

# DO YOU HAVE AN

## *Artificial*

# BRICK WALL?

ReclaimingKin.com



By Robyn N. Smith

msualumni33@gmail.com



Art and Picture Collection, The New York Public Library, 1885. *Hey, diddle, diddle, the cat and the fiddle.*

- ✓ I use the term **"artificial brick wall"** to refer to genealogical problems that aren't actually brick walls; they are cases where we simply haven't done thorough enough research yet to reach a conclusion.
- ✓ Let's not be too quick to declare something a brick wall. There is so much of our research that can easily take *years* to complete.

## 12 WAYS TO PREVENT ARTIFICIAL BRICK WALLS

- 1) Redouble your efforts to find missing families/people in the census.

Use multiple search strategies and learn to [extract every single clue from the census](#).

- 2) Visit multiple repositories in person.

At a minimum visit the state archives, the local genealogical society, the local library, and the local courthouse.

- 3) Always strive to examine the original source.

[Don't just rely on an indexed record](#) or a date provided by a book or database.

- 4) Research in a wide variety of sources, even the ones more difficult to access.

Have you researched [land](#) & [court records](#)? What about church & [probate records](#)? Have you located historic maps?

- 5) Search the ["cluster" of people](#) associated with your ancestors.

Research the extended family, associates, and neighbors that keep appearing near your ancestors. Some of them may actually be family.

- 6) Research every sibling in each generation.

[Every sibling left different records](#). The information you need may be in *their* records.

- 7) Remember that human behavior hasn't changed.

People [had children before](#) and [outside of marriages](#). They also lived and loved [across the fictional boundaries of race](#).

- 8) Move beyond searching for new records; [analyze and correlate](#) the records you already have.

Learn how to [evaluate and correlate evidence](#); learn how to resolve conflicts.

- 9) Double your efforts to [find living descendants](#). They have information no archives will.

Use death certificates, obituaries, yellow pages and the Social Security databases to find names of living cousins. Can you find them on social media?

- 10) Consider your ancestor may have had multiple marriages. **Verify each parent separately.**

*Never* assume [the wife is the mother](#) of all the children in a household.

- 11) Expand your research to less commonly used records.

Manuscripts and special collections archives and libraries [can yield valuable sources](#).

- 12) Grow your genealogical skills by reading, taking classes, and joining genealogy groups.

You will learn new skills by joining genealogy groups, and gain inspiration from others on the same journey.

- ✓ **Note:** *Reclaiming Kin* has hundreds of useful genealogy-skillbuilding posts. Easily find them at this [Archives link](#). Also, *Reclaiming Kin* has downloadable [Microsoft tables](#) for sale.