



Pulling Away from the Web

Sue Lisk says there are benefits to taking the occasional break from internet research

THE LITTLE RED FLAG HAD TWO POSSIBLE POSITIONS. AND IT was still pointing in the wrong direction: up. The mail carrier hadn't arrived yet. I was awaiting a special document I'd requested, via snail mail, from the State Archives. But waiting wasn't my strong point. Fortunately, there were plenty of worthwhile family history projects I could pursue in the meantime.



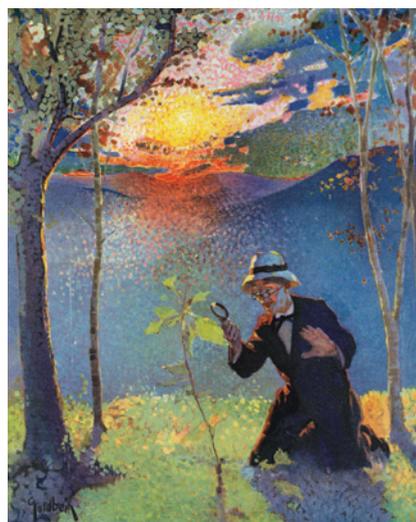
Not all documents can be obtained via the internet. Sometimes you'll have to wait for them to arrive the old-fashioned way. Double barn-themed mailboxes in Upper Leacock Township, a rural area in Lancaster County, PA, Carol M. Highsmith. (Library of Congress)

If there were such a thing as the “cardinal virtues of genealogy”, one of them would certainly be patience. Yet nowadays, patience isn't a highly valued quality. In the realm of family history, the internet is one of the culprits contributing to this problem. Genealogists want and often expect to be able to click here, there, and then voilà, see the answer appear as if by magic. But that rarely happens.

Taking an occasional break from using the internet as a research tool can be a smart move. And, if you use your time well, it can help you become a more effective genealogist. Let's take a look at some of the potential benefits of keeping your distance from the web, at least for a little while. (And I do mean for more than a day!)

Assumptions Anonymous

You probably have piles of material, paper and otherwise, related to your family history saved in at least several places. Apart from that, you likely have other information stored digitally. But no matter how organized you are, you've inevitably lost track of some of your discoveries.



You may discover amazing facts when you slow down and study in detail items close at hand. “Oh, what a beautiful bug!”, Walter Dean Goldbeck, published in *Puck* in 1914. (Library of Congress)

And I'm willing to venture a guess that at least some of the information you have, you've never even reviewed, at least not in detail. And as time has passed, and you've encountered new information in your research, you may not have had time to consider how it all fits in with what you already know. Or think you know.

When you temporarily halt your online research, you can tackle the issue of confronting the information you already have at hand. It's the perfect time to take notes on new questions that arise and uncover contradictions. Perhaps you'll find that some of those “facts” you've entered in your tree are actually wrong.