



# CONSTRUCTING GENOGRAMS

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# Creating a genogram

- Part of family assessment & initial interview
- Three levels
  1. Mapping the family structure
  2. Recording family information
  3. Delineating family relationships

# 1. Mapping the family structure

- How family members are **biologically and legally** related
- Figures represent people, lines represent relationships
- Standard figures and symbols
- Basic figures
  - Gender : square & circle (transgender?)
  - Index person : double square & double circles
  - Birth & death date : digits of year born, age written in gender symbol
  - Children : pregnancy, stillbirth, miscarriage, abortion
  - Marriage connection : lines going down and across, year of marriage (m.77), slashes (separation & divorce), husband on left, wife on right

# Basic Symbols/Figures

Male  Female 

Diagram 2.1 Gender symbols

Male I. P.  Female I. P. 

Diagram 2.2 Index person symbols

Birthdate → 43 - 62 ← Deathdate





Diagram 2.3 Birthdates and deathdates

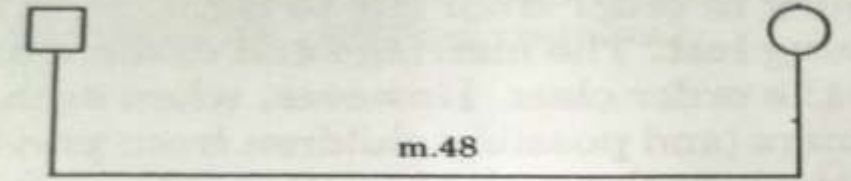


Diagram 2.5 Marriage connections

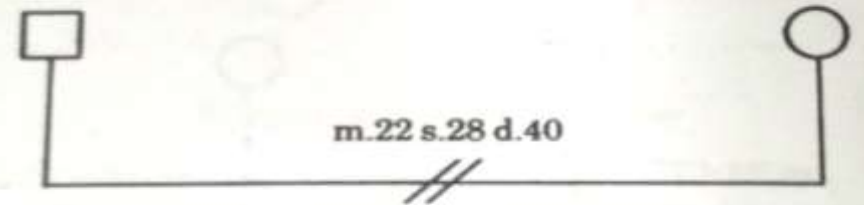


Diagram 2.6 Separations and divorces

pregnancy  stillbirth  or  miscarriage  abortion 

Diagram 2.4 Symbols for pregnancy, miscarriage, abortion and stillbirth

# 1. Mapping the family structure

- Multiple marriages
  - Chronological order (left to right), important dates (year)
- Unmarried / living together couple
  - Dotted line, date met or started living together
- Children
  - Hang down from bar across parent symbols, chronological order (left to right)
  - Lots of children → add line going down, new bar going across
  - Foster/adopted children → dotted line
  - Twins → connected two lines (fraternal vs. identical)
- Dotted line encircling family members living together → one household

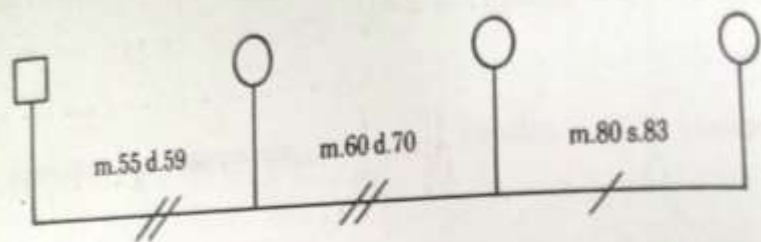


Diagram 2.7 A husband with several wives

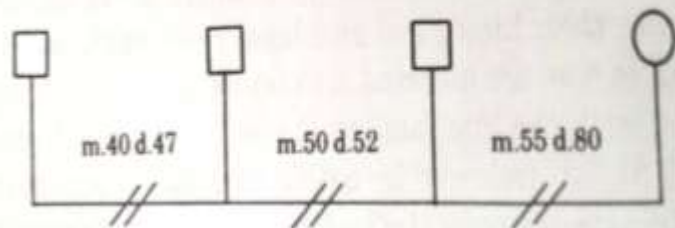


Diagram 2.11 Unmarried couple

## Constructing Genograms

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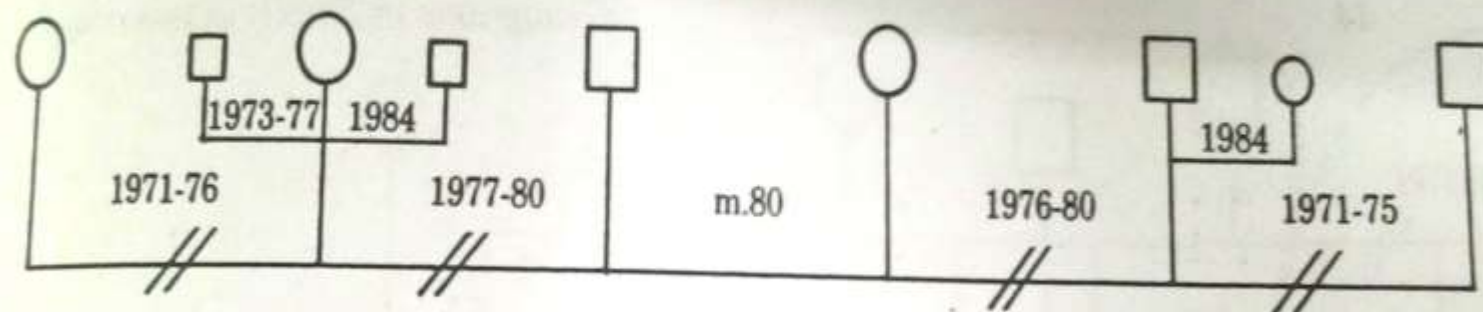


Diagram 2.10 Remarriages where each spouse has had several other partners

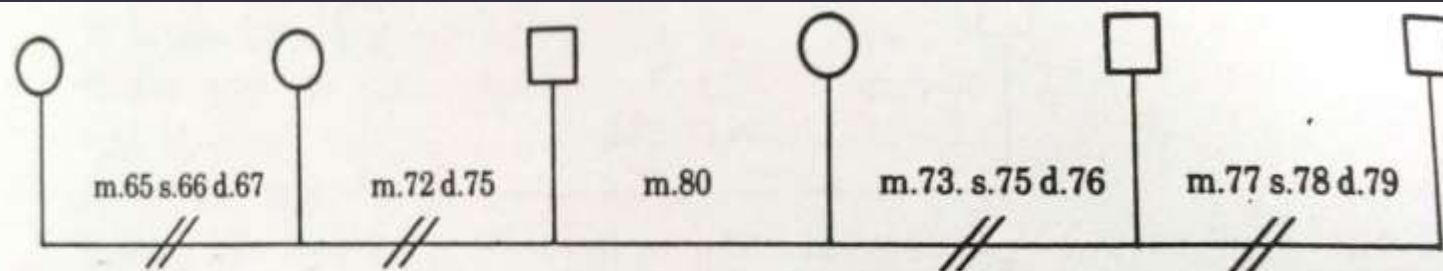
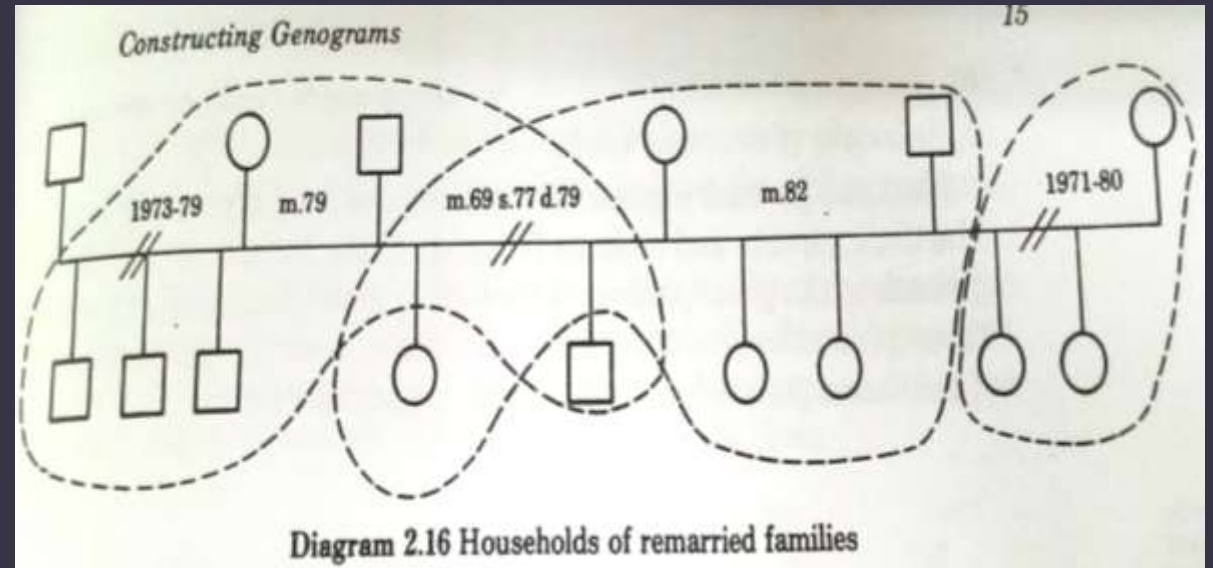
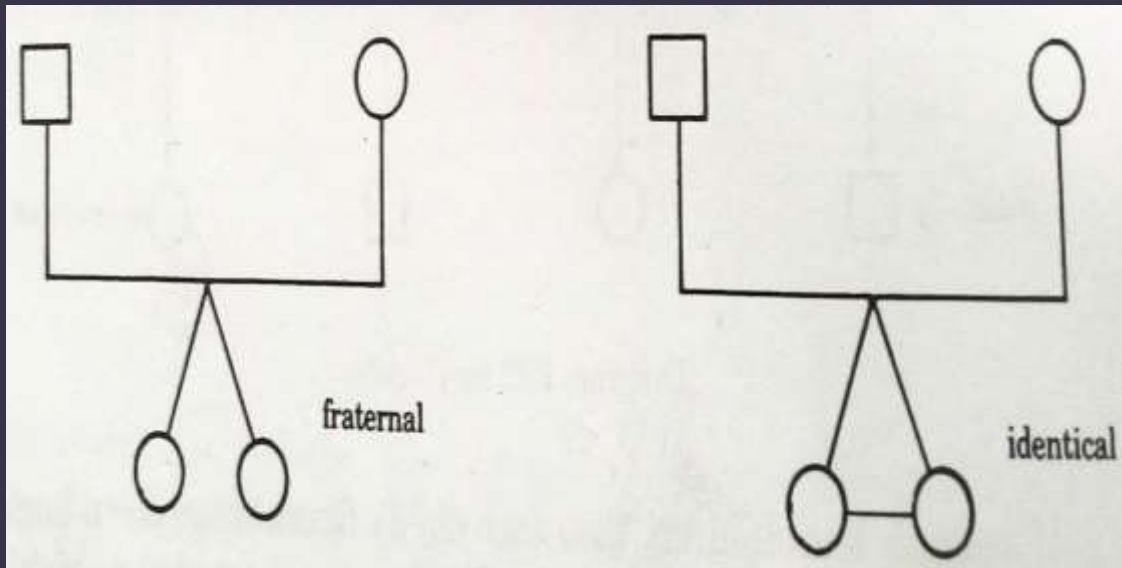
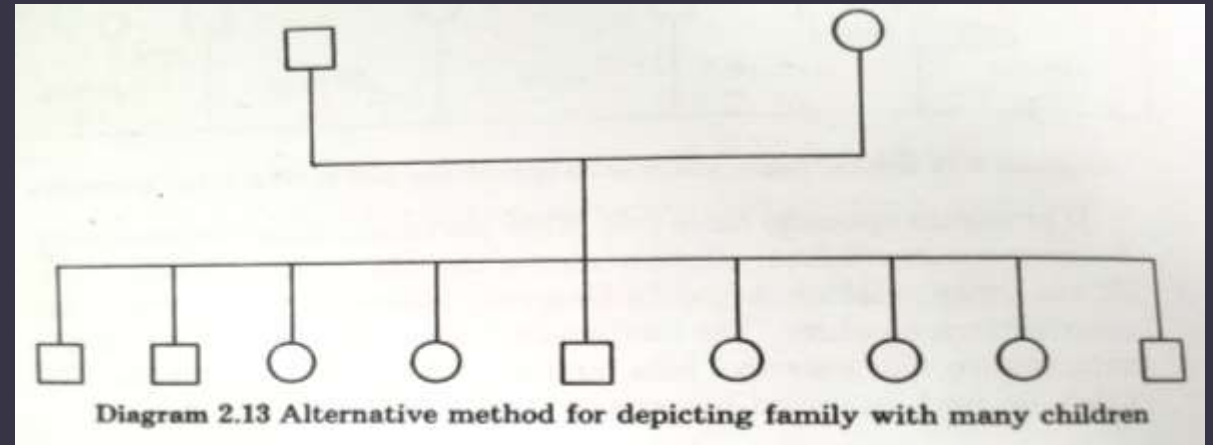
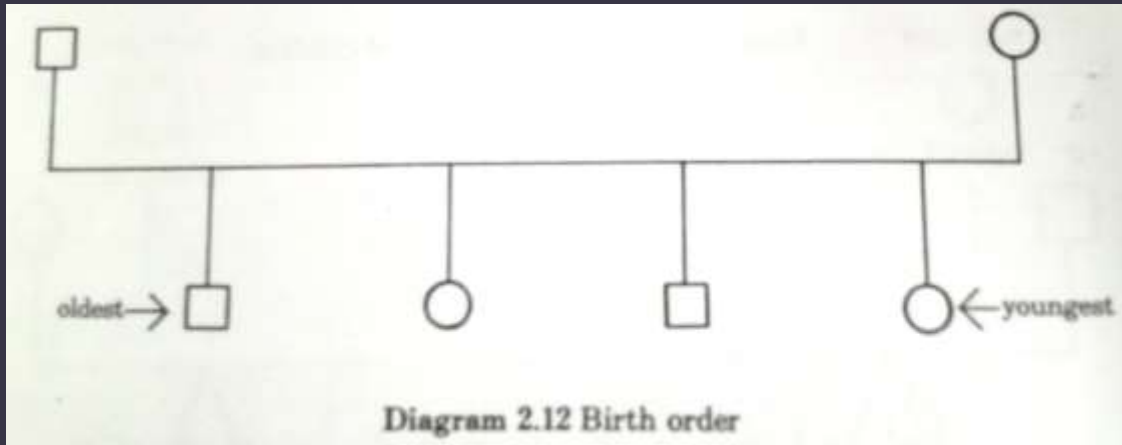


Diagram 2.9 Two partners who have each had multiple spouses





# 1. Mapping the family structure

- Include grandparents of index person → going at least three generations upwards
  - Include generation below index person (4-5 generations total if index person has children or grandchildren)
- Placing index person in the center, shift sibling lines higher or lower
- Include date of the genogram snapshot outside the household dots → depicting important point of time



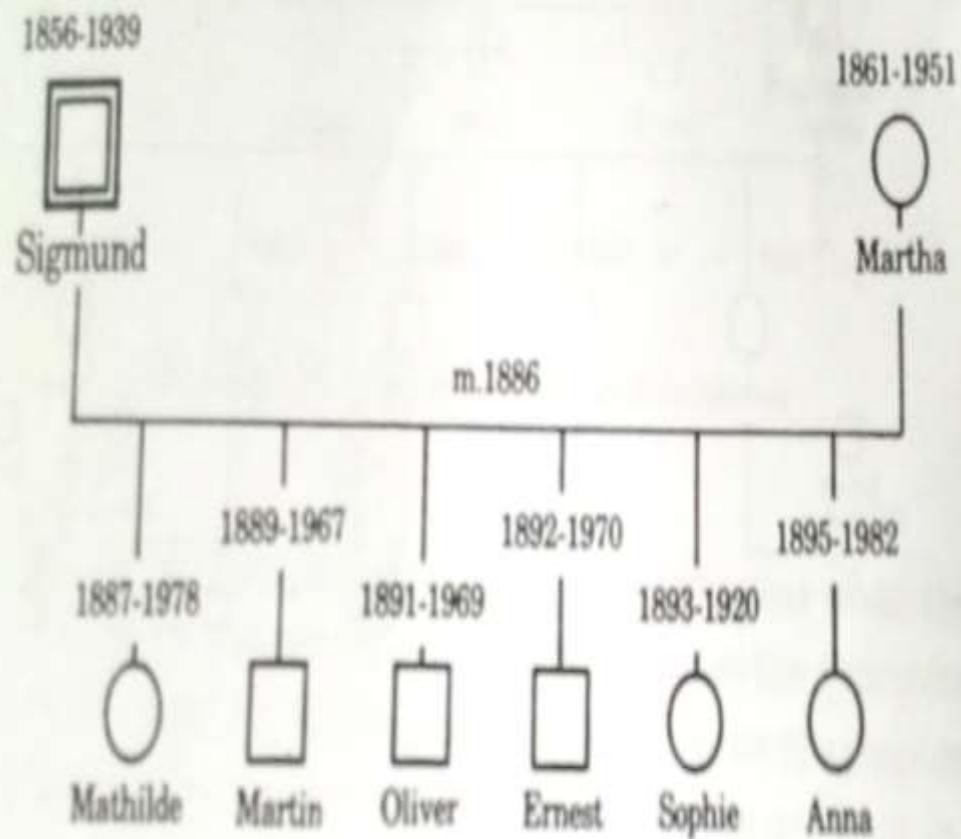
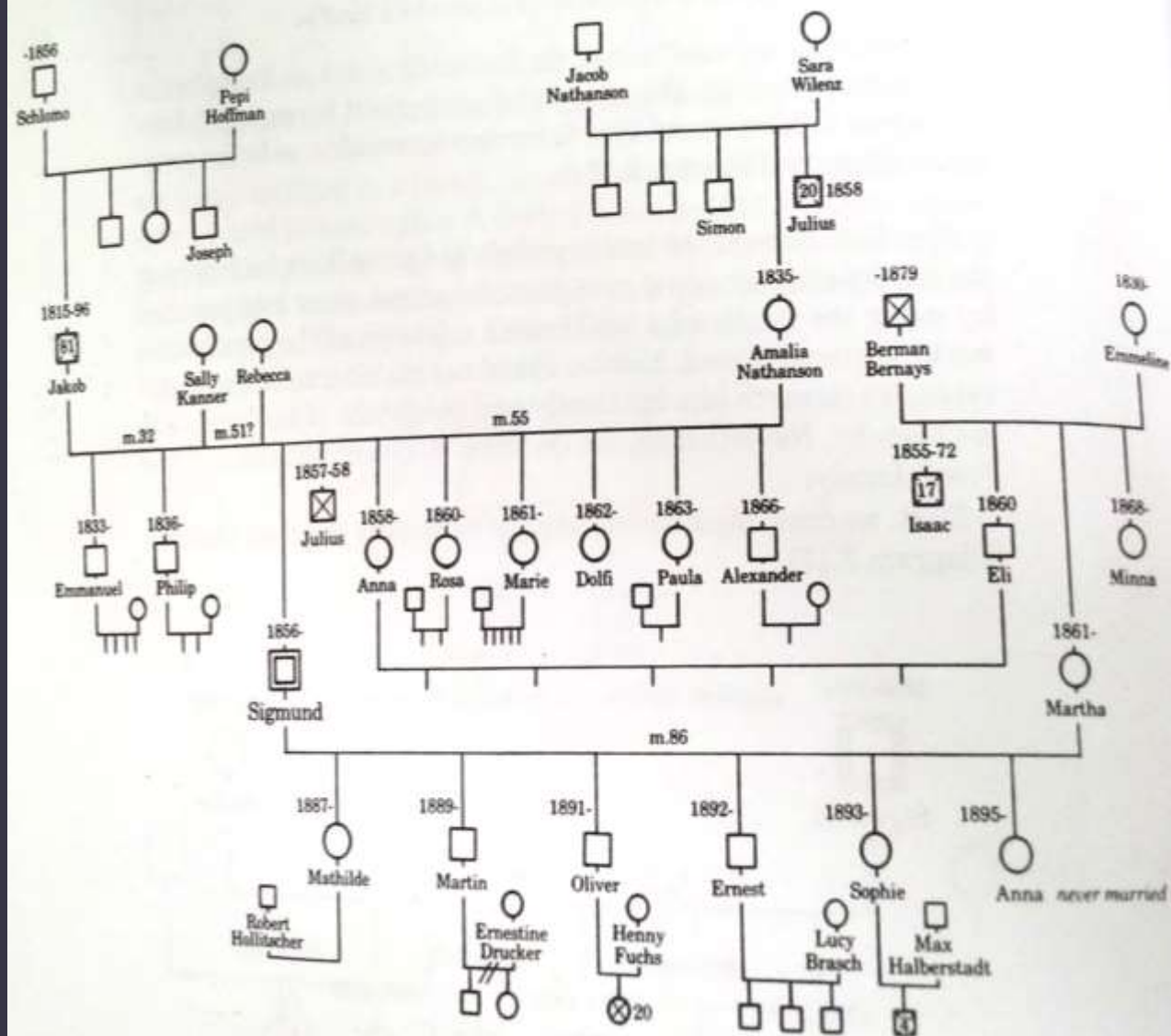
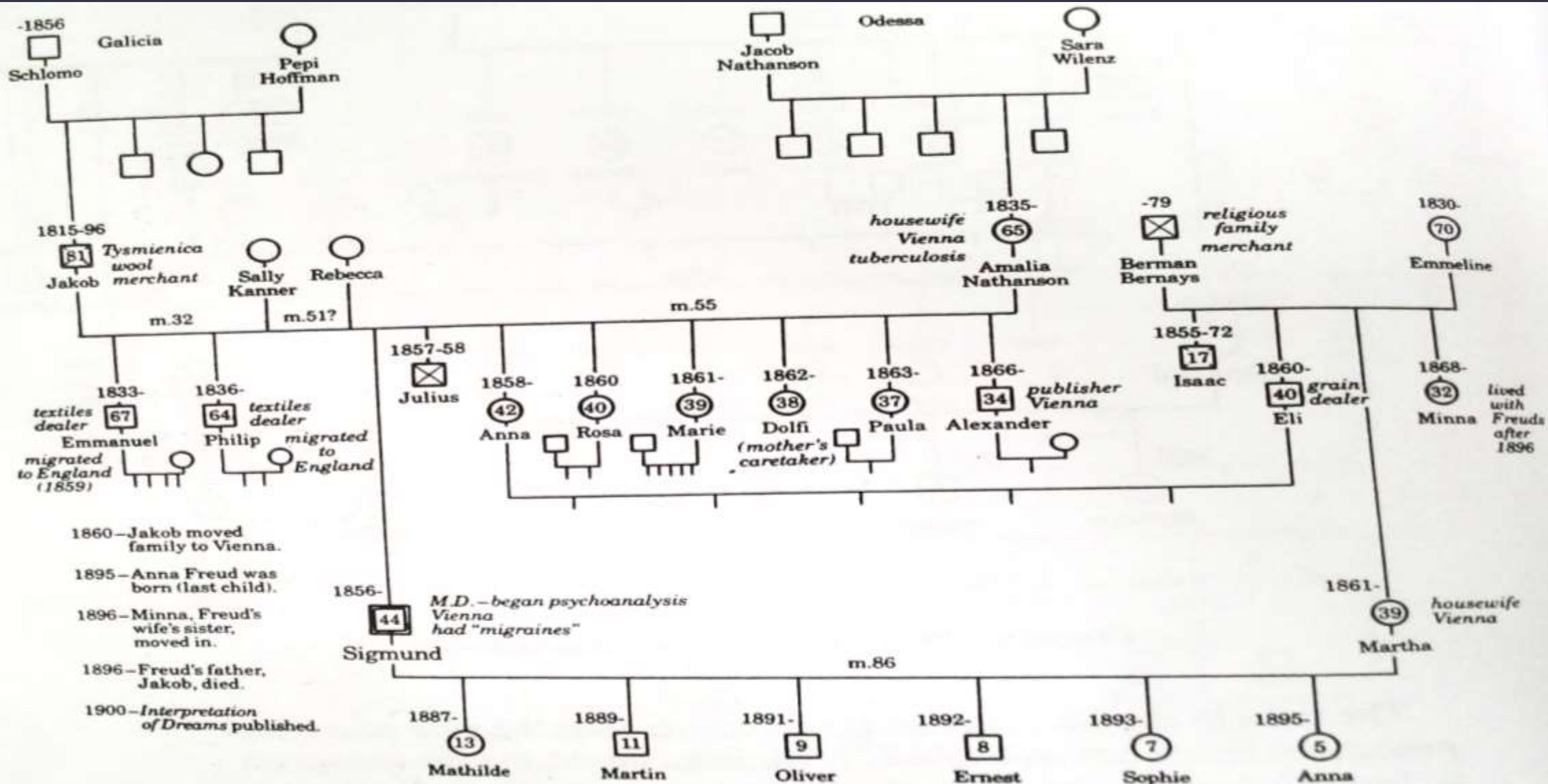


Diagram 2.17 Freud nuclear family



## 2. Recording Family Information

- Family structure → skeleton of genogram
- Information to add:
  - Demographic
    - Ages, dates of birth and death, locations, occupations, educational level
    - Information located above symbol
  - Function
    - Objective data on medical, emotional, behavioral functions (absent from work, drinking problems)
    - Information located on the side of the symbol
  - Critical family events
    - Important transitions, relationship shifts, migrations, losses, successes
    - Marriages, separations, divorces, job changes
    - List of chronology to the side or below genogram → include year and brief information

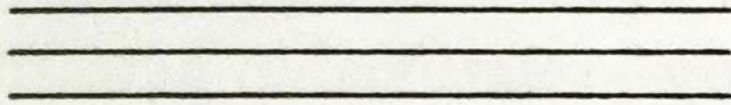


1855 Jakob Freud and Amalia Nathanson marry.  
2/21/1856 Schlomo Freud (Jakob's father) dies.  
5/6/1856 Sigmund Freud is born in Freiberg.  
4/1857 Julius Freud is born.  
12/1857 Julius Freud dies.  
1858 Anna Freud (Sigmund's sister) is born.  
1860 Jakob moves his whole family to Vienna.  
1866 Sigmund enters gymnasium (age 10).  
1866 Alexander Freud is born (last child).  
1873 Sigmund begins medical studies (age 17).  
1879 Sigmund serves in military for 1 year.  
1881 Sigmund receives medical degree (age 24).  
1882 Sigmund becomes engaged to Martha Bernays.  
1884 Sigmund publishes paper on cocaine.  
1885 Sigmund attends Charcot lectures in Paris.  
1886 Sigmund and Martha marry.  
1887 Mildred is born (first child).  
1889 Jean Martin Freud is born (first son).  
1894 Sigmund's self-analysis begins.  
1895 Anna Freud is born (last child).  
1895 Sigmund publishes *Studies on Hysteria*.  
1896 Minna, Sigmund's wife's sister, moves in.

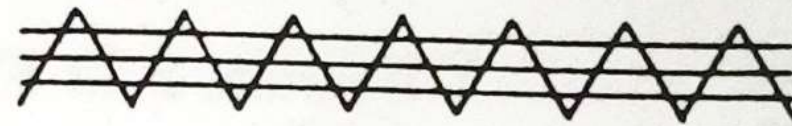
# 3. Delineating Family Relationships

- Most inferential level
- Based on the report of family members **AND** direct observation
- Lines used to symbolize relationships
- **Represent them on a separate genogram**
- Complex genograms → get an overview of the number of siblings and marriages in the parental generation **BEFORE** starting
  - How many times was each parent married?
  - How many siblings did each parent have and where was he/she in the birth order
  - Focal point → index person
  - Complexity factors:
    - Multiple marriages, psychiatric history (suicide), affairs, traumas, children raised in multiple households, discrepant information, etc
    - Use different colors for different sources of information





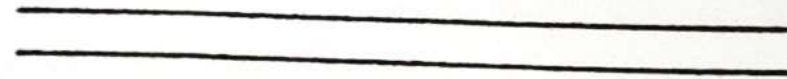
Very close or fused



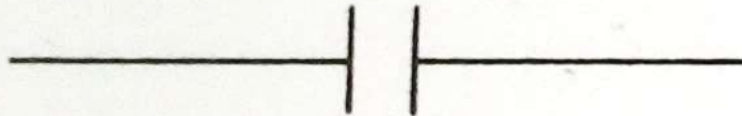
Fused and conflictual



Poor or conflictual



Close



Estranged or cut-off



Distant

**Diagram 2.21 Relationship lines**





# The Genogram Interview

- Data gathered during family interview
- Part of general task → joining and helping the family
- The family information net
  - Presenting problem → larger context of problem
  - Immediate household → extended family and broader social systems
  - Present family situation → historical chronology of family events
  - Judgments about functioning and relationships → family patterns

# Presenting Problem in the Immediate Household

- Starting point for clinician
- Questions to ask
  - Who lives in the household?
  - How is each person related?
  - Where do other family members live?
  - Which family member knows about the problem?
  - How does each person view and respond to it?
  - Has anyone in the family had similar problems?

# The Current Situation

- Questions to ask
  - What has been happening recently in your family?
  - Have there been any recent changes in the family (illnesses, people coming/leaving, job problems, etc)?
- Wider family context
  - Tell me about your mother's side of the family
  - How did your father meet your mother?
  - Tell me about your father's side of the family

# The Social Context

- Inquiries about friends, caretakers, teachers, neighbors, etc.
- Questions to ask
  - What roles have outside people played in the family?
  - Who outside the family has been important in your life?
  - Has anyone else ever lived with your family?
- The Facts
  - Objective data → dates of birth, death, marriages, separations, illness, etc
  - Sibling positions, ethnic and religious background, occupation, education, current whereabouts

# The Historical Perspective

- Seek more information by speaking to other relatives, obtaining medical records, etc.
- Goal → locate family's development in historical time
  - Ex: suicide in 1920s related to the Great Depressions, marriage in 1940s during WWII
- Question to ask → How did the family react to certain events?
- Look for → certain patterns of adaptation following transitions, family's response and reorganizations

# Tracking Family Relationships and Roles

- Inquire about different types of relationships family members have, functioning roles
- Questions to ask
  - Are there family members who do not speak to each other or have a serious conflict?
  - Are there members who are extremely close?
  - What sorts of conflicts of marital conflicts has the family encountered?
  - How do you get along with others?
  - Identify roles : caretaker, the “sick” one, problematic, strong, weak, dominant, submissive, successful, failure, warm, cold, caring, distant
- Goal → uncover differences, agreements, different perceptions

# Difficult Questions About Individual Functioning

- Approach with sensitivity, warn family members that questions may be difficult → notify clinician if there are things that they prefer not to discuss
- Serious problems
  - Medical or psychological problem
  - Details of problems
- Work history
  - Recent job changes, unemployment, income, economic situation
- Drugs and alcohol
  - Medication, alcohol & drug abuse problem
- Legal trouble
  - Arrests, prosecutions, licenses, etc.



# Conclusion

- Important data to obtain
  - Repetitive symptoms, relationships, functioning patterns
  - Patterns of conflict
  - Coincidences of dates
  - Impact of change and life cycle transitions



# INTERPRETING GENOGRAMS

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# Categories

- I. Family Structure
  - a) Household composition
  - b) Sibling constellation
  - c) Unusual family configuration
- II. Life Cycle Fit
- III. Pattern Repetitions Across Generations
  - a) Patterns of functioning
  - b) Patterns of relationships
  - c) Repeated structural patterns
- IV. Life Events and Family Functioning
- V. Relational Patterns and Triangles
- VI. Family Balance & Imbalance

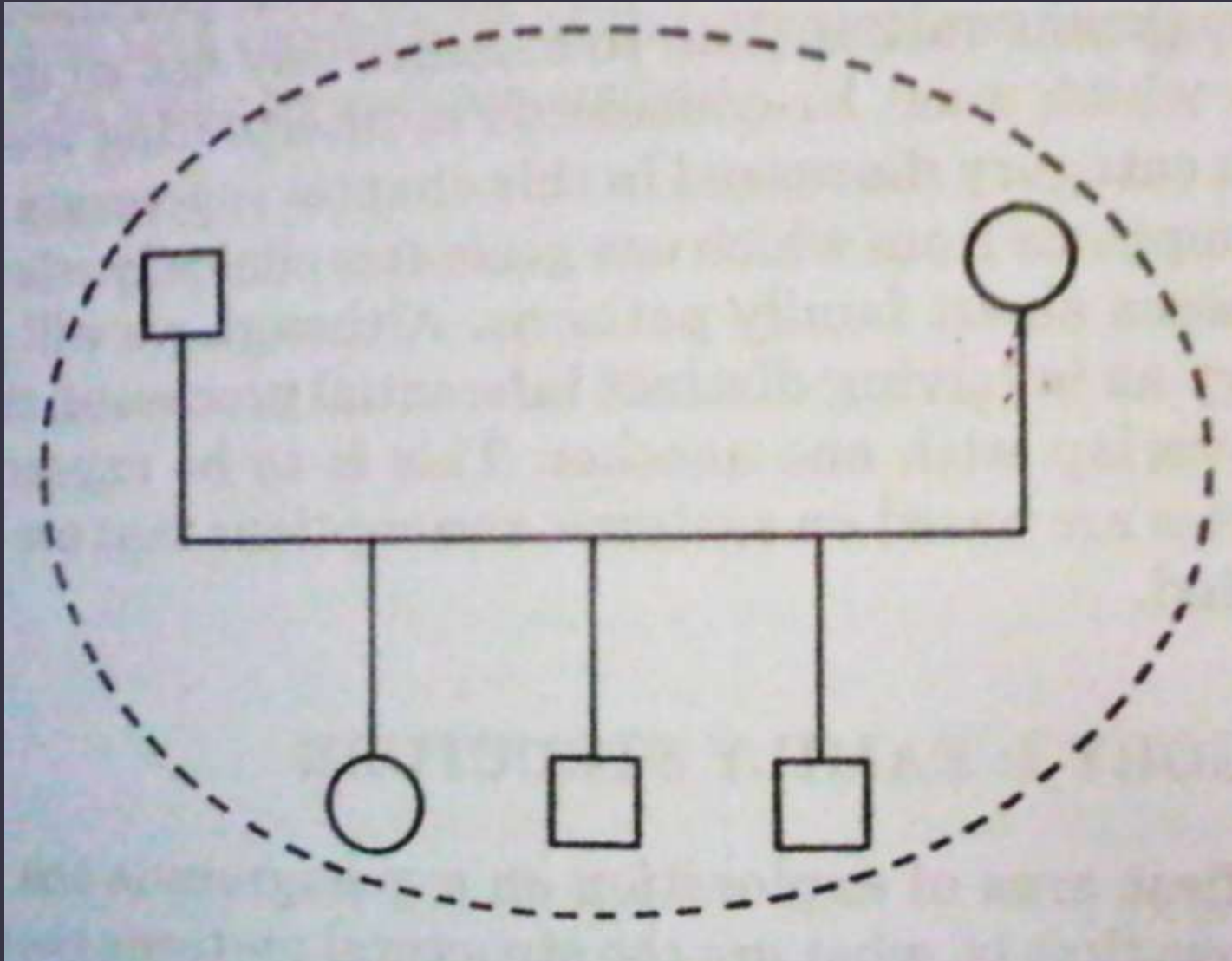
# Category I : Family Structure

- Basic family structure
  - Where are the patterns that connect the lines and figures on the family diagram

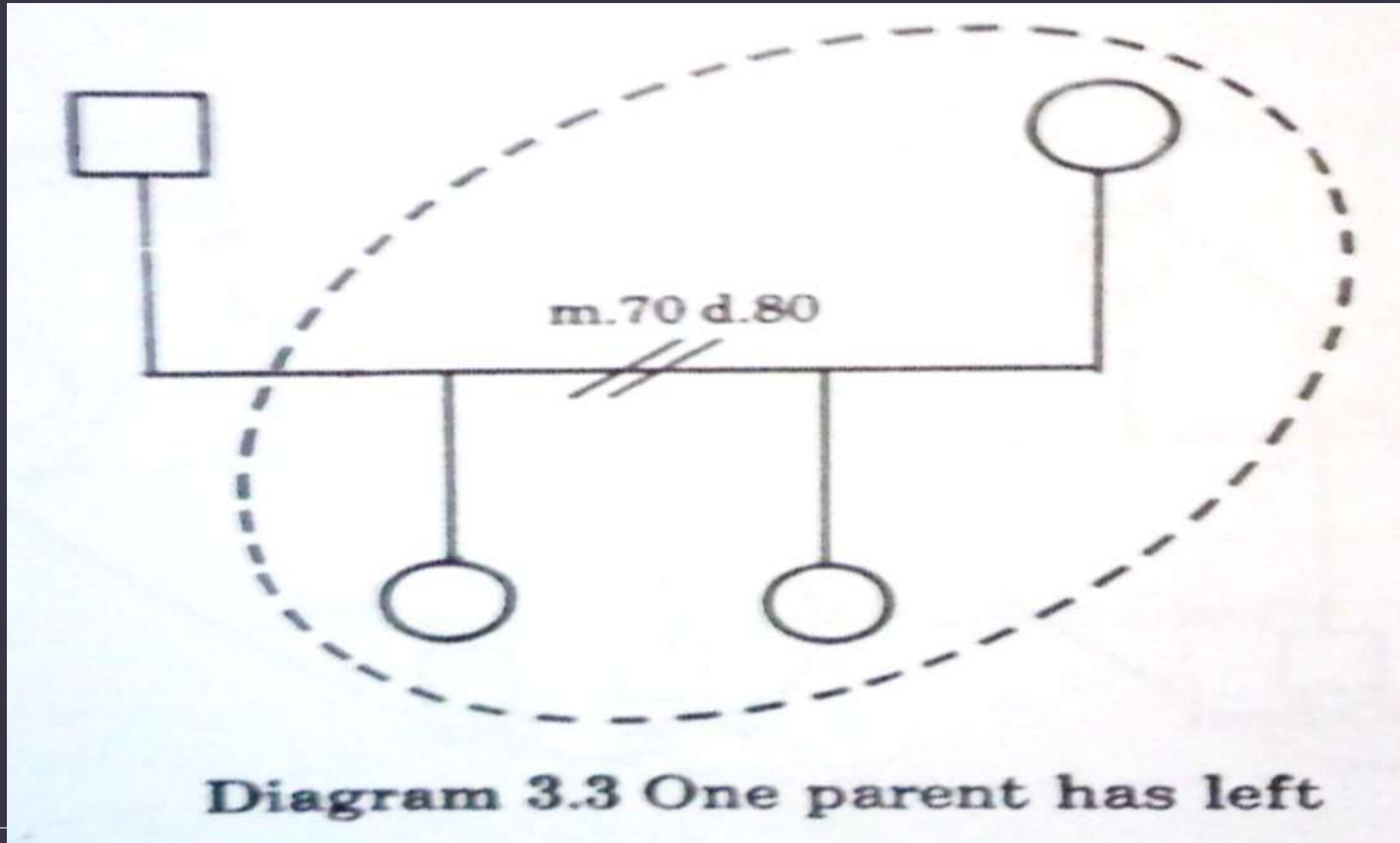
## A. Household Composition

- Intact nuclear family household
  - Parents including biological children
  - How does the family respond to severe stress or conflict?
- Single-parent household
  - Cause of single-parent → death, divorce, separation, desertion
  - Explore issues of being a single parent → loneliness, economic situation, difficulties, etc.
  - Impact on family, relational patterns

# intact nuclear family household



one parent has left



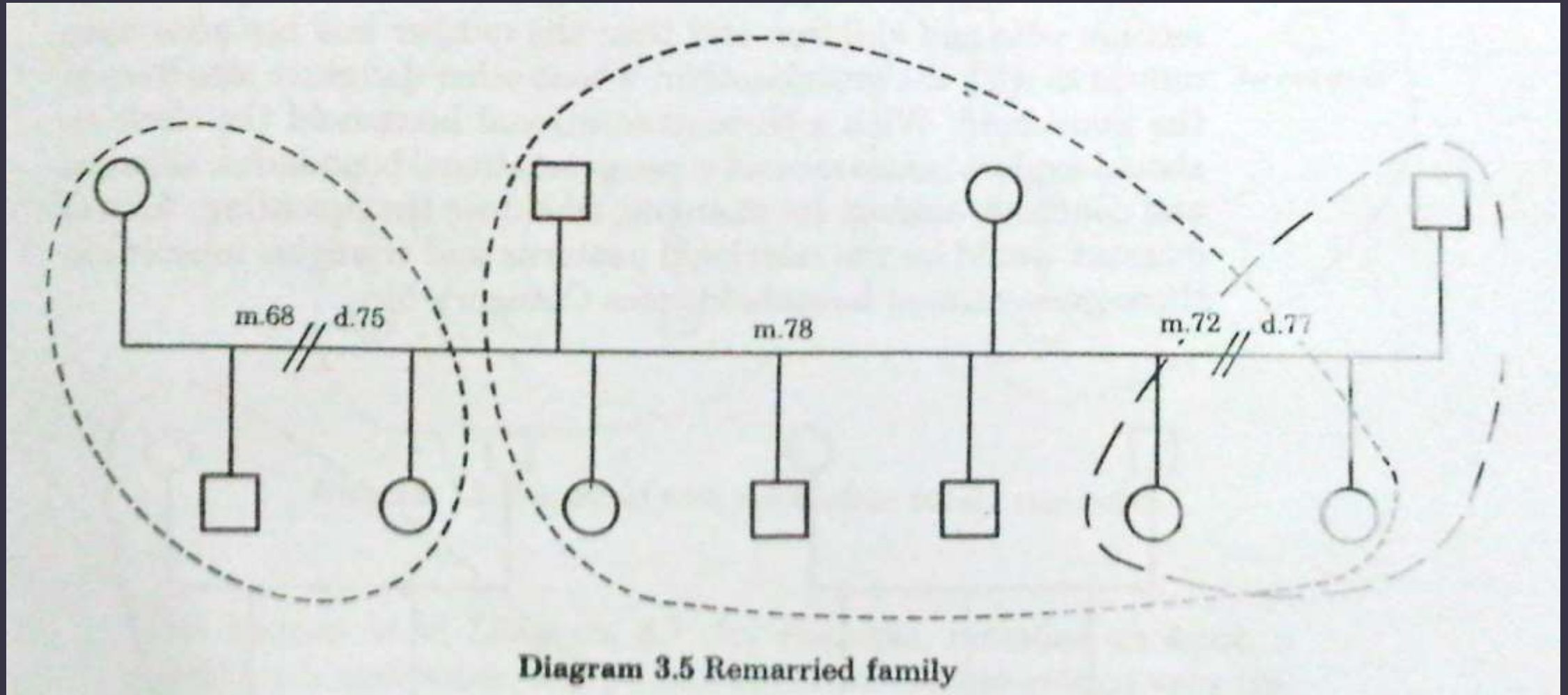
# Category I : Family Structure

## A. Household Composition

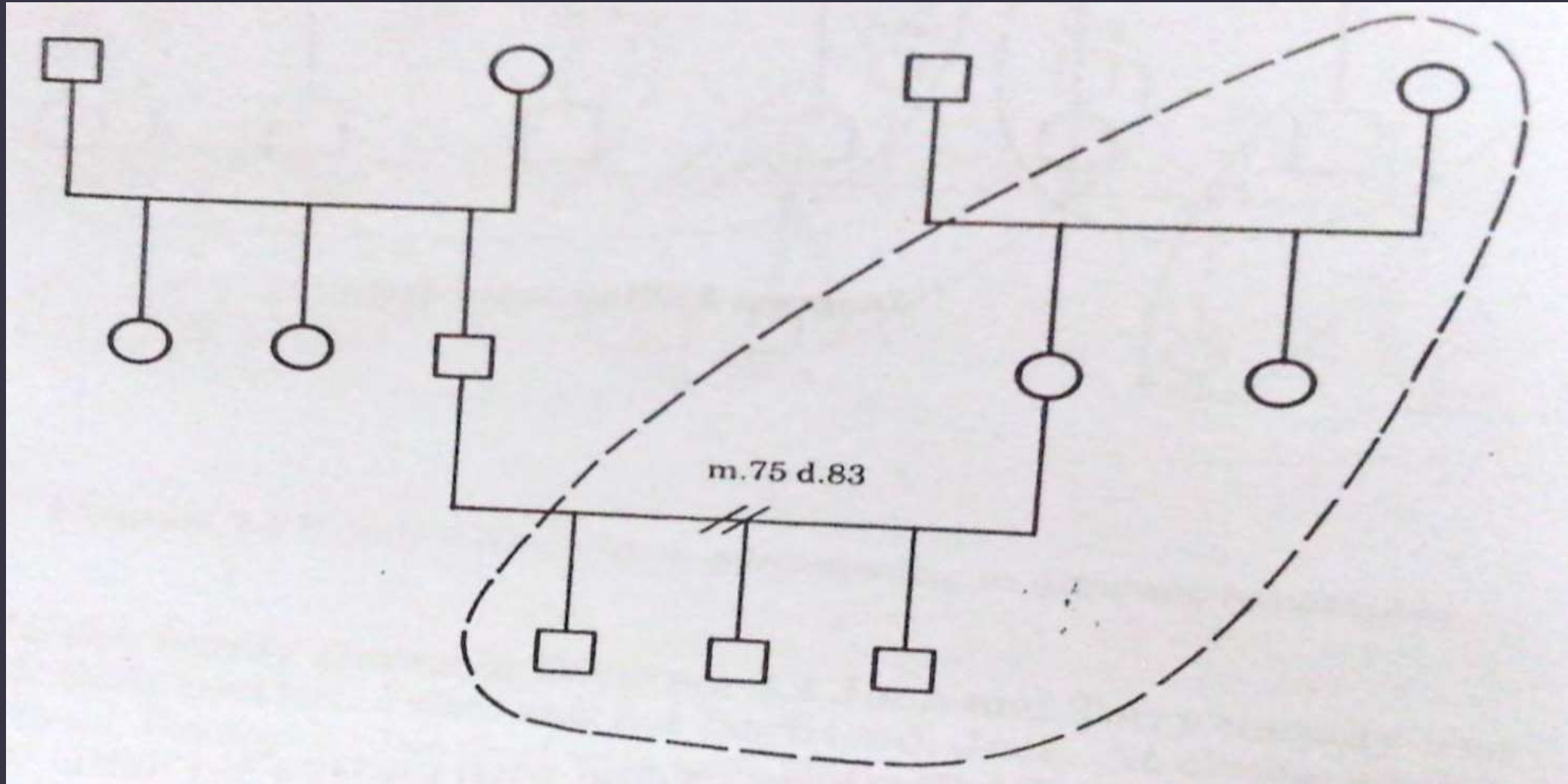
- Remarried family
  - Bringing stepparent into household
  - Issues: custody, visitation, jealousy, favoritism, loyalty conflict, step-sibling problems
  - Explore impact of divorce and remarriage on each family member, relational patterns
- Three-generational household
  - Living with grandparents (common with single parents)
  - Explore issues around cross-generational boundaries, alliances, conflicts → who does the parenting?
- Household including extended family
  - Housekeepers, aunts, uncles, cousins, adopted children, etc.
  - Explore roles and relationships of extended family members



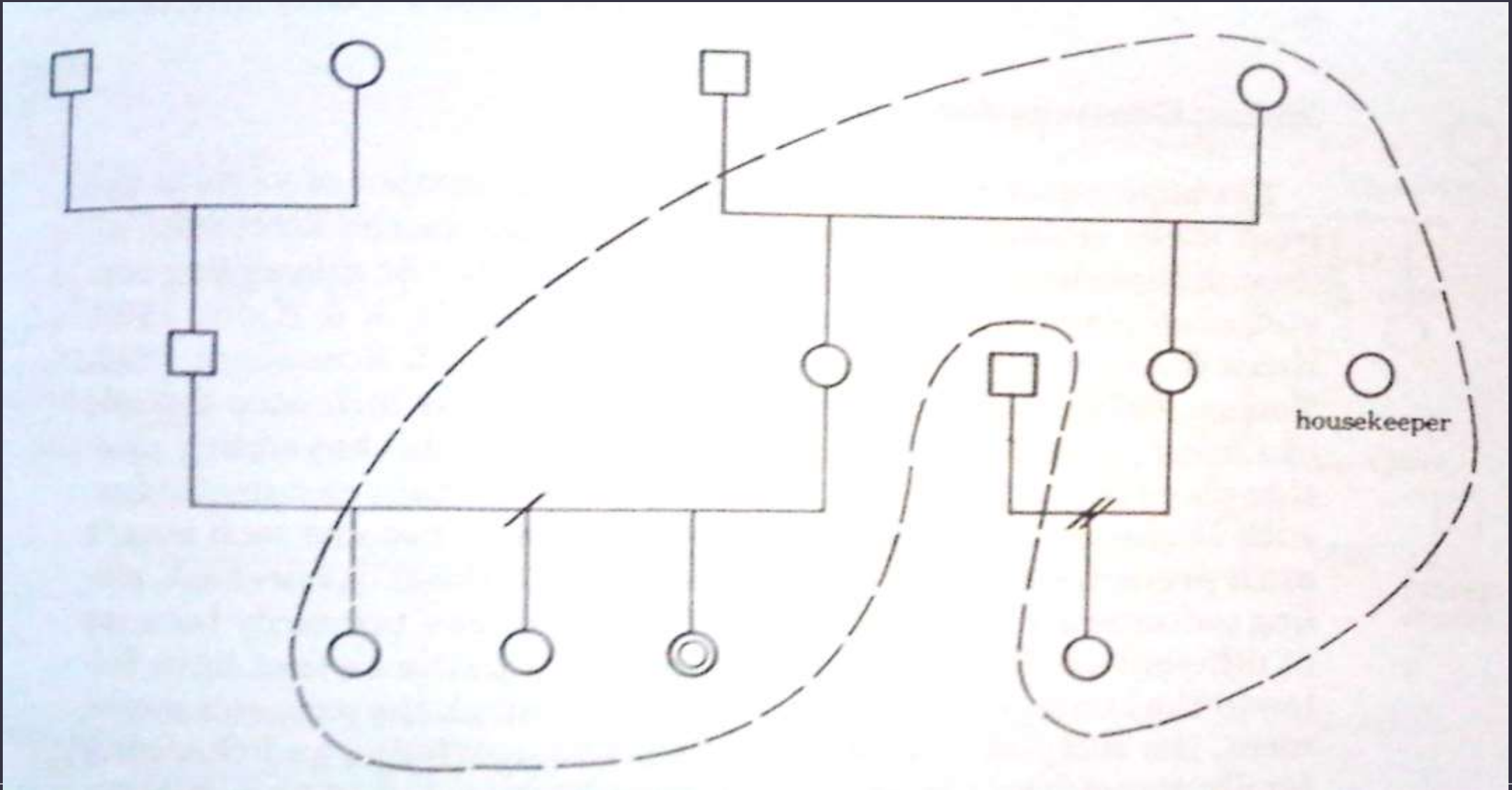
# remarried family



# three-generational household



# household with non-nuclear family members



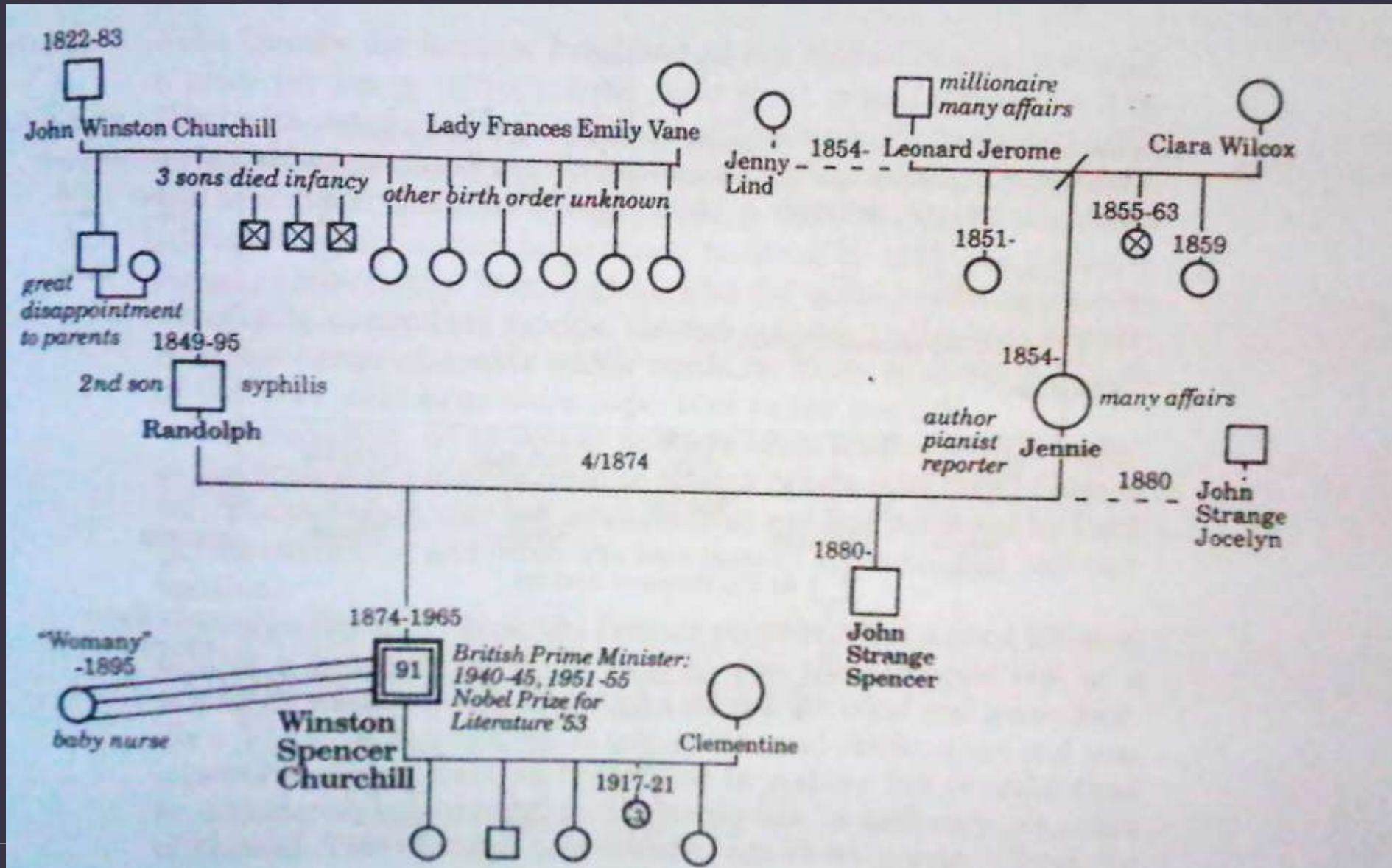
# Category I : Family Structure

## B. Sibling Constellation

- Birth position, sex, number of years in age
- Factors : changes in child-rearing and childbearing practices, women working
  - Children spending more time in daycare than with siblings
- Birth order
  - Relevant to one's emotional position in the family, future relations with spouse and children
    - Ex: eldest child → more likely to be over-responsible, parental while youngest → carefree, child-like
  - Resentment → younger siblings viewed as an intrusion to their previous exclusive possession of parents' love and attention



# Birth Order – Churchill family

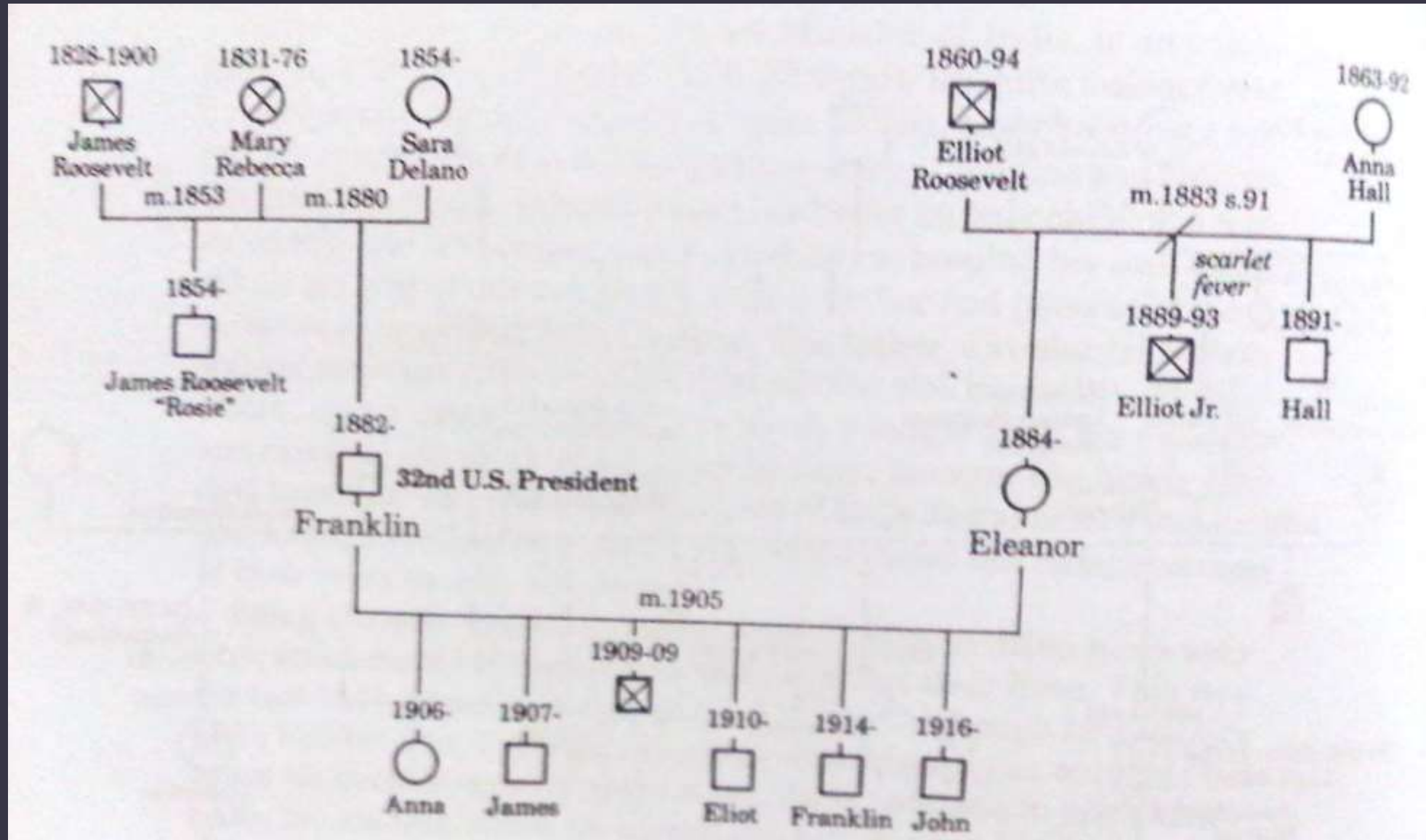


# Category I : Family Structure

## B. Sibling Constellation

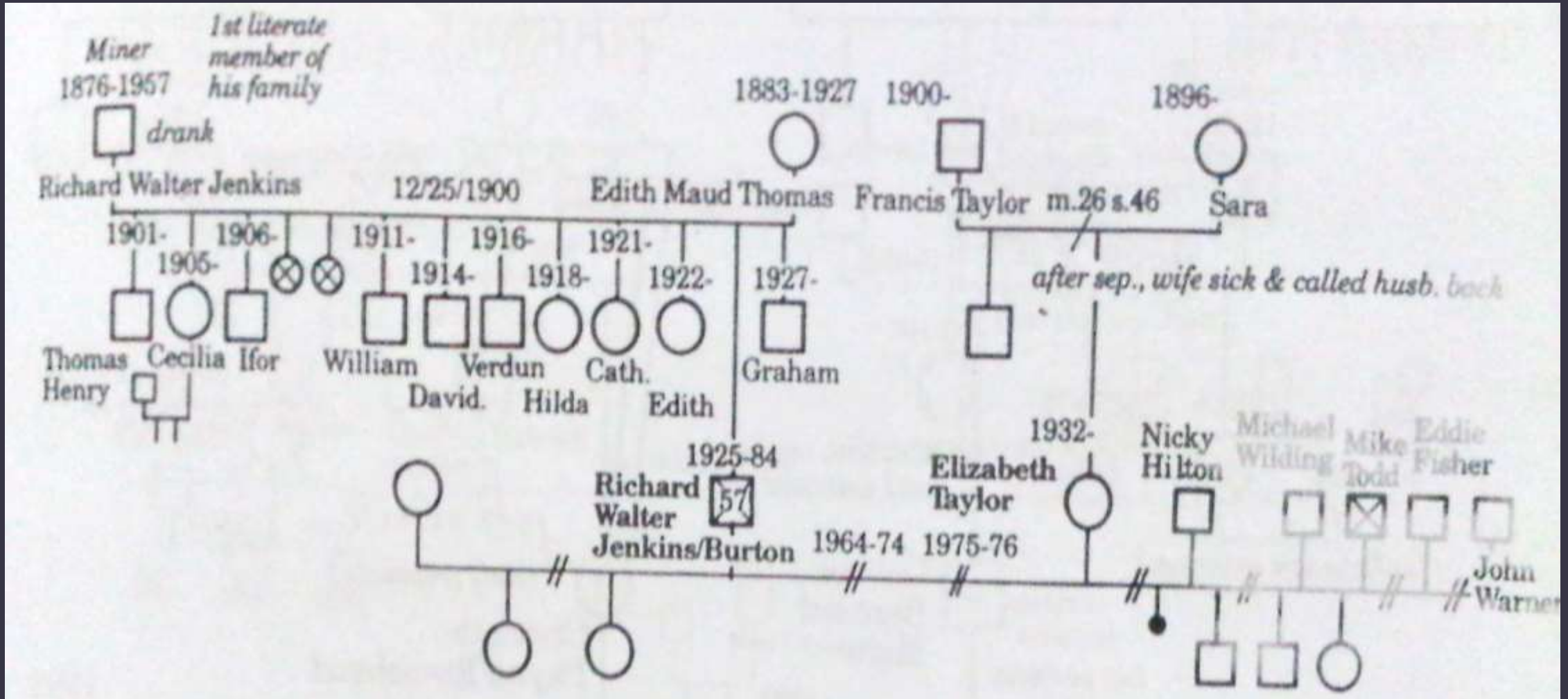
- Birth order : Eldest
  - Great expectations, high ambition, sense of responsibility
  - Can become filled with self-doubt, self-criticism, suffer under pressure to excel
- Birth order : Youngest, the “baby”
  - Used to being taken care of, less burdened by responsibility, often less respectful of authority
- Birth order : Only children
  - Socially independent, less oriented towards relationships, adult-like at an earlier age, more anxious as a result of attention and protectiveness
  - Close relationships to parents
- Sibling position → predict marital difficulties (in the same position)
  - Two eldest → competition for power
  - Two youngest → compete for attention, both waiting to be taken care of
  - Oldest and youngest → complimentary

# Eleanor and Franklin Roosevelt

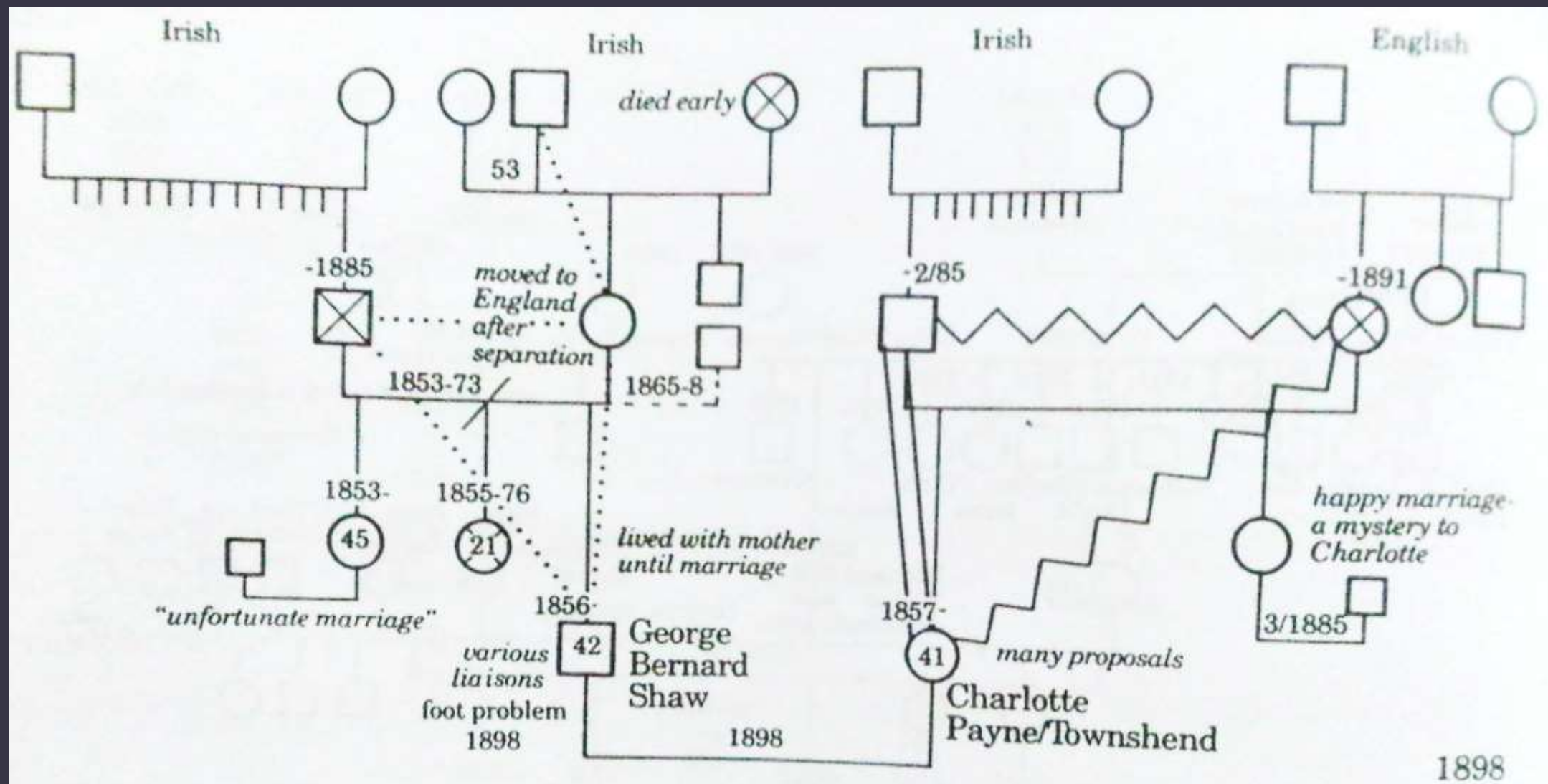




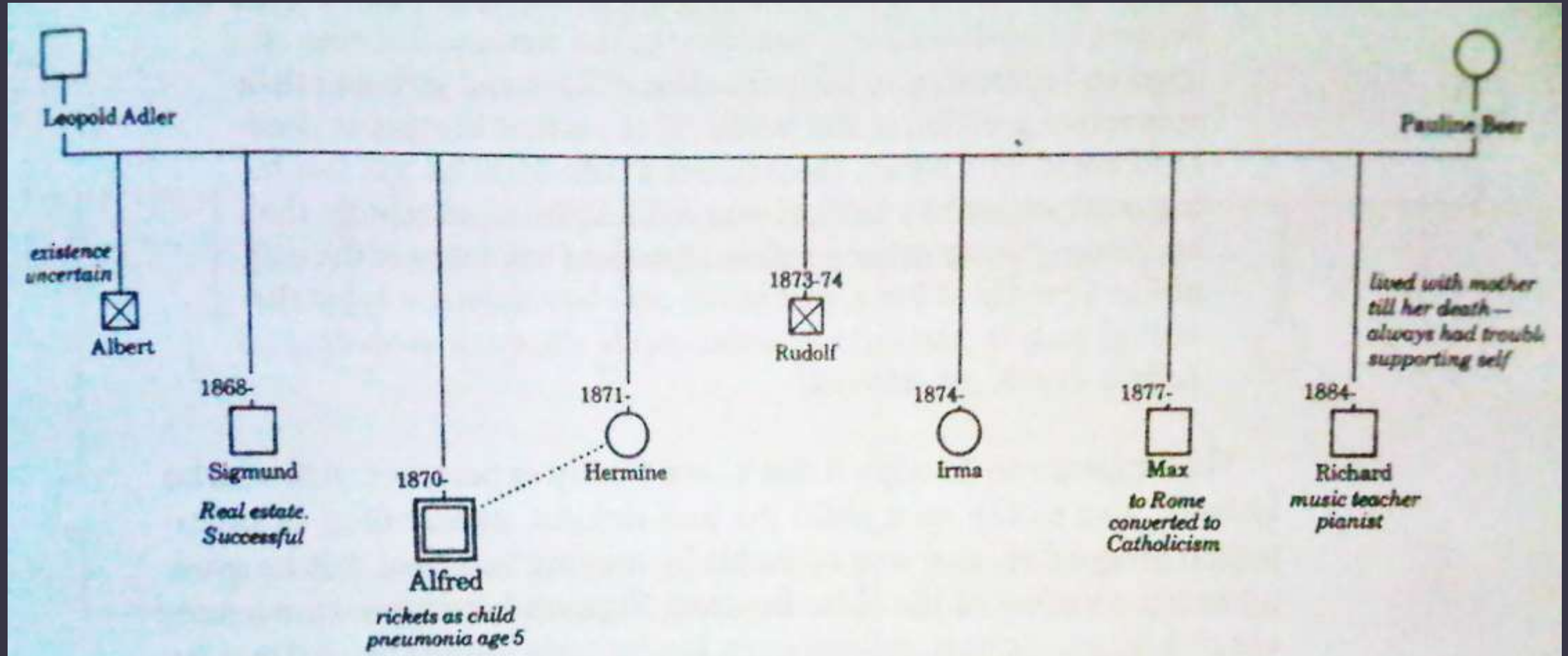
# Burton/Taylor – marriage of two youngests



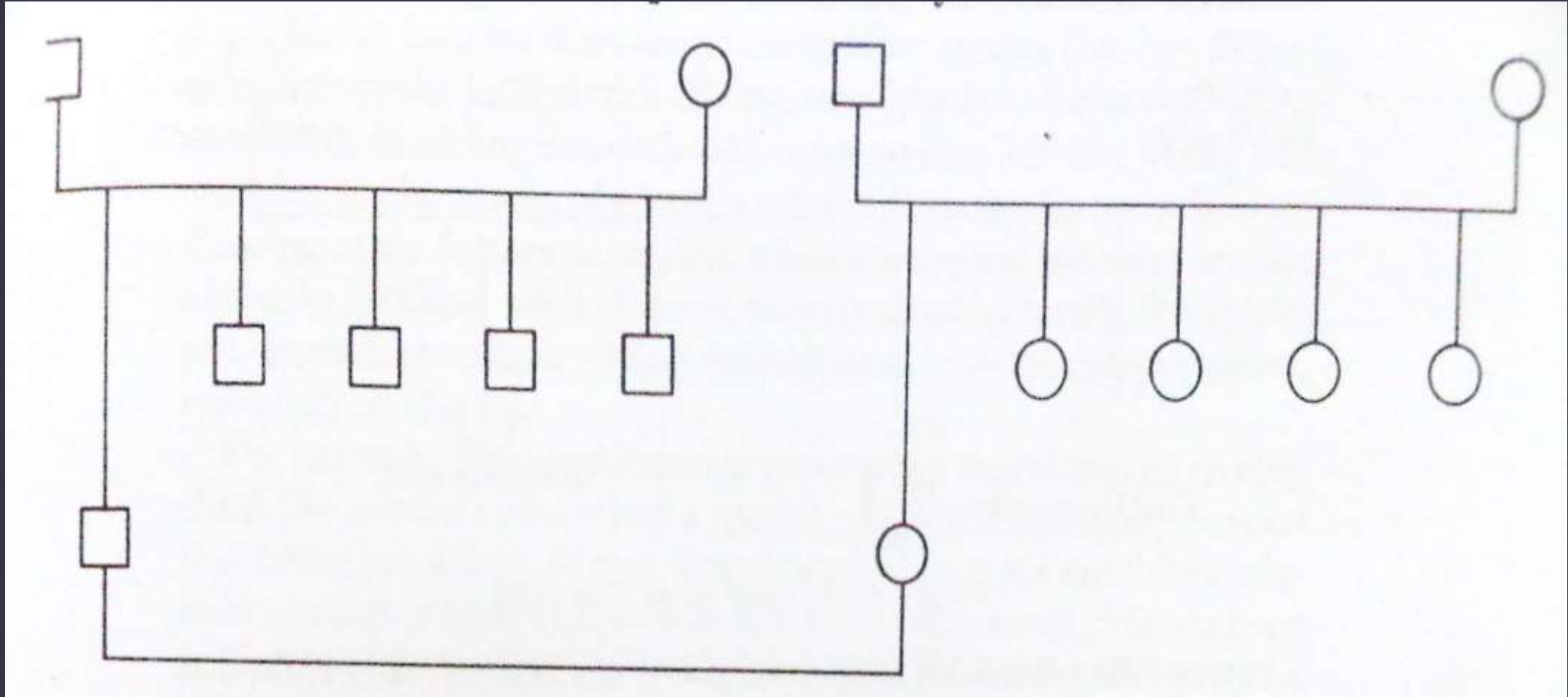
# Shaw/Payne-Townshend



# Middle child - Adler

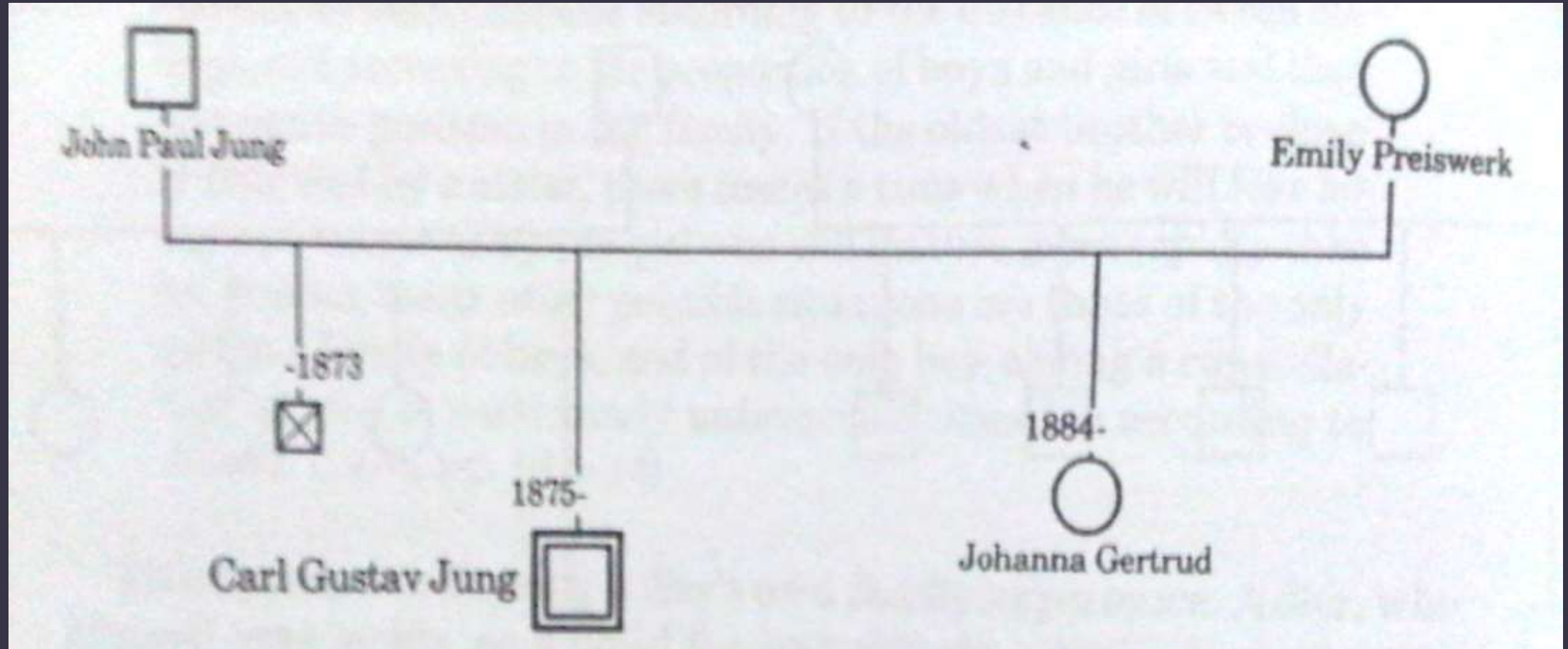


# Marriage of two oldest from same-sexed system





# Jung as an only child

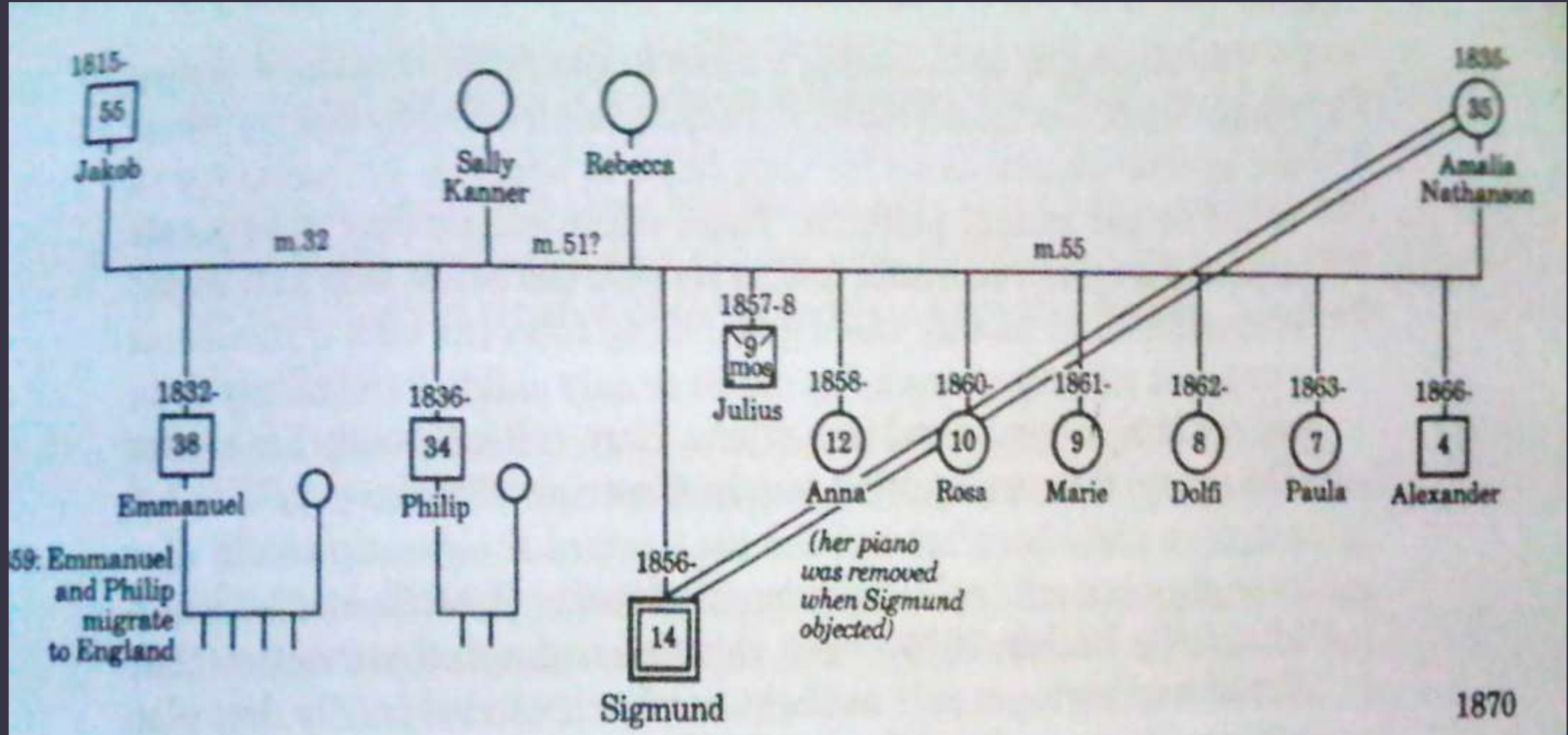


# Category I : Family Structure

## B. Sibling Constellation

- Birth order : middle child
  - Characteristics of eldest or youngest child, or combined
  - Struggle for a role in the family, struggle to be noticed
- Siblings' Gender
  - Gender of siblings → provide model for his or her experiences with peers
  - Lack of opposite sex → affect marital compatibility
- Distance in age between siblings
  - The closer the age, the more shared experiences
  - Subsystems and dyads
- Other factors
  - Timing of each sibling's birth, child characteristics, the family's program for the child, parental attitudes in regarding sex differences, the child's sibling position in relation to that of a parent

# Freud



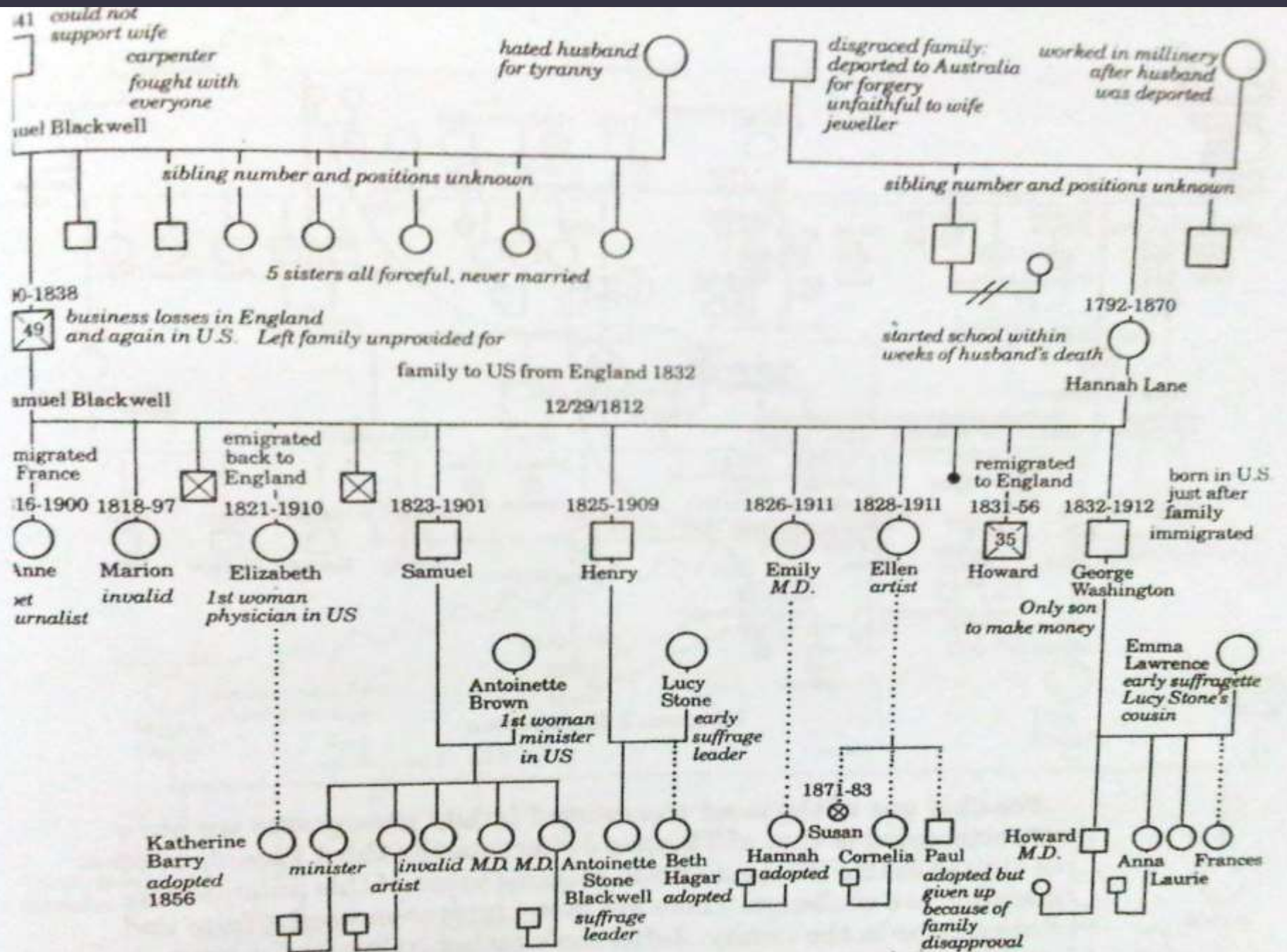


# Category I : Family Structure

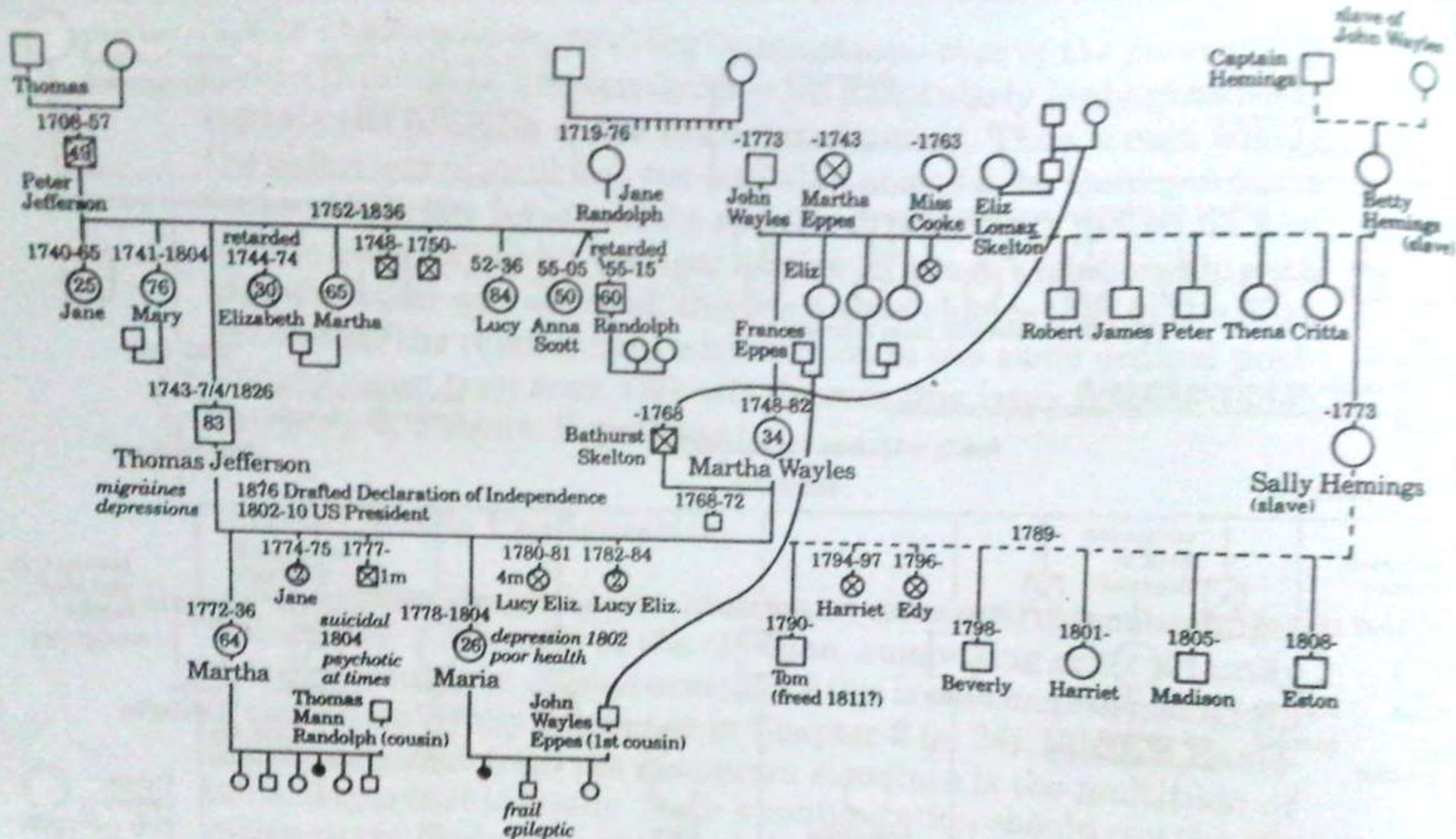
## C. Unusual Family Configurations

- Role of gender
  - Blackwell family: highly successful women, women do not marry but frequently adopt
  - Attitudes towards success and marriage
- Interconnected affairs and relationships, intrafamily marriages
  - Jefferson family : marriages within extended family, affairs with in-laws
  - Freud/Bernays family : Sigmund's sister and Martha's brother
  - Albert Einstein : married 1<sup>st</sup> cousin from mother's side who is his 2<sup>nd</sup> cousin on father's side
- Summary :
  - Numerous hypotheses from relational structures (family composition, sibling constellations, unusual configurations)
  - Hypothesize about certain roles, themes, and relationships

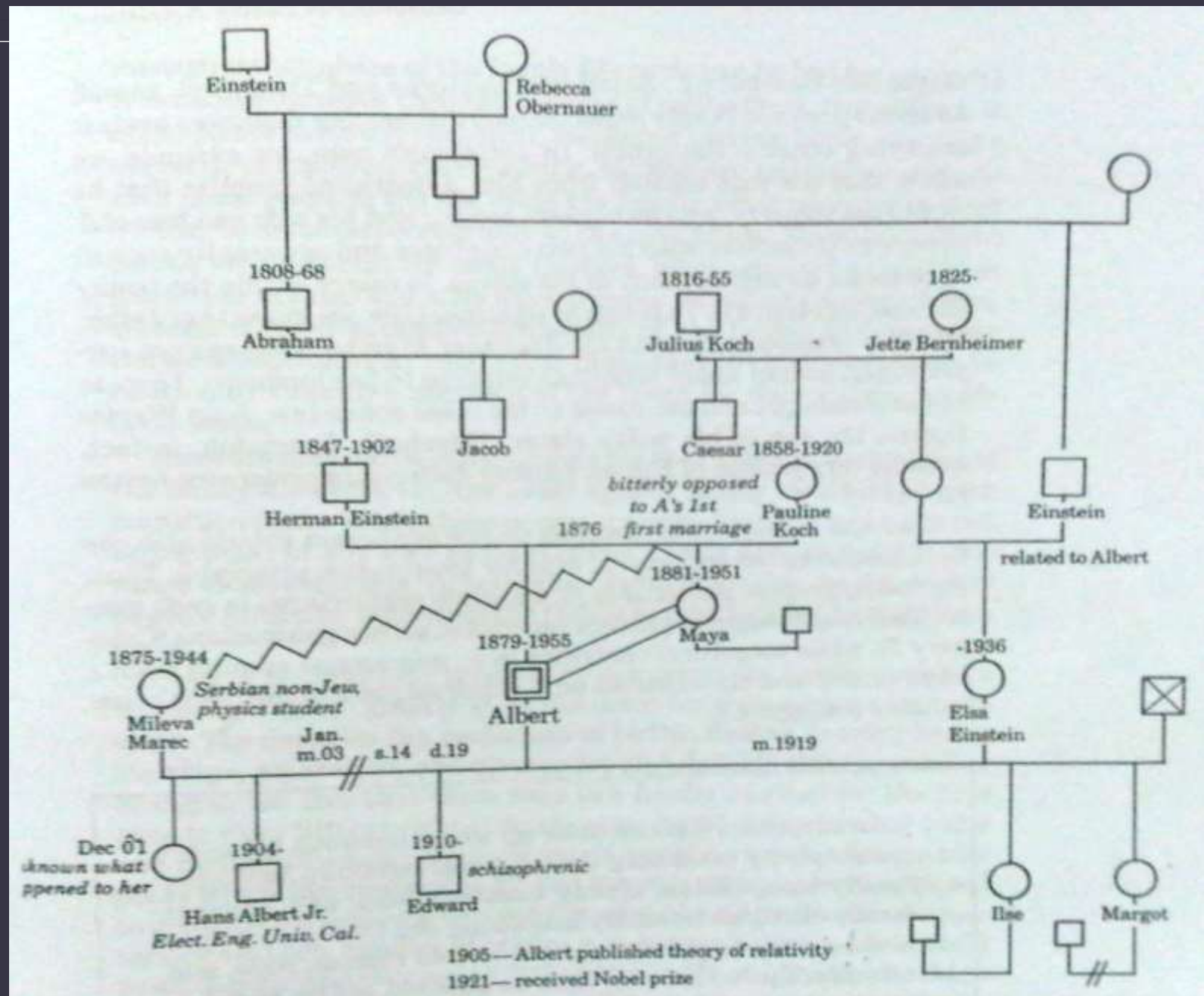
# Blackwell







# Einstein



# Category II : Life Cycle Fit

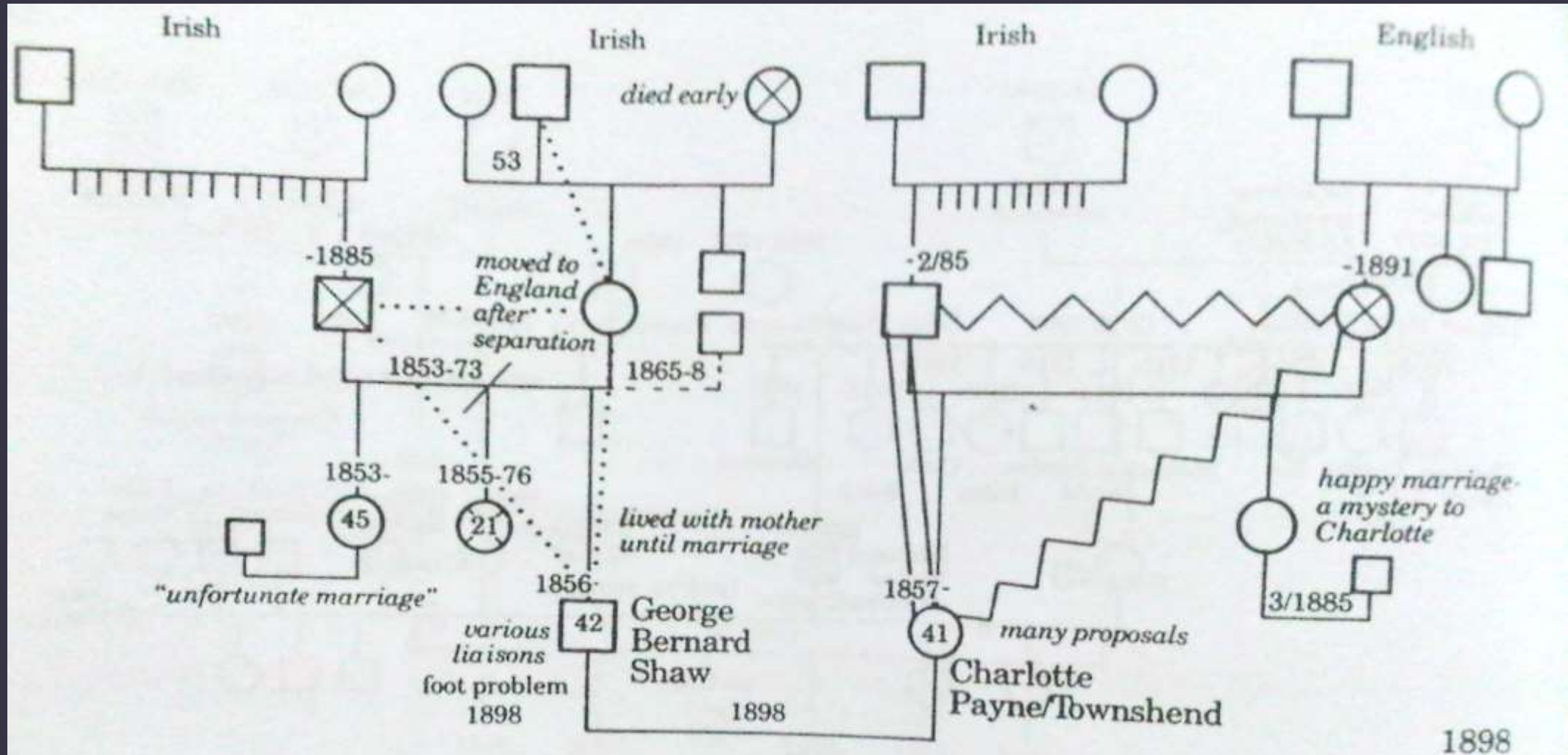
- Understanding life cycle transitions a family adapts to
- Fit of ages and dates → do life cycle events occur within normal expectations?
- Series of milestones, transitions in development
  - Leaving home, marriage, birth of children, child-rearing, launching, retirement
  - At each point → family reorganizes to move on to next phase
  - Norms are ever-changing, must not be in any way as fixed → explore difficulties
- Explore family members whose ages differ greatly from the norm for their phase of life cycle → dates
  - Ex : three sons marrying in their 50s → trouble leaving home? Forming intimate relationships?
  - George Bernard Shaw & wife → married in their 40s, hesitated about marriage due to both parents' unhappy marriage & childhood → ambivalent about intimacy
- Period of time between meeting, engagement, marriage, separation, divorce, remarriage
  - Fonda family → rapid remarriages, rapid emotional shifts & adjustments

# Category II : Life Cycle Fit

- Early programming of children
  - Bronte sisters → virtual isolation post mother's death → turned to their own imagination
- Life cycle discrepancies
  - Age differences in marriage
- Summary
  - Ages and dates → see life cycle transitions the family is adapting to, do they occur within normative expectations
  - Possible difficulties managing phase of life cycle

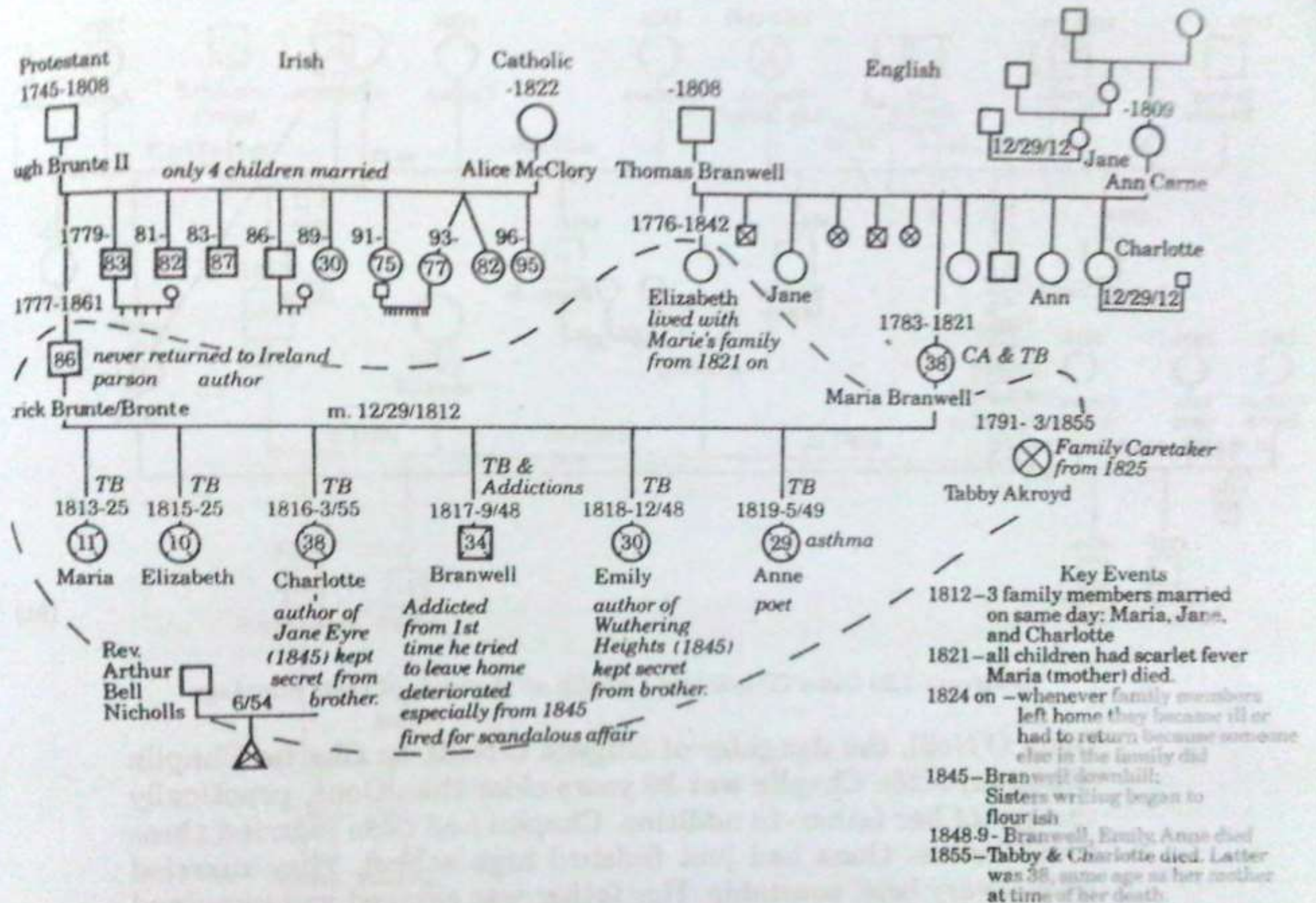


# Shaw/Payne-Townshend

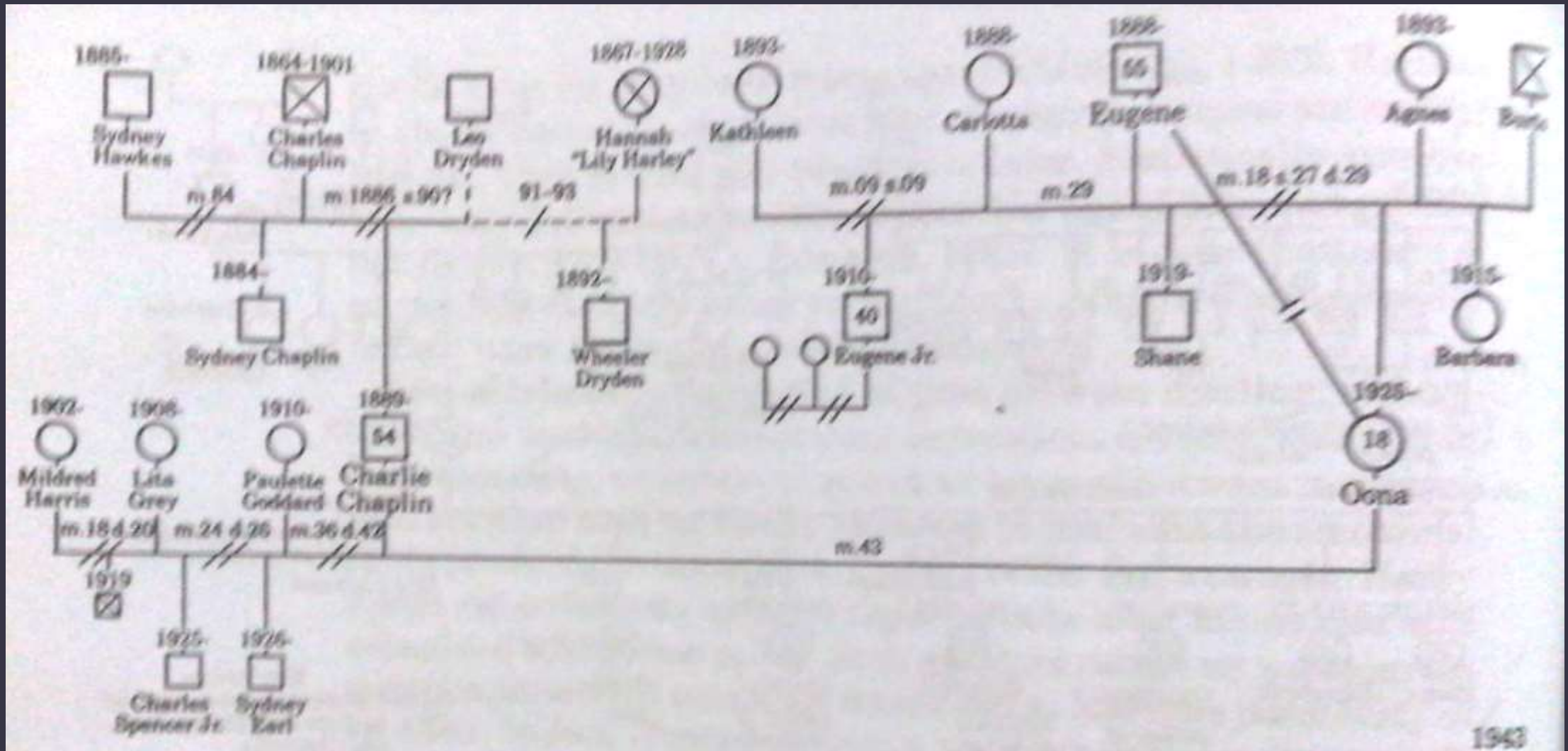




# Bronte Sisters



# Oona O'Neill and Chaplin



# Category III: Pattern Repetition Across Generations

- Repetitive patterns in functioning, relationship, family structure
  - Avoid repeating unfortunate patterns in the present and transmitting them in the future

## A. Patterns of Functioning

- Adaptive or maladaptive in dealing with problems
  - Alcoholism, incest, violence, suicide
- Note the patterns → understand present adaptation to the situation and suggest interventions
  - Ex : Fonda family and suicides, O'Neill family and substance abuse
- Track multigenerational patterns of success and failures

# Category III: Pattern Repetition Across Generations

## B. Patterns of Relationships

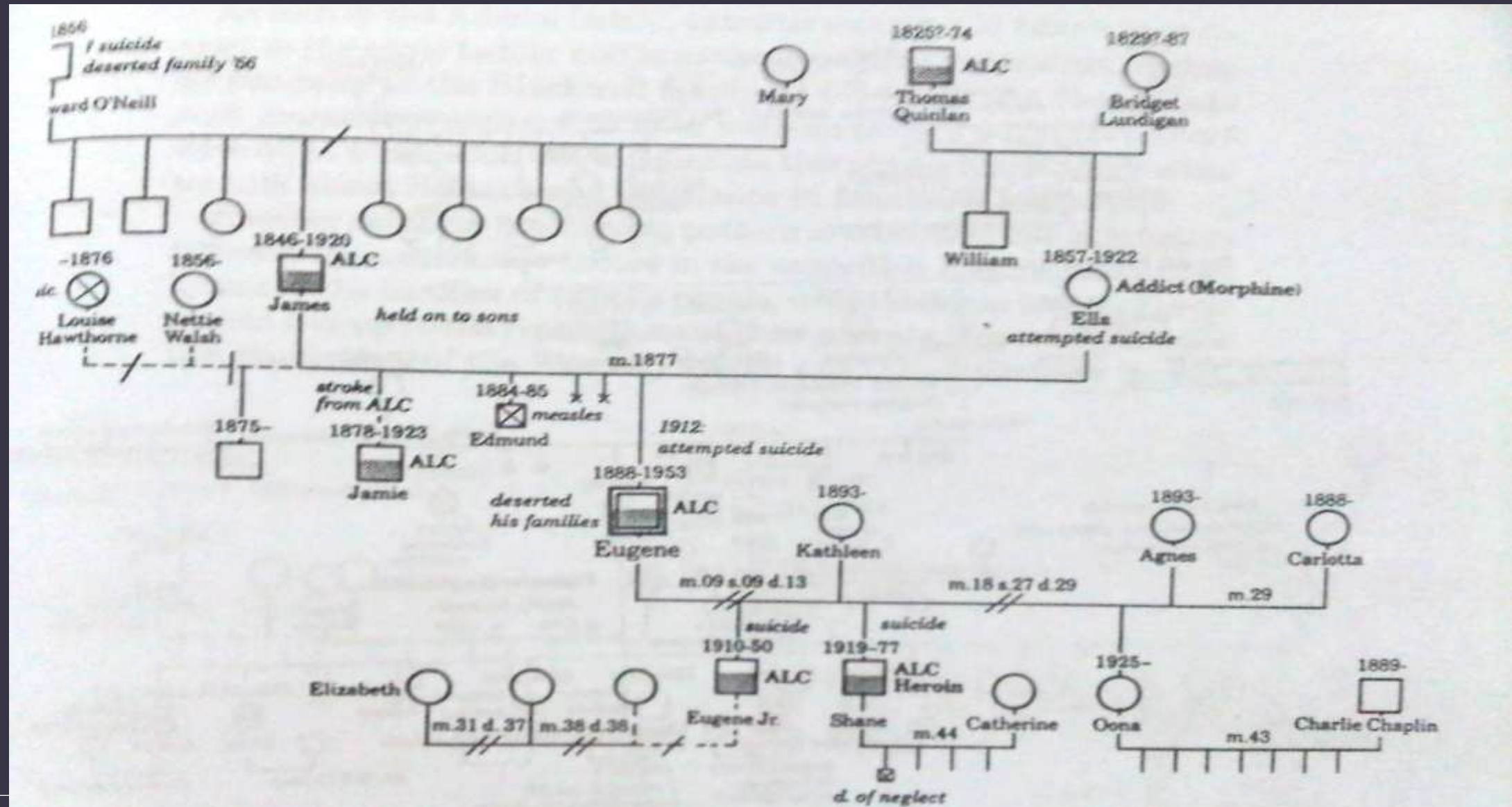
- Patterns of closeness, distance, conflict
  - Help families avoid continuing repetition in future generations
  - Ex: O'Neill family → estrangement with fathers
  - Ex: Roosevelt family → mother-daughter resentment

## C. Repeated Structural Patterns

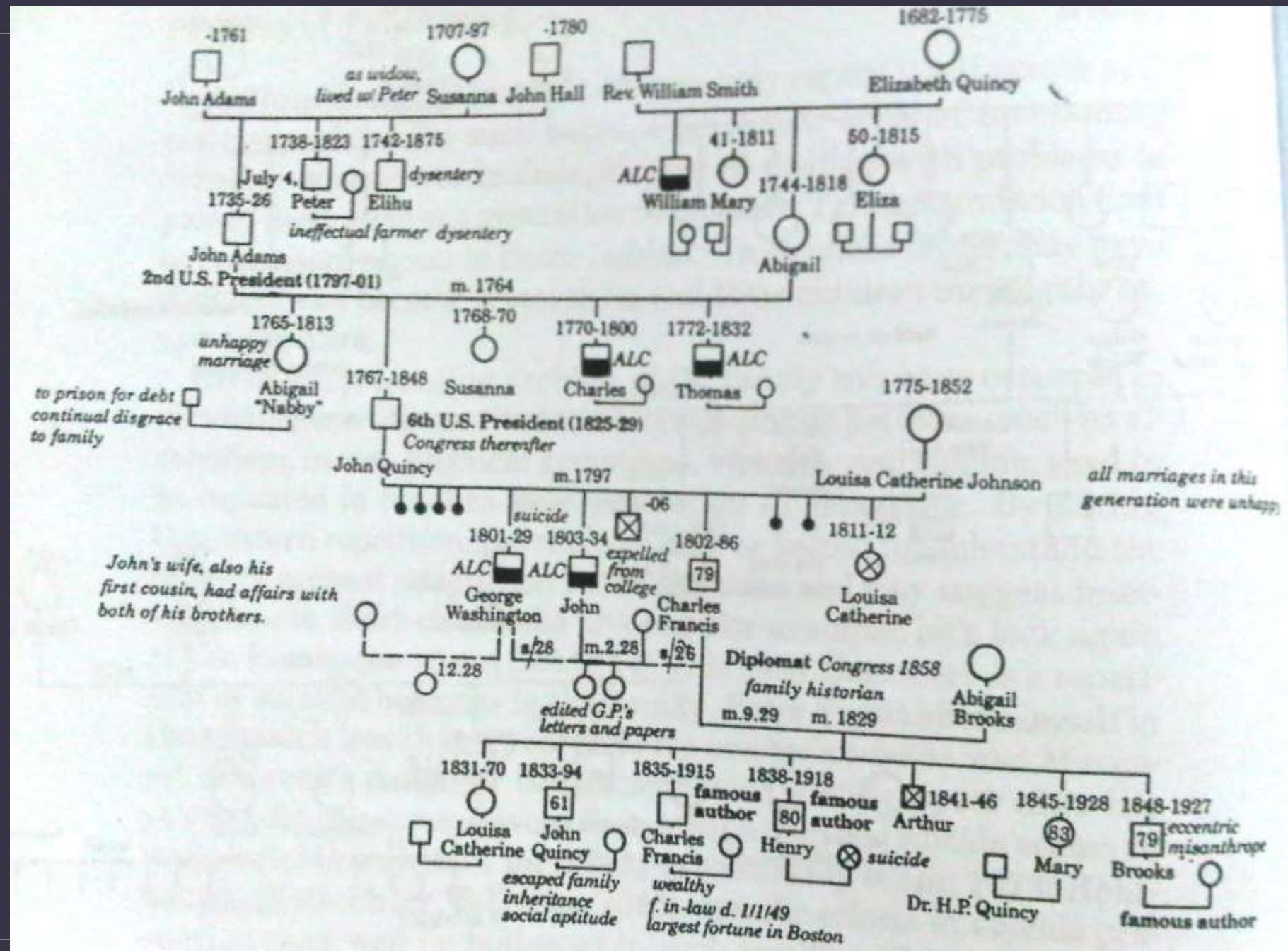
- “The past is the present isn't it? It's the future too. We all try to lie out of that, but life won't let us.”  
[O'Neill, 1955]
  - Ex : Mother who is youngest of three sisters identifies with her youngest daughter
- Summary
  - Possibility of patterns continuing in the present and into the future → patterns of functioning, relationship, structure
  - Help with possibility to alter patterns



# O'Neill family – repetitive functioning patterns

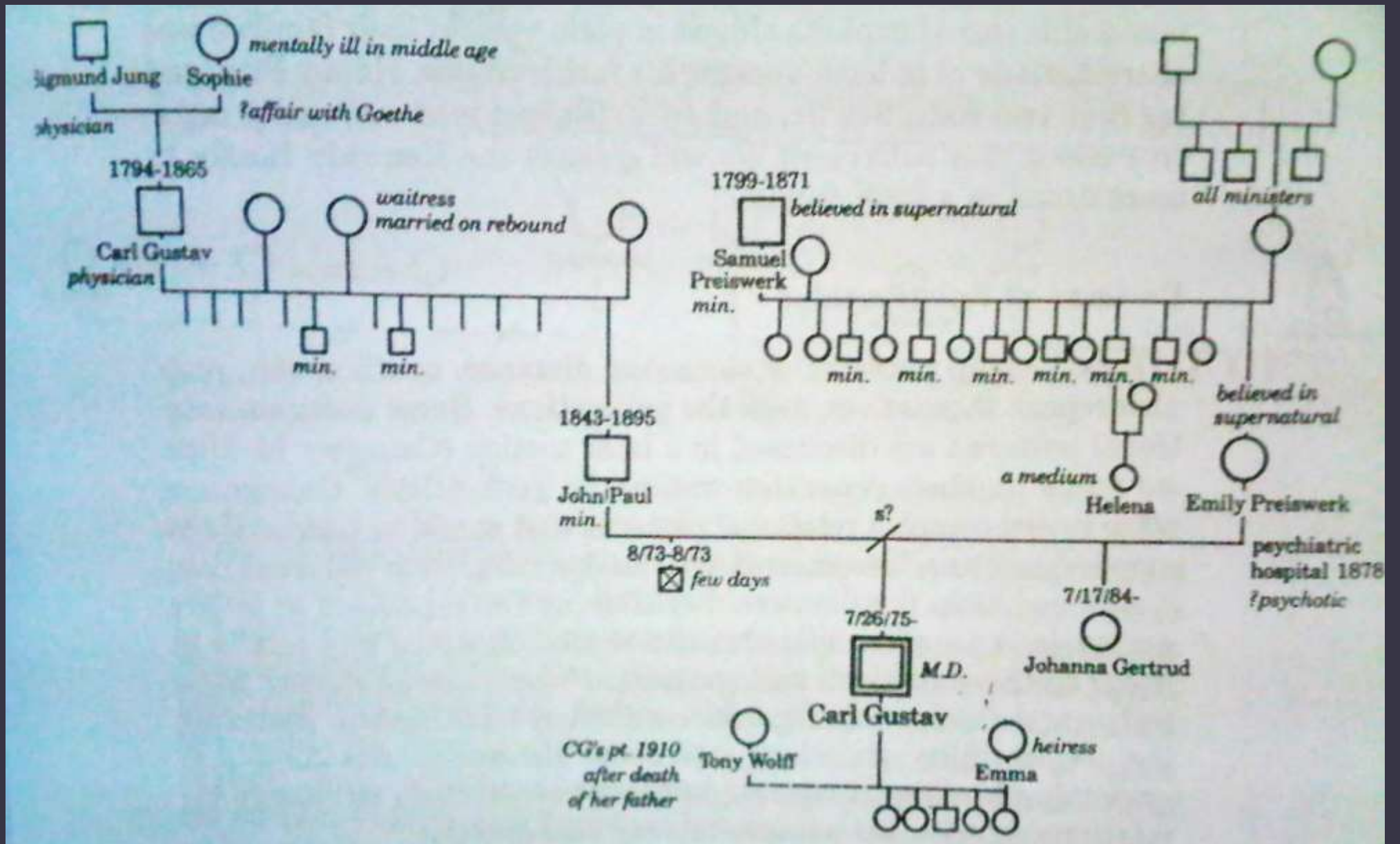


# Adams family – successes and failures



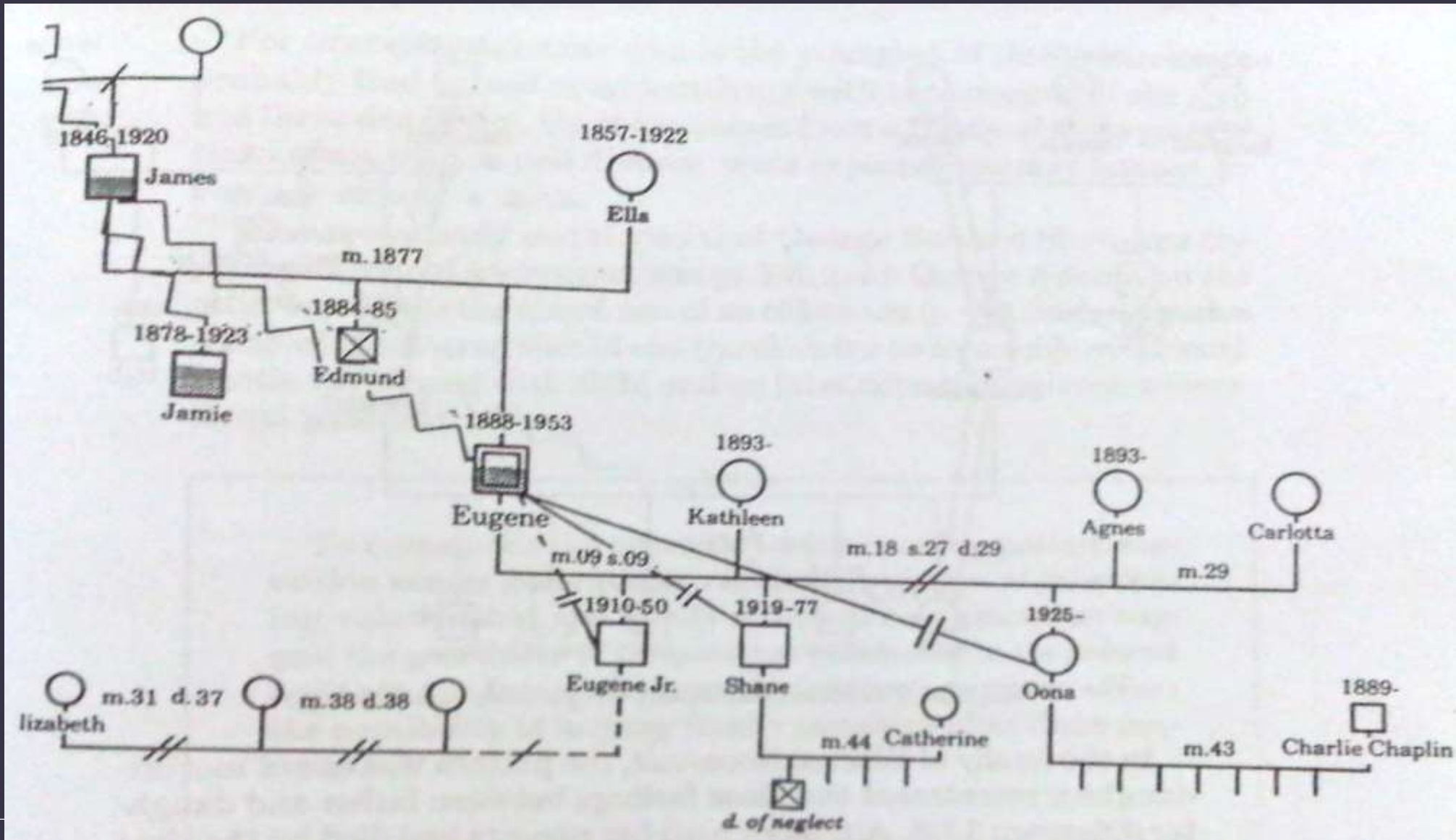


# Jung family

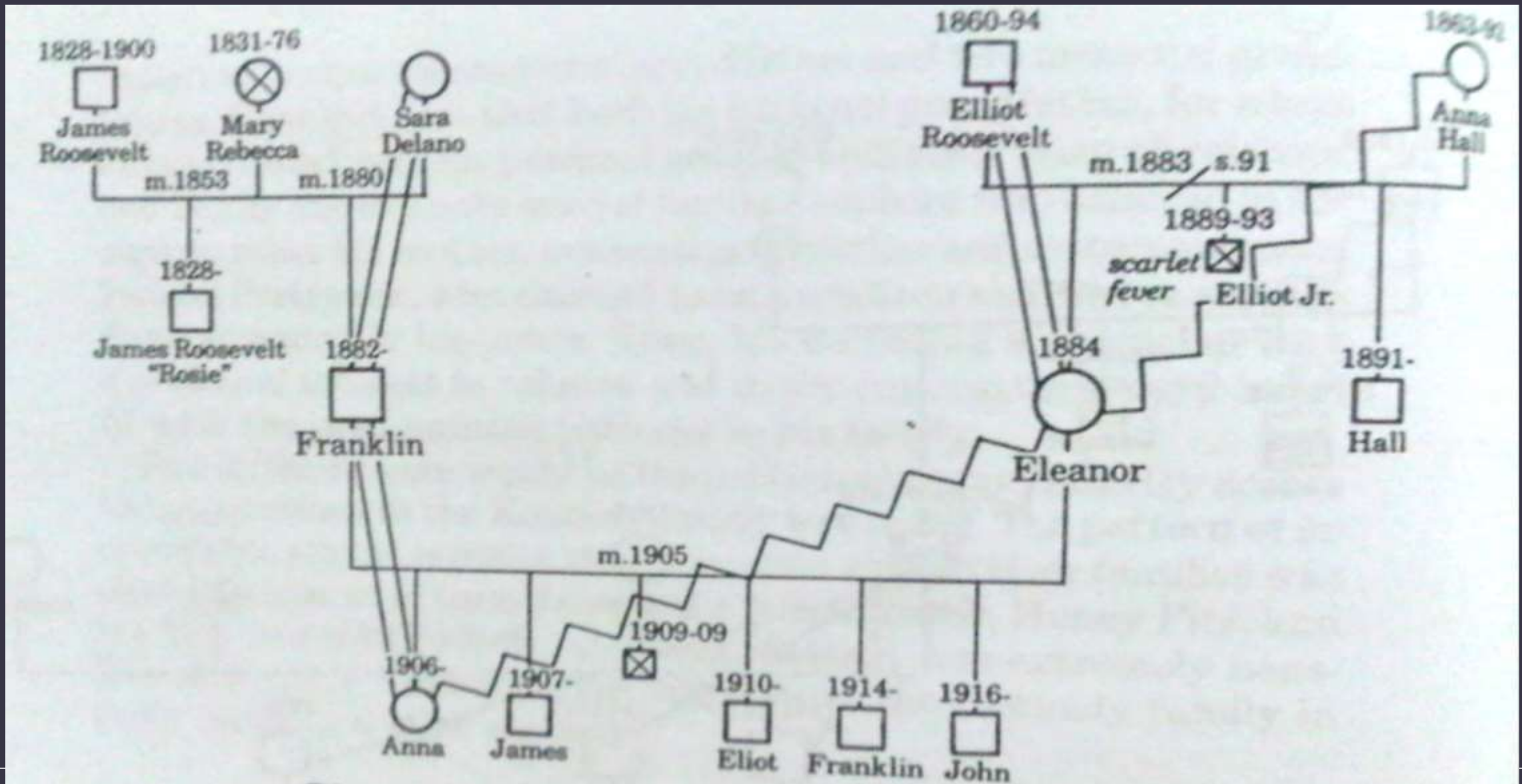




# O'Neill family – repetitive relationships



# Roosevelt family - repetitive relationships





**THANK YOU**