

How thin can one man be spread? Or Whose Relative is Elias Beasley?

When different researchers have different parts of a genealogical puzzle, it's essential to document the research.

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When a new genealogy magazine arrives in the mail, I turn to the case studies first because I like stories and because case studies show how professional genealogists think and work. Hopefully, you enjoy case studies too. Here is a case study showing how "three" men became one.

Thanks to Rootsweb's WorldConnect, three researchers connected via internet because of a man named Elias Beasley. None of us were Beasley researchers, and he is the only connection the three of us have in our pedigrees.

Researcher A had an Elias Beasley born about 1835 in St Clair County, Illinois to Richard and Mildred Free Beasley. Family records showed his wife was Sarah Quick. This researcher, me, was working on the Free line.

Researcher B had an Elias Beasley born 9 July 1836 in St Clair County, Illinois married to Dicey Ann Hooker in 1868 in Nebraska. This researcher was working on the Hooker line.

Researcher C had an Elias Beasley born about 1835 in Illinois who was the second husband of Dicey Ann Hooker. Her first husband was Nicholas Hite. This researcher was working on the Hite line.

Was it possible all three Elias Beasleys were the same man?

To answer this question, we turned to census records. Using as many variations of the name Beasley as possible (Beezly, Buzley, Baesly, etc.), and using Ancestry.com's Soundex feature, we searched for all possible Elias Beasleys. The censuses showed only one Elias Beasley in the country who met all three researchers' criteria.

Even so, there were other dilemmas to solve. Who did Elias marry? That he was married by May 1857 is clearly shown in a St Clair County deed that mentioned his wife but gave no name. A May 1858 deed, however, listed his wife's name as Emily. The 1860 census gave her name as Ema which is a nickname for Emily.

Researcher B had a Nebraska marriage record showing the marriage of Elias Beasley, age 32, to Dicey Ann Hooker in 1868 in Nebraska.

What about Sarah Quick? Did he also marry her? The family records I trust the most gave Elias' wife's name as Sarah Quick. I couldn't find a marriage record for Elias Beasley in St Clair County or in the state of Illinois to anyone, let alone an Emily or a Sarah. But at least Emily was in public records - a deed and a census. No public records for Sarah.

If a researcher cannot prove something is true, she is obligated to prove it isn't true. So I asked: was there a Sarah Quick in St Clair County Elias could have married? Local census and marriage searches

revealed four Sarah Quicks of marriageable age. However, Sarah A Quick, daughter of George Quick married Thomas Hendrix. Sarah Quick daughter of Daniel Quick married Mason Bennett. Sarah Quick daughter of Rigdon Quick married Daniel Heely (this from her autobiography). The remaining Sarah Quick, daughter of Isaac Quick was finally removed from the running when I found her burial as Sarah QUICK, not Beasley, in 1864 in the Richland Baptist Cemetery.

It was apparent that my most trusted family source was wrong in this instance. Elias had not married a Sarah Quick but an Emily (was her surname Quick?) and an Ann. Further, the children's birthdates indicated Elias was married to Emily/Ema from about 1857 to at least 1865 and to Ann (Dicey Ann) from January 1868 until his death in 1910. Didn't leave much time for a third marriage.

The 1880 census listed John Beasley age 18 born Illinois as the son of Elias. Since he was born about 1862, he could not have been both Elias' son and Ann's because they did not marry until 1868. But Ann had a son, John, born about 1861 with her first husband, Nicholas Hite. Did the John on the 1880 census represent Ann's son or Elias' son? Were there two Johns or just one?

As it turned out, Researcher C had the answer to this. There were two. Elias' son John born about 1862 was alive and married in 1900, farming next to his Dad in Nebraska. Ann's son John born about 1861 was also alive and married and living in South Dakota. Where had he been when the 1880 census was taken? He and his sister were both raised by Hite relatives.

After determining there was only one Elias Beasley who met all three researchers' criteria, by jettisoning one wife when no evidence could be found for her in public records, and by distinguishing one John child b 1861 from another born 1862, all three researchers felt comfortable with the way the family of Elias Beasley came together.

Of course, we'll all keep looking...