

City directories: Mining for gold

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SILICON VALLEY COMPUTER GENEALOGY GROUP

PastFinder

By Pamela Brigham

Like many genealogists, I have struggled to learn where my ancestors lived between 1880 and 1900. While we have the 1880 and 1900 U.S. federal censuses, I used to think we didn't have much in between, because the 1890 census records were destroyed. This often was frustrating, because many people moved around the country during that time.

Then I discovered city directories and soon was able to estimate to within one or two years when certain ancestors moved from the East Coast to the West Coast. That made it much easier to find them in additional records. That's far from the only information I found in city directories, however.

What are city directories? When they were first published, they were lists for salesmen, who needed access to the residents of the city. Eventually they came to contain much more.

As a list of residents, they typically were limited to males over the age of 18, working women over 18, and widows. Many towns had city directories by in the early 1800s.

Other items that could be found in later city directories were lists of street names, ward (city division) maps, street names that had changed, churches, and businesses.

City directories usually were published on an annual basis. They were compiled ahead of the year for which they showed residents — more on this



Shelves of city directories in the Portland, Oregon, Central Library. (Wikimedia image.)

later. Some city directories contained advertisements for local business, similar to the yellow pages of today; it's

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Outside and Inside

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always interesting to see what was being advertised in the 1800s.

What can they be used for? I've come across a surprising number of items in city directories. First, they are useful for establishing a geographical timeline of where in a city your ancestors might have lived. This is key for ancestors who might not have owned their homes but instead rented a house or apartment in a city, or who moved a lot.

They also often provide information about an ancestor's occupation. For instance, I learned that although an ancestor of mine in Elmira, New York, was primarily a carpenter, he also was a police constable for a several years.

Also, because a city directory often listed widows'

names along with those of their husbands, I could narrow a death date range down to a couple of years. Using city directories to narrow a time period down to specific years has been very helpful in being able to search other local records for additional information.

Family relationships and voter lists

The other surprising way I've used them has been to confirm potential family relationships. In Elmira city directories I found a listing of a seamstress living at the same address as her father, the carpenter. Two other people with the same last name were living there, which helped me determine that my ancestor had fathered two other children.

I've often used city directories in combination with voter registration lists to get a more detailed picture of my relatives than even the census could provide. Spelling is the biggest challenge. I have an ancestor whose last name is Spellacy — I've found that the names of the same people living at the same address were spelled at least five ways in city directories published between 1905 and 1920.

Also, as mentioned above, city directories were published ahead of time for the year they reference. For example, in Elmira, the city directory for 1888 - 1889 was published in about 1888. Although my ancestors moved in early 1889, they were listed in the city directory as still living in Elmira even though they were actually on the West Coast by that time.

This is something to be aware of when you might also be using voter registration lists to track ancestors: you can find people seemingly living in two places at once.

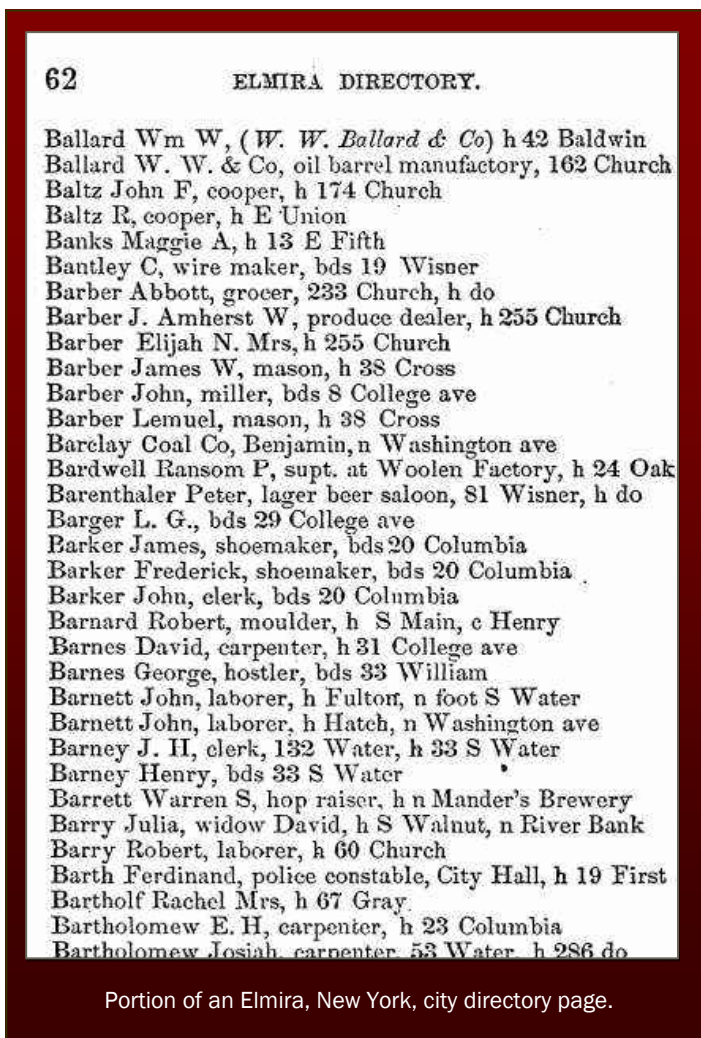
Where to find city directories

Where can these goldmines of information be found? In several places. Printed versions are in many local libraries. Ancestry.com has digitized and indexed many directories. Remember that you can search Ancestry for free at your local family history center and in many public libraries.

Familysearch wiki has several good references for them as well. One of those links is to a site that helps you search by state for directories:

sites.google.com/site/onlinedirectoriesite/Home/usa

Another site, www.uscitydirectories.com/, also



Portion of an Elmira, New York, city directory page.

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Connection clue is in the land

By Richard Rands

Trying to find verify that two families with different surnames who appear to have an intermarriage were actually connected can often be a challenge when you have no marriage records confirming the connection.

I have been working on the family of Bavarian-born John Hiltz and his wife, Margaret, who immigrated to Ohio in the mid-19th century.


John was a shoemaker who later worked for a post office and then relocated to the District of Columbia to work for the U.S. Government, taking only the youngest of three children with him and his wife. The middle child, a son also named John, seems to have moved west when his parents moved east.


A likely candidate for John shows up in the 1900 U.S. Census in a small town called Buena Vista in Chaffee county, Colorado, married to an Alice, with five children. Family lore suggests that Alice's maiden name was McPhelemy. This was the name of an Irish family who had been in the area around Chaffee County for some years. Aside from the fact that Buena Vista was a small town and one might assume that the two families could have known each other, I had no documentation of the connection.

After a lengthy effort poring through typical documents, I decided to determine whether a connection

City directories (continued)

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allows you to enter a state name to search. One useful thing to remember is that even if a city directory isn't indexed, it's an alphabetical list. Barring any major spelling mistakes or variations, you should be able to find your ancestors easily in city directories. Have fun searching these wonderful sources of information! 



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
General Land Office Records

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Patents

Note: An *Italic* entry denotes data that has not been indexed against the land patent document, and has no image.

Image	Accession	Names	Date	Doc #	State	Meridian	Twp - Rng	Aliquots	Sec. #	County
	<i>COCDOAA 006545</i>	HALL, RICHARD, MCPHELEMY, SARAH, STARR, THOMAS	11/1/1883	8367	CO	6th PM	009S - 080W		25	Lake
	<i>COCDOAA 016148</i>	MCPHELEMY, FRANCIS	11/16/1894	325	CO	6th PM	014S - 079W	S1/4NW1/4	2	Chaffee
	<i>COCDOAA 016661</i>	MCPHELEMY, FRANCIS	9/1/1891	1056	CO	6th PM	014S - 079W	SW1/4NE1/4	2	Chaffee
	<i>COCDOAA 016675</i>	MCPHELEMY, FRANCIS	9/1/1891	1056	CO	6th PM	014S - 079W	NW1/4SW1/4	2	Chaffee
	<i>COCDOAA 016075</i>	MCPHELEMY, JAMES	3/10/1890	179	CO	6th PM	014S - 079W	SW1/4SE1/4	7	Chaffee
	<i>COCDOAA 016624</i>	MCPHELEMY, JAMES	4/26/1880	489	CO	6th PM	014S - 079W	NW1/4NW1/4	17	Chaffee
	<i>COCDOAA 016074</i>	MCPHELEMY, JAMES	3/10/1890	179	CO	6th PM	014S - 079W	N1/2SE1/4	2	Chaffee
	<i>COCDOAA 016187</i>	MCPHELEMY, ROGER	5/13/1904	1669	CO	6th PM	014S - 079W	SE1/4NE1/4	2	Chaffee
	<i>COCDOAA 016187</i>	MCPHELEMY, ROGER	5/13/1904	1669	CO	6th PM	014S - 079W	NE1/4SW1/4	2	Chaffee
	<i>COCDOAA 016074</i>	MCPHELEMY, ROGER	3/10/1890	178	CO	6th PM	014S - 079W	S1/2SW1/4	8	Chaffee
	<i>COCDOAA 016187</i>	MCPHELEMY, ROGER	5/13/1904	1669	CO	6th PM	014S - 079W	SW1/4SE1/4	8	Chaffee
	<i>COCDOAA 016074</i>	MCPHELEMY, ROGER	3/10/1890	178	CO	6th PM	014S - 079W	NE1/4NW1/4	17	Chaffee
	<i>COCDOAA 016187</i>	MCPHELEMY, ROGER	5/13/1904	1669	CO	6th PM	014S - 079W	S1/2S1/4	2	Chaffee
	<i>COCDOAA 016187</i>	MCPHELEMY, ROGER	5/13/1904	1669	CO	6th PM	014S - 079W	Lot/Trct 4	4	Chaffee

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Census image for Patti in the 1900 U.S. Census (image: Ancestry.com).

could be established using U.S. federal land records, on the offhand chance that both of the families had bought or homesteaded public land before moving to such a small town.

James McPhelemy had immigrated from Ireland to Massachusetts prior to 1870 with his wife and seven children. They all had taken jobs working in the cotton weaving and dyeing industry. Sometime before the 1880 U.S. Census, the McPhelemy family left the cotton mills and moved to Buena Vista, Colorado, taking up farming — a typical pattern for families caught up in the westward movement.

At the General Land Office (GLO) website search page (www.glorerecords.blm.gov/search/) I entered Colorado in the location box and McPhelemy in the Last Name box. The search gave me hits for seven patents, one for Sarah as a mineral patent, and two each for James and two of the three sons, Francis and Roger. Half of the latter six patents were cash purchases, and the others were homesteads, giving the appearance that the family members had pooled their resources to amass a portion of land.

Plotting the patents revealed that the McPhelemy family owned contiguous plots that made up the better part of what is now the town of Buena Vista, plus

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THE 1940 CENSUS IS A WRAP

Within 13 short weeks, the entire U.S. 1940 Census was completely indexed and arbitrated in an amazing feat that astonished everyone involved. It took several additional weeks of back-end computer processing before the census for every state was online for name searching.

The organizers of the 1940 Community Census Project are justifiably proud of the way the volunteers were motivated and how the entire process went so smoothly. Analysis of the results indicates that this was the most thorough and effective census indexing effort ever, even compared to other groups who worked on the 1940 census.

The volunteers from the Silicon Valley Computer Genealogy Group indexed and arbitrated 279,532 records from the 1940 census during the 13-week period. Adding that total to all of the indexing completed since the beginning of the indexing effort, SVC GG has contributed **1,562,950 records** to all of the re-

cord collections indexed at FamilySearch.


What a generous way to give back to the research progress in the genealogy community. And the work hasn't stopped.



FamilySearch.org image

The community of volunteer indexers and arbitrators is now being asked to keep going by working on a dozen collections of U.S. Passenger Lists ranging from Atlantic Coast ports of entry in the 1820s to Honolulu through 1952.

Those of us who were unable to take the time to work on the census are still being challenged to get into the act and improve the immigration records that are so vital to tracing ancestors back to their countries of origin.

If you have yet to register as an indexer, it is quick and easy to do at the familysearch.org website. Be sure to specify that you are part of the Silicon Valley Genealogy Group. If you have any questions, you can call SVC GG at (650) 969-6567 or e-mail us at this address: siliconvalleygroup@earthlink.net. 

How I found it *(continued)*

(Continued from page 3)


several hundred acres toward the west side of the valley. Following the McPhelemy family in subsequent census records revealed that the original patentees apparently held control of their property for the duration of their lives, never married, and left no heirs.

Most of the other members of the family drifted away leaving very little in the way of a paper trail to enable me to follow them. The oldest daughter, Margaret, appeared to have left with a mariner and moved to San Francisco, leaving her son behind with her brothers to raise. The third son, Patrick, apparently went to the gold fields of California; and the youngest daughter, Mary, apparently never married.

So how could I find a link to the John Hiltz fam-

ily? The potential link was Alice, John Hiltz's wife, who may be a match with an Alice (sometimes called Olly), the sixth child of James McPhelemy. Both Alices were born about 1861 in Ireland.

Using the GLO patent search site, I searched for the name *Hiltz* in Colorado, which resulted in four patents around the state, one of which was for John Hiltz in Chaffee County. Plotting the patent revealed that it was adjacent to one of the McPhelemy plots, making them neighbors and giving me evidence that the two families easily could have been connected.

An additional item of indirect evidence came when I uncovered the McPhelemy family entry in the 1885 Colorado State Census, with Alice not listed. Unfortunately, the census had no entry for John and Alice Hiltz, nor did it have an entry for Alice McPhelemy. 

RootsMagic 5 — latest upgrade continues the magic

By Janet Brigham

How much better can a good thing get?

The answer for the new RootsMagic 5 software is simple: pretty darn good. Like any powerful software, RootsMagic has a learning curve. But it's an enjoyable hill to climb, and the rewards are substantial.

RootsMagic is one of several strong contenders in the competitive field of genealogy software. Although RootsMagic developers plan to release a Mac version of the software, it is not imminent. In the meantime, RootsMagic runs on a Mac using Wine (www.winehq.org/) or CrossOverMac (www.codeweavers.com/via/rootsmagic5) software, as well as emulation programs that run the Windows operating system (see rootsmagic.com/mac).

RootsMagic (about \$30 new, \$20 upgrade) also is available in a free trial version, RootsMagic Essentials, that allows users to work with the software before committing to buy it.

The previous release, RootsMagic 4, involved a substantial rewrite of the software code. Version 5 builds on the enhancements and successes of version 4 with these additional features:

- A Timeline View shows an individual's life in the context of the lives of family members. Timeline also is available as a printed List in the Reports pull-down menu.
- CountyCheck confirms and corrects listings of county, state, and country at a given timepoint, including online maps of county boundaries at that timepoint. For example, my grandfather was born in a California mining town called Sarahsville, listed by the family as Placerville County, California. CountyCheck informed me that this county had never existed; it listed the 44 towns named Sarahsville in California — including Sarahsvilles that no longer exist. This enabled me to find the right Sarahsville.
- Research Manager keeps track of research goals, sources, and results regarding a person, family, or place.
- On This Day list displays historical events for any day of the year. For example, explorer Meriwether Lewis died, and anti-apartheid


activist Steven Biko was arrested, on the same calendar day as my birthday.

- Media Tagging allows a user to identify people, families, sources, or places in media.
- Who Was There list identifies those who may have been in the same locality during a given time period.

Working in RootsMagic 5 is not necessarily an intuitive experience for those unfamiliar with its interface. For instance, creating a Timeline with the selection tool is more complicated than accessing the Timeline in the main

screen. Using the Marked and Unmarked options in the selection tool can be frustrating for the uninitiated, whereas highlighting a name in the database and generating a report is relatively simple.


In this regard, the user guide and RootsMagic's numerous tutorials may be useful in explaining some features, along with the RootsMagic blog, community groups and message boards, tutorials, newsletter, and webinars. Harnessing the power of the software is worth the effort of learning to use the software.

One of RootsMagic's strongest features is its customer service. The company is serious about responding to users' questions and concerns. They provides phone support during daytime hours and rapid-turnaround email support 24/7 from knowledgeable, responsive, friendly, live human beings. Can you hear the angels singing? 



Online help with RM5

RootsMagic provides dozens of free webinars available on the RootsMagic.com website. Many of these cover topics in considerable detail and are at least an hour long.

This no-cost instruction collection also is easily accessed from search engines — enter search terms such as *rootsmagic* and *selection tool* for links within and beyond the RootsMagic website. 



Ask the doctor Add an individual? Use existing?

Q I've started entering my family history into a genealogy program and have a question. When I start to add someone, a window pops up asking if I want to add an existing person or a new person. I'm confused. Why would I ever want to enter an existing person? Won't that create all kinds of duplicate entries?

What a great question! The terminology used in your program is confusing and should have been clearer. In most circumstances, when you have not yet entered someone into your database, you will be adding a new individual either as a parent, a spouse, or a child. As you enter the information, the program puts it into a new record and links the record into its appropriate place in a family.

However, in a few circumstances the individual you want to add has already been entered, and a record already exists in the database for him or her. For example, suppose you entered an individual as a child in a family and then discovered that you put the child in the wrong family.

A common situation for this kind of error is when a child is added to the family of the grandparents when the child should have been added to the parents. Another is when a child is added to the family of a parent who has been married twice, and the child has been added inadvertently to the correct father but the wrong mother. Or vice versa.

The process for correcting such mistakes usually requires two steps. First, you must unlink the individual from the incorrect family, and then you must

relink it to the correct family. When you unlink the individual from the wrong relationship, that person's record remains in the database, albeit disconnected from any relationship.


You might think of it as an "orphaned" record. All of the individual's personal details remain intact, including items such as the birth date and place, any marriage details, and death details. That record is now what is referred to as an *existing individual*, as opposed to a *new individual*.

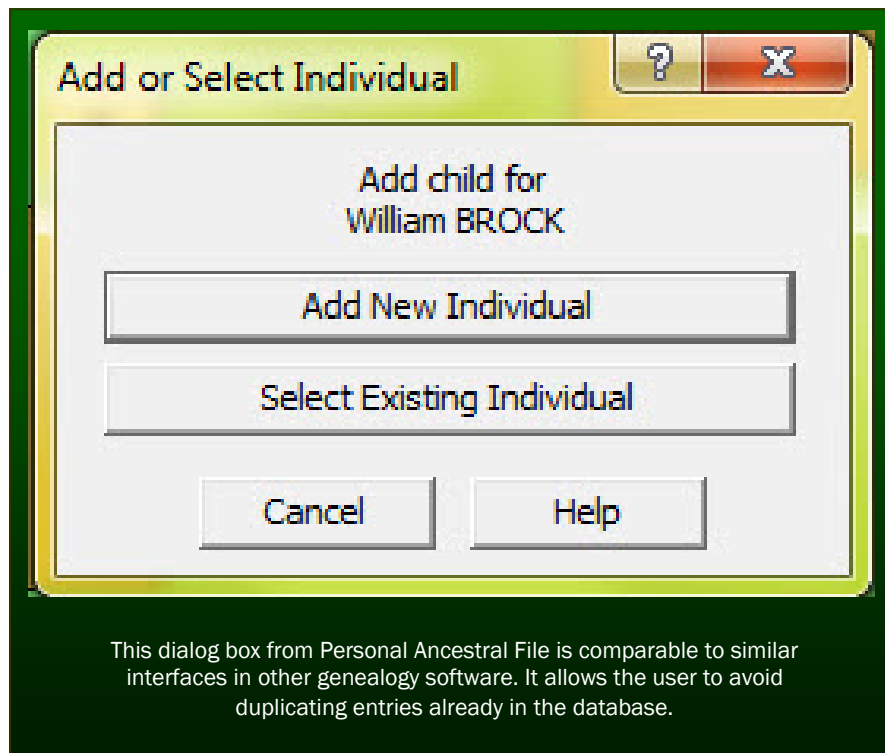
Now when you bring up the correct set of parents so that you can connect the child's record to the proper family, you should click on the feature to add

the child and then tell the program that the individual is an existing individual.

Instead of displaying a screen for you to enter information for a new individual, the program will take you through a process to identify the existing record, either by asking for a record identification number or by specifying the name of the individual.

There are other circumstances when you will want to add an existing entry to a family relationship. Examples include when a child has been adopted and you need to link an individual to two sets of parents, or when you discover that a marriage has occurred among members of two different families, both of which have previously been entered into your database.

Without the option to add an existing individual to a relationship, you could end up with lots of duplicate records cluttering your database. 



SVCGG website expands services, information

The Silicon Valley Computer Genealogy Group's website has been to the spa and emerged fresh and rejuvenated.

SVCGG volunteer Bill Weller recently became the group's webmaster and rebuilt the site, which was overdue for renovation. With a redesign and a systematic approach, Bill rebuilt the site so that it is easier to use and contains more information.

A key element of the new build is the expanding list of site contents at the upper left of the screen. Hovering a mouse pointer over the arrows brings up an expanded list of page links. Other graphic elements on the site now have greater usability, helping site visitors navigate more easily.

PastFinder newsletters for 2009 through 2011 are available for free download, along with dozens of handouts and other helpful documents, such as the Census Analysis Forms and instructions for using EarthPoint to identify ancestors' locations.

New to the site is a list of other community classes taught by SVCGG members. Also new is a list of SVCGG classes taught in previous months.

Weller also has prepared a web page that will list blogs and websites of SVCGG members. Any member with a website or blog is welcome to contribute a link.




The screenshot shows the website for the Silicon Valley Computer Genealogy Group. The header is black with the group's name in white. The main content area is yellow. On the left, there is a navigation menu with arrows next to the items: Home, About Us, Free Downloads, Online Store, Meetings, Web Resources, and Contact Us. The 'About us' section contains text about the group's history, membership, and mission. At the bottom, there is a copyright notice for 2012 and a logo for the group.

The website www.svcgg.org now is more easily viewed on wide-screen monitors and allows for more content on site pages.

This will provide a way for the SVCGG community to increase the visibility of members' research.

The list of genealogy resources in the Bay Area has been expanded, with links to San Mateo and Santa Clara county genealogy groups, as well as links to California resources.

Webmaster Bill Weller can be contacted by e-mail at webmaster@svpafug.org. 

Allin Kingsbury hangs up his PastFinder editorial hat

Longtime *PastFinder* editor Allin Kingsbury has stepped down as editor and is now editor emeritus.

Also a past president of the Silicon Valley Computer Genealogy Group, Kingsbury was an early member of the group. During Kingsbury's editorship, the group expanded its scope from a single genealogy software package to covering the breadth of genealogy information available on the web.

Current SVCGG president Richard Rands explained Kingsbury's impact on the group:

"It has been more than 20 years since our genealogy users group was founded as the Silicon Valley PAF Users Group, and it has since been in continuous operation. A major reason behind the stability and effectiveness of our group has been the steady leader-

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Kingsbury (continued)

(Continued from page 7)

ship of Allin Kingsbury. Allin stepped into the role of president after the founding president, Floyd Nordine, and his wife, Mary, relocated to Utah.

"Allin's experience and influence among the genealogy circles in the Bay Area was able to keep the organization moving steadily forward despite the departure of the Nordines, who had helped build the user group into a multi-national success.

"When Allin's first wife became seriously ill, he felt unable to devote the requisite time to leading the group and asked to be allowed to step down as president.

"Unable to step away from genealogy activities altogether, Allin assumed the responsibility for the *PAFinder* newsletter when the previous editors had moved on. His


Upcoming meetings

The group meets monthly except December, on the second Saturday of the month from 9 to 11 A.M. at The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 875 Quince Ave., Santa Clara, California (see map at right). The group is not affiliated with any church or other group.

13 October 2012, 9–11 A.M.

- Rooting around in RootsMagic 5 (Janet Brigham)
- Converting a brick wall to stepping stones (Richard Rands)
- Reunion 10 for Mac (Pat Burrow)
- Mac Reunion basics (Pat Solomon)
- Getting started in genealogy

10 November 2012, 9–11 A.M.

- Getting the most out of the census (Richard Rands)
- Reunion 10 for Mac
- Mac Reunion basics
- Getting started in genealogy 

commitment to the success of the publication is evidenced by the widespread readership and high quality of the award-winning newsletter.

"We can count a widespread membership well beyond the confines of Silicon Valley because of the usefulness of the newsletter. He has spent many hundreds of hours working to make every issue interesting and informative.

"Allin now has reached the point when his grandchildren and family matters have taken over much of the time he spent as editor of the *PastFinder*, and he has requested to be allowed to give up his post and allow others the opportunity to take the newsletter forward with fresh new ideas.

"We wish to express our heartfelt appreciation for the multifaceted impact Allin Kingsbury has had on the Silicon Valley Computer Genealogy Group."

Stepping in as editor is Janet Brigham, who has a background in journalism and editing. She has assisted with compiling the newsletter since 2010.

Members are welcome to submit articles to the newsletter, including questions for the Ask the Doctor feature and the How I Found It series. 

About the Silicon Valley Computer Genealogy Group

SVCGG is the former Silicon Valley PAF Users Group, a nonprofit group of some 600 genealogy enthusiasts. The group is based in Silicon Valley in the Bay Area of northern California, but members live all over the world.

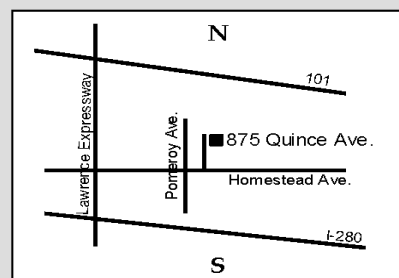
SVCGG offers classes, seminars, and publications to help family historians improve their skills in using

PastFinder
First place winner
Local/society newsletter
National Genealogical Society, 2012
Website: www.svcgg.org
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Meeting site has ample free off-street parking, with a wheelchair-accessible entrance at the front.

technology for genealogy research.

PastFinder, the official publication of the Silicon Valley Computer Genealogy Group, is published monthly except December. *PastFinder* is distributed at meetings to members and mailed to others after the meetings. Members can receive the newsletter electronically by emailed download link. 