



# BEGINNER'S KIT FOR FAMILY HISTORY RESEARCH

This kit is free to anyone who is seriously interested in researching his or her family history.

**Compliments of:**

Indian River County Main Library  
Julian W. Lowenstein  
Archive Center: Florida and Local History  
Genealogy Department  
1600 21<sup>st</sup> Street, Vero Beach, Florida 32960  
772-770-5060 x5; Fax 772-770-5446

Email: [genealogy@irclibrary.org](mailto:genealogy@irclibrary.org)

Web Site: <http://www.irclibrary.org/genealogy>

**Hours:**

Monday – Friday	10 AM – 5 PM
Saturday	10 AM – 4 PM
Sunday	Closed

## GENEALOGY FORMS

Forms are a very important part of your research. They help you to organize your data and see a road map to your family history. There are many ways to obtain forms and it is important to be aware of copyright rules. The library has many forms available in our Genealogy vertical file, as well as in our forms binder located at the genealogy service desk. There are books that allow you to freely copy forms and web sites where you can print forms and charts at no charge. See below.

---

- ***Peacefield Genealogy Forms*** - 2 Books – Ask at the genealogy reference desk.
- ***Unpuzzling Your Past Workbook: Essential Forms and Letters for All Genealogists*** by Emily Anne Croom – 929.1 CRO
- **GOOGLE – search for free genealogy forms or charts.**
- Free Genealogy Charts and Forms - <http://www.ldpierce.com/recordsforms.html>
- **Ancestry.Com** - <http://ancestry.com/trees/charts/ancchart.aspx>  
Ancestral Chart, Research Calendar, Research Extract, U.S. Census, U.K. Census, Canadian Census, Correspondence Record, Family Group Sheet, and Source Summary
- **Bailey's Free Genealogy Forms** - <http://www.cs.williams.edu/~bailey/genealogy/>
- **Cyndi's List of Supplies and Forms** - <http://www.CyndisList.com/supplies.htm>
- **Genealogy.Com** - <http://www.genealogy.com/00000061.html?Welcome=1018020977>  
1790-1930 Census Forms
- **Ancestors** - <http://www.byub.org/ancestors/charts/> The companion web site to the PBS Family History and Genealogy T.V. series. The video tapes of this popular television show are available in the Genealogy Department-
- **Family Tree Magazine** - <http://www.familytreemagazine.com/freeforms> Five-Generation Ancestor Chart, Research Calendar, Note-Taking Form, Deed Index—Grantors/Grantees, Research Repository Checklist, Research Journal, Research Worksheet, Table of Contents, Statewide Marriage Index, Biographical Outline, Correspondence Log, Family Correspondence Log, Family Group Sheet, Time Capsules, Military Records Checklist, Census Checklist, 1790-1930 Census, Artifacts and Heirlooms, Cemetery Transcription Form, Article Reading List, Research Checklist of Books, Book Wish List

**Remember: Your permanent record should be on a clean acid-free form and kept free from dust and dirt. All copies made in the Archive Center and Genealogy Department are on acid-free paper.**

## SUGGESTIONS FOR RESEARCHING YOUR FAMILY TREE

---

1. **SUPPLIES:** Pencils; acid-free ink pens; loose-leaf notebooks; file cards; file folders; pre-printed genealogy forms; genealogy self-help books (see bibliography); acid-free sheet protectors. Depending upon the extent of your research, supplies will be based upon your needs. All of your paper products should be acid-free.
2. **ORGANIZE:** No matter how much research you do, know that you will not remember everything that you look at. Discipline yourself from the beginning that you will always write down everything. Start with a very basic filing system. It need not be complicated. Computers are great, but you will still need a file for backup. When your files become more extensive, you will need to make a decision as to file cabinets, office space, computers, etc.
3. **MAPS, ATLASES & GAZETTEERS:** Research cannot be done without knowing the geographic area you are researching. Locating records are dependent on the jurisdiction of the courts. Knowing the city and county boundaries at the time of the event will enable you to locate your records more efficiently.
4. **START WITH YOURSELF:** Never skip a generation. Always work from you to the next generation and to the next--from the known to the unknown. Valuable clues and family names are easily overlooked if you do not work with every ancestor in your pedigree chart. Gather your records on each individual such as birth, death, marriage, land, probate, obituaries and many other items that affect our daily lives. Be aware that you will be writing many emails, letters and making many telephone calls.
5. **PROVE THE FACTS AS YOU GO:** Each life event should be documented with original papers. Write for vital records, search for obituaries, look for cemetery records, and find all the important papers in your home that pertain to any event in your life and that of your ancestors. Use these records as proof of your search so that your descendants will not have the difficulty that you are experiencing in proving relationships.
6. **TALK TO YOUR RELATIVES:** Contact all known relatives that might reveal any clues. Ask them if you can make photocopies of any documents or pictures and offer to pay postage expenses. Be candid. Do not try or let them think you want to keep the records. Also, ask them if you can tape record your conversations when you are asking them questions.
7. **CHECK FOR WORK ALREADY DONE:** Thousands of family histories have been printed over the last 100+ years. Check the many resources in a well-equipped library for bibliographies of books in print or out of print and the many library web sites on the Internet. Learn how to access these materials through interlibrary loan or personal contact with archives and libraries.
8. **READ THE HOW, WHY & WHERE!** Most important. Read all you can about the area you are researching and the time period. KNOW the history. Also familiarize yourself with the state and county record retention schedules. Rules and regulations vary from state to state and county to county for all records. Dates of origination for vital records (birth, death, marriage) will be inconsistent. Read a self-help book, which is available at your local library or through a genealogy vendor. Examples: *How to Research in Pennsylvania*; *Researching Scottish Roots*; *Revolutionary War Research*; or *Alabama Churches*.
9. **SURNAME SPELLINGS:** Names can vary a great deal from one record to the next. This is mentioned as a word of CAUTION. Do not be arbitrary about spelling. Be open-minded enough to realize that human error does exist. Understanding how a name can be misspelled will solve many difficult research problems when you think of all possible variations of the name. Remember: many of our ancestors had accents not easily understood and many of our record keepers were not very literate.
10. **RECORD SEARCHING:** The following records are some of the more important and primary resources that you will be seeking. There are many books in print that give addresses to courthouses, churches, genealogical and historical societies and libraries (see the bibliography). Almost all of these records (pre 1920) can be accessed through the LDS church microfilming program (Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints) and many of the records are in print. Check the LDS library catalog on the

Internet <<http://familysearch.org>> or with the local genealogical/historical society from the area you are researching.

- VITAL RECORDS - Courthouses and churches.
- CENSUS - Libraries and Inter-library loan.
- LAND & PROBATE RECORDS - Courthouse
- CHURCH - Write the headquarters or the church itself.

11. **MILITARY RECORDS:** Chances are that at least one of your relatives served in the military. With sixteen wars and hundreds of conflicts in the U.S. and numerous wars in other countries, military records will be a very important resource. If you are interested in any one of the wars, familiarize yourself with the records available by using one of the many published guides on the Internet or the library shelf. Remember, if your ancestor was between the ages of 15 and 45 at the time of the conflict, more than likely, he was a good candidate for a soldier. Many records were created as a direct result of the wars.
12. **JOIN LOCAL OR STATE GENEALOGICAL SOCIETIES:** There is a genealogical/historical society for every county in the United States. There are many more for foreign countries. Each organization has an obligation to preserve and protect the records of their local area. As a result, many more records have been made accessible. If you are researching extensively in any one area, you should consider joining the society. A benefit would be the receipt of their newsletter, which would contain information about the history of the area, and a description of society projects. Enlisting the help of one of their members would be another benefit. Remember, almost all societies are completely volunteer and non-profit.
13. **READ. READ. READ.** The more genealogy periodicals, history books, self-help books that you read, the more ideas and contacts you will find in locating ancestors.
14. **ATTEND GENEALOGY CLASSES REGULARLY:** You can never get enough education to research your genealogy. Every day, more resources are made available. Repeating classes is a good way to reinforce your knowledge.

## **STANDARDS FOR SOUND GENEALOGICAL RESEARCH**

### **Recommended by the National Genealogical Society**

Remembering always that they are engaged in a quest for truth, family history researchers consistently--

- record the source for each item of information they collect.
- test every hypothesis or theory against credible evidence, and reject those that are not supported by the evidence.
- seek original records, or reproduced images of them when there is reasonable assurance they have not been altered, as the basis for their research conclusions.
- use compilations, communications and published works, whether paper or electronic, primarily for their value as guides to locating the original records.
- state something as a fact only when it is supported by convincing evidence, and identify the evidence when communicating the fact to others.
- limit with words like 'probable' or 'possible' any statement that is based on less than convincing evidence, and state the reasons for concluding that it is probable or possible.
- avoid misleading other researchers by either intentionally or carelessly distributing or publishing inaccurate information.
- state carefully and honestly the results of their own research, and acknowledge all use of other researchers' work.
- recognize the collegial nature of genealogical research by making their work available to others through publication, or by placing copies in appropriate libraries or repositories, and by welcoming critical comment.
- consider with open minds new evidence or the comments of others on their work and the conclusions they have reached.

Copyright © 1997 by National Genealogical Society. Permission is granted to copy or publish this material provided it is reproduced in its entirety, including this notice.

**HOME SOURCES  
LOOK FOR CLUES TO YOUR FAMILY HISTORY  
IN THESE DOCUMENTS:**

Personal Papers	Legal Papers	Certificates	Military Papers	Family Records	Announcements
Journal	Wills	Birth	Service	Bible	Wedding
Diary	Deeds	Marriage	Pension	Book of Remembrance	Birth
Biography	Land Grants	Death	Disability	Family Group Sheets	Obituary
Letters	Water Rights	Divorce	Discharge	Pedigrees	Funeral
Photographs	Mortgages	Adoption	National Guard	Genealogies	Graduation
Autograph Album	Leases	Graduation	Selective Service	Family Bulletins	Divorce
Personal Knowledge	Bonds	Christening	Bounty Awards	Family Histories	Anniversary
Baby Book	Loans	Baptism	Service Medals	Local Histories	Memorial Cards
Wedding Book	Contracts	Confirmation	Ribbons	Family Traditions	New Job
Scrap Books	Summons	Transfer	Sword	Oral Histories	Travel
Funeral Books	Subpoena	Ministerial	Firearms	Home Movies	New Home
Guest Registers	Tax Notice	Memberships	Uniform		Birthday
Travel Accounts	Guardian Papers	Apprenticeship	Citations		Professional
	Title Abstracts	Awards	Separation Papers		Engagement

Financial Records	Citizenship Papers	Health Records	Licenses	School Records	Membership Records
Accounts	Naturalization	X-Rays	Business	Diplomas	Cards
Bills	Declaration of Intent	Insurance Papers	Occupational	Report Cards	Publications
Check Stubs	Alien Registration	Hospital Records	Professional	Honor Roll	Programs
Estate Records	Department	Medical Records	Hunting	Awards	Uniforms
	Passport	Immunizations	Firearms	Transcripts	Awards
	Visa		Drivers	Yearbooks	Certificates
			Motor Vehicle	Publications	

HOUSEHOLD ITEMS	EMPLOYMENT RECORDS	NEWSPAPER CLIPPINGS	BOOKS
Silverware	Apprenticeship	Announcements	Yearbooks
Needlework	Awards	Obituaries	Textbooks
Sampler	Graduation	Special Events	Treasured Volumes
Tapestries	Citations	Vital Statistics	Vocational
Dishes	Severance Papers	Home Town News	Foreign Language
Quilts	Social Security	Professional	
Coats of Arms	Retirement Papers	Trade	
Insignias	Pension		
Souvenirs	Union		
Clothing	Income Tax		
Tools			
Memorial Rings			
Engraved Jewelry			

---

## INTERVIEWING A RELATIVE

---

After checking home sources, contact your living relatives and ask some of the following questions:

1. Where and when were you born? What was happening at the time of your birth? What was the name given at birth?
2. What are your parent's names and maiden names? When and where were they born?
3. How many children did your parents have and what were their names?
4. Do you recall when and where your grandparents died? Where are they buried?
5. How did your parents and grandparents earn their living?
6. Do you know any stories they told about what life was like?
7. What religion did your parents or grandparents practice?
8. Do you know the names of the first ancestors who came to America? Do you know why they left their homeland to come to America?
9. Where did they live prior to coming to this country? Do you know the name of the town or village they live in?
10. Do you know any stories they told about life in their homeland? What were their occupations?
11. Did any family members follow them to America at a later date?
12. Did you ever hear of anyone in your family serving in any wars? What was the soldier's name?
13. Describe some of your family's customs and traditions.
14. Did you ever hear that you were related to anyone famous?
15. Do you know anyone who has a written history of our family?

At the end of your interview, put the information together and complete pedigree charts and family group sheets. If you tape recorded, be sure to label the tape with the name, date and be sure to transcribe it.

---

## COMPUTERS AND THE INTERNET

---

### ***THE PAST IS NOT ONLINE***

Although, the Internet is growing all the time and daily there are new resources added, the "real" records must still be researched in the real-world places such as the courthouse, church, cemetery and business.

### **YOUR FAMILY TREE IS NOT ON THE COMPUTER UNLESS YOU OR SOME MEMBER OF YOUR FAMILY PUT IT THERE!**

---

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

It is highly recommended that you read some of the following books or purchase them for your home library:

1. Allen, Desmond Walls. ***First steps in genealogy: a beginner's guide to researching your family history.*** Cincinnati, OH: Betterway Books, 1998. 929.1 ALL (Also in circulation.)
2. Arnold, Jackie Smith. ***Kinship, It's All Relative.*** 2nd Edition. Baltimore, MD: Genealogical Publishing Co., 1994. 929.1 ARN (Also available for circulation.)
3. Burroughs, Tony. ***Black Roots: A Beginner's Guide to Tracing African-American Family Tree.*** New York: Fireside Book, 2001.
4. Carmack, Sharon DeBartolo. ***A genealogist's guide to discovering your female ancestors: special strategies for uncovering hard-to-find information about your female lineage*** Cincinnati, OH: Betterway Books, 1998. 929.1082 CAR (Also in circulation.)
5. Carmack, Sharon DeBartolo. ***A Genealogist's Guide to Discovering Your Immigrant & Ethnic Ancestors: How to Find and Record Your Unique Heritage.*** Cincinnati, OH: Betterway Books, 2000. 929.1072 CAR

6. Carmack, Sharon DeBartolo. **Organizing Your Family History Search: Efficient & Effective Ways to Gather and Protect Your Genealogical Research.** Cincinnati, OH: Betterway Books, 1999. 929.1 CAR (Also in circulation.)
7. Crandall, Ralph Dr. **Shaking Your Family Tree: A Basic Guide to Tracing Your Family's Genealogy.** Dublin, NH: Yankee Publishing Inc, 1988. 929.1 CRA (Also available for circulation)
8. Croom, Emily Ann. **Unpuzzling Your Past: A Basic Guide to Genealogy.** 4<sup>rd</sup> Edition. Cincinnati, OH: Betterway Books, 2001 929.1 CRO (Also available for circulation.)
9. Curran, Joan Ferris. **Numbering Your Genealogy.** Arlington, VA: National Genealogical Society, 1999. 929.1 CUR.
10. Dollarhide, William and William Thorndale. **Map Guide to the U.S. Federal Census, 1790-1920.** Baltimore, MD: Genealogical Publishing Co., 1992. 929.3 CEN
11. Eichholz, Alice. Editor **Red book: American state, county & town sources.** 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition. Salt Lake City, UT: Ancestry, Inc., 2004. 929.1 RED.
12. Everton, George B. **The HandyBook for Genealogists.** 11th Edition. Draper, UT: Everton Publishers, 2006. 929.373 EVE (Several copies available and different editions.)
13. Luebking, Sandra and Lorretto Szucs. **The Source, A Guidebook of American Genealogy.** Third Edition. Salt Lake City, UT: Ancestry Publishing, Inc., 2006 929.1 SOU (The 1984 edition is available for circulation.)
14. Greenwood, Val D. **Researchers Guide to American Genealogy.** 3rd Edition. Baltimore, MD: Genealogical Publishing Co., 1990. 929.1 GRE (Three in circulation.)
15. Hinckley, Kathleen. **Locating lost family members & friends: modern genealogical research techniques for locating the people of your past and present.** Cincinnati, Ohio: Betterway Books, c1999. 929.1 HIN
16. Lackey, Richard S. **Cite Your Sources: A Manual for Documenting Family Histories and Genealogical Records.** Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 1986. 929.1 LAC
17. Melnyk, Marcia Yannizze. **The Genealogist's Question and Answer Book.** Cincinnati, OH: Betterway Books, 2002. 929.1 MEL
18. Melnyk, Marcia Yannizze. **The weekend genealogist: timesaving techniques for effective research.** Cincinnati, OH; Betterway Books, 2000. 929.1072 MEL (Also in circulation)
19. Meyerink, Kory L. Editor. **Printed Sources: A Guide to Published Genealogical Records.** Orem, UT: Ancestry, Inc., 1998 Gen Desk 016.9293 PRI
20. Mills, Elizabeth Shown. **Evidence Explained: Citing History Sources from Artifacts to Cyberspace.** Baltimore, MD: Genealogical Publishing Co., 2007. 907.2 MIL
21. Morgan, George G. **How to do Everything with Your Genealogy.** Emeryville, CA: McGraw-Hill Osborne, 2004. 929.1 MOR
22. Morgan, George G. **The Official Guide to Ancestry.com.** Provo, UT: Ancestry Publ., 2007.
23. Pfeiffer, Laura Szucs. **Hidden Sources: Family History in Unlikely Places.** Orem, UT: Ancestry, Inc. 2000. Gen Desk 929.1 PFE
24. Rising, Marsha Hoffman. **The Family Tree Problem Solver.** Cincinnati, OH: Family Tree Books, 2005. 929.1072 RIS
25. Rose, Christine and Kay Germain Ingalls. **The Complete Idiot's Guide to Genealogy.** 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, New York, NY: Alpha Books, 2006. 929.1 ROS
26. Stevenson, Noel C. **Genealogical Evidence: A Guide to the Standard of Proof Relating to Pedigrees, Ancestry, Heirship and Family History.** Laguna Hills, CA: Aegean Park Press, 1979, 1989. 929.1 STE
27. Stratton, Eugene A. **Applied Genealogy.** Salt Lake City, UT: Ancestry, Inc., 1988. 929.1 STR
28. Sturdevant, Katherine Scott. **Bringing your family history to life through social history.** Cincinnati, OH: Betterway Books, 2000. 929.1072 STU (Also in circulation.)
29. Taylor, Maureen Alice. **Through the Eyes of Your Ancestors: A Step-by-Step Guide to Uncovering Your Family's History.** Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1999. J929.1 TAY (Children's Area)
30. Westin, Jeanne Eddy. **Finding Your Roots: How to Trace Your Ancestors at Home and Abroad.** New York: Jeremy P. Tarcher/ Putnam, 1998. 929.1072.WES

## **GENEALOGY IS AN EDUCATION!**