

Tuesday's Tip: Mary (Bliss) Parsons - Which Witch??



Painting that many attribute as Mary (Bliss) Parsons, but it is not. No known images exist of her. Unknown source.

[McMurray Family, Burnell Family](#) (Click for Family Tree)

Tuesday's Tip: Be careful with names.

Even when the occupation or another trait seems to "fit," do an 'exhaustive search' to make sure you have the correct ancestor.

Initial research on Mary Parsons as an ancestor provided

confusing results.

Two women with the name of Mary Parsons lived in two of the same towns during the same time period. That is challenging enough, but during the early research, I knew that "our" ancestor had been accused as a witch. That was not enough to distinguish one from the other, however- *both* of these Marys had been accused as witches! WOW!- so were they the same person?

No.

The key to this problem was to find the maiden names of the women- not always easy to do, especially in very early records. For women, looking at their children is also a clue. Well, sometimes children can be a clue, however the same few names were often used, children died young, etc. But the number of children, their birth years, and names, can be tidbits that might also prove helpful to differentiate two people, or prove they are the same.

In our case, the children helped but maiden names were the definitive way to show they were indeed two different women.

Mary (Lewis) Parsons, wife of Hugh Parsons, lived in Springfield, Hamden, Massachusetts at the same time as Mary (Bliss) Parsons, our ancestor. We have posted extensively about both families in our series on Mary (Bliss) Parsons. Once we found the maiden names of "Lewis" and "Bliss" it was fairly easy to distinguish between the two women. Additionally, Mary (Lewis) was older and had fewer children than "our" Mary (Bliss) Parsons.

Interestingly, though, some additional research shows that "Lewis" was NOT the maiden name of the wife of Hugh Parsons. I have never seen this mentioned in any of the scholarship on the two families, however.

How do I know that? It's that BSOS- "Bright Shiny Object Syndrome," where one has to look at just one more piece of evidence... though at least this one did not take me far from the original focus.

American Ancestors, the website of the New England Historic & Genealogical Society (NEHGS), has a database with the papers of John Winthrop, Deputy Governor of Massachusetts. In a letter from William Pynchon in Springfield to Winthrop, dated 15 September 1645, Pynchon states:

I wrote to you... about one Mary Lewis the wife of Lewis a papist. [*a Catholic- something abhorred by the Puritans.*] she hath been aboue [about] 7y[ears] seperated from her husband, and is perswaded by others that she may marry by the lawes of England: she is easely perswaded to that bec[ause] she liues [lives] vnder [under] temptations of desyer [desire] of mariage and I vnderstand [understand] lately that she is falen into a league of amity [*a "friendly" relationship*] with a bricke maker of our Towne...

This "bricke maker of our Towne" was none other than Hugh Parsons.

Thus "Lewis" was the *married* name of Mary, from her first marriage. Some researchers do note that she was deserted by her first husband (the "papist"), but none that I have found note her maiden name; I have not found it either.

Gov. Winthrop must have approved the "league of amity," as the marriage of Mary and Hugh is recorded in the Springfield, Massachusetts Vol. 1, page 20 of "Massachusetts Vital Records to 1850" on AmericanAncestors.org. It is written as:

Hugh Parsons & mary Lewis joyned in m[*torn*] 8 mon. 27 day 1645.

Researchers have therefore assumed that Mary's maiden name was

Lewis. But it most likely was not, as can be deduced from Pynchon's letter stating she had married a man named Lewis. Of course, her maiden name *could* have been 'Lewis' and she married a man named 'Lewis'- such things did happen, but it was less likely. Either way, technically, her name should be genealogically written as "Mary (__) [Lewis] Parsons."

So another tip: don't assume!

Notes, Sources, and References:

1. See resources listed in previous posts about Mary (Bliss) Parsons, Parts 1-4 beginning with:
"No Ghoulies, No Ghosties, But a Witch? Yep. Part 1"—<http://heritageramblings.net/2015/10/31/no-ghoulies-n-o-ghosties-but-a-witch-yep-part-1/>

"Wedding Wednesday: Mary Parsons and Ebenezer Bridgman"—<http://heritageramblings.net/2015/12/23/wedding-wednesday-mary-parsons-and-ebenezer-bridgman/>
2. *Gov. John Winthrop Papers, Vol. 1-5, 1557 to 1649*. (Online database. AmericanAncestors.org. New England Historic Genealogical Society, 2016.) Originally published as: *Winthrop Papers*. Boston: Massachusetts Historical Society, 1929 -. Vol. 5, page 45.
3. Massachusetts Vital Records to 1850 (Online Database: *AmericanAncestors.org*, New England Historic Genealogical Society, 2001-2016).
4. Newer usage in genealogy includes using brackets around previous married names, in addition to the convention of parentheses around maiden names.
5. Reading colonial writing is not as hard as it seems- if stumped, say the words out loud, as they were often spelled as they were said, and with whatever accent was

used. Also note that sometimes “v” and “u” were used interchangeably as in ‘vnderstand.’ Additionally, an “f” was often used as an “s,” especially if it was a double “s” in the word, as in “difmifsed” for “dismissed.”

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**Thankful Thursday: #My
Colorful Ancestry**



Birthplace Excel Chart, inspired by J. Paul Hawthorne. (*Click to enlarge.*)

[McMurray Family, Helbling Family](#) (*Click for Family Trees*)

Sometimes it seems I am ‘wasting’ time by reading so much on the internet, but one can learn fantastic things. There are also fantastic people who share their fantastic ideas with the world via the internet, and for that I am so thankful- not only on Thankful Thursday.

Today, gratitude goes to J. Paul Hawthorne, who posted “[A Little Thing That Went Viral... #MyColorfulAncestry](#)” on his blog, “GeneaSpy.” Of course, I am behind the times as it went viral last March, but that is what happens when one lives with one foot in the present, and the other back in the 1700s, 1800s, etc.

The above chart is for the children of Edward A. McMurray, Jr.

and Mary Theresa (Helbling) McMurray.

Note how color-coding the Excel cells helps to show migration of a family.

Grayed cells are unknown birthplaces, although they most likely were in the same country as where the more recent generation was born, such as Germany or Ireland.

Follow the links on J. Paul's blog for templates to use, as a number of other genealogy bloggers have added generations. I do recommend that one clear the cells of text, or use all caps when inputting your own ancestor's birthplaces. When all the words are in the cells, then go back and change colors so that each state and country are different.

The chart also follows the genealogical convention of an Ahnentafel chart, with the father's name on top, mother's below. So the largest bright green box for Iowa is for Edward A. McMurray, Jr., and the largest rose-colored box for Missouri would be the birthplace of Mary (Helbling) McMurray. Mary's father, William Gerard Helbling, was born in Missouri, so is represented to the right, with the lower box being for her mother, Anna May (Beerbower) Helbling, who was born in Indiana. Take a look at the associated family trees for names and details.

Notes, Sources, and References:

1. "[A Little Thing That Went Viral... #MyColorfulAncestry](http://www.geneaspy.com/2016/03/a-little-thing-that-went-viral.html)" by J. Paul Hawthorne in his blog, "GeneaSpy." <http://www.geneaspy.com/2016/03/a-little-thing-that-went-viral.html>. Thanks to J. Paul for sharing such a cool idea!
2. There are many excellent versions of this chart found throughout genea-blogland.
3. Excel is an excellent tool for timelines, one-name or

one-place study, data analysis, etc. Many videos and webinars are available online and information is available on FaceBook and genealogy blogs as to how to use Excel as more than just a numbers-cruncher.

4. Make sure that you note the problem with dates in Excel- it only recognizes those that go back to 1900! So all my dates are in three columns in Excel- one each for day, month, and four-digit year. The months can be listed as numbers for easy sorting, or Excel has a function that allows you to tell it to sort by month order. See Teresa Keogh's Excel videos, especially, "[Example 7 – The Date Issue in Excel](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4hj6FS2QViI)" at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4hj6FS2QViI>

Click to enlarge any image. Please contact us if you would like an image in higher resolution.

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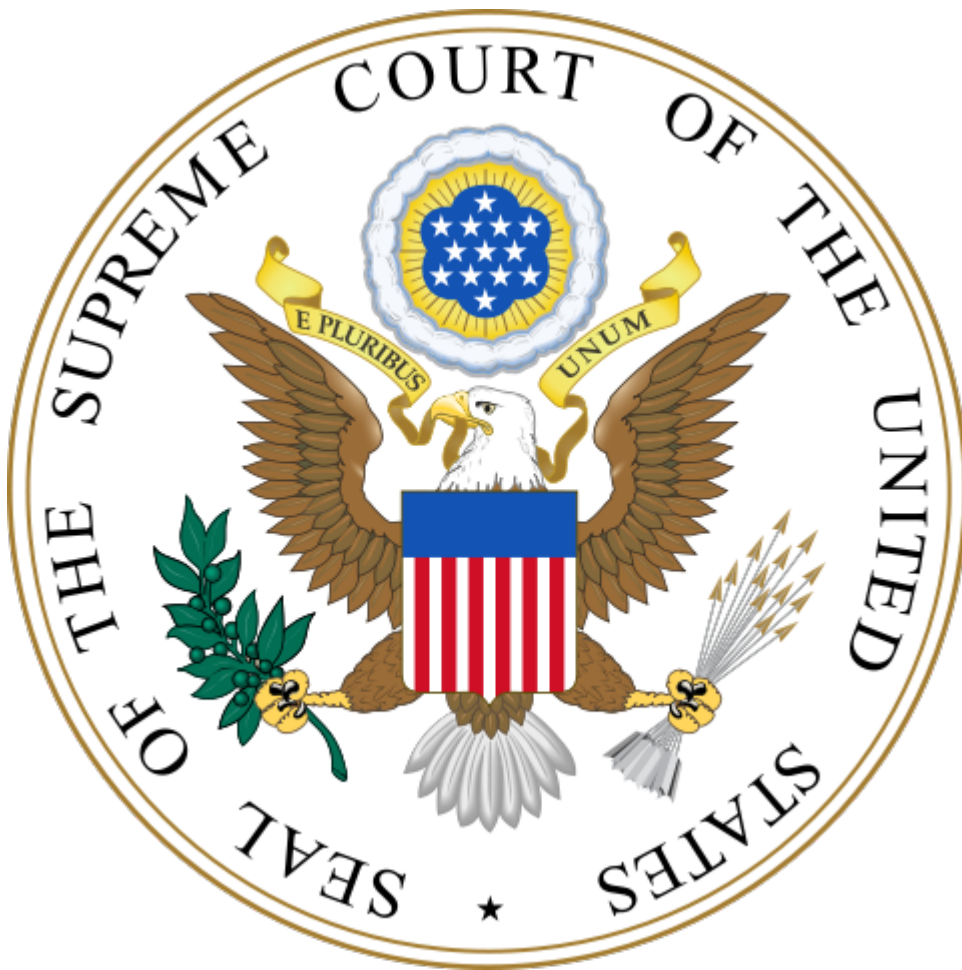
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Friday Funny: A Federal Income Tax is 'Unconstitutional'



Seal of the Supreme Court of the United States of America.
Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons.

[McMurray Family, Payne Family](#) (Click for Family Tree)

Well, maybe this isn't so funny... maybe funny-ironic?

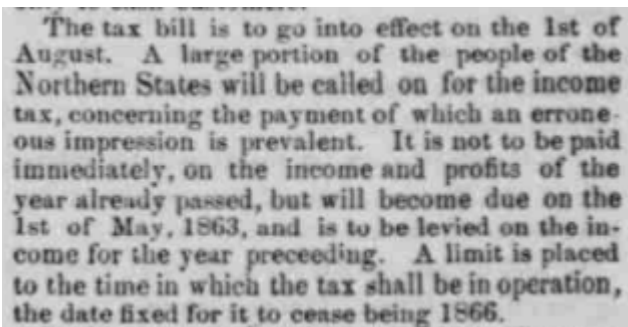
Our "Friday Funny" today is courtesy of the 1895 Supreme Court ruling in *Pollock v. Farmers' Loan & Trust Co.* concerning an 1894 taxation law:

“The tax imposed ... so far as it falls on the income of real estate, and of personal property, being a direct tax, within the meaning of the constitution, and therefore unconstitutional and void, because not apportioned according to representation, all those sections, constituting one entire scheme of taxation, are necessarily invalid.”

Yes, they really declared income tax unconstitutional!

Since today is the anniversary of the founding of the Internal Revenue Service (though it did not yet have that name), on 1 July 1862, it is an appropriate day- of mourning, perhaps?- to consider how our ancestors saw income taxes and to explore how tax records are useful to family historians. They most likely did not find taxation funny either, but would have liked the idea that the Supreme Court felt certain taxes were unconstitutional.

Let's go back to the beginning of income taxes:



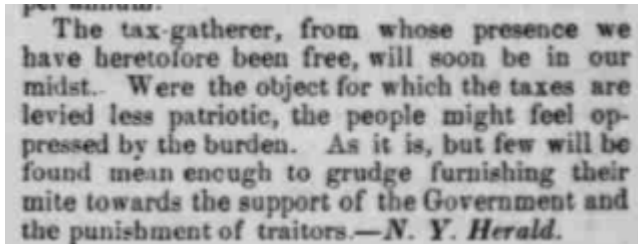
The tax bill is to go into effect on the 1st of August. A large portion of the people of the Northern States will be called on for the income tax, concerning the payment of which an erroneous impression is prevalent. It is not to be paid immediately, on the income and profits of the year already passed, but will become due on the 1st of May, 1863, and is to be levied on the income for the year preceeding. A limit is placed to the time in which the tax shall be in operation, the date fixed for it to cease being 1866.

“The Passage of the Tax Bill” detailing the new income tax, from the *N.Y. Herald*, printed in *The Indiana State Sentinel*, 30 June 1862: Vol. 22, No. 6, Whole No. 1,199, Page 1, Column 7. Via [Chronicling America](#).

That first federal tax collection was done to help fund the Union Civil War efforts to keep the country together. Taxes were levied at 3% on incomes above \$600 and 5% for incomes above \$10,000. The bill was amended in 1864 and raised to 5% for incomes \$600-\$5,000, 7.5% for incomes \$5,000-\$10,000, and 10% on incomes greater than \$10,000. (The Confederacy also levied taxes with a 1% tax on wages of \$1,000-\$2,500, and 2%

on income over \$2,500.)

Beginning an income tax to fund the Civil War surely made citizens have mixed feelings:



The tax-gatherer, from whose presence we have heretofore been free, will soon be in our midst. Were the object for which the taxes are levied less patriotic, the people might feel oppressed by the burden. As it is, but few will be found mean enough to grudge furnishing their mite towards the support of the Government and the punishment of traitors.—*N. Y. Herald.*

“The Passage of the Tax Bill” from the *N.Y. Herald*, printed in *The Indiana State Sentinel*, 30 June 1862: Vol. 22, No. 6, Whole No. 1,199, Page 1, Column 7. Via Chronicling America.

The Federal tax was to continue until 1866, however it remained in force until 1872.

Once Congress had gotten used to citizens filling the kitty each year for them to spend as they wished, new bills for taxation were introduced regularly. In our Constitution, Article 1 gives Congress the power to levy “Taxes, Duties, Imposts and Excises.” Direct taxes, however, were limited and Congress had to apportion them according to the population of a state; indirect taxes were not allowed. Apportionment was hard to do with an income tax, as some of the tax was collected on income from property, such as rental property or dividends on stocks, which was considered an ‘indirect tax’; therefore most thought an income tax was unconstitutional. (See references below for better legal details.)

Now back to *Pollock v. Farmers’ Loan & Trust Co.* Never fear, our Congress took action once an income tax was declared unconstitutional! Not fast though, as it took until 1913 for the 16th Amendment to be ratified and give Congress the power...

“to lay and collect taxes on incomes, from whatever source derived, without apportionment among the several states, and without regard to any

census or enumeration.”

The branch of government that collects taxes officially become the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) in 1918.

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Of course, there *were* taxes long before 1862- “No taxation without representation!” was the cry of the American Revolutionaries against the oppressive taxes of King George of England, and those taxes were instrumental in forming our new nation. Early in the republic, imports were taxed via tariffs, whiskey was taxed (leading to “The Whiskey Rebellion”,) and even glass window panes were taxed at one point, as only the wealthy could afford real glass. States could tax property owners, and those who were eligible to vote (white males) paid a ‘poll tax,’ one way to ensure that only those of means could vote. But there were no federal income taxes.

Sometimes tax records are the only record we can find of our very early ancestors. Tax information can also be used to differentiate two persons of the same name, such as Sr. and Jr. (not necessarily related, and the Jr. would become Sr. when the elder man in town died), father and son, etc., by looking at assets.

The Internal Revenue Service and other tax records can give us quite a lot of insight into our ancestors- their property, other items they owned, what was important at the time, their neighbors and family, even their relative standing in the community economically when we compare them to others in the neighborhood.

Tax records are sometimes challenging to understand, and often difficult to read, plus often one has to flip back some pages to find the headings, place, date, etc. But they can be interesting additions to the information we have about our ancestors, and they are worth the extra time in researching.

Coming up: some family tax records.

Notes, Sources, and References:

1. Technically the first federal income tax bill was passed by Congress in 1861. That bill called for a 3% tax on incomes greater than \$800, but was never put into force.
2. "Taxation History of the United States"- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Taxation_history_of_the_United_States#Income_tax, accessed 6/26/16.
3. "The First Income Tax," Civil War trust- <http://www.civilwar.org/education/history/warfare-and-logistics/logistics/tax.html>, accessed 6/26/16.
4. Images from Chronicling America/Library of Congress- <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn82014306/1862-06-30/ed-1/seq-1/#date1=1862&index=4&rows=20&words=income+tax&searchType=basic&sequence=0&state=Indiana&date2=1862&proxtext=income+tax&y=11&x=11&dateFilterType=yearRange&page=1>

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Tuesday's Tip: Be careful out there!



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AncestryDNA is emailing customers with a new promo offer to refer a friend, who will get a 10% discount on their AncestryDNA kit. The person who does the referring will get a \$10 Amazon gift card. Sounds like a great deal, right?

Before clicking the "Tell a friend" button, make sure you click the 'Terms and Conditions' link first:

http://refer.dna.ancestry.com/terms-and-conditions/55e0d3a363616e6796000009?o_xid=69620&o_lid=69620&o_sch=Email+-+Campaigns

Wow. They can use your first and last name, the actual words from your email to your friend, any information you provided in your profile, such as where you live, your age, your picture, etc. etc. for both you and your friend. Would your friend (or family) like giving away their personal information in this way? What if you are referred by someone but do not want to be- can they use this information without the 'friend's' permission?

AncestryDNA can even use the email you sent to that family member for Ancestry publicity- "Let's find out if grandpa was illegitimate after all." They can use **any** of that information in **any** way for **any** publicity now and into the future without asking your permission- because you are **GIVING** them your permission by clicking the link and taking the offer. You could be watching tv one day and your info pop up in an Ancestry ad (the above grandpa might have a heart attack), or it could be in an ad in a publication in one of those countries where people like to collect such data for identity theft and fraud. Either are possible. (Yes, a lot of that info is already out there, but this connects people and places and etc. easily.)

So, 10% off a \$99 test kit is \$9.90. A \$10 gift card from Amazon makes the deal basically a discount of \$19.90, divided between two people. Those who use this program are selling the privacy of two people and future use of their information for publicity for the low, low price of \$9.95 per person.

Is this amount worth it???

We won't even get into the audacity of Ancestry for requiring this. Especially when they say, "protecting your privacy is at the core of what we do"...

Ancestry has a new Privacy Policy as well, so we should

probably read through that in case there are surprises- <http://www.ancestry.com/cs/legal/privacyphilosophy>.

We recently asked a cousin if they had taken a DNA test, and her reply was no, that she did not trust anyone to not take the resulting information and use it in nefarious ways. At first it seemed somewhat paranoid, but now... a slippery slope??

Google, Facebook, etc. mine our data and sell to the highest bidder. When things are free, like Google and Facebook, we know that "if you aren't buying a product, **YOU** are the product." (Read the Terms of Service for these websites and all that you use.) But when something is paid for, like an AncestryDNA kit or Ancestry subscription, we shouldn't be the product.

So think twice before clicking a button on **any** website, and do your homework- AKA 'due diligence' in today's jargon. Then make an informed decision.

Be careful out there.

Just sayin'.

Notes, Sources, and References:

1. AncestryDNA Refer a Friend Terms & Conditions (see #5): http://refer.dna.ancestry.com/terms-and-conditions/55e0d3a363616e6796000009?o_xid=69620&o_lid=69620&o_sch=Email+-+Campaigns
2. Ancestry's new privacy policy- <http://www.ancestry.com/cs/legal/privacyphilosophy>
3. Kuwait's DNA program:
The official stance- <http://news.kuwaittimes.net/website/kuwait-to-enforce-dna-testing-law-on-citizens-expats-visitors-tests->

[wont-be-used-to-determine-genealogy-affect-freedoms/](#)

Another POV-

<http://www.sciencealert.com/kuwait-has-become-the-first-country-to-make-dna-testing-mandatory-for-all-residents>

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Tuesday's Tip: Compare Photos Carefully and in Context- The Frances "Fannie" Isabella

(Brown) Chapman Photo Collection



Lizzie Speery

[Beerbower Family](#) (Click for Family Tree)

Any family historian lucky enough to find a batch of photos is likely to find some in that batch that are not labeled, or have incomplete labels. Sometimes a photo might include just a first name, or a place, or a date- frustratingly often just one of these, or just nothing. After all, the original owner knew who all the people were, so why put names on them??

Tuesday's Tip: Study each photo individually to glean as much information as possible, but also look at the photo in context with others found with it, and others you may

have.

These photos were in the Fannie Belle Brown Chapman Collection. The family believes these were friends and/or schoolmates of Fannie and her sister Ida, and hope that they can find descendants and give them the images. (Contact us if you are related!)

So how does one sort out who is who?

1. Keep collections or boxes, envelopes, scrapbooks, etc. of photos together; include the negatives if you have them.
2. Making a scan or taking a picture of them all laid out in the order you received them might be helpful.
3. If you are scanning a scrapbook, scan each page and number accordingly, then scan individual photos at a higher resolution. This will help keep the images in context.
4. Label your scans appropriately. Include the name of the collection, side of the family, type of image, and anything you can add to help ID the photo. An example of a file name for the above picture might be: Year_four digit month/day_SPEERY_Lizzie_fm Fannie Belle Brown Chapman Collection_tintype This will 'automagically' sort your images by date and person; I use individual family folders and when people become adults, they get a new folder with the two names: CHAPMAN_Unknown- BROWN_Fannie Belle I usually put the husband's name first, as adult records are generally under that name for both of them.
5. Now that you have familiarized yourself with the collection as you scanned the images, and have a record of their context, look at each image carefully. Look at them in a variety of lights, and tilt them in the light to see if you can find any markings on them- both pencil and ink fade over time, but sometimes the 'graphite' of a pencil will glisten if angled just right in the light, or there may be an impression where the writer pressed

hard. Enlarge your digital images- sometimes the camera will pick up something your eye did not.

6. Write down everything you know about the image, using metadata, and a text file that has the same name as the photo but ends in '.txt.' (TextWrangler is a good text app for Macs.)
7. Look for clues in the photos. For example, the above photo was labeled as, "Lizzie Speery." Looking at other photos, there was another, older Lizzie in the group:



Lizzie

It is hard to read the writing, but this photo definitely says, "Lizzie"- maybe 'Hines'? Then it looks like the name of a city, and possibly 'NY' after.

Think about the context- two Lizzies, the only person to have 2 photos in the collection. Different last names, but the first image was a young girl, the second a

mature woman, and the different last name is likely a married name.

Could these Lizzies be the same person with some years in between photos? Take a look at her eyes, chin, nose- what do you think? (Let us know in the comments.)

8. Try to date the photos by dress, type of image, etc. Maureen Taylor, "The Photo Detective," has excellent books, webinars, classes, speaks at genealogy conferences, and will even do video/phone consults; there are other resources as well to help determine approximate time periods. In the case of our two Lizzies, dating each photo might help us determine if they could possibly be the same person. Lizzie might have been a childhood friend or a distant cousin, possibly who moved away, but then the women exchanged photos in later years?
9. If there is information available about a photo studio on the back of the image, use Google to try to learn when and where the photographer was in business to give you clues. They often changed the backs of photos as they added a partner or one moved on, or just to update their look or logo. Sometimes images on eBay can even help one determine the years a photo studio was in business, giving you another clue to time period.
10. Crowd-source your detective hunt by posting your unknown photos on a blog, a website such as DeadFred, Facebook, etc. And, as always, keep copies of your photos and the description file on your own computer or media- online services may not be here forever, some use proprietary software that will not be readable in the future, etc. (Text (.txt) files should be readable for a long time.) This is redundant but redundancy is a good backup. Keep copies of all these images somewhere other than your computer- a drive you keep in a safe deposit box, give to a sibling, etc. The cloud is a good option too, but

not failsafe, so always have your own copies.

Notes, Sources, and References:

1. Fannie Belle Brown Chapman Collection, with permission.
2. Lizzie Speery apparently worked as or with a photographer.

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