Economics can explain many significant ancestral actions. Defined as “a social science concerned chiefly with description and analysis of the production, distribution, and consumption of goods and services,” the discipline can put life-defining circumstances in context. Economic forces often motivated, for example, emigration from Europe and elsewhere, immigrants’ choice of destination, and migration across North America. Economics also can influence occupations, community status, roles, relationships, successes, and failures.

Several economies affected family life in the past. Local and national factors were influential. Men and women participated in separate economic systems, especially before the twentieth century. Exploring these micro and macro forces can shed light on how individuals lived.

Hannah Frances “Fannie” Dunn provides an example. She married Henry Carter Swartz on 26 May 1870 in Frederick County, Virginia. Her father, William Dunn, owned a small tract there, probably a subsistence farm. More important, he was a skilled carpenter. Fannie’s groom, in contrast, was an unskilled, landless farm laborer, son of a landless widow. His father, enduring hardship in Reconstruction-era Virginia, had been a day laborer.

In 1879, post-Reconstruction Frederick County remained depressed. Fannie and Henry’s family had expanded to include four children. As she cared for her growing family, Fannie’s ability to contribute to the family income probably decreased, and Henry’s earning power had not improved. In late 1879 or early 1880 they moved to Hagerstown, Maryland. Henry worked, first as laborer and later as “wood machinist,” for the Hagerstown Spoke and Bending Works, which manufactured wheels for wagons and eventually for automobiles. The Swartzes’ move was part of a nationwide migration from country to city—from agricultural to industrial economy—to improve family resources.

The move undoubtedly helped. By 1900 Fannie had raised thirteen children, five still at home. After Henry’s death Fannie took boarders into her rented home to augment her income. The few family members remaining with her worked in Hagerstown factories. Economics, perhaps more than other social sciences, puts the family into context.

Credits:

The photographer was Flynn Photo Company; 459-939 Pennsylvania Avenue; Washington, D.C. The picture and Swartz family history are in the care of descendant Patti Spong Walker; RR 1 Box 152; McRae, GA 31055-9746; pwalker_53@yahoo.com. The quoted definition is from Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary, 11th ed. (Springfield, Mass.: Merriam-Webster, 2004), s.v. “economics,” definition 1. For information on Hannah Frances Dunn’s maternal ancestry, see “The Bourn Identity” in the present issue.
The Bourn Identity:
Meredith Bowen Alias Bourn
of Frederick County, Virginia

By Victor S. Dunn, CG

The absence of Meredith “Bowen” in certain ordinary records suggested a potential surname anomaly. An appreciation of linguistic principles and study of collateral relatives led to his origin.

A stute genealogists often consider surname variations when researching non-English-speaking families. Similar spelling evolutions and phonetic drift affect English family names, even in those families present in America for multiple generations.1 These forces are illustrated in the case of Meredith Bowen who lived and died in early nineteenth-century Virginia.

RECORDS OF MEREDITH “BOWEN” IN FREDERICK COUNTY, VIRGINIA

Meredith Bowen married Lucy Drake in Frederick County, Virginia, on 15 November 1810.2 On 24 May 1819 he signed a bond there for his marriage to Catherine Carper, daughter of Philip Carper.3 They married that same day.4 Meredith died before 3 March 1832 when Philip Carper signed a bond for the...
upcoming marriage of Catherine Bowen “widow of Meredith Bowen, deceased.” Catherine apparently died between 1870 and 1880 in Frederick County.

Indexed Bowen deed and probate records in Frederick County do not mention Meredith. His sole Federal census listing, in 1820, shows “Merideth” Bowen’s household of two males under ten and two males and one female age sixteen and under twenty-six. This census record likely misrepresents Meredith’s age since he was probably more than twenty-one when he married Lucy Drake.

An 1898 Frederick County chancery suit involving the heirs of Catherine (née Carper) (Bowen) Carpenter’s niece names Catherine’s children with Meredith Bowen:

- Catherine Carpenter, wife of Alex Carpenter
- Lucy Dunn
- William Bowen
- Meredith Bowen
- Jane Dunn

A 27 December 1861 marriage license for Meredith’s thirty-seven-year-old daughter Lucy A. Bowen to Robert Dunn indicates she was born in Frederick County about 1824. All documentation of Meredith’s life from 1810 through 1824, and likely until his death before 1832 when his widow remarried in there, places him in Frederick County.

Since no county court documents identified Meredith’s parents, the search turned to tax lists which often provide clues to father-son relationships. Surprisingly, Frederick County personal property tax lists for the period 1800–25 make no mention of Meredith Bowen.

6. Catherine appears with her husband Zachariah Carpenter in 1870, but he is living alone in 1880 (his marital status is not indicated). See Zachariah Carpenter household, 1870 U.S. census, Frederick Co., Va., population schedule, Gainsborough, p. 30, dwelling 71, family 72; National Archives (NA) microfilm M593, roll 1648. Also, Zachariah Carpenter household, 1880 U.S. census, Frederick Co., Va., pop. sch., Gainsborough, ED 43, sheet 362, dwell./fam. 2; NA microfilm T9, roll 1366. Catherine’s death is not listed in Frederick Co. death records.
9. Dunn-Bowen marriage license, Frederick Co. Marriage Certificates, Consents, Licenses and Minister’s Returns, 1860–64; LVA Frederick Co. microfilm 153.
ASSOCIATES AND COLLATERAL CONNECTIONS

When records fail to identify an individual's origin, focusing on family associates and collateral surnames may lead to breakthroughs. Two grandchildren of Meredith Bowen married members of the Swartz family of Frederick County:

- On 26 May 1870 Mary Frances Dunn, daughter of William and Milly Jane (née Bowen) Dunn, married Henry Carter Swartz.11

On 21 October 1819, Meredith Bowen purchased several items at the estate sale of John Swartz, deceased, as did “Morten” Bowen.13 This is the only known record connecting Meredith Bowen with another man of the same surname. On 16 December 1819 “Morton” Bowen married Elizabeth Greenlee in Frederick County.14

In 1860 Morton Bowen, farmer, age sixty-five, a native of Virginia, resided in Franklin County, Missouri, with another Virginian, John Bowen, farmer, age twenty-five.15 No Morton Bowen appears in the 1850 census of Franklin County; however, that year a Morton “Bourn,” a fifty-five-year-old farmer, headed a household of seven Bourns, all born in Virginia.16


Although no Morton Bowen was enumerated in Frederick County, Virginia, census records, Morton “Bourne” lived in there in 1830. The household’s eldest male was between thirty and forty years old, so born between 1790 and 1800, the approximate age of the Morton Bourn or Bowen of Franklin County, Missouri.

FAMILY LORE VERUS DOCUMENTED ANCESTRY

Family papers include an ancient pedigree chart believed to have been drawn by Morton Bourn’s granddaughter based on information provided by his daughter. This chart states that Morton was born about 1800 in Fredericksburg, Virginia, to Andrew Jackson Bourn and Jane or Elizabeth (née) Morton. Andrew Jackson Bourn was born in 1760 and resided on a plantation five miles from Winchester (Frederick County), and died before 1837. Andrew Jackson Bourn was a son of [Blank] Bourn and Mildred (née) Helm. In 1830 Morton Bourn married Elizabeth Greenlee, daughter of David Greenlee of Frederick County.

Evidence in Virginia probate and land records establishes that William Bourn of Frederick County had sons Morton and Meredith “Bourn.” It further demonstrates that the Bourn surname was of some antiquity in Virginia:

- The will of William “Bourn” of Frederick County, dated 17 August 1824 and proved 2 August 1830, names sons William, John, Andrew, Morton, and Meredith; daughters Lucy Ann, Jane, and Sarah Hathaway, wife of Francis Hathaway; and wife Milly Bourn.
- The will of William Helm of Frederick County, dated 11 February 1815 and proved 3 December 1825, names son-in-law William Bourne/Bourn and son William Helm among others.
- In his 1829 Frederick County will William Helm left legacies to his niece Lucy Ann Bourn and the children of his sister Milly Bourn.
- On 6 January 1789 William Bourn and wife Milla Bourn of Frederick County sold land in Culpeper County to Joseph Morton.

18. Wes Klang (12220 Evanston Ave. N, Seattle, WA 98133), to author, letter and photocopies, 15 August 2005. Included in the documents is a copy of a pedigree chart which states “The above Bourn family record is authentic, given me by one Sara Jane Bourn Daugherty, sister of Morton Bourn, my father.”
19. William Bourn will (1830), Frederick Co. Will Book 16:127. William Bourn indicated that his son Meredith had already received his share of the estate.
21. William Helm will (1830), Frederick Co. Will Book 16:164.
Andrew Bourn's 1788 will names wife Jane and son William.  
William Morton's 1747 will names son-in-law Andrew Bourn, and Alvin Mothershead's 1734 will names Jane Morton, daughter of William Morton.  

These documents establish William Bourn as father of Morton Bourn, husband of Milly (née Helm) Bourn, and son of Andrew Bourn and his wife Jane (née) Morton. Jane was probably Morton Bourn's namesake. William Bourn also had a son named Meredith. Was he the Meredith "Bowen" who married Lucy Drake and Catherine Carper?  

MEREDITH BOWEN REVISITED  
A review of Frederick County personal property tax lists 1809–32 indicates that Meredith "Bourn" paid taxes there in 1820, 1822, 1823 and 1825. Some years the tax collector listed only owners of taxable property such as slaves or horses. This may explain Meredith's absence from many of the lists. He apparently died after the 1825 tax list and before March 1832 when his widow Catherine "Bowen" remarried.  

An 1848 estate account for Mildred "Bourne" was recorded in Clarke County, Virginia, in 1854. The eight shares were distributed as follows:  

2. "Felix Metz & wife." William Bourne acted as bondsman for the marriage of his daughter Jane Bourn to Feliz "Meetze" on 8 September 1828.  
3. "John Bourne and wife."  
5. "[ditto mark under William above] Hathaway and wife." This was likely Francis Hathaway and wife Sarah.  

23. Andrew Bourn will (1788), Culpeper Co. Will Book C:357, Circuit Court, Culpeper, Va.; LVA Culpeper Co. microfilm 32.  
24. William Morton will (1747), Orange Co. Will Book 2:131, County Court, Orange, Va.; LVA Orange Co. microfilm 23.  
25. Alvin Mothershead will (1734), Richmond Co. Will Book 5:261, County Court, Warsaw, Va.; LVA Richmond Co. microfilm 24.  
26. Meredith Bourn entries, Richard M. Sydnor's district (1820) and Wilford G. Settle's district (1822, 1823, and 1825), p. 3 for all years, Frederick County Personal Property Tax Books, Virginia Auditor of Public Accounts; LVA Personal Property Tax Records microfilm 126. Only surnames beginning with the letter B were studied. Occasionally, individuals were listed under other letters of the alphabet if someone else paid taxes on their behalf.  
27. Clark County was formed from Frederick County in 1836.  
7. “Andrew Bourne.”
8. Meredith Bourne’s heirs: (a) “Lucy Bourne,” (b) “Jane Dun,” (c) “Alex’ Carpenter et ux,” (d) William Bourne, and (e) Meredith Bourne.

Mildred Bourne must have been William Bourn’s wife, called “Milly” in his 1824 will. Meredith Bourne’s heirs match his children named as Bowen heirs of Catherine (née Carper) (Bowen) Carpenter in 1898. Therefore, Meredith Bowen alias Bourn was son of William and Mildred “Milly” (née Helm) Bourn.

William Bourn’s grandfather, John, left a will in Essex County in 1721. Meredith’s Bourn ancestors were in Virginia for more than a century and his family’s first language was apparently English.

The evolution of Bourn to Bowen was not limited to Frederick County since Culpeper County, Virginia, court records imply the name changed there as well. In some areas in the South, the letter r was pronounced as uh when proceeded by the vowels o or u. Accordingly, Bourn was pronounced as boe-uhn, explaining the spelling variations “Bourn,” “Bourne” and “Bowen.” In addition, the words “Bowen” and “Bourn” are similar when written in long hand.

CONCLUSION

Southern accents rendered Meredith’s surname variously as Bowen or Bourn, an evolution not immediately apparent to twenty-first-century researchers. The failure of Meredith “Bowen” to appear in certain records suggested a potential surname anomaly. Finally, an appreciation of linguistic principles and study of collateral relatives led to his origin.

30. The 1844 court suit Helm v. Helm names “Morton Bourne” as a son of Milly Bourne; no son Newton is listed. See Frederick Co. Chancery Causes 1844-026, Circuit Superior Court of Law and Chancery, Winchester, Va.; LVA Frederick Co. microfilm 398.
32. John Bourn will (1720), Essex Co. Will Book 3:258, County Court, Tappahannock, Va.; LVA Essex Co. microfilm 40.
33. Although Virginia was settled primarily by British immigrants, many Germans settled in the Piedmont and Shenandoah Valley regions where Meredith and a number of his ancestors lived. Court records often indicate if a document was signed in German script. This was not the case with any of Meredith Bowen’s ancestors.
34. See Culpeper Co. General Index to Wills 1, 1749–1930, p. 34. The index cross-references Bowen and Bourn probates.