

# Newsletter of the Family History Group, West Auckland Historical Society and Waitakere Branch, NZ Society of Genealogists

## Convenors Message

### Another fortnight at home with a Pandemic of Cabin Fever!

March 2021 begins our fourth year of reforming our group at Mill cottage in Henderson. Things have certainly changed since then. Amongst other things the roll out of high speed internet has allowed us to partially off-set the restrictions on group meetings caused by the virus by taking to the Ethernet for virtual "Zoom" meetings by which you can take part from the comfort of home and also allow fellow enthusiasts from around the world to participate.

Genealogy on the internet is continuing to flourish. Apart from pay sites such as My Heritage and Ancestry there are a couple free to use sites that are updating all the time. The obvious one, Family Search, operated by the Latter Day Saints has a lot of access to the Church record collection which is being added to frequently. They used to provide for a small fee, film copies of requested records which would be made available at your local Family Research Centre or Library. This service has been discontinued as they concentrate on digitising their entire collection. To see some records which are confidential you will need to visit Salt Lake City in person (go on one of Jan Gow's tours).

Another free option is WikiTree. This site's goal is to create one tree for all humanity. When you start to add a name it searches it's entire database to see if there is a person of that name already entered and asks if this name is a match for the name you entered. Check your information carefully! You can alter the information entered already BUT give your reasons for doing so. Others can alter your information but cannot delete your reason for doing it.

As John explains in his article, treat all on line information with care unless you are happy with its source.

Good hunting,  
Gary Snow

### FamilySearch Launches New Page for Family History Beginners

Have you ever wanted to do family history but didn't know where to start? FamilySearch recently launched a beginner-friendly page to help!

<https://www.familysearch.org/gettingstarted/>

## Family in Focus

March/April 2021

## Group Meetings

**Waitakere Central Library,  
West Auckland Research  
Centre**

10am to 11.30 am, every 2nd  
Tuesday of the Month,  
February to December.

### Mill Cottage

Every 3rd Thursday of the  
month at 7pm.

Every 2nd & 4th Saturday  
morning of the month at 11am,  
John Soppet and Gary Snow  
are rostered on duty at Mill  
Cottage. Close 3pm.

## Door Charges:

Waitakere Central Library  
Gold coin donation.

Mill Cottage. \$2.00

## Contacts

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## Are You Recording Fairy Tales in Your Genealogy Records?

WARNING: This is a "soapbox article" in which I rant and rave a little. - Dick Eastman - 3 Mar 2021

A newsletter reader wrote to me a while ago expressing unhappiness with all the erroneous information found in online family trees. The bogus information is usually found in family tree information submitted by other users of whatever online family tree service is being used at the moment.

My belief is that this newsletter reader wasn't spending much time looking at online images of census, birth, marriage, and death records or at other online documents of value to genealogists: old newspapers, military pension files, and such things.

I decided to share my response publicly in this newsletter so that others could either benefit from or reject my ideas and suggestions.

Instead of spending your time looking at other people's fairy tales, I suggest you look at original records and newspapers (or digital images of original records and newspapers). That's the manner that experienced genealogists have used for decades, and it has always worked well.

Luckily, millions of such records are available online today, unlike the days when I started doing genealogy in the 1980s. In "the old days," I often had to go to the locations where the records were kept. I spent a lot of money on travel and on photocopying machines. However, the expense was worth it. I got accurate results most of the time.

Back in the 1980s, we also had thousands of self-published books written by other genealogists with claims of their family trees. Those books were just as inaccurate as today's online family trees. Those books often were a mix of facts and conjecture, often accompanied by so-called "family coats of arms" and similar fictitious material.

Sadly, in the 1980s and earlier, thousands of new genealogists did not understand the difference between unsourced information versus documented records. A lot of junk claims were copied, republished, and distributed all over the place.

I will suggest that online databases of genealogy information intermixed with fairy tales hasn't really changed genealogy very much. The only difference today is that computers and online capabilities allow genealogists to publish accurate and inaccurate information alike faster, easier, and at less expense than ever before.

My belief is that the **PERCENTAGE** of inaccurate genealogy information hasn't changed much in many decades. What has changed is the **QUANTITY** of both accurate and inaccurate information available today.

The reality is that the basics of good genealogy research haven't changed in the past century, even though we certainly have more convenient access today than ever. In short, any genealogy claims you find that are not accompanied by verifiable source citations to original records should be treated as a potential fairy tale.

Please don't get me wrong: I still love the online family trees submitted by other genealogists, and I look at them often. I have thousands of such claims saved in various note files in my computer. I always want to know what someone else thinks is a fact. I want to save those possible fairy tales until I can verify the information myself through independent, well-trusted sources. In most cases, that means looking at an original record, either in person or as an online image.

I still want to know what another person believes is true, even though I have some doubts. Knowing someone else's guesses is still better than knowing nothing at all about an ancestor. There are times when someone else's guess gives me a clue as to what to look for to see if I can confirm or refute it.

*I never, ever enter possible fairy tale information into my primary genealogy database until I have independently verified its accuracy in the original records.*

My belief is that your genealogy collection of facts can be better and more accurate today than ever before – if you really care about accuracy. Anyone who doesn't care about accuracy probably isn't reading this article anyway.

What's in your (possibly bogus) family tree?

Editor Note: I totally agree with all that Dick Eastman has said here.

Both Gary and I always encourage our members to take great care when using data found in online family trees or search results that come from an online tree. We can both quote examples of such erroneous data.

I have an example where an error in family trees containing my own family on MyHeritage was propagated through five different trees. Fortunately, I knew who made the error first and was able to get them all corrected.