**Genealogy: Part History, Part Mystery**

**Crista Cowan - December 2012**

**Professional Genealogist-Ancestry.com**

**Webinar presentation: Searching for an unknown \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Ancestry** has resources that any member should utilize, as needed. To submit your question or issue log-in to ancestry.com and click on **HELP** from the main Menu in the black horizontal bar at the top of your screen. The 2nd and 3rd items exist to help you with questions or issues, or guide you over, around and hopefully through your “brickwalls”. These are labeled as follows:

* Community
* Message Boards

It helps to be part Detective when doing your genealogy and family history research. You’re sure to encounter a mystery sooner or later; here’s a tried and true approach to solving a mystery.

1. Canvas the neighborhood where your person of interest is believed to have lived. This should include possible neighbors and friends, school mates, work or business associates and fellow congregates from religious organizations, if known. Don’t overlook possible clubs, lodges or groups he or she may have joined. Continue your search using City Directories, public records and obituaries.
2. Check any probable records for useful clues. Study multiple censuses carefully and thoroughly; this should easily identify neighbors who may be able to provide information. Seek out any standard hospital records, search for newspaper announcements, examine the family bible (if available), review journals, logs or letters.
3. Using all relevant information you now have, create a prioritized list of possible suspects.
4. Attempt to conduct an interview with your best ones. *Depending on the circumstances, this may be a bit (or a lot) touchy and delicate.*
5. If you think you’ve been successful, solidify your conclusion with DNA testing.