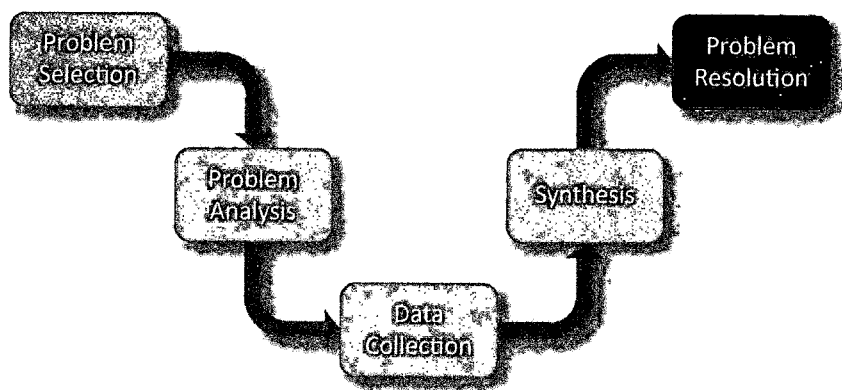


ELEMENTS OF
Genealogical Analysis

Robert Charles Anderson, FASG

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Chapter Eight

Problem Resolution

As we have emphasized throughout this book, the solution of a genealogical problem is always the result of the joining of two or more linkage bundles or dossiers. Merging two or more bundles into a dossier, however, does not always lead to the satisfactory solution of a genealogical problem, as shown in the case of Hannah Farnham in the last chapter.

In this chapter we will review the final stages of some of the problems discussed in early chapters, to clarify just what constitutes **problem resolution**. Two additional case studies will further exemplify these criteria, and the chapter will conclude with a brief discussion of a final strategy that may assist us in problem resolution.

Criteria of Problem Resolution

In Chapter Four, Problem Selection, we introduced the concept of **genealogical definition** of an individual: minimally connecting that individual to his or her parents, spouse (or spouses), and children (see page 58). Having now proceeded through a number of case studies, in some instances resolving a genealogical problem and in other instances not, let's return to the idea of genealogical definition and see how it relates to problem resolution.

In the case of Rachel Hart, the first step was to create a linkage bundle for a woman of that name, relying only on the records in the Winthrop Medical Journal. The next step was to create a second linkage bundle for a woman named Rachel Cole, again relying solely on the same source. These two sets of conjoined records, when considered in isolation, could not be confidently linked to one another. Only when we explored the connections of the first linkage bundle in another direction, using evidence from the records of Rachel Hart's father and brother, were we able to make a confident linkage and resolve the problem.

As for John Borden, the linkage bundles created for a John Borden of Watertown and a John Borden of New London had points of similarity, but again we could not

weld them together with any confidence. Once we had brought in a third set of records, for a John Borden of Dedham, we were able to pull all three bundles into one larger dossier, and declare the genealogical problem to be solved.

Therefore we can make the following general observations:

- The resolution of a genealogical problem will always arise from a series of linkage decisions, that is, from serial application of the Second Fundamental Rule of Genealogy: You must have a sound, explicit reason for saying that any two individual records refer to the same person.
- Most of the linkage decisions a researcher makes do not directly address the genealogical problem of interest. Typical linkage decisions focus on determining whether two deeds refer to the same piece of land, or whether an individual holding a local office is the same as an individual of the same name who had been admitted to colony freemanship.
- As you build from linking individual records into a bundle, and then linking two or more bundles into a dossier, you will be recreating the life of a person. At some point, almost trivially, as the life of that person takes better shape, the resolution to the genealogical problem you are working on will gradually emerge.
- Directly comparing the process of record linkage with the concept of genealogical definition, we find that we never solve a single genealogical problem, but always two reciprocal problems. In demonstrating that the wife of John Cole was Rachel Hart, we have also shown that the daughter of Stephen Hart married John Cole. From the perspective of our imagery of unfinished tapestries, we have tied together the edges of two tapestries, finding that a loose thread in one is now connected to a loose thread in the other. We have resolved an unanswered question of genealogical definition in one incomplete pedigree by showing that it is the other end, the other half, of an unanswered question of genealogical definition in another incomplete pedigree.
- This last observation illuminates another aspect of problem resolution: *The solution to a genealogical problem may be possible when approached from one direction, but not from the other.* Sometimes a genealogist compiling a volume containing all the descendants of an immigrant will run into a dead end, such as an inability to determine the fate of a great-grandchild of the immigrant. Once the volume is published, a descendant will come forward with the crucial piece of evidence, which has been preserved only among the descendants of that great-grandchild. And the opposite situation can occur as well. A genealogist may be tracing his or her ancestry and come to a dead end some generations back. The answer may be found in records of a much earlier generation, provided by some other researcher studying

all the early families of a given time and place. The bottom-up and the top-down approaches may *both* be necessary.

- The technique of linkage analysis, the full application of the Second Fundamental Rule, can resolve problems of genealogical importance in addition to those directly bearing on genealogical definition. First, as in the case of John Borden, these techniques may also allow us to follow migrations of individuals. By linking the records of John Borden of Dedham with those of John Borden of New London, we were able to settle a number of questions of genealogical definition. But by also including the records of John Borden of Watertown, it was possible to add to our biographical knowledge of this man's wanderings without directly adding to our genealogical knowledge of that man. Second, as shown later in this chapter, researchers are often confronted with the problem of carefully distinguishing two or more men of the same name, a problem that these same tools can help resolve.

Case Studies

■ Samuel Gay (cont. from Chapter Four)

In the discussion of problem selection in Chapter Four, we noted that the parentage of Abigail, only wife of Samuel Gay, was unknown, and that we needed this information for her to be fully defined. We do have some information about Abigail. We know her age at death, and we can calculate an approximate birth year. We in fact have much information about her life from 1688 until her death in 1744; what we are missing are the details of her life before 1688, which would obviously include her birth and her connection with her parents. This situation is one of the commonest that researchers encounter in genealogical work—we have a portion of an individual's life history and are casting about for the remainder of that life. In this case we are looking for the early years of a girl named Abigail, which we can unite with the later history that we already have, to form the complete picture of a life. We possess an incomplete weaving, one of the dangling threads being Abigail, wife of Samuel Gay.

As in the case of Hannah Farnham in Chapter Seven, we commence by building a linkage bundle based on Abigail's life as wife of Samuel Gay. In the case of Hannah Farnham, we had a date of marriage and a surname but little additional information. With Abigail, wife of Samuel, the circumstances are different. There is no marriage record, so we must approximate the date of marriage using our knowledge of Samuel and Abigail Gay's children's birthdates. Their eldest known child was a son Samuel,

born at Roxbury, Massachusetts, on 24 February 1687/8. They had seven additional children, born at Roxbury and Swansea, Massachusetts. Unfortunately, we do not have recorded dates for all these children, but there was a daughter Hannah, born at Swansea on 30 April 1701, and apparently two children younger than that, and so perhaps born about 1703 and 1705. Based on the usual assumption that women were about 20 years old at first marriage, Abigail would have been born about 1667. She would then have been about 38 years old at the birth of her youngest child, well within the usual child-bearing range.

As a check upon this estimated date of birth for Abigail, we also have her age at death. After their period of residence at Swansea, the family had moved on to Lebanon, Connecticut, where Abigail died on 9 August 1744, "in her 78th year." Samuel outlived her and died there on 22 February 1753, "in his 92nd year." These dates are from the tombstone inscriptions in Exeter Cemetery, Lebanon. The formula "in her 78th year," if used correctly, would mean that Abigail was somewhere between her 77th and 78th birthday. This would place her birth between 9 August 1666 and 9 August 1667, which is an excellent match with the estimate derived from the birth date of her eldest child. (Note, by the way, that Samuel's death occurred in the year after the switch from the Julian to the Gregorian calendar, and so no resolution of a potential double-date is necessary.) See Figure 8.1 for the resulting linkage bundle.

We may gain some knowledge of the accuracy of the tombstone dates for Abigail by examining Samuel's dates more carefully, in other words, by employing source-analysis skills. The tombstone data would place Samuel's birth between 22 February 1661/2 and 22 February 1662/3. Samuel Gay was born at Dedham on 4 January 1662/3, so we have valuable evidence that whoever provided the information about Samuel Gay was an accurate reporter. Although we cannot be certain that the same person provided the information about both Samuel and Abigail, we have some evidence that members of this family had good knowledge of the family's vital events.

Having determined that Abigail was born in or very close to 1667, we next observe that she was probably a member of a Roxbury family. Samuel Gay was born in nearby Dedham, but his mother, Mary (Bridge) Gay, was from a Roxbury family, and Samuel's first two children were born at Roxbury. We hope, then, to find an Abigail born in Roxbury in or about 1667 who is not otherwise accounted for, and perhaps find evidence that this Abigail became the wife of Samuel Gay.

Fortunately for our purposes, both the town vital records and the church baptisms for Roxbury survive for the late 1660s and early 1670s, and they seem to be reasonably complete; that is, the record density for Roxbury

Linkage Bundle: Samuel Gay no. 1

On 24 February 1687/8, Samuel Gay, the eldest known child of Samuel and Abigail Gay, was born at Roxbury, Massachusetts.

On 9 August 1744, Abigail Gay, the wife of Samuel Gay, died at Lebanon, Connecticut, "in her 78th year."

Samuel and Abigail Gay of Roxbury, Swansea, and Lebanon had a son Joseph, a daughter Mehitable, and a grandson Philip.

Conclusion: By 1687 Samuel Gay, residing at Roxbury, had married a woman named Abigail, who was probably born about 1667.

Rationale: The first two records pertain to the same Abigail, if the two records pertain to the same Samuel Gay; and if he had only one wife between 1687 and 1744.

The evidence for claiming the Samuel Gay in these two records was one man consists of a string of deeds, which first document the move of Samuel Gay and his family to Swansea about 1690, and then a second move, from Swansea to Lebanon, shortly after 1715.

On the second point, no evidence has been found indicating that Samuel had more than one wife. There is no earlier death record for an Abigail, wife of Samuel, during the period in question, nor is there a marriage for Samuel to a second Abigail in the same interval. Additionally, these two records are chronologically consistent with one another.

Having linked these two records, we estimate the birth year for Abigail. Since women generally made their first marriage in early New England at about the age of 20, Abigail would have been born about 1667, based solely on the first of these two records. A more accurate estimate of her birth year may be derived from the tombstone inscription, which states that she was between her 77th and 78th birthdays at her death, and therefore born in late 1666 or early 1667, a nice fit with the rougher estimate based on the birth of her first known child. (We will use the information on the names of children and grandchildren at a later point in the argument.)

Confidence: Almost certain.

Figure 8.1.

in this period is working in our favor. Examining all these records from 1662 to 1672, we find eleven Abigails born in Roxbury. Of these, four may be immediately eliminated as having died young or married someone other than Samuel Gay. Of the remaining seven, an additional four were born at the outer edges of the search range, and we will investigate them further only if the more likely candidates do not provide a solution. We are left with three possibilities, born in or close to 1667:

Abigail Wise, born 20 June 1666 and baptized 4 [sic] June 1666, daughter of Joseph Wise

Abigail Curtis, born 1 April 1667, daughter of Philip Curtis

Abigail Holbrook, born 13 May 1669, daughter of Daniel Holbrook

The charts in Figure 8.2 present this information in three additional partial networks, to show that in each case we have a small portion of the lives of three women named Abigail, and in each instance are looking to see if one of these partial networks might be woven into what we know of the family of Samuel Gay, to produce a more complete tapestry.

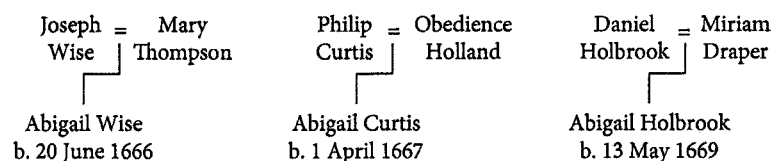


Figure 8.2.

Further examination of the Wise family demonstrated that Abigail Wise, daughter of Joseph, married about 1687 Adam Cogswell of Ipswich.¹ We are left, then, with two candidates to examine: Abigail Curtis and Abigail Holbrook.

In examining each of these candidates, we attend closely to several points of comparison, falling within three categories of circumstantial evidence: onomastics (study of proper names), chronology, and associations.

Onomastics (study of names): A number of given names appear among the descendants of Samuel Gay that are not otherwise seen at this early date in the Gay family, including Joseph, Mehitable, and Prudence among his children and Philip, Elisha, Simeon, and Gideon among his grandchildren. None of these names appears in the family of Abigail Holbrook. Three of the names, however, can be accounted for in the family of Abigail Curtis: her father was of course Philip, she had a brother Joseph, and her uncle Isaac had a daughter Mehitable, born before Samuel and Abigail Gay gave that name to one of their daughters.

Chronology: Comparing the known birth dates for the two candidates with the age at death for Abigail, wife of Samuel Gay, we observe that on 9 August 1744, Abigail Curtis would have been in her 78th year and Abigail Holbrook in her 76th year.

Associations: When we study the Curtis and Holbrook families, we discover three occasions on which members of the Gay and Curtis families interacted, but no such connections between the Gay and Holbrook families.

1. On 2 October 1682, Samuel Gay witnessed the will of Isaac Curtis, brother of Philip. This may have been Samuel, husband of Abigail, or his father Samuel. This record precedes by some years the marriage of the younger Samuel to Abigail, so probably arises through Mary (Bridge) Gay, mother of the younger Samuel. Thus, the Gay family and the Curtis family were certainly known to one another before the marriage of Samuel and Abigail.
2. On 1 August 1713, Mary Gay witnessed a deed in which the grantees were Benjamin and Obedience Gamlin. Obedience Gamlin was the remarried widow of Philip Curtis. Given the date, this Mary Gay could have been Mary (Bridge) Gay, or she could have been the daughter of Samuel and Abigail Gay, who was born about 1699, and was therefore just old enough to act legally as a witness.
3. On 22 July 1719, Mary Gay witnessed a deed in which the grantor was Obedience Gamlin, now a widow. By this date, Mary (Bridge) Gay was dead, so the witness in this instance was almost certainly the daughter of Samuel and Abigail Curtis, who was still single (and who in fact never married).

Looking back at our two candidates, Abigail Holbrook has nothing going for her. Not one of these three categories of evidence produces anything in her favor.

Abigail Curtis, however, comes out well ahead in all three categories: her family accounts for three of the "new" names among the children of Samuel and Abigail Gay; her year of birth matches exactly that calculated for the wife of Samuel Gay; and on at least three occasions the members of the Gay family witnessed legal documents executed by members of the Curtis family.

All this evidence, of course, is circumstantial, but altogether it is quite compelling. We are able, then, to state explicit reasons for concluding that the linkage bundles created around Abigail, wife of Samuel Gay, and around Abigail, daughter of Philip Curtis (Figure 8.3), pertain to the same individual. This conclusion has a confidence level of highly probable, inasmuch as all evidence points in the same direction, and the record density is favorable. The conclusion does not attain the level of "almost certain," since there remains the possibility that some other Abigail, perhaps omitted from the Roxbury records, perhaps from some other town, may actually have been Samuel's wife.

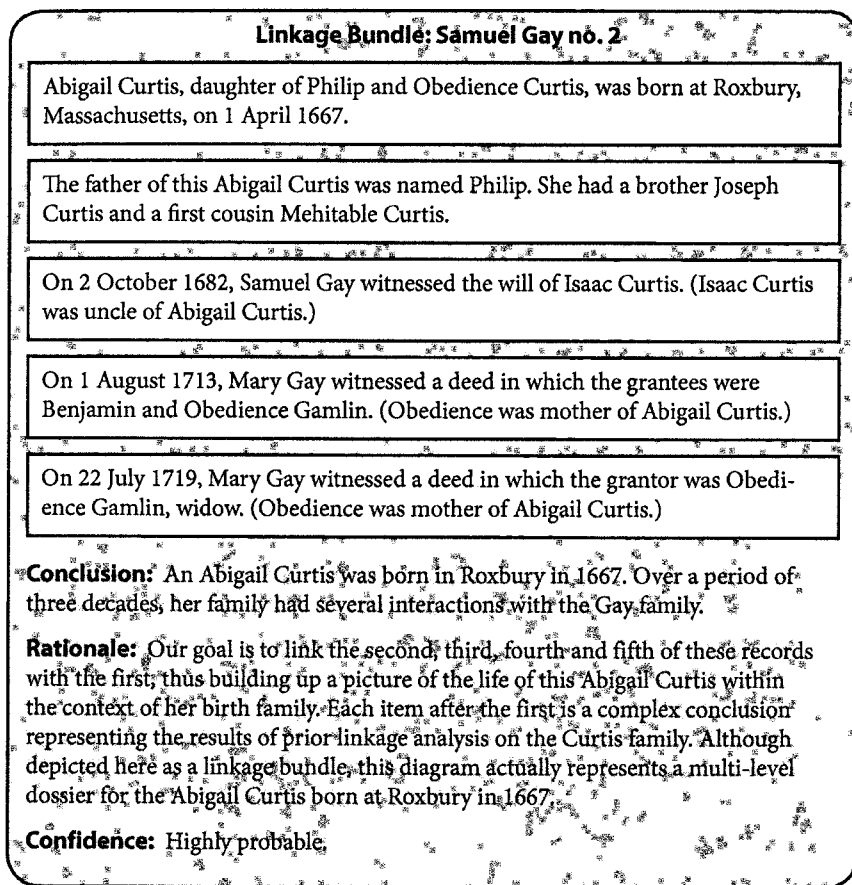


Figure 8.3.

In this one final linkage step, which creates the dossier for a single person (Figure 8.4), now designated as Abigail (Curtis) Gay, we have solved two reciprocal genealogical problems: we have provided parents for the wife of Samuel Gay and we have provided a spouse for the daughter of Philip Curtis.²

William White

The Second Fundamental Rule of genealogy may also be stood on its head. Not only do we demand that there be an explicit reason for stating that any two records pertain to a given individual, we also must work hard to be certain that we do not even inadvertently link two records that actually belong to two different individuals. This is, of course, the ever-present pitfall of “the name’s the same.”

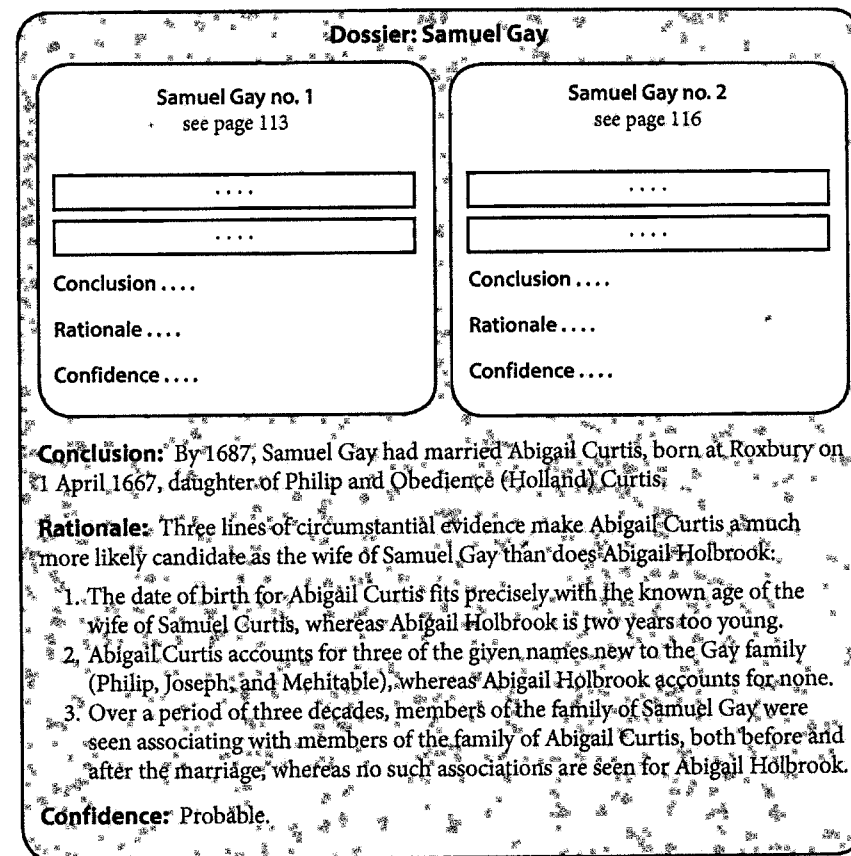


Figure 8.4.

An example of this problem may be found in the early men of Essex County, Massachusetts, named William White. In his *Genealogical Dictionary of New England*, James Savage had three entries for men of that name in the towns of Ipswich and Newbury. By looking at the first of these entries, we can see where Savage went wrong.

WILLIAM, Newbury, freeman 22 June 1642, had come from London in the Mary and John 1634, and first sat down at Ipswich, then removed probably in 1635 or 6, with many of his fellow-passengers, to Newbury, had John and James, the latter born says Coffin, about 1649; removed to Haverhill, there died 1690, aged 80.³

Savage explicitly identified only one of his sources, “Coffin,” referring to the history of Newbury published in 1845 by Joshua Coffin. He relied on that non-contemporaneous source for only one of his statements in this entry, the age of supposed son James.

Let's first engage in some reverse linkage analysis, as discussed in Chapter Five, and list the separate statements in this entry for which we would wish to find the original source.

1. Passenger from London on *Mary and John*, 1634
2. First residence in New England at Ipswich
3. Removal to Newbury in 1635 or 1636
4. Freeman as a Newbury resident, 22 June 1642
5. Son John
6. Son James, born about 1649
7. Removal to Haverhill
8. Death at Haverhill in 1690, aged 80

Assuming that each of these statements is based on one or more recoverable records, the immediate objective is to determine whether Savage was correct in linking them together as all pertaining to the same individual. (As noted above, Savage included two other entries for men named William White who resided at Ipswich, each based on its own set of records.⁴)

First Linkage Bundle

The passenger list for the *Mary & John*, compiled on 24 March 1633/4 and 26 March 1634, includes, under the earlier date, the name William White.⁵ This record will be the nucleus of our first linkage bundle. Assuming that this vessel sailed for New England shortly after the date the list was compiled, William White and his fellow passengers would have arrived in the New World in late May or early June of 1634.

As Savage noted, a number of the passengers on the *Mary & John* settled first at Ipswich and then, when the neighboring town of Newbury was settled in 1635, were among the first settlers there. It is not surprising, therefore, to find records for a William White in Ipswich, the earliest being on 29 December 1634, when "a spring in question of difference between Mr. Nicholas Easton and William White was decided by . . . the committee appointed for that end."⁶ William White was one of the commonest names to be found in England at the time of the Great Migration, and so not an unusual name in early New England. Since Nicholas Easton was also a passenger on the *Mary & John*, however, we may be reasonably confident that this record for a William White pertains to the 1634 passenger of that name. This first linkage decision creates a linkage bundle that ties together the first two statements in the list of those made by Savage in the William White entry presented opposite. (See Figure 8.5.)

Linkage Bundle: William White no. 1

On 24 March 1633/4, "William White" was enrolled at Southampton as a passenger for New England on the *Mary & John*.

On 29 December 1634, a dispute "between Mr. Nicholas Easton and William White was decided by . . . the committee appointed for that end" at Ipswich.

Conclusion: A man named William White sailed from England for New England in the spring of 1634 and, by the winter of the same year, was residing at Ipswich, Massachusetts.

Rationale: The second of these records is the earliest appearance of the name William White at Ipswich. Nicholas Easton was also a passenger on the *Mary & John* (as were a number of other men who first appeared at Ipswich in 1634).

Confidence: Highly probable.

Figure 8.5.

Other early records for William White at Ipswich describe the land grants made to him. On 26 January 1634/5, he received "twenty acres of land lying on the south side of this river."⁷ On 20 April 1635, the town compiled a list of all the land granted to William White by that date: "An houselot . . . , also . . . a place to set a house . . . , also . . . twenty acres of land part meadow, part upland, lying on the east side of town, also . . . two hundred acres of land lying at the further Chebacco, bounded on the southeast by a creek that lies between it and Mr. Cogswell's land, bounded on the north by a great bare hill without trees."⁸ The detailed descriptions of the last two parcels of land will turn out to be critical in sorting out the William Whites of early Essex County. To this point, there is no indication of a second William White in Ipswich, and so we add these two records to the linkage bundle that is beginning to take shape; see Figure 8.6. (Note that in this instance we are not creating a new linkage bundle but augmenting one already in existence.)

On 27 June 1638, "whereas William White of Ipswich, husbandman, had granted to him by the company of freemen twenty acres of land, lying at the east end of town, . . . being part meadow and part upland now the said William White hath sold unto Thomas Treadwell of Ipswich all the said twenty acres of meadow and upland lying and bounded as above written, for which land the said Thomas Treadwell hath given and paid in exchange, six acres of planting ground lying on the east side of the great hill commonly called Heartbreak Hill."⁹ Based on the description of the land, we may be confident that the William White of this record is the same as the man of that name of the 20 April 1635, and so, if the record of 20 April 1635 pertains to the 1634 passenger, then so must this deed of 27 June 1638.

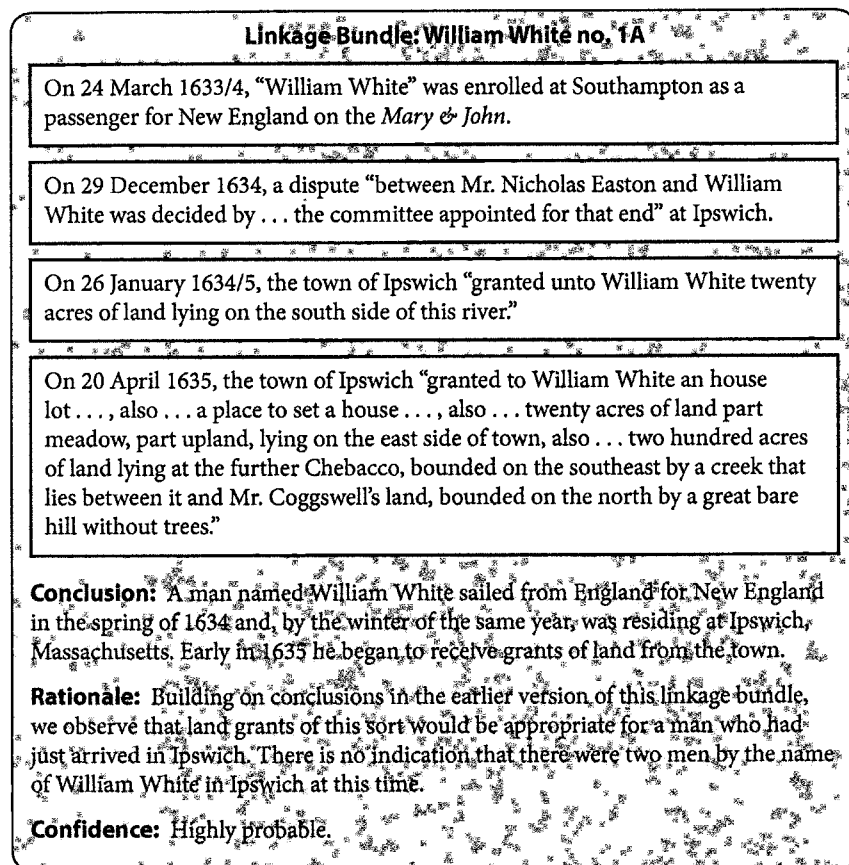


Figure 8.6.

This exchange of land between William White and Thomas Treadwell states explicitly that William White was resident of Ipswich at the time of the 1635 deed, but not that he was living there in 1638. However, since the land that White received in exchange was also in Ipswich, his continued residence in that town seems highly likely. Here the story we are building departs from that prepared by Savage, who thought that the 1634 passenger had, after a brief residence at Ipswich, moved on to Newbury by 1635 or 1636.

Second Linkage Bundle

At this point, we set aside the linkage bundle we have been building for the 1634 passenger and look for evidence of a William White at Newbury. No man of this name appears in the early town meeting records of Newbury, which are reasonably complete for the late 1630s. William White does

appear in a list of Newbury proprietors dated 7 December 1642,¹⁰ but nowhere else in the early lists of Newbury landholding.

We can with reasonable confidence place a William White in Newbury on 22 June 1642, when six men were admitted to Massachusetts Bay freemanship. Four of these men (Henry Palmer, Joseph Peasley, William Titcomb, and Thomas Dow) were certainly Newbury residents on that date and a fifth (Richard Pid) may also have been of that town (if we assume that this name, not otherwise seen in New England, was a garbled version of Richard Fitz). The remaining name in this list of freemen, fifth in the sequence of six, was William White, and so we conclude that he also was of Newbury on that date.

On 10 April 1650, "William Easto of Hampton . . . , husbandman," sold to "William White of Haverhill, planter, . . . my house and lot with all the appurtenances thereunto belonging, as upland, marsh or meadow, that is mine, excepting four acres sold unto Mr. John Oliver . . . in the town of Newbury."¹¹ On 6 July 1650, "whereas William White, lately of Newbery . . . , yeoman, . . . did heretofore sell unto Thomas Jones, then of Newbery, now of Charlestowne, butcher, all his houselot of four acres . . . in Newbery aforesaid, as it is next to the land of Robert Coker, with twelve acres of salt marsh below Great Pine Island, witness now these presents, that the said Thomas Jones long since in the year 1641 or 1642 . . . did sell all that abovementioned house, houselot, with twelve acres of salt marsh below Great Pine Island with all the privileges thereto belonging, to William Elnsly of Newbery aforesaid."¹² On 8 April 1679, "John Emerie Sr., aged about eighty-one years, testified that about forty years ago he saw laid out to William Estow then living in Nuberie a four-acre lot being a houselot and twelve acres of meadow, bounded by Great Pine Island creek southerly, . . . which land said Estow sold to William White, and White to Tho[mas] Jones of Hampton, and Jones to deponent for William Ilsly Sr., who has peacably enjoyed it from 1643 to date."¹³

If we interpret the 1650 deed from Eastow to White to be a belated confirmation of a sale made about ten years earlier, as testified to by John Emery in 1679, then all three documents fall into line. They place a William White in Newbury about 1641 or 1642 (which is consistent with the record of William White as a freeman and proprietor at Newbury in 1642), and they further indicate that by 1650 (and probably earlier) this William White was a resident of Haverhill. So, we have created a second linkage bundle (Figure 8.7), consisting of a record of freemanship, a record of proprietorship, two deeds, and a deposition, that tell the story of a William White who was in Newbury by 1642 and then moved on to Haverhill by the end of the 1640s. This includes the third, fourth, and seventh of the statements that we extracted from Savage's first William White entry.

Linkage Bundle: William White no. 2

On 22 June 1642, William White of Newbury was admitted as a freeman of Massachusetts Bay. (Of the six men admitted as freemen that day, the five other than William White are known to have been Newbury residents at the time, implying that William White was also of Newbury.)

On 7 December 1642, William White was included in a list of proprietors of Newbury land.

On 10 April 1650, "William Easto of Hampton . . . husbandman" sold to "William White of Haverhill, planter," land in Newbury.

On 6 July 1650, "whereas William White, lately of Newbery . . . yeoman, . . . did heretofore sell unto Thomas Jones, then of Newbery, now of Charlestowne, butcher," and "the said Thomas Jones long since in the year 1641 or 1642" sold the same land to "William Elnsly of Newbery aforesaid."

On 8 April 1679, John Emery Senior deposed that "about forty years ago . . . William Estow then living in Nuberie . . . sold [land] to William White, and White to Thomas Jones of Hampton, and Jones to William Ilsly Sr., who has peacably enjoyed it from 1643 to date."

Conclusion: The first appearance of a man named William White in Newbury, Massachusetts, was in 1642. He soon removed to Haverhill, Massachusetts.

Rationale: The first record marks the first appearance of a William White in Newbury records.

The second record, from just a few months later, almost certainly pertains to the same man, employing our usual argument that there are no indications of two men of the name in town in that year.

The fourth and fifth records, although dated in 1650 and 1679, refer to events in Newbury in the early 1640s, very close to the time of the first two records. These two records clearly refer to the same piece of land and to the same land transaction.

For the third record to connect to the fourth and fifth, we make the claim that this also referred to the same piece of land and the same land transaction, and is a confirmation by William Easto of the sale of nearly a decade earlier.

If we accept that interpretation, then all five records describe events involving a William White in Newbury in 1642 and 1643. Once we accept that all five records pertain to one man named William White, then the conclusion that he soon moved from Newbury to Haverhill is straightforward.

Confidence: Highly probable.

Figure 8.7.

Savage created his first William White entry by combining the two linkage bundles that we have created here. Was he justified in linking those two bundles of records to form a dossier for a William White of Ipswich, Newbury, and Haverhill? The following two lines of reasoning lead to the conclusion that he was not.

First, without rehearsing all the details behind the reasoning, an additional linkage bundle may be developed, for the name William White in Haverhill, which shows a man of that name there continuously from 1650 until his death at Haverhill on 28 September 1690, "aged about 80 years." This William White had a son John. We may confidently link this additional linkage bundle, which includes Savage's fifth and eighth statements, to the second linkage bundle, thus tracing the life of this man from 1642 to 1690. (We do not provide a diagram for this additional linkage bundle.)

Third Linkage Bundle

Second, when we return to Ipswich records, we find a number of additional items for the name William White, which show a man of that name in town until his death on 25 August 1684. Most important, on 2 October 1647, "William White of Ipswich" mortgaged to "Ralfe Dix of the same town, fisherman, . . . my farm lying and being in Ipswich aforesaid at Chebaco, containing by estimation 200 acres."¹⁴ This farm would appear to be the same farm granted to William White by early 1635, which we have already associated with the 1634 passenger.

This assumption is greatly strengthened by a deed of 6 April 1691, in which "James White of Ipswich" confirmed unto William Goodhue Junior a parcel of land, "in consideration that my father William White" had sold this parcel unto three other Ipswich men, who then sold the land to Goodhue; this piece of land is described in part as "fourscore & two acres . . . bounded in form following, viz: on the southeast by a creek, next Cogswell's farm, on the southwest by the common of Ipswich & land of the ministry of Chebacco."¹⁵ Despite the passage of more than half a century, this large tract of land is recognizable as a large part of the farm granted to William White in 1635; the elements in common are the size of the parcel, the location in Chebacco (the eastern part of Ipswich, adjacent to Gloucester), and the adjacency to Mr. Cogswell's farm.

We have, therefore, created a third linkage bundle (Figure 8.8), for a William White in Ipswich from the 1640s until his death in 1684. Based on the history of the farm granted to William White in 1635, we may now link this third bundle to the augmented first bundle created above, thus describing the life of a single William White in Ipswich from 1634 to 1684. This third bundle includes the sixth statement from Savage's entry, so we have now accounted for all portions of this first William White in Savage's accounting.

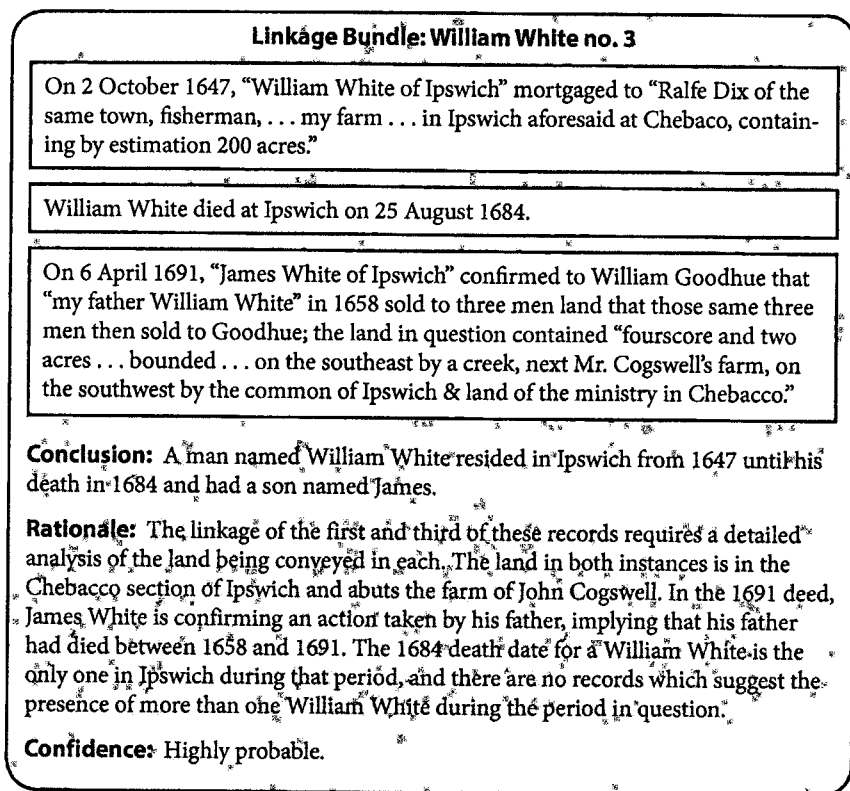


Figure 8.8.

By tying the first linkage bundle to the third, we exclude the possibility that this man can be the same as the William White of Newbury and Haverhill described above. (This entire problem is elaborated in much

Chronological lists as analytic tools

A technique that can be especially helpful in sorting out two or more people of the same name is to compile a simple chronological list of *all* the occurrences of that name. Such a list may possibly highlight instances in which two or more records for that name are in direct conflict and cannot possibly be for the same person. When you find such a conflicting pair of records, each can be employed as the seed crystal for distinct linkage bundles that may lead to the solution of the problem. In 1981 Ruth Wilder Sherman employed this technique in reverse manner as part of her argument that a man named William Drinkwater from 1700 to 1722 was identical with a man named Warren Drinkwater from 1723 until his death sometime after 1734.¹⁶

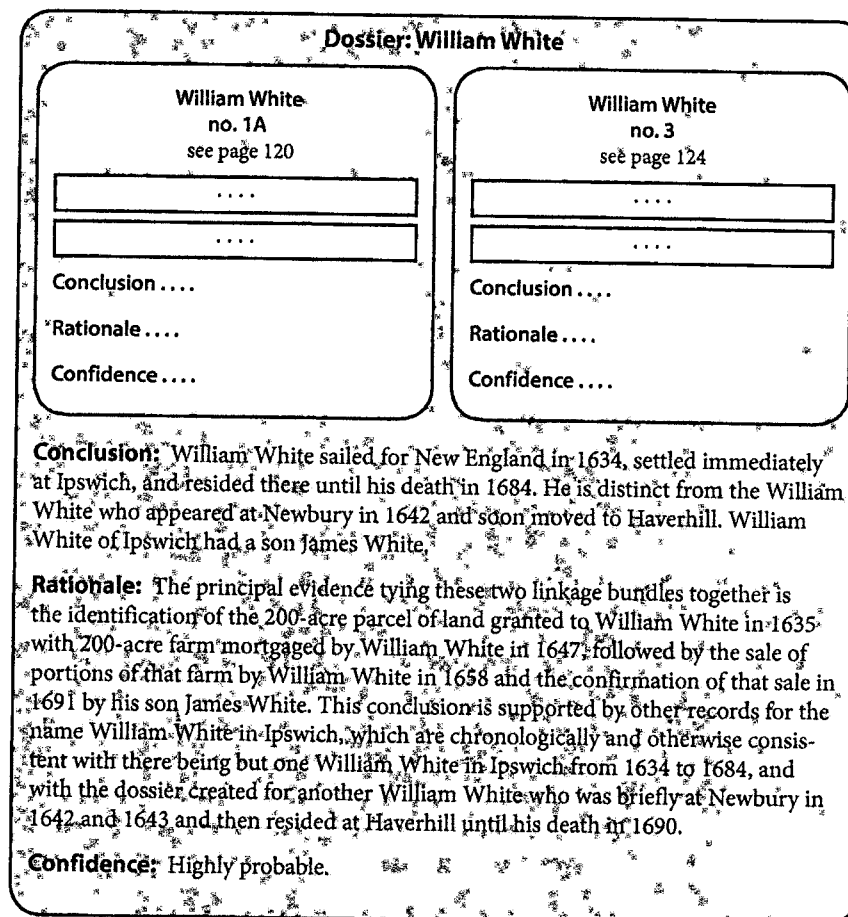


Figure 8.9.

greater detail in the Great Migration sketch of William White.¹⁷) Thus, by applying the same rules and the same procedure that we have employed in identifying spouses and parents, we have carefully separated myriad records that pertain to two different individuals, thus avoiding falling into the "name's the same" fallacy. Figure 8.9 presents the dossier that describes William White of Ipswich.

Evaluating Your Conclusion: The White Queen Test

Once you have reached a genealogical conclusion, with whatever degree of confidence, you should apply one final test, the White Queen Test, named for the White Queen in Lewis Carroll's *Alice Through the Looking Glass*. The White Queen assured Alice that she was quite capable of believing six impossible things before breakfast. In this test, you emulate the White Queen by turning your conclusion on its head and asking what you would have to believe if the conclusion were *untrue*. As the propositions you must believe in order to *disprove* your hypothesis become more and more unbelievable (to anyone but the White Queen), so your proposed conclusion gains in strength.

As an example, let's take the English origin of John Hunting, who settled in Dedham, Massachusetts, in 1638.¹⁸ As is our usual procedure, we first gather what we know about this man once he has arrived in New England. He had a wife, Esther, and at least five children born in England: son John and daughters Mary, Margaret, Esther, and Elizabeth. Based on evidence from New England, mostly their dates of marriage, these children were born in the late 1620s and early 1630s— suggesting that John Hunting himself was born not far from 1600.

In many instances of early migration to New England, information of this sort is all we have to work with. For John Hunting and his family, however, we have much more. In her will of 4 January 1675/6, Hester Hunting, wife of John Hunting, included a bequest to "my loving brother Francis Seaborne in old England." Further research unearthed the marriage of John Hunting and Hester Seaborne at Wramplingham, Norfolk, on 28 June 1624. (The names Esther and Hester were interchangeable in the seventeenth century.)

Wramplingham is in south-central Norfolk, a likely origin for an early Dedham, Massachusetts, family, as many of the immigrants to that town in the late 1630s were from southern Norfolk and northern Suffolk. A survey of records in that part of England reveals that the Hunting surname was common in a number of parishes in north-central Suffolk, including at Hoxne, Thrandeston, and Oakley. The baptism of a John Hunting, son of William and Margaret, at Thrandeston on 24 January 1601/2 is a good match for the immigrant to New England. Baptisms for Mary and Margaret, daughters of John Hunting, were discovered at nearby Hoxne in 1626 and 1628, and of Esther, Elizabeth, and John, children of John Hunting, at Oakley in 1631, 1634, and 1636. Finally, "Margaret Hunting of Hoxne . . . , widow," mother of the John Hunting baptized at Thrandeston, in her will of 25 October 1648, included a bequest to "John Hunting of New England my son."

The identification of the English origin of John Hunting and his family presented here in outline is about as strong and solid as it gets. Given the close match of the names and baptismal dates of the children in Norfolk with what is known of the

family in New England, the identification would be solid even without the will of Margaret Hunting.

In this case, then, in order to apply the White Queen Test, you would say, "What do I have to believe to state that John Hunting in New England with wife Esther and these five children is *not* the same one whose records are found in Oakley and in Hoxne and whose mother says he is in New England?" And you have to believe a lot of very strange things.

You have to believe, first of all, that there were two people who met these criteria— not just two John Huntings, but two with wife Esther and all of these children. You have to believe that there were two of them who came to New England and one of them left no records; that the one from Hoxne and Oakley came to New England as his mother's will says that he did, but that he just evaporated; and that the other one appeared out of nowhere with no other record that we can find. Or you have to believe that there were two John Huntings in Hoxne and Oakley, one of whom shows up in the records and the other of whom doesn't, and it is the one who doesn't who comes to New England. Or some other equally unlikely story.

In other words, you try to destroy your own conclusion, and when you begin to have to generate these fairytales to say that your conclusion is not correct, then the more confident you may be that your conclusion *is* correct. The probability of the correctness of your conclusion is proportional to the improbability, even the impossibility, of the stories generated by the White Queen Test.

Summary

In this chapter we have examined a number of concepts which bear on the problem-solving step of problem resolution. In one way or another, most of these concepts derive from the Second Fundamental Rule.

- Our primary goal in genealogical research is adding to our knowledge of the genealogical definition of an individual, that is, of providing some evidence that will lead to the identification of that person's parents, spouses and children.
- The solution of a genealogical problem is the result of joining two or more linkage bundles or dossiers.
- The solution of any given genealogical problem is the reciprocal of some other problem; for example, identifying someone's parents simultaneously adds to the genealogical definition of one of the children of those parents.