

## Genealogy Rocks!

### Chasing Collaterals

Many beginning family historians focus on their direct ancestors: parents, grandparents, etc. While this is a good beginning, it's equally important to research collateral relatives. Collateral relatives are all those relatives that you're not directly descended from, such as cousins, aunts, and uncles. Some genealogists complain that they're really not that interested in great aunts and distant cousins; after all, these are not "your" line.



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However, as more seasoned genealogists are aware, you never know what you might find when you search out those collaterals. Your great grandmother may not have kept a diary, but perhaps her younger sister did; maybe your great grandfather's naturalization record has no information about his hometown in Ireland, but his older brother's does. A good plan is to try to find every record for collateral relatives that you find for direct ones. Some types of records to search for might include naturalization records, obituaries, birth and death records, census records and so on.

The Internet has made it much easier to find and access these various records. In addition to the records themselves, the Internet has made it possible to find descendants of collateral relatives. Message Boards such as those found on Ancestry.com, Rootsweb and Genforum allow you to post queries about ancestors. Over the years, I've found numerous "genealogy cousins" who've supplied me with pictures, stories and letters about my ancestral families that I'd never seen, items which I didn't even know existed. Even in the cases where these distant cousins had no new information, just corresponding with them and looking over my own research again helped me see clues that I'd missed before.

Can chasing collaterals solve every genealogical puzzle? Probably not, but it's surprising how many brick walls can be breached by researching all those people who aren't really "yours."

❖ *Carol Stetser is the VP, researcher, and speaker for Larimer County Genealogical Society. Free presentations: Intro to Genealogy, Feb. 13, 9 am, Loveland Library and Care and Feeding of Photos, Feb. 18, 6:30 pm Fort Collins' Harmony Library. Please visit [www.lcgsc.org](http://www.lcgsc.org) for more events and information.*