

# Good Sources of Information

## by Mary Lou Bevers

The most important records of all to PROVE child-parent relationships are:

- **Birth Records**
- **Death Records** (although sometimes the informant gave wrong information).
- **Probate Records** (estate proceedings, wills, guardianships). Many people never had wills, but most of them had estates which were divided by the court. Wills are only one part of probate records.
- **Deeds**--Extremely valuable in proving relationships--sometimes three or more generations.
- **Court Case Papers**--especially partition and equity suits. Relationships may be proven in these and not found anywhere else.
- **Marriage Applications and Consents**--Applications began in Indiana in 1882 and are known as supplemental marriage records. A few counties never had them, but existing ones have been published as part of the WPA Record Series.
- **Census Records (especially 1880 and later)**(Although sometimes loosely interpreted). The 1850-1870 censuses do not provide proof, but can be good tools for circumstantial evidence and clues. With 1840 and earlier you can only speculate as to household inhabitants, but it can be useful when combined with other records. Pay very close attention to neighbors in all census records, for clues to possible relatives.
- **Immigration Records** (as a family unit).
- **Bible Records** (If the owner is identified and it seems to be authentic).
- **Published Family Books/Records** (if evidence is documented -- otherwise, use as clues to try to prove).
- **War Pension and Bounty Land Applications** (of a father or widowed mother who may identify children; or children of a deceased soldier).

The following can be important when used with other identifying records:

- Baptismal/Tombstone/Cemetery/Obituaries; Biographies/County Histories/City Directory study
- Family files in local libraries where your family lived (charts, correspondence, newspaper clippings, etc.)
- Lineage society records (older ones when less proof was required may be wrong because of misidentification).
- Other researchers in the area where your family lived
- Internet trees and compilations--If you have studied your family well enough to recognize them--even amid likely errors--then valuable clues may be found in them such as a date or place you had not known about

that can give you new ideas for searching. Those without dates and places are useless.

*Mary Lou Bevers has done on-site court house research in all types of records since 1966 and has researched for clients since 1980.*