

Boring Farmers No More

RootsTech 2022

Michael John Neill
www.genealogytipoftheday.com

Boring Farmers No More (c) 2022 Michael John Neill
www.genealogytipoftheday.com

1

General Reminders

- There are no boring ancestors, just ones begging to be researched more fully.
- Locate every item that has your ancestor's name.
- Small details matter—research clues and broader picture of your ancestor
- Exhaust all records—not just ones that are easy to locate.
- Learn occupational and social history.



Boring Farmers No More (c) 2022 Michael John Neill
www.genealogytipoftheday.com

2

General Suggestions

- Estate records can provide clues about ancestor's farm operation, financial status, and farming practices.
- Newspapers may provide a variety of minor details that provide insight into ancestor's daily life.
- Newspapers can provide background detail about the area and farming in general—read more than just the sentence that mentions your ancestor.
- Census can help compare your ancestor's farm operation to that of neighbors.

Boring Farmers No More (c) 2022 Michael John Neill
www.genealogytipoftheday.com

3

What's a "Farmer?"

- *Landowner*—they leave the most records.
- *Tenant Farmer*—no land records, but estate records if they had significant personal property.
- *Farm Laborer/Farm Hand*—leave fewer records—could be working for parents.

Markley	Johnathan	59	M	W	Farmer
—	Mary	55	F	W	Keeping Horses
—	William	34	M	W	Farm Hand
—	Susan	32	F	W	At Home
—	Rebecca	22	F	W	At Home
—	Martha	17	F	W	

Boring Farmers No More (c) 2022 Michael John Neill
www.genealogytipoftheday.com

4

Estate Inventories

- Determine what items were used for
- Compare to other inventories
- Compare appraised value to sale value

One stand table
 One grind stone
 One two horse Wagon
 One Spring Wagon
 One two horse Wagon
 One two horse Wagon
 One old reaper
 One Corn Sheller
 Two breaking Plows
 Three Cultivators
 Two old harness

Boring Farmers No More (c) 2022 Michael John Neill
www.genealogytipoftheday.com

5

Other Estate Records

- Properties owned
- May mention leases
- Loans they made to others
- Money they borrowed
- Bills paid
- Farm operation details

Also the South half of the South half of the
 North West quarter of Section twenty two in
 township five North and range seven West
 aforesaid.
 Title perfect
 Subject to Mortgage of March 5th 1875
 of \$2100 with 6 per cent interest, from
 deceased to Stephen Coddington, Sec
 B T M 26 page 450 of the records of the

Boring Farmers No More (c) 2022 Michael John Neill
www.genealogytipoftheday.com

6

Finding Estate Inventories and Probate Records

- County court records
- FamilySearch Wiki may say where located
- Some are online at FamilySearch
- Search for all extended family members

Boring Farmers No More (c) 2022 Michael John Neill
www.genealogytipoftheday.com

7

Mch. 2, 1918,	To cash received from George Trautvetter, as one year's interest on his inventoried note for \$900, being interest to Mch. 2, 1918, at 6%,	54.00
Jan. 4, 1918,	.To cash received from Oscar Myers, for corn sold him by decedent, such account not having been inventoried,	13.30
July 25, 1918,	To cash received from George McAdams of Ursa, Ills. from the sale of 281 bu.30 lbs. of wheat at \$2.10 per bu, and 185 bu. oats at 60c per bu.,	692.85

(Said wheat and oats was the rent wheat and oats raised on the farm of said decedent for the year 1918, by Henry W. Trautvetter, tenant under lease made by him with decedent, expiring Mch. 1, 1919. Said proceeds of wheat and

Boring Farmers No More (c) 2022 Michael John Neill
www.genealogytipoftheday.com

8

Court Records

- Lawsuits over inheritances
- Lawsuits over other boundary disputes, fence lines, livestock, etc.
- Depositions or affidavits may mention details of farm operation in addition to ownership issues, family relationships, etc. (depending upon case)

Boring Farmers No More (c) 2022 Michael John Neill
www.genealogytipoftheday.com

9

Finding Court Records

- Usually at county level (or independent city in some places)
- May have been multiple courts that heard different types of cases
- Many are only in original paper format
- Some are at FamilySearch
- Search for all extended family

Boring Farmers No More (c) 2022 Michael John Neill
www.genealogytipoftheday.com

10

Agricultural Censuses

- US 1850-1880
- Details about farming operation
- Compare to neighbors
- Determine what all items are

	Acres of Land		Present Cash Value			Live Stock			
	Unimproved		Of Farm	Of Farming Implements and Machinery	Total amount of wages paid during the year including value of board	Horses	Mules and Asses	Milch Cows	Working Oxen
	Improved	Woodland							
No	No	No	Dolls	Dolls	Dolls	No	No	No	No
2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11

Boring Farmers No More (c) 2022 Michael John Neill
www.genealogytipoftheday.com

11

Finding Agricultural Censuses

- Online at FamilySearch—some are online on subscription sites
- Usually only name farm operator
- Usually only as specific as township of residence

Boring Farmers No More (c) 2022 Michael John Neill
www.genealogytipoftheday.com

12

Some Pension Applications

- In contested pensions, testimony may provide financial details and information about farm operation.

Boring Farmers No More (c) 2022 Michael John Neill
www.genealogytipoftheday.com

13

... in the matter of all of 20 days
Children. We have values all of the
lands mentioned herein at about from
\$20.5⁰⁰ to \$22. per acre, or say about \$4200.00
for all of the lands. The land is a
under fence Barbed wire fence.
Mostly. The land is all quite broken
and hilly, with some deep ravines
on it. The 25 acre tract is all timber.
The 20 acre tract is timber part
clear of and the 160 acre tract
has a fine deal of timber on it.
About one hundred acres or one had

Boring Farmers No More (c) 2022 Michael John Neill
www.genealogytipoftheday.com

14

Finding Pensions

- Generally Civil War and after are more detailed—if an examiner was appointed.
- For Federal Service—US National Archives
- Confederate—appropriate state archives

Boring Farmers No More (c) 2022 Michael John Neill
www.genealogytipoftheday.com

15

General Techniques for Out-of-Print Books

- Google Books <https://books.google.com/>
- Archive.org <https://www.archive.org>
- HathiTrust.org <https://www.hathitrust.org/>
- BYU Library <https://lib.byu.edu/collections/digital/>
- FamilySearch <http://www.familysearch.org>
- Digital collections of local and regional libraries
- For certain historical topics, check academic libraries with departments in those areas

Boring Farmers No More (c) 2022 Michael John Neill
www.genealogytipoftheday.com

16

Agricultural History

- Contemporary books about farming practice
- Contemporary books about veterinary practices
- Search books.google.com for terms found in court, probate records, etc.
- Historical, social, cultural studies of appropriate groups
- Focus on material that is peer-reviewed and not simply based on speculation and assumptions about life
- JSTOR <https://www.jstor.org/>
 - Database of academic articles
 - Read footnotes, endnotes, bibliography of any article of relevance.

Boring Farmers No More (c) 2022 Michael John Neill
www.genealogytipoftheday.com

17

Plat Maps

- Detail farm sizes
- Show neighbors
- Show other political and local features
- Can make nice illustrations if out of copyright.



Boring Farmers No More (c) 2022 Michael John Neill
www.genealogytipoftheday.com

18

Locating Plat Maps

- Local libraries, historical/genealogical societies, regional libraries.
- Online techniques already discussed

Boring Farmers No More (c) 2022 Michael John Neill
www.genealogytipoftheday.com

19

Local Newspapers

- Rural newspapers are usually full of gossipy information
- When families moved from one farm to another
- Information on crop, purchases of new equipment, etc. Never know what might make the local newspaper.

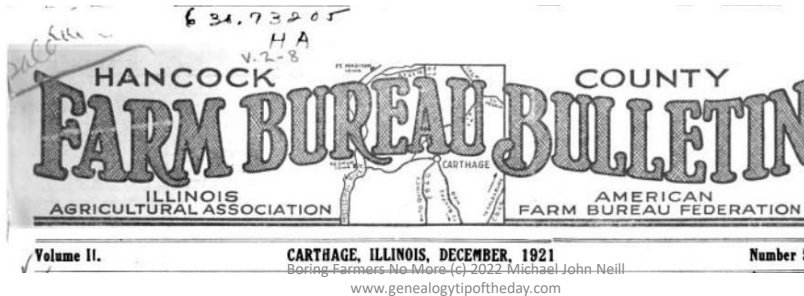
Ben Dirks introduced a new potato last spring (Lee's Favorite) which he will exhibit at the county fair. For earliness, beauty, excellent quality and abundant yield it promises to be the coming potato. Squire Leach showed us half a bushel of beauties from a medium size potato presented him by Mr. Dirks last spring.

Boring Farmers No More (c) 2022 Michael John Neill
www.genealogytipoftheday.com

20

Other Periodicals

- Farming magazines—ex *Farm, Field, and Fireside Collection* at University of Illinois
- County Farm Bureau or other newsletters—start with Google Books to search these things. Reach out to locals who may be aware of digitizations of niche materials.



21

Reaching Out to Locals

- In some rural areas, reaching out to locals “in the know” is best way to learn of materials, sources, etc.
- Local Library
- Local Genealogical/Historical Society or social media groups/pages
- County Courthouse Offices

22