



**Four Generations Genealogy**  
*www.4GenGenealogy.com*

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Jay Fonkert is a Minnesota-based researcher and genealogy educator. He has lectured at the NGS and FGS national conferences, and for regional conferences in Ohio, Southern California, and Washington, as well as for libraries and societies across the country. He has been an instructor in the Advanced Practicum course at the Salt Lake Institute for Genealogy (2013-2015), and he has served as a GenProof mentor. He is a past-president of the Minnesota Genealogical Society and co-managing editor of *Minnesota Genealogist*. When not researching his favorite English, Dutch or Midwest families, he keeps busy as co-managing editor of *Minnesota Genealogist*. He is former director of the Association of Professional Genealogists and a former trustee of the BCG Education Fund. His research and teaching articles have appeared in *National Genealogical Society Quarterly*, *NGS Magazine*, *Family Chronicle*, *The Septs*, *Crossroads*, *On Board*, and *Minnesota Genealogist*.

### **Genealogical Education Classes and Presentations**

*I offer the following lectures for genealogical and historical societies, ethnic heritage organizations, libraries, and any group interested in family history. My standard lecture is 60 minutes, including time for questions, but I can tailor my presentation to fit the time your organization has available. With enough advance planning time, I can tailor topics to your organization's specific interest. If you don't see what you want, please ask. My talks emphasize how you can evaluate the information you find and use it to solve genealogical problems.*

B = Beginner  
I = Intermediate  
A = Advanced

#### **BEGINNING GENEALOGY**

- 1. You don't have to be a Celebrity to Find Interesting Ancestors: Your Family History Awaits.*** Learn what is possible. See examples of the records you can find. Get a five-step plan for getting started. This presentation is suited for non-genealogy community groups. (B)
- 2. Bare Essentials: Top 10 Sources for the Average Genealogist.*** Every research problem is different, but these essential, easily accessible sources will give you a solid start. (B)
- 3. Getting Started in Family History – a two-session class introducing beginners to genealogy research.*** Two-part class. Session 1: Steps for getting started. Basics of accessible American records; Session 2: Finding clues to European origin. (B)

#### **SOURCES FOR OUR PROBLEMS**

- 4. Vital Records: What to Do When You Can't Find Them?*** Birth, marriage and death records are our best sources for basic genealogical facts, but they are hard to find before 1900. Learn how

to use other kinds of records to indirectly document marriages and parent-child relationships. (B, I)

5. ***Genealogy Detective Skills: Following Clues from the Census.*** It is exciting to find a “snapshot” of our family in the census, but it is even more exciting when we use the census as a springboard to other sources. Learn how to use *all* the information in the census to find your ancestors in other records. (B, I)

6. ***Breaking News: Finding, Accessing and Searching Historical Newspapers.*** Learn to use the U.S. Newspaper Directory to find newspapers in your research locale and how to find and search digitized historical newspapers on the Internet.

7. ***News Fit to Print: Using Newspapers to Bring Families to Life.*** Newspapers offer more than obits and wedding stories. Learn how to find historic newspapers online and on microfilm and use the news to reveal the texture of your ancestors’ lives. (B, I)

8. ***Finding your pre-1850 American Ancestors.*** American genealogy becomes more challenging before 1850, when the U.S. Census first listed every individual in a household. Researchers must turn to other records, including tax lists, estate records and court records to reconstruct pre-1850 families. (I, A)

9. **The Riches in Probate Files.** Among the most valuable of records created at the end of life are probate records settling the estate of the deceased. Records created as part of probate of an estate are valuable to genealogists in two ways. They reveal rich details about a family’s life, especially its economic status and business and community relationships. They give clues about family relationships that can lead to solutions of complex genealogical problems.

## **DNA – ANOTHER KIND OF INFORMATION SOURCE**

10. ***The ABCs of DNA.*** Deoxyribonucleic acid is not only hard to say, but the science behind it is also pretty complicated. What you need to know for genealogy is not so hard. Learn the basic concepts behind Y-DNA, mitochondrial DNA, and autosomal DNA, and understand their different uses in genealogy. (I) [*This is a basic primer for DNA-beginners*].

11. ***Using DNA to Test a Theory from Traditional Research.*** Fishing for cousins is fun, but the real power of DNA comes when it is combined with traditional documentary research to solve a genealogical question. In this case-study presentation, both Y- and autosomal DNA evidence is blended with traditional research to find a birth family for a man born in the late 1700s. (I, A)

## **GEO-GENEALOGY: MAPS, MIGRATION, AND MORE**

*Jay is a self-proclaimed Geo-Genealogist. Our ancestors moved through time and space. Among our most compelling questions are where did they come from? and why did they go where they went? These talks will bring out your inner GeoGenealogist!*

12. ***Map-reading for Genealogists: Interpreting the Places Where Your Ancestors Lived.*** Never be lost on a map again! Learn the tricks of finding exact locations on maps and creating a 3-D

mental image of where your ancestors lived. You will leave this class knowing your way around latitude and longitude, topographic maps and the public land survey system. (B, I, A)

13. ***Documenting the Immigration Trail: A Five-stage Approach.*** Immigration was a chain of events: preparations to leave home, embarkation at a port, arrival in an American port, getting established in a new community, and gaining U.S. citizenship. Learn how to use records to document the entire process. (B, I)

14. ***Location, Location, Location: Using Online-Gazetteers to Find and Understand the Obscure Places Your Ancestors Lived.*** A gazetteer is a dictionary of place-names. Small, obscure places can be hard to find, and changing names and spellings can complicate your search. Learn to use the government's Geographic Names Information System to find American locations and the GeoNet Name-Server to find locations around the world. (I)

15. ***Midwest Historical Geography for Genealogists.*** Cincinnati was Porkopolis. Chicago out-dueled St. Louis. Minneapolis milled grain from the Dakota bonanza farms. The Upper Midwest farmlands, forests and mines fed the cities' hunger for food and lumber and steel. Railroads made it possible, bringing raw materials to the city and sending consumer goods back to the hinterland. Learn about how the development of the Midwest created opportunity and hardship for your ancestors. (B, I, A)

16. ***A Midwest Migration Case Study: Dutch and Ostfriesen Immigrants to Illinois and Iowa.*** Immigrants rarely wandered alone. Get to know two ethnic groups that came together in Illinois through religion, but gradually grew apart as they moved west across Iowa, Minnesota and the Dakotas. This lecture illustrates the advantages of "cluster genealogy." (I, A)

17. ***Getting to Here from Where: Following your Ancestor's Migration Trail.*** Every migration story is different, but learning about common migration routes helps us understand the migration possibilities for our individual ancestors. Learn about major 19<sup>th</sup> Century American migration routes, as well as how to look for clues for the routes taken by your particular ancestor. (I)

18. ***Why Were They There?*** Finding where your ancestors came from is one thing. Figuring out why they settled where they did is another. Your ancestors might have traveled in a group, followed friends, or set out for a hot job location. Learn to use a variety of sources to understand why they were where they were. (I).

19. ***Who was Dena? Correlating Evidence and Geography to Find a German Immigrant's Origin.*** It can be hard to a German homeplace for a young, single female immigrant. This lecture illustrates the use of indirect evidence to narrow a search for the home parish of Dena, who came up river from New Orleans in 1846. (I, A).

## OUR IMMIGRANT ANCESTORS

20. ***Finding Your Ancestors' European Origins: A 3-Step Strategy.*** Learn where to find clues to where your immigrants came from, locate obscure hometowns on maps, and make a certain match of American and European families. This lecture uses examples from 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup>-century English, Dutch, Scandinavian and Italian families and single individuals. (I)

21. ***Fish and Chips Genealogy: Finding your Common English Ancestors.*** English food is ordinary, but the possibilities for family history research are extraordinary. Learn about basic English genealogy resources – civil registration, censuses and parish church records. (I)

22. ***Tidballs Here, Tidballs There: Using Tax Records and Geography to Identify an 18th-Century Ancestor in Southwest England.*** This case study demonstrates how several different kinds of evidence can be combined to prove that a Tidboald was a Tidball. (I, A)

23. ***Wooden Shoe Genealogy: Methods for tracing North American immigrant families back to The Netherlands.*** Learn how to keep your feet dry as you wade through the polders trying to find your Dutch or Frisian ancestors. Use a three-step strategy to match families across North American and Dutch records and then work your way back in The Netherlands. (I)

24. ***Tulips, Polders and Windmills: A Genealogist's Tour of the Low Countries.*** Learn the basics of Belgian, Dutch, Frisian and Luxembourger genealogy, while enjoying a colorful tour of the Low Country landscape. Learn genealogy research basics, as well as how the land shaped your ancestors' lives and how they shaped the land. (This lecture features Dutch genealogy and a beginner's introduction to Dutch records). (B, I)

## **METHODS FOR YOUR MADNESS**

25. ***How do We Know What We Know? Basics of Evidence Analysis.*** Methodology can be a scary word. This lectures presents the basics in plain language. Learn about how information about our ancestors comes forward to us and how to evaluate its trustworthiness. You will learn about informants with primary and secondary knowledge of events and the difference between direct and indirect evidence. (B, I, A)

26. ***Five Tips for Research in a New Location.*** When tackling a new locale, get to know the geography, the local history, the record-keeping jurisdictions, the range of available records, and the researchers who know their way around town. (B)

27. ***Genealogical Detours: Solving Problems with Indirect Evidence.*** Learn how to solve a problem when you can find no direct evidence answering your question. Become an “evidence weaver” and reveal your family’s history. Some solutions are a result of basic logic; others depend on rejecting alternative explanations of the evidence you have found. Become an “evidence weaver” and reveal your family’s history. (I, A)

28. ***Who's on First? Merging and Separating Identities in Family History Research.*** Merging or separating identities is a core genealogical problem. Sometimes we find two easily confounded people in the same place and time. Other times we must merge identity fragments to prove that Fred in Iowa in 1880 was the same person as Frank in Ohio in 1870. A series of short case studies demonstrate how to solve identity puzzles. (I, A)

29. ***Official, but Wrong: Evaluating the Reliability of Records.*** Don't assume “official” government records are truthful. Learn how to seek corroborating evidence, evaluate conflicting evidence and examine motives of informants – in this case a single woman applying for a passport. (I, A)

30. ***Finding Truth (or not) Beyond Family Lore: Unpacking the Evidence.*** Learn how to test family lore against original records and separate kernels of truth from myth. Family lore is a bit like DNA--it can mutate as it is passed down across generations. In this case, two pieces of family

lore help prove and disprove parts of a family history. A broad search across time and geography yields probate, guardianship, tax and court records that identify three more wives for John C. Fawkner. (I, A) [This case study material in this lecture overlaps with no. 30, but this lecture focuses on evaluating family lore. *Don't chose both.*].

31. ***A Reasonably Exhaustive 3-D Search: Four Fawkner Wives.*** Extensive research across three dimensions -- time, geography, and associations -- increases your chance of success. Using an example covering five states and more than a half century, this presentation demonstrates how to link widely spread information together to solve a difficult problem. (I, A) [The case study material in this lecture overlaps with no. 29, but this talk focuses on evidence correlation. *Don't chose both*].

32. ***Use all the Sources: A Complex Case of Confounded Identity.*** Learn the importance of using every available source to sort out identity and create a problem-solving timeline of a name-changing Norwegian immigrant's life. Learn how Carrie became Clara, how Sigrid became Vivian, and Hjalmer Petersen became Earl Moore. (I)

33. **Turning Raw Information into Evidence: Tips for Drawing and Explaining Conclusions.** Orderly genealogical research proceeds in three steps: establishing the existence of a research subject in a place and time, 2) ascertaining the subject's unique identity through time, and 3) Linking individuals together within or across generations. Learn about how to frame productive research questions, plan a reasonably exhaustive search, and logically anchor your research conclusion. (I, A)

34. **Now You See Him, Now You Don't: The Life and Times of Oliver Dresser of Maine, Ohio, Iowa, and Utah.** The core challenge in genealogy is certain identity. Follow the fragmented identity of a doctor, soldier, and liquor dealing across the continent from 1840 to his disappearance in the 1860s. Genealogy is about identity and relationships. Family history is biography.

#### **PROBLEM-SOLVING WORKSHOPS** (generally 90-150 minutes)

35. ***Workshop: Finding Maiden Names.*** This workshop combines a short lecture with a hand-out exercise in which, starting from a short obituary, students brainstorm strategies for finding Mrs. Romkie's full maiden name and work through evidence made available by the instructor to draw a convincing conclusion even without a marriage record. Best suited to intermediate researchers, but of value to beginners. (B,I)

36. ***Workshop: Who is the World was Hjalmar?*** Beginning with a starting set of source documents, this hands-on workshop challenges students to identify key clues and develop a strategy for finding the information necessary to solve the case. Periodically throughout the workshop, the instructor will provide students with new information, and work with the students to correlate the evidence to identify Hjalmar's parents and grandparents. This workshop can be structured from two hours to a half-day. The experience is enhanced if at least half the students have access to the Internet. (I, A)

#### **LIGHTER FARE**

These are shorter (20-30) minutes talks suitable for luncheon or after-dinner situations. They can be presented with or without slide show.

37. *A Comedy of Errors*. If all the records were true, genealogical research would be easy. They are not. This talk shares a half dozen of the speaker's favorite, sometimes amusing, finds. (B, I, A)

38. *Five Favorite Characters*. Your ancestors were real people. They did strange and sometimes funny things. (B, I, A)

39. *Ancestral Homes and Aha Moments*. If you are lucky, you may some day stand where your ancestors lived. Real research, some serendipity, and a little luck can help.

40. **GenGems: Fonkert's Favorites**. You just never know what you'll find. Sometimes it's funny. Sometimes it's sentimental. Sometimes, it's a Eureka moment! The speaker shares some of the best from 30 years of research.