



## Making Inferences in Genealogy

Ed Storey looks at drawing inferences and using facts to fill in some of the missing information when bringing ancestors to life

**W**E HAVE ALL LONG HEARD ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF accuracy when recording facts about our ancestors. Whenever possible, we should obtain a copy of the record and carefully note where it was sourced. I try to include source information in the title of the document on my computer. If it is a hard copy, I will write the source on the margin of the document.

Still, a story of our ancestors is a little stark if we have nothing but birth, marriage and death dates, perhaps with a photo of a tombstone or two. Here, we will talk about how to use the facts to round off the corners in the story and make our ancestors seem more alive. I am not suggesting we ignore the facts. They should not change. We will talk about how to better draw inferences from the facts. I will show examples of what are reasonable conclusions from what we know.

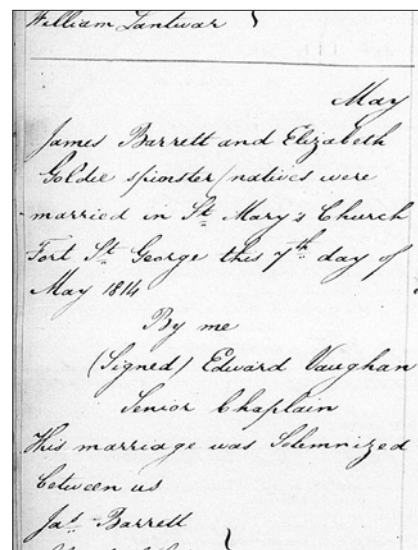
First, here is an example of an adoption by an aunt. I am using it because it shows how fragile life was 200 years ago and how families worked together to care for those left behind. There is a nearby chart that shows the people involved on a timeline to make it easier to follow.

### Did Catherine Adopt the Orphaned Girls?

DATE	WHAT HAPPENED
7 May 1814	James Barrett married Elizabeth Goldie
1815	John Hattersley married Catherine Buchan
1815 & 1816	Elizabeth and Matilda Barrett were born
16 Jan 1816	John Ellis Hattersley was born
13 Sept 1820	Elizabeth Barrett Goldie died.
25 My 1822	John Hattersley died
13 May 1824	James Barrett died
2 Sept 1824	John Ellis Hattersley died
4 April 1825	Catherine married Thomas Barrett
25 June 1825	Thomas Barrett died
1849	Catherine left bequest to Elizabeth and Matilda in Will

These are the records I have seen for those involved with Elizabeth Hester and Matilda Simpson. Together, they make it seem likely that Catherine brought them up.

James Barrett married Elizabeth Goldie and they had 2 daughters. It appears Elizabeth might have been frail as she died when the girls were very young and she was only 24, in 1820. About the same time, Catherine Buchan married John Hattersley and they had a son, John Ellis. John Hattersley died when his son was six and the son died two years later. Whether Catherine and Elizabeth knew each other we cannot determine.



Even though we do not know for sure who cared for the children after both parents died, we can find documents relating to the marriages, births and deaths of the parents and the children. Many, however, are barely readable. (FamilySearch.org)