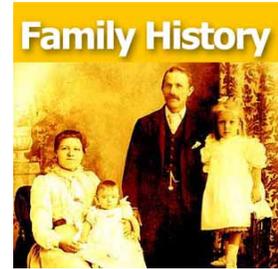


## Family History: Genealogy Made Easy

with Lisa Louise Cooke

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Welcome to this step-by-step series for beginning genealogists—and more experienced ones who want to brush up or learn something new. I first ran this series in 2008-09. So many people have asked about it, I'm bringing it back in weekly segments.

### Episode 44: Family Secrets in Genealogy Records

Today's episode is unlike any other I've done on the podcast. Today we are going to tackle some difficult subject matter. You know, none of us have a perfect family tree. In fact, I would venture to guess that at some point each one of us who are delving into our family's past will come across some sad and painful stories. An ancestor abandoned at an asylum, incarcerated for acts of violence, or perhaps who committed suicide.

For Crystal Bell, my guest on today's show, that sad and painful story was very close to her branch of the tree. In fact, the troubles lay at her parents' door, and she bore the brunt of the chaos that was created. And yet there is tremendous hope that comes from Crystal's story. She is a wonderful example of the freedom that can come from facing your fears and breaking down the mystery of a troubled past. It's what I call the redemptive gifts of family history.

Crystal also shares some of the research strategies that her co-workers at Ancestry.com gave her for taking the next steps in finding her mother, who passed away under an assumed name.

Thoughts from Crystal on responding to the family secrets in your own tree:

“Hatred and resentment only make *you* look older. They have a great toll on your health. As far as I'm concerned, I can't hate my mother and father because I don't know their circumstances were. I can only try to determine *their* ancestors. I want to know who were my ancestors. Where did they come from?”

I feel badly when people...just don't want to know. I don't want to die with that sense of abandonment. I want to move on, I want to get past the grief. I want to know who my people were. I just, for the first time in my life, want to experience a feeling of joy and happiness that I feel like I deserve.”

#### Ancestry.com “Shaky Leaf” Technology

Crystal made connections on her Ancestry.com family tree by reviewing the automated hints provided on the site, known popularly as “shaky leaves.” Learn more about using these in [this video](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2SCohCLs8TY) at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2SCohCLs8TY>.

#### MyCanvas

The MyCanvas service mentioned by Crystal is no longer offered by Ancestry.com. But it is still around! Learn more at <http://lisalouisecooke.com/2014/08/mycanvas-finds-new-home-alexanders>.

**Here's a final thought for today:**

We are not just defined by one relative, or the product of a dysfunctional family or parental relationship. We come from all of our ancestors....

The ones who did amazing things,

The ones who did everyday things,

And the ones who did wrong.

You deserve to know them all, and as the saying goes, the truth will set you free.