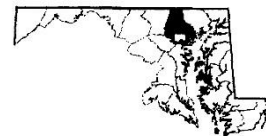


The Baltimore County Genealogical Society



THE NOTEBOOK



Volume 42 Issue 3 (No. 185)

P.O. Box 10085 – Towson, MD 21285-0085

September 1, 2026

Tip of the Quarter—Reclaim the Records

Who Are You?

Reclaim The Records is an activist group of genealogists, historians, researchers, and journalists. We work to identify important genealogical record sets that are not online anywhere and not broadly available to the public. We then use state Freedom of Information laws to force government agencies and archives to hand over copies of these records to the public, which we then digitize and put online for free use. Other organizations and companies are then free to make transcriptions and searchable databases of our images and data, if they wish.

Since our founding in 2015, we've already won the release of tens of millions of records. We upload all the records we acquire to the Internet Archive, as well as other Open Data websites. When government agencies fail to respond to our requests in a timely manner or are unwilling to comply with the law, we take them to court. We've won outright, or won settlements, in several groundbreaking lawsuits in the Supreme Court of New York, such as the release of decades of [the New York City Marriage License Index and Database](#). We have more requests and potential lawsuits pending for other records from other states, and also from the federal government.

The bottom line is this: we want public records to be returned to the public. The law is on our side, and we're not afraid to use it.

Here's How You Can Help...

Too many government agencies and archives have long treated genealogists as if we were asking them for a favor when we ask to see their records — *our records* — rather than recognizing their responsibilities to the public under the law. Reclaim The Records is changing that. If you like what we're doing, if you want to see more records returned to the public domain, and if you want to see this approach brought to more record sets in more states, we hope you'll consider making a contribution to our work. See: reclaimtherecords.org

Update on the Maryland Birth and Death Indexes

The **Birth index** for Baltimore City is complete from 1875-1911, & 1914. Total records: 361,233 as of January 14, 2026

The **Death index** for Baltimore City is 100% complete from 1874-2014. All counties, (not including Baltimore City) are complete for the years 1898-1903, and 1969-2014. Total records: 2,910,195 as of May 21, 2026. We need volunteers to help this project proceed! Please contact David Powell if you can help with the birth index, and Greg Burton if you can help with the death index.

In this Issue...

Research Tip of the Quarter.....	1
BCGS birth/death index update.....	1
Using AI to review genealogy reports.....	2
Using Google Gemini 1	4
1880 Mortality Schedules.....	5
Marshall family of Baltimore County.....	6

Reading Between the Lines: Using AI to Review Genealogy Reports

By Greg Burton

A descendant report is a strange kind of document. It has to be exhaustively accurate and also readable — a spreadsheet's worth of vital dates dressed up in narrative clothing. Anyone who has assembled one knows the real work isn't finding the records. It's catching the small things after you've stared at the draft so long you can no longer see it: a birth date that's a year off from the source, a child listed under the wrong marriage, a citation that points to a certificate you never actually attached.

Over the past several months, I've been using **Claude**, an AI assistant from Anthropic, as an extra set of eyes on genealogical writing — most recently on a major descendant report covering more than 3,400 individuals across nine generations, and ongoing on the front matter, DNA-match sections, and narrative write-ups that go into a report like that. I want to share what's actually useful about this, and where the limits are, for anyone in the Society who might be curious.



Where it is useful:

Internal consistency checking. This is the strongest use case by far. A report of any real size will eventually contradict itself — a person's birth year stated one way in the narrative and another way in a table three pages later, a spouse's name spelled two different ways, a generation number that doesn't match the pedigree chart above it. Claude is patient in a way I'm not anymore after the tenth read-through. Feed it a chapter or a full report and ask it to flag every internal inconsistency in names, dates, and relationships, and it will find things a human proofreader — including the author — tends to miss simply from fatigue.

Formatting and structural cleanup. Front matter, colophons (publisher's official trademarks or details), source citation formatting, DNA match tables — this is mechanical work that eats hours and is exactly the kind of task an AI handles well. I've had Claude help standardize citation formats across a report, build out introduction and colophon pages, and organize a DNA matches section into a consistent, readable structure.

A second read for clarity. Genealogical narrative writing has a particular trap: it's easy to write a paragraph that's technically correct and completely unreadable to anyone outside your own head, because you already know the family. Asking Claude "does this paragraph make sense to someone who has never heard of this family" is a genuinely useful gut check before a report goes out to cousins or gets submitted anywhere formal.

Digitization and transcription tooling. Beyond report writing, I've also used Claude to build the actual infrastructure behind large-scale transcription work — a web-based system for volunteer transcription of Maryland death and birth certificates, and Python tools to verify the integrity of tens of thousands of scanned certificate PDFs before they go into a project pipeline. This is a different kind of use — not reviewing prose, but building the scaffolding that makes a big indexing project manageable.

Reading Between the Lines: Using AI to Review Genealogy Reports *(Continued from p.2)*

Where it falls short — and where you should never rely on it:

It cannot verify facts against records it hasn't seen. This is the one point I'd underline for anyone trying this. Claude has no independent access to vital records, census images, or church registers. If you ask it to check a birth date, it can only check your document against itself — internal consistency — not against the actual certificate. Every date, every relationship, every source citation still has to be verified by a human against the original record. AI review is a second pass for consistency and clarity, not a substitute for the archival work.

It will occasionally invent something if you let it. If you ask an AI a genealogical question it doesn't actually know the answer to, it can produce a plausible-sounding but fabricated response. The safe pattern is to only ever have it work with material you provide directly — your own report, your own transcription — never to ask it to "tell me about the Baron family of Baltimore County" and trust the answer.

Sensitive and living-person data. Anything involving living relatives, DNA match details, or personal information should be handled the same way you'd handle it with any outside tool — thoughtfully, and generally kept out of anything that isn't necessary for the task at hand.

A practical workflow—For anyone wanting to try this on their own report, the pattern I've settled into is simple:

1. Do the actual research and record verification the old-fashioned way — nothing changes here.
2. Draft the narrative or build the report as usual.
3. Have the AI do a dedicated consistency pass: names, dates, relationships, generation numbers, citation formatting.
4. Have it do a separate clarity pass: does this read well to an outsider?
5. Go back to the original records yourself for anything it flags — the AI can point at a discrepancy, but only you and the source document can resolve it.

Used this way, it's less a research tool and more what a good editor is: someone who doesn't do your research for you, but reads everything you wrote a little more carefully than you're able to by the fifth revision.

I'm happy to talk more about any of this with fellow members — the digitization tooling in particular might be of interest to anyone involved in indexing projects of their own.

Greg Burton is a member of the Baltimore County Genealogical Society and a volunteer at the Maryland State Archives.

Using Google's Gemini+ for Review of Genealogy Reports

By Greg Burton

I created a descendant report "The Descendants of Peter Jacob Baron" using Family Book Creator 2024. I uploaded the PDF report to my Gemini account. I asked Gemini to review the 1142-page report for errors.

[To upload a PDF to Gemini, click the **plus (+) icon** in the chat box at gemini.google.com, select "Upload files," and choose the PDF from your computer. Alternatively, you can enable the Google Workspace extension in settings to prompt Gemini to read PDFs directly from your Google Drive]



Here is the report:

Based on a review of the provided document, "Descendants of Peter Baron," here is an analysis of logical inconsistencies, chronological errors, and historical discrepancies found within the text.

1. Internal Logical Contradictions (Family Lineage)

The compiler includes a self-correction for an error found in a primary historical source quoted in the text:

- **The Error:** "Nelson's Biographical Dictionary" (1896) incorrectly states that **Julia Stritzinger** was the mother of Valentine Barron.
- **The Correction:** The compiler notes that Valentine was actually the son of **Maria Teresa Winstel**, Peter Jacob Baron's first wife. The document correctly lists Valentine under Winstel elsewhere.

2. Chronological & Date Discrepancies

Several individuals have conflicting dates between the narrative text and the cemetery/census records cited:

- **Valentine Barron (#3):** * One obituary states he was born **May 7, 1821**, in "Baden German".
 - However, the primary record used for the document lists his birth as **May 6, 1820**, in Hayna.
 - His 1880 Census record lists his age as 59 (suggesting an 1821 birth).
- **Peter Jacob Baron (#1):** * The document states he immigrated on **October 1, 1835**.
 - The biographical entry for his son John Jacob Baron (#7) claims Peter came to America earlier, in **1833**.
- **Justina Keller (#7):** Her death is listed as **May 8, 1889**, but the biographical excerpt on the same page lists it as **November 11, 1889**.
- **Theresa Munch:** Narrative text says she died at age **74** in **1958**. Her obituary on the same page says she was **73** and born in **1885** (conflicting with the birth year **1884** given in the data block).

3. Location Inconsistencies

- **Mary E. Haas:** The document records her death in **Erie, PA**, but states she was buried in "Trinity Cemetery, **Baltimore, Maryland**". Given the family's deep roots in Erie, this may be a data entry error for Trinity Cemetery in Erie, PA, where other family members are buried.
- **Valentine Barron's Origin:** Different records cited in the text place his birth in **Hayna, Bavaria** and **Baden, Germany**.

Continued on p. 5)

Using Google's Gemini+

for Review of Genealogy Reports *(Continued from p. 4)*

4. Possible Duplicate or Missing Data

•**Mary Anna Sanner Children:** The text states Mary Anna Barron and Jacob Sanner had **six children**. However, the list of names following that statement includes "John, Charles, **Mary**, Julia, **Mary**, and Joseph". The repetition of the name "Mary" might indicate a child who died young or a typo in the list.

•**Appolonia Barron (#2 and #4):** Two daughters named Appolonia are born to the same parents (Peter Jacob Baron and Maria Teresa Winstel). This was a common practice if the first child died, but users should verify if these are distinct individuals or a single record error.

5. Other "Red Flags"

•**Margaret Hepburn (#3):** Her birth is listed as "before January 12, 1810". If born in 1810, she would have been **42 or 43** years old when her last child, William, was born in 1853. While biologically possible, this is on the older side for the mid-19th century and warrants verification of the birth record.

•**Lillian M. Barron:** Her birth is listed as **1899**, but her mother (Isabelle Hatfield) was reportedly married to her father in **1927**. This suggests Lillian may be from a previous marriage or the marriage date is incorrect.

My next step is to review each record and make corrections and rerun the report.

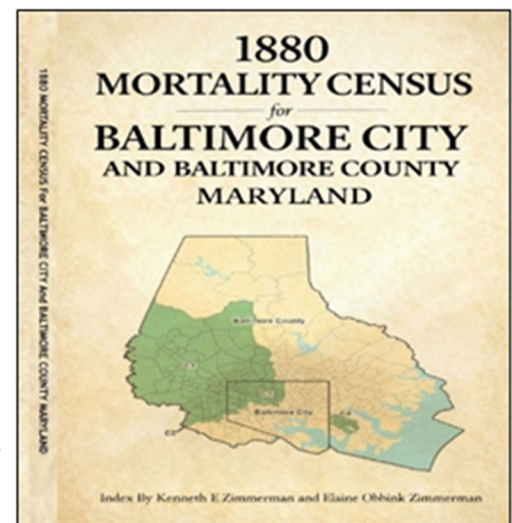
1880 Mortality Census for Baltimore County and Baltimore City

The June 1, 2026 edition of the BCGS Notebook showcased Ken Zimmerman's work on his research and indexing of the 1880 Baltimore City and County Mortality Census. His book can now be ordered. See below for details. His work on indexing the 1870 Maryland Mortality Census for Baltimore City and County is a work in progress.

1880 Mortality Census for Baltimore City and Baltimore County, Maryland, by Kenneth E Zimmerman and Elaine Obbink Zimmerman (Author, Indexed), Paperback, 203 pages, 8.5 x 0.46 x 11 inches, ISBN 979-8196560897, May 2026. \$30.00

Discover hidden family history through Baltimore's 1880 mortality records. *1880 Mortality Census for Baltimore City and Baltimore County, Maryland* is a carefully compiled index of individuals recorded in the **1880 United States Census Mortality Schedule**, covering deaths between **June 1, 1879, and May 31, 1880**.

The above publication is available only from Amazon.com



The Marshall Family of Baltimore County

From Maryland Families written by and published with permission from the late Robert Barnes (1939-2021), founder of the Baltimore County Genealogical Society

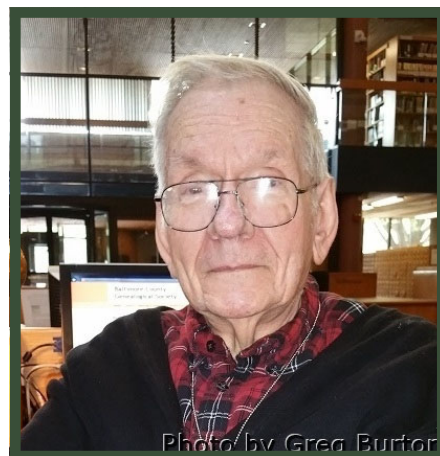
1. Isaac Marshall was born c1665, and died about 2 August 1699 in Baltimore Co. Maryland. He married Joyce [-?-], who was born c1667, and died after 1699 (Undocumented material on Ancestry World Tree).

In 1692 Isaac Marshall was in the household of John Hase [Hayes] on south side of Patapsco Hundred. In 1694 he was head of his own household in South Side of Back River Hundred. In 1695 he was head of household on North Side of Patapsco Hundred (*IBCW*: 2, 6, 10).

Joyce Marshall filed an account of Isaac Marshall's estate on 2 Aug 1699. She cited an inventory of £117.10.6 and listed payments of £21.0.5 (INAC 19½A:118).

Joyce Marshall was alive on 2 June 1702 when she received a payment from the estate of Daniel Swindell (INAC 21:369).

Isaac and Joyce were the parents of: **2. Thomas**, b. c1698. He married Sarah Bull on 3 October 1740.



Robert Barnes, founder of the Baltimore County Genealogical Society

2. Thomas Marshall, was born c1708 as the deed cited below states. On 3 October 1740, he married Sarah Bull (*SJSG*: 154). She was said to have been born by 1715 but May have been born c1720, according to the lease given below. She was a daughter of Jacob Bull whose will, dated 22 November 1756, named a daughter Sarah Marshall (*MWB* 30:223).

In 1737 a Thomas Marshall was in the household of John Somner in the Upper Hundred North of Gunpowder Hundred. Another Thomas Marshall was at Edward Knollemore's Quarter in the same Hundred (*IBCW*: 16, 17).

On 15 October 1742 Thomas Brerewood leased 100 a. of *My Lady's Manor* to Thomas Marshall, for the lives of Thomas, age 34, Sarah, age 22, and son John, age 1 (*BALR TB#C*:52).

Thomas Marshall died in Baltimore Co. by 15 December 1775, when his wife Sarah Marshall, administratrix, posted an administration bond, with Jacob Marshall and Abraham Corbin as sureties (*BAAB*, 2:325). Sarah Marshall administered his estate on 30 April 1778 (*BAAD* 8:16).

In 1783 Sarah Marshall was listed as owning 100 a. *Carroll's Manor*, in Mine Run Hundred. Her household consisted of 1 white male and 3 white inhabitants (Bettie S. Carothers. *1783 Assessment List of Maryland*. Privately Printed: 67).

Thomas and Sarah were the parents of (Undocumented material posted on Ancestry World Tree): **3. John**, b. 28 February 1741 (*SJSG*: 131); **4. William**, b. by 1749; and **5. Jacob**.

4. William Marshall, son of Thomas (2) and Sarah, was born by 1749, and died about August 1809 in Baltimore Co. He married Rachel Cox, who was born by 1751. She was the daughter of Jacob and [-?-] Cox; Jacob Cox's will, dated 24 June 1798, named a daughter Rachel Marshall (*BAWB* 6:121).

He is probably the William Marshall who in 1783 was listed in North Hundred of Baltimore Co. as owning 140 a. *Rum*. His household consisted of 1 white male and 4 white inhabitants (Carothers: 79).

William and Rachel were the parents of : **6. Elizabeth**, was evidently unmarried on 5 April 1811 when she sold her part of her father's estate to Peter Rule (*BALR EG#114*: 515); **7. Jacob**; **8. John**; **9. Sarah**; **10. Rachel**; **11. Thomas**, m. by 5 April 1811 Sarah [-?-], who gave her consent to his selling to Peter Rule his share of his father's estate (*BALR WG#114*:514.; **12. William**; **13. Joshua**; and **14. Isaac**, d. by August 1809, leaving a son Jesse.

(Continued on p.7)

The Marshall Family of Baltimore County

From Maryland Families written by and published with permission from the late Robert Barnes (1939-2021), founder of the Baltimore County Geological Society

(Continued from p.6)

5. Jacob Marshall, son of Thomas (2) and Sarah, in 1783 was listed in North Hundred of Baltimore Co., as owning 70 acres *Cross's Grove*, and 80 a. *Benjamin's Choice*. His household consisted of 1 white male and 4 white inhabitants (Carothers:78).

11. Thomas Marshall, possibly son of William (3), died by 1831. He married by 5 April 1811 Sarah [?-], who gave her consent to his selling to Peter Rule his share of his father's estate (BALR WG#114: 514).

In 1783 Thomas Marshall was listed in North Hundred of Baltimore Co., as owning 200 a. *Marshall's Folly*, and 118 a. *Sampson's Folly*. His household had 1 white male and 8 white inhabitants (Carothers, 79).

In 1790 Thomas Marshall patented 254 a. of land in Baltimore Co. called *Marshall's Folly* (MPL IC#F:27, 328).

On 15 September, 1831 Simeon Markey and Nancy his wife; Gerrard Matthews and Diana, his wife; Isaac Marshall, and Elizabeth Keller came into court by James M. Buchanan, Esq, their attorney, and filed the following petition: Whereas Thomas Marshall, late of Baltimore County, deceased, being at the time of his death was seized in fee of a valuable piece of real estate called *Marshall's Folly*, on the Old York Road near the Pennsylvania Line adjoining the lands of John Davis, Robert Role (Ruhl) and others containing 250 acres died in 1831 intestate, the Petitioners further show to your honors that Thomas Marshall had lawful children, to wit: your petitioners (BALR TK:229:532-541): **15. Jacob**, in 1831 lived in Ohio; **16. Nancy**, m. Simon Markey; **17. Diana**, m. Gerrard Matthews; **1**

8. Elizabeth, m. Jacob Keller and died without issue; **19. Isaac**; **20. Rachel**, m. 1st, on 18 March 1805, Gottlieb Hoffman in Baltimore Co., b. 12 September 1781 in Hoffmanville, Maryland., and d. 1813 in Hoffmanville; she m. 2nd, Levi Lamott. In 1815, Levy Lammott, (one of Harry's sons) married Rachel Marshall Hoffman, the widow of Gottleb Hoffman. Rachel was one of the 4 children of Gotlieb and Rachel Hoffman. Levy was appointed guardian for the children shortly after the marriage. In 1827, there was a big court fight over Gotlieb's land and included in the documents was an affidavit stating that Rachel Hoffman had m. George Fisher in 1833. The papers are in the Chancery Court records in the Maryland Hall of Records; **21. Sarah**, m. Aaron Campbell; **22. Rebecca**, m. Jacob Singer, and d. leaving her husband and four children to wit: Thomas, Elizabeth, Rachel and Ann, all of whom resided in the state of Maryland; **23. Hannah**, m. Christopher Walker; **24. Edward**; and **25. Thomas, Jr.**

12. William Marshall, son of William (3) and Rachel, died by October 1809. He married Rachel [?-]. He died leaving a will dated 21 August 1809 and proved 4 October 1809. He left his estate to his wife (unnamed), and his children, Elizabeth, Jacob, John, Sarah, Rachel, Thomas, William, and Joshua, and grandson Jesse, son of Isaac. His brother Jacob Marshall was named executor. William Matthews, Thomas Talbot, and Thomas Marshall witnessed the will (BAWB 8:441).

On 11 March 1812 when Jacob Marshall, executor filed an account mentioning a bill owing Gottlieb Hoffman (BAAD 19:21). Jacob Marshall filed another account in April 1812 naming William Mashall's widow Rachel, and his heirs: Issac, Sarah, Rachel, John, William, Thomas, Joshua, Elizabeth and Jacob (BAAD 19:25).

Baltimore County Genealogical Society

PO Box 10085

Towson, MD 21285-0085

Baltimore County Genealogical Society

Located in the Parkville Senior Center

8601 Harford Rd, Parkville MD 21234

3rd Floor, Room 308 (Elevator Available)

Monthly Meetings:

4th Sunday of the month. January & June are research days 12-4 p.m.

- Eastern European Group—11:45 a.m. to 2 p.m.
- General Meeting—2 p.m. to 3 p.m.
- Speaker—3 p.m. to 4 p.m.
- Library open 12 noon to 2 p.m. for research before meeting
- No monthly meetings in July, August, and December.

Our Research Days are:

2nd Thursday of the Month—10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

2nd Saturday of the Month—10 a.m. 2 p.m.

4th Thursday of the Month 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.