

SCANDALS, SHANDEHS, AND LIES: THE STORIES FAMILIES DON'T TELL

Renée Stern Steinig – JGSCV – 3 Oct. 2021

In the course of 40+ years of genealogical research for family, friends, and clients, I have uncovered many "skeletons in the closet" -- cases of mental illness, illegitimate birth, infidelity, abandonment, and even murder, all hushed up for decades. We'll talk about

Anna T., a Viennese refugee who gave birth in a N.Y. State psychiatric hospital



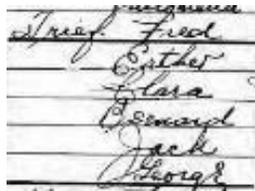
Murray K., a Brooklyn GI whose WW II love affair produced a Belgian son



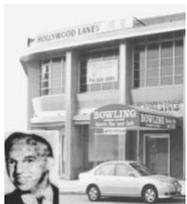
Harold W., a Romanian immigrant hanged for "stealing horses" (or so his family thought)



Clara T., a "big sister" who married, then vanished



Mannie R., a New York bowling alley owner who led two lives



A birth father known only as "Dr. Leslie Smith, 40, born Kentucky"



I'll describe these family secrets, the sources that helped uncover them, and the reunions and reconciliations that followed many of these discoveries.

Most of the records used in these searches were conventional ones that should be in every family detective's toolbox. They are listed below as online sources, but in some cases, they were accessed on microfilm. I'll also discuss some mindsets and methodologies that helped uncover these secrets; they too are useful in all genealogical research. Examples:

- watching for name variations (alternate spellings, shortened names, etc.)
- not accepting reported ages as fact
- taking family stories with a grain of salt
- locating missing people by searching for collateral family
- exploring on Google

(continued)

Cemetery Records

- Find a Grave - <https://www.findagrave.com/>
- Mount Carmel Cemetery (NY) - www.mountcarmelcemetery.com/search.asp
- New Montefiore Cemetery (NY) - newmontefiorecemetery.org/search/

Censuses

- 1925 New York State Census - <https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/2704/>
- 1930 United States Federal Census - <https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/6224/>
- 1940 United States Federal Census - <https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/2442/>

Immigration and Naturalization Records

- New York, Passenger and Crew Lists, 1820-1957 – <https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/7488>
- New York, State and Federal Naturalization Records, 1794-1943 – <https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/2280>

Newspapers

- <https://www.newspapers.com/>
- ProQuest NY Times Historical Database (available through libraries and to NYT subscribers)

Online Family Trees

- Ancestry - <https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/1030/>
- Geni - <https://www.geni.com/>

Social Media and People-finding Tools

- Facebook - <https://www.facebook.com>
- Intelius - <https://www.intelius.com/>
- Phone Disc (no longer manufactured)

Vital Records

- New York City Birth Index, 1910 to 1965 - <https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/61457/>
- New York City Brides Index - <https://www.germangenealogygroup.com/records-search/brides.php>
- New York City Marriage License Indexes, 1907 to 2018 – <https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/61406/>
- Social Security Death Index - <https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/3693/>

And of course...

Google – <https://www.google.com/>

Questions? Email Renée at genmaven@gmail.com .