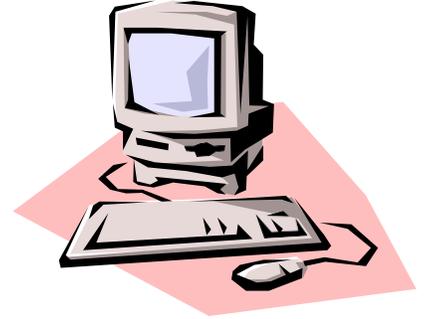


COMPUTER

O
R
N
E
R

I Love Google!

Guest Column by Lark M. Robart



I am continuously amazed by all that we as family historians can learn about our ancestors by just using a few Google tools. Here's an example of how I used a few of those tools to learn a bit more about my mother's paternal great grandparents.

While doing U.S. research recently on my great great grandparents Lewis and Margaret (Lauer) Blacker, I wondered if it might be possible to map where they lived in 1850.

I started with the U.S. 1850 census record. In the image below, you see the family of Lewis and Margaret living with their two daughters Elizabeth (and her husband Nathan) and Sarah (and her husband Alonzo) living in Ward 1, City of Dayton, Miami County, Ohio.

3405	31462	Lewis Blacker	46	M	Labourer	German
1685	1755	Margaret "	43	F		"
		Elizabeth Pierce	16	F		"
		Nathan E "	24	F	" ✓	Ohio
		Alonzo Ford	25	M	" ✓	"
		Sarah "	16	F		"

Next, I performed a Google searching using the terms "Dayton Ohio", "1850", and "historic map" but the closest I could find was an 1875 map at the website *Historic Map Works*.¹

Looking again at the 1850 U.S. Census record, I was hoping to find some reference to an address, or at least a street name, but was quickly disappointed when I realized there were none. The only reference is the "dwelling house" number (column 1) and a number indicating the order in which each family was visited (column 2).

3405	31462	Lewis Blacker	46	M	Labourer	German
1685	1755	Margaret "	43	F		"
		Elizabeth Pierce	16	F		"
		Nathan E "	24	F	" ✓	Ohio
		Alonzo Ford	25	M	" ✓	"
		Sarah "	16	F		"

Never one to give up easily, however, I wondered if maybe, just maybe, the census record might contain some other notation or reference to a landmark that might give me a clue. So I decided to go through the census record, page by page, starting with page 1.

Luckily, I didn't have to go far. The very first listing on page 1 was for a group of people who lived in a hotel. I wondered if the hotel was owned by the first person listed, a "hotel keeper" by the name of Francis Ohmer?

SCHEDULE I.—Free Inhabitants in *1st Ward Union City* in the County of *Montgomery* of *Ohio* enumerated by *me*, on the *13th* day of *Oct* 1850. *S. H. Holliday* Ass't Marshal

1	2	3	Description.			7	8	9	10			12
			Age	Sex	White Black Color				Married with the female within the year	Female under 15 years of age	Whether deaf and dumb, blind, insane, paralyzed, or convicted.	
<i>3287</i>	<i>3345</i>	<i>Francis Ohmer</i>	<i>54</i>	<i>M</i>		<i>Hotel Keeper</i>		<i>France</i>				
		<i>Margaret</i>	<i>57</i>	<i>F</i>								
		<i>G. W.</i>	<i>15</i>	<i>M</i>		<i>Bar Keeper</i>		<i>Ohio</i>				
		<i>Rebecca</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>F</i>					<i>1</i>			

Next, I searched Google for Mr. Ohmer's name, plus a few additional identifiers like "Ohio" and "1850" and soon came across the *American Antiquarian Society* website, which contained a reference to the Richard P. Morgan Indexes. Included there is a searchable database called the "Ohio Name Index, 1796-1900" which includes "Odell's Dayton Directory and Business Advertiser, 1850." And guess what?

Mr. Ohmer *and his address in 1850* are in that database!

It quickly occurred to me that I might be able to cross reference the address information in the Dayton Directory with the names in the census record in order to figure out where Lewis and Margaret lived in 1850.

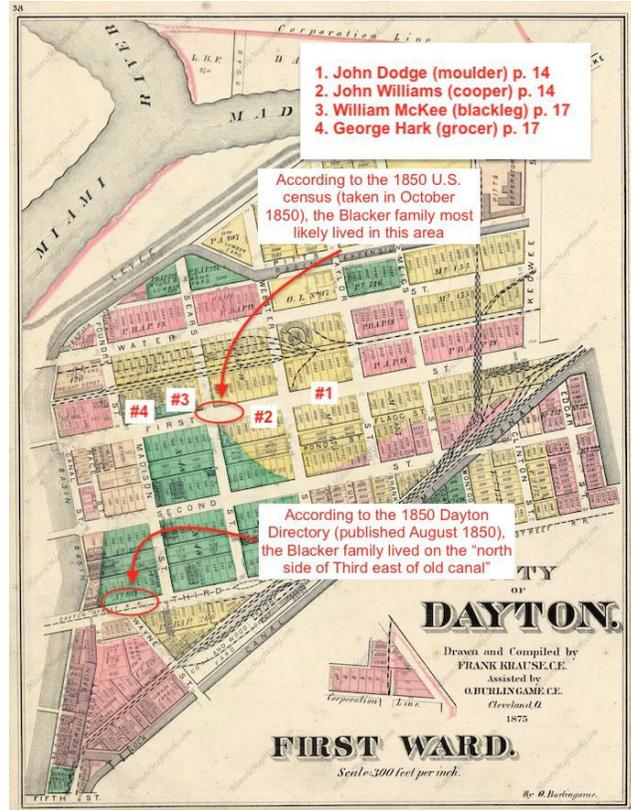
So here's what I did:

1. I began by reviewing the 1850 census record, specifically the entries on either side of Lewis Blacker (i.e., he is on p. 16 so I looked at a few pages before and a few pages after p. 16).
2. I identified four men (two on p. 14 and two on p. 17) who were also listed in the Dayton Directory. *Reminder: The Dayton Directory has the address for each individual listed, whereas the census does not.*
3. Based on the addresses in the Dayton Directory, I plotted the four men onto the 1875 City of Dayton map in the order they were listed on the census, beginning with John Dodge on p. 14 and ending with George Hark on p. 17.

4. Because the Blacker family was listed in the census between #2 (John Williams, the “cooper”) and #3 (William McKee, a “blackleg”)², I hypothesized the family lived somewhere in the area of Sears and First Street.

5. So far so good, right? Not so fast . . .

6. Quite by accident, I realized there were some “laborers” listed in the Dayton Directory. Since Lewis Blacker was listed as a “laborer” in the census, I searched his first and last name in the database but nothing came up. Remembering that “Blacker” is often misspelled, I tried searching on his first name alone and got lucky. There were only 20 names in the search results, including one for a “Lewis Blicker”. And since “Blicker” is an alternate spelling that comes up over and over again in my research, I again hypothesized that this might be my guy.



7. Just one (little?) problem. According to the Dayton Directory, Lewis Blicker lived on the “north side of Third east of old canal,” which is two blocks southwest of the 1850 census location I plotted at Sears and First Street.

8. My conclusion, at least for now, is that “Lewis Blicker” listed in the Dayton Directory (published in August 1850) and “Lewis Blacker” listed in the census record (taken in October 1850) are likely the same individual. It seems entirely plausible that the family might have lived in two different locations in the same year.

Here are those same two locations as shown on a current Google map . . .

And just for the fun of it, I also located a reproduction copy of Odell’s Dayton Directory (*more Google searching!*) at a very reasonable price. So I placed an order, which came in the mail a few days later.

Obviously, none of this information answered my ultimate brick wall question, which is . . .



Where in Germany were Lewis and Margaret born?

I had been researching Lewis and Margaret Blacker for many years by this time. The birth locations that came up in the records I had gathered were either Germany or Prussia. And once again, the 1850 census record states they were both born in Germany.

(That's about as helpful as saying they were born on the moon, right?) And I had also determined that the Blackers were probably Protestant as opposed to German Catholics.

So . . . while driving in my Google maps "virtual car" up and down Third Street³, I noticed a church in the block just on the other side of Madison Street. I zoomed in on the church sign and saw that the name was St. John's United Church of Christ.

I then located the church website (again, more Google searching) and learned the following:

- St. John's was established by a group of German Evangelical Protestants in 1840 as the "German Evangelical Congregation"
- The original meeting location was in the old courthouse located at 3rd Street and Main, about 4 blocks west of the current site at 515 East 3rd Street, and about 3 blocks west of where the Blacker family lived on East 3rd Street
- The East 3rd Street site was built in 1865



So although the church was not in that location in 1850 when the Blacker family lived in that neighborhood, it was in existence at a nearby location. Definitely worth further investigation for possible records! But that, my friends, is another story for another day.

In conclusion, I certainly hope to visit Dayton one of these days so I can walk up and down the streets where my ancestors lived. You know, that *crazy* thing that genealogists like to do.

But in the meantime, I'll keep on using Google as a research tool. Because you never know what you'll find!

References and Notes

¹ The web site *Historic Map Works* is located at www.historicmapworks.com. However, don't forget that the way I found the map was by a simple Google search, probably using some combination of the terms "City of Dayton", "1850s" and "historic map".

² By the way, never having heard the term “blackleg”, I did another Google search and found two definitions at merriam-webster.com that might apply: (1) a cheating gambler; or (2) a worker hostile to trade unionism or acting in opposition to union policies. Interesting, huh? I guess #2 seems the most likely choice. Today, we might use the word “strikebreaker”. And according to Wikipedia, “blackleg” is indeed a derogatory term for “strikebreaker”. However, I digress.

³ In case you wondered, there really is no such thing as a “virtual car” at Google maps. But if you use “street view” mode, it is possible to drive up and down many streets all over the world. (I like to joke with my husband that by the time we finally get around to visiting my cousins in County Galway, Ireland, I won’t even need a map, guide, or GPS. I know exactly how to get there!) If you’ve never used “street view”, just head on over to YouTube and search “street view google maps” for several short tutorials.

A version of this article was published as a blog post on April 1, 2017, at www.eightroadstomontana.com, under the title “I Love Google - again!!”