

Gamifying genealogy

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SILICON VALLEY COMPUTER GENEALOGY GROUP

PastFinder

By Janet Brigham

Don't look now, but you've been gamified. Here, you thought you were just going to the grocery store or flying cross-country to attend a wedding, and the whole time, you were being gamified.

Gamified? The term has a specific meaning in the realm of computer programs and applications. Recently, it has become a genealogy buzz-word, since a prominent genealogist has proposed using gamification to enhance the appeal of genealogy to young persons.

The concept meets with mixed reviews — perhaps because the term *gamification* is easily misunderstood. Gamification doesn't necessarily refer to gambling, traditional Nintendo-type gaming, or even playing board games. Instead, it refers to providing a reward system to reinforce engaging in a specific behavior.

You may not have realized it, but every time you get rewards points at a grocery store or any other store with a "loyalty" program (think: Safeway, Bloomingdales, Walgreens, and too many others), you are engaging in gamification. You engage in behavior (buying, providing information) and you receive a reward (points, discounts, friendly notes).

You might get digital "badges" or be invited to be on a consumer advisory board (I was, at a hardware store, along with probably everyone else who shops there), or you might get a monetary discount the next time you shop.

Gamification can be as simple as earning points toward free airline tickets by flying on a specific airline. It can be as complicated as playing Microsoft's game *Ribbon Hero 2*, which familiarizes users with the ever-unpopular "ribbon" of tasks in later versions of Microsoft Office.



The Facebook-platform game Family Village rewards users for adding family information.

Gamification can be a powerful marketing tool for engaging consumers. It relies on a reward system; the more quickly the reward is evident, the greater the likelihood that the reward will reinforce the behavior. This is why the checkout clerk reads your receipt before handing it to you and announces, "You've just saved \$17.32," or whatever amount you've "saved" by spending with your loyalty discount.

How could gamification apply in genealogy? A Utah startup, Funium, is banking on the idea that rewarding users for entering genealogy data into the Facebook-platform Family Village app (see above) will engage a broader group in the process of family research. As you add information, your village expands, and in the background, the app searches for historical records relating to your ancestors. At this writing, Family Village has 8,355 "likes" on Facebook.

A goal of this marketing approach is to

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Gamifying genealogy (continued)

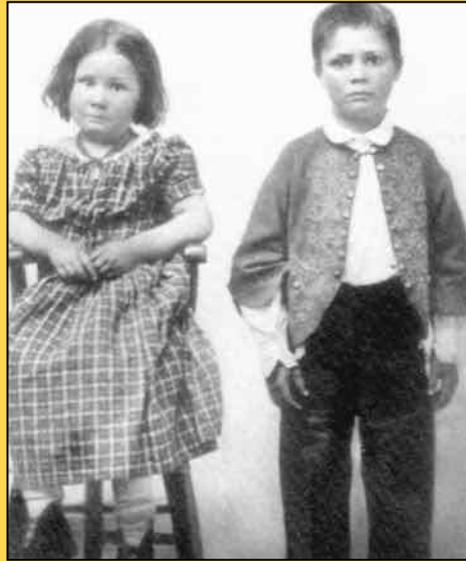
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prompt the user to continue to participate. The idea is that if the behavior is sufficiently rewarding, the user will remain a customer.

The irony is that genealogy already is rewarding — but not in that way. It is an ultimate game: When you start a search, you never know if the game can even be won. It is like life, writ small. We never know if an outcome is possible until it is realized. Then we know it was possible.

In genealogy, we never know what we will uncover, if anything. This gives the gamification of genealogy an additional dimension: *Will I find anything? If I do, what will I find?* The fact that we do eventually find things makes the hunt all the more reinforcing. It's well established that reinforcement on a "variable-ratio schedule" (i.e., reinforcement after an unpredictable number of actions) generates a high, steady action rate.

So if we don't find an ancestor at first, the fact that we do sometimes find ancestors makes genealogy research a powerfully reinforced behavior. We're hooked, if not actually addicted.



Finding these charmers can be reward enough.

When we do find something, the rewards are tangible and feel immediate. Several years ago, we made a last-ditch effort to find some elusive ancestors in England, after many prior attempts.

At a research center in Bristol, England, we divided the last batch of microfiches among the three of us and started taking that last genealogical gasp. Within a few minutes, my sister-in-law suddenly bounced up and down in her chair and screech-whispered, "I FOUND HER!! I FOUND HER!!"

Which is to say, she was highly reinforced.

Hundreds of hours of tedious searching paid off because a helpful librarian knew that the records might be where we wouldn't expect them. As a result, several behaviors were reinforced: field research in a local library; persistence across decades; asking for help; and thorough, dogged searching.

No online gamification could ever match that exhilaration. But programmed gamification could be amusing and engaging. It could hold someone's attention until the real fun begins. 📄

Up-and-coming freebies: *Treasures* book PDF, Reunion forum

Free *Treasures*. Genealogist Barry J. Ewell is offering our members and friends a free PDF download of his new book, *Family Treasures: 15 Lessons, Tips, and Tricks for Discovering Your Family History*. Barry presented an excellent seminar for SVC GG several years ago. This book elaborates on many of the ideas he touched on in his seminar and provides new insights as well.

To obtain a free download, send an email to Barry at bj57barry@gmail.com, with the subject line *Free eBook*. While the title speaks for itself, this useful book (available in paperback and ebook formats at major online booksellers) emphasizes organization, web and field research, records, oral interviews, and numerous hints for effective, efficient research. A

companion website with links and videos is mygenshare.com/news/book/family_treasures.

Reunion forum. Leisterpro, makers of Reunion for the Mac, hosts a helpful, informative user forum. This active site can help you answer nearly any Reunion question quickly (caution: the search engine is a bit frustrating). You also can subscribe to the site's daily digest, an end-of-day emailed list of posts. You can learn about such things as Reunion specifics, research methodology, and documentation. Log in at reuniontalk.com (free, minimal input), click on *User Settings* (top), *Edit Your Details* (left), scroll down to *Reunion Talk Digest* (choose a format), and click *Save Changes*. 📄



How I found it Historical Records, old Bible

Historical Records database wins again

By Lesly Klippel

After having good luck using FamilySearch.org to cross the Atlantic to Germany for a friend (see How I Found It, *PastFinder*, May 2013), I decided to have a go at my daughter-in-law's German immigrant ancestors, Joseph Romer and Anna Mader.

Having found them in the 1900 through 1930 U.S. censuses, I knew that they were born in Germany, that both had immigrated to the U.S. in 1880, and that Joseph was naturalized. I looked for their marriage in the Iowa County Marriages 1838-1934 database at FamilySearch.org and found that they married on 8 May 1882 in Mahaska County.

The San Diego County Voter Register for 1894 at Ancestry.com stated that Joseph was naturalized in February 1886 in Wable County, Iowa. Since Iowa has no Wable County, I guessed that the listing meant Wapello County.

I searched the Family History Library catalog for 1886 naturalization records and found the records on film, but Joseph's naturalization record showed Baden (Germany) as his place of birth. Before the federal government took over the naturalization process in 1906, counties did not always require an exact place of birth, but having Baden listed is better than having just Germany.

Germans to America

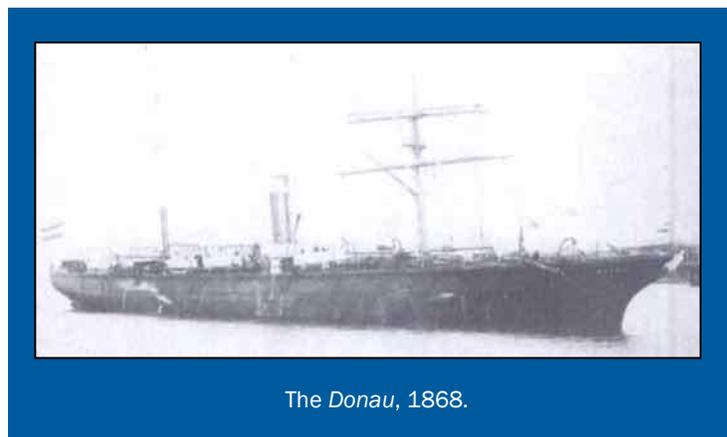
A wonderful resource showing ship passengers who listed a Germanic ethnicity is *Germans to America*, a series of books prepared by Scholarly Resources, Inc., from original passenger lists. The information in the books is also available on two CDs (No. 355, 1850-1874, and No. 356, 1875-1888) published by Genealogy.com. Access to the CDs is available by subscription at Genealogy.com, or you can purchase them on that site. The set of books is available in many genealogy, city, county, and university libraries.

Search Results from Historical Records
 1-20 of 32 results for Name: **engelhard mader**. Country: **Germany**. Event: **Birth**. Event Range: **1860-1865**
 Number of results to show: 20 / 50 / 75

Try adding more search terms to improve your search results.

Engelbert Mader Germany, Births and Baptisms, 1558-1898	christening: 18 July 1862	KATHOLISCH-LAASEN-VILLINGEN-BADEN	parents: Johann Mader, Anna Maria Bausch
Mader	birth: 7 July 1862		parents: Jakob Mader, Karoline Fallegger
Anna Mader Germany, Births and Baptisms, 1558-1898	christening: 7 June 1861	KATHOLISCH-LAASEN-VILLINGEN-BADEN	parents: Jakob Mader, Maria Hoefler
Kreszenza Mader Germany, Births and Baptisms, 1558-1898	christening: 3 November 1864	KATHOLISCH-LAASEN-VILLINGEN-BADEN	parents: Johann Mader, Anna Maria Bausch
Josef Romer Germany, Births and Baptisms, 1558-1898	christening: 10 February 1855	KATHOLISCH-LAASEN-VILLINGEN-BADEN	parents: Josef Romer, Maria Agatha Hauger

Results of searches in Historical Records at FamilySearch.org.



The Donau, 1868.

Since my local Family History Center has the CDs, I used them to look for both Joseph Romer and Anna Mader, arriving in 1880.

Joseph Romer wasn't listed in the passenger lists, but Anna Mader, aged 19 years, was shown as arriving in New York City on 12 April 1880 on the ship *Donau* (Danube), a 2,896-ton passenger/cargo ship. (This was the first of several ships by that name and is not among those destroyed in World War II.) Listed next to her were Engelhard Mader, aged 17 years, and Cerescenz Mader, aged 16 years, all booked in steerage and coming from Baden. The

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How I Found It (continued)

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similar surnames and ages suggested a relationship among the teenagers.

At FamilySearch.org, I first clicked on *Search* at the top of the screen to bring up the search template for the Historical Records section and entered *Engelhard Mader*, born in Germany between 1860 and 1865. The first result was an Engelbert Maeder, christened 18 July 1862 in Aasen, Villingen, Baden. Very interesting, but not exactly correct.

Since I recognized that *Ceresenz* was a corruption of the German name *Crescentia*, I entered that name in the search template, and one of the results was Kresenzia Maeder, christened 3 November 1864, also from Aasen. I next entered *Anna Maeder* with the birthplace listed as Aasen, Baden. The first result listed Anna Mader, christened 7 June 1861, the same birth date recorded in the 1900 San Diego register. She was listed as the daughter of Jacob Mader and Maria Hoefler.

FamilySearch allows you to search on a surname without a first name but including a birth place and the name of the parents. Using this technique, I soon had Engelbert and Crescentia's family documented. It turned out that they were brother and sister, children of Johannes Mader and Anna Mari Bausch. Anna was their cousin, a daughter of Jacob Mader and Maria Hoefler.

After a few hours' work in the FamilySearch Historical Records database, I had collected four more

generations of Anna's ancestors, back to Gregory Mader, born about 1722.

Engelbert (Bert) Mader moved to Whitman County, Washington, married and raised a large family. I have not been able to find a trace of Krescenzia Mader, who may have Americanized her first name.

While I didn't find Joseph Romer on the passenger list for the *Donau*, it is probable that he was on the ship as part of the crew. Many male immigrants came to this country as WOPs (worked own passage). On a hunch, I entered the information for Joseph Romer in the FamilySearch.org search template, with Aasen, Villingen, Baden, as the birth place, and he appeared in the list of results with the same birth date as listed in the 1900 U.S. Census.

It wasn't long before I had documented four generations of Romers back to Joannes Romer, born in 1742. So Joseph and Anna grew up together in the same tiny village in Germany, traveled to a new country, and made a life together, raising 12 children. Joseph owned a tailor shop in San Diego and died in 1915. Anna lived to be 95 years old, dying in 1956. She saw all of her children grow to adulthood, marry, and have families; most of them lived into their 90s. My daughter-in-law has good, strong German genes!

The Historical Records database is the result of decades of indexing by thousands of volunteers and contains birth, marriage, and death records from many parts of the world. If you are trying to locate an immigrant ancestor in his/her home village "across the Pond," try FamilySearch. The Historical Records database also includes records from Mexico and Central and South American countries.

As a side note, the village of Aasen is located in the Black Forest and is about six miles from Villingen, the ancestral home of my husband's grandmother. The village has now been incorporated into Donaueschingen, which is the city where the spring that begins the Danube River is located. My husband and I visited the area in 2007 and have pictures of the monument around the Danube River Spring (Donauquelle). We probably drove through Aasen without realizing its significance to our family.

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Passenger list from FamilySearch.org showing the three teenagers on their adventuresome voyage.

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On the trail of an old Bible

By Bonnie Wagner

A family Bible register, or ancestral list, can document vital information that may not be recorded elsewhere or that is lost. The Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) will accept a family Bible register provided that the title page with the date of publication is before 1857 and is attached to the register.

As part of a trip to Virginia and North Carolina, my sister, her husband, and I stopped at the Danbury Historical and Genealogical Museum at a local library in Stokes County, North Carolina. I found a four-page family tree for Giles Leonard Sheppard, brother of my great grandfather Calvin Lewis Sheppard.

The information included the birth dates for the parents, their marriage date, the birth dates for all 12 children, and the death dates of the parents and at least one child. What a find!

The most interesting part was at the bottom of page 4:

This was taken from a Bible belonging to Finetta Shepherd Smith It is now owned by Mr and Mrs Edwin Smith Martinsville, Va
This Bible was printed in 1851

Although the last line listing the date of publication was smudged, it was a major breakthrough to learn that this Bible could be in the possession of a descendant of Finetta Shepherd Smith, sister to Calvin Lewis Sheppard. I knew I wanted to find the current owner to confirm the Bible's existence and gather its information. How could I do this?

I stepped back and tallied my database, checking the references for this branch of the family: An 1850 U.S. Census from Patrick County, Virginia, listed Finette as a child age 9 in the household of James Shepherd. The remainder of the names in the census entry matched the family tree I found for Giles Leonard Sheppard.

By the 1870 Census, Finette and her husband Christopher were listed in Stokes County, North Carolina, with four children, including two boys, James B. and William R. I had no lead as to how Mr. and Mrs. Edwin Smith tied into this family. I searched

death records on Ancestry and FamilySearch but could not find a match.

A month later I stumbled across a family tree on Ancestry that had an obituary for an Elizabeth Joyce Smith of Martinsville, who died in 2008. Was it possible that her middle name *Joyce* was her surname, adding another key to my search?

The article stated that her husband, Edwin Carroll Smith, preceded her in death. Eureka! It pays to read the fine print. These names in the obituary tie even closer to the names listed in the family tree at the Danbury museum.

The bonus was that the obituary stated, "Surviving are sons, James 'Jim' E. Smith of Fishersville and Franklin 'Frank' H. Smith of Sandy Hook; four grandchildren; eight great-grand-children; and several nieces and nephews."

Now, I had a specific lead on two names with locations. I did not find either James or Frank in the Social Security Death Index, so I assumed they were still living, and I looked for their names in Virginia.

I found that Sandy Hook, Virginia, an unincorporated community, is in Goochland County, Virginia. The county is in the Richmond-Petersburg region.

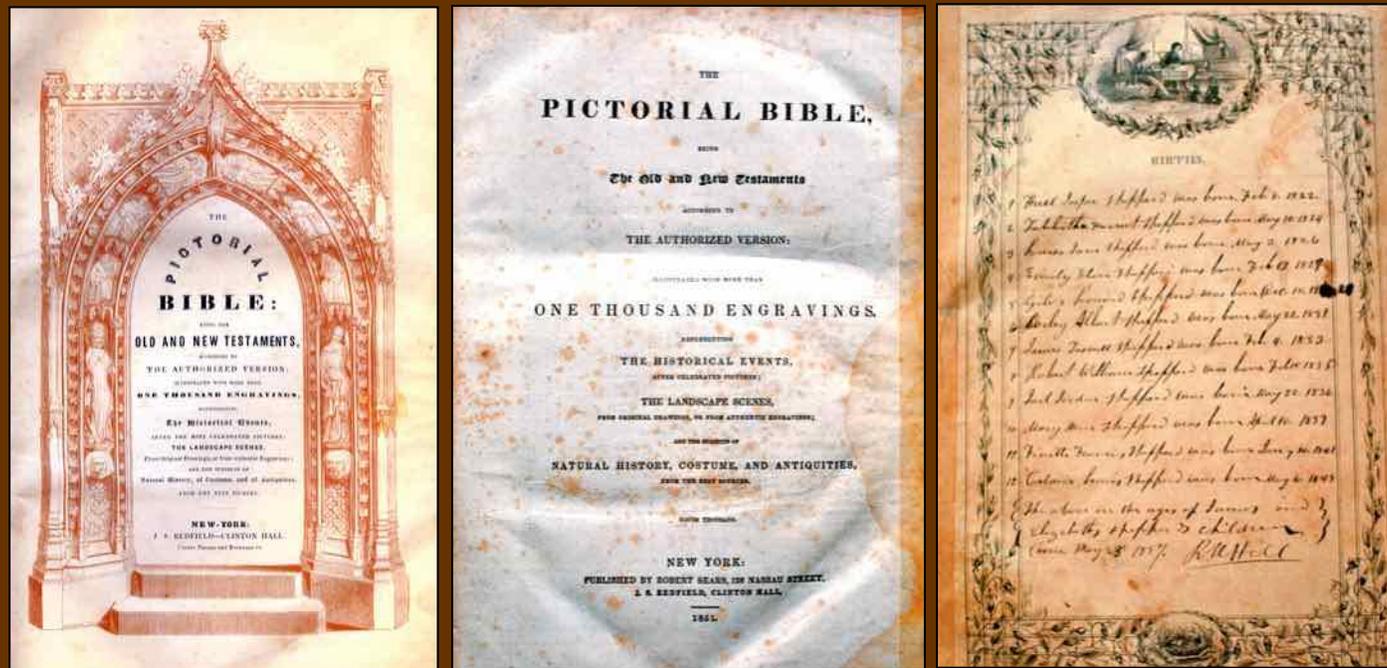
An online search for *Frank Smith* and *Sandy Hook Virginia* yielded a list of links including the obituary for Evelyn Joyce Smith. I finally located a Franklin H. Smith with a mailing address in Sandy Hook.

I pulled my facts together as follows:

- Franklin H. Smith and James E. Smith were surviving sons of Mr. and Mrs. Edwin Carroll Smith, according to the obituary for Mrs. Smith.
- Mr. and Mrs. Edwin Carroll Smith owned the Family Bible that belonged to Finetta Frances Sheppard Smith, wife of Christopher Columbus Smith, according to the family tree for Giles Leonard Sheppard. My research confirmed that Finetta Frances Sheppard did marry a Christopher Columbus Smith.
- Research online identified Edwin Carroll Smith as one of 10 children born to Franklin Columbus Smith and Lou Ellen Smith.
- Franklin Columbus Smith was one of five children born to Christopher Columbus Smith

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How I Found It (continued)



Cover, title and register pages from Finetta's family Bible, courtesy of James Smith.

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and Finetta France Sheppard.

- James E. Smith and Franklin H. Smith are my third cousins one time removed, apparently.

With this research and gathered facts, I wrote a letter to Franklin H. Smith introducing myself as a descendant of James and Betsy Sheppard of Patrick County, Virginia. I explained how I found his name and that I was trying to confirm whether he was a descendant of Finetta Frances Sheppard and Christopher Columbus Smith, through Mr. and Mrs. Edwin Carroll Smith.

I asked whether he had the family Bible that belonged to Finetta, or whether he could direct me to whomever did have it. I said I was willing to share my information and provided my contact information.

Then I prayed. I prayed again for just a response. After one month I was convinced that either he was the incorrect Franklin Smith or, if he was the correct one, he was not interested in communicating with a cousin from the world of genealogical research. I was prepared to accept that the trail had died.

Two months later, to my amazement, I received an email from Franklin's brother, James. He confirmed

that Frank had forwarded the letter to him and asked him to respond. He said he had Finetta's family Bible.

I was floating above the stratosphere with joy. We negotiated how I could obtain copies of the register and the front pages of the Bible with the publication date. His daughter, a professional photographer, photographed the relevant pages, which James printed and mailed to me with permission to publish.

A bonus was that the family register page was countersigned by R.A. Hill on 25 May 1857.

The Sheppard family Bible register now is on file with the DAR, with my approved application.

The take-home messages are—

- Follow the trails wherever they lead.
- Keep checking the web for updates to family trees and records databases.
- Contact collateral lines for leads.
- If you have access to a Bible with a family register, copy the front pages that include the name of the publisher and the publication information as well as copying pages containing family data.
- If the pages are in poor shape, open them carefully to create a digital scanned or photographed image. 



Ask the doctor Backup quandary, FamilySearch

Q I have been backing up my genealogy database from the time I began keeping it, but have never had to use a backup until just recently. To my surprise, when I tried to open the backup database, I got a message telling me that Windows cannot open the file, and that Windows needs to know what program to use to open it.

I can either let it look on the web, or let it search my computer. If I let it search my computer, my genealogy program is not listed as an option. Have I been wasting my time doing backups?

Creating a backup is never a waste of time. All you need is a brief explanation of how backup files are created, and how they work.

But a brief explanation will not allow me to brag about how long I've been playing around with computers, so this will not be brief. Once upon a time, when the largest amount of memory on a computer was 8,000 bytes, and a disk drive for storing 14 megabytes of data cost upwards of \$40,000 (and dimmed the lights in your house when it was turned on), backing up computer data was all about squeezing out every bit of unnecessary data to save space.

So the programs that created backup files contained compression routines that essentially removed all the blank space out of the data while it backed up your files, resulting in a backup file that was considerably smaller than the file you were backing up. This was a very good thing, because the old floppy disks we used for backups could not hold very much data. Furthermore, sending a data file over the telephone lines (that's how we did it before the Internet) was so slow that it was much quicker to send a compressed file than a regular file.

I won't bother you with the methodology that was used to compress data, but needless to say it was clever. It came to be known as "zipping" a file, and the file extension name usually given to backup files was .zip.



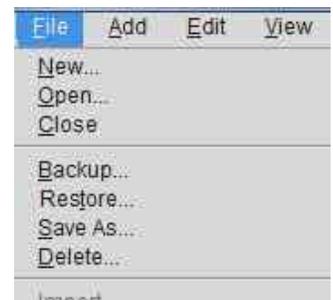
However, the downside of having a backup file in a compressed, or zipped, format was that it had to be decompressed, or "unzipped," before it could be opened and used again. Consequently, every zipping

program also had to include an unzipping program. One of the most popular programs on the market back then was PKZIP, with its sister program, PKUNZIP.



Today, when you can buy 16-gigabyte flash drives for less than \$10, the need to compress data is as old fashioned as backyard out-houses. Yet, some software programs, especially genealogy programs, still zip and unzip their backups. It happens without your knowing it, so when you tried to open your backup genealogy file, Windows didn't expect it to be zipped and didn't know what to do.

So the brief answer to your question is that you need to use the equivalent of an "unzip" program in your genealogy program to be able to open it up. Since you created your backup files using the Backup feature in your genealogy program to zip the database, you must use the Restore feature to unzip the backup file to be able to read it again. Usually Backup and Restore are next to each other in the File menu.



As a final note, because disk space is now so downright inexpensive, many users don't bother to use the Backup command to create zipped backups. It is safe simply to make copies of the database on a backup disk, making it possible to open backup files using the genealogy program without the need to restore, or unzip, them. It is safe simply to make copies of the database on a backup disk, making it possible to open backup files using the genealogy program without the need to restore, or unzip, them.

Q I appreciated the links The Doctor posted for the reorganized FamilySearch website last month. Could you put them on the SVC GG website? Also, do you have any updates?

News! We have news!

The links are on our website, www.svcgg.org, now, on the home screen. Look for them in the Announce-

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Ask the Doctor (continued)

(Continued from page 7)

ments section; if you don't spot them quickly, search for the word *Frustrated*.

The FamilySearch team has been responsively tweaking their new website. They haven't gone so far as to add a much-needed site map, but the band of icons on the home page now actually take the user someplace useful, instead of requiring the user to second-guess what he or she *should* have clicked, to move the

cursor, and to click yet again.

The Search link now connects the user to a page with links to records search, user genealogies (Ancestral File + Pedigree Resource File + other sources), the library catalog (the eternally youthful beta and the previous version), digitized books (yay), and the wiki. At the bottom of the Records is a Browse section to search within all records or to narrow the search within geographic or other parameters. 

'Hangout' with SVCGG meetings online

Selected monthly classes soon will be available to participants anywhere with web access.

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.

8 June 2013, 9–11 A.M.

- Best practices for documentation (Richard Rands)
- Life in the Trees (Janet Brigham)
- Reunion 10 for Mac (Pat Burrow)
- Reunion 10 for Mac Basics (Debbie Callan)
- Getting started in genealogy (Lesly Klippel)

13 July 2013, 9–11 A.M.

- Introduction to Irish research (Richard Rands)
- Digital image editing for computers big and little (Janet Brigham)
- Mac Family Tree for the Mac (Pamela Brigham)
- Reunion 10 for Mac Basics (Debbie Callan)
- Getting started in genealogy 

Using Google+ features (OnAir and Hangouts), SVCGG will transmit one class live each month, accessed via a link from the SVCGG home page. The number of classes transmitted per month may increase in the future.

It will be helpful for additional SVCGG members who are unable to attend meetings to volunteer to receive the transmissions live as we refine the process. To volunteer, contact the webmaster (webmaster@svcgg.org). Participation is free.

Eventually, recorded classes will be on YouTube, so that those who cannot join the live transmission can view them at their own convenience. 

About the Silicon Valley Computer Genealogy Group

SVC GG is the former Silicon Valley PAF Users Group, a nonprofit group of some 600 genealogy enthusiasts. We are based in Silicon Valley in the Bay Area of northern California; members live all over the world.

SVC GG offers classes, seminars, and publications to help family his-

PastFinder
First place, Major Society Newsletter, 2013
First place, Local Society Newsletter, 2012
National Genealogical Society

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Meeting site has ample free off-street parking, with a wheelchair-accessible entrance at the front.

torians improve their skills in using technology for genealogy research.

PastFinder is published monthly except December. *PastFinder* is distributed at meetings to members and mailed to others after the meetings. Members can receive the newsletter digitally by emailed link. 