

And why do we need to know what questions to ask to get the right answers? What difference can it possibly make as long as we do ask questions?

I learned a long time ago that you needed to know what questions to ask in order to find out the information that you were seeking—sometimes not even knowing what you really wanted to know.

Let's look at a few of the questions that LaRae has put into the syllabus sheet.

Did you raise or butcher your own food?
Did you make your own soap?
Why did you move from Tennessee to Illinois?
Or from Colorado to Texas?
What did you believe?
Who did you love?
Where were you born?
Why were you born there?
What do you need to know about your Dad in order to find his father?
What records might provide that information?
Where are they?
Can you get to them?
Who kept those records and for what purpose?
But most importantly, what do you want to know?

All of these kinds of questions can be asked if there is someone around to answer them. Who can you ask for answers to these questions?

What if all of your elderly relatives are gone? How can you then find out the information? (Research online at places like EHistory, read journals written at the same time and in the same area, read the local newspapers for their time frame or do a time line or an age gauge just to mention a few) (Example of Age Gauge)

Ehistory is a great resource for historical information to answer some of those first questions about what life was like for them. This site has thousands of pages of historical content, timelines, battle outlines, biographies, images, maps, and more.

You need to know something about them to ask more questions. When I first began interviewing for my family histories, I was not too effective until I learned more about my grandparents. Then I could ask more questions. If you're interviewing someone who went to school with them or was a neighbor, you can ask general questions like:

What were your favorite classes in school?
What kind of neighborhood games did you play?
What kind of chores did you have to do?

Were you allowed to play outside after dark? If so, what kind of games did you play?
What were the foods your mother fixed for your meals?
How were the meals fixed? Was everything cooked? Did you have a garden or a cow
or chickens?
What kind of class activities did you do?
Were there special school holidays or events?
What kind of sports or music or drama did you have?

Handout - interview questions

I learned about a childhood game called Boney Horses when I was interviewing a classmate of my dad's. I had never heard about that game. (Explain it) So then I started asking all the people around Dad's age if they played boney horses. I found out that many of them had as they each explained how they played the game. What a treasure as I learned all about this game. I even learned an interesting incident in Old Mexico where a church member and her brothers played boney horses.

“Ila Overson tells of her brothers playing with them in the colonies of Old Mexico. She says her brothers would make harnesses for their animals and actually “brand” their boney horses “by using a copper wire twisted into the shape they wanted for their brand. They left a wire handle so they could thrust the branding iron into the fireplace to heat – and then they would quickly pull it out and brand their horses and cattle.”¹

She laughingly tells of she and her sister lying on the braided rug in front of the fireplace watching their brothers as they branded their stock. Suddenly, her little sister grabbed one of the branding irons, pulled up Ila's dress and pressed one of the cooling irons on her upper leg! Ouch! It left a mark for quite a while. Sister got spanked and never repeated that trick again. Ila remembers, too, of them using long necked bottles, when they could find them, as horses, as well. What fun they enjoyed in the south-of-the-border country where her folks raised their children to adulthood.”

I even found that a lady who had written a delightful poem explaining about playing Boney Horses. Now everyone can know about that game that chooses to read my history about my Folks.

It's so helpful, too, to keep looking for information about people. LaRae tells about an ancestor of hers that she didn't like because he threw her great-grandmother (age 19 at the time) out of his house and never communicated with her again. She tells how she learned more about him–injured and living in the workhouse–unable to care for himself–and that helped to change her attitude toward him–to have more empathy for him

The same thing happened to me when I was writing about Great-Grandpa Isaiah Cox. I actually didn't like him much as I learned that the children had to knock before they could come into the

¹Interview with Ila O'Donnal Overson in Las Vegas, Nevada, November 5, 2004.

house when he was home. And that he kept marrying younger and younger plural wives. And that he refused the request of my grandfather when he wanted a piece of bread—then he came to the door and threw a slice of bread toward Grandpa Warren and Henderson but the dog beat them to it. When a grandchild asked him why they would want to eat a dirty piece of bread, he told him that was how hungry they were. Well, I didn't like him much.

However, I kept digging and reading and trying to find out things about him that were positive. I finally began to find that he was involved in the schools, that he participated in plays and drama, that he worked hard to try to support his wives and children, that he was so honest that when a man absconded with the money to open a mine, he and his family worked until they had paid back the money again that should have gone to the operator. And then finally, that he was the one who put the ball on top of the Tabernacle steeple! That must have been pretty scary. So, even though I didn't appreciate some of the things he did, I did learn to appreciate him as a person.

One of the ways I found the answers to these questions I had was to read the local newspaper for the local news items.

LaRae tells how important it is to visit Archives or Museums or Historical Societies for the areas of your ancestors. And sometimes it helps to go more than once. People keep donating things and it takes some time for them to be cataloged and indexed. You might find pictures online in several different websites such as familyoldphotos - deadfred - ancient faces - and others like that.

Especially look for diaries of other people. When I was writing about the pioneers coming across the plains, I was doing so at the Sesquicentennial time and someone would put online the current trek that the people were doing in commemorating the pioneers and also put what had happened that day 150 years ago. They did a lot of my research for me. But there are lots of journals and diaries available to help you see what was happening at a particular time. You just need to start asking where to look. BYU has started putting all of their journals and diaries online. I found about a new book written about Richard great-great grandfather by checking the BYU site. You can ask the right questions online, too, as you look for people, or pictures or specific happenings of certain areas.

Be sure that you use a variety of search engines because different search engines categorize different information. Some of them are Google, Teoma, Alta Vista, Yahoo, Meta Crawler, Dogpile, Mamma, just to name a few. So ask the search engines the questions, too.

Are you trying to find out how sheep were sheared because that was something your ancestor did? Go to Google and type in sheep shearing or brick making or cooking or whatever. Ask those questions to help you understand the timeframe.

If you discover that some of your ancestor's babies died of summer complaint. You need to ask what that is and explain it so the readers of your history will understand. (summer complaint [severe diarrhea, cholera, or severe gastroenteritis].)

When some people write and research family histories, they want to discover their families are the way they want them to be. That is genealogical robbery. They don't ask the right questions and they certainly don't want true answers. They don't want the real person.

If you don't find your true family history, you will never feel the connection with your own people. When it's true, you don't have to follow the bad things they did, you can change and stop the progress of undesirable traits. If they are silent devoted heroes, you can be one, too.

So set up the target question you will try to answer.

Use the who (name) What (event) when (date) Where (place) Why (reason)

For instance: Where was a person born? Why was he born there? My children were all born in St. George even though we lived in Las Vegas. Why? Because it was cheaper, because Mother was there to help, because I felt like I got more personal and better medical care. My own grandmother was born at her grandmother's home—probably so her mother could help.

Be careful of name variations—do they go by a nickname? Is this really the person? We found one instance of 3 men in the same town marrying women of the same first name (no last names listed). How can we tell which is ours? Often it's by asking the right questions - like: what was his occupation? That allowed the separation of the 3 marriages and the ability to determine which children belonged to which couple.

Always ask does the info make sense? For instance, is the person old enough to have a child? Are they old enough to be married? Are they born after they died? (Probably a typo) Who is giving the information? One birth record recorded by the doctor showed the child born 2 days later than the mother indicated she was born. After checking the records, it was discovered that the doctor didn't record the date immediately so listed it 2 days later than the event actually happened. The mother had recorded the birth in her journal the day it happened. Choose the source that's most apt to be involved and care.

Is the source you've put down for the information complete enough that someone else can find it?

Does what you found reflect what really happened? If someone disappeared for 6 years was he in the service or perhaps in jail? Records should exist to help you ask the right questions to get the answer as to what really happened?

Are you sure that this person is your relative? Our Larkins hired a researcher and he found a wonderful line that went on and on. However, Todd Larkin went to England and researched the information and found it wasn't our line. The right line didn't go as far back. Let's ask the questions that help us find the right ancestors.

When you see that two boys in the family have the same name, try to bury one. It was common practice for people to use the name if the first child died fairly young. Again, if you have two men with the same name, can you bury one? Just the first step to trying to find which

one is really yours.

So many questions to ask. Know that the more questions you ask, the more questions turn up to be asked. But the wonderful result is that you begin to be able to fill out your family tree with true relatives.

For Stout Reunion - July 7, 2006

One night as I lay on my pillow
Pondering things dark and deep
The thoughts of my kin
wondering who they had been
robbed my poor eyes of sleep
While struggling there in the darkness
the yearning inside wouldn't cease
And I knew without doubt
that I had to find out
or I never would ever know peace

Was I a little bit royalty, little bit knave,
little bit commoner, little bit slave?
was there aristocrat blood in my veins
or blood from some bad men I'd rather not name?
Was I a little bit hero, little bit cad,
little bit Nero? a madman, too bad,
The thoughts were enticing you'll have to agree
And I just **couldn't wait to know me.**

I started looking up cousins
And anyone else I could find
Who'd maybe recall and gladly tell all
They knew about those left behind
I gathered up letters and journals
till everyone thought I was weird
But I just had to know what really was so
And the truth was as bad as I feared.

I **was** a little bit royalty, little bit knave,
little bit commoner, little bit slave,
There's some aristocrat blood in my veins
and blood from some bad men I'd rather not name.

I'm a little bit hero, little bit cad,
little bit Nero, a madman, how sad

It's awfully exciting you'll have to agree
It's such **fun** since **I've come to know me.**

These are part of the words of a song by Janeen Brady called 'The Genealogy Song' I thought you'd all prefer just hearing the words instead of me singing them.–Good choice!

Anyway, they really sum up Family History very well. **'It's such fun since I've come to know me.'** And that's what we're here tonight to learn just a bit more about–how to come to know yourself through your ancestors.

If need the time, Use E-bay lesson sheet