

## ???? Questions to Ask Yourself ???? ?

Have I prayed for the Spirit to help me find the information I'm looking for?  
Am I keeping my mind open to new information and possibilities?

### What do I know?

- What do I think is likely true?
- Do I have sources for this information or is it family legend?

### What don't I know?

What clues does the information I have give me? Ask "What could this tell me?" or "Why?" about every piece of information you have.

### Do the sources of information I have contain clues I have overlooked?

Sample questions to ask yourself about your information:

- Is there an unusually large gap between children's birthdates?—Does this mean that there may have been another child born in the gap?
- Has a child died and then another child been named the same name?
- If the parents of young children have died, what happened to the children?
- Who gave the information I'm looking at? (Mothers tend to be more accurate about birthdays than fathers or siblings) Is the informant consistent in giving information? Are they consistently inconsistent?
- Are there inconsistencies that could be easily explained—Jan. vs. Jun. for example? Is the persons' name one that could be male or female?
- If someone is no longer listed with the family, does that mean they got married? Died? Do these possibilities lead to other records?
- Is someone new listed with the family? What could be their possible relationship to the family? Does this tell me anything else about other family members? (ie. Granddaughter living with a grandparent—Does this mean that her parents have died?)
- What do I know about extended family of this person—Grandparents, Aunts, Uncles, Cousins? What do I know about the "in-law" side of this family? How did a couple meet each other?
- What could have caused the inconsistencies between information in different sources?
- Have I check other locations where I know they lived for the information I need? What is the proximity of various locations mentioned in different records? Have the names of any locations been changed? Are there cities by the same name in another state or location?
- Is there a reason the family may have wanted to hide or alter information?

**How could someone else have come up with the information they have given?**

**Make sure you understand the general guidelines for recording dates and places and for calculating and estimating dates.**

Do these guidelines explain the inconsistencies in the information you are looking at?

Are there clues in this information to other sources of information?

**Could someone with fresh eyes see something I'm missing?** Am I missing information because of preconceived ideas of what is correct? Step back at times and let things simmer. Explain your findings to someone else. Putting things into words many times will clarify a situation and help you keep progressing. Remember—your ancestors know where their information is!

The “Evaluating a Document” page that follows next was typed in 15 minutes before a class. (True Story) I asked the class to proof read it for me. The care that they took in reading the document is the same way we should read all family history documents. They had the incentive of finding mistakes the teacher had made; the point to be made is: **READ CAREFULLY!** (BYW: I haven’t changed the document.)

## Evaluating a Document

READ CAREFULLY AND MAKE NOTES!

What does it say?

What doesn’t it say?

Is a wife mentioned, but no children? What about parents?

What places are mentioned?

Geographical locations, Businesses worked for, Locations moved from or hometown, schools, etc.

What records would have been kept by the “places mentioned”?

What dates or time periods are mentioned?

What was the history of the area or the nation during that time period?

What names of individuals are mentioned?

Are there nicknames mentioned or names that might be nicknames of people in your family history?

Why was the information in the document included? Example: does mentioning troubles during a pregnancy mean that the couple has lost other babies?

What does the document tell you about the personality or past history of the individuals mentioned?

Were they detail oriented and might have kept other records? Are there clues about other records that may contain information? (Military service records, property deeds, church affiliation, etc.) Do the clues about their personality lead you to the conclusion that the information is probably accurate?

What does the document tell you about the lifestyle of the individuals mentioned? This may also lead to other records that may have been kept. A lot more was recorded about individuals who were considered to be “one of the wealthy” of the community.

Does the document give you information about individuals that may have a connection to the person you are looking for? Are there connections that will lead you to the information you seek? Don’t become so focused on one individual that you miss other valuable information.

Are there other documents around the document you are evaluating that may have more information? (i.e.: other newspaper articles or bible entries etc.) While you have access to the document, search for other information that may help you. It saves times locating the document again.

Have you predetermined the information you think you will find?