

Who do you think you are? Getting Started in Genealogy

by Larry Van Horn

Organize Your Home and Family Sources

- Organize what you know from your personal knowledge.
- Organize family papers and photos you have in your own home.
- Seek out papers and pictures that your immediate family may have.
- Organize what you know by starting with you, your parents, and your grandparents.
- Look in every nook, cranny, corner and the attic/basement for family paper/sources. Leave no stone unturned no matter how insignificant you may think it is
- Again it starts with you, your parents, and your grandparents. Be sure to record the following events:
 1. Date and place of birth.
 2. Names of parents
 3. Date and place of marriage
 4. Names of children
 5. Date and place of death
- Record everything, even if you don't think you will need it. Get photocopies if possible.

How to Record Genealogical Family Information

- Use the Family Group Sheet to document each of your families.
- Use a pedigree chart to record your past ancestral generations.
- You can use the links on our blog (<http://family-genealogy.blogspot.com/>) to download free copies of the forms above.

Conduct Family History Interviews

- During interviews ask about elements that may be missing from your initial home and family sweep.
- Collect and record any information you learn from the interviews.
- Always ask about the places where people lived. Understanding the place is the key to finding any written evidence in a person's life.

Write of search online for death records & certificates

- You should always work from the known to the unknown.
- You should check online first as death certificates are being digitized and put online.
- You will be writing to the state vital records office where the family member died.

Followup on Death Record Clues in Other Records

- Birth Record
- Funeral Record
- Cemetery Record / Tombstone
- Obituary
- Social Security Record (SS-5)
- Other Records (i.e. marriage, taxes, probate, deeds, divorces, bankruptcies, adoptions, christenings, baptisms, etc.

Search Federal Census Records

- Build on what you have by using federal census records.

- Microfilm available from the library on interlibrary loan.
- Instant access via the internet on free and subscription websites.

Search State and County Records

- If nearby work in the county courthouse where your family lived.
- Best place to do a lot of research is at a large metropolitan library or state library/ archives.

Genealogy Rules to Research By

- Do not assume anything. The term “set in stone” does not apply to genealogy.
- Always cite your sources.
- Work from the known to the unknown.
- Treat brothers and sisters as equals.
- Seek original records, or reproduced images.
- One source does not equal proof.
- Share the wealth.
- Have a lot of fun, and . . .
- Patience, patience, and more patience!

Mistakes to Avoid in Genealogy

- Don't put off talking to relatives.
- Don't neglect to write down your sources (and make photocopies of everything, if possible.)
- Don't assume that everything you find on the internet is reliable.
- Don't trust everything you see in print.
- Don't accept family legends without question.
- Don't limit yourself to the current spelling of your or any ancestor's surname.
- Don't assume you are related to someone famous.
- Don't be satisfied with just names and dates. Put some meat on the bones and it will make your research more interesting.
- Don't misspell the word genealogy.

Top Ten Internet Genealogy Research Sites

- Familysearch.org (including their Pilot, Historical Books, and Electronic Card Catalog)
- Ancestry.com\$\$
- Genealogybank.com\$\$
- Footnote.com\$\$
- Findagrave.com
- Heritage Quest via NCLive.org
- Cyndi's List (www.cyndislist.com)
- USGenWeb Project (www.usgenweb.org)
- Rootsweb.com (www.rootsweb.ancestry.com)
- Roots Television (www.rootstelevision.com)

And for local events, genealogical information and how-to stuff.

The Family Roots and Branches Blog at <http://family-genealogy.blogspot.com/>