

How Do I Know That's My Ancestor?

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People with the same name. Nicknames. Changing names. How do you know if the record you're looking at is referring to your ancestor? This session will take a close look at records and how you can tell if it's really referring to the person in your tree and not just someone with the same name.

The Sanity Check

- Does the record even make sense for it to be that person?
- How "outside the norm" is this event? (Marrying at age 12; military service at 14; giving birth at 50, etc.)
- When it is outside the norm, what other records might exist to explain or refute it?

What Are Your Assumptions?

- Are you reading the record accurately?
- Terms
- Are the facts driving your theory?

People Are More Than Names

Think of all the ways you can describe a person, such as:

- | | |
|--------------|--------------------|
| • Age | • Occupation |
| • Birthplace | • Economic status |
| • Relatives | • Religion |
| • Friends | • Military service |

All of those descriptions can help you sort out records and the people they refer to. It's building your ancestor's **identity**.

Looking Around at Others

"You'll be known by the company you keep."

People don't live in vacuums. Who are the neighbors in the census? Who are the sponsors at the baptisms? Who is buried in the same plot at the cemetery?

These other people are another way to "identify" the person in the record.

You Have to Evaluate the Source

"What does the record say and who is saying it?" We hear that advice a lot, and it's good advice. But you need to take it one step further.

What about the source itself? How close is that source to what was originally recorded? Are you looking at the record or just an index? Is it an abstract or a transcription?

Your question should always be "Can I get back to something better?" If you can, do it.

Look at the *entire* record. What clues does it contain that will help you **identify** the person?

Form V, S. No. 11-100M-114-11

STATE OF OHIO
BUREAU OF VITAL STATISTICS
CERTIFICATE OF DEATH

PLACE OF DEATH
County of Lawrence
Township of Northwood Registration District No. 9751 File No. 11742
Village of _____ Primary Registration District No. _____ Registered No. 10
City of _____ (No. _____ St. _____ Ward _____)

FULL NAME John P. Higgins

PERSONAL AND STATISTICAL PARTICULARS
SEX Male COLOR OR RACE White MARRIAGE STATUS Married
DATE OF BIRTH Mar 29 1846
AGE 75 yrs 10 mos 14 ds
OCCUPATION Massachusetts
CAUSE OF DEATH Pneumonia Complicated by Chronic Bronchitis and Atrial Septal Defect

MEDICAL CERTIFICATE OF DEATH
DATE OF DEATH Feb 11 1912
I HEREBY CERTIFY, That I attended deceased from Feb 2 1912 to Feb 13 1912
that I last saw him, alive on Feb 13 1912
and that death occurred, on the date stated above, at 2 a.m.
The CAUSE OF DEATH* was as follows:
Pneumonia Complicated by Chronic Bronchitis and Atrial Septal Defect

Contributory (Disease)
(Signature) Wm. Phillips (Address) 11742

PARENTS
FATHER Henry Higgins
MOTHER Mary Higgins
BORN Mar 29 1846

WITNESSES
J. G. Balliet
C. B. Hamner

PLACE OF BURIAL OR REMOVAL
Burial place Wm. Phillips