USING *GOOGLE* AS A GENEALOGICAL SEARCH TOOL

1. First, a Very Useful <u>FREE</u> Program That You Can Download: The Google Toolbar

To obtain this program, go to the Google home page (<u>www.google.com</u>) and click on <u>About Google</u>, just below the "I'm Feeling Lucky" button. In the "Our Products" section, click on <u>Google Services & Tools</u>. Then scroll down (alphabetically) and click on <u>Toolbar</u> in the left-hand column. On the resulting page, you can learn about what the toolbar does, and decide whether you want it. If you want to download it, click on the <u>Install Google Toolbar</u> button, and go from there.

Advantages: The Google Toolbar is available to you from any web page, so you can do a Google search immediately by typing in the search box, without going first to the Google home page. Also, the Google Toolbar has a pretty good pop-up screen blocker and several other useful tools.

2. Where to Find Useful Tips and Suggestions from Google:

a. The Basics of Google Search

As we did above, go to <u>www.google.com</u> and click on <u>About Google</u>. On the "About Google" page under "Our Products", click on <u>Google Web Search Features</u>. This brings you to the "Google Help Center", which has lots of links to everything you wanted to know about Google and considerably more. Notice particularly the underlined links in the left-hand column of the page. You'll probably want to explore all of these in some detail — especially the <u>Basics of Search</u> and the <u>Advanced Search</u> pages — to learn how to do more effective genealogical searches. These sections will describe and demonstrate all the strategies we used in class, and a good deal more.

b. Google Web Search Features

Examine the many things that are available as "Google Web Search Features". You may find <u>Book Search</u>, <u>Currency Conversion</u>, <u>Definitions</u>, <u>Images</u>, <u>PhoneBook</u>, <u>Site Search</u>, <u>Street Maps</u>, or <u>Web Page Translation</u> to be useful in your genealogical research.

c. Google Services and Tools

Go to the "About Google" page and click the link <u>Google Services & Tools</u> in the "Our Products" section. In the "Search" section, you may find <u>Blog Search</u>, <u>Book Search</u>, <u>Desktop</u>, <u>Images</u>, <u>Maps</u>, and <u>News</u> to be useful. You might find the <u>Labs</u> under "Explore and Innovate" to be interesting. In "Communicate, Show and Share", you may be able to use <u>Blogger</u>, <u>Calendar</u>, <u>Docs & Spreadsheets</u> or <u>Gmail</u>. Be sure and examine the <u>Translate</u> tool. (Incidentally, you can get to the Translate tool directly from the Google home page by clicking <u>Language Tools</u> to the right of the search box.) Also, you may wish to use <u>Picasa</u> to organize your photos, and though it may not help much in your genealogy you can have a lot of fun playing with <u>Google Earth</u>.

 (Note: to use Picasa or Google Earth, you have to download the installation file to your computer, and then install the program. If you wish to do so, be sure your computer can handle it. They recommend for Google Earth, for example, that you have Windows XP with a 512 MB RAM and 2 GB of hard disk space.)

3. Some Other Good Sources for Google Genealogical Search Tips

Sometimes it helps to read essentially the same information from two different authors. Another excellent list of tips for using Google in genealogical searches, with a wealth of useful suggestions, can be found at http://www.searchforancestors.com. If you click on the Google Searcher tab at the top of the page, or the Easy Google Genealogy Search link under the "Free Genealogy Databases Search" section below, it will bring up a page that will try to do some of the work for you. It shows a number of different types of Google genealogy search boxes, which make use of the tips you have read about. (Incidentally, you may wish to explore this whole "searchforancestors" website, which apparently is sponsored by Ancestry.com, and has links to a raft of genealogical helps.)

Finally, if you want a lot more tips and suggestions, do a Google Search for "Google Genealogy" (without the quotes), and examine some of the nearly three million results that come up. Actually, the first couple of pages of results look pretty good!

4. A Closing Statement

As with all computer programs, the best way to learn how to use it is just to jump in and try it out. It takes some practice to learn how to use Google most effectively. The more you use it, the more proficient you will become, and the more valuable the program will be.