How Do You Know? – Why Documentation Is Essential

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You hear it all the time: be sure when you submit your lineage information to identify the sources you have for your information. This is especially important if you have not researched your lineage directly but taken information from the many online trees which are now readily available. Major sites like ancestry.com and familysearch.org make it easy for you to find images of many available supporting documents which add credibility to your lineage.

While a great deal of work went into documenting submitted lineages, the methods used to identify sources on the website are, unfortunately, not helpful. Much of the documentation is identified by a person's name, with no indication of who this person was or how to evaluate the validity of their information. Some of this documentation may be available in the historic lineage files in our archive which are in the process of being scanned. When we can find a particular person's file, we can put that information on the site. When there is no file, we have no way of evaluating the accuracy of the information, so need to identify it as unverified. Another large portion was saved on disks which cannot be opened with today's software so again are unverified.

An undocumented, or minimally documented, database is of little value. We are committed to making our database the most accurate Towne family database available.