

Murphy's Law of Genealogy

The public ceremony in which your distinguished ancestor participated and at which the platform collapsed under him turned out to be a hanging.

When at last after much hard work you have evolved the mystery that you have been working on for two years, your aunt says, "I could have told you that."

You never asked your father about his family when he was alive because you were not interested in genealogy then.

The will you need is in the safe on board the Titanic.

Copies of old newspapers have holes occurring only on the surnames.

John, son of Thomas the immigrant whom your relatives claim as the family progenitor, died on board ship at the age of 10.

Your great grandfather's newspaper obituary states that he died leaving no issue of record.

Another genealogist has just insulted the keeper of the vital records you need.

The relative who had all the family photographs gave them all to her daughter who has no interest in genealogy and no inclination to share.

The only record you find for your great grandfather is that his property was sold at a sheriff's sale of insolvency.

The one document that would supply the missing link in your dead end has been lost due to fire, flood or war.

The town clerk to whom you wrote for the information sends you a long handwritten letter which is totally illegible.

The spelling of your European ancestor's name bears no relationship to its current spelling or pronunciation.

None of the pictures in your recently deceased grandmother's photo album have names written on them.

No one in your family tree ever did anything noteworthy, owned property, was sued or was named in a will.

You learn that your great aunt's executor just sold her life's collection of family genealogical materials to a flea market dealer 'somewhere in New York City.'

Ink fades and paper deteriorates at a rate inversely proportional to the value of the data recorded.

The 37 volume, 16,000 page history of your country of origin isn't indexed.

You finally find your great grandparent's wedding record and discover that the bride's

father was named John Smith.

The family you are looking for will be on the last page of the unindexed (of course) census film that you check. However, if you begin at the end of the roll, they will be on page 1.

The microfilm that you have diligently searched page-by-page will have an index at the end.

All of your spouse's ancestors will be mentioned in county histories. None of yours will be.

If you need just one record, the microfilm will have page numbers. If you need 3 or more records, there won't be any page numbers and the records will not be in the proper order.

The book you need most will be out being rebound.

You will need item 23 on a microfilm roll that has 22 items. The rest of the film is continued on another roll that will not be in the drawer, and the librarian will tell you that it is "missing, and presumed lost."

Just before the entry you need, the records will end. They will begin again two years after the date you need.

If one brother is left out of the genealogy of a family, guess whose ancestor he will be?

If there is a family history on one branch of the family -- it won't be yours.

When you finally find the microfilmed probate records of your missing link to a rich and/or famous line, the book will be so tightly bound that you can only make out the first two letters of the name of the one who MAY be your ancestor.

The researcher you hired to read the original records at the courthouse will inform you that only the particular probate packet you need is missing.

After spending a week at Family History Library in Salt Lake City, you finally find the book that will tell you about your ancestors ten minutes before closing time. Needless to say you have to return home and will probably never make it back to Salt Lake City again! Nor, will you remember the name of the book!

Thank you, [Kathy Tobiasson](#)