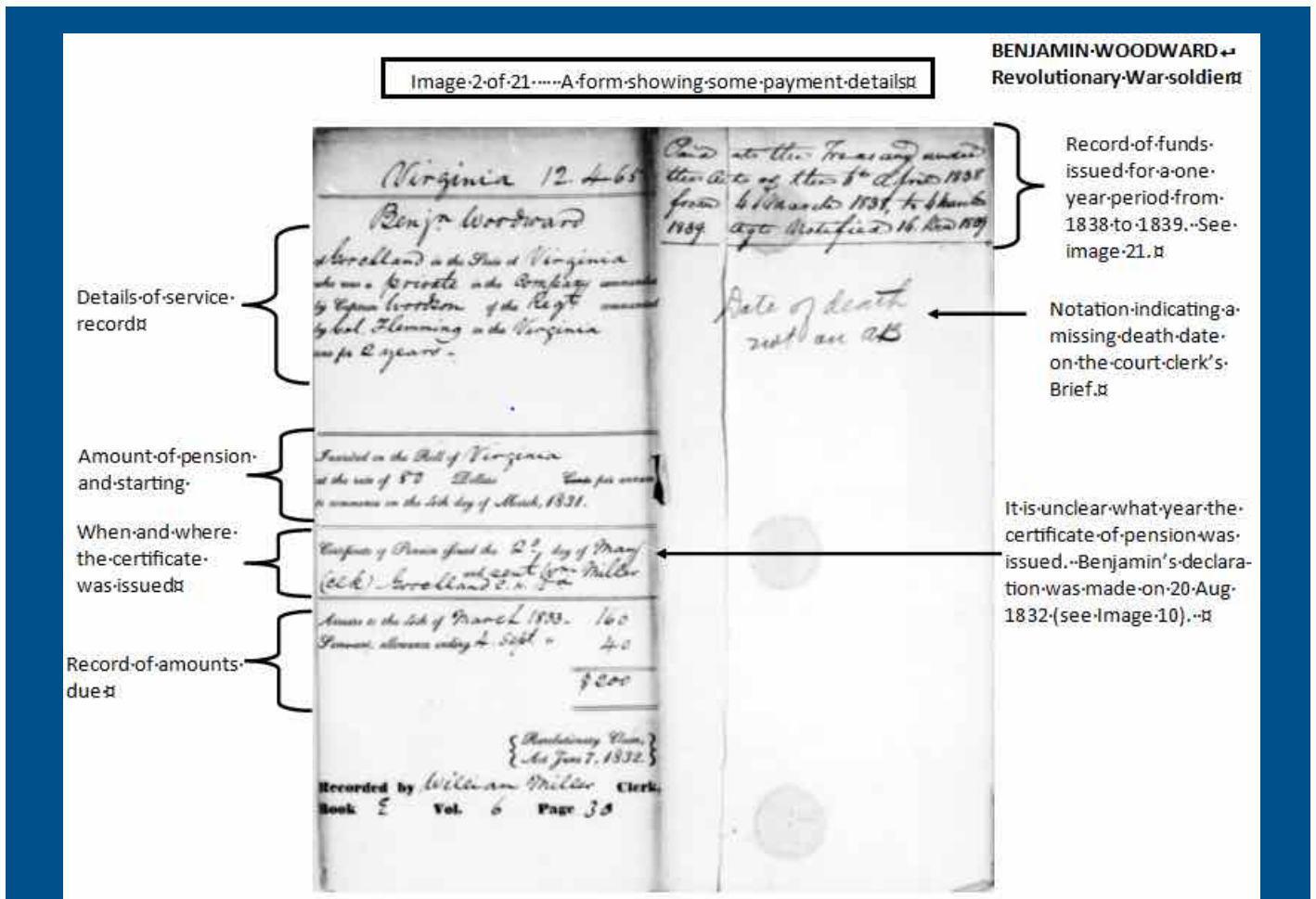
Created initially for the November 2013 seminar “Lest We Forget,” the casebook was modeled after social science and technical casebooks. It illustrates how to make sense of records from the Revolutionary War, War of 1812, and Civil War. With page-by-page explanations of how to extract information from pension and other military files, it makes a potentially baffling task manageable.

Such basic advice as not to expect pages of a pension file to be in chronological order can help immensely as we try to glean information from files now available for download from sites such as

Fold3.com. In fact, Fold3.com generously allowed SVC GG to use images from their website as the basis of the casebook illustrations.

Explanations about the contents of pension files and service records came from SVC GG experts, with verification from staff at the National Archives at St. Louis.

The book is available for \$15 from the SVC GG website and can be purchased at SVC GG monthly meetings. The book can be ordered directly from <http://svcgg.org/pages/ordersyllabus.html>. Website payments are made through PayPal, which accepts all major credit and debit cards. Payment at SVC GG meetings can be made with cash, check, and all major credit and debit cards, including the new PayPal payment card. 



A page from the U.S. Military Records Casebook illustrates how to interpret various entries in the pension file for a Revolutionary War soldier. This is the second of 21 pages from the Woodward file included in the Casebook.



# How I found it Using prenominal censuses

By Richard Rands

Sometimes we work a family back from family records, and sometimes we work a family down from a census. The family of Moses and Sally Metcalf is one that we worked both ways.

Moses and Sally appeared in the 1850 U.S. Census for Sylvan township, Washtenaw County, Michigan, as shown in the table inset (birth years are estimated based on ages in 1850).

Moses was a farmer with property valued as the second highest in the township listing for several pages before and after the entry. The two men at the bottom of the Metcalf household apparently were lodgers or workers. Henry was a farmer (without property) and Albert was a carpenter. In the 1860 census for the same locality, the two oldest children, Henry and Harriet, had left the family, and the two lodgers had been replaced by a Thomas Roberts, a 19-year-old farm laborer. Sally was listed in 1860 as Sarah.

Family lore and digitized transcripts of court proceedings indicated that at least one more child, possibly two, belonged to the family. But since the 1850 U.S. Census was the first U.S. census listing all members of the family, my task was to try to validate the lore.

Based on the fact that the oldest son, Henry, was born in Ohio, I went on a hunch that Moses and Sally (Sarah) were married in Ohio sometime in the 1820s. Fortunately the hunch was good; on FamilySearch.org in the Ohio Marriages, 1800-1958 collection was a marriage listed between Moses Metcalf and Sally Overocker in Cuyahoga County on 23 March 1821. (Incidentally, *Cuyahoga* is an Iroquois word for *crooked river*, perhaps also *snake*.

The county was named after the Cuyahoga River.)

A marriage year of 1821 gave me a reasonably good upper limit on how far back to look for additional children in the family. Furthermore, it confirmed that Ohio was the most likely locality to search. It also indicated that the earliest U.S. census record the couple would appear in was the 1830 census. Even though only Moses' name would be listed as the head of household, it could be clear from the counts if additional family members were not accounted for in the 1850 census. Based on the family's entry in the 1850 census,

we could expect, at minimum, a two-year-old male child (Henry), a 34-year-old adult male (Moses), and a 29- or 30-year-old female (Sally).

U.S. censuses prior to 1850 were *prenominal*, meaning that they did not list the names of all household members, listing instead only the head of household. All household members were tallied by sex and by age categories. To match a census earlier than 1850 to the results from the 1850 listing, the sexes and age categories would need to match. The prenominal censuses also could show whether some family members were missing from the 1850 entry.

A search of the 1830 U.S. Census in Ohio for Moses Metcalf returned two hits, one for a Moses Metcalf in Colerain, Belmont County, and another for a Moses Metcalf in Mayfield, Cuyahoga County.

The latter hit appeared to be a logical one to follow, but due diligence required that both hits be examined. The Metcalf family living in Belmont County showed a count of six family members, but not a single tally mark lined up with anyone in Moses' family from the 1850 U.S. Census, which es-

*(Continued on page 5)*

Name	Age	Sex	Birthplace	Estimated birth year
Moses	54	Male	New Hampshire	1796
Sally	50	Female	New York	1800
Henry	22	Male	Ohio	1828
Harriet	17	Female	Michigan	1833
Warren	10	Male	Michigan	1840
Caroline	7	Female	Michigan	1843
Henry Erwin	30	Male	New York	1820
Albert Preston	23	Male	New York	1827

The household of Moses and Sally Metcalf as listed in the 1850 U.S. Census for Sylvan, Washtenaw County, Michigan.

# Whaddya think this is? Davey Jones' locker? Some kind of chest?



We continue here a new feature in the *PastFinder*, “Whaddya think this is?” Each issue now includes an item, fact, photo, or document that is significant for genealogical and family history research. So, whaddya think this is? (For the correct answer, see page 8.)

- A. A parish chest
- B. Davy Jones' locker
- C. Anne Boleyn's shoe chest
- D. Antique music box

## How I found it (continued)

(Continued from page 4)

essentially ruled out the Colerain family. The Metcalf family living in Cuyahoga County had five family members, three of whom lined up perfectly with the columns that accounted for Henry, Moses and Sally. Two additional tally marks suggested that the family included a male child between the ages of 5 and 9 years old, plus a female child under the age of 5. Thus, if this was indeed the family of Moses and Sally Metcalf, here was evidence that they had two additional children, a son just older than Henry, and a daughter between Henry and Harriet.

These results warranted pursuing the family in the following census in 1840, also a prenominal census listing only the head of households. In this case, the 1850 census suggested that the family was residing in Michigan by 1840, and that, at a minimum, the family in 1840 included one more female child, Harriet, age about 7, and possibly a new male child, Warren, who may or may not have been born in time to be counted in the 1840 U.S. Census.

A search of the 1840 U.S. Census in Michigan returned one Moses Metcalf living in Washtenaw County, the same place where Moses was residing in the 1850 U.S. Census. In actuality, two Moses Metcalfs were listed in Ohio, and due diligence required that I check them out. They were easily disqualified because the counts of family members did not come close to matching the Metcalf family as listed in 1850.

In Washtenaw County, the Metcalf family followed the logical counts exactly as expected, with four males in the appropriate columns and three

females in the correct columns, confirming the existence of the two mystery children as noted previously.

Next came an effort to identify the names and birth details of the two new children. Essentially I was seeking a male born in Ohio between 1821 and 1825, and a female born in Ohio between 1825 and 1830. Starting with the boy, and assuming that his absence from the family in 1850 meant that he may have had his own family by then, I searched the 1850 U.S. Census for males born in Ohio between 1821 and 1825, with a results list of 113 entries, only 15 of whom were Metcalfs. Recognizing the possibility of spelling errors or indexing errors, I focused on the 15 Metcalf families, who surprisingly were all living in Ohio or Michigan.

A quick pass through the list eliminated four of the families because the individual who qualified for the list was still living at home with parents other than Moses and Sally. Working in more details through the remaining 11 hits, I noticed one in particular who was residing in Jackson County, Michigan, which is adjacent to Washtenaw County. This Metcalf, named Alfred, was married to an Adaline and listed a lodger named Albert Preston, born in New York.

Referring back to Moses Metcalf's entry in the 1850 U.S. Census, I noted an Albert Preston, also from New York. These two details amounted to enough of a coincidence to put Alfred at the top of my list of potential candidates.

And sure enough, at FamilySearch.org, in the collection of Michigan, County Marriages, 1820-1935, I located a marriage record for Alfred Metcalf of Sylvan township, Washtenaw County, Michigan, and Adaline Preston. It looked like Alfred belonged to Moses' family

(Continued on page 6)

## How I found it (continued)

The for *Theresa* } To whom it may concern  
 May 1<sup>st</sup> 1850 } This certifies that Mr  
 Curtis Brigham Jr. aged twenty eight years  
 of the town of Orangeville in the county of  
 Barry in the State of Michigan and Miss  
 Esther Metcalf aged nineteen years of  
 the town of Sylvan in the county of Washtenaw  
 in the State of Michigan are joined  
 together in Holy Matrimony on the  
 Eighth day of November in the year of our  
 Lords Eighteen hundred and forty nine

In presence of  
 Alfred Metcalf }  
 Mary H. Bairdwell }

By me  
 J. M. G. Partridge  
 Minister of the Gospel

Moses Metcalf } Mayfield December  
 To } the 21. 1821 This may  
 Sally Crocker } certify that Moses  
 Metcalf & Sally Crocker was joined  
 together in the bands of matrimony on  
 the 23<sup>rd</sup> day of November last by me  
 Michael Crocker  
 J. P.

This certifies that Mr. Alfred Metcalf of Sylvan  
 Washtenaw County and State of Michigan aged  
 23 years and Miss Adaline Preston of Glad  
 Lake Jackson County Michigan aged 20 years  
 were married by me this 9<sup>th</sup> day of Nov<sup>r</sup>  
 Grace Thomas & Emeline Thomas co witnesses  
 Thomas Jones  
 Minister of the Gospel

Marriage records for Moses and Sally (right, top), Alfred and Adaline (right, bottom), and Esther and Curtis (left). The records are from FamilySearch.org: Michigan, Washtenaw County marriages 1820-1935 (Esther, Alfred), and Ohio, Cuyahoga County Marriages, 1794-1994 (Moses).

(Continued from page 5)

and had married the sister of a lodger. In fact, not too long after making this discovery, we were looking through some articles from a local newspaper of the time and came across the account of a trial in which Moses Metcalf's two sons, Alfred and Henry, were called to testify for the prosecution against men who had borrowed tools from Moses and tried to blow up a railway station. Google Books had downloadable digitized versions of published records of the proceedings.


The case of the mystery boy was solved: He was Alfred Metcalf.

Next I went after the mystery girl. I had no luck searching for female births in Ohio for the requisite time period, but it was safe to assume, as I had with Alfred, that there might be a marriage record for a female, listed in the same marriage collection in

which I found the record of Alfred's marriage.

This time there was no long list of a dozen or so potential candidates. There was only one hit, for an Esther Metcalf married in 1849 in Washtenaw County to a Curtis Brigham. Esther also was from Sylvan township.

My wife, whose ancestors were Moses and Sally, knew from family records that her great-grandfather, Curtis Brigham, had married an Esther Metcalf.

And that's how I found the two children missing from the Metcalf family in 1850. Identifying these missing family members led to our finding out much more about the family. After daughter Caroline and Moses both died, others in the family moved to California, some stopping on the way to visit Alfred in Montana, where he was working as a miner. Harriet raised a son. Esther died in her 40s and was buried 20 miles from where we now live. 



# Ask the Doctor *A useful duplication service*

**Q I have heard that a site online will print out certificates and send them to researchers. How do I find this?**

Word gets around! At a recent genealogy meeting, a lecturer reminded everyone there of a wonderful service that can be helpful in uncovering documents relating to your family history. Available for about 20 years, but recently updated to allow responses by email, the photo duplication service at the Family History Library in Salt Lake City will send to you a digital copy of qualified documents for free. Yes. Free! Oh, how that word warms the Doctor's heart.

Of course, the site limits the number of documents you are permitted to request, but, nevertheless, five requests per week is a very liberal number.

Here's the deal. Go to the following URL in your browser: [familysearch.org/learn/wiki/en/Photoduplication\\_Services](http://familysearch.org/learn/wiki/en/Photoduplication_Services)

Alternatively, navigate to the Wiki at FamilySearch.org (Search—> Wiki) and search for *Photoduplication Service*.

There you will learn the rules for how to determine whether your request qualifies. First, make certain that the documents are not already available online. Beyond that, the rules are as follows:

### Limitations

What Photoduplication **cannot** do:

1. The service cannot copy entire works.
2. For copyrighted materials, Photoduplication can only provide copies of 10 pages or 10%, whichever is less.
3. The service cannot search a film or book to see whether your ancestor's record is on or in it.
4. The photoduplication team can only accept re-


quests that have already been researched. Enough information must be included in the request so that Photoduplication can go directly to the page or certificate being requested.

5. If you are uncertain which page to order, you may request copies of select pages from the index of a record. You can use this index to place a second order requesting specific pages.
6. Photoduplication cannot make copies of maps (e.g., oversize maps from the map collection).
7. Copies cannot be made of documents, films, or books that are available online or of films or books that are viewable at a local Family History (FamilySearch) Center.
8. Photoduplication cannot use links or URLs to determine which record is being requested.

### Requirements

1. Film or fiche number, item number
2. Name of individual you are researching
3. Title of record and name of parents, spouse, grantor, grantee, etc.
4. Event type (birth, death or marriage)
5. The event date and place
6. Name of parish, the volume or page number, and the registration or certificate number
7. The state or country of origin
8. Any other information that will be helpful in locating your record

On the wiki is a green link that will send you to the forms necessary to make your request. Word on the street is that most requests have been filled within a few working days.


Happy hunting. 

## *Bay area genealogist, teacher Carol Haws dies in Utah*

Carol Anne Haws, family historian and teacher, died in Farr West, Utah, January 14. She taught for the Silicon Valley Computer Genealogy Group.

She taught dance at San Jose State University for 27 years, choreographing university and community productions. She is survived by her husband, Von; her children, Matthew (Debora), Jeffery (Jan), Gretchen Myers (Douglas), Aaron, Forrest (Cheryl),

Rachel Helwig (Keith), Nellie Gratton (Jeff); and 27 grandchildren, 28 great-grandchildren, and one great-great-grandchild; a sister, Sylvia Bevan (James), and a brother, Franklin (Rosemary Beless). A funeral service was held January 20 in Utah.

Full obituary is at [www.legacy.com/obituaries/deseretnews/obituary.aspx?n=carol-haws&pid=169136691&fhid=4559#sthash.zmN6GD2Y.dpuf](http://www.legacy.com/obituaries/deseretnews/obituary.aspx?n=carol-haws&pid=169136691&fhid=4559#sthash.zmN6GD2Y.dpuf) 

# What didja think it was? And were ya right?

## ANSWER to question posed on page 5: A. A parish chest.

Prior to the 1834 Poor Law Union Act in England, when the parish church wardens were still responsible for the care of the poor and homeless within their parish boundaries, a very strong chest or lockbox was used to house the records and the tax money used for the welfare of the needy. The chest usually had multiple locks so that more than one warden had to be present to open it.

Among the records would be such items as church warden

## Upcoming meetings

The group meets monthly except December, on the second Saturday of the month from 9 to 11 A.M. at The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 875 Quince Ave., Santa Clara, California (see map at right). The group is not affiliated with any church or other group.

### 8 February 2014, 9–11 A.M.

- Getting the most from the U.S. Census (Richard Rands)
- Reunion 10 for Mac Users (Pat Burrow)
- Reunion for Mac, Basics (Pat Solomon)
- Research with Lesly (Klippel)
- Getting Started in Genealogy (Carleen Foster)

### 8 March 2014, 9–11 A.M.


- The best of RootsTech 2014 (Janet Brigham)
- A simplified approach to backing up (Richard Rands)
- Reunion 10 for Mac Users (Martha Wallace)
- Reunion for Mac, Basics (Pat Solomon)
- Research with Lesly (Klippel)
- Getting Started in Genealogy (Carleen Foster)

minutes, apprenticeship records, poor tax rates, and bastardy bonds that were provided by men responsible for children of unmarried women and who were required to guarantee the ongoing care of the mother and child.

The chests also housed the settlement and removal records. For an understanding of Settlement and Removal Records, refer to the article on Parish Chests on the wiki at FamilySearch.org.

Parish chest records are not usually still available today, but when they are, they can be astonishingly valuable for genealogists.

An example of the usefulness of parish chest records was evident several years ago when a member of SVCGG was researching an ancestor in England whose marriage details were confusing. A genealogist at the Family History Library British desk helped the researcher access parish chest records.

Included were records of one of the possible wives, with a list of her children and what the parish was paying for the upkeep of the woman and her children while her husband was performing military service. The records also stated that the husband was serving on behalf of another man who was eligible for service but chose to pay a surrogate soldier. It helped clarify the family situation. 

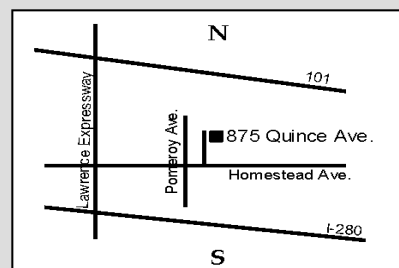
**PastFinder**  
First place, Major Society Newsletter, 2013  
First place, Local Society Newsletter, 2012  
National Genealogical Society

Website: [www.svcgg.org](http://www.svcgg.org)  
Email: [siliconvalleygroup@earthlink.net](mailto:siliconvalleygroup@earthlink.net)  
Postal mail: P.O. Box 23670, San Jose, CA 95153-3670

### Officers and staff

Richard Rands	President <a href="mailto:rrands@earthlink.net">rrands@earthlink.net</a> 650-969-6567
Janet Brigham	Vice-president Newsletter editor <a href="mailto:jzbrands@earthlink.net">jzbrands@earthlink.net</a>
Wanda Levy	Secretary
Carleen Foster	Treasurer
Lesly Klippel	Membership director <a href="mailto:leslyklippel@gmail.com">leslyklippel@gmail.com</a>
Brian Smith	Program chair <a href="mailto:bsmith4gen@yahoo.com">bsmith4gen@yahoo.com</a>
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Bill Weller	Webmaster
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Betsy Shafer	Assistant editor
Allin Kingsbury	Editor emeritus/ past president

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Meeting site has ample free off-street parking, with a wheelchair-accessible entrance at the front.

## About the Silicon Valley Computer Genealogy Group

SVCGG is the former Silicon Valley PAF Users Group, a nonprofit group of some 600 genealogy enthusiasts. We are based in Silicon Valley in the Bay Area of northern California; members live all over the world.

SVCGG offers classes, seminars, and publications to help family his-

torians improve their skills in using technology for genealogy research.

*PastFinder* is published monthly except December. It is distributed at meetings to members and mailed to others after the meetings. Members can receive the newsletter digitally by emailed link. 