

OPERATION GRANNY FILES

The Capstone Project Worksheet

Your One-Ancestor Proof Summary — Start to Finish

Workbook

Mission 25: The Complete Genealogist — Your Volume 1 Capstone

Clearance Level: Biscuit-Tin Operative

operationgrannyfiles.substack.com

QUICK-GRAB SUMMARY

The five steps to your capstone piece:

- Choose one ancestor and one research question — a bounded, answerable question is the only way to know when you're done
- Run the reasonably exhaustive search — work through the full Volume 1 toolkit on that one person
- Log every source as you go — record what each source said and its citation while it's fresh
- Grade yourself against the GPS — five checkboxes, five honest answers
- Write the one-page proof summary — introduction, body with citations, plain conclusion

Part 1 — Scope Your Capstone

Your Ancestor

Who are you researching for your capstone?

Field	Your Answer
Full name (as known)	
Approximate birth year	
Approximate birth location	
Relationship to you	
Why you chose this person	

Your Research Question

A research question is the single thing you're trying to prove. It should be specific enough to be answerable and bounded enough that you can know when you're done.

Good examples:

- Who were the parents of [Name], born approximately [year] in [place]?
- Did [Name] marry twice, and if so, when and to whom?
- Was [Name] born in Ohio or Indiana — what do the records actually say?

Write your research question here:

GRANNY PRO TIP

"If you can't answer your research question with a simple 'yes,' 'no,' or a name, it's probably too vague. 'Tell me everything about Grandma Rose' is a project, not a question. 'Who were Grandma Rose's parents?' is a question you can actually answer, cite, and declare finished."

Part 2 — The Reasonably Exhaustive Search

Run through the Volume 1 toolkit for your chosen ancestor. Record each source you check — even sources that turn up nothing, because showing you looked matters.

Source and Search Log

#	Source / Record Type	Mission Ref.	What I Found (or Didn't)	Citation	Conflict?
1	Census records	M06			
2	Vital records (birth, marriage, death)	M07			
3	Newspapers (obituary, announcements)	M08			
4	Cluster / neighbor research	M09			
5	Probate records / wills	M14			
6	Land records	M15			
7	Church / religious records	M16			
8	Military records	M13			
9	City directories / other records	M21			
10	DNA evidence (if applicable)	M11			
11	Additional source				
12	Additional source				

Notes on sources checked and not found:

GRANNY PRO TIP

“A citation answers five questions: Who created this record? What is it? When and where is it from? And why should I trust it? That's the whole formula. You don't need to memorize Evidence Explained — you just need those five answers on the page. AI tools like FamilySearch's Research Assistant and Ancestry's citation pop-up can draft a citation for you, but you must proofread every word. A tool that writes the citation is an assistant. You are still the genealogist.”

Part 3 — The GPS Self-Check

The Genealogical Proof Standard is not an exam anyone gives you — it is a checklist you grade yourself against. Work through all five components honestly before you write your conclusion.

Component 1: Reasonably Exhaustive Research

- ☐ I searched a wide range of relevant record types, not just the obvious ones
- ☐ I checked both direct (names your ancestor) and indirect (names people around them) evidence
- ☐ I documented sources that turned up nothing as well as sources that did

My honest assessment:

Component 2: Complete and Accurate Source Citations

- ☐ Every fact in my conclusion has a citation I could hand to another researcher
- ☐ My citations answer: Who? What? When? Where? Why trust it?
- ☐ I cited as I went, not all at once at the end

Any citations I still need to complete:

Component 3: Evidence Skillfully Correlated

- ☐ I compared my sources against each other, not just read them in isolation
- ☐ I identified which pieces of evidence agree and which do not
- ☐ I noted what each piece of evidence actually proves (or doesn't prove)

Where my sources agree:

Where my sources disagree:

Component 4: Contradictory Evidence Resolved

- ☐ I identified every conflict between my sources
- ☐ For each conflict, I explained which source I gave more weight and why
- ☐ I did not simply ignore a record because it was inconvenient

Conflicts found and how I resolved them:

Conflict	Source A said	Source B said	Which I trusted and why

Component 5: Soundly Reasoned Written Conclusion

- ☐ My conclusion answers the research question directly
- ☐ My reasoning is explained, not just asserted
- ☐ I have not claimed more certainty than the evidence supports

My overall GPS grade (circle one): Meets standard / Mostly meets standard / Still in progress

What I need before I can say it fully meets the standard:

Part 4 — The One-Page Proof Summary

Write your proof summary here. Aim for one page. Three pages is the maximum. Structure: Introduction → Body → Conclusion.

Introduction (State the research question and the answer in plain language)

Body (Walk through the evidence, source by source, with citations woven in. Explain any conflicts and how you resolved them.)

BONUS INSIGHT

“There are two formats for a written genealogical conclusion. A proof summary is what you've just written — the right choice when your evidence is direct and all points the same way. A proof argument is its longer cousin, used when evidence conflicts or no single document proves the fact and you must build the case piece by piece, inference by inference. You don't need to write a proof argument today. But keep the name. You'll meet it when the trail gets harder — and the fact that you've already written a proof summary means you'll be ready for it.”

Conclusion (Answer the research question one more time, plainly and completely. State the confidence level the evidence supports.)

GRANNY SAYS

“You chose one ancestor, ran the search, graded yourself honestly, and wrote the conclusion with your name on it. That is not a hobby. That is genealogy done right. File this in Volume 1 — it belongs there, because so do you.”

Notes

Use this space for personal notes and discoveries.
