



10 THINGS TO KNOW: BLACK SHEEP

Looking for the shady characters in your own family tree? Whether they were bootleggers or brothel owners, black sheep are some of the most interesting ancestors you'll ever trace. Our 10 Things to Know will help you figure out why – and where to turn to herd your own family's black sheep.



A N

ision
ndorsement to check

1914

1914

1914

1914

1 Who's the black sheep in your family?

He or she is the one who went against the grain -- negatively. Of course it's all a matter of perception, but you may discover that you're looking at a black sheep simply by looking at comments in the census and elsewhere. Try a few of these on for size.

Rushton, Georgia Ann w 34			1	Washing
— Florence w 11	Daughter		1	Keeping house
— Harry w 7 5	Son			
— Charles w 11 3	Son		1	
Rushton, Thomas w 12 34	Husband		1	Drunkard

No. 11111 (Christian name) She Devil			1	Says "we must keep away or get shot" w
--------------------------------------	--	--	---	--

REMARKS: *See #1 - Frank Snow - was a woman of ill fame.*

2 Black sheep often have deep paper trails.

Exchanged & paid 1/1919	NOV 1 1 1919	11/8/19	Lawrence of Paul Office
Exp. Feb. 1919			
Released on Parole May 14, 1921	NOV 1 1 1919	11/8/19	Lawrence of Paul Office
William S. Wood	NOV 1 1 1919	9/1/19	Edith J. Hunt

Depending on you ancestor's black sheep offense, you may find his or her trail in newspaper records, court records, and even prison records. If committing crimes - and getting caught and tried - was your black sheep's forte, check newspapers more carefully. Coverage of a criminal trial may have lasted months and extended well beyond the town

or county in which it was committed. Even petty criminals could make repeat appearances in the town's published police blotter.

3 Family stories are comfortable homes for black sheep ancestors.

But before you add Jesse James to your family tree, check out the story carefully. Passed-down stories are notorious for their on-the-fly edits, which in turn get handed to the next generation and beyond. To sort truth from fiction, create a timeline of the story and mesh it with known records. Jot down ages, years and family relationships from census and birth, marriage and death records. Check city directories for whereabouts during the 10 years between censuses. Search yearbooks and the Defective, Dependent and Delinquent census schedule for details about childhoods (see #9 for more). And check the attic for clues lurking in albums and scrapbooks.

4 What's in a black sheep's name?

Whether your black sheep ancestor was escaping the law, a jilted lover or something else entirely, he or she may have adopted a new name. If you think that's the case with your black sheep ancestor, try the following:

- Search by criteria.** Forget names and use birthplace, age, gender, occupation and other details that match your ancestor. Pay attention to names that sound familiar: a family member's maiden name or middle name, for example.

- b. **Lengthen and shorten names.** The alias might be taken from the existing surname.
- c. **Follow the black sheep's address in city directories.** The name may have changed even when the address remained the same.

5 Other people may have written about your black sheep ancestor - in their own histories.

Check written local histories and biographies of law-enforcement officers: either may mention local notorious characters.

6 Certain geographic locations attracted black sheep.

The American West was big - and wild. Check state and territory censuses and newspapers carefully if you think your ancestor migrated, even temporarily. Black sheep in the UK? If he or she was of the criminal variety, check Australian records, too.

7 Black sheep on the lamb.

More than just a pun, it's a fact: black sheep had reason to travel the globe or get away from something (see #4). Look for them in passports (bonus: you often get a photo, too), on passenger lists, and in out-of-town newspapers. You'll even find a handful of histories about "privateers" and "pirates" in the Ancestry.com card catalog.

8 Everyone has a mother - even black sheep.

Follow the family of a black sheep ancestor in census records and newspapers. You may find mentions of him or her visiting kin, living with a parent, child, sibling or even next door. Pay careful attention to boarders and neighbors who seem to match the black sheep's description.

9 Even the government tracked black sheep.

A special census schedule taken in 1880, the Defective, Dependent and Delinquent schedule, included details about people who were imprisoned. While most people included in this special schedule weren't black sheep, it's still worth taking a look: details included are particularly rich. Also remember that prisons and asylums were enumerated in state and federal censuses.



NELSON H. DESSLER

The Canadian "Raffles" who murdered Captain Hasset, and who died 48 hours later from wounds received during the fight with the officer.

Police Biographies



Passports

Number of Page	Number of File	Brooks Co Jail		
448	112	William Hays	Michigan	Conv
448	112	Dennis Henry	Michigan	Conv
448	112	Joseph Robert	Michigan	Conv
448	112	J. C. Allen	Michigan	Conv
448	112	Co. Miller Edward	Michigan	Conv
448	112	Willie Ann R.	Michigan	Conv
448	112	Blacksmith	Michigan	Conv

Defective, Dependent and Delinquent

10

Other members of the family may not want to talk about the black sheep.

When you're up against a tightly held family story, dive into the following black sheep-only collections at Ancestry.com to see if you can learn more:

U.S.

Alcatraz, California, U.S. Penitentiary, Prisoner Index, 1934-1963

McNeil Island, Washington, U.S. Penitentiary,

Records of Prisoners Received, 1887-1939

Leavenworth, Kansas, U.S. Penitentiary, Name Index to Inmate

Case Files, 1895-1931

Atlanta, Georgia, U.S. Penitentiary, Prisoner Index, ca. 1880-1922

Ft. Smith Criminal Case Files

UK

England & Wales, Criminal Registers, 1791-1892

Birmingham, Warwickshire, England, Pub Blacklist, 1903-1906

UK, Prison Hulk Registers and Letter Books, 1802-1849

UK, Licences of Parole for Female Convicts, 1853-1871, 1883-1887

Australia

New South Wales and Tasmania, Australia Convict Musters, 1806-1849

Australian Convict Transportation Registers - Other Fleets & Ships, 1791-1868

New South Wales, Australia, Registers of Convicts' Applications to Marry, 1826-1851

New South Wales and Tasmania, Australia, Convict Pardons, 1834-1859

Australia, List of Convicts with Particulars, 1788-1842

Australian Convict Index, 1788-1868

New South Wales, Australia Convict Ship Muster Rolls and Related Records, 1790-1849

New South Wales, Australia, Convict Death Register, 1826-1879

Australia - Convict Savings Bank Books, 1824-1886

New South Wales, Australia, Settler and Convict Lists, 1787-1834

New South Wales, Australia, Convict Registers of Conditional and Absolute Pardons 1791-1867

Australian Convict Transportation Registers - First Fleet, 1787-1788

Australian Convict Transportation Registers - Second Fleet, 1789-1790

Australian Convict Transportation Registers - Third Fleet, 1791



Birmingham Black List