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SILICON VALLEY COMPUTER GENEALOGY GROUP

PastFinder

When ancestors misbehaved

By Janet Brigham

We are not judge and jury. We do not know why some of our ancestors apparently misbehaved — or even whether they were justly accused. We can learn a lot, however, by trying to figure out what they did and why.

Consider a recently unearthed leaf in our family branches. A venerated ancestor born in the 1850s engaged in public service much of his adult life and was honored repeatedly for his contributions to his state and community. He raised a large family on a rural farm; all the children who could attend school did, and most graduated from college — after he helped launch the college. One of his sons studied abroad at a time when few U.S. students from the rural West studied abroad.

So imagine our surprise to find a clipping from 1918 reporting that this ancestor had been arrested for sedition and for “hoarding flour.” A farmer with a large family, he maintained possession of 13 sacks of flour at a time when residents of his community were required to surrender food for the war effort of World War I.

The disposition of the arrest is unknown and may take some effort to discover. The case is not mentioned in the ancestor’s obituary. We do not know how much flour a farm family with youngsters was allowed to store, nor whether the ancestor had political enemies who may have had some part in the arrest.

One thing we do know is that his purportedly seditious statements sound a lot like what has been said before about government, specifically, that a “yellow dog” might know more about how to run the government than the officials of the government knew. Whether he (a Republican) was referring to Yellow Dog Democrats, using a



One Charles Johnson, charged in a police court in 1902 in England. Photo courtesy of Tyne & Wear Archives & Museums.

political term originating in the 1800s and peaking about 10 years after his arrest, also is unknown. We do know that not much is known.

Mistrust of standing government officials ran deep in the family’s roots, with multiple Revolutionary War ancestors, including some Massachusetts Minutemen. Perhaps, from the perspective of a

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When ancestors misbehaved

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public servant-turned-farmer, little had happened between the 1780s and 1918 to increase trust in governmental officials.

One of his sons suspended attending college and enlisted in the U.S. military a few days after the arrest. Another son registered for the draft later that year, after his 18th birthday.

Many people who have not yet started looking into their family history say that they are afraid of what they might find. A friend with African American heritage explained that she was afraid of finding ugly aspects of slavery that her ancestors would have endured. A middle-aged man with a British surname indicated that he preferred not to know what unsavory events might be in his family history.

This is the flip side of those who want to learn their ancestry in hope that they will discover famous settlers (for example, Mayflower ancestors), historical figures such as Abraham Lincoln or Thomas Jefferson, or well-known families such as the Rockefellers. Perhaps they believe this will help them achieve feelings of self-worth or rootedness that they lack.

While those are not bad reasons for studying one's family history, the success of the endeavor depends on finding the desired connections to the famous. On the other hand, only one thing dooms a more traditional genealogical search: finding nothing at all. Which, in this time of electronic access, is rare.

Without indulging in fantasy genealogy by simply making up our ancestry, we cannot control who our ancestors were, what they did, or what they experienced. It is history; our tasks are to find the best sources of information and to make sense of our ancestors' lives.

To encourage family historians to use all records — including criminal records — major records providers such as Ancestry.com and FindMyPast.co.uk include searches of criminal records. The FamilySearch.org catalog lists 1,054 criminal records, including the “Circuit and supreme court records of Cooweescoowee District Oklahoma Historical Society. Indian Archives Division.” And 1,053 others.

Criminal accounts and records can be discouraging

if you find that an ancestor was executed for even a small offense, as occurred in England — a scan of the Old Bailey records (www.oldbaileyonline.org/) brings up records of executions for offenses we now consider misdemeanors. The Old Bailey records of London's central criminal report (1674-1913) can be searched by surname and given name, time period, alias, offense, verdict, punishment, and other terms.

The Old Bailey records include a transcript of witness testimony, with jury decision and punishment. For example, a man was arrested in 1809 for picking the locks on a row of stores. A physician said the man appeared


insane. The man was found not guilty but insane (“non compos mentis”) and was sentenced to imprisonment for insanity. The disposition notation was that he was to be “detained, and to be taken proper care off [sic].” A “Calculate Total” click tells us that 433 persons listed in the Old Bailey records were sentenced to imprisonment for insanity.

Images of the original published records also can be accessed on the Old Bailey site.

Some criminal records will be more challenging to access. Records might be housed in county courthouses, county or state historical societies, university libraries, or many other locations, some unpredictable.

Remember that newspapers publish criminal and legal information; historic newspaper accounts might provide details about criminal activities and legal procedures and can set the events in a cultural and historical perspective because of the range of topics they cover. Criminal records can include much valuable genealogy information.

A final caveat: Don't jump to conclusions. You probably do not know the whole story. For example, this notice appeared in a Spokane, Washington, newspaper: A man who “was ordered to report for entrainment to Camp Lewis Friday and failed to report and was posted as delinquent, is found to be serving and already in France, having entered some special service of the war department several months ago.”

Enough said. 

Reunion for Mac Resources for learning and using

By Patricia Burrow

All current genealogy software programs have a wonderful variety of basic functions, connecting moms and dads to their children, creating family trees, linking sources to the dates and places you found, etc. And each program has a range of additional, more sophisticated features such as viewing all of the surnames you have collected, sorting and separating them, or analyzing your inputs and letting you know that you've indicated that Great-grandma was 125 years old when her first son was born. Finger-check (which is to say, operator malfunction).

Reunion for the Mac is a very good genealogy program about which many of us would like to learn as much as we can, including how to take advantage of its numerous features and how to be more efficient with entering and examining our research.

Access Help

Reunion has an excellent built-in Help function that can be accessed by clicking on the ? wherever you see it. I have learned a lot about the program's capabilities just by searching on and reading about the function I am trying to use. I didn't know it could do *that!* You can access Help three ways:

Click on the ? in the lower-left corner (opens to the topic relevant to the subject in the middle of the Reunion window).

Select Help from the top menu bar (first two items will be relevant to your current subject). Choose Tutorial to read a how-to about functions.

Enter cmd-? or right-click on a mouse to bring up the user guide, opening to the relevant topic in the middle of your Reunion window. You can print portions of the guide via File > Print.

LeisterPro

The maker of Reunion, LeisterPro, has a few free videos that introduce new users to basic data entry and some of the concepts specific to Reunion. Watch Part 1 and Part 2 here:

<http://www.youtube.com/user/LeisterPro>

Videos on installing and using Reunion on the iPhone and iPad are at the same web location.

ReunionTalk is a forum where you can post messages, respond to messages and/or search for topics that have already been discussed by users such as yourself (www.reuniontalk.com). It is free, and you

need to register only if you are going to post/answer a question. You can search the website without registering if you prefer not to register.

To subscribe to ReunionTalk and have it come to your email: Log in > User Settings > Edit Your Details (left side) > (scroll down) ReunionTalk Digest > (pick your format) > Save Changes.

This will give you lots of ideas on how to use your Reunion to maximize your genealogy research.


If you have read the manual and searched the ReunionTalk boards and still cannot find an answer to your question, you can contact LeisterPro Technical Support. Email: help@leisterpro.com; phone: 1-717-697-1378.

The few times I have contacted LeisterPro (they always contribute to SVC GG events, when asked), they have been very helpful and responsive.

SVC GG

Our Silicon Valley Computer Genealogy Group can be a great resource for learning to use Reunion. On the 2nd Saturday of each month we have one or two classes that will show you features of Reunion and demonstrate some practical applications that may be pertinent to your own genealogy. Want to know how to incorporate the information that Cousin Betty gave you in a GEDCOM? Need to share just one branch of your family tree with another cousin? Trying to find all of the cemeteries in Iowa you need to visit over the Thanksgiving holiday? These are just some of the subjects covered in our meetings. Watching the demos and asking questions is the best way to learn. So, come to our classes. If you cannot get to the meetings or you need to hear another lecture in the same timeframe, you can get the notes on our website: SVC GG.org > Meetings > Prior Meetings.

MacGen

In addition to SVC GG, there are other free classes provided nearby that might be of interest. Bill George offers two interesting, informative classes a month, on the second Wednesday and fourth Saturday, on Mac and Reunion, at the Oakland FamilySearch Library, 4766 Lincoln Ave., Oakland (well worth the trip). Bill knows Mac inside and out and can help with any question. His website is filled with good info, including notes from past presentations: Macgen.org. Bill lists other organizations in the area that have Mac groups, primarily in the East Bay. 



How I found it Contact living relatives

By Richard Rands

One of the cardinal rules for any family historian is to always search for living relatives and stay in contact with them so that any information or materials they might have, or might yet uncover about your family will become readily accessible. An example of this principle came up in one of my recent projects and was a powerful reminder for me. Because it involves living individuals, the names have been changed.

Our friend Claudia asked me to help her uncover information about her parents, and to determine whether there were any living relatives whom she could contact. Because her family had split up when she was quite young, there were few details to start with. Someone had given her a link to a George J. Bennet in the 1940 U.S. Census, who could have been her father, who had died when she was an infant, but who also would have been old enough to be her grandfather. Beside his surname, the only connection was the middle initial, J, that corresponded to the name Jonah, which Claudia had been told was her father's name.

Working from the link in the 1940 census, I was able to build a fairly substantial family tree for George J. Bennet, the man Claudia hoped would turn out to be her father, but I could not make a reasonable connection to Claudia, who had grown up in a different part of the country. At one point, it seemed likely that George Bennet's first child, a son named Jonah, might actually be Claudia's father, and George would actually be Claudia's grandfather. But Jonah turned out to have died at age 11, eliminating that possibility.

A more serious conflict was that George's spouse in the 1930 and 1940 censuses was Belinda, and

Claudia remembered that her mother's name was Hannah. For George to be Claudia's father, he would have had to have had a second marriage to a much younger Hannah and fathered Claudia when he was 55 years old. Persistent searching turned up numerous details, all of which were circumstantial evidence but were insufficient to conclude that George was indeed Claudia's father.

Furthermore, without being able to identify Claudia's family, there would be little chance of tracking down any living relatives.

So I returned to George and Belinda's family in hope of finding living descend-



This photo came from a previously unmet relative and could have disappeared forever.

ants who may be able to reveal information that would link him to Claudia. After the first son, Jonah, who I knew had died young, there were two additional children listed in the 1940 census: Henry and Eliza. From their ages in the census, I knew they would both be in their mid-80's at this time, 2013. This is a stark reminder of how important it is to seek out living relatives at this time, because many family members who were children in 1940 are reaching ages when they are no longer alive or may be old or ill. Without access to a 1950 census, we may never know who all the family members were back then.

Starting with Henry, I searched for any evidence that would indicate whether he was still alive, but quickly discovered an entry for him in Find-A-Grave with a death date of 2007. Fortunately, among his survivors were his wife, Vanessa, and his sister, Eliza, who was living in another state.

My subscription to PeopleFinder.com gave me access to two telephone numbers for a Vanessa Bennet residing in the same town where Henry was buried. Both numbers were nonworking! Could it be that Vanessa had also died? Had she moved away? I

(Continued on page 5)

How I found it (continued)

(Continued from page 4)

was unable to uncover any death records for Vanessa, or for Henry's sister, Eliza. At this point it appeared that I had hit a dead end. So close, but so far from making the connection needed.

Late one evening when the Internet was very fast—when I often make my best discoveries—I was searching through newspaper sites or whatever else came to mind. Suddenly, I noticed an obscure hit in a newspaper from a small town about 150 miles from where Henry's family had been living, for a Vanessa Bennet.

The hit was from a lengthy list of county marriage licenses for that date in 2008, listing a marriage license between William Thomas Jones, 75, and Vanessa G Bennet, 74. No wonder the telephone numbers for Vanessa Bennet had been disconnected! She had remarried and moved to a nearby town.

Switching my search to Thomas and Vanessa Jones quickly revealed a record for the dissolution in 2010 of a business owned by Thomas Jones with treasurer Vanessa Jones, with a contact telephone number and an address that Google Earth revealed to be a private residence. My call was answered by Tom, who readily handed the phone to Vanessa.


After I explained why I was calling, she explained that she had been married to Henry for 47 years before his death, and said that Henry's father had "abandoned" his family, divorcing his wife, Belinda, and moving to California, where he was last known to be living with a much younger woman by whom he had two children; he died soon afterward.

After providing me with details that finally confirmed that George J. Bennet was definitely Claudia's father, she told me that I should call Henry's sister, Eliza, who would know far more about the second family because she had kept in touch with them for some time. With Eliza's phone number, I immediately called her and added even more details to this amazing breakthrough.

It was a happy ending and a reminder to contact living family members now. Eliza had in her possession a handful of snapshots that Hannah had sent to her many years ago, taken of George, Hannah, and Claudia's brother, of whom Claudia had only a vague memory. Eliza said that she had been on the verge of tossing them out because she had lost all contact

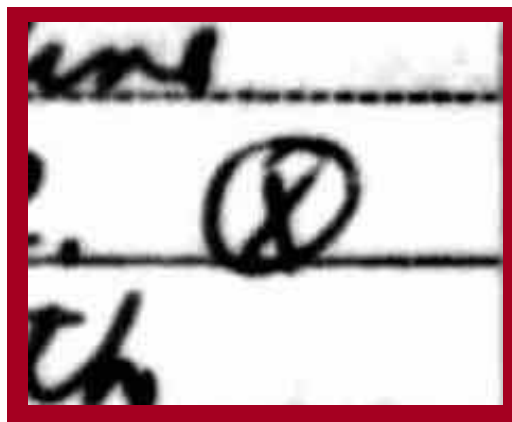
with Hannah.

A few days later, the photos arrived in my mailbox, marked "keep—do not return." Claudia now has photos of the father she never knew, of her mother before she was born, and of a brother she hardly remembers. Plus she has the ability to be in contact with a newly discovered half-sister.


Without having initiated this project, priceless photos would have been tossed, and a family connection would soon have gone dead. 

Whaddya think this is?

We have added a new feature to the *PastFinder* called "Whaddya think this is?" (What do you think this is, said fast). Each issue will include an item, fact, photo, or document that is significant for genealogical and family history research. The correct answer will be published near the back of the issue.



- A. The rancher's cattle brand listed on the 1870 U.S. Non-Population Census Schedule.
- B. Notation after a woman's name in the 1900 U.S. Census indicating she was pregnant.
- C. The symbol marking that a family member was absent at the time of an English census enumeration.
- D. Symbol used to identify the person who provided the census information for a family in the 1940 U.S. Census.

(For the correct answer, see p. 8.) 

See the whole family in careful research

By Allin Kingsbury

I was searching for records about a cousin and decided to search Ancestry.com for a family tree. This may not always be a place to find good family history research, but it is a good place to find others who are working on the same family.

My cousin was James Arthur Dove, born on 12 May 1888 at Newtown, Fountain County, Indiana. Ancestry.com had four trees that included James Arthur Dove. Each tree included his spouse listed as Clara Adeline Vyse, born 4 March 1890 (no place listed) and died 1943 (no place listed). The death date appeared on three of the four family trees. No parents were listed on any of the trees. The trees appear to have been copied from each other and do not evidence original research. No sources are listed in any of the trees.

Some genealogists would dismiss the trees as worthless and would start their research from scratch by building on the information regarding James Arthur Dove, for whom I had a good start with a birth date and birth place. However, the lack of research can indicate that personal knowledge or family sources were the basis of information. I assumed that Clara Adeline Wise was the name of the spouse until I found information to the contrary. This strategy has often been successful in the past.

I began by looking for the parents of Clara. I found a Clara Vice in the 1900 U.S. Census. She was listed as born March 1890 and living with her parents, William F. (born 1855) and Mary L. Vice (born February 1858), in Indiana. I also found her in the 1910 U.S. Census living as a boarder in Indiana. She had left home and family. No occupation was listed in the census. It is difficult to know whether any additional persons were named Clara Vyse/Vice.

The next step was to search for a marriage record for Clara. If she had been married in Indiana or in the Chicago area, the marriage could be on the Internet. It was not. I searched for a marriage for James Arthur Dove, in case there was an error in transcribing the name of Clara. I found the following record:

Groom:	James A. Dove
Bride:	Clara Stiles
Married:	12 Oct 1915, Tippecanoe County, Indiana

The marriage date and place match the corresponding data in the family trees. One plausible ex-

planation for the change in the surname from Vyse to Stiles is a marriage. I could not find a marriage record, nor anyone named Stiles whom I could link to Clara. More research, probably at a courthouse, might produce a record of a marriage or a divorce.

The search for a death record for Clara was also frustrating. Finally I did a first-name search with the year of death and found the following record:

Name:	Clara Spivak
Born:	4 Mar 1890, Indiana
Died:	17 Apr 1943, San Francisco, California
Father Surname:	Vyse
Mother Surname:	Devere

The death record is for the individual who married James Arthur Dove. Since he died in 1959, I concluded that there may have been a divorce and that Clara married again.

Additional searches found that the next husband was George Walter Spivack, born 10 Apr 1896 at Milwaukee, Wisconsin, died in June 1973 at Miami, Florida. I found George Walter Spivack with his wife Clara in the 1940 U.S. Census.

Two important techniques can be learned from this example. First, when looking at a family, do enough research to see all of the family. We tend to define a family as belonging to the marriage of a husband and wife. In the case of Clara Vyse, her family may have included more than two husbands. Until they are all identified, a researcher may not be able to find all of her children, step-children, and other records. All of this information is part of the family history of Clara Vyse. The genealogical facts concerning Clara are important and necessary to define her life and document her history.

Secondly, avoid discarding or ignoring information from family trees, especially with regard to individuals who are personally known to living individuals.

Family trees created with an intention to deceive may exist. Some of the information about individuals may be inaccurate, but other information may be reliable. Factoids presented in the trees might not meet genealogical proof standards, but they can provide a starting point for conducting careful research.





Ask the Doctor Browser vs. browser vs. user

Q I have noticed recently that sometimes when I try to display the results of a Google search on my screen, it will not show up correctly. This situation has started happening more and more often. Is there something wrong with my computer's settings? I'm running the latest version of Windows 7 with Microsoft Internet Explorer 8.

The Doctor is happy you asked this question because you are not the only one to experience this kind of problem. We all experience the side effects of the war for market share, waged among competing browsers. People use several different browsers to display web sites; issues tend to differ from browser to browser. The major browsers include Internet Explorer (IE) by Microsoft, Chrome by Google, Firefox by Mozilla, Safari by Apple, and Opera by Opera Software.

A browser is the software that allows your computer to communicate with the World Wide Web (WWW). For example, when you are doing a search for ancestors on a site such as FamilySearch.org, the browser converts your search criteria into the code that the World Wide Web uses to send and receive instructions throughout the system. When the servers at FamilySearch.org return the results of your search, the browser converts the code into something you can read on your screen.

The problem you are experiencing is that each brand of browser interprets the code in slightly different ways, and sometimes those differences result in glaring problems. The standard for the code used to communicate over the WWW is governed by an international committee, but the companies that supply us with browsers are not required to interpret the code in exactly the same way. In fact, each browser company may want you to use only its browser so that it can generate advertising revenue on its site, which translates into more and more imaginative ways to make one browser more enticing than others. Thus, the war continues between browsers.

In the 1990s, most people accessing the WWW used one of two browsers — Microsoft's Internet Explorer or Netscape. This meant that those who designed websites had to test the website in only a couple of browsers before they could release it to the world. Gradually, as alternative browsers came online, website designers were forced to test their results in multiple browsers.


From experience, the Doctor can tell you that debugging computer software across many browsers is tedious, unpleasant, and very time-consuming. In today's economy, few companies can afford the staffing required to perform that much testing, so they pick one or two top browsers and only support their web sites on those specific browsers.

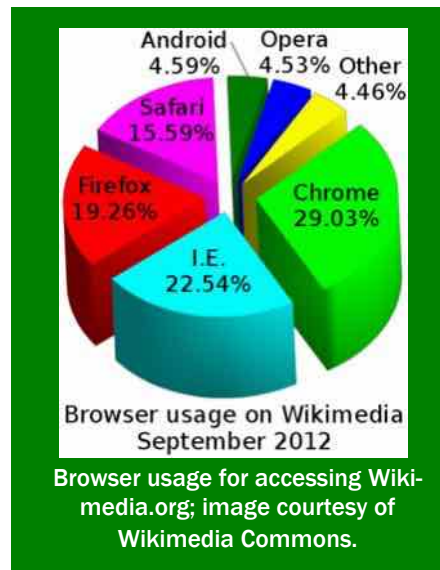
If you call the support line for FamilySearch.org today to report a problem, they will ask you which browser you are using. If it is not the latest version of Google Chrome, they will ask you to try using Chrome; if the site information downloads well in

Chrome, you will be expected to switch to Chrome, at least for accessing FamilySearch. For them, the problem is solved. Click!

The first time that happened in our household, the Doctor was incensed. FamilySearch would not support its site on Internet Explorer? What were they thinking? It took the Doctor some time to become comfortable in Chrome.

The net result is that we, the users, have to be adept at using multiple browsers if we want to get the most effective results from our searches.

For example, on my computers, I never use Chrome to search at NewspaperArchive.com because Chrome does not properly handle the ability to navigate around and enlarge portions of the newspaper pages. Chrome also does not print readily from some websites (the print dialog box appears behind other windows sometimes, or not at all). Firefox, however, handles most printing well. Your mileage may vary. Because of website support standards, I typically use Chrome when doing searches at FamilySearch.org and Ancestry.com. 




What didja think it was? And were ya right?

ANSWER to question posed on page 5: D. Symbol used to identify the person who provided the census information for a family in the 1940 U.S. Federal Census.

Unlike any other U.S. federal census, the 1940 census included such notation indicating who had provided the information about a family. This helps indicate the

credibility of the information — specifically, whether it was coming from an adult who knew the family details, or from someone perhaps less knowledgeable.

The census did not note whether a woman was pregnant. Enumerators sometimes noted someone's absence with the letters *abs.* 

Military Records Seminar November 9

The Silicon Valley Computer Genealogy group is sponsoring a seminar November 9 on using military records for genealogy

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.


14 September 2013, 9–11 A.M.

- Navigating the new old FamilySearch.org, Part 1 (Janet Brigham)
- Software to synchronize and back up your data (Richard Rands)
- Research with Lesly (Lesly Klippel)
- Reunion 10 for Mac (Pat Burrow)
- Reunion for Mac Q&A (Pat Solomon)

12 October 2013, 9–11 A.M.

- Navigating the new old FamilySearch.org, Part 2 (Pam Brigham)
- Mobile GEDCOM viewers (Janet Brigham)
- Reunion 10 for Mac
- Research with Lesly (Lesly Klippel)
- Getting started in genealogy, with Q&A (Carleen Foster)

9 November 2013, 9 A.M. – 4 P.M.
Military records seminar


December 2013, No meeting 

Lest We Forget



research. The all-day seminar, Lest We Forget, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., will be free and open to the public, as are all SVCGG seminars and meetings. A casebook syllabus will be available for purchase.

Keynote speaker will be Bryan McGraw, director of the National Archives at St. Louis (National Personnel Records Center [NPRC]). He will address the historical and genealogical value of military records, as well as the status of World Wars I and II records, many of which were damaged by fire or water.

California genealogist Kathy Burrow will provide instruction in using Fold3.com, a records site owned by Ancestry.com. 

PastFinder

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

Website: www.svcgg.org

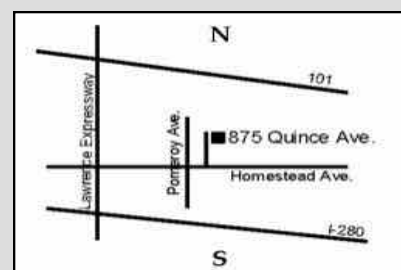
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Meeting site has ample free off-street parking, with a wheelchair-accessible entrance at the front.

About the Silicon Valley Computer Genealogy Group

SVCGG 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.

SVCGG offers classes, seminars, and publications to help family his-

torians improve their skills in using technology for genealogy research.

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