

The Brick Wall Checklist

38 questions to work through before you decide an ancestor has vanished.

ANCESTOR _____ DATE _____

1 — THE NAME

- ☐ Have I tried spelling variants of the surname (-sen / -son, one s or two, -datter / -dotter)?
- ☐ Have I tried the given name in its Norwegian, Danish and Americanised forms?
- ☐ Have I searched on the given name plus the place, without the surname?
- ☐ Could the person be recorded under a farm name rather than a patronymic?
- ☐ Have I checked the farm names of every place they are known to have lived?
- ☐ If they emigrated, could the patronymic have frozen into a fixed surname, or the farm name become the surname?
- ☐ Have I looked at the original entry rather than only the index?

2 — THE AGE AND THE DATES

- ☐ Have I allowed for an age that is several years out?
- ☐ Have I compared the ages given across every record, rather than trusting one of them?
- ☐ Could the informant have been guessing — a widow, a son, a neighbour?
- ☐ Could the age have been rounded to the nearest ten?

3 — THE PLACE

- ☐ Could the recorded birthplace be a farm, a *sogn*, a *prestegjeld* or a municipality?
- ☐ Could it be where they grew up rather than where they were born?
- ☐ Did the parish or municipal boundaries change during this period?
- ☐ Have I looked at a map from the period rather than a modern one?
- ☐ Have I checked the local *bygdebok* for the farm and the people on it?

4 — WHERE THEY WENT

- ☐ Have I checked the *flyttelister* for the parish they left?
- ☐ Have I checked the *flyttelister* for the neighbouring parishes?
- ☐ Could they have moved to a town — Kristiania, Bergen, Trondheim, or a regional centre?
- ☐ Have I checked the police emigration protocols?
- ☐ Have I traced the siblings, and where each of them ended up?
- ☐ Did other families from the same district settle somewhere in particular?
- ☐ Could they be in another household as a servant, a lodger or a fostered child?

5 — IF THEY DIED

- ☐ Have I checked burials as well as deaths?
- ☐ Could they have died in another parish, at sea, or abroad?
- ☐ Have I searched probate (*skifte*) for the estate and its list of heirs?
- ☐ Could a death notice have appeared in a Norwegian-American newspaper?

- ☐ Are there known gaps or losses in this parish's registers?

- ☐ What is the last generation I am genuinely certain about?

question sideways: probate, land records, military rolls, tax lists.