

# John Knox Case Study (Holmes, Ohio)

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# DEVELOPING MULTIPLE HYPOTHESES TO SOLVE GENEALOGICAL CHALLENGES



Jan M. Joyce, DBA, CG®

# 1923 Society Column, Akron, Ohio

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Susan Fritz was arrested on a charge for a messenger. It was alleged she wrote an insulting note to Regina Langendorf and tied the note to a cat's tail and sent the cat out.

Susan Fritz was arrested on a charge of using a cat for a messenger. It was alleged that she wrote an insulting note to Regina Langendorf and tied the note to a cat's tail and sent the cat out.



## Remember The Time In 1898 ?

The Eighth Ohio Infantry, also known as the "President's Own," including Co. B of Akron, was mustered out of the federal service at Wooster.

One of the items in the expense account of Arnold Green, democratic candidate for common pleas judge was: "Paid an unknown man 85 cents to get rid of him."

Susan Fritz was arrested on a charge of using a cat for a messenger. It was alleged that she wrote an insulting note to Regina Langendorf and tied the note to a cat's tail and sent the cat out.

A come dog, belonging to Almon Hewitt, Hopewell township, N. J., ran two miles and summoned help for Hewitt who was caught in the branches of a tree while gathering nuts.

The city council, voting six to six, refused to reconsider the granting of a franchise to the Central Union Telephone Co. A crowd of spectators groaned when the vote was announced.

A grand jury at Philadelphia indicted Senator M. S. Quay on a charge of conspiracy to misuse state funds in a bank. The bank's cashier, John S. Hopkins, committed suicide.

William Hamilton, a newspaper reporter at Newport, Ky., was in contempt of court for printing criticisms of the manner in which Judge John T. Hodge of the circuit court administered justice. Hamilton was "punished" by being compelled to sit all

"Remember The Time In 1898?," Akron Beacon Journal, 24 Nov 1923, p 4, col 3  
(www.newspapers.com : accessed 17 Mar 2018).

# Agenda

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- Objective: Learn methods to create hypotheses and solve your genealogical challenges.
- Three stages of the hypothesis development framework:
  - ▣ STAGE 1 – Creative Hypothesis Development – 4 methods
  - ▣ STAGE 2 – Prioritize Hypotheses
  - ▣ STAGE 3 – Refute or Support Hypotheses
- Case Study on John Knox demonstrating methodology.
  - ▣ Research Question: Why did John Knox sell ten parcels of 80 acres for \$3,500 apiece to each of his ten children just six days before he died?





# Handout & Feedback

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- During presentation we will use the handout (wait for instructions)

## John Knox Case Study Holmes County, Ohio

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.....  
Your hypotheses from Simplification and Sharing:

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# Handout & Feedback

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- Please make comments on the feedback sheet during the session and submit at end.

Creative Hypothesis Development for Complex  
Genealogy Problems

Dr. Jan Joyce March 19, 2019

1. What did you like, learn, or enjoy about today's session?

2. How would you rate this presentation?

5	4	3	2	1
Excellent			Poor	

3. What ideas do you have that could improve the session?

4. How did you learn about this presentation?

5. What presentations would you like to see in the future?



# Risk of a Single Hypothesis

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- Explanations for a genealogical research question come to mind.
- These explanations are hypotheses – answers to research questions.
- We usually develop one scenario, or hypothesis.
- One hypothesis is usually sufficient. It evolves; we may formulate, test, reformulate and refine it.



# Risk of a Single Hypothesis (cont'd)

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- This can lead us to not explore additional options.
  - ▣ “Confirmation bias”
- In more complex genealogical challenges, it's best to develop multiple hypotheses.
  - ▣ We then seek a variety of information.
- You made one assumption about John Knox from the introductory case study description, right?



# Stage 1 – Creative Hypothesis Development

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- Objective of this stage:
  - ▣ To brainstorm on new ideas...solutions...hypotheses.
    - Don't evaluate them yet.
    - Really, stop yourself. Promise me you won't do this! 😊
    - During brainstorming, no idea is a “bad idea.”
  - ▣ Using different methods to brainstorm – based on your preference and what works for you.



# Stage 1 – Creative Hypothesis Development

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## Four Methods:

- A. Simplification & Sharing
- B. Mind Mapping
- C. Genealogical Categorization
- D. Expository Writing



# Stage 1 – Creative Hypothesis Development

## A. Simplification & Sharing

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- Simplify the challenge (brick wall).
- Use most relevant information.
  - ▣ This may be difficult to determine, but try!
- Write critical facts into brief bullet points.
  - ▣ Highlights from a timeline.
  - ▣ Elevator pitch. (~2 minutes)





# Stage 1 – Creative Hypothesis Development

## A. Simplification & Sharing

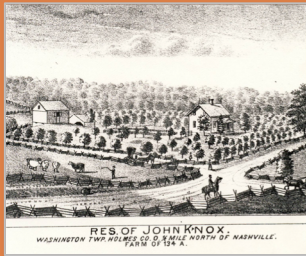
12

- Reevaluate and create new hypotheses on your own.
- Share with others (no additional research).
  - ▣ Share with others.
  - ▣ Did I say...share with others?
  - ▣ In writing is best.
- Be receptive to all ideas and explore them.



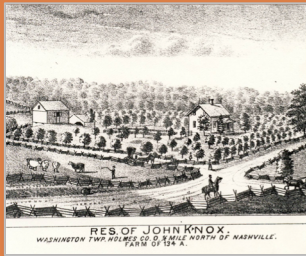
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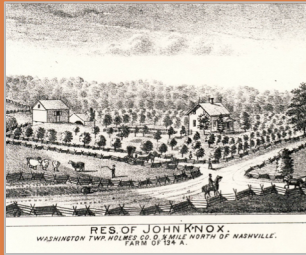
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# John Knox Case Study

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- Let's document your hypotheses from the Simplification and Sharing method.
- Why did John Knox sell each of his ten children a parcel of 80 acres for \$3,500, six days before he died?

.....  
Your hypotheses from Simplification and Sharing:

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# Stage 1 – Creative Hypothesis Development

## B. Mind Mapping

16

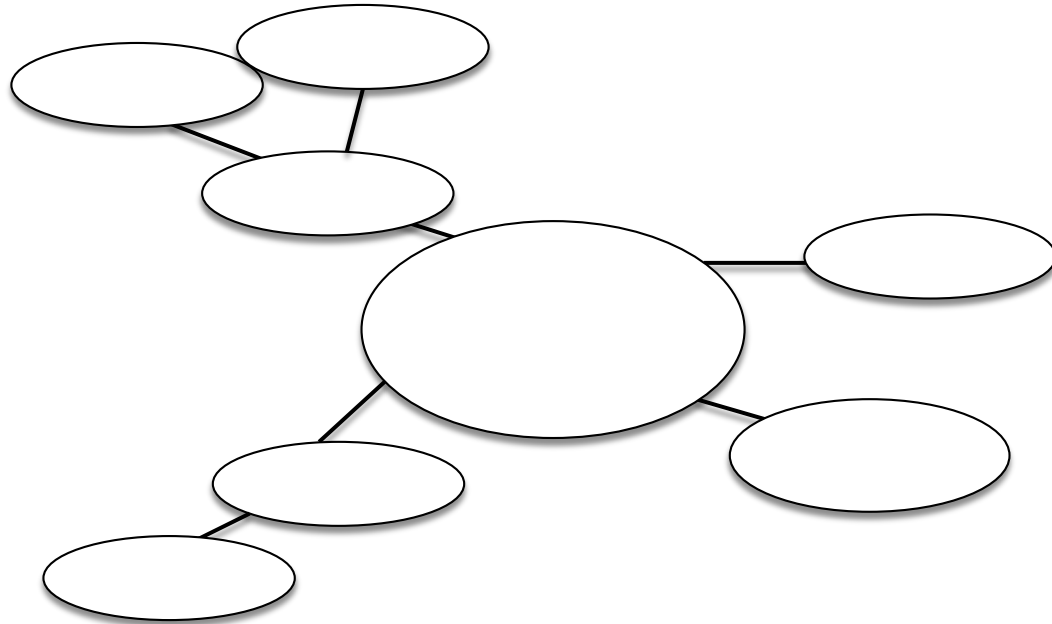
- Method that allows your thoughts to flow freely.
- Not outlined.
- No sequence or constraints.
- The “branching” allows refined ideas to be developed.



# Stage 1 – Creative Hypothesis Development

## B. Mind Mapping

17



# Stage 1 – Creative Hypothesis Development

## B. Mind Mapping

18

- I think it's best to write general ideas close to middle circle then become more specific as you branch out.
  - ▣ More ideas may be generated that way.
  - ▣ Example:
    - DO write: OTHER HEIRS?
    - DON'T write: IS THERE AN AS-YET UNIDENTIFIED ILLEGITIMATE CHILD WHO COULD CLAIM PART OF ESTATE? Until further down the “Other Heirs” branch





# Stage 1 – Creative Hypothesis Development

## B. Mind Mapping

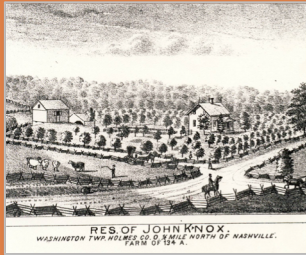
19

- Change your mindset for the ancestor and think creatively:
  - ▣ A child born out of wedlock.
  - ▣ He disappeared between the 1900 and 1910 census but you can't find a death record. Maybe he didn't die. He lost all his money gambling and left town and his family.
  - ▣ Other ideas?



# John Knox Case Study

20



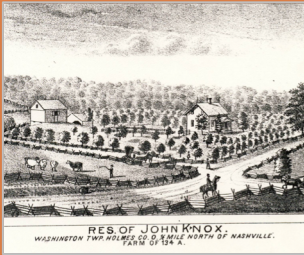
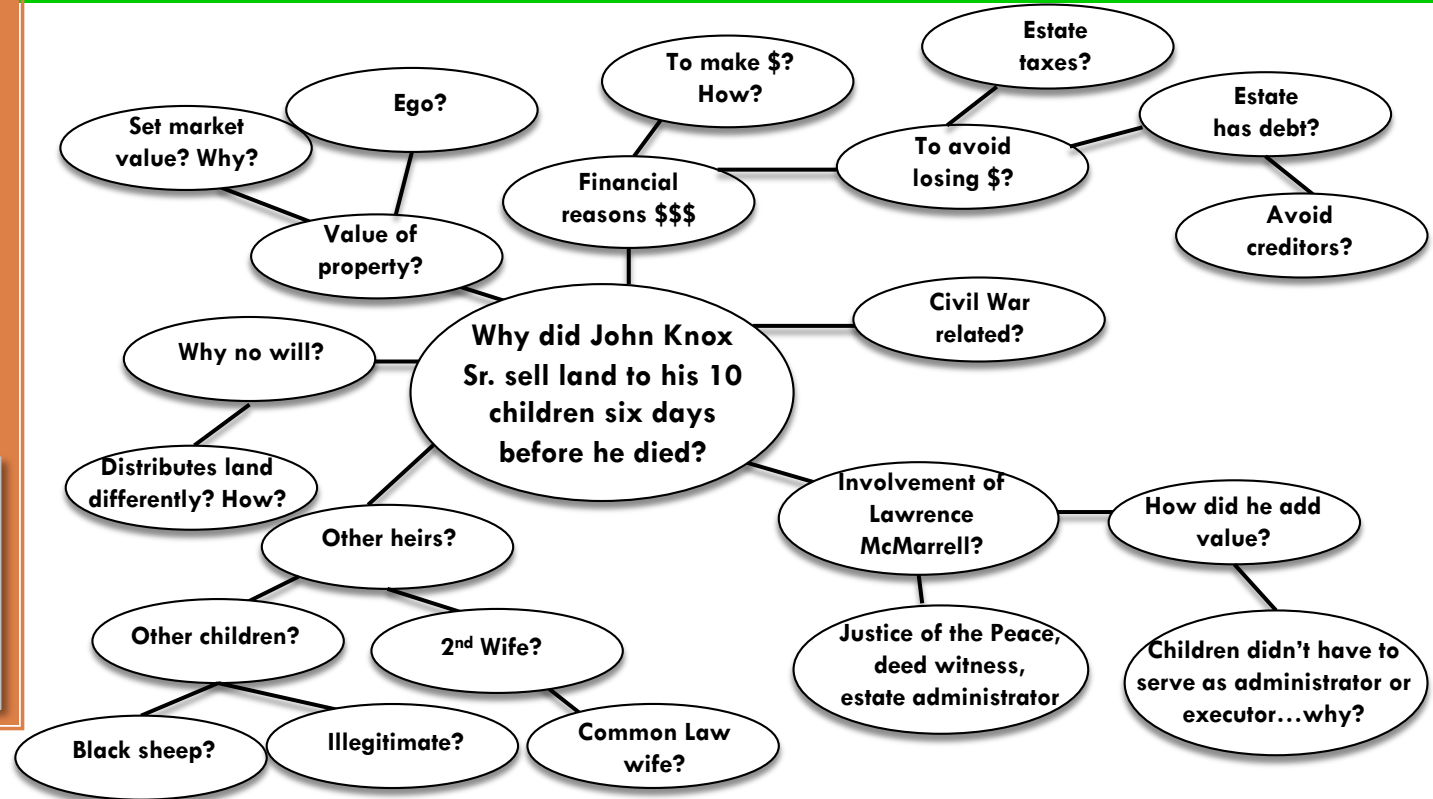
- Draw a quick part of a mind map for the John Knox case
  - ▣ You may use your own case study if you like!
  - ▣ Use worksheet space.

Draw a part of a Mind Map here:

Why did John Knox Sr. sell land to his 10 children six days before he died?

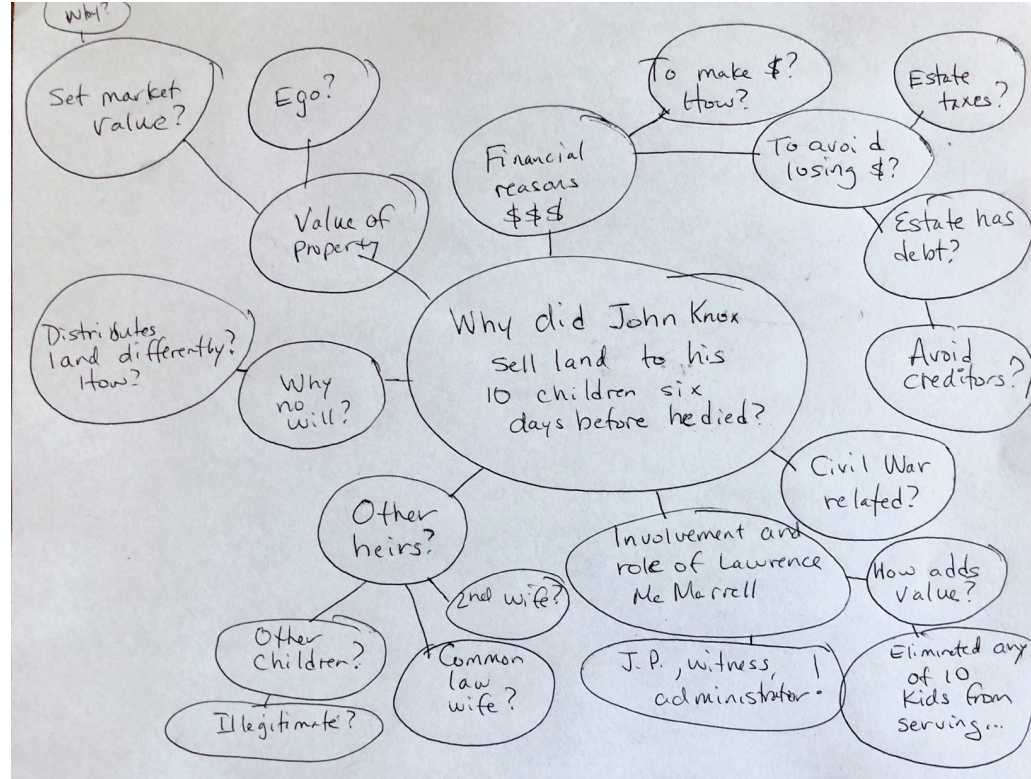
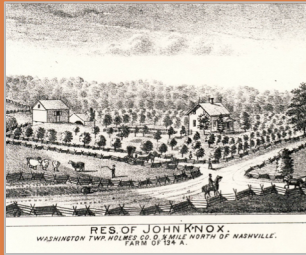
# John Knox Case Study

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# John Knox Case Study

22



# Stage 1 – Creative Hypothesis Development

## C. Genealogical Categorization

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- The first two methods intend to generate out-of-the-box thinking.
- This method provides a categorization, based specifically in genealogical work.
- It can be used to create more hypotheses, as well as categorize the ones generated from other methods.



# Stage 1 – Creative Hypothesis Development

## C. Genealogical Categorization

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### □ Errors

#### ▣ Unintentional

- ▣ Records may contain errors.
- ▣ John Knox Example?

#### ▣ Intentional

- ▣ Misinformation on purpose.
- ▣ John Knox Example?



# Stage 1 – Creative Hypothesis Development

## C. Genealogical Categorization (cont'd)

25

### □ Unrecorded or Missed

- ▣ The ancestor or event you're expecting to find isn't there.
- ▣ John Knox Example?

### □ Multiple People with Same Name

- ▣ Relatives – parent, child, aunt/uncle, cousin, grandparent.
- ▣ Names are not unique – unrelated.





# Stage 1 – Creative Hypothesis Development

## C. Genealogical Categorization (cont'd)

26

### □ Event

- Moved into or out of the area
- Macro environmental issue – famine, war, economy, politics, religion.
- Military service
- Birth, Marriage, Death



# Stage 1 – Creative Hypothesis Development

## D. Expository Writing

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- This is the most difficult one.
- Time consuming.
- **BUT...big payoffs!**
  - It really uncovers missed research, holes in a timeline, and more context that can't be done in other ways.



# Stage 1 – Creative Hypothesis Development

## D. Expository Writing

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- Explanatory and descriptive writing
- Organized format
  - ▣ Sequential?
  - ▣ Story?
  - ▣ Compare and contrast?
  - ▣ Cause and effect?



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- © Jan M. Joyce 2019

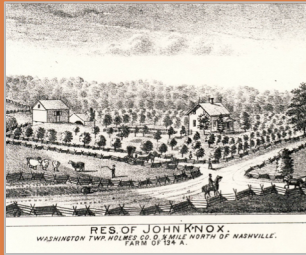
# John Knox Case Study

## Expository Writing Example

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*An early December 1864 scene on the Knox farm in Holmes County, Ohio that seems possible may include this:*

*A very ill John Knox Sr. called together his family. He told them he was dying. Each child would receive exactly the same inheritance from him but that it won't be transmitted the usual way through a will.*



*Instead, he wished to set a high market value for the land and “sell” approximately 80 acres to every son and daughter for \$3,500 each before he died. The children objected because most of them didn't have that kind of money. With a wink and a knowing look, John told them that they have each already paid him.*

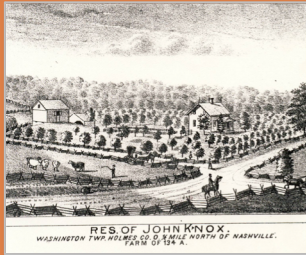


# John Knox Case Study

## Expository Writing Example

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*Perhaps there was further discussion about which child received what piece of property. Some may have already been decided because they were being farmed accordingly. There must have been discussion about the two girls' properties and how they would be farmed. His daughters were not married and thus would need significant help to make the farms productive. There was probably already a system in place to do this.*



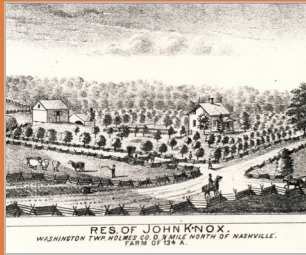
*If John had any creditors, or outstanding debts, he likely issued instructions to his sons for how to take care of them. If monies were owed John, perhaps he assigned these to different children, or even forgave them and had the notes returned.*

# John Knox Case Study

## Expository Writing Example

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*John might have told the kids that he would not make a will, and thus his estate would be assigned an administrator. Because of the odd nature of how he chose to close out his estate, he didn't want any of his sons, as was typical of the time, to be appointed as an administrator. Maybe he was trying to stave off any potential arguments among the children.*



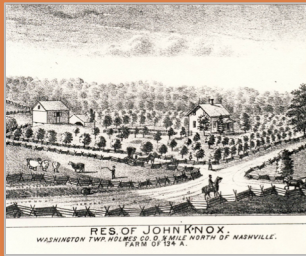


# John Knox Case Study

## Expository Writing Example

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*Finally, John had Lawrence McMarrell, Justice of the Peace, called to his bedside. There, John would have explained the situation and how he distributed his property in a neat and clean way. He probably told McMarrell that he would be appointed as his administrator and that after a short time, McMarrell could resign because there would be nothing to administrate. The resignation should occur after all the deeds were recorded. Two additional witnesses were called and John executed ten deeds. Then, he probably sent McMarrell off with a handshake and a big jug of maple sugar from his farm.*



## Stage 2 – Prioritize Hypotheses

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- Objective of this stage – to make the best use of your time.
- New hypotheses have been generated from Stage 1
  - ▣ Which you have NOT researched yet. 😊
- Prioritization methods:
  - ▣ Easiest first - easy to refute or support.
  - ▣ Most logical first – spending time on most likely ones.
  - ▣ Other ways?



# Stage 2 – Prioritize Hypotheses

## John Knox Case Study



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- For presentation only, I selected three of the many hypotheses.
- Selected this variety for educational purposes.

# Stage 2 – Prioritize Hypotheses

## John Knox Case Study



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- John Knox Hypotheses Prioritized:
  1. Financial reasons – to avoid creditors
  2. Other heirs – seeking a claim to estate
  3. Set market value of property

# Stage 3 – Support or Refute Hypotheses

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- Objective of this stage –
  - ▣ Refute – yes, consider these are successes too!
    - Can also lead to new hypotheses.
  - ▣ Support – you may support or even prove.
    - Further research may be needed on supported hypotheses.
    - Utilize a variety of analytical methods.
    - Use Genealogical Proof Standard.
- Capture rationale in your research notes.



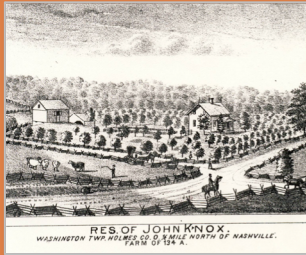
# John Knox Case Study

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## □ Hypothesis 1 –

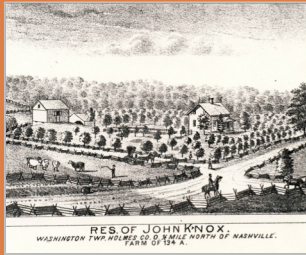
### Financial Reasons: To Avoid Creditors

- If John had considerable debt, his creditors would have legal means to attach his substantial estate.
- Creditors would have had first priority when estate was liquidated.
- By selling land to children, he “gave” away all real property (and perhaps personal property).



# John Knox Case Study

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- **Hypothesis 2 –  
Avoid Other Heirs Staking a Claim to Estate Assets**
- Other heir possibilities:
  - Second wife
  - Common law wife
  - Black sheep child
  - Illegitimate child
  - Other?
- If another heir, s/he could try to claim a part of estate.
- By distributing real property via deeds, the other heir would have nothing to claim.

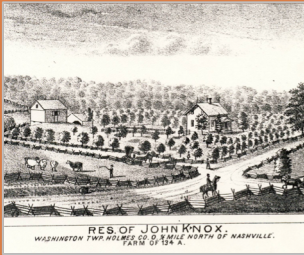
**Refuted!**

# John Knox Case Study

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## □ Hypothesis 3 – Set Market Value of Property

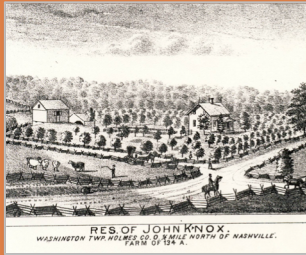
- By selling land for \$3,500 per 80 acre parcel, John may have attempted to set its market value.
- This may have benefited the children.
- How? If they wanted to sell it soon after John's death.





# John Knox Case Study Conclusion

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- Hypotheses were developed using all four methods.
- Several ideas emerged from each method.
- Revisit your brick wall later.
  - Create new Mind Maps...new ideas emerge
- Best methods for this Knox case study:
  - Simplification and sharing
  - Expository writing
  - Mind Mapping

# Summary

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- A framework for hypotheses development increases the likelihood of solving a challenging research problem.
- ◆ STAGE 1 – Creative Hypothesis Development
  - ◆ Provides methods for creative thinking to develop new and perhaps unusual hypotheses.
- ◆ STAGE 2 – Prioritize Hypotheses
  - ◆ Select a method to prioritize, perhaps by most likely or easiest first, and then prioritize your hypotheses.
- ◆ STAGE 3 – Refute or Support Hypotheses
  - ◆ Work to refute or support each hypothesis; additional research may be necessary.



# Resources

43

- Jan M. Joyce, “Developing Creative Hypotheses to Solve Genealogical Challenges,” *Association of Professional Genealogists Quarterly*, Vol XXXIII, No 4 (December 2018).
- Jan Joyce, “Hypothesis Development to Solve Genealogical Challenges: Conflicting Evidence for George Joyce and the 1800 Census,” *Crossroads*, 12 (Summer 2017)
- Thomas W. Jones, “Developing Research Questions and Hypotheses,” *Advanced Genealogical Methods*, 2016 Syllabus, Salt Lake Institute of Genealogy, (Salt Lake City: SLIG, 2016), Module 2, p 5-6.
- Birdie Monk Holsclaw, “From Hypothesis to Proof: Indirect Evidence for the Maiden Identity of Elizabeth, Wife of George Hagenberger,” *National Genealogical Society Quarterly* 92 (June 2004): 96.
- Thomas W. Jones, *Mastering Genealogical Proof*, 2013, National Genealogical Society.
- How to Ask Good Research Questions. <http://bcgcertification.org/blog/2016/01/ten-minute-methodology-how-to-ask-good-research-questions/>
- Focused Versus Diffused Research: <http://www.bcgcertification.org/skillbuilders/skbld911.html>



# Feedback & Questions

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- Please provide all feedback
- Provide to me up front or in back
- Contact me:
  - ▣ [janmjoyce@gmail.com](mailto:janmjoyce@gmail.com)

