

ORIGINAL SOURCES

We are always told, when doing genealogical research, to not rely on others research but be sure to check the original sources ourselves. A good example of this is the International Genealogical Index (IGI) put out by the Church of the Latter Day Saints. The IGI is a terrific tool and invaluable to all genealogists but it has its limitations and there are some inaccuracies. The limitations were brought home to me recently with two terrific examples:

I had a call recently from a fellow member of the B.C. Genealogical Society, one of the many who kindly keep an eye out for Whitlocks during their own research. Valerie phoned to let me know she had ordered the film for St.Olave, Southwark, Surrey, England and she noticed as she was working her way through it there were plenty of Whitlocks. She had written down the first few and when she listed them off I knew I had them in the files as entries from the IGI. As there were so many of them Valerie had stopped recording them and was offering the film to me to search if I wished. It happen I was able to get down to the library within a few days so I took my computer with me and had a look at the film.

As the first four entries I came across were all in the computer I assumed the rest would be as well so used the computer to search for each of them. In about twenty minutes I had photocopies of the eleven baptisms I showed recorded between 1837 and 1864.

As most of you will have used the IGI at some time I am sure you know the detail it gives: Name, parents, date of baptism, place. The original entries gave some very useful additional detail. Foremost is date of birth. The father's occupation was given as was the place of residence. These last two details can be very useful, particular if you happen to have two John and Elizabeth Whitlocks having children at the same time. The street address can also help you pinpoint the family when using census records.

In this case the fact that Robert Whitlock of St.Olave, Southwark was shown as a Cheesemonger told me immediately which family he belonged to and also allowed me to connect additional information from the London trade directories.

The same was true of Joseph Whitlock who was shown as a Miller. This tied him into additional information that was already in the files. You could also see Joseph's progression from Miller to Corn Dealer to Corn Chandler to Corn and Coal Merchant.

Thus while I had all the basic information in the files, consulting the original gave very useful additional information. In this case there was also one date of birth that showed as the date of baptism in the IGI so that was corrected as well.

The second example came from Janis Kirby. Janis has been looking for a James Whitlock born about 1750 who married as a widower, the widow Elizabeth Lake. James and Elizabeth were married Sep.12,1791 in Witham, Essex. Understandable Janis had been concentrating her research in the Essex, London area. After some years of getting nowhere with this line (WHITLOCK.67) I suggested to Janis she try some of the more remote possibilities of which there were two. There was a James Whitlock born in Pitton, Wiltshire that fit the time period and there was also a family in Kirk Hammerton, Yorkshire that matched closely enough the name names of James and his siblings to warrant some attention. I had suggested to Janis she write to Ray Skinner in Swindon as he was something of an expert on the Yorkshire families. This was also for the point of view that the Pitton James appeared to have been accounted for.

I think Janis thought it was a bit far fetched to find her Essex family in Yorkshire and she preferred the Pitton

option but she wrote to Ray and was very surprised by his reply.

Ray checked the parish registers for Kirk Hammerton and while the IGI showed the baptism of Isaac Whitlock1783 son of James & Sarah Whitlock the register also mentioned that... (quote from Janis' letter)

Thus while the IGI gave the basic information consulting the original register uncovered a totally unexpected gem that has to rate as every genealogists dream.

I would say the James Whitlock of Kirk Hammerton is the James Janis is looking for as Sarah (Spink) Whitlock is buried ...1790. Strangely the Kirk Hammerton entry also provides a link back to the other possible location, Pitton in Wiltshire.

Thus in both these cases, while the IGI gave the basic information, consulting the original registers not only confirmed the information was correctly transcribed but provided the additional detail required to confirm the suspected connection.