

Finding Stories: Turning Names and Dates into an Impactful Family History



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Milking Every Record

- Pick out every clue from every record.
- Transcribe wherever you can and then extract important details. Highlighting makes it an easy process.
- Don't overlook those "other" columns in census records (e.g., how many months employed, number of children born/living, etc.). Browse special schedules too.
- On death records look at cause of death and think about impact. Long illness?
- Compare and contrast the entries between censuses
 - What and who has changed?
 - If you have financial details, how have they changed. Did they own their home or rent it? Value of property or rent? Are all of the same family members in the household? Has anyone died? What impact might that have had on the family? Did older children move out? Where did they go?
- Write up record summaries and compile them

Create Timelines

- Begin with one record, like a census, and extract dates
 - Where was the family on the census date=one entry
 - Birth dates and places tell us where the family was at the time of children's births
 - Look for age at first marriage, how many years married, or whether married in census year to add estimated marriage dates
 - Look for immigration dates and naturalization statuses (and year in 1920) in censuses 1900-1930
 - Layer other censuses, vital records, city/county directory listings, voter lists, tax records, land records, etc.
 - Add in historical events on national, state, and local level that may have impacted your ancestors
 - Cite your sources so that you can compare where you got details. You will run into conflicts and having the sources in front of you will help you to resolve them.

Timeline

1814-1815

Kelly, James – born in Ireland
1880 US Census data, age 65=b. 1815¹
Death cert. age 82 in 1896=b. 1814²

ca. 1817

Kelly, Mary A.
1860 Census, age 43, born in Ireland³

ca. 1817-25

Kelly family emigrates from Ireland
Estimated from birth dates and places of Mary and Jane found on noted U.S. Census records. Also, from James Kelly death certificate in 1896-- been in country for 75 years = 1821.⁴

6 Jun 1819 (or c. 1822 or 1825)

Kelly, Jane
Death ctf. 10 January 1882 she was 62 years, 7 months, 4 days; = 1819⁵
1870 census, age 48, born NY=1822⁶
1880 census, age 55, born NY=1825⁷

Asking Why

- Why did they migrate? Why did they move within a small area? Why did they change congregations? Why were the children working? Then ask, where can I find the answers to these questions.

Sources for Context

- Google it.
- Be a student of history. Look for historical publications about the places, times, and ethnic groups in your family tree.
 - City directories are your guide to your ancestor's hometown.
 - Check online book sources like HathiTrust www.hathitrust.org , Google Books books.google.com, and Internet Archive archive.org/
 - Check local libraries (public, private, and universities) to see what digital collections they subscribe to and whether you can access them.
 - Look at the thousands of local histories on Ancestry. They will not surface in a global search. You need to seek them out and treat them like a book. Browse!!
 - To locate local histories on Ancestry, go to the Card Catalog <https://ancestry.me/2Fmjc8Z> and select **Stories, Memories & Histories** (then if you are only looking for local histories, select **Social and Place Histories**), then select the location. You can drill down to the county level in the U.S. and find some amazing county histories that will give you fantastic insights into your family. Or,
 - Click on the **Search** tab www.ancestry.com/search and scroll down to the map in the lower left corner of the page. Select a state, then scroll to the bottom of that page to access **Stories, Memories & Histories** for that state. There is a county box on the left side of the page, that will lead you to county-specific titles. Both state and county histories can give you unique insights.
- Historical Newspapers
 - Newspapers.com www.newspapers.com
 - Ancestry ancestry.me/2QJZam
 - Chronicling America chroniclingamerica.loc.gov
 - GenealogyBank www.genealogybank.com
 - Old Fulton New York Postcards fultonhistory.com/Fulton.html (mostly NY, but includes other states)
 - Elephind.com searches multiple collections
- Historical maps
 - Check vendor halls at conferences
 - Look for online vendors and free online collections cyndislist.com/maps
- Laws and Statutes
 - Many state statutes are online. Google and look at Internet Archive and HathiTrust