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Gilbert Alford
1403 Kingsford Drive
Florissant, MO

Dear Gil,

It always takes me awhile to get everything in order before I write to you. I've been tempted to telephone and just spill it all out and sort the mess together. The brainstorm method does have some merit and it may come to that, but for now let me attempt to explain my current thoughts.

Last weekend I spent several hours at the Carnegie library researching PA census. The experience was valuable in many aspects, but now I have more questions. My brain is trying to come up with a procedure that, with minor variations, can be followed for each state.

So, first I looked up the census index books for 1790-1850, and checked variations for three different spellings of ALFORD.

- 1) Alford/Alfred/ Allford/Alfred, etc.
- 2) Alvord/ Allvord, etc.
- 3) Olford/Olvord/ Ollford, etc.

Typically this meant a xerox copy of two or three pages for each census year. Also, sometimes two different sources had indexed the census with different results, so I copied each index.

Secondly, I looked at the index pages and highlighted the names that I thought ought to be extracted. Although in my mind it's clear that one name was worth extracting and one variation wasn't, I know that someone else who just knows their grandfather was in PA might find him under OLIVERD or OHLFORD -- or some equally "unlikely" spelling. We can assume that the spelling ALFORD was well established by, say 1850, but before that is dicey. My point is this: I feel it is valuable to have hard copies of the index pages in case we find at some future time someone wants to check alternate spellings OR (You'd better sit down) in the future we expand the data-base or supplement the data-base to include these alternate spellings.

OK, so now I have copies of census index pages with names highlighted for extraction.

Thirdly, I pulled out the microfilm copies and, using a pre-printed form, proceeded to go down the list looking up Alfords. It was immediately clear that all the names indexed

Alford, Alfred, Alfnod, etc MUST be extracted. These original handwritten entries all looked the same to me and I know my eyes are every bit as good as the Person who made the index. The Point is that if someone only looked UP or extracted ALFORD, half the names would be missing.

I can see the trick in delegating the work is to keep a close observation on the data returned to assure completeness. If you have no objection, I'd like to send standard extraction forms to volunteers. This will help insure consistency.

There needs to be some way to differentiate in the computer and on the Print-outs the relative completeness of the file. Perhaps an "A", "B", "C" version designation. For example:

"A" designates complete data extraction, verified for accuracy.

"B" designates complete data extraction.

"C" designates index with Partial extraction.

"D" designates index only.

This version designation would indicate at a glance the relative quality of the file at any point in time. The goal then, would be to upgrade the data, bit by bit, until all the files are of class "A" quality.

I've completed an assessment of the notebooks you sent and the Printed tabulations. It's apparent that you have more in the computer than what is backed by hard copy in the notebooks. I feel that it's valuable to have the index pages for reasons previously discussed. So, I plan to continue collection of Printed index pages. I know it's not necessary, but I'd also like to have hard copies of data extraction. I won't insist on this, because I know it's just a matter of Personal Preference, but this is what I'll be trying for.

When our indexes don't match, a combination of the Printed index pages and the current computer index should be checked for extraction. With care, a Person could verify every entry to make a single extracted (Class "B") file. This process would eliminate duplicate entries from the index. Unverifiable entries (i.e. can't find a corresponding original entry for an index reference) should be dropped. Bona fide entries could be added as they are verified. This is a good way to pick up single Alford's enumerated with other families but not indexed.

If I had a computer, I could Print the current index to give to the Person extracting data. This would be more efficient than extracting from one source or another. When I send you data, a note designating class could be included. This would tell you whether to add or replace computer data. It would be nice to be able to directly access and edit the data-base.... This would be the best alternative, but I don't know how feasible at present. There is plenty to do in the meantime.

Priorities

- 1) As AFFA concentrates effort and resources on a specific state, I think census data collection should follow suit. What state(s) are we currently focused on?
- 2) As AFFA members express interest or access to information in specific states, I think this enthusiasm should be tapped immediately.
- 3) In my opinion, additional efforts should first be focused on the thirteen original states and then expanded to other states in the order each began to conduct a census. Without further instruction, I'll proceed alphabetically.

Do you have any other comments as to Priority? It appears as though all states need some work.

For the next newsletter, Perhaps we could announce that we'd like volunteers for the above three categories.Please contact me, etc...

Lucy Schull has written me twice (What a Pistol!!) and explained some of the types of information her mother collected. I suggested to her and now to you: What are the Possibilities of microfilming her 3x5 cards and family group sheets? Can you bring this up for discussion among the AFFA officers? Or in the next newsletter? I understand Mrs. Bowman was a librarian and all her data is organized alphabetically. It would be so nice to have a couple of rolls of microfilm for reference, available to everyone, instead of shoebox files. Perhaps one of our members might have an idea.

I hadn't before taken much note of your reference number identification system. This is really ingenious! With such a number, one could conceivably pull each bit of information on a specific Person, or even extract a group of people by portions of the ID number. This system has all kinds of possibilities!

This letter might seem long, but basically I need to know two things: What state(s) do you want to begin with? How do you want me to send you information? Thanks for letting me get this off my chest. Whew!! Hope to hear from you soon.

Yours,



Alicia Roundy Houston