

A Guide to Starting Your Genealogy

Discovering Family History

Online Preview Issue 2008

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A Guide to Online Subscription Databases • Getting Started: Computing Basics • Understanding Obituaries • 10 First Steps • Citing Sources AND MUCH MORE!

Discovering Family History

THE SEED OF the idea for *Discovering Family History* was sown when *Family Chronicle* and *Internet Genealogy* magazines exhibited at an event in Toronto last September, called "The Word on the Street". Some 200,000 people attended this event, put on for those interested in books and literacy.

We sold plenty of subscriptions to both magazines, but I found that I was continually explaining to new subscribers some real genealogy basics — steering them to Cyndi's List and other places that listed beginner's courses. These people were smart enough; they just needed something more basic than what we were selling. It was sobering to realize that there might be a big market for a genealogy magazine that dealt with the basics.

This triggered us to conduct market research among *Family Chronicle* and *Internet Genealogy*

readers. We sent out (via the Internet) questionnaires to one thousand readers and were more than pleasantly surprised by the response. A few people said they thought the idea for a beginner's magazine was a bad one, but for each one of these, 12 people were excited by the idea. We had not expected to find that many people, who had been researching their genealogy for many years, still considered themselves beginners. But then we realized that most of us are beginners when we tackle a new area for research. I am still doing my own genealogy and not long ago realized that I knew next to nothing about land records. Most of us are beginners in some area or another.

This is the 19th magazine that I have brought to life in a publishing career that began in 1973, and I thoroughly enjoy the process. It was fun researching this magazine and it was exciting preparing it for

you, the reader. We hope you approve of the result. Please let me have your comments — good and bad. I really do read everything people send me.

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Discovering Family History

ONLINE PREVIEW ISSUE 2008

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Discovering Family History

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What's in a word? Quite a lot, as Donna Murray finds out.

First Things First...

Genealogy News You Can Use!

Irish Research Gets A Wee Bit Easier!

Anyone who has done Irish research knows the challenges due to the dearth of records available. Well, Irish research has now become just a bit easier. There is an ongoing digitization project for the 1901 and the 1911 Irish censuses. Focusing on Dublin, the National Archives of Ireland now has part of the 1911 census online, <http://www.census.nationalarchives.ie/search>. For more on the digitization project, see <http://www.census.nationalarchives.ie/about/index.html>.



THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES and Records Administration (NARA) and the National Personnel Records Center (NPRC) announced that they were making available for the first time all the Official Military Personnel Files (OMPF) for those who served in any branch of the armed services prior to 1946; these represent about six million records! As explained in the press release, contained in a typical OMPF are assignments, evaluations, awards and decorations, education and training, demographic information, some medical information and documented disciplinary actions. Some records contain photographs and correspondence. The full news release, at <http://www.archives.gov/press/press-releases/2008/nr08-14.html>, provides details on viewing and obtaining copies of these invaluable records.

African American/Slave Research

AFRICANDNA.COM, www.africandna.com, the first company dedicated to offering both genetic testing and genealogical

Institute for African and African American Research at Harvard University, in partnership with the Inkwell

(home to Pittsburgh) Pennsylvania deed books. The office transferred hand-written documents recording the legal status of 56 African American slaves to the Senator John Heinz History Center, <http://www.pghhistory.org>. The oldest papers date to 1792, the year Peter Cosco purchased his freedom from John McKee for £100. Read more about the discovery online, <http://www.post-gazette.com/pg/107318/833611-85.stm>.



tracing services for African Americans, has been launched by Henry Louis Gates, Jr., Alphonse Fletcher University Professor and Director of the W.E.B. Du Bois

Foundation and Family Tree DNA.

SLAVE RECORDS

A county recorder of deeds discovered historical slavery-era papers in old Allegheny County

Do You Know the Way to Oyster Bay?

WHAT WELCOME resources for those researching in this part of Long Island; two excellent compendiums recently produced by the Town Historian, John Hammond.

- *Historic Cemeteries of Oyster Bay — A Guide to Their Locations and Sources of Transcription Information*: It includes a listing of 121 cemeteries, some of which no longer exist and where transcription records can be found. The listing is done first by present-day locality and then alphabetically by the most commonly known name. The guide goes on to list, in alphabetical order, several

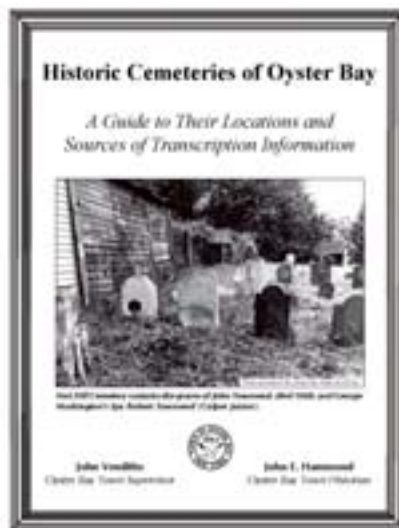
thousand names of those interred in the cemeteries.

- *Index to Register of Deaths — Town of Oyster Bay — 1881-1920*: Generally speaking, the death certificates include the name of the

deceased, the deceased's date and place of birth, the cause of death, the deceased's place of burial, the names and birth places of both parents, and the name of the doctor. This guide provides an alphabetical list of names, with the date of death, of 9,421 individuals.

The URLs for these two publications are quite long, so the easiest way to access them it to go to

<http://www.oysterbaytown.com> and use the search engine!



Historic Cemeteries of Oyster Bay.

Database Updates!

- The National Burial Index (NBI) for England and Wales is an ongoing project of the Federation of Family History Societies (FFHS) and is now available online at FindMyPast, <http://www.findmypast.com/national-burial-index-search-start.action?redef=0>.
- Periodical Source Index (PERSI) updated — this resource is available via HeritageQuest Online, often available at a local library, http://www.proquest.com/products_pq/descriptions/heritagequest.shtml.
- Genealogy Bank, <http://www.genealogybank.com/gbnk/newcontent.html>, continues to grow its collection, more than 1.5 million documents were added in November 2007 — these range from 1800 editions of the *Charleston Times* to modern versions of the *Grand Island Independent*.
- Footnote.com has released original images from *The Times* of London, 1785 to 1820 and it has



also released the largest collection of WWII photos on the web. For news about this and other recent updates, see <http://www.footnote.com/page/120/Footnote-Press-Room>.

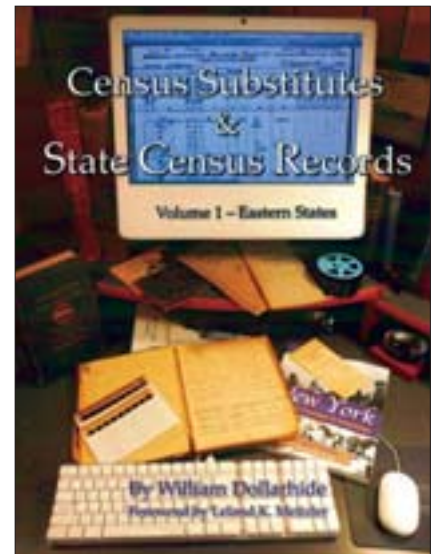
- Two British newspapers, *The Guardian* and *The Observer* have placed more than 212 years of their back editions on the Internet. They are available free at any library or educational institution that subscribes to the ProQuest Historical Newspapers Service or you can purchase personal access via their website, <http://archive.guardian.co.uk>.
- The Original Record, www.theoriginalrecord.com, is constantly adding new material, — some recent noteworthy additions include: New Plymouth Colony Deeds 1620-1651, 1930 Crockford's Clerical Directory, 1934 The Half-Yearly Army List, 1930 Liste du Rat for the parish of St Peter, Jersey and much more.

Worth A Second Look...

- Tell Your LifeStories — Save your memories and anecdotes and those of your family and enrich the lives of your children and grandchildren, siblings, cousins, aunts, uncles, your friends and those in your community online, <http://www.tellourlifestories.com>
- PhotoWorks — Use this Internet-based digital photo-publishing company, via its Photo Communities, <http://www.photoworks.com>, to share photos online
- Kip Sperry, author of such books as *Reading Early American Handwriting* and *Abbreviations & Acronyms for the Family Historian* has compiled his list of recommended Family History Internet Sites, see <http://home.byu.net/ks4>. It's a veritable who's who of genealogy websites, and there's sure to be something of interest to everyone!
- Get Grandpa's FBI File — This website, <http://www.getgrandpasfbifile.com/>, helps you craft Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) letters that you

can then print and mail to the FBI to learn more about your deceased ancestors. If you prefer to do it yourself, check out the FBI's own FOIA web page at <http://foia.fbi.gov>

- Pearl Street Software has merged with MyHeritage, <http://www.myheritage.com>. This means that Family Tree Legends, <http://www.familytreelegends.com>, and GenCircles, <http://www.gencircles.com>, are now completely free!



A new two-volume series, *Census Substitutes & State Census Records*, by William Dollarhide identifies census substitutes, as well as state census records for the US. The substitutes are those name lists derived from tax lists, directories, military lists, land ownership lists, voter registrations, and other compilations of names of residents. Additionally, 37 states conducted colonial, territorial or state censuses that survive.

International Tracing Service (ITS) Archives Open to the Public

After more than 60 years, the archives of ITS have become accessible to the public online at <http://www.its-arolsen.org/index.php?id=2&L=1>. Holocaust and Historical researchers and other interested people can now examine archives and documents from WWII at the Tracing Service in Bad Arolsen, Germany.

FamilySearch and The Generations Network announced an agreement that provides free access of Ancestry.com to patrons of the Family History Library in Salt Lake City, Utah and the 13 largest regional family history centers across America.

ANNOUNCING

A Guide to Starting Your Genealogy **Discovering Family History** Magazine

Discovering Family History is the latest magazine from the publishers of **Family Chronicle** and **Internet Genealogy**. This new magazine is for people who are starting their family history, need a refresher or are tackling a new aspect of genealogy.

Discovering Family History articles are written by some of the most respected authors in the genealogy field — and many of them have extensive experience in teaching genealogy courses, either face-to-face or online. With articles of this caliber, you can expect excellence — and we deliver!

Even if you have been conducting your genealogy research for many years, you will want to take a look at what **Discovering Family History** has to offer: as you get more and more into your family history, you will find you need to investigate resources that are completely new to you. **Discovering Family History** can help! The first issue of **Discovering Family History** (May/June 2008) will be on newsstands in mid-April.



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A Few Fantastic Free Family History Websites

THE INTERNET HAS truly revolutionized genealogy. A lot of information that just a few years ago would have required trips to distant libraries and courthouses, or weeks waiting for replies through the mail, can be found online. While there are useful online sites that require subscription fees (and I can't get along without them!), dedicated volunteers and government agencies also offer some indispensable free genealogical sites.

THE US GENWEB PROJECT

<http://www.usgenweb.org>

Created by volunteer contributors, the US GenWeb project seeks to "provide free genealogy websites for genealogical research in every county and every state of the United States."

Their home page contains a list of links to pages for the US states at the left. State pages vary in format, but generally contain some statewide resources and a list or map of the state's counties, which lead to county pages.

Some counties have more material than others, depending on how many volunteers adopted them and what records are still available. Typically, listings for a county might include early deeds and land grants; census transcriptions or indexes; court records; military rosters; older birth, marriage and death records; cemetery listings; vintage maps and photos. Often there are lists of useful links to other genealogical or local history sites.

You'll Be Surprised at How Much is Out There — And You Can't Beat the Price!

GENFORUM

<http://genforum.genealogy.com>

Offered by Genealogy.com, a fee-based online resource, GenForum offers free online forums devoted to surnames; US states and counties; more than 100 countries, from Albania to Wales; and "General Topics" including General Genealogy; Immigration, Emigration, and Migration; Religions; Wars; Miscellaneous; and Genealogy Software and the Internet. Forums are easily searchable by keywords.

GenForum is a good way to tap into the research of distant cousins, whether they're living in

your ancestor's home county or elsewhere. Remember that whatever you write on a forum will be made public, so don't reveal anything personal that you don't want on the Internet! The message boards are moderated for inappropriate postings.

CYNDI'S LIST

<http://www.cyndislist.com>

Online since 1996, Cyndi Howells' compendium called Cyndi's List is "a categorized & cross-referenced index to genealogical resources on the Internet". In December 2007, there were more than 263,150 Internet links in more than 180 categories. The categories include states and countries; types of material, such as "Family Bibles" or "Land Records, Deeds, Homesteads, Etc."; and tips for research methods in "How To", "Handwriting & Script" and, yes, even "Handy Online Starting Points".

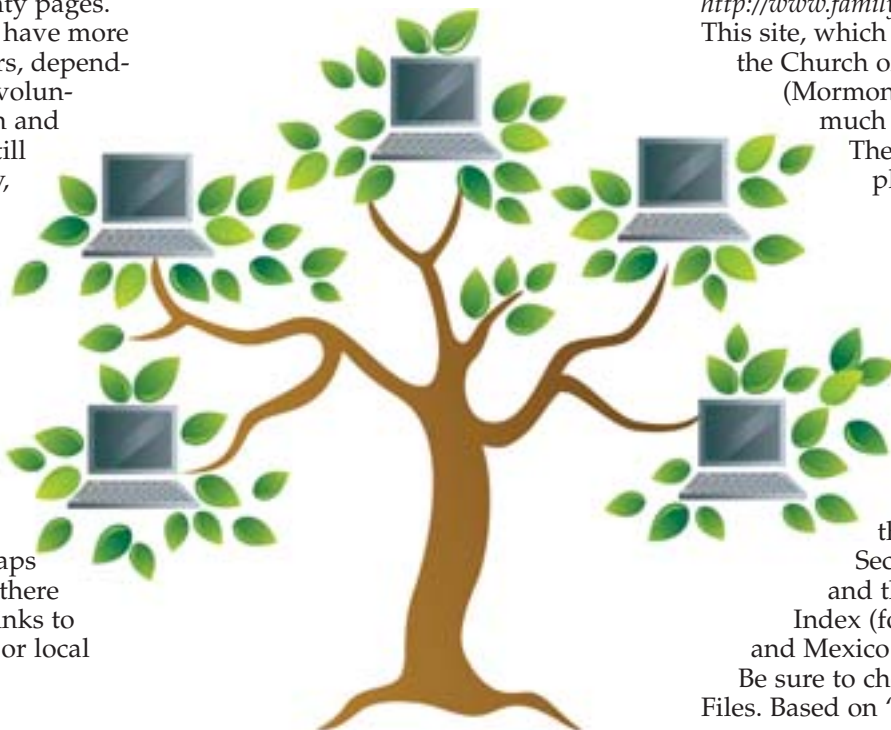
FAMILYSEARCH

<http://www.familysearch.org>

This site, which is sponsored by the Church of Latter-day Saints (Mormon Church), offers much to the genealogist.

The 1880 US census, plus British and Canadian censuses of 1881, can be searched online at http://www.familysearch.org/Eng/Search/frameset_search.asp?PAGE=census/search_census.asp. You can also search the US Social Security Death Index and the Vital Records Index (for Scandinavia and Mexico only).

Be sure to check their Ancestral Files. Based on "information taken



from Pedigree Charts and Family Group Records submitted to the Family History Department”, these records include dates of birth, marriage, and death, along with family trees, of vast numbers of people. (I’ve found a lot of my own ancestors listed here.) The site also includes numerous links and tips on compiling your family history.

FIND A GRAVE

<http://www.findagrave.com>
 Their “Find Famous Graves” section includes those of movie stars, Civil War generals, prominent politicians and writers, and many, many others. The “Find Graves” tab contains links to more than 19 million cemetery records in the US, Canada and other countries. Some records include a photo of the gravestone or other information.

INTERMENT.NET

<http://interment.net>
 This site offers millions of gravestone records. You can search by individual names, or browse by region to see lists of older cemetery records in the US, Canada, Britain, Ireland, Australia and other countries.

NATIONWIDE GRAVESITE LOCATOR

http://gravelocator.cem.va.gov/fj2ee/servlet/NGL_v1
 This site, from the US Department of Veterans’ Affairs, lists burials of military personnel and eligible family members in US military cemeteries. Listings date from the Revolutionary War to the wars in

Iraq and Afghanistan, and usually include name, rank, branch of service, and dates of birth and death. Earlier listings, such as from the Civil War era, may have less information; sometimes, there

information can be viewed as a text version, or a scan of the original ship passenger manifest (which may reveal more useful information). Often, the site even has a photo of the ship an ancestor arrived on. Fee-based services offer attractive certificates, photos of immigrant ships, or large copies of ships’ manifest.

GEOGRAPHIC NAMES INFORMATION SYSTEM

<http://geonames.usgs.gov/domestic/index.html>
 This site, from the US Geological Survey, must be the most thorough US gazetteer available online. You can find places your ancestors lived in or visited in its list of almost two million “populated places”, streams, mountains, ridges, gaps, mesas, bridges, mills, fords and more. Better yet, links give you several options for seeing each place on digital topographic maps or aerial photos!

GOOGLE BOOK SEARCH

<http://books.google.com>
 Google Book Search has made a virtual library full of public domain books available online. The collection contains lots of rare local histories, family history books and other historical works that may help with your research. Searching for particular ancestors, their hometowns or counties, or military units, may well reward you. There are many old genealogical works, and local and county histories that reprint 18th- and 19th-century marriage, death, court and land records.

With books that are not under copyright, you can browse them online or download a PDF copy onto your computer. The browsing capability is handy, even if you have a copy of the book; the text is word-searchable online, saving a lot of skimming in older books that lack good indexes.

Besides older published books, many US and state govern-



FindAGrave (above) and Interment.net.



is only the notation “US Army” instead of a particular unit. Confederate soldiers are usually not found here, except in prison camp cemeteries.

ELLISISLAND.ORG

<http://aolsvc.ellisland.aol.com>
 This site, from the Statue of Liberty-Ellis Island Foundation, Inc., offers free searches of the records of 22 million immigrants who arrived at Ellis Island, New York between 1892 and 1924. You may find names, ages and places of birth of immigrants, and the name of their ship, and its departure and arrival dates. The infor-



ment books and reports, which were not copyrighted, are found here.

The site also offers sample pages and “snippet views” of copyrighted works (including ones currently in print), providing a useful way to see what books are available on a subject, and to give an idea of how helpful they may be to you.

To narrow your searches, you can add more key words, or limit the results to “full view” books, which are the ones that are available for download.

INTERNET ARCHIVE

<http://www.archive.org/index.php>

This vast site has everything from digitized ancient texts to 1940s radio shows, archived web pages and Grateful Dead recordings. Most useful to genealogists, perhaps, will be the huge selection of digitized books, which include many rare local histories.

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS: AMERICAN MEMORY

<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/browse/ListSome.php?category=Maps>

PRINTS AND PHOTOGRAPHS ONLINE CATALOG (PPOC)

<http://lcweb2.loc.gov/pp/pphome.html>

There’s far too much available online at the Library of Congress to begin to describe here. It would be hard to top the map collections at American Memory and the pictures available at the PPOC, anywhere on the web. Lots of pictures and maps can be downloaded onto your computer. Most maps need special viewing software, but there are online instructions for downloading free viewing programs.

Don’t miss their huge Revolutionary, Civil War and railroad map collections. And, you may even find an ancestor’s house in their “Panoramic Maps”, which are elaborately drawn bird’s-eye views of hundreds of late 19th-century US cities and towns.

Pictures are easily searchable by keywords in the PPOC. Checking for views of towns and

counties where your family once lived may be very rewarding.

CIVIL WAR SOLDIERS AND SAILORS SYSTEM

<http://www.civilwar.nps.gov/cwss/soldiers.cfm>

This National Park System database includes 6.3 million names of Union and Confederate soldiers and sailors (this includes some duplication of names). Brief entries include a soldier’s name; side; regiment; rank when entering and leaving the service; and roll number of the National Archives microfilm with their complete record. The site also includes 4,000 brief regimental histories, links to 364 online battle histories, some prisoner of war



Internet Archive.

records, and names of 1,200 Civil War winners of the Medal of Honor.

COUNTY COURTHOUSES

Most county governments have websites these days. More and more counties, particularly more heavily populated ones, are adding databases that are of use to family historians. You might want to check “your” counties (ones where your ancestors lived) to see what records they have online.

The register of deeds or clerk of court’s office might have birth, marriage or death records available. Real estate records may be online from a register of deeds, or the tax department. There may be a county map where you can find current ownership of parcels of land, sometimes with a sales his-



tory. If you’re lucky, the county you’re researching might have deeds online that go back for several decades.

County government sites might also offer some local history and genealogy links.

THE COUNCIL OF STATE ARCHIVISTS

<http://www.statearchivists.org/states.htm>

State archives are certainly among the most valuable resources for your family history research. Many states now have some historic and genealogical records online. This list from the Council of State Archivists is filled with links to state archives and related institutions, state offices that maintain records, museums and historic sites.

Be sure to check the archives departments from the states where your ancestors lived. You may find useful online records, state histories, useful links to state agencies and historical associations, and genealogy tips and suggestions. You might also see if the state offers historical and genealogical publications for sale.

Alas, most records are not online. While a visit in person to the archives building may net you the most information, they might offer copies of some early documents by mail. If so, the website will state what kind of documents they can look up and copy for you, and what the fees are for such services.

DFH

Freelance writer and artist David A. Norris lives with his wife Carol and far too many books in Wilmington, North Carolina.

CAN'T GET OVER YOUR BRICKWALL? WE CAN HELP!

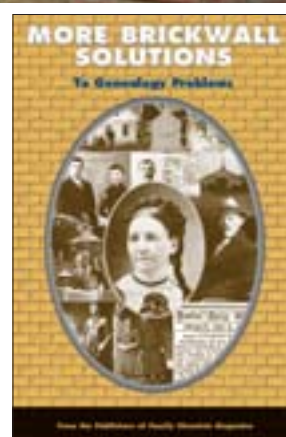
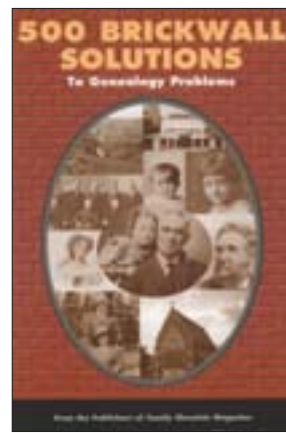


Every genealogist or family historian encounters a brickwall or a seemingly insurmountable obstacle in their research, such as a missing gravestone, inexplicable census omission or unconfirmed marriage.

Family Chronicle now has two great books on the subject of genealogical brickwalls: **500 Brickwall Solutions to Genealogy Problems** and our newest book, **More Brickwall Solutions to Genealogy Problems**.

500 Brickwall Solutions to Genealogy Problems contains more than 500 stories submitted by *Family Chronicle* readers in a beautiful softcover, 432-page edition. Now in its third printing.

More Brickwall Solutions to Genealogy Problems contains over 170 new brickwall solutions, packed with even more informative thinking and unorthodox research techniques. This softcover, 192-page volume contains over 100 black and white photographs and illustrations.



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Let Obituaries Speak to You!

EVERY GENEALOGIST should know the importance of seeking out obituaries for valuable clues to other resources. An obituary is a notice of the death of a person, often with a biographical sketch, most often published in a newspaper, but these days more frequently on the Internet.

Obituaries have a lot to tell you if you take the time to analyze them. First of all, an obituary is many things, and not just a notice of someone's death. It is a public record, although not necessarily an original record or a primary source.

An obituary or a funeral notice may actually be an advertisement for a mortuary or funeral parlor, complete with a graphical border. It also is an announcement of funeral or memorial services, and this can provide a geographical location where to seek other information. There is usually a reason, such as family connections or former residence in the area, where services are held and interment is performed.

Obituaries have been published for centuries in various formats, from handbills to newspapers, periodicals to the Internet. Since it was created as a result of information provided by some informant who may not have had all the facts or who may have been under emo-

Obituaries can help you find clues to your family history. George G. Morgan shows you what to look for.

tional stress at the time, the information in an obituary may not be 100 percent correct. The facts should, therefore, be verified for accuracy.

The accuracy of the information included is as reliable as the knowledge of and the information provided by the informant(s). There may have even been reasons for information to have been withheld or falsified. As an example, a younger age may have been given for the deceased if the person was sensitive about that subject. In addition, the nickname of the person may have been used in an obituary, rather than the given name, because that was how the person was commonly known.

Accuracy also depends on the person who took down the information, the person who tran-

scribed it, an editor's attentiveness to detail and a typesetter's accuracy. Upon my father's death in 1980, for example, a representative of the funeral home interviewed my mother, brother and me for the obituary. The representative took down the information by hand. At that time I was living in Chicago, and he abbreviated Chicago as Ch'go, a common abbreviation. Unfortunately, when the obituary was published, my place of residence was listed as Fargo, Illinois. Someone had tried to interpret the abbreviation and failed. And while there is a Fargo, Illinois, some future researcher seeking details about my life will draw a complete blank there. These are just a few reasons why it is essential that you personally corroborate the information in an obituary with other original evidence.

Perhaps you remember how you diagrammed sentences when you were in school. In effect, you were dissecting sentences by drawing lines, writing in phrases and clauses, identifying parts of speech and connecting the sentence pieces with conjunctions and prepositions. You were placing all the pieces into a logical structure that could be visualized and thereby more easily understood. You can do the same



Obituaries make your ancestors more than just names on gravestones.

21 Clues in an Obituary

You can dissect an obituary for anyone. The below example is for my great-grandmother who died on Tuesday, 13 January 1914, and whose obituary was published in the *Rome Tribune-Herald* in Rome, Georgia, on Wednesday morning, 14 January 1914.

I have pointed out the important clues in the text

and have added commentary, and pointed out the errors (her age, place of birth and a daughter's name).

There are a minimum of 21 clues and pointers in her obituary, plus the names of all 11 surviving children. Interestingly, nowhere in the obituary was Mrs. Holder's name, which was Ansibelle Penelope Swords.

Her name is listed as Mrs. G.B. Holder since her husband is living. Were he deceased, her name would be listed as Mrs. [her forename] Holder. In this obituary, her given and maiden names are never provided.

Home address can indicate the correct person, could point to property records.

Inconsistent with the age implied by date above. This needs to be resolved.

Seek other records for her from 1867 to 1915, including land and property records, will and probate records, and other documentary evidence.

Mr. and Mrs. Holder had a total of 12 children. The obituary indicates that one has pre-deceased her and that child should be identified.

This turned out to be a widowed sister, Mrs. Caroline "Cal" Minton. Not only was her nickname used, but her surname was misspelled. A fruitless search in Georgia census records for a Calvin, Calbert and Calvert Menton and Minton failed to turn up any matches.

Mrs. George Black was easily found in Cedartown, Polk County, Georgia, and records for her and her husband provided links to the women's parents in the 1860 census.

A check of the 1913 Rome City Directory showed that Reverend Cooper was the minister of the Primitive Baptist Church.

**MRS. G.B. HOLDER
PASSES AWAY**

Mrs. G.B. Holder, aged 71 years, an old and honored resident of Rome, died Tuesday night at 11:10 at the family residence, 808 South Broad street, after a brief illness of pneumonia.

The deceased was born at Rock Creek, Alabama, in 1848. She married in 1867, G.B. Holder, of this city, and has since resided in Rome. Her husband is a prominent business man of the county. Mrs. Holder was a member of the Primitive Baptist church and always took an active part in the church work.

She is survived by 11 children, five sons and six daughters. The sons are Ed Holder, Will Holder, Scott Holder, Brisco Holder and Charlie Holder. The daughters are Misses Isa Holder, Anna Holder and Emma Holder, Mrs. A.D. Starnes, Mrs. Walton Weatherly and Mrs. Wyatt Foster. She is also survived by three sisters, Mrs. Cal Menton and Mrs. Davis of Alabama, and Mrs. George Black, of Cedartown.

The funeral services will be conducted from the residence at 3 o'clock this afternoon, the Rev. J.W. Cooper officiating. Interment will follow in Myrtle Hill cemetery.

The following pall-bearers will meet at 2:30 o'clock at Daniels Furniture Company: honorary, J.G. Pollock, B.F. Griffin, Capt. J.H. May, M.W. Formby, H.V. Rambo, Tom Sanford. Active: J.M. Yarbrough, G.G. Burkhalter, Sanford Moore, W.A. Long, Dr. R.M. Harbin, C.B. Geotchius.

Implies that her birth was c. 1843.

Cause of death.

Seek information about her birthplace, which was actually Rock Falls, Alabama.

Seek marriage record in the county courthouse [Floyd County, Georgia].

Seek other information about G.B. Holder.

Look for records of the church, particularly membership records that may indicate the name and location of the church elsewhere from which her membership may have been transferred.

This is an error; the name should be Ida.

Three surviving sisters' information might provide clues to parents' names.

The chances of finding the correct "Mrs. Davis" in Alabama are miniscule, and so this clue was set aside.

No funeral home was involved.

Seek out Myrtle Hill Cemetery records. In the cemetery administrator's office were found a burial permit, the obituary, a letter authorizing the opening of the grave, and the cemetery's interment ledger that indicated the lot, plot, date of interment, age as 71, and cause of death as pneumonia.

Pallbearers met at the furniture company to take delivery of the coffin, which was made by that company.

Capt. May was the father of William Ira Holder's wife, Emma May.

J.M. Yarbrough was a son-in-law of G.B. Holder's older brother, Scott Thomas Holder.

thing with any obituary. By dissecting an obituary, you can: locate other evidence of the facts; help corroborate facts you may already have identified; verify names, dates, and locations; locate other family members; and identify possible alternate research paths for brickwalls you may have encountered.

Obituaries really do speak to you. They can communicate a wealth of clues for your research. Some of these include:

- Name and age of the deceased
- Date, location and sometimes cause of death
- Names of parents, siblings, spouse(s) and sometimes maiden names
- Names and/or numbers of children, grandchildren, nieces, nephews
- Places of residence of living relatives
- Names of and notes about deceased relatives
- Where and when deceased was born
- When deceased left their native land, perhaps even the port of entry and date
- Naturalization date and location

- Place(s) where deceased was educated
- Date and location of marriage, and name of spouse (sometimes maiden name)
- Religious affiliation and name of church or temple
- Military service information (branch, rank, dates served, medals and awards)
- Place(s) of employment
- Public offices held or political appointments
- Organizations to which the person belonged
- Awards received
- Events in which the person participated
- Name and address of funeral home or church where funeral was to occur
- Date and time of funeral
- Name(s) of officiating clergy
- List of pallbearers
- Date, place and disposition of remains
- Statement regarding any memorial services
- Directions regarding donations or memorial gifts

Obituaries can speak to you and lead you to other evidence.

They can also challenge you to recheck other materials that you have already found. When two evidentiary sources don't agree, it is important to examine them to establish if they are independent (not derived from one another) and to weigh the quality of that evidence. An obituary is never a primary source of information. There are opportunities for errors to be introduced or for important information to be omitted.

You can dissect any obituary just as we've done in Mrs. G.B. Holder's example. Underline the pointers or clues and make a list of what resources could be used to locate more definitive and reliable information. Then figure out where you would look for the information. This approach is sure to help you attune yourself to those obituaries and how they speak to you.

DFH

George G. Morgan is president of Aha! Seminars, Inc. He is an international genealogical lecturer and a prolific author of books, magazine, journal and Internet articles.

WHAT'S COMING IN Discovering Family History

Discovering Family History Centers • Cyndi's List • The SSDI • Linkpendium • German Research • Collateral Lines • Family Crests • Black Sheep Ancestors • Free Online Resources • Google Books • Identifying Subjects in Old Photographs • Where did Your Ancestors Live? • Mailing Lists • Old Newspapers • The IGI • Irish Research • English Research • Best Beginners Books • GEDCOMS • Military Records • Web 2.0 • City Directories • Learning to Make the Most of Google • Scottish Research • The Origins of Surnames • Using Your Local Library • Polish Research • It's All About Parents • Finding Lost Cousins • Finding Family Trees Online • Old Handwriting • Choosing a Software Program • Finding Immigration Records • French Research

The features mentioned here are planned for future issues. Circumstances may affect the final content.

WWW.DISCOVERINGFAMILYHISTORY.COM

The Ultimate Guide to Subscription Databases

THE 'NET IS FULL OF FREE FAMILY HISTORY INFORMATION, BUT SOMETIMES IT'S WORTH PAYING FOR RECORDS. OUR GUIDE TO ONLINE SUBSCRIPTIONS WILL HELP YOU NAVIGATE THE MAZE OF FEE-BASED SERVICES AND SHOWS YOU WHERE YOU CAN ACCESS THEM.



FREE GENEALOGY WEBSITES, such as FamilySearch, www.familysearch.org, RootsWeb, www.rootsweb.com and GenForum, www.genforum.com, are terrific resources. When you've found everything they have on your family, you could write to courthouses, order microfilmed records on interlibrary loan and travel to your ancestral hometowns, but you'd probably save time and money by taking advantage of subscription websites first. To help you decide which ones best fit your needs, here's our complete guide to commercial genealogy websites.

GENEALOGY MEGASITES

The old standbys, Ancestry and HeritageQuest Online, deserve your attention, but don't overlook the upstarts, Footnote.com, GenealogyBank.com and World Vital Records. You can use all three of them, plus HeritageQuest Online and the Godfrey Memorial Library, for free at Family History Centers. Many of these databases are also free at subscribing public libraries.

ANCESTRY

www.ancestry.com

By far the largest online genealogy

subscription service, Ancestry has more than six billion names in 2.5 billion records, and adds millions of names every week. Coverage is strongest for the United States and Britain, but Ancestry is building collections for Canada and Western Europe, too.

Key Resources: US federal census records from 1790 to 1930; birth, marriage and death records from around the US from the 17th to the 20th centuries; 18th- and 19th-century passenger arrival lists for the ports of Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, New Orleans and San Francisco;

military records, including Revolutionary War and Civil War (Union Army) pension file indexes, WWI draft registration cards and WWII army enlistment records; directories; newspapers; family and local histories; family trees.

Price: The US Deluxe Membership costs \$19.95 a month or \$155.40 a year. The World Deluxe Membership, \$29.95 a month or \$299.40 a year, gives you access to everything, including records from the US, the UK and Canada. Check with your library to see if it subscribes to Ancestry Library Edition.

FOOTNOTE.COM

www.footnote.com

Footnote.com has original historical documents relating to the Revolutionary War, the US Civil War, WWI and WWII, US presidents, historical newspapers and naturalization records. The company has reached agreements with the National Archives and the Family History Library to digitize more record collections.

Integrating social networking features, Footnote.com lets members share personal accounts and family histories and post comments.

Key Resources: Civil War Union and Confederate pension file indexes; Confederate soldier service records from Alabama, Texas and Virginia; an index to selected New York naturalization records; New England city directories.

Price: Subscribe for \$7.95 a month or \$59.95 a year or buy individual document images for \$1.95.

GENEALOGY.COM

www.genealogy.com

One of the first large online genealogy subscription sites, Genealogy.com has five collections: the US Census Collection, International & Passenger Records, the World Family Tree, Genealogy Library and Family & Local Histories. The Generations Network, Ancestry's parent, bought Genealogy.com and has since focused its attention on Ancestry. Most of Genealogy.com's resources are available on Ancestry, which gives you more for your money, including more records and

better search capabilities.

Key Resources: US federal census records for 1790 to 1820, 1860 to 1870 and 1900 to 1910; 19th-century passenger lists.

Price: Subscriptions to individual collections range from \$9.99 to \$19.99 a month and from \$49.99 to \$99.99 a year.

GENEALOGYBANK.COM

www.genealogybank.com

NewsBank, a longtime supplier of information products to libraries, gathered together its best genealogical records to form GenealogyBank.com. The site has four main collections:

- Historical Newspapers, 1690-1977. You can view actual images of more than 500,000 issues from more than 3,700 historical US newspapers. This collection is also available through the New



England Historic Genealogical Society (NEHGS), the New York Genealogical and Biographical Society (NYGBS) and the Godfrey Memorial Library.

- America's Obituaries, 1977 to present. These 26 million obituaries, mostly dating from 1999 to the present, come from more than 900 US newspapers.
- Historical Books, 1801-1900. This is a motley collection of books and pamphlets, including funeral sermons and a few genealogies and biographies.
- Historical Documents, 1789-1980. The main resources here — the American State Papers (1789-1838) and genealogical content from the US Serial Set (1817-1980) — can also be searched as part of the Library of Congress' American Memory Collection, <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/hlawquery.html>.

Key Resources: I found the Historical Newspapers, 1690-1977,

to be a great tool for finding ancestors in the 18th and 19th centuries.

Price: \$19.95 a month or \$69.95 a year. Check to see if your library subscribes to America's Genealogy Bank, the library edition of this website.

HERITAGEQUEST ONLINE

www.heritagequestonline.com

Available through subscribing libraries, this site now consists of six collections:

- Census records, including US federal census records from 1790 to 1930. Head-of-household indexes cover the 1790 through 1820, and the 1860 through 1920 censuses. The 1880 census, also available on FamilySearch, www.familysearch.org, has an every-name index and the 1930 census has a partial index.
- Family and local histories, including 22,000 books.
- PERSI, an index of more than two million articles in genealogy and local history periodicals.
- Revolutionary War pension files.
- The Freedman's Bank, with records of African Americans after the Civil War.
- The US Serial Set, with citizens' petitions to the US Congress for relief.

Key Resources: The census records, though they have less comprehensive indexes than Ancestry's collection, and the family and local histories probably appeal to the broadest range of genealogists.

Price: Only libraries, not individuals, can subscribe. If your library subscribes, you may be able to access HeritageQuest Online from home by logging in with your library card number.

WORLDVITALRECORDS.COM

<http://www.familylink.com/>

Formed by one of Ancestry's founders, WorldVitalRecords.com is following Ancestry's model by creating a collection of many genealogy databases. WorldVitalRecords.com already has close to 900 million names in more than 5,000 databases. Several of them were acquired through a partnership with Everton Publishers:

- *Everton's Genealogical Helper.*



Search more than 200 issues of this magazine and view the pages online.

- Everton pedigree and family group sheets. Search for a name in more than 150,000 records submitted by genealogists.
- Books from the Everton Library Collection. Titles in this collection include family and local histories and record compilations.

Other resources include US and Canadian census records and US and British vital records. The service recently acquired newspapers, family histories and local histories through partnerships with NewspaperArchive, Quintin Publications and Accessible Archives. New databases are added every day, and they're free for a few days.

Key Resources: Everton pedigree and family group sheets, the Meitzler Ahnentafel Pedigree Chart Collection.

Price: \$5.95 a month or \$49.95 a year.

GENEALOGICAL SOCIETIES

Genealogical societies are converting their library collections to online databases. See the August/September 2006 issue of *Internet Genealogy* for my article on genealogical society websites.

NATIONAL GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY

www.ngsgenealogy.org

As an organization focusing on education, scholarly research and record access, the National Genealogical Society publishes the *NGS NewsMagazine* with news and how-to articles and the *NGS Quarterly* with carefully researched family histories. But NGS membership now includes another benefit — access to several online databases.

Key Resources: Family Bible records, names extracted from members' ancestor charts.

Price: \$60 a year.

NEW ENGLAND HISTORIC GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY

www.newenglandancestors.org

Founded in Boston in 1845, the New England Historic Genealogical Society is the US's oldest genealogical society. It helps both beginning and advanced family historians improve their research skills, and it preserves and interprets genealogical data on New England families. While the society focuses on New England genealogy, its library and website also have important resources for the Mid-Atlantic States, the Maritime provinces of Canada and the British Isles.

Membership benefits include subscriptions to *New England Ancestors*, a bimonthly magazine, and *The New England Historical and Genealogical Register*, published four times a year. The society's website has quickly become one of the most popular benefits of membership.

Key Resources: The *Register* back to 1847, Massachusetts vital records, cemetery records and newspaper advertisements placed by Irish immigrants from 1831 to 1920.

Price: \$75 a year.

NEW YORK GENEALOGICAL AND BIOGRAPHICAL SOCIETY

www.newyorkfamilyhistory.org

The New York Genealogical and Biographical Society aims to preserve and publish genealogical data on New York State families. Membership entitles you to the *New York Genealogical and Biographical Record* (a quarterly journal) and *The Researcher* (a quarterly newsletter). Another benefit of membership, the society's eLibrary, has a growing collection of online databases.

Key Resources: New York State cemetery and church records, the *Record* from 1870 to 1960, Early American newspapers.

Price: \$60 per year.

SPECIALTY SITES

Smaller sites give you access to resources, such as county histories, newspapers and maps, that you might not find on the big genealogy sites.

ACCESSIBLE ARCHIVES

www.accessible.com/accessible/

County histories usually include biographies of pioneers and local residents, with details on their education, religious affiliation, military service and careers.

Accessible Archives' collection includes 92 rare county histories from Maryland, New Jersey, New York and Pennsylvania. Other resources include 19th-century Pennsylvania newspapers and African American newspapers, Civil War-era newspapers and *Godey's Lady's Book*.

Key Resources: County histories from the Mid-Atlantic States.

Price: \$14.95 for 30 days or \$49.95 a year, \$14.95 for a one-year subscription to only the county histories.

AMERICAN CIVIL WAR RESEARCH DATABASE

www.civilwardata.com

Drawing on state rosters, pension indexes, regimental histories, Rolls of Honor, photographs and other sources, the American Civil War Research Database is an attempt to create a comprehensive record of Civil War soldiers. It's a great resource for identifying a soldier's unit and dates of service — the information you need to request copies of a soldier's service and pension files from the National Archives. Tools, such as the "casualty analysis", help you put each soldier's service in a broader historical context.

Key Resources: Soldiers' records, regimental rosters, regimental chronicles, officer profiles, soldier photographs and battle synopses.

Price: \$25 a year for the Research Database and \$10 for a visitor's pass to just the soldiers' military information. Ancestry's version of this database, called the Civil War Research Database, is updated less often.

GENEALOGY TODAY

www.genealogytoday.com

Family Tree Connection, the largest of several databases on the Genealogy Today site, aims to make nontraditional resources available to genealogists. Its index covers a wide range of records, such as high school and college yearbooks, city directories, fraternal organization memberships and criminal records. Many more documents published between 1830 and 1930 are in the pipeline.

Key Resources: Funeral cards.

Price: Free index, \$29.95 annual subscription to get complete references.

GODFREY MEMORIAL LIBRARY

www.godfrey.org

A private library in Connecticut, the Godfrey Memorial Library focuses on genealogy and history. No matter where you live, you can register for a Godfrey Scholar library card, which gives you access to several major online newspaper collections.

Key Resources:

- Accessible Archives. This includes the newspapers, but not the county histories.
- Early American Newspapers. This is the same great collection of newspapers dating back to 1690 that you get on several other commercial sites.
- The *London Times* Digital Archive 1785-1985.
- NewspaperArchive.com. This collection includes 1,743 fully searchable US and foreign papers dating back to 1759.

Another resource, Marquis Who's Who, contains more than 1.3 million biographies.

Price: \$35 for a basic yearly membership; \$65 a year, adds NewspaperArchive; \$80 a year, adds World Vital Records; \$110 a year includes both resources.

HISTORIC MAPWORKS

www.historicmapworks.com

Maps help you pinpoint your ancestors' places of residence, locate nearby churches and cemeteries and trace changing county boundaries. County atlases show individual property owners so you can identify your ancestors' neighbors and potential relatives.

Historic MapWorks's extensive collection of online maps includes 64,933 US maps, 919 Canadian maps and 259 world maps. They include county atlases and hand-colored maps. You can also order copies printed on heavyweight paper.

Key Resources: County atlases.

Price: \$29.99 a year.



OBITUARIES

Genealogists focus mostly on older records, but recent obituaries often provide family information going back decades and help you locate living relatives.

LEGACY

www.legacy.com

One of the largest obituary sites, Legacy has more than 6.5 million obituaries dating back to February 2001, including some from Canadian and British newspapers. Adding about 200,000 obituaries and death notices from 400 newspapers every month, it has 55 percent of US newspaper obituaries published every day.

Key Resources: Newspapers covered include the *New York Times*, the *Los Angeles Times* and the *Chicago Tribune*.

Price: Obituaries are free for 30 days. Archived obituaries cost \$2.95, but you can view the first 24 words for free.

OBITSARCHIVE.COM

www.obitsarchive.com

Affiliated with 985 US news-

papers, ObitsArchive.com has obituaries dating back to 1977. You can search on the name of the obituary's subject, as well as any other words in the text, such as a place of residence, occupation and the names of family members.

Key Resources: The *New York Times* from 1980, the *Los Angeles Times* from 1985 and the *Chicago Tribune* from 1985.

Price: \$2.95 per article or \$19.95 a month for 100 articles.

OBITUARYREGISTRY.COM

www.obituaryregistry.com

When it began collecting current obituaries in March 2000, ObituaryRegistry.com covered about 20 percent of all US deaths, but expanded to 80 percent of all deaths in September 2002. Today, it acquires obituaries and death notices for about 92 percent of all US deaths and adds records on about 6,500 unique names every day. Obituaries archived since 2000 now number 10 million.

Key Resources: The *New York Times*, the *Philadelphia Inquirer*.

Price: \$24.95 for three months.

CANADA

Ancestry has sizable collections of Canadian census records and vital records indexes, but these sites offer many other records and finding aids.

EARLY CANADIANA ONLINE

www.canadiana.org

This online library has more than 2.6 million pages from nearly 30,000 books and documents, including many local histories.

Key Resources: Local history books and periodicals.

Price: Some areas require a subscription (a whopping \$530 a year for individuals), but 592,500 pages are free.

GENEALOGICAL RESEARCH LIBRARY

www.grl.com

This database indexes the names of 16 million Canadians mentioned in 1,500 sources, including farm property maps, directories, church records, land records, cemeteries, censuses, vital records and records of Native Americans. More than one million names are linked to

images of the original books and documents.

The site is also adding historical and genealogical resources for Hungary and Poland and has indexed documents with 4 million names from each country.

Key Resources: Indexes to property maps, census records and vital records.

Price: \$10 a week or \$75 a year.

PRDH: PROGRAMME DE RECHERCHE EN DÉMOGRAPHIE HISTORIQUE

www.genealogy.umontreal.ca/en

This tremendous resource for anyone with French Canadian ancestry has Quebec's Catholic Church records before 1800, as well as some death records from 1800 to 1850.

Key Resources: About 710,000 baptismal, marriage and burial records.

Price: \$21.95 to retrieve 150 records, but you can search the index for free.

INGENEAS DATABASE

www.ingeneas.com

Compiled by professional genealogists, this database covers Canadian passenger, immigration, census, vital, land and military records. The records name more than 854,000 immigrants to Canada.

Key Resources: Passenger lists from 1748 to 1873 and other immigration records up to 1906.

Price: You can search the database for free and order copies of records for about \$7 to \$10 each.

ENGLAND AND WALES

Civil registration — government records of births, marriages and deaths — began in 1837 in England and Wales. Genealogically useful census records for England and Wales were taken every 10 years beginning in 1841. Several online services have civil registration indexes and the actual census records from 1841 to 1901, the most recent census records open to the public. FamilySearch, www.familysearch.org, has a free transcription of the 1881 census of England and Wales.

You can order English and Welsh birth, marriage and death certificates online through the General Register Office Certificate

Ordering Service, www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/certificate/index.asp. The fee is lower if you have the index reference.

Unlike most American genealogy services that sell subscriptions that give you unlimited access for a period of time, most British sites sell credits to view a certain number of records or index entries.

Keep in mind that Ancestry.com has a large British collection, including England and Welsh census records from 1841 to 1901. Also, a free site, Free BMD, <http://freebmd.rootsweb.com>, has 143 million index entries for births, marriages and deaths transcribed by volunteers.



1901CENSUSONLINE.COM

www.1901censusonline.com

The British National Archives' site has census records from 1841 to 1901 and page images of the birth, marriage and death indexes from 1837 to 2004.

Key Resources: Census records, civil registration indexes.

Price: 500 credits cost about \$10. You can search the census images for free, but it costs about \$1.50 to view an image of a census page and 20 cents to view a civil registration index page.

ANCESTORSONBOARD.COM

www.ancestorsonboard.com

FindMyPast.com, in association with the British National Archives, is creating this list of passengers leaving the UK from 1890 to 1960.

Key Resources: Passenger lists from 1890 to 1939 were covered first.

Price: Sixty units, good on either this site or FindMyPast.com, cost about \$14. It costs about \$1.17 to view a transcription and about

\$7 to view a color image of a passenger list. Or buy a subscription.

BMDINDEX.CO.UK

www.bmdindex.co.uk

This service from The Genealogist (see next page) has civil registration indexes from 1837 to 2005 and is adding census records, marriage transcripts and indexes to wills.

Key Resources: This site's searchable index of births, marriages and deaths from 1984 to 2005 makes it easier to find a name, even if you don't have a specific date or place.

Price: Rates start at about \$50 for 175 credits which are good for three months. The number of credits required to do a search and view a record varies.

BRITISH ORIGINS

www.britishorigins.com

British Origin's English and Welsh collection covers records dating back to the 13th century, including census, marriage, apprenticeship, probate, burial, militia and court records.

Key Resources: The 1841 and 1861 censuses, Boyds Marriage Index and the Marriage Licence Allegations Index.

Price: \$13 for 72 hours or \$17.90 a month.

FAMILY HISTORY ONLINE

www.familyhistoryonline.net

The Federation of Family History Societies created this site, but will transfer the data to its new partner, FindMyPast.com. The 67 million records making the move include parish registers, gravestone transcriptions, census records and poor law documents.

Key Resources: Census records and the National Burial Index.

Price: You can get a prepayment voucher for \$10 and it costs about 12 cents to view an index entry and about 14 cents to view a transcription.

FAMILYRELATIVES.COM

www.familyrelatives.com

This site's 600 million records include birth, marriage and death indexes, as well as military records and church records. Free social networking features let you con-

nect with other researchers and comment on records.

Key Resources: Searchable birth, marriage and death indexes (not just browsable images) from 1866 to 1920 and 1984 to 2005, Phillimore's Marriage Registers.

Price: Fifty units good for 90 days cost \$10. Two units are required to view a search results page and one unit to view an image. Unlimited use costs \$75 a year.

FINDMYPAST.COM

www.findmypast.com

Formerly known as 1837.com, this service features civil registration indexes, census records, passenger lists and military records. You can also build an online family tree with photos for free.

Key Resources: Census records from 1841 to 1891.

Price: About \$30 for a 30-day subscription or buy pay-per-view units.

THE GENEALOGIST

www.thegenealogist.co.uk

More than 8,000 volunteers are indexing census, church and tax records for this site.

Key Resources:

Census records, Phillimore parish register transcripts, the 1873 tax survey.

Price: About \$138 a year.

GENES REUNITED

www.genesreunited.com

In addition to census records and civil registration indexes, you can build your family tree online and search through millions of names in other researchers' family trees.

Key Resources: Census records from 1841 to 1901, civil registration indexes.

Price: Membership, about \$20 for six months, lets you contact family tree submitters. Fifty credits cost about \$10 and it takes five credits to view a census transcript, a census image or a civil registration index page.

IRELAND AND SCOTLAND

You'll find some records for Ireland and Scotland on the com-

mercial sites already described here. For instance, Ancestry has transcriptions of the Scottish census records from 1841 to 1901.

IRISH ORIGINS

www.irishorigins.com

Irish genealogy is a challenge, but Irish Origins has gathered many of the most important resources, including census records, census substitutes, passenger lists and militia records.

Key Resources: Griffith's Valuation and an index of Irish wills from 1484 to 1858.

Price: Subscriptions start at about \$15 for 72 hours.



SCOTLAND'S PEOPLE

www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk

Scotland's People is the country's official online source for census, church and probate records.

Key Resources: Census records from 1841 to 1901, church records from 1553 to 1854, civil registration indexes starting in 1855 and wills from 1513 to 1901.

Price: Searching is free. 30 page credits cost \$11.

SCANDINAVIA

Norway's Digital Archives (Digitalarkivet, <http://digitalarkivet.uib.no>) provides many records for free, but you'll have to pay to access other Scandinavian databases.

DIS — COMPUTER GENEALOGY SOCIETY OF SWEDEN

www.dis.se/denindex.htm

The site has family trees submitted

by genealogists.

Key Resources: 15.5 million records on Swedes before 1905.

Price: \$15 a year.

GENLINE

www.genline.com

A tremendous resource, this site has more than 16 million images of Swedish church records.

Key Resources: Birth, baptism, confirmation, marriage, death and burial records from the 16th to the 20th centuries.

Price: Subscriptions start at \$12 for 24 hours of access.

INSTITUTE OF MIGRATION

[www.migrationinstitute](http://www.migrationinstitute.fi/index_e.php)

[.fi/index_e.php](http://www.migrationinstitute.fi/index_e.php)

Drawing on passport records, passenger lists and information on Finns who died abroad, the emigrant register has 550,000 names.

Key Resources: 197,000 entries from passport records from 1890 to 1950 and 318,000 records from passenger lists from 1892 to 1910.

Price: Free searching. Full access costs between \$22 and \$44.

SVAR

www.svar.ra.se

SVAR, the Swedish National Archives site, has birth, marriage and death records, as well as databases of inventories, convicts, seamen and farms.

Key Resources: Censuses from 1860 to 1900.

Price: Access starts at about \$8 for three hours.

Explore these subscription sites and you just might find services that will make your research more efficient and save you time and money in the long run.

DFH

A regular contributor to Family Chronicle and Internet Genealogy, Rick Crume specializes in online research, genealogy software and British genealogy.

Who Else is Researching Your Name?



ASK ANYONE WHO has been working on their family history for a while and they'll tell you that some of their greatest successes weren't purely their work alone. Perhaps they made a connection with a cousin or someone else who was researching the same surname line that they were. As a result, questions are asked, information begins to be exchanged, and, in many cases, a full-fledged collaborative relationship is formed. Sometimes these are one-time exchanges but, in other cases, familial reconnections are formed and branches near and far are reunited and relationships form.

Such chance encounters are not as rare as you might think. The many electronic facilities offered by today's technology can provide accelerated communications with other researchers around the globe, potentially within minutes. Rather than post printed queries in newsletters and magazines and enduring postal delays, we have a number of available electronic communications formats and choices. This article will examine the most commonly used options and offer

According to George G. Morgan, genealogical success is all about teamwork.

some tips and advice on using them.

E-MAIL MAILING LISTS AND E-MAIL

The largest use of the Internet is by far the sending and receiving of e-mail. There are few of us who can do without it, even though unsolicited messages and junk e-mails are a ubiquitous nuisance. (E-mail filtering programs can offer some relief, but that's the subject for another article.)

E-mail is a powerful tool; you can compile an e-mail distribution of many addresses, such as a list for all your immediate family members, friends, and members of your own genealogical society or club.

But wait! There are literally thousands of e-mail mailing lists available to which you can subscribe. If you are unfamiliar with a

mailing list, consider the analogy of a newsletter subscription. You initiate the action to subscribe and to receive every issue. The differences are that: a) an e-mail mailing list is free; b) you can usually select the format in which you prefer to receive it; and c) you usually also have free access to browse the entire archive of past messages that have been posted. You will receive a copy of every message posted by other subscribers. You can read the message, bypass and delete it, respond publicly with another e-mail posting to the mailing list, or respond in private (one-on-one) directly to the person who posted the message.

There are hundreds of thousands of people who have subscribed to one or more mailing lists. These people are posting messages geared to elicit responses from others. There are general mailing lists for the new researcher, lists for surnames (and variant spellings of them), lists for every US state, lists for almost every country and administrative area within, lists for ethnic and religious groups, evidentiary record types, software program

users, military eras and a wealth of other subjects. RootsWeb.com hosts the vast majority of genealogy mailing lists and you can search for lists of interest to you at <http://lists.rootsweb.com>. The screen

POLAND-ROOTS Mailing List

POLAND-ROOTS-L
list?

Topic: A mailing list for those who are researching the history and genealogy of the Polish people inside and outside of Poland wherever they resided. The list is not limited to the 19th and 20th centuries and will address both ancient and modern history and genealogy back to the beginning of Polish culture (that includes before and after).

For questions about this list, contact the list administrator at POLAND-ROOTS-admin@rootsweb.com.

- Subscribing:** Clicking on one of the shortcut links below should work, but if your browser doesn't understand them, try these manual alternatives: To join **POLAND-ROOTS-L**, send mail to POLAND-ROOTS-L-request@rootsweb.com with the single word **subscribe** in the message subject and body. To join **POLAND-ROOTS-D**, do the same thing with POLAND-ROOTS-D-request@rootsweb.com.
 - Subscribe to **POLAND-ROOTS-L**
 - Subscribe to **POLAND-ROOTS-D**
- Unsubscribing:** To leave **POLAND-ROOTS-L**, send mail to POLAND-ROOTS-L-request@rootsweb.com with the single word **unsubscribe** in the message subject and body. To leave **POLAND-ROOTS-D**, do the same thing with POLAND-ROOTS-D-request@rootsweb.com.
 - Unsubscribe from **POLAND-ROOTS-L**
 - Unsubscribe from **POLAND-ROOTS-D**
- Archives:** You can search the archives for a specific message or browse them, going from one message to another. Some list archives are not available, if there is a link here to an archive but the link doesn't work, it probably just means that no message has been posted to that list yet.
 - Search the **POLAND-ROOTS** archives
 - Browse the **POLAND-ROOTS** archives

RootsWeb is funded and supported by www.familysearch.org and our host www.rootsweb.com.

Mailing List Created by [Discovering Family History](http://www.discoveringfamilyhistory.com) (POLAND-ROOTS) & www.rootsweb.com
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POLAND-ROOTS mailing list at RootsWeb.com

shot above shows an example of a RootsWeb entry for the POLAND-ROOTS mailing list, complete with instructions for subscribing, unsubscribing and for searching the archives.

You will note that you have two subscription options. You can subscribe to POLAND-ROOTS-L, the list mode in which you will receive individual copies of e-mails as they are posted.

Alternately, you can subscribe to POLAND-ROOTS-D, the digest mode in which one e-mail is sent to your e-mail box periodically that includes multiple message postings. This can simplify your work with a busy mailing list, such as the SMITH list.

Another source for all the RootsWeb mailing lists and more is John Fuller's website at http://www.rootsweb.com/~jfuller/gen_mail.html at which he maintains all the genealogy mailing lists in the world.

Use a mailing list effectively by using an informative subject line that will grab the attention of a potential collaborative researcher. Then, in the body of the message, describe exactly about whom you are seeking information, where they were, the

time period, and any research results you've already attained and where.

MESSAGE BOARDS

Similar to mailing lists in purpose are message boards. Rather than subscribing, individuals post messages to message board websites using the same types of subject categories as mailing lists. You can then bookmark and regularly visit the message boards that interest you, read the message postings, and either post a response or send a private e-mail to the person

who posted the message.

Hundreds of thousands of people use message boards each year to post queries and thousands make connections with other researchers. There are a number of message board sites on the Internet, among them being Ancestry.com's message boards, at <http://boards.ancestry.com>; RootsWeb.com, at <http://boards.rootsweb.com>; and GenForum, at <http://genforum.genealogy.com>.

Cyndi's List has a specific page for queries and message boards, at <http://www.cyndislist.com/queries.htm>, where you will find other links. The screen shot at right shows an example of the Holder message board screen at Ancestry.com.

Like mailing lists, you will achieve a higher success rate if you use a meaningful subject line for your message board posting in order to

attract the attention of researchers. You should also write a concise message describing what you are seeking, in what locations, and when, as well as any research you have already performed.

FAMILY TREES AND GEDCOM FILES

Tens of thousands of researchers are using genealogical database programs, such as Family Tree Maker, RootsMagic, Legacy, The Master Genealogist, Personal Ancestral File, Reunion, Heredis, and a number of other programs to enter and organize their genealogical data and source citations. Many of these people find that, at some point, they are ready to place their information on the Internet to draw the attention of other interested researchers. All of the PC and MAC programs can produce a common formatted extract file called a GEDCOM — short for Genealogy Electronic Data COMMunications. GEDCOM files can be exchanged between users of different software programs and can be imported and read by those programs. (I personally discourage importing and merging someone else's GEDCOM file with your own work. You don't know how good a researcher the person is and how accurate their data might be. Each fact in someone else's research should be personally researched and verified

Message Boards

View and Post: [Browse Boards](#) | [Subscribe](#) | [Admin](#)

Names or Keywords: [Advanced Search](#)

[Old Boards](#) | [Holder - Family History & Genealogy Message Board](#)

Holder Threads: 719 | Messages: 1990

Thread	Author	Replies	Last Post
John Henry Holder born in Arkansas, OK (1817-1880)	lucyholmes...	0	2 Dec 2007
Oliver Andrew Holder born Oct. 11 1836	lucyholmes...	0	21 Nov 2007
Justis HARRIS, sister Lavinia, Randolph Co, NC	lucyholmes...	0	20 Nov 2007
Holder in Tennessee	lucyholmes...	0	20 Nov 2007
Holder	lucyholmes...	0	20 Nov 2007
Christina Ann Holder and Grandfather Abraham Beck	lucyholmes...	0	18 Nov 2007
The Holder Book	lucyholmes...	0	18 Nov 2007
Justis Holder of Randolph Co, NC	lucyholmes...	0	9 Nov 2007
ME Holder Line (NC)	lucyholmes...	7	6 Nov 2007
1832-1877 1880 1885 South Iowa & Illinois	lucyholmes...	0	2 Oct 2007

Results per page:

Showing 1 - 10 of 719 | 100/1.0

Posts to this board are posted to the "HOLDER," www.rootsweb.com mailing list.

Find a Board

Holder Message Board at Ancestry.com.

— and then you can enter the information with its source citation into your genealogical database program of choice.)

There are a number of Internet sites where people also upload their GEDCOM file data so that other people can see it, study it, and even download the data for further investigation. Some of these sites include Ancestry.com, <http://www.ancestry.com>; RootsWeb, <http://www.rootsweb.com>; FamilySearch, <http://www.familysearch.org>; Geni, <http://www.geni.com>; Famillion, <http://www.famillion.com>; and other genealogy social networking sites.

Individuals are even creating their own personal genealogical websites by generating or converting web pages from some of the leading genealogy database software packages. There are even family associations that are hosting websites that focus on uploaded GEDCOM files for persons of a surname and/or variations.

FAMILY ASSOCIATIONS AND ONE-NAME STUDIES

Family associations are organizations or informal groups of individuals who share a common surname or even a specific ancestor. They join together for any number of reasons, but the most common purpose includes exchanging genealogical information, sharing current news about family members, holding reunions, and promoting family knowledge, traditions, and self-esteem.

A one-name study can be defined as research into one surname and its variants by one or more people. Those persons concentrate on the relationships between people sharing the same surname. They conduct a project of researching all occurrences of a surname, as opposed to a particular pedigree (ancestors of one person) or descendancy (descendants of one person or couple). The Guild of One-Name Studies, based at the Society of Genealogists, is a membership organization that records project reports, among other activities. They may be found at <http://www.one-name.org>, although access to the databases at

that site has been limited to members only. Bear in mind, though, that there may be members who are researching one or more of the surnames in your family tree.

WEBLOGS (BLOGS)

In addition to the personal web pages of computer-generated indexes and navigatable pedigree charts and family groups, there is an expanding group of researchers who are creating blogs about their family research. One of the most prodigious bloggers is Steve Danko, whose blog, at <http://www.stephendanko.com>, documents in scholarly text and in scanned images and digital photographs the details of his Polish ancestral research.

The Genealogy Blog Finder, <http://blogfinder.genealogue.com>, at the Genealogue site, <http://www.genealogue.com>, is an excellent place to look for individuals, groups and family associations who publish their stories of research into families and locations.

Considering all these electronic resources for rapid access to and the exchange of information, is it any wonder that genealogy has become one of the most popular pastimes in the world and one of the top uses of the Internet?

That is not to say that traditional research for and into documents and other evidentiary resources should be abandoned. Far from it! It is essential to use all of the tools above as clues and/or pointers to original materials or exact facsimiles so that you can personally examine them. Your verification of the exact contents in their proper context helps assure that you develop accurate hypotheses and reach correct con-

clusions.

Who are all these people researching your name? They are a diverse lot of folks — men and women, young and old, from every nationality, socio-economic group, ethnic and religious background. They are people who want to know more about their family origins, traditions and culture. Some want to join hereditary, lineage and other types of societies. Others are performing cultural, architectural, social, and/or



Steve Danko's Blog.

legal research. Some are authors or historians, while others are on a personal journey of discovery and enlightenment. There are many, many motivations for genealogical research but the researchers are joined by the common bond: a commitment to learn more about their family history.

DFH

George G. Morgan is an internationally recognized writer and speaker. He is the author of five books, including The Official Guide to Ancestry.com and How to Do Everything with Your Genealogy, and hundreds of online and magazine articles.

What is a **Vital Record**?

WITH ANY NEW endeavor, you are exposed to terms that are specific to that project, hobby or occupation. This is also true of genealogy. This article addresses one of the most common terms used in family history research: vital records.

WHAT IS A VITAL RECORD?

Vital records are usually considered to be primarily those civil records of birth and death. They can be a very important source of genealogical material. Other records of significant life events — marriage and divorce records — are considered to be either contracts or civil cases and will not be discussed here.

The first known law in the American colonies requiring the registration of vital records was passed by the Grand Assembly of Virginia in 1632. It required ministers or wardens from each parish to appear in court once a year, June 1, to present a record of christenings, marriages and burials for the preceding year. The General Court of the Massachusetts Bay Colony required town clerks to make a record of the actual births and deaths, rather than christenings and burials. These laws were not very effective and were not consistently obeyed. By 1833, only five US cities had regular vital registration: Baltimore, Boston, New Orleans, New York and Philadelphia.

The main reason for requiring vital records registration, especially deaths, was disease control. Without reliable statistics, the medical profession had a hard time battling contagious diseases and poor sanitary conditions. Vital records registration did not become common in North America until the late 19th and early 20th centuries. In the US, vital registration is a function of the states. In Britain and much of Europe, it is a function of the national government. In Canada, the Registrars of Vital Statistics in

Mary Clement Douglass, CG looks at the basics of understanding and using vital records.



Quebec birth certificate from 1868.

each of the provinces and territories handle the registration.

WHERE DO I FIND VITAL RECORDS?

There are three principal sources for vital records — the home, the church and the state. Home sources include the family Bible, letters and newspaper clippings, such as obituaries, birth announcements and other personal papers. Some churches maintain records of christenings and burials. Christenings are Christian religious rites in which a person, usually an infant, is

given a name at baptism. While a christening date is not the exact date of birth, it is usually within a year of the date of birth. Burials are not exact death dates, but are the date the body was interred, usually within the week following death. Civil sources are the most commonly consulted when searching for vital records. New England was a leader in the keeping of vital records. The further you go south, the more deficient the vital records are.

The largest source of vital records is the Family History Library of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Salt Lake City, Utah. It has micro-filmed millions of vital records from church registers and government record offices all over the world. These records are as close to you as your nearest Family History Center (FHC). The Family History Library maintains a website, <http://www.familysearch.org>. Look under the "Library" tab on the website to find a FHC near you.

It is wise to check for town, and county registers of vital records before state registration was required. Where cities maintain a public cemetery, they may also keep a burial register. The cemetery sexton's burial register often shows date of death as well as date of burial. Tombstones often list birth dates or ages at death from which you can calculate an approximate birth date.

The most exhaustive attempt to compile a list of available vital records in the US was made by the Historical Records Surveys in the late 1930s and early 1940s. The states *not* inventoried include Connecticut, Delaware, Maine, Maryland, Ohio, Pennsylvania, South Carolina and Vermont. Participating states published an inventory or guide to the vital statistics records available for various counties, cities and towns within its boundaries and told where and how the records were filed. A WPA List of Vital

Records, issued in 1943, shows the vital records inventories published for each of those 40 states. Consult the state historical society for information on where you may use a copy.

Many local historical and genealogical societies have published early birth and death records in their periodicals, newsletters and journals. The Periodical Source Index (PERSI), at <http://www.acpl.lib.in.us/genealogy/persi.html>, lists what records have been published by societies. Contact the Allen County Public Library Genealogy Center in Fort Wayne, Indiana for more information.

Thomas J. Kemp's *International Vital Records Handbook*, now in its 4th edition contains the latest information for each of the 50 states and also furnishes details about records that were created prior to statewide vital records registration. It also covers all the other countries of the world, giving their current forms and instructions. An inexpensive reference is the booklet published by the US Department of Health and Human Services, "Where to Write for Vital Records" (Washington, DC: Superintendent of Documents, US Government Printing Office or <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/howto/w2w/w2welcom.htm>). If you have Internet access, either at home or at your local library, one of the simplest ways to find information on where to find civil vital records offices is to search the term "vital records" on your favorite search engine.

WHAT CAN I EXPECT TO FIND IN A VITAL RECORD?

Modern birth records are usually created by the parents shortly after the birth, while still in the hospital, and filed by the hospital with the Office of Vital Statistics. Early birth records gave little information beyond the name of the child, date and place of birth and parents' names, or only the father's name. Most 20th-century birth records contain that information plus sex of child, county of birth, location of birth, hospital name, father's race, birthplace,

age and occupation, mother's maiden name, race, birthplace, age, occupation, residence and marital status. The US Standard Certificate of Live Birth also asks questions about educational level attained by each parent, previous deliveries born alive or dead, prenatal care, birth weight of child, health questions relating to the pregnancy and delivery including birth injuries and congenital malformations.

When Social Security benefits were instituted in 1937, individuals were required to document their births even if their states had not required birth registration. This led to the creation of delayed birth certificates. Evidence had to be supplied to support the applicant's sworn statement. Often this evidence came from home sources such as the family Bible, a baptismal certificate, school record or an affidavit from a person having definite knowledge of the facts, such as a parent or older sibling.

Death records are usually created by the attending physician or coroner for unattended deaths. Early death records often contained little more than the name of the deceased, the death date, and the place of death. Nineteenth-century death records became more detailed, including cause of death, age at the time of death, place of birth, names of parents, place of birth, occupation, name of spouse, name of the person giving the information and the informant's relationship to the deceased. Modern death certificates also give information about the deceased's cause of death, birth, marital status, Social Security number, residence and place of burial.

Death records are only as accurate as the knowledge of the informant. Consider that members of the immediate family, who would otherwise furnish reliable data, do not think as clearly as they should when under the stress of bereavement. Consequently, the record suffers. This is one reason why obituaries are often inaccurate or incomplete. The names of the

deceased's parents, birth dates, and birthplaces should be double checked, and verified, against other information.

HOW DO I USE VITAL RECORDS?

It is helpful to obtain the birth and death certificates of siblings to compare the information given about places and parents' names. This is especially true of death certificates that give the parents' birth dates and places. Gathering death certificates for a family health history may show patterns, such as a tendency to heart disease or particular types of cancer.

Vital records are useful for supporting or disproving existing evidence. Compare the vital record to home records and the censuses for that individual. The information contained in a civil registry may help to clarify the direction of future research. Check all the locations named. This may help you find earlier generations in the censuses. Vital records are important to contribute to a more complete family history.

FURTHER READING:

- Editors Loretto Dennis Szucs and Sandra Hargreaves Luebking *The Source: A Guidebook of American Genealogy*. Salt Lake City: Ancestry Publishing Company, 2006.
- Greenwood, Val D. *The Researcher's Guide to American Genealogy*. Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Company, Inc. Third Edition, 2000. Chapter 12: "Vital Records."

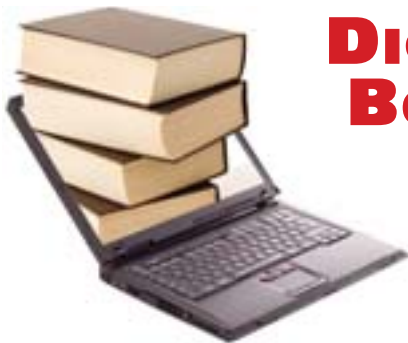
DFH

Mary Clement Douglass, Certified Genealogist, is owner of Historical Matters — Historical and Genealogical Research in Kansas. She is a researcher, teacher, author, architectural historian and curator. Mary lectures nationally on genealogical methodology. Her articles have appeared in Everton's Genealogical Helper and Family Chronicle magazine.

Internet GENEALOGY

www.internet-genealogy.com

What to Look Forward to in Upcoming Issues



DIGITAL BOOKS

Diane L. Richard checks out one of the newest sources for family history — the digital book

ALSO:

- **Finding Quaker Ancestors**
- **Library of Congress**
- **Baker Hoax**
- **Confederate Pensions Online**
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Halvor Moorshead
Editor & Publisher

Citing Sources

WHEN YOU'RE in the early stages of tracing your family history and only using limited resources, it's relatively easy to keep track of where you obtain information. But as the months and years go by and you amass more research, remembering where all the facts, anecdotes and claims came from gets a lot harder. That's why it's vitally important to properly record your sources from the start.

You can be forgiven for thinking you'd rather get on with the exciting aspects of tracing your family history rather than worrying about organization but, trust me, you'll be thankful further down the line if you do get organized now!

Genealogy is renowned for involving tracking down information from numerous sources and it's easy to forget where you got information if you don't record the details.

Some of the sources you're likely to use for obtaining information during your genealogical journey include:

- Birth certificates
- Marriage certificates
- Death certificates
- Church records
- Censuses
- First person memories from relatives
- IGI (International Genealogical Index) and GRO (General Register Office) indexes
- Newspaper articles
- Old maps
- Photograph archives
- Other people you meet who are researching the same lines

There are various methods you can use to record your sources and what you choose to do is up to you, but there are key pieces of information that should be recorded in all source records. For example, you need to make a specific note of exactly where you obtained the information — was it a census record, a birth/mar-

Rachel Newcombe explains why it's vitally important to properly record your sources from the start.

riage/death certificate, a church record, anecdotal, through swapping notes with another researcher, etc.

If there's an official reference number on the record you found, such as on IGI or GRO indexes, then record this number too, as you never know if you may need to go back and look at it again. If you've found the details in an old newspaper article, then don't forget to note the date, issue and page of the item in question.

Don't worry — recording your sources needn't be an arduous task. The key to getting it right is to develop your own habits and methods — and the sooner you start, the easier it will be to locate information as you go along. How you choose to do it is up to you, but the following are some useful suggestions to get you started.

USING FAMILY RECORD SHEETS AND OTHER FORMS

One easy way of keeping track of all your sources of information is to methodically keep family record sheets, source summary forms, records of who you've corresponded with and other similar forms as you go along. These sheets can then be filed away in a ring binder — one for each family or line you're researching — and you can easily refer back to them when you need to check up on details.

Family record sheets are great for recording details of all the family members and you can make a note on the form of where you

obtained each individual piece of information. Source summary forms are filled in for each family group and help you keep track of where you found information. The correspondence record is aimed at helping you keep track of who you've corresponded with, but is also handy for making a note of what information you've received and from whom.

You can create your own tailored forms if you wish, but to make life easier, template forms are available to download from Ancestry: family group sheet — <http://www.ancestry.com/trees/charts/familysheet.aspx>; source summary form, <http://www.ancestry.com/trees/charts/sourcesum.aspx>; correspondence record, <http://www.ancestry.com/trees/charts/correcord.aspx>

DEVELOPING YOUR OWN SOURCE CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM

As you become more advanced, you may find you want to branch out and invent your own ways of recording sources. This is perfectly fine too, as long as you develop a system you find easy to use and remember. One person who's developed his own system is Tim Roberts. "I find it useful to give each source an ID. For example, I use a simple system whereby I assign each source a unique ID reference," he explained.

Roberts' system uses letters to relate to the type of source used:

An	Anecdotal
Bi	Birth
Ba	Baptism
Bu	Burial
C	Census
Ch	Church Record
D	Death
Di	Directory
M	Marriage
Mil	Military
N	Newspaper
OR	Other Researcher
W	Will

"Using the prefix letter as the start of the reference, I then add on the date. So for a marriage on 6

July 1848 it becomes — M/1848-6-7. In case I come across any other marriages later on that may have occurred on the same day (a small chance, but it does sometimes happen), I add an *a* on the end, so it becomes M/1848-6-7-a.”

Once he’s got this unique ID, Roberts adds the details, along with other information, such as where the record was found, the names of the individuals concerned, etc., into a database.

“Often on records, you pick up multiple details — such as the names of the parents, the father’s occupation or where they were from, as well as the information about the event in question. My referencing system means I can input all the details then cross-reference them back to see which original source they all came from,” he says.

Although Roberts has his own database record, he also records the information in the genealogy software program he uses, using the same ID number approach.

RECORDING SOURCES IN GENEALOGY SOFTWARE

These days, there are various forms of genealogy software available that make recording sources all the more easier. Many programs have a facility that allows you to record notes and sources on all individuals entered into your database file. This makes it really easy to keep track of everyone and allows you to keep all manner of notes and snippets of information.

There are lots of options for printing, including one which isolates and prints out just the notes sections. As you will inevitably gather lots of notes during the course of your research, it’s a good idea to periodically print out this file — even though it may well be long — so that you have a hard copy of everything.

Likewise, remember to back up your master file as often as possible, so that you won’t lose valuable information should a problem occur.

PAPER VERSUS COMPUTER

Keeping electronic records on the computer has, in many ways, overtaken the traditional forms of written genealogy record keeping, but don’t overlook the good old pen and paper entirely. For a start, when you go into some libraries and record archives — especially when dealing with very old records — laptops aren’t always allowed, so you have to rely on paper and pen, or even pencil, as pens aren’t permitted in some places.

It’s very handy to be able to keep your records of sources on the computer, but you must make reg-



ular back-ups and keep copies of everything. If your computer has a sudden hard drive failure, it would be devastating to lose all your research. It’s a good idea to get into the habit of saving everything regularly and doing regular back-ups. Memory sticks are useful for an initial back-up (e.g., keep the original on your hard drive and a copy on a memory stick), but then a weekly or monthly back-up onto another source, such as CD or portable hard drive, is useful to do.

CREATING A RESEARCH TRIP LOG

Some people find it useful to keep a record of research trips to archives, libraries, churches, fami-

ly relatives or other sources of information. Often, you may find that in the future you’ll remember a particular trip you went on for your research, but can’t necessarily remember what you found out. The research trip logs can act as an additional useful reference, so you can double-check where you went and let it lead you to your findings on that occasion.

You can either use inexpensive notebooks or create files on your computer. If you’re visiting a lot of different libraries or Family History Centers, then it may be a good idea to allocate one notebook per event. If they’re more infrequent occasions, then one per year may be sufficient. Files on your computer can easily be labeled per trip.

In your research trip log, it’s useful to record key information, such as:

- Where you went and when.
- What your aim of the trip was — what were you searching for?
- The name of specific archive collections you searched.
- The dates you examined.
- Whether or not you found the answers you were looking for.
- If you uncovered any other interesting facts, possible relatives or other details in the course of your research.

Keep a note on the outside of the notebook, or just inside the front cover, mentioning the year, or name and date of the trip. If you’re recording details of numerous trips, you could write the details of each one on the first page to form an index.

By developing systems such as these, you’ll be able to pinpoint your sources whenever you need to and will no longer be in the dark about where you obtained information. Good luck and happy organizing!

DFH

Rachel Newcombe is a freelance writer, editor and researcher. She’s an avid fan of genealogy and loves the challenge of piecing together the past. She can be found on the web at www.newcombe.co.uk/media

Case Study

Getting to Know

Lisa A. Alzo describes her quest to learn about the grandfather she never knew.

IF YOU DROWN, don't come home." I can't help but chuckle every time I remember this quote from a story that my father used to tell me about my grandfather, John Alzo, Sr.

As a boy, my father and his friends liked to sneak away to take a swim in the Monongahela River that flowed not far from his home in Duquesne, Pennsylvania. When young Johnny arrived home, his father questioned him, "Were you swimming in the river?"

"No, Pap," would be his response, while his usually wavy blond hair, damp and green from the various unidentified substances floating in the river, gave him away.

In reply, my grandfather's exhortation about not drowning came without him cracking a smile, and then he would return to reading his newspaper.

This story captures the essence of my paternal grandfather. I've been told he was a kind man, with an implacable personality, who could subtly make a point with his unique sense of humor. From all that I learned about my grandfather, I regret that I never had the chance to know him.

We're all familiar with those speculative types of question and answer or "ice breaker" games in which we are asked, "If you could have lunch with one person, living or dead, who would it be?"

My answer to this particular question is always the same, "My Grandpap Alzo".

My grandfather died at the age of 67 in 1961, two years before I was born.

However, thanks to my interest in genealogy, I have had the opportunity to learn about many of the details of my grandfather's life.

LEARNING THE FACTS

One of the first steps in genealogy is to "start with what you know" and, since I knew very little, researching my grandfather presented a bit of a challenge. Talking to relatives is another important step.

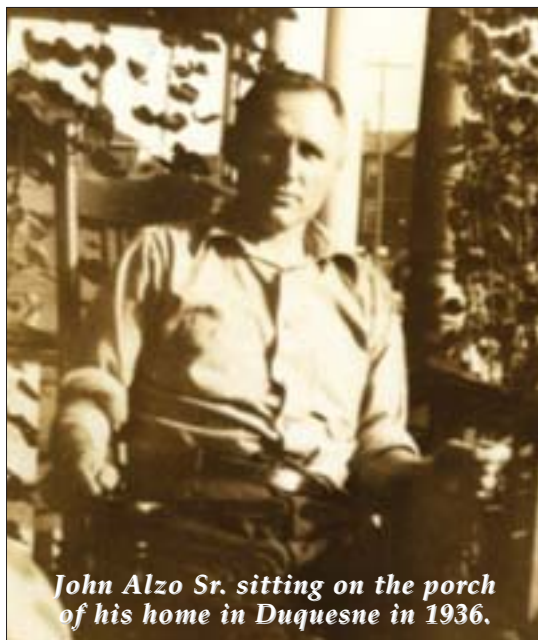
Unfortunately, I started too late and there were few living relatives who could answer my questions. My paternal grandmother passed away in 1966 and all my

whiskey to drink at the local corner bar and ladled out the hot water in the large pot on the stove that my grandmother was using to wash clothes, thinking it was soup.

I also learned that my grandfather was a very religious man. He was a dedicated member of Holy Trinity Roman Catholic Church in Duquesne, and an officer in one of their Slovak Catholic fraternal lodges (Osadny).

My grandfather was also a sort of jack-of-all-trades. He worked as a millwright for the Carnegie-Illinois Steel Company in Duquesne, was the neighborhood handyman and unofficial barber (I have the scissors he used to use), and even built his own coal bin.

Ironically, my grandfather died while painting his back porch after coming home from his friend's funeral. My grandmother was calling him for dinner and, annoyed that he was not coming after several minutes of prompting, she went to fetch him and found him slumped over the paint can, the brush still in his hand.



John Alzo Sr. sitting on the porch of his home in Duquesne in 1936.

aunts had died years before. When I began my quest, my father was still alive, and while he did not know exact dates, or could not remember some names or other details, he did provide some interesting stories about my grandfather.

How he enjoyed a good conversation — he spent hours sitting on the front porch talking to neighbors, including my maternal grandmother (my mother's family had moved next door to my father's family in 1943); or the time when he had a bit too much

GATHERING HOME AND FAMILY SOURCES

I didn't let my father's lack of detailed information stop my search. First, I checked at home for any sources of information about my grandfather that were readily available, and located his funeral card, obituary, miscellaneous papers, prayer book, Bible and some photographs. I was also fortunate to locate two key documents, a rudimentary family tree handwritten by my mother, listing the names of ancestors and relatives she could remember, along with those of their spouses and children, and a copy of a typed

How "Pap"

one-page narrative entitled "Our Family Tree" that was prepared by my aunt in the 1970s that told of how my grandfather met my grandmother while he was a boarder at her sister's house.

Next, I contacted my first cousins who inherited the contents of their deceased parents' homes. This was a smart move as one cousin had acquired my grandfather's desk that her mother (my aunt) had inherited. I obtained a number of important records.

These hidden genealogical gems contained many valuable details about my grandfather, including:

BIRTH REGISTRATION

Jan Alzo was born on 1 January 1894 in Kucsin, Slovakia to Jan Alzo and Barbara Meriorska; his religion was Roman Catholic.

RECORD OF MARRIAGE

John Alzo and Elizabeth Fenchak were married on 21 January 1915 in Sts. Peter & Paul Greek Catholic Church in Duquesne.

DEATH RECORD

John Alzo, Sr.'s date of death is recorded on the Coroner's Certificate of Death as 10 June 1961 at 6:15 PM, E.S.T. The immediate cause: "Coronary Occlusion". Other information on the certificate included his occupation, millwright; his spouse's name, Elizabeth (Fenchak); his parents' names, John Alzo and Barbara Mariorska. The name and location of the funeral director, "M.J. Shaughnessy, Duquesne, PA" and the name of the cemetery, Holy Trinity, as well as his address and Social Security number are provided too.

SOCIAL SECURITY CARD

This provided his Social Security number and date he applied.

CERTIFICATE OF NATURALIZATION

John Alzo was naturalized on 7 June 1928. The certificate lists his address in Duquesne, the name of his wife (Elizabeth) and the names and ages of his minor children (Anna 10, Elizabeth 7, Helen 5, and John 3). His age (34) and physical description are also provided. There was no declaration of



John Alzo, Sr. (right) was a "jack-of-all-trades". He is seen here with his son, John, Jr. when they were building a coal bin for their house.

intent or copy of the actual petition attached; only the certificate, so I knew I would want to get copies of these "first papers" because they will contain additional details not found on the certificate.

PROPERTY DEEDS

Property deeds list the dates and purchase details for the two homes he owned; one on Crawford Street and later the one on Hill Street. There were also a number of Allegheny County property tax receipts.

PHOTOGRAPHS

My cousin had several boxes of old photographs stored away in

the basement of her home. Among them was one of my grandfather dressed in work shirt and pants and sitting in a chair on his front porch at home in Duquesne. The photo was taken in 1936 while he was recovering from an operation. He was 42 years old in this photo. The expression on his face is one of engagement — he is looking at the camera as if to say, "Come, sit down and talk with me."

IF I HAD TO START FROM SCRATCH

I was very fortunate to have the above documents and photographs at my disposal. This proves that it pays to let everyone in your family know that you are involved in genealogy (of course, it doesn't guarantee the family members will oblige, but that is another matter).

However, if the above items had *not* been available to me via family members, I could have tracked most of them down on my own through various sources.

For example, I'd check with the churches for the marriage and death records, and burial information. The funeral home had since gone out of business, but I'd contact other funeral homes in Duquesne, or the local historical society to see if they obtained any of the records. I'd search for his obituary in old newspapers. The local paper for the Duquesne area was the *McKeesport Daily News*. All copies of this, from 1884 to present, are microfilmed and available at the McKeesport Heritage Center www.15122.com/mckheritage/info.htm. Also, the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh's Pennsylvania Department has obituaries from 1786 to 1913 and 1963 to the present indexed and searchable by name. Although from 1914 to 1962, there is no index, if I had the specific death date, the staff of the Pennsylvania Department will conduct a search and copy one to five names or pages of its obituaries for a non-refundable, prepaid fee of \$10.

DEATH RECORD

For his death record, I could use information found on his funeral

card and/or obituary to request a death certificate. Joe Beine's Online Searchable Death Indexes and Records, at www.deathindexes.com, is a good place to start to find out where to begin to look for death records. Any links to sites for obituaries in papers in Allegheny County are for more recent obits, so I wouldn't be able to find information for the year I needed online. But there is a link to the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh Pennsylvania Department as described above.

After 1906, birth and death certificates are available from the



Above: Passenger Record for "Jan Alzio" found on the Ellis Island Database.

Right: Civil birth registration for John Alzo from Slovakia.

Pennsylvania Department of Health, Division of Vital Records in New Castle, PA, at www.dsf.health.state.pa.us/health/cwp/view.asp?a=168&Q=229939. The fee is \$9 and they require that a copy of your current valid driver's license accompany the request.

MARRIAGE RECORD

In Pennsylvania, the Clerk of the Orphans' Court Division of each county is responsible for maintaining the records of all marriages in the county where the marriage license was issued, so I could have obtained a "plain copy" (issued for genealogical purposes) for \$4 either by appearing in person at the Marriage Records Department located in the City-County building in downtown Pittsburgh, or by mailing a letter of request to the

department, at www.alleghenycounty.us/regwills/regrec.aspx.

NATURALIZATION RECORD

There is a naturalization index for Allegheny County, covering the years 1790 to 1906. The index provides date of declaration of intent, country of birth, date of naturalization and sponsor. After 1906, the index files are maintained downtown. Naturalization documents are available under the US Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). Because my grandfather was naturalized after 1906, I would follow the guidelines on their site to get to the correct place to request his records: Federal Archives & Records Center Archives Branch, Room 1350, Philadelphia, PA 19107; its holdings include from 1906 through the present. Luckily for me, Footnote,



www.footnote.com, has put some Pennsylvania naturalization documents online. So, taking advantage of a free trial, I was able to locate both the petition and declaration of intent for my grandfather on their site. Among the details found in these documents is the name of my grandfather's ancestral village, Kucin, as well as details about his arrival in the US: 29 October 1910, Port of New York

on the vessel *Kaiserin Auguste Victoria*.

PROPERTY RECORDS

Information on property ownership could be obtained from the Recorder of Deeds Office in the Allegheny County Office Building, www.county.allegheny.pa.us/deeds.

BIRTH/BAPTISMAL RECORDS

The Family History Library, www.familysearch.org, has microfilmed and catalogue early church records for just about all the counties in Slovakia (formerly part of Austria-Hungary). The catalog is searchable by place or keyword. I could also write to the Slovak Archives, www.civil.gov.sk/snarchiv/uk.htm, or hire a professional researcher to obtain the certificate on my behalf.

INTERNET RESEARCH

Even with all the documentation about particular events in my grandfather's life, there were still some missing details. Because the Internet has opened up a great deal of information to genealogists, I decided to use several different websites to try to track down what I wanted to know.

GOOGLE

Google, www.google.com, is a good place to begin for a general search. Given that Alzo is not that common of a surname, I thought I might turn up some positive results by typing in my grandfather's name. There were several results — but they were linked to some of my own articles or data postings that mentioned my grandfather's name.

SOCIAL SECURITY DEATH INDEX

I was curious to see if I could locate an entry for my grandfather in the Social Security Death Index (SSDI). The SSDI is available for free and as part of several subscription databases. I tried many but my grandfather did not turn up in any of the results. My guess is that a benefit was never filed for after he passed away. I did locate my grandmother, however. I used the link provided by the version of the SSDI found on RootsWeb,

www.rootsweb.com, and generated a letter to request the original SS-5 application (it costs \$27 if you know the person's social security number and \$29 if you don't, under FOIA). I plugged in my grandfather's name and social security number, printed the letter and mailed my request to receive a copy of his original application in the mail.

CENSUSES

Searching online census records was not an easy task. You would think that a name like Alzo would not require much searching, but I was surprised to find that when I used my Ancestry.com subscription to search the "every name index" for the 1930 census, the results turned up empty for John Alzo. Using some creative searching with spelling variations, I finally located the family (my grandparents and their four children), living on Hill Street, but listed as Elza.

The 1930 census provided some clues I could use to search other records, such as his year of immigration to the United States (1910) and "NA" in the naturalization area of the citizenship column. (The handwriting is not the best, so I can understand how the name Alzo could have been transcribed as Elza.)

My grandfather is listed as John Olza in the 1920 census (with Elza in parentheses) on Ancestry.

IMMIGRATION RECORD

Family lore indicated that my grandfather left his homeland for America in order to avoid conscription into the Austro-Hungarian army. When males turned 17, they would be required to enter, with a mandatory three-years service initially and another nine years in the reserves. From his naturalization papers, I had the date of his arrival and the port — New York. So the next step was to search the Ellis Island Database, (EIDB) www.ellisland.org/. It's free to search but you must register with a user name and password. When I typed in John Alzo, I got "No exact matches for this passenger", and a list of suggested

names from which to choose. After several attempts with different choices, I finally located the record. He is listed as:

First Name: Janos
Last Name: Alzio
Ethnicity: Hungarian-Slovak
Last Place of Residence: Also-kocsen, Russia
Date of Arrival: Oct 29, 1910
Age at Arrival: 17y
Gender: M
Marital Status: S



Above: John Alzo and Elizabeth Fenchak on their wedding day on 21 January 1915. Right: Marriage certificate for John Alzo and Elizabeth Fenchak.

Ship of Travel: *Kaiserin Auguste Victoria*

Port of Departure: Hamburg
Manifest Line Number: 0023

The last place of residence is not exactly correct as it is listed, but upon review of the actual image, I was certain this was my grandfather.

If the search had not been this easy, I could have used Steve Morse's One-Step Web Pages, at www.stevemorse.org. Morse's "Gold Form" lets you use various parameters to search the EIDB, including "sounds like" for surname, first name and town. (See my article "Morse Code: Streamline Your

Online Research" in *Internet Genealogy's* February/March 2007 issue.) Since my grandfather arrived in the US just a few months before his 17th birthday, the family lore about his reason for leaving can be taken to be a possibility. He also arrived too late to be counted in the 1910 US census.

US MILITARY RECORDS

A search on Ancestry.com also turned up a record for my grandfather in its collection of US World War II Draft Registration Cards.

This registration was conducted on 27 April 1942. All men who were born on or between 28 April 1877 and 16 February 1897 (men who were between 45 and 64 years of age at the time) were required to register, provided they weren't already in the military. This registration was often called the "Old Man's Draft". The card contained a number of pertinent details for my grandfather, including a physical description and his signature.



There are some words of caution for searching this collection. First, you won't find all states covered. Check Ancestry.com for a list of those states that have been filmed or those that are partially completed, as well as a list of those states where the cards were destroyed before they were copied and, therefore, will not be available at all. Secondly, if you're searching in Pennsylvania, Maryland, Vermont and Delaware, note:

"These four states were scanned at the National Archives facility in such a way that the back of one person's draft card appears

on the same image as the front of the next individual. The result is that when you click to view the original image, you will see the



correct front side of the draft card, but the back of the previous soldier's card. Ancestry is aware of this problem, and is working to correct this issue."

These records were all scanned in individually, so you can't just use the forward arrow to get to the next page, but there is a temporary solution, while a permanent solution is being worked out.

First, going to the web address at the top of my browser, I located the part of the URL that read "PA-2243595-2643", which is the code for this particular record. To see the back of my grandfather's record, I moved the cursor to the end of the code and added one to the last digit, to read "PA-2243595-2644" and hit the enter key. Scrolling down, I could see the back of my grandfather's card (the part which contained his physical description). It is not as easy as clicking "forward", but it works.

Ancestry.com also has a searchable database of World War I Draft Registration Cards, 1917-18. By all accounts, my grandfather should have registered dur-

ing this draft (which took place in three stages) since every male living within the US between the ages of 18 and 45 was required to do so. However, a search for Alzo and variations turned up empty. Since I've been burned before by indexing issues in online databases, I wasn't about to give up. The original records are kept at the National Archives-Southeast Region in East Point, Georgia and microfilm copies are at the National Archives regional offices that serve their respective states. NARA has a new service to order reproductions online:

<https://eservices.archives.gov/orderonline/start.swe?SWECmd=Start&SWEHo=eservices.archives.gov>. For \$10



Above: John Alzo, first from the left, served as a pallbearer for his neighbor, Michael Sivak in 1921. Forty years later, John Alzo died after serving as a pallbearer at another friend's funeral. Top: John Alzo poses with his wife, Elizabeth, and daughter, Anna in this photograph found, with many others, in a box in the author's cousin's home.

you can get a copy of the WWI Draft Registration Card (you can pay by credit card or check if you print and mail the request form). I submitted my request online, and in about two weeks, received this reply: "Dear Researcher, We were unable to locate the records that you requested WW1-23704191E."

I am discouraged by this result, but I am still not about to give up. Given that my grandfather registered for the "Old Man's Draft", I am fairly certain

he would have registered for the one held for WWI back in 1917-18. My guess is that it is an issue of spelling, translation or location (perhaps he registered elsewhere), so I need to try more variations, or possibly even manually search the cards for the draft board (this will be quite time-consuming though). But, it just goes to show that even experienced researchers hit brick-walls during the research process.

(After this article went to press the author persisted in her research and eventually did locate the elusive WWI draft card registration for her grandfather.)

WHAT GENEALOGY TAUGHT ME

It's no secret that genealogy is one of the hottest pastimes or hobbies right now. The subject is now written about in mainstream publications and referenced in commercials. For me, genealogy provided an opportunity to find out more about the grandfather I never knew.

By reviewing my grandfather's personal documents, gathering family stories and some online sleuthing, I was able to uncover the details I needed to paint a picture in my mind of what he was like. Still, I would give anything for an opportunity to have lunch with him. I'd ask him questions about his parents, his childhood, his journey to America and other experiences.

I can imagine what it would be like to have that meal with him. Then, we would go out onto the porch and he would sit in his favorite chair and with that gentle, welcoming look in his blue eyes, he'd say to me, "Lisa, come sit and talk with me." I would gladly oblige.

DFH

Lisa A. Alzo, M.F.A. is a freelance writer, instructor, and lecturer. Lisa is the author of six books and numerous magazine articles, and teaches for Genclass.com www.genclass.com. Lisa can be reached at www.lisaalzo.com, but regrets that she is unable to assist with personal research.

Computing Basics

IN TODAY'S WORLD, one of the key tools for genealogical researchers is the personal computer. In the not so distant past, researchers relied on notebooks with lined paper, photocopies of census records and manila folders to store their data. Today, computers enable us not only to store our information, but locate it, organize it and present it as well.

Regardless of whether your computer is a desktop or laptop, whether it runs Microsoft Windows or Mac OS X, your computer is a powerful weapon in your research arsenal. Here are a few things to keep in mind as you use a computer to assist you in finding and recording your past.

Software

The key piece of software every researcher should have is a genealogical database. Genealogical databases allow you to enter information about your relatives in an organized manner that can be easily retrieved when you need it. Some products offer the bare essentials, allowing you to enter names, dates and notes, while others allow you to print detailed charts, or include photos,

Bill Puller takes a grass-roots approach to getting your computer in tip-top genealogical shape!

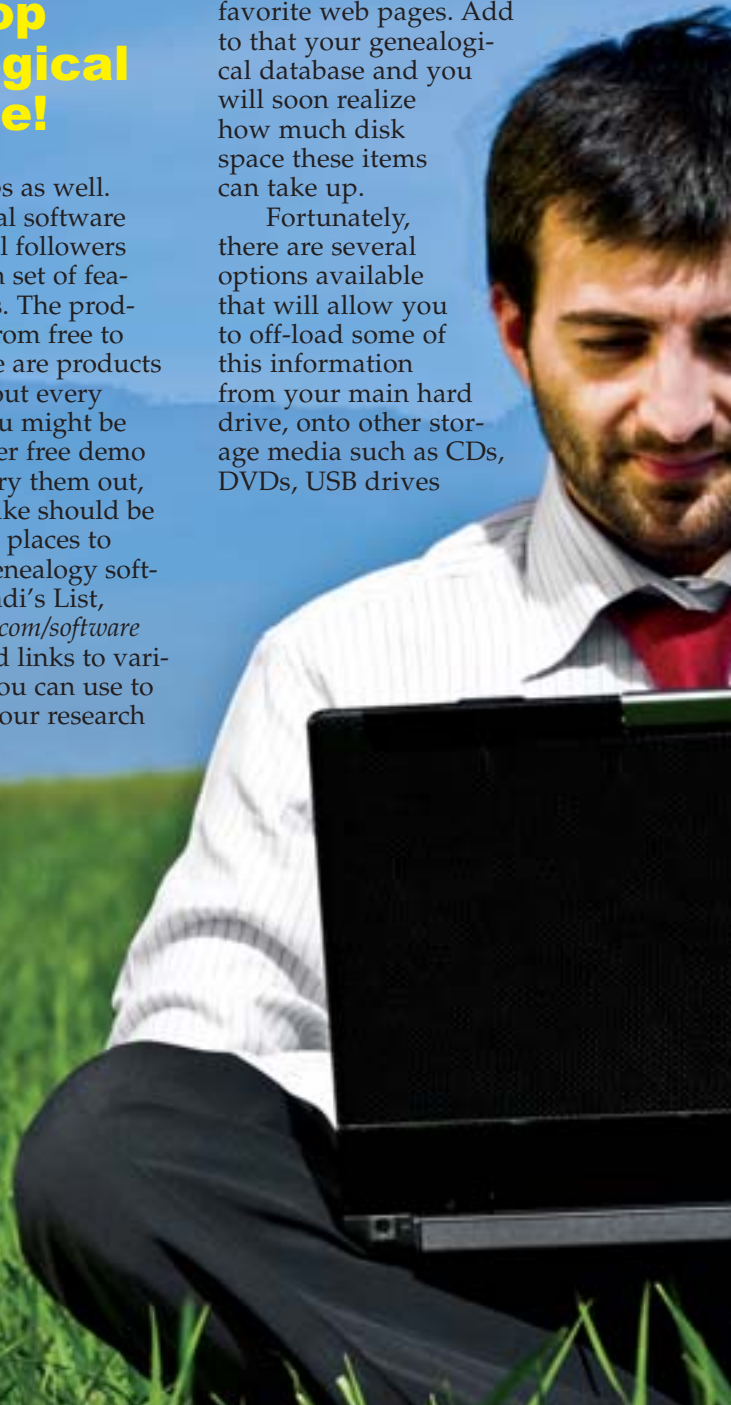
video and audio clips as well.

Each genealogical software program has its loyal followers and each has its own set of features and limitations. The products range in price from free to around \$50 us. There are products available for just about every operating system you might be using, and many offer free demo versions for you to try them out, so finding one you like should be easy. One of the best places to start looking for a genealogy software package is Cyndi's List, <http://www.cyndislist.com/software.htm>. Here you'll find links to various programs that you can use to store and organize your research data.

Data Storage

As you begin your research, you will quickly realize how much genealogical information is available, and even more surprised at how quickly you will develop the tendency to download census images, scan photos and documents and bookmark your favorite web pages. Add to that your genealogical database and you will soon realize how much disk space these items can take up.

Fortunately, there are several options available that will allow you to off-load some of this information from your main hard drive, onto other storage media such as CDs, DVDs, USB drives



and even portable hard drives.

If you purchased your computer within the past two years it probably came with a CD drive that allows you to create (or burn) your own CDs. A standard CD can hold approximately 700 megabytes (MB) of data; that's the equivalent of more than 485 floppy disks!

Similarly, a drive that can burn DVDs can create CDs that hold anywhere from four gigabytes (GB) to as much as eight GB depending on the type of drive. The CD/DVD media themselves are inexpensive and are a great way to store scanned photos or documents.

Another alternative for your storage needs are USB drives. USB stands for Universal Serial Bus, and most computers have at least one USB port on them. USB drives are smaller than a cigarette lighter in size and can hold anywhere from 64MB to eight GB of data. These drives are inexpensive, price varies on storage size, and many come with pre-loaded software to help protect your data. USB drives are a nice place to store your notes and correspondence, or even a backup of your genealogical database.

One other option you might want to consider is an external hard drive. These drives are more expensive than CD or USB drives, but they also hold a lot more data. These drives are portable, usually connect via a USB cable, and can hold anywhere from 150 GB to 1 terabyte of data (1TB is equal to 1,064 GB). These drives are a great place to backup or store all your genealogical data.

Correspondence

While there is an abundance of genealogical data available on the Internet, much of it still exists in microfiche, paper or book form and is sitting in boxes or on shelves, waiting to be discovered.

You will often find yourself sending away for copies of birth/marriage/death certificates, Social Security card applications, passport applications, naturalization



records or other documents. More often than not these materials will probably not be where you live, and subsequently, you may have to contact the repository in writing for assistance. While many repositories have an e-mail address you can send inquiries to, some may not, so you will have to rely on good, old fashioned snail mail to send in your requests.

One way you can streamline this process with your computer is to create or download templates for letters you will send out frequently. Creating a template is easy; simply type the letter as you normally would, only leave the names and dates out; then save it.

The next time you need to send a request, open the file, fill in the appropriate information and print. You can save the file using a different file name and your template will remain intact for later use.

You will also want to setup a correspondence log to keep track of the requests you have sent and received. This log can be in the form of a word processing document or a spreadsheet, and there are numerous free examples available on the Internet that you can download and print. A great

utility for creating and tracking your correspondence is Google Docs, <http://docs.google.com>. Google Docs allows you to create and store word processing documents and spreadsheets online; this is a very handy way to access these types of documents when you are working away from home.

For your electronic correspondence needs, you might want to consider setting up a Web-based e-mail account specifically for your genealogical research. By setting up a designated e-mail account, all your requests and responses are in one place, and not dispersed among all your other non-genealogy related e-mails. These accounts are free, easy to set-up and can be accessed anywhere you can connect to the Internet.

Scanners

Although you may not think you need one at first, a scanner will soon become one of those "must have" items in your research toolkit. Scanners are very useful for not only scanning photographs, but to scan vital documents like birth/marriage/death certificates, small drawings and artwork, old love letters or any other document that you want to store digitally in your database.

Scanners are getting more



affordable, smaller in size and easier to use. Scanners like the Canon CanoScan LiDE70 weigh less than four pounds, making them useful to take to family gatherings to scan keepsakes your relatives may be holding onto.

Internet

As a computer owner you proba-

bly surf the Internet on a daily basis; as a genealogist, you will spend even more time seeking out your relatives in the long lost corners of the World Wide Web. Indeed, the Internet is a tremendous aid to family historians, but remember that not all information about your relatives is online, and not all of the information you find is accurate.

There are numerous genealogy related websites that you can search for information; some are free and some require a subscription. One great online starting point is Cyndi's List, <http://www.cyndislist.com>. Cyndi's List is a comprehensive website with links to numerous free and subscription websites that will aid you in your research.

If you have logged onto the Internet the chances are pretty good that you have searched the Internet using Google, <http://www.google.com>, at least once. As you begin your online research, you will soon learn that Google is both a blessing and a curse.

Google does a fantastic job of indexing the Internet. However, if you are not specific enough in your queries, you will have to sort through many unrelated sites to get to the nugget of information you are seeking. Spend some time learning how to use Google in conjunction with your research, and don't assume that Google is the only search engine available.

Additionally, don't discount paper-based publications that might be able to assist you in your online research. Publications, such as *Internet Genealogy* and *Family Chronicle*, always contain a wealth of information and reviews of various genealogy related websites and databases that are available for you to search.

Organization and Protection

As you conduct your research online, you are bound to come across information that you want

to refer to later. This information may be in the form of census document images, photos, maps or your research notes. One way you can keep all this information organized is to create folders or directories on your computer that correspond to the person you are researching.



Make sure you back up your database to a diskette, USB drive, CD or secondary drive.

For example, create a top-level folder for your family surname, then create subfolders for each person in that family. As you find information you want to save, save it in that person's folder. If the information relates to more than one person, you can save a copy in each person's folder or place a note in one folder referring back to the other.

You will also want to create a research log to keep track of the information you have found, information you need and websites you have searched. This log can take the form of a word processing document or a paper-

based notebook; either way, save yourself headaches down the road and get in the habit of keeping a record of all your research activities.

Finally, get in the habit of backing up your data. Most of the genealogy database software applications have built-in back-up utilities, use them. Make sure you back the database up to a diskette, USB drive, CD or secondary hard drive. Not to your primary hard drive! If you encounter a (primary) hard drive failure, you have a copy of your database to restore from. The same goes for the rest of your genealogy data; use the back-up utilities included with your operating system and conduct back-ups on a regular basis.

Suffering a hard drive failure is bad enough, don't compound the issue by not having a back-up of your research.

Conducting genealogical research using your computer will enhance your ability to locate information, record your findings and even share and display the results of your effort. Take advantage of the many resources that are available to you as a researcher, and you will soon see why genealogical research is one of the top uses of computers and the Internet. Happy hunting!

Bill Puller is a freelance writer and amateur genealogist and technology geek. He can be reached at bill.puller@gmail.com.

10 First Steps

SO YOU'VE DECIDED to research your roots. Perhaps you were moved by a parent's or other relative's passing. Maybe the big box of old photographs and papers uncovered in Aunt Betty's attic somehow ended up at your house. Perhaps you're just curious about this hobby called "genealogy" that everyone's been talking about.

Whatever the reason, you're now ready to plunge into the uncharted waters of your family history. Not sure where or how to begin? Do you feel intimidated by the research process? This article offers 10 first steps to help you get started.

1 IDENTIFY WHAT YOU KNOW. The first step in genealogy is to identify what you already know. Start with yourself and work backwards in time by filling in as much information as you can recall on a pedigree chart — a chart that shows the ancestors from whom you directly descend. This document is sometimes also

Lisa A. Alzo describes the first steps you should take when starting to research your genealogy.

referred to as an ancestral chart.

You can find free, downloadable/printable charts online. One source is Elaine Johnson's Free HTML Pedigree Charts and Family Group Sheets, at www.ida.net/users/elaine/pedigre2.HTM. You can also find them at ProQuest, at http://il.proquest.com/products_hq/gen101/pedigree.pdf; Ancestry.com, www.ancestry.com/charts/ancchart.aspx, or The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS) website, at www.familysearch.org. At the LDS website, click on the Library tab, then click the Family History Library Catalog tab and

"Use Research Guidance to Find Catalog Records", then click on "Research Helps". After clicking on "Research Helps" you need to click on "Sorted by Document Type", then "Form" then "Pedigree Chart Form".

When completing the chart by hand, use ID numbers to identify the names. The first person on the first chart should be assigned the number "1". The man always appears in the upper position. A man's ID number is always double the ID number of his child. All males have an even number, while all females have an odd number. A wife's number is always one higher than that of her husband.

You can also purchase a computer software program to automatically generate the pages for you. (See step #5.)

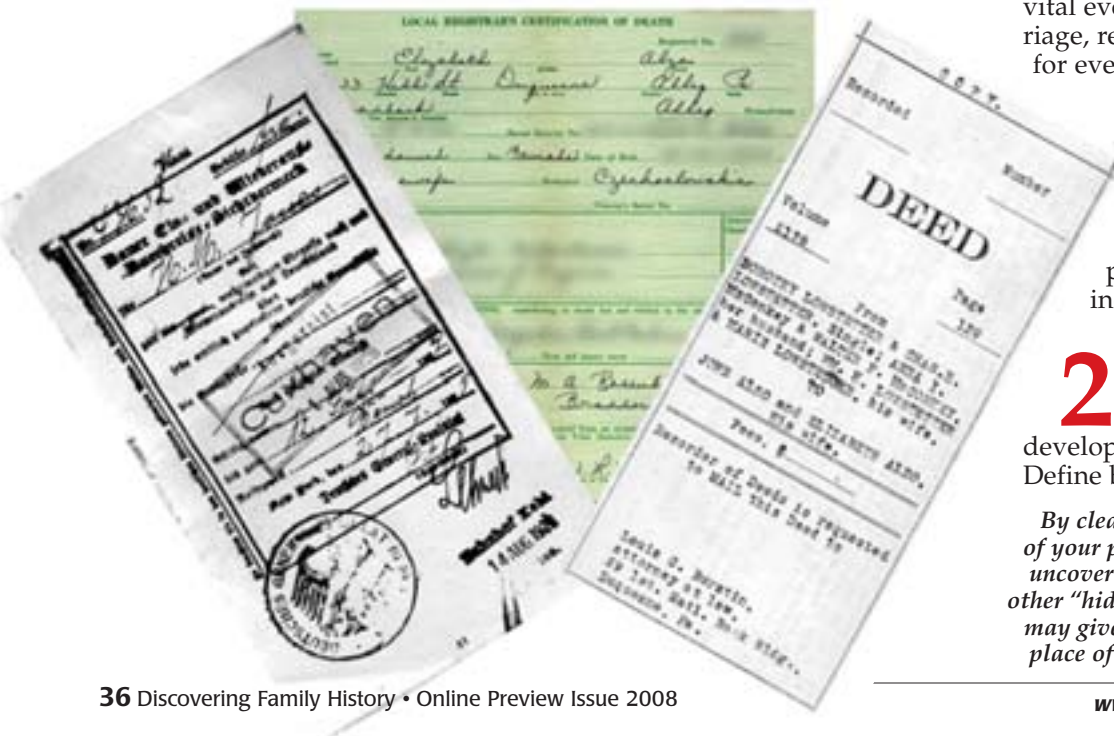
Whether you handwrite the data on a pre-printed form or use software, you will need some basic information to complete your chart, such as the full name (including women's maiden names); approximate dates for vital events (birth, death, marriage, residences, etc.); locations for events.

See additional steps in this article for obtaining the above information.

When you've finished an initial draft of your chart, you'll have a good picture of your family tree, including who's missing.

2 OUTLINE YOUR RESEARCH GOALS. One of the first tasks you should do is to develop a research strategy. Define both short-term and long-

By cleaning out your closets or those of your parents or relatives, you might uncover certificates, property deeds or other "hidden genealogical gems" which may give you a clue to your ancestor's place of residence or ancestral village.



term research goals. For example, your overall goal may be to find and locate the ancestral village of your grandfather. The long-term goal might be to determine when your grandfather left his ancestral homeland and arrived in the US. A short-term goal might be to locate him in a US federal census, which may show or help you determine his year of immigration. Be sure to set realistic, attainable goals, taking into consideration accessibility and availability of documentation.

For example, consider the following: Do records exist in the location where your ancestors lived? For what time period? Are the records available as originals, or on microfilm or microfiche? Is there an index available in an online database or on a compact disc, or in published books and periodicals? What happens if the records are not in English? What translation resources or tools are available? Also, identify any missing pieces or obvious holes (e.g. a missing maiden name, adoption, etc.). However, resist the temptation to start from a family legend or tradition. Try to build your research upon known facts.

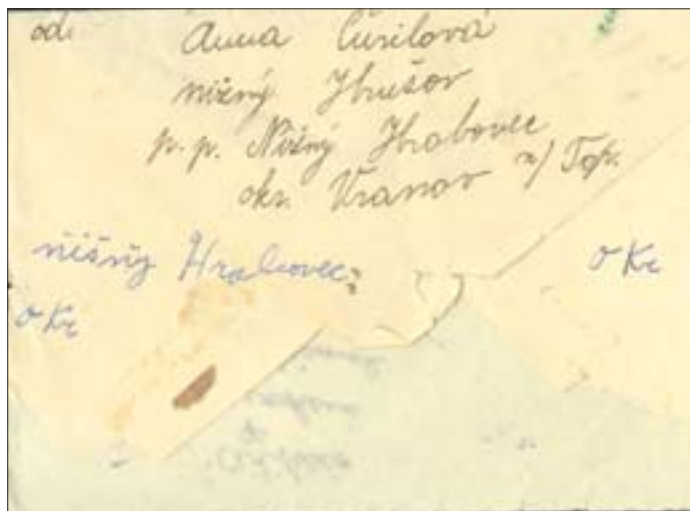
Another useful tip: Use a “5Ws” approach — who, what, when, where and why. For example, if I want to research my paternal grandfather, I would jot down the following:

- *Who* — John Alzo
- *What* — Track John Alzo through the census; search for his immigration record and vital records
- *When* — John Alzo was born in 1894 and died in 1961
- *Where* — Duquesne, Allegheny County, Pennsylvania, United States; or Kucsin, Zemplen County, Slovakia (Hungary)
- *Why* — Find out when and why John Alzo left his ancestral homeland for the US. What led him to settle in Duquesne?

A research log/planner can

help you stay on track. Use it to record who, what, when, where and why. Research planners are also important for recording what you don't find. Keep a written record of all the sources you have consulted, noting both positive and negative results. You can also note specifics to be searched in the future.

Many genealogy software programs come with built-in research logs/planners. You can also find a link to a free research log at www.genealogysearch.org/free/forms.html.



Check family correspondence too. This envelope indicates the hometown of several of the author's ancestors.

3 CLEAN OUT THE CLOSETS AND DRAWERS. The first place to begin your search is right at home. Scour your attic, basement, closets, boxes and desk drawers for documents, letters and photographs. By collecting certificates, deeds, passports, funeral/memorial cards and other items your parents or grandparents may have hidden away for safekeeping, you could uncover basic information which can lead you to your next source, and help identify the appropriate archives or repositories

Once you've looked through your own house, move on to the homes of your parents and grandparents. If they are still alive, move next to step #4.

4 TALK TO YOUR RELATIVES. Broadcast that you are researching the family's history to all your aunts, uncles and cousins. Use oral history to uncover family lore, and even if the stories contain errors, you may still spot vital clues for your research. Ask relatives if they have any photographs or documents, and be sure to ask where events happened. Record family stories in a notebook, and if possible, try to audiotape or videotape the interview. (Remember to get permission first!)

There are two methods of questioning typically used to elicit different responses from the person being interviewed. Closed questions are those questions that are relatively easy to answer without much thought on the part of the interviewee. But open-ended questions call for a lengthy and more thoughtful response. For example, don't ask Aunt Mary, "Where were you born?". Instead, ask her, "What do you remember about the town where you were born?". Instead of asking Uncle John, "What

branch of the military did you serve in?", ask instead "Can you describe your experience on the fuel tanker ship you served on in WWII?". Also, always remember to ask where events occurred, so you get a better sense of place.

If you don't have any living relatives to interview, try locating others with the same surname in phone books or city directories (which you can find in most libraries) or check online telephone directories, such as www.anywho.com or www.switchboard.com. Once you have a list of names, you can create a letter to send to those individuals with the same surname. Provide information about your ancestors and ask if they know of a common connection.

As you gather family details, complete a family group sheet to

organize your ancestors according to marriages. (See the websites noted in step #1 for where to download free blank forms.) Don't forget to research collateral lines (brothers, sisters or other family members) to help with locating your direct line.

5 DOCUMENT YOUR FINDINGS AND SOURCES. It is essential to use proper source citations to document where you've found information. Most genealogical software programs have fields for this task or at the very least a notes section. There are many such programs available. Before buying, read reviews, such as those found at <http://genealogy.about.com/cs/genealogysoftware/a/software.htm>, and, where available, download a free trial version from the manufacturer before making a purchase.

If you are not using a software program, then keep your own thorough records. Be sure to document all sources, including those you find on the Internet (see step #6). For guidance, see Elizabeth Shown Mills' books, *Evidence! Citation & Analysis for the Family Historian* and *Evidence Explained: Citing History Sources from Artifacts to Cyberspace*.

6 GO ONLINE. While the Internet has certainly revolutionized genealogy, and it is tempting to start your research online, you will have a greater chance of success if you follow the previous steps before typing your surname into an online database or search engine. The Internet is home to millions of sites related to family history and genealogy. A number of key genealogical records have been digitized, including censuses, immigration, naturalization and military, among others, and can be found on both free and pay-for-access sites. In addition, historical newspapers, indexes and other infor-

mation can be viewed online, eliminating the need to travel to far-away repositories and saving valuable research time.

Given the large number of genealogy-related websites, there is a tendency to rely too heavily on online sources and to give up if information is not located online right away. Therefore, if for no other reason, completing the earlier steps listed here before you turn on your computer can provide you with a plan for your Internet research.



Search for the Family History Center nearest you by clicking on the "Family History Centers" tab on the Family History Library website, at www.familysearch.org, by simply typing in your location in the search boxes.

For example, by talking to relatives or finding family documents you may uncover several alternate spellings for surnames, variations of first names or nicknames to plug into the search boxes if your ancestors do not turn up on the first try. Use the Internet to help streamline your research. The magazine *Internet Genealogy* offers how-to articles by experts in the field, including reviews of the top subscription-based sites, new free sites and search techniques and case studies from experienced researchers explaining how they tackled investigating a hard-to-find ances-

tor. Download a free sample issue at www.internet-genealogy.com.

7 VISIT A FAMILY HISTORY CENTER. The LDS Family History Library has a vast system of more than 4,000 branch libraries, known as Family History Centers (FHCs), located throughout the world to help people search for the records of their ancestors. These records include vital, census, land, probate, immigration and church records, as well as many other records of

genealogical value available in various formats, including online data collections, microfilm, microfiche, and books. The FHCs enable patrons to access certain records without the need to travel to the main library located in Salt Lake City. To find out what records are available, you will need to search the Family History Library Catalog, at www.familysearch.org, then follow up at your local FHC to read through exact copies of old original records. There is no charge for use of the FHCs, but you will have to pay a small fee to rent microfilm. Volunteers may be on hand to lend assistance. To locate your nearest FHC, simply go to www.familysearch.org and click on the "Library" tab at the top of the page. Then click on the "Family History Centers" tab and

use the search box provided to find a FHC near you. Hours of operation will vary by location. It is best to call ahead before any visit.

8 IDENTIFY LOCAL RESOURCES. Contrary to popular belief, you will not find all information about your family on the Internet. Once you've identified where a particular ancestor resided — state/ province, county, town — there are a number of documents pertaining to that locality to search, such as newspapers, state censuses, state military records, county histories, special

genealogy collections, birth, death or marriage records, tax lists, voter registrations, coroner's records, probate records (wills, estate papers, etc.), vital records, just to name a few. You'll find these records in any number of places (each state is different), such as state archives, county courthouse or department of health, cemeteries, funeral homes, land offices, libraries, museums and genealogical societies. Websites, such as Cyndi's List, www.cyndislist.com, Linkpendium, www.linkpendium.com and USGenWeb, www.usgenweb.com, allow you to browse for information by locality. You can also visit your local library and ask to see the *Directory of Libraries* (published by R.R. Bowker). This directory lists addresses of local libraries throughout the US.

9 CREATE A TIMELINE. You will want to think beyond a search for just vital records and study other sources, such as photographic collections, oral and social history, folklore, etc. Then,

create a timeline for your ancestor(s) either using your genealogical software or a specialty program, such as Genelines, www.progenygenealogy.com/gene-lines-universal-details.html. This helps to place your family in the appropriate historical context.

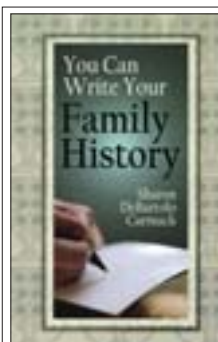
10 SEEK OUT ADDITIONAL LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES. If you're just starting out, it often helps to interact with others who share your interest and may have some experience under their belt and can offer you advice and tips. Join a generic and/or ethnic-specific genealogical society — find those that best suit your needs by perusing Cyndi's List, at www.cyndislist.com/society.htm. Many groups have regular meetings and some hold national conferences which enable you to network with researchers from all over. You can also sign up for genealogy classes at your local library or adult education program of a nearby college or university, or work on one from the

comfort of your home through such organizations as the National Genealogical Society at www.ngs-genealogy.org, GenClass, at www.genclass.com, or the National Institute for Genealogical Studies at www.genealogicalstudies.com.

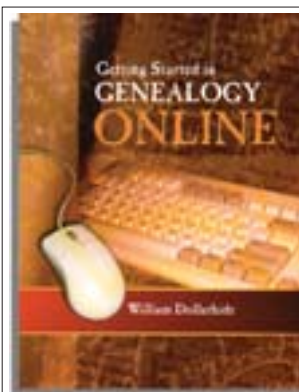
As with any new activity or venture, there is that inevitable learning curve, and it's no different with genealogy. But if you follow these 10 first steps, you'll soon be on your way to charting the course of your family tree!

DFH

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Your ancestors are composed of more than vital records and family group sheets. Their stories are what will make them real to your present-day (and future) relatives, the ones who don't care about city directories or census records. You don't have to be a writer to chronicle your ancestors' lives. *In You Can Write Your Family History*, popular author and speaker Sharon DeBartolo Carmack explains exactly what it takes to create a compelling, highly readable, and entirely true story, whether you decide to write a biography, family history narrative, or memoir. There's no better tribute to those who came before you than to share their stories with those who will come after. \$23.95 ppd. from Genealogical Publishing, 3600 Clipper Mill Road, Suite 260, Baltimore, Maryland 21211. Telephone: 1-800-296-6687, web: www.genealogical.com.



William Dollarhide's *Getting Started in Genealogy ONLINE* is so basic that it brings the world of Internet genealogy into instant focus. If you ever wanted to trace your family tree online, this book will help you do it. The object of the book is to reduce the process of genealogical research to its most basic elements, enabling the raw beginner to be brought up to speed in no more time than it takes him to read a handful of pages. At the same time, it is a handy resource for the more experienced genealogist, providing in one convenient place the names and web addresses of all essential record repositories. 64 pp. Soft cover, \$16.95 ppd. from Genealogical Publishing, 3600 Clipper Mill Road, Suite 260, Baltimore, Maryland 21211. Telephone: 1-800-296-6687, web: www.genealogical.com.

OKLAHOMA BASED RESEARCHER. Will research at the Oklahoma Historical Society Library with access to over 4,000 Newspaper titles and 30,000 reels of microfilm for the 77 counties some prior to statehood. I can also visit area county court houses, libraries and societies. See my rates at: <http://www.frederick.dittmar.org/ddg.html>.

RESEARCHER IN EAST TENNESSEE, Family History Research, US Southern States, all East Tennessee repositories, internet; web site development. 25+ years experience. Member APG. Contact Jimmy Rosamond, email: jdrosamond@comcast.net, (865) 938-9871 / (865) 387-6588 (cell), Web site: <http://rosamondresearch.iwarp.com>.

It's All About Parents

EVERYONE HAS TWO biological parents. From a genetic point of view, it is the combination of your parents' genes that makes you unique. And, since each of your parents also had two parents, you can think of yourself as the result of the combination of your four grandparents. Extended further in time, you are the end product of eight great-grandparents, 16 great-great-grandparents and so on.

In most cases, this pattern is not just a biological reality, but a social one as well. Most of our ancestors were raised by a father and a mother. However, sometimes circumstances intervene, and some of our ancestors were missing one or both parents, or had more than one social father or mother during their lives. So, from a social point of view, we are also the product of the people who raised us and who raised our parents, and our grandparents, etc.

Thus, genealogy is all about parents, whether defined biologically or socially. The crucial question is always, who were my ancestor's parents?

FINDING EVIDENCE OF PARENTAGE

Fortunately, the legal, religious, and social institutions that governed our ancestors' lives also considered their parentage important. In the past, who a person's parents were was even more important than it is now. So, you will find information about your forebears' parentage in a wide variety of written records, including wills and testaments, church registers, civil registers, censuses, military records and newspaper announcements (to name just the most commonly used genealogical records).

Your job, as a genealogist, is to search for evidence that will help

Janice Nickerson gives suggestions on how to answer the eternal question of who were your ancestor's parents

you correctly identify your ancestors' parents. First, look for documents created by or about your known ancestor. This would include his birth and baptism records, civil and church marriage records, civil death registration, gravestone, newspaper obituary, biography in a local history book,



etc. Do any of these records mention or hint at his parents' names?

Once you have a possible candidate for your ancestor's parent, you can then start researching that person, to see if you can find evidence from his/her point of view. Perhaps none of your known ancestor's documents ever mention his parents, but his parents

left wills or had newspaper obituaries that named your ancestor.

BEING CAREFUL

It's important to carefully consider the information you find in each document, comparing it with information you have found in other documents, to reach a sound conclusion about each child-parent link in your ancestral chain.

Be careful not to jump to conclusions based on similar names and locations. You may know that John Smith's father's name was Robert Smith, and that an older Robert Smith lived nearby, but you need more than this to determine that you've found the right Robert Smith!

In fact, you might even have a document that clearly states that this Robert Smith is the father of your John Smith and still not have enough evidence. Why? Because both our ancestors and the people who created the documents about them were fallible.

You want to be sure that you have the right parents for each of your ancestors, each step of the way. Because if you get even one wrong, the mistake will multiply with each generation as you go back in time. Imagine if you misidentified your grandmother's father. Then not only would one of your eight great-grandparents be wrong, but two of your 16 great-great-grandparents and so on!

So the wisest approach is to start with yourself and your own parents, and work your way back, generation by generation, slowly and carefully. For each generation, you need to do a thorough search for all possible evidence pertaining to your ancestor, his parents, and even siblings, so that when you put it all together, you will

hopefully end up with a consistent pattern that all points to the same conclusion.

WEIGHING THE EVIDENCE

What do you do if the evidence conflicts? You carefully sift through the evidence, considering the reliability of each piece of information, based on what you know about who provided the information (were they in the best position to know?), who recorded the information (could language differences have interfered with their ability to hear the name right?) and the history of the document itself (is this the original, or a second- or third-hand copy?).

For example, say you have three documents that each give a different father's name for your ancestor: his church baptism record, his civil marriage record and a newspaper notice of his death. Ask yourself, who provided the information in each case? If the parents were present at the baptism, they were almost certainly the source of the information. The information on the marriage record was probably supplied by your ancestor himself. The newspaper notice was probably written by your ancestor's widow or child. Clearly, the most knowledgeable people in this case is your ancestor's parents. So the baptism record is the most likely to be accurate. There are many reasons why your ancestor might not have known his own father's name. And your ancestors' widow or child is even less likely to have had accurate information about his parents.

However, you also need to consider the person who recorded the information. Is there any reason to doubt the priest/minister's accuracy or truthfulness? Can you determine whether the parents were long-term members of the church or new arrivals? If they were new, the clergyman might have made a mistake. Did the parents and the clergyman speak the same language? If not, there's room for doubt about their ability to communicate effectively.

Also, what about the document itself? Did you see the origi-

nal? If not, how many times was the record copied or transcribed? By whom? The original record that was handwritten at the time of the event is more likely to be accurate than a published transcript because someone had to copy the information and could have introduced errors. If you're using a copy or transcript, what do you know about the person who created it? Do they have a lot of experience reading old documents?

When you've come to a well reasoned conclusion, you should write it out, explaining exactly why you decided what you did. That way, you won't have to go through the process over again when, at some time in the distant future, you forget how you came to your conclusion (or your cousin challenges your interpretation).

USING INDIRECT EVIDENCE

What should you do if you can't find any document that directly states your ancestor's parents' names? You start looking for indirect evidence. This could be as simple as identifying your ancestor's brothers and sisters, and then finding their parents' names. Or it could be as complex as studying all the neighbors and associates of your ancestor (Who were the witnesses at his marriage? On his will? At his children's baptisms), to find a pattern that points to a likely candidate, and then searching for any evidence that might contradict it.

Again, when you've come to a conclusion based on indirect evidence, be sure to write it out step by step, so you can follow your train of thought again later!

FINDING MOTHERS

So far, I've been using the male pronoun when I speak of your ancestors, but, of course, half of your ancestors were female. It can often be more difficult to identify a female ancestor than a male one. This is because of the male-oriented nature of our society in the past. In most cases, heads of households were male, property owners were male, a person inherited from his/her father, and a woman took her husband's name

upon marriage (sometimes being known only as Mrs. John Smith). But this does not mean that female ancestors are impossible to identify, only that certain information about them is a little more elusive, and requires more persistence to locate.

In many cases, you will find that you need to use indirect evidence to identify your ancestors' mothers. A woman's family often played a powerful role in her husband's and children's lives. So you may find that your ancestor inherited property from his maternal grandfather, or his maternal uncles acted as witnesses on his legal documents. You may find an elderly mother-in-law living in the household of your ancestor, or a young maternal niece or nephew. This is why you need to pay attention to all your ancestor's "associates". If you ignore the lodgers, witnesses and neighbors, you will miss many clues that could lead to identification of your female ancestors.

MULTIPLYING ANCESTORS

One final note about the doubling ancestors effect discussed above. While it's true that everyone has two parents, and each of those parents had two parents, it's not true that your total number of ancestors continues to double every generation. This is because as you go back in time you will find some instances where cousins married cousins (of some degree or other). When this happens, it decreases the number of distinct ancestors you have in the next generation. Imagine if you married your first-cousin. You have four grandparents. Your spouse has four grandparents. But your children would only have six great-grandparents, not eight, because two of them are shared between you and your spouse.



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Genealogical Societies

GENEALOGY SOCIETIES have been around for a long time. In our grandparents' day, belonging to such a society meant attending chaired meetings or lectures, or having access to a collection of records at the society's library. Today, you can find all of those things at a genealogical society, plus much more!

Although the old adage says "the more things change, the more they stay the same", this isn't necessarily true about genealogical societies. Many of today's societies are evolving and changing with the times. Today's societies may still hold monthly meetings with lectures, but they are also more likely to offer online resources including blogs, podcasts, mailing lists and message boards. But one thing remains constant — genealogical societies continue to be one of the best resources available to genealogists.

WHAT IS A GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY?

A genealogical society is an organization of genealogists or family historians that can include beginners, experienced researchers and even professionals. Together, the group works to share, collect or publish information, educate others and preserve local history. There are several characteristics that nearly all genealogical societies share: a common interest, membership, meetings, publications and records.

COMMON INTEREST

Genealogical society members share a common interest besides a hobby involving genealogy. The shared interest can have a broad range or it can be very specific. For example, most genealogical soci-

Donna J. Pointkouski explains what genealogical societies have to offer family historians.

eties focus on a particular area or locality. The locality can vary from a country to a more narrow focus of a particular territory, state, county, city or town. For example, for anyone interested in US genealogy, the National Genealogical Society's focus is the entire US. If your ancestors came from Pennsylvania, the Genealogical Society of Pennsylvania can help you learn about the state's history



or genealogical resources. Focus in even more on the ancestor's locality with a county genealogical society, such as the Western Pennsylvania Genealogical Society or the Beaver County Genealogical Society. Some cities and towns even have their own genealogical societies. If not, the local historical society often explores genealogical topics.

The important thing to remember is that all members of a society share an interest. Therefore, when you join a society, you quickly find out that you are not alone. There are other genealogists that are researching ancestors from the same area, which means you have an opportunity to share ideas or research tips. In fact, you may even find members that are researching the same families as you are.

The common interest doesn't necessarily have to be specific to a locality, however. Many genealogical societies focus on a particular ethnic group. For example, there are several Hispanic Genealogy Societies throughout the US, including ones in Colorado, New York and Texas, as well as area-specific groups, such as the Cuban Genealogical Society. Similarly, there is a Polish Genealogical

Society of America, but there are other Polish genealogy societies specific to Michigan, Connecticut, Texas and other states. For researchers with Jewish roots, there is a Jewish genealogical society in nearly every state in the US and many large cities. There are also several international Jewish genealogical societies.

Genealogical societies even exist for people whose ancestors shared a common military unit or war.

These groups focus on genealogical research related to the military event that their ancestors shared. One of the more famous of these organizations is the Daughters of the American Revolution, whose membership is only open to women who can prove descent from a Revolutionary War soldier. Societies of this type are useful for finding out more information about

an ancestor's military service.

Societies such as these groups are sometimes called lineage societies. Other lineage societies exist if you are tracing ancestors that are united to others by an event, time period or location. The Jamestown Society is for descendants of the first English settlement in Virginia. Another example is the Mayflower Society, which brings together descendants of the famous ship's passengers to both honor and research their ancestors.

Other genealogical societies with a limited focus are groups dedicated to one particular surname. The Goddard Historical and Genealogical Society has much in common with all the other genealogical societies mentioned in this article with one exception — they only research the Goddard surname and its variations. While these surname genealogical societies are not as common as locality genealogical societies, if you have a common surname there just might be a society that researches it. If so, these societies can be a great resource.

A subset within some genealogical societies are sometimes called SIGs, or special interest groups. The special interest of most society's SIGs are computers and how technology assists genealogy, and many genealogical societies have a computer-related SIG. But some SIGs take an ethnic or locality interest and narrow the scope of its research. One example of this is the St. Louis Genealogical Society, which has separate SIGs for members with a particular interest in researching their African-American, French, German, Irish, Jewish or Scandinavian ancestors within the city.

Whatever your special area of genealogical interest may be, chances are you will find a society or SIG with the same interest. Genealogical societies are especially beneficial to those researching smaller countries or ethnic groups. For example, there are genealogical societies dedicated to Serbia, Slovenia and Estonia. Researchers with ancestors in those countries are unlikely to find as much information elsewhere.

MEMBERSHIP

A second characteristic of a genealogical society is that it involves membership. While membership isn't always required to enjoy some of the society's benefits, the society needs members to exist. In this electronic age, researchers have become accustomed to getting access to information for free, so many question why they should pay to join a society. One of the most important reasons is that most genealogical societies are non-profit organizations. The dues help to support the organization and fund various projects, which can include extracting data to form a database, collecting books and records for an on-site library, maintaining a society web page, organizing a seminar, workshop or conference.

Membership fees are not costly, usually ranging from as little as \$10 to \$60, with the average amount around \$25 for a one-year membership. For such a relatively small amount, membership has its privileges. First, it allows members to receive any of the society's printed publications which can include valuable information to assist in your research. Also, most genealogical societies have web pages or libraries that are available to both members and non-members alike. But there are "members only" sections that have added benefits such as access to particular records, databases or query boards. If the society has its own library, members can usually have free or discounted access to it or have on-site members consult reference books for you by mail. Members also receive discounts for special events such as genealogical conferences.

MEETINGS

Meetings are another feature of a genealogical society, whether the meetings are held face-to-face or online. Most societies conduct local meetings on a regular basis. At a monthly meeting, the society's board can discuss business relevant to the management of the society or its funds. Most societies have speakers present lectures on various genealogical topics of

interest, or they conduct hands-on workshops to show valuable skills to their members. This is especially valuable for beginners as most societies have "how to begin" workshops conducted by more experienced members.

Meetings also allow members to connect with one another, make new friends and discuss their research. If you are obsessed with genealogy (and who isn't once you begin to research), then genealogical societies allow you to share your passion with others who feel the same way.

But you don't need to live in the area to belong to a genealogical society. In fact, most societies have members from many states and provinces, as well as international members. With the Internet, meetings can sometimes be "virtual" by using techniques such as blogs, message boards or chat rooms. These features give members the opportunity to connect as much as meeting in person.

Another way that a society's members meet is through conferences. Many genealogical societies hold an annual conference, or they combine with other societies to hold one together. This can be especially useful for smaller societies. One example of this is the United Polish Genealogical Societies, which is an association of several Polish genealogical societies. In 2008, the individual genealogical societies are coming together for one conference in Salt Lake City. By combining their efforts and sharing the costs, they are able to assemble a high quality roster of speakers. By choosing Salt Lake City as the conference location, as many societies do, it allows members to utilize the Family History Library and consult with professionals.

Society conferences also provide members with an opportunity to take a research trip to an area that their ancestors once lived, or to an area that has archives or libraries of interest. Conferences also allow society members to meet others with their interests and share research ideas.

We can't list every existing genealogical society, but we'll leave you with a list that includes societies mentioned in this article, as well as a small sampling for various countries and ethnic groups.

AFRICAN AMERICAN

AFRICAN AMERICAN GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY
PO Box 201476
Cleveland, OH 44120
<http://www.aagsclev.org/>

AMERICAN-CANADIAN

AMERICAN-CANADIAN GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY
PO Box 6478
Manchester, NH 03108-6478
<http://www.acgs.org/>

CANADA

THE ONTARIO GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY
40 Orchard View Blvd., Suite 102
Toronto, ON M4R 1B9
<http://www.ogs.on.ca/>

CUBA

THE CUBAN GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY
PO Box 2650
Salt Lake City, UT 84110
<http://www.rootsweb.com/~utcubangs/>

CZECHOSLOVAKIA

CZECHOSLOVAK GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY INTERNATIONAL
(Society uses 1918 boundaries, not current Czech Republic)
P O Box 16225
St. Paul, MN 55116-0225
<http://www.cgsi.org/>

ESTONIA

ESTONIAN GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY
Pk 4419
10511 Tallinn
<http://www.genealogia.ee/English/english.html>

GERMANY

GERMANIC GENEALOGY SOCIETY
PO Box 16312
Saint Paul, MN 55116-0312
<http://www.rootsweb.com/~mnggs/GGS.html>

HISPANIC

HISPANIC GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY
PO Box 231271
Houston, TX 77223-1271
<http://www.hispanicgs.com/>

HISPANIC GENEALOGY CENTER
THE HISPANIC GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY OF NEW YORK
Old Chelsea Station
PO Box 474
New York, NY 10113
<http://www.hispanicgenealogy.com/>

IRELAND

GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY OF IRELAND
13 Desmond Avenue
Dún Laoghaire
Co. Dublin
<http://www.familyhistory.ie/>

IRISH GS INTERNATIONAL (IGSI)

1185 Concord St. N. Suite 218
South St. Paul, MN 55075
<http://www.irishgenealogical.org/>

ITALY

THE ITALIAN GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY OF AMERICA
PO Box 3572
Peabody, MA 01961-3572
<http://www.italianroots.org/>

LITHUANIA

LITHUANIAN GLOBAL GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY
222 Thunder Circle
Bensalem, PA 19020
<http://www.lithuaniangenealogy.org/>

POLAND

POLISH GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY OF AMERICA
984 N. Milwaukee Ave.
Chicago, IL 60622
<http://www.pgsa.org/>

SERBIA

SERBIAN GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY
(No address listed)
<http://www.rodoslovlje.com/>

SCOTLAND

THE SCOTTISH GENEALOGY SOCIETY
15 Victoria Terrace
Edinburgh EH1 2JL
<http://www.scotsgenealogy.com/>

SLOVENIA

SLOVENIAN GENEALOGY SOCIETY INTERNATIONAL
10829 Tibbetts Rd.
Kirtland, OH 44094
http://sloveniangenealogy.org/html/join_sgsi.html

UNITED STATES

NATIONAL GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY
3108 Columbia Pike, Suite 300
Arlington, VA 22204-4304
703-525-0050
<http://www.ngsgenealogy.org/>

US — STATES, COUNTIES OR CITIES

BEAVER COUNTY GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY
PO Box 640
Beaver Falls, PA 15010
<http://www.rootsweb.com/~pabecgs/>

INDIANA GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY

PO Box 10507
Fort Wayne, IN 46852-0507
<http://www.indgensoc.org/>

IOWA GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY

628 East Grand Avenue
Des Moines, IA 50309-1924
515-276-0287
<http://www.iowagenealogy.org>

THE GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY OF NEW JERSEY

PO Box 1476
Trenton, NJ 08607-1476
<http://www.rootsweb.com/~njgsnj/>

ST. LOUIS GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY

#4 Sunnen Drive, Suite 140
St. Louis, MO 63143
314-647-8547
<http://www.stlgs.org/>

THE GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY OF PENNSYLVANIA

1300 Locust Street, 2nd Floor
Philadelphia, PA 19107-5699
215 545-0391
<http://www.genpa.org/>

WESTERN PENNSYLVANIA

GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY
4400 Forbes Avenue
Pittsburgh, PA 15213-4080
412-687-6811
<http://www.wpgs.org/>

OTHER LINEAGE OR SURNAME SOCIETIES

THE GODDARD HISTORICAL AND GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY
172 Oldefield Farms
Enfield, CT 06082
<http://www.goddardfamilies.org/join.html>

JAMESTOWNE SOCIETY

Post Office Box 17426
Richmond, VA 23226
804-353-1226
<http://www.jamestowne.org/>

THE MAYFLOWER SOCIETY

PO Box 3297
Plymouth, MA 02361-3297
508-746-3188
<http://www.themayflowersociety.com/>

PUBLICATIONS

Nearly all genealogical societies have publications — even the smallest group will usually have a newsletter. Publications can be printed, electronic or both. Most societies offer members a printed newsletter as a benefit of paid membership. Articles can include research tips, information about records, personal stories, surname queries and specific information relative to the area or group that is the society's focus.

Because a society's focus is on one locality, the publication is often very detailed, which provides extremely helpful information.

In addition to newsletters, many societies also have a quarterly publication. The quarterlies have more pages, more photos and much more information. An example is the Germanic Genealogy Society's *Germanic Genealogy Journal*. At 30-plus pages, it contains detailed articles on topics such as immigrant stories, a research trip to Germany, using Google for genealogy and the early history of Germany.

Some societies offer publications for sale, often books compiled from extracting genealogical data from vital records. The American-Canadian Genealogical Society has published more than one hundred books of parish records, and they are available for purchase in either book format or on CD. Many societies do the same by taking their members' hard work and research and making it available to everyone.

Regardless of whether or not a society has any printed publications, today nearly all have an online newsletter. These online newsletters are usually open to both members and non-members and offer an easy way to keep up-to-date with not only the society's latest news, but also any genealogy-related news. Genealogical society web pages and blogs are other ways for the group to communicate and publish information.

RECORDS

One of the goals of genealogical societies is to preserve information

and make it available to others. This can include extracting data from records and making it available in either a book format, an online database or even a card catalog. Society members gain access to research or records that are only available because of the society's efforts.

Many societies have either their own library or archives with set hours, or a virtual lending library. If society members do not live in the area, other members will often perform remote searches for specific information.

Online databases are quickly becoming the standard format for data because of the ease in which others can access it. The genealogical data you find on societies' websites cannot be found anywhere else, including on some of the most well-known pay-for-service genealogy sites. The amount of information that genealogical societies provide is staggering, and the records are broad in scope. For example, the Lithuanian Global Genealogical Society has 75 databases with more than 45,000 records available. Many genealogical societies are in the process of putting their collections online in a database format, so the possibility of finding information online grows each day.

WHERE DO I SIGN?

So far you've learned that genealogical societies offer a common interest, membership, meetings, publications and records, and you've seen some examples of how each of these areas can be useful to both beginning and experienced genealogists. There's no better way to share your love of genealogy, exchange information, learn from others, get access to records, and keep up-to-date with the latest news. Are you ready to join a genealogical society?

The best way to find a genealogical society that will be useful to your own particular research is to do an Internet search. Just typing "genealogical society" into a typical search engine finds more than 1.5 million results! To get better results, add a keyword into the search, such as

"Jewish", "Chicago" or "Texas".

For lists of various genealogical societies, try the following sites: Society Hall at FamilyHistory.com, <http://www.familyhistory.com/societyhall/>, allows visitors to search for societies in a particular area or that specialize in a certain area of research. Searches can be performed by society name, keyword, city, state/province or zip code.

Don't confuse Society Hall with Society Hill, found at <http://www.daddezio.com/society/>. This site features listings of societies in the US, Canada and Australia.

The United States Internet Genealogical Society, at <http://www.usigs.org/>, has compiled a list of state genealogical societies, historical societies, libraries and archives.

The Federation of East European Family History Societies, <http://feefhs.org/>, maintains a national, religious and ethnic index of genealogical societies from 14 different countries.

The member list of the Federation of Family History Societies, <http://www.ffhs.org.uk>, can help you find genealogical societies in England, Wales, Ireland and Australia.

A number of Canadian Genealogical Societies are listed at <http://www.generations.on.ca/genealogical-canadian.htm>.

Cyndi's List, at <http://www.cyndislist.com/soc-gen.htm>, has a page with a general listing of various national, ethnic, religious and military societies, as well as other lineage societies.

Genealogy societies have a lot to offer — why not join one to get the most out of your family history.



Donna J. Pointkouski has been researching her Polish and Bavarian roots for nearly 20 years. She's been a member of the Polish Genealogical Society of America (PGSA) for just as long!

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Web 2.0

IN THE 17 YEARS since the World Wide Web was released to the world in 1991, it has mostly been used as a means of storing and retrieving information from web pages and databases created by a very small minority of Internet users.

Web 2.0 has recently emerged as a term to describe the increasing use of the web to showcase content generated by the many millions of web users themselves. Web 2.0 includes blogs, wikis and podcasts, as well as sites known generically as social networking sites. Genealogists have always been early adopters of any new technologies that might help them in their search for family and Web 2.0 is no exception.

Blogs, or web logs, are the most popular and widely used of the Web 2.0 tools. A blog is simply a website that is ordered chronologically, with the latest entry at the top. Links can be made to other websites and there is frequently the ability to post comments on what a blog has to say. The blog software takes care of all the web page building and the archiving of the information posted on the site.

If you want to learn about what is happening in the genealogy world and to keep abreast of the new online resources as they appear, reading some of the genealogy newsletter-type blogs is an excellent way to do it. Some of the best of these types of blogs include Eastman's Online Genealogy Newsletter, http://blog.eogn.com/eastmans_online_genealogy/, Ancestry's Family History Circle, <http://blogs.ancestry.com/circle/> and Anglo-Celtic Connections <http://anglo-celtic-connections.blogspot.com/>. There are more specialized blogs that let you know about developments in family tree database programs or additions to subscription databases. For example, Legacy News, http://legacynews.typepad.com/legacy_news/, is

Marian Press looks at how Web 2.0 can help you with your research.

very helpful if you use the Legacy family tree program and the Footnote Blog, <http://blog.footnote.com/>, allows you to keep abreast of new resources on this rapidly growing site of full-text documents. My personal favorite of these types of blog is The Genealogue <http://genealogue.com/>. The subtitle of The Genealogue sums up its wonderful quirkiness: "Genealogy News You Can't Possibly Use". The author collects zany genealogy stories and news reports from current and historical sources.

You can find blogs of interest by searching one of the blog search engines, such as Google Blog Search, <http://blogsearch.google.com/> or Technorati, <http://www.technorati.com/>. But the best method of

publish the result of one's own family history. A blog is much easier to build than a traditional web page and has the advantage of being in a journal-like format where you can post information as you come across it, rather than having to wait until a substantial amount of material has been accumulated. The ability for visitors to leave comments means that you may receive additions or corrections from related family members who find your blog.

There are free websites that provide simple software, allowing anyone to build a blog without needing to possess any technical skills. One of the most popular sites is Blogger, <http://www.blogger.com/>. Here, in a matter of minutes, following the step-by-step templates provided, you can have the beginnings of a family blog online. Some good examples of personal family history blogs are: The Ainscough Family History-Mawdesley Blog, <http://ainscough-familyhistory.blogspot.com/>; Breese Genealogy, <http://breesegenealogy.blogspot.com/>;

Web 2.0 includes blogs, wikis and podcasts, as well as social networking sites.

finding a genealogy blog is to visit the Genealogy Blog Finder, <http://blogfinder.genealogue.com/>, where 745 blogs in 28 categories are listed.

To read those that interest you, it is not necessary to visit every blog's website on a regular basis to see what is new. You can create an account on a blog reader and sign up for all the blogs you want to read. New postings will automatically be sent to your blog reader account. Two of the most popular of the readers are Bloglines, <http://www.bloglines.com/>, and Google Reader, <http://www.google.com/reader/>.

Blogs are also playing an increasing role as a means to easi-

and A Light That Shines Again, <http://www.tierneyhistory.blogspot.com/>, the history of the Tierney family of Tipperary, Ireland.

Wikis are another example of a Web 2.0 technology that is being used by genealogists. A wiki is a website that allows individuals connected to the Internet to collaboratively build content. As a result, the content may continue to change and is always a work in progress.

The best known of the wikis is Wikipedia, <http://en.wikipedia.org/>. Although it is designed to cover all areas of knowledge, there are many opportunities for family historians to both search Wikipedia for information on people and

places of interest and to update or add content on their ancestors or the places where they lived. With more than two million English-language articles, Wikipedia can be expected to have an entry on historical events that affected your family, the locations they came from, and perhaps some of the members of your family themselves. Remember, though, that as a collaboratively written encyclopedia, Wikipedia is the product of individuals, rather than “experts”, so information found there should be evaluated accordingly.

Dick Eastman has a wiki devoted entirely to information on the subject of genealogy. The Encyclopedia of Genealogy, <http://www.eogen.com/>,

“provides reference information about everything in genealogy except people”. As such, it is a useful place to visit if you have questions about any aspect of family history as you pursue your research.

The WeRelate Wiki, <http://www.werelate.org/>, is a wiki for genealogy sponsored by the Foundation for On-Line Genealogy, Inc. in partnership with the Allen County Public Library. This is a collaborative site that is trying to make use of the networking strengths of Web 2.0 to bring genealogists together. WeRelate contains research guides on a variety of topics, shared research pages for those working on the same surname in the same place, as well as information on place names and place histories, surnames and genealogical sources. As the site is

using wiki software, you can join and add in any way to the information provided. However, if you have a problem with others changing or editing your information, wiki building may not be for you.

Podcasting, a method of distributing audio files on the Internet, is being used by genealogists to broadcast their own radio shows on topics that interest

casts as a category. Currently there are about 20 available.

Alternatively, if you know of a podcast, you can usually visit the website and listen to it without the need for additional software. Some of the more interesting family history podcasts are The Genealogy Guys Podcast, with George Morgan and Drew Smith, <http://genealogyguys.com/>, Dick Eastman’s podcast interviews with genealogy experts, http://blog.eogn.com/eastmans_online_genealogy/podcasts/, and the UK National Archives Series, <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/rss/podcasts.xml>, which broadcasts valuable information on the Archives’ resources and how to use them.



The social networking part of Web 2.0 is exactly what it sounds like — a web-based way for like-minded people to get together and communicate their common interests. This is a perfect medium for genealogists who have a strong desire to find others searching the same family names and places.

Most of the genealogy social networking sites are based on the premise that people would like to build collaborative family trees online. These sites are very new and rely entirely on users to build them, so it will be interesting to watch as they develop. One of the first of these sites was Geni.com, <http://www.geni.com/>. This site works on the simple system of having individuals build a family tree online and then invite relatives to make their own contribu-

them. This means that podcasts are a good way of learning more about various aspects of genealogy. The word podcast is a combination of the words “iPod” and “broadcast”, and although this suggests it is necessary to own an Apple iPod to listen to these broadcasts, in fact, all that is necessary is a computer with speakers attached.

The simplest way to find genealogy podcasts is to visit the iTunes Store, <http://www.apple.com/itunes/store/>, — the iTunes software and the podcasts are free to download — and search for the word genealogy limited by pod-

tions to the tree. When the trees being built begin to overlap with those being built by other members of the site, Geni.com will offer the option to combine them. Visitors to the site can see only their own family tree, but a search feature allows users to find others researching the same surnames. Contact can then be made by e-mail. Famiva, <http://www.famiva.com/>, works in a similar way to join families together.

FamilyLink.com, <http://www.familylink.com/>, allows you to upload your family tree and make links with others searching the same surnames. In addition, you can build a personal profile on the site so that others will be able to search by place to see active genealogists who live there or who are doing research related to that geographic area. Your genealogical profile can also include such information as the family tree programs you use, the societies you belong to, and a list of the surnames you are searching.

FAMILLION, <http://www.famillion.com/>, is yet another example of a collaborative family tree building site that incorporates other social networking features. The creator of the site has designed his own tree-merging technology — as family trees start to overlap, FAMILLION “links similar branches together allowing members to track their ancestry and see their distant relations living throughout the world.”

There are new social networking sites for genealogists springing up constantly it seems, some of which allow collaborative tree building and some of which are more about making contacts with others. Newer ones you might want to visit are: TreeX, <http://www.treex.com/>, which aims to have a more international flavor; Genetree, <http://www.genetree.com/>, a DNA-enabled family history-sharing website designed to help people understand where their personal histories belong within the greater human genetic story; and the social networking

portion of familyrelatives.com, <http://www.familyrelatives.com/>, an addition to the UK-based database site.

Web 2.0 looks like it's going to play a significant part in the future of genealogy on the Internet and has already acquired enough critical mass to be referred to as “Genealogy 2.0”. But its success will depend on individual family historians contributing their own information to make the collaboration work. Blogs and wikis are already very well established; we will have to wait and see what the future is for collaborative tree building and social networking.

DFH

Marian Press is a librarian at the University of Toronto. She teaches courses on the Internet and genealogy for the National Genealogical Institute and the Toronto Branch of the Ontario Genealogical Society.

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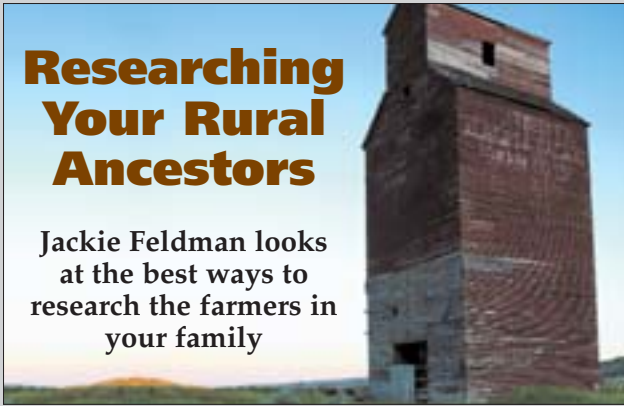
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Making Sense of the US Census



SOME PEOPLE MOAN and groan about doing census work. Not me! I always find something — and, occasionally new information on a second look. For the most part, it is easy work with the promise of finding something.

The key to successful census work is to look, record and look again. Return on another day with fresh eyes, and you might find something you missed earlier. Every census will provide pertinent information, depending on what the government wanted to know about its constituents that year.

Nine years after America won the Revolution, Congress needed to know how many people were living in this new country. Foremost in their minds must have been how many men would be available to help defend its borders. And, secondly, what kind of commerce would be able to support the country. Seats to apportion the House of Representatives and assess federal taxes were also

Love ‘em or hate ‘em, census records are a big part of tracing your family history. This article will help you understand one of genealogy’s most important resources.

determined from the first count.

A new census would be taken every decade (decennial) to allocate the number of representatives from each state and the amount of taxes to be levied.

Future genealogists looking for family clues certainly were not a consideration in 1790 when the country’s forefathers were determining the questions to be asked

and how often to do so.

It’s most fortunate that the National Archives and Record Administration (NARA) decided to microfilm federal records in 1941 when the technology became available. And then to make duplicate copies and eventually to digitize them — and mostly for the benefit of researchers! Because of technology, searching censuses (along with myriad other information) is now available online from the comfort of your own home.

The basic parameters for each family were set with the first census in 1790: the name of the head of household and the number of males and females, by age increments, that lived there. With each new census, new questions appear and others disappear — all on a “need-to-know” basis. The latest census — conducted in 2000 — is the “mother” of all censuses, with pages and pages of questions asked of some constituents and a much briefer form for everyone else. Descendants of those who

filled out the long version will be treated to an insightful peek into the lives of their ancestors. The 2000 census won't be available until 2072. All censuses remain under wraps for 72 years to protect the privacy of those whose information was gathered.

The first US census began on 2 August 1790, and on 1 March 1792, the completed tally was given: 3,929,214.

Census marshals were to learn the name of every head of household in the 13 states, the number of free white males who were 16 years or older and those 15 and under. Free white females, regardless of age, were noted as were other free people living with the family, regardless of gender or age. Also, how many slaves each citizen owned.

Native Americans were not included in the count, unless they lived in settled areas and paid taxes.

If a resident refused to answer the questions, he risked a fine of \$20, which equated to \$228 in 2006.

The 1800 census had a count of 5,308,483 people, all of whom answered the same questions about the names of the heads of household and the number of free white males and females designated in age categories: 0-10; 10-16; 16-26, 26-45; 45 and older. It also asked the number of other free persons, except non-taxed Indians, the number of slaves, whose segmented ages are given, and the town or district and county of residence.

Also included for the next few censuses are free men of color with the names as heads of household and answers to all the other questions asked in the previous census.

In 1810, the official count of US residents was 7,239,881. Again, questions were for name of family head, number of free white men and women according to ages.

In 1820, the government wanted more information from its 9,638,453 constituents: The number of males 16 to 18 years old; the number of people not naturalized;

and how many farmed or was in commercial or manufacturing ventures.

Officials found that the numbering system of 10-16, 16-18, etc., made it confusing to determine the exact number of people living in each household — and for the



A page from the 1880 US federal census.

national total. For instance, it would have been correct to mark a person who was 16, in both the 10-16 and 16-18 brackets, but they kept up the practice until 1850.

The 1830 census recorded a total population of 12,860,702, who answered additional questions posed by the census taker. There were extra age categories: 0-5; 5-10; 10-15; 15-20; 20-30; 30-40; 40-50; 50-plus. And, in addition, if there were any "deaf, dumb and blind persons", or aliens in the household.

In the 1840 census, there were 17,063,353 US residents (excluding Native Americans, of course). The country was growing exponentially. In 50 years, it had increased by 13,143,139 people from its initial 3,929,214 inhabitants. The age cat-

egory also increased in this census: 0-5; 5-10; 10-15; 15-20; 20-30; 30-40; 40-50; 50-60; 60-70; 70-80; 80-90; 90-100 and over 100. The preface questions remain the same. The government also asked the ages of Revolutionary War pensioners and the number of people working in the mining, agriculture, commerce, manufacturing and trade, and navigation of oceans, canals, lakes and rivers. It also asked who were "learned professions and engineers"; the number in school and how many in the family who were 21 and older who could not read or write — and the number of insane.

The 1850 US federal census holds a treasure-trove of information. At last, someone in Washington DC, wanted to know the names of everyone in the household! They also wanted the age, sex and color of everyone, the occupation of those over 15, value of one's real estate, where each person was born, if they were married within the past year, or attended school during that time. Other questions were, whom over 20 could not read or write, and were deaf-mute, blind, insane or "idiotic". It gave the names of those who died before 1 June 1850, and omitted children born after that date. It also asks if one is a fugitive from the state. (How many do you suppose responded honestly to that question?)

Separate slave schedules in 1850 asked for the name of each slave-owner, how many slaves he or she had, and the number manumitted (released). Unfortunately, there are not names for every slave, but questions asked included age, color, and sex, and whether deaf-mute, blind, insane or idiotic, and if the slave was a fugitive from the state. This is a great bonus resource for those researching slaves.

The 1860 census counted 31,443,321 persons. In addition to the same questions, it also wanted the value of real and personal estate; the name of the state, territory or country where each was

born; and whether he/she was married during the year, or attended school during that time.

The US Civil War ended before the 1870 census, which reported 38,558,371 residents.

Unfortunately, a large number of Southern residents were excluded from the count. The census taker was to indicate the number of dwelling houses and families in the order he visited. He was to ask the names of those who lived with the family on 1 June 1870. A variation to censuses past was the question of everyone's age on their last birthday. If a baby was less than a year old, its age was by the number of months months old (i.e., $\frac{1}{12}$). The questioner asked for the sex, color (white, black, Chinese, Indian or Mulatto), profession, occupation or trade, place of birth as before (except those born in Germany were to report which province). There was a spot to indicate whether one's father and mother were foreign born, and if the right to vote by men 21 and older was denied or abridged, and was it on grounds other than rebellion or another crime?

Disaster struck in 1921, when a fire at the Commerce Department destroyed most of the 1890 census. Less than one percent of the schedules survived, with only fragments of some states. Researchers with Civil War veterans can use special 1890 schedules listing veterans and widows — but only if he fought for the North. There is no similar census for Southern veterans.

However, not all is lost. Ancestry.com, NARA and the Allen County Public Library in Indiana joined forces to provide a definitive online substitute for the missing census. The collection contains more than twenty-million identified records. As other records surface, they will be included.

The 1900 census lists 76,212,169 persons who provided the number of dwelling houses and family members in the order the census taker visited them. New questions asked women how many children they bore and how many were living. The govern-

ment also wanted the number of foreign-born and year of immigration, how long they had lived in the US and the citizenship status of those at least 21-years-old. They asked for the occupation of each person and if unemployed, how many months had it been since they worked. Another series of questions was whether a family's

Omitted from this record were questions of unemployment, Civil War military service; the number of children or length of marriage. However, it does ask for the year of naturalization, the arrival and status of every foreign-born person. There is no Indian Schedule.

In 1930, new information the government wanted to know



Census records are crucial to success in genealogy.

home was rented, owned or had a mortgage, and if it was on a farm. This census provides the month and year of each person's birth, and the number of years a couple were married.

The 1910 census lists the relationship of everyone to the head of the household, which is a boon to researchers. Other new items include the language spoken by each resident and the occupation and type of industry of each person, whether they are an employer, employee or self-employed. Governmental officials also wanted to know the number of weeks a person might have been unemployed in 1909 and whether they were out of work on 15 April 1910. They also wanted to know if one was a veteran of either the Union or Confederate army or navy. An Indian schedule recorded the tribe and/or band.

The number of citizens topped the 100-million mark in the 1920 census: 106,021,537 people lived in the US. This census asked a new set of questions: if one were single, married, widowed or divorced. It also asks the place of the birth of the mother and father of each person and the native language.

included if a person owned a radio, the language spoken in the home, the industry of business, class of worker and whether the person had worked the day before. Also asked was if a man was a veteran and of which service and war.

So it is with census records. We appreciate all the incredible information we garnered — but what would we have found in the 1890 census? You know, the one that burned in a fire in 1921, leaving only fragments of what no doubt would have provided a bounty of information. Oh well. The spilt milk turned into water under the bridge that is gone forever.

DFH

*Beverly Smith Vorpahl is a retired journalist who now writes freelance articles, mostly on genealogy topics. She wrote **Goody Wing, an American Foremother**, a historical novel about her eighth-grandmother, and researches and writes "stories" on her ancestors.*

It's Only Words

IF THERE'S ONE constant when it comes to language, it's that the meaning of words changes over time. When Shakespeare wrote "get thee to a nunnery", he didn't have a religious connotation in mind. After the Revolutionary War, pounds went on your hips, not in your pockets. And the phrase "broken record" holds no meaning for today's teens.

No one knows exactly when a human uttered the first word. Scientists and linguists suggest that language underwent a gradual evolution that began with body language, progressed to gestures and then sounds. That's as good an explanation as any.

While the precise origin of language may be murky, it's perfectly clear that oral and written language change with the times. Advances in science, medicine and technology coupled with trends in culture, traditions and politics routinely generate new words and make others obsolete. Each generation creates its own lingo. Language, like people, continues to evolve.

Thus, every researcher eventually encounters archaic legal terms like "my trusty friend" or "my now wife". Misinterpret them at your peril. At best, you'll charge off on a wild goose chase. Or worse, you'll link people to the wrong families.

"Trusty friend" is how John Murray is described by six people who signed separate powers-of-attorney in the early 1800s making Murray his or her personal representative in the sale of a parcel of inherited land. Since four had different surnames, and two lived in other states, one might think that Murray's connection to them was only in a legal capacity. One would be wrong.

Three of the heirs were Murray's siblings. The rest were related as well, a fact proven by documents pertaining to the sale of the land, which showed that Murray was also an heir.

What's in a word? Quite a lot, as Donna Murray finds out.

"Trusty friend" is often found in legal documents from the early 1800s. Like many labels and expressions used to describe relationships in earlier times, it means something entirely different today.

"My now wife" is another term that causes confusion.



Commonly used in the legal arena to differentiate between the current spouse and one that may come along later, its purpose was to protect the estate from future claims. *Now* was the operative word. It bore no relationship to the number of times the man had wed. He could have had three previous wives or none at all.

The titles junior and senior once referenced age as much as family ties. In modern times, junior is tacked on to a male child's surname when he's named after his father. Dad doesn't become senior until junior makes an appearance.

Until about 1900, these tags were often used to differentiate between two people with the same name — one older, one younger — who lived in the same community.

Thus, John Smith, Sr. and John Smith, Jr. weren't necessarily father and son. They might not even be related. Women occasionally used these designations for the same reason.

In Colonial times, "in-law" signified any relationship that occurred as a result of marriage. When a woman referred to her father-in-law, she might be talking about her spouse's dad or her own stepfather. Likewise, her son-in-law could be either her stepson or her daughter's husband. In one probate record, heirs-in-law referred to a married couple. The deceased was the wife's father.

Nieces, nephews, close friends or relatives often came under the cousin umbrella. And brothers and sisters may be blood relatives, adopted siblings or other members of a religious organization.

Some words have simply fallen out of favor, like relict and consort. Generally used in a female's epitaph, relict (also spelled relic) refers to a widow who has not remarried, while consort means her husband was still living when she died.

Among other terms that rooters should become familiar with to ensure they don't misinterpret the intentions of those who penned the prose are dower, the right of a wife to one-third of her husband's real estate upon his death, and marriage banns, a religious tradition by which engaged couples announced their intent to get married.

A visit to one of these websites that feature helpful glossaries — www.genealogy-quest.com/index.html, <http://homepages.rootsweb.com/~sam/terms.html> and www.genealogy.com/Glossary/glossary.html — might give new meaning to some old words while preventing inadvertent research errors.

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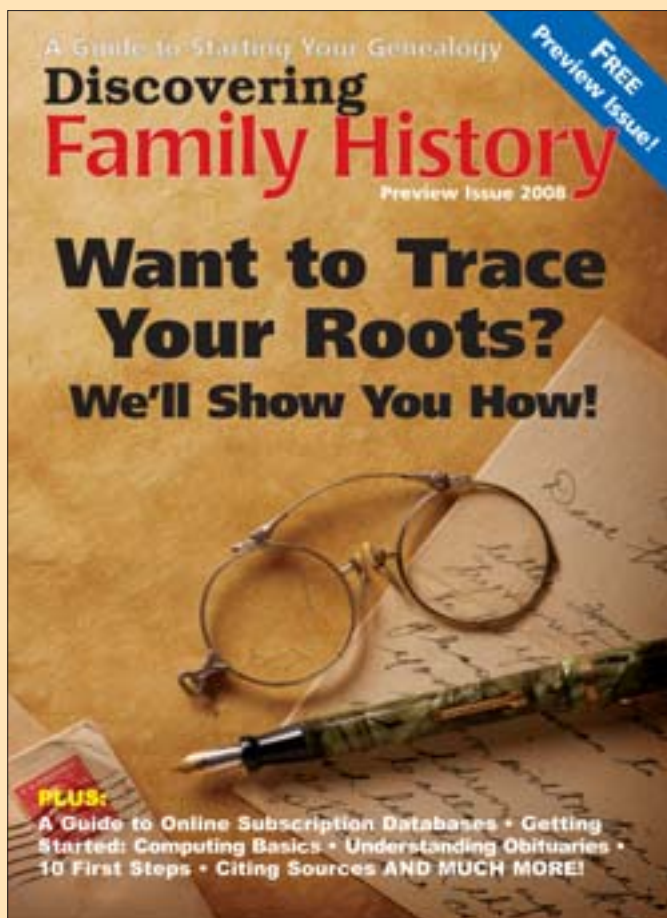
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