PUTTING THE PIECES TOGETHER WITH THE WEST VIRGINIA GEOEXPLORER PROJECT

Conflict in Context:

Donald E. Watts
William D. Theriault, PhD.
What is the West Virginia GeoExplorer Project?

- An innovative geographically-based web resource for exploring the history, culture, and architecture of West Virginia.
- Jefferson County serves as the starting point for project efforts, which will later be expanded to encompass the rest of the state.
WV GeoExplorer Contains Three Major Parts

1) A Relational Database, currently containing more than 100,000 records: e.g., Jefferson County Census Records (1810-1880); abstracts and full text documents (newspapers, histories, wills, deeds, and other public records);

2) An Archive containing digital copies of historic maps, books, photographs, and public records;

3) A Geographic Information System (GIS) containing maps of historic properties and resources (e.g., a base map containing all the original Jeff. County Land Grants).
The WV GeoExplorer Project is NOT a Wiki

- Individual contributors and collaborating institutions are welcome, but there is **no open editing**. Everything is reviewed before being incorporated.
- Transcribed, encoded documents are **internally linked** to digital facsimiles of original documents to maintain the integrity of links and provide powerful search capability among full text documents, GIS components, relational databases, and the digital archives.
The West Virginia GeoExplorer Project has adapted 21st century search parameters (e.g., SSN, time, long./lat) to historical documents by coding them:

- **Date:** 10/17/1859
- **Location:** e.g., HF60A (original land grant for Virginius Island, near Harpers Ferry, WV)
- **Person:** Personal Identification Number (PIN); e.g., 02061834.04061865JLK (Maj. John Locher Knott, Co. D. 12th Virginia Cavalry).
The sources used by historians often contain dates, personal names, and locations in an imprecise, ambiguous, or nonstandard format.

A person might be identified in older, original documents as:

- “... the wife of John Smith [Smythe] ...”
- “... Mary Smythe ...”
- “... Mary Jane Smith ...”
- “... M. Smith ...” or
- “... widow Smith ...”
Solution: Create Personal Profiles and PINS

We create **Personal Profiles** for historical persons of interest and then use unique **Personal Identification Numbers (PINs)** to identify individuals in historical sources.

Ideally, an individual’s dates of birth and death are used to create a PIN, but any unique number can be used.

Date of Birth + . (period) + Date of Death

Henry Shepherd, born on January 4, 1793, and died on October 12, 1870 = 01041793.10121870HS
The Profile...

... includes information such as:

- Surname, Name, Middle Name;
- Dates of Birth and Death;
- Spouse, date of Marriage;
- Mother and Father;
- Names of Children and Siblings;
- Where Buried;
- Religious, Political, and Fraternal Affiliations;
- Military Service;
- Slave Ownership;
- Personal traits;
- Decennial Highlights;
- References
Profiles are used to:

- Accurately identify persons in historical sources so that PINS can be added. Historical sources coded with PINS can be searched as easily as modern sources coded with Social Security Numbers.
- Historians can use the information recorded in profiles to study relationships among historical individuals.

Such as the members of Company D., 12th Virginia Cavalry
Profiling the Members of Co. D, 12th Virginia Cavalry
Major John Locher Knott was in command of Co. D. 12th Virginia Cav. from its inception to April 6, 1865, when he was killed at High Bridge, Prince Edward County, Virginia.
Knotts in Co. D.

In addition to John Locher Knott, Co. D., also included three of his brothers:

- William J. Knott (Pvt.) (b. 6/14/1828, d. 7/12/1901); married Margaret Ann Moler;
- Samuel Mitchell Knott (Pvt.) (b. 3/2/1830, d. 3/5/1907); first marriage to: Eliza Jane Climer; second marriage to: Margaret Ursula Kephart
- George Saunders Knott (Pvt.) (b. 8/21/1832, d. 6/11/1913); married Caroline E. Doub
Family Relations

The four Knott brothers and their siblings were the children of Samuel C. and Margaret S. Knott
By profiling Samuel C. and Margaret S. Knott ...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personal Identification File</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ID</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Reference**

1. US. Tenth Census._populc. 1880:
2. Singlehams Register, 6/10/1874, p. 2.
3. Singlehams Register, 8/10/1874, p. 2.
4. Singlehams Register, 9/10/1874, p. 2.
5. Singlehams Register, 10/10/1874, p. 2.
7. Singlehams Register, 12/10/1874, p. 2.
8. Singlehams Register, 12/10/1874, p. 2.
9. Singlehams Register, 12/10/1874, p. 2.
10. Singlehams Register, 12/10/1874, p. 2.
11. Singlehams Register, 12/10/1874, p. 2.
12. Singlehams Register, 12/10/1874, p. 2.
13. Singlehams Register, 12/10/1874, p. 2.
15. Singlehams Register, 12/10/1874, p. 2.
16. Singlehams Register, 12/10/1874, p. 2.
17. Singlehams Register, 12/10/1874, p. 2.
18. Singlehams Register, 12/10/1874, p. 2.
19. Singlehams Register, 12/10/1874, p. 2.
20. Singlehams Register, 12/10/1874, p. 2.
We were able to determine that...

Samuel C. Knott owned a gristmill, limestone quarry, hundreds of acres of prime farmland, a substantial blacksmith shop, and several canal boats in which he shipped his products to Washington, DC.
His wife, Margaret S. Knott, described as the “priestess of the Knott home,” was one of the founders of the Methodist congregation at Moler’s Crossroads and Bethesda Methodist Church South. Her moral influence extended throughout the community.
Add to that ...

The dozens of families who had relatives employed at one of the Knott enterprises...
And other families related to the Knottses by marriage...
And the Knott’s social, political, economic, and familial web extends to more than ... 

25% of the entire unit.

Additional research will reveal other business, social, and cultural ties among the Knott’s and their neighbors. By using WV GeoExplorer and tools like PIN profiling, we will be able to put more of the pieces together and better understand Jefferson County’s journey from the antebellum period, through the Civil War and Reconstruction, into the 20th century, and beyond.
To Learn More

Go to:
http://www.wvgeohistory.org

To become a history profiler, contact:
Bill Theriault at
wmtheriault@myactv.net