

Using Pre-1850 Census: Finding Parents without Vital Records

by Jean Nudd, Archivist

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My great-great-grandfather, Israel Goodman, was born in Pennsylvania in 1822. I know this from his tombstone in Indianola, Iowa, and from the 1850, 1860, 1870 and 1880 census which all give Pennsylvania as a place of birth. Remarkably, his age is fairly consistent throughout the census.¹ Pennsylvania, however, is a very large place. How can I ever find out where he was born in Pennsylvania or who his parents were when vital records don't start until 1906?

Many beginning genealogy books talk about searching collateral lines. They tell us that collateral lines can sometimes lead us to our ancestors. What are collateral lines? They are our ancestors' brothers, sisters, cousins, aunts and uncles that some of us don't normally research.² I was one of those people. I didn't have time to do my direct ancestors, why should I bother with people I'm not directly descended from? The search for Israel Goodman convinced me that using collateral lines is not only worthwhile but in some cases, the only way we'll ever find our ancestors.

I began the search for Israel with the census, finding him in 1860 and 1870 in Iowa.³ That gave me information on Israel, his wife and children, as well as the dreaded Pennsylvania for place of birth. The census listed him as a mason and the 1870 census told me his father was foreign-born. It also told me that several of his children, including my great-grandmother, Sofia, were born in Ohio. Again, where in Ohio? That's a complete story in itself.⁴ It took me a long time, but I finally found Israel and family in Delaware, Ohio.

Living next door to Israel on the 1850 census for Delaware, Ohio, is Franklin Goodman, also born in Pennsylvania, also a mason. Also in the household, are Mary C., born in Pennsylvania, Wm. Welt, Jeremiah Markle, and Rosanna Goodman, age 64, born in Pennsylvania! Israel's mother perhaps? A few pages later, we find Levi Goodman, age 35, born in Pennsylvania, also a mason, with his wife Sarah, daughter Clarrisa, and Jacob Goodman, age 77, born in Germany.⁵ Was it really possible that I'd found both of Israel's parents? More research was needed for confirmation.

Living in Delaware, Ohio, in 1850 was also a single Julia Goodman, age 29, born in Pennsylvania, who appeared to be living in a boarding house.⁶ In the next township, Troy, in the village of Marlboro, there is an Adam Goodman, age 25, born in Pennsylvania, a carpenter by profession.⁷ To start, I decided not to use Adam as a possible sibling since his age was the same as Israel's on the 1850 census (they could be twins, I suppose although Israel was actually 27 when the 1850 census was taken). So, in searching pre-1850 census, there are three other

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Figure 3: Analysis of Surnames

1850 Delaware, Ohio	1840 Delaware, Ohio	1830 Berks County, Pennsylvania
Alexander	Alexander	
Allen	Allen	Alen (Albany)
Barley		Barley (Reading SW)
Elymer		
Bowman		Bowman (Reading SW)
Brecht		
Brez(y)fogle		Breyfogle (Maxatany)
Britton		Britton (Union)
Crawford	Crawford	
Crook		Crook (Kutztown)
Cunningham	Cunningham	
Dangler		
Duden		
Eaton	Eaton	
Ely	Ely	Ely (Reading S. Ward)
Falkner	Falkner	Faulkner (Reading SW)
Front/Fort		
Gerhard		Ge(a)rhard(t) (8 towns)
Haines		Haines (Maxatany)
Harter	Harter	
Hel(l)er(n)	Heller	Heller (Reading SW)
Hoffman	Hoffman	Hoffman (17 towns)
Howard	Howard	
Jones		Jones (Reading SW)
Kensell	Kensell	Kinsel (Bethel)
Lin(d)sey	Lin(d)sey	
McCulloch		
McElvan		
Miesner		
Miller	Miller	Miller (Reading SW)
Moses	Moses	Moses (Reading SW)
Neess		
Palmer		
Poland	Poland	
Porter		Porter (Reading NW)
Rheam	Rheam	Rhein (Reading SW)
Richards	Richards	Richards (Reading NW)
Ring		
Short		
Stark	Stark	Stark (Cumru)
Stearp		
Stimmel	Stimmel	Stimmel (Maxatany)
Utter	Utter	
Van Horne	Van Horn	
Vandeman		
W(e)iser	Weiser	Weiser (Maxatany)
Worline	Worline	Worline (Delaware OH)

I also visited the Berks County Historical Society's website to see if they had anything that could help my research. The Society has church, tax, and cemetery records for the county including an on-line database index to the church records. Searching that database, I found nineteen Jacob Goodmans, six Israel Goodmans, and twenty-five John Goodmans (Franklin's name was actually John Franklin) but no Levis, Julias, or Rosannas.⁹ This was another indication to me that while Jacob and family lived in Reading in 1830, they weren't there in 1820. Further searching also revealed that most of those citations were from the Trinity Lutheran Church in Reading but they also mainly pre-dated 1800.

The Delaware Ohio Historical Society also has a website and searchable database of cemetery records. That search found Jacob Goodman's tombstone listing his birth as 1773, his death as April 26, 1852, and his burial in Oak Grove Cemetery. The database also listed John Franklin's birth date of 23 January 1825 and death date of 6 August 1896, and he was also buried in Oak Grove Cemetery.¹⁰

One of the easiest research projects is finding sources

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through www.familysearch.org. The Genealogical Society of Utah has microfilmed probate, marriage, early death, guardianship (chancery), wills, and tax records for Delaware, Ohio. Having found Jacob's death date on the cemetery database, I ordered what I thought were the appropriate rolls of film for all the above records. I found Finleys (Israel's wife was Elizabeth Finley) on the tax rolls but no Goodmans, so apparently Jacob didn't own any land. I also didn't find any probate or will for Jacob so I can't prove parentage using a will. I did find, in the Probate Court index, an index to marriages and lots of Goodmans were listed: Adam, John Franklin, Israel, and Levi, as well as Mary C., which was a nice surprise.¹¹ The only one I didn't find was Julia.

I also ordered a roll of microfilm on Reading naturalization records. The 1830 census asked about foreigners not naturalized, and there was no mark in that column for any of the Jacobs. There was no Jacob Goodman listed in the naturalization records so he must have lived somewhere else in Pennsylvania before he went to Reading. Either that or he arrived with his parents prior to 1789 when the Constitution was passed and everyone who resided in the United States automatically became a citizen.

So while I can almost prove that Israel's father was Jacob, his mother was Rosanna, and his siblings were Levi, John Franklin, Julia and Mary C., I can't definitively prove it because none of the church records, wills, and tax records that I searched had listings for Jacob Goodman. So the search continues. But the technique of finding siblings and then parents living with siblings can work for you as it did for me. The trick is finding out the siblings' names if you don't know them. To be honest, I thought my finding Israel's family was just a fluke so I decided to try it again on another brick wall.

Thaddeus Pollard Atherton was one of my thickest brick walls. While there is not an overabundance of Athertons in New England, there's also not a lot of work done on the Atherton families; no published genealogies and not much on the Internet.

My paternal grandmother, Florence Louise Hill, was the child of Joseph Algernon Hill and Mary Louise Jones. Mary Louise was born to Franklin Jones and Lorinda M. Atherton. Lorinda Murdock Atherton's father was Thaddeus Pollard Atherton.¹² I found, at the New Hampshire Vital Records Office, all of the birth certificates for Thaddeus' children along with his marriage license.¹³ I've also found him on the 1850, 1860 and 1870 census in New Hampshire. They all give his place of birth as Vermont, the birth certificates list it as Newfane, Vermont. I've floundered around for years looking for Thaddeus, almost drowning after my visit to Newfane, Vermont, was a total washout.

Back when I started looking, Ancestry.com didn't have its on-line databases for the census with all-name versus just head of household searches. I'd checked the published indexes and had lists of all the Athertons in Windham County, Vermont; Cheshire County, New Hampshire; and northern Worcester County, Massachusetts.

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Friends also offered to help. A genealogist in Bennington, Vermont, did some looking for me and found a Zilpah Pollard who married a Peter Atherton. That looked like a good possibility. Unfortunately, Thaddeus Pollard wasn't born until 1814 and Zilpah would have been 47 years old when he was born. It was possible but unlikely that Zilpah was his mother.¹⁴

I even indexed a two-volume genealogy of the Pollard family thinking that Thaddeus' middle name must be somehow related to the Pollards, especially with the above lead. No luck, except there was Zilpah Pollard, born 1767, daughter of Thaddeus Pollard, who married Peter Atherton in 1786. Unfortunately, the Pollard genealogy doesn't follow up on Zilpah or tell me where they were married. Thaddeus Pollard died in Harvard, Massachusetts, so that's where I started looking.¹⁵

The Harvard, Massachusetts, vital records books didn't record any Atherton births to Peter and Zilpah.¹⁶ The lead on Zilpah told me that she and Peter settled in Vermont. But where?

Following the methodology I used to find Israel, I searched Ancestry.com's on-line, all-name index for 1850 for New Hampshire, Vermont and Massachusetts. The list for 1850 in New Hampshire had a Lorinda M. Atherton, age 27, living in Claremont, New Hampshire. What a funny coincidence, it was not all that common a name, and it seemed that somehow she had to be related. So I pulled up the census for Lorinda M. in Claremont and to my delight found an entire family! Lorinda was living with Levi, age 62, Sophie, age 63, and Fanny, age 38. They sound like a family, parents with two daughters. A few pages from them was Frederick, age 34, with Lavina.¹⁷ I couldn't believe that finding possible siblings for Thaddeus might be this easy. But could I prove they are family and the right family?

Checking www.rootsweb.com's WorldConnect, I found several people also looking for Levi Atherton in New Hampshire, one with a list of possible children on the family tree. It listed six siblings: Fanny, born 1812; Frederick, born 1815 or 1816; Dan, no date of birth; Albert, no date of birth; Laurinda (or Lorinda) M., born 1822; and Archibald, born 1828 in Claremont.¹⁸ On the 1870 census, I found Dan listed at age 52 making his year of birth about 1818.¹⁹

There was a Levi living in Claremont in 1840 and 1830. The family as shown by Laurie Clifford on Rootsweb's WorldConnect lines up very well in 1830 but the daughters are missing from the household in 1840.²⁰ (See Figure 4 below) I searched every index I could find for the 1800, 1810 and 1820 census, but I couldn't find any listing for Levi. And none of the information I found on the Internet gave any information on Levi's parents so I can't search for a father's name in the earlier census. Was it possible Peter and Zilpah were Levi's parents?

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FIGURE 5
State Vermont County Windham City Brookline Roll No. M252 Roll 65

Page	Head of Family	Free White Males					Free White Females					All Others	Slaves	Remarks		
		Under 10	10-16	16-20	20-45	45 & Over	Under 10	10-16	16-20	20-45	45 & Over					
245	Peter Atherton		2	2		1	2									
	Zilpah															
	Selvia									1						
	Sophia									1						
	Sophia									1						
	Fanny									1						
	Levi				1											
	Charles				1											
	Cephas		1													
	Luke		1													

If the family was transient as indicated by the “warnings out,” it’s possible their children’s births weren’t recorded anywhere, and they probably didn’t own land. So the next steps in verifying this family will be to check out deeds, town, tax and probate records at www.familysearch.org for records available from these small towns in Windham County, Vermont, as well as possible visits to the Bennington Museum in Bennington, Vermont and the New England Historic Genealogical Society in Boston. I hope I’ll have more luck finding local records to support this family connection than I had with Israel Goodman.

1. Warren Co. Genealogical Society, *Cemetery and Death Records of Warren County, Iowa*. (Marceline, MO: Walsworth Publishing Co., 1980), 171. Israel’s tombstone gives his date of birth as 13 October 1822.

2. There are many beginning genealogy books available as well as free lessons on several Internet sites. Check the Internet or visit the Friends’ bookstore. Also, www.cyndislist.com has a listing under “Hit a Brick Wall” that discusses using collateral lines in genealogy.

3. Israel Goodman household, 1860 U.S. Census, Mahaska County, Iowa, population schedule, Richland Township, page 53, dwelling 382, family 373, National Archives micropublication M653, roll 334; Israel Godman household, 1870 U.S. Census, Warren County, Iowa, population schedule, Indianola Township, page 32, dwelling 250, family 259, National Archives micropublication M593, roll 423.

4. See “That One Line,” *Archival Anecdotes*, 6 (June 2001): 17 at <http://www.narafriends-pittsfield.org/goodman.htm>

5. Franklin Goodman household, 1850 U.S. Census, Delaware County, Ohio, population schedule, Delaware Township, page 182, dwelling 1212, family 1216 and Levi Goodman household, 1850 U.S. Census, Delaware County, Ohio,

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population schedule, Delaware Township, page 197, dwelling 1387, family 1387, National Archives micropublication M432, roll 675.

6. Alvin F. Belt household, 1850 U.S. Census, Delaware County, Ohio, population schedule, Delaware Township, page 200, dwelling 1426, family 1441, National Archives micropublication M432, roll 675.

7. Adam Goodman household, 1850 U.S. Census, Delaware County, Ohio, population schedule, Troy Township, village of Marlboro, page 357, dwelling 70, family 71, National Archives micropublication M432, roll 675.

8. Jacob Goodman household and Moses Goodman household, 1840 U.S. Census, Delaware County, Iowa, population schedule, Delaware Township, page 231, National Archives micropublication M704, roll 391.

9. www.berkshistory.org/library/churches.html; www.nktelco.net/buzmeyer/berks_co_goodman.htm, accessed 1 Sep 2004.

10. www.interment.net/data/us/oh/delaware/oakgrove, accessed 23 Nov 2004.

11. The Early Marriage Bonds of Delaware County, Ohio, 1832-1865, Vol. I, A to K (DAR Delaware City Chapter, Delaware, Ohio), FHL US/CAN Film 317362.

12. Mary Louise Jones birth registration, Office of the City Clerk, Rockingham, Vermont, Book A, page 17 (1877); Florence Louise Hill birth registration, Office of the City Clerk, Rockingham, Vermont, Book D, page 3 (1896).

13. Lorinda Murdock Atherton birth registration (1848), Annie Hale Atherton birth registration (1857), Mary Smith Atherton birth registration (1850), Office of the City Clerk, Franklin, New Hampshire, 1832-1873, page 60.

14. Ibid. On his children's birth certificates, Thaddeus' age in 1848 was given as 34; in 1850 as 36; and in 1857 as 43; Maurice J. Pollard, *The History of the Pollard Family of America*. (Dover, NH: Maurice J. Pollard, 1964), 212.

15. Ibid., Pollard.

16. Henry S. Nourse, *History of the Town of Harvard, Massachusetts, 1732-1893* (Harvard, MA: W. Hapgood, 1894), 505-507, 510, 515, 533, 537-538.

17. Levi Atherton household, 1850 U.S. Census, Sullivan County, New Hampshire, population schedule, Claremont city, page 153, dwelling 121, family 125, and Frederick Atherton household, 1850 U.S. Census, Sullivan County, New Hampshire, population schedule, Claremont city, page 180, dwelling 492, family 563, National Archives Micropublication M432, roll 441.

18. <http://worldconnect.rootsweb.com/cgi-bin/igm.cgi?op=GET&db=leppard5&id=I46>, Laurie Clifford's Family Tree, Levi Atherton family, ID 146, accessed 7 Jan 2005.

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19. Dan Atherton household, 1870 U.S. Census, Washington County, Vermont, population schedule, Waterbury town, page 308, dwelling 275, family 301, National Archives micropublication M593, roll 1626. I found it interesting that a few lines above Dan on the same page is Lucius Pollard!

20. Levi Atherton household, 1830 U.S. Census, Sullivan County, New Hampshire, population schedule, Claremont city, page 249, National Archives micropublication M19, roll 74; Levi Atherton household, 1840 U.S. Census, Sullivan County, New Hampshire, population schedule, Claremont city, page 47, National Archives Micropublication M704, roll 244.

21. Alden M. Rollins, *Vermont Warnings Out: Southern Vermont, Volume 2* (Camden, ME: Picton Press, 1997), Brookline, 171.

22. *Ibid.*; Newfane, 230.

23. Peter Atherton household, 1810 U.S. Census, Windham County, Vermont, population schedule, Brookline town, page 245, National Archives micropublication M252, roll 65. ◀