



GENEALOGY...made simple!!!

----- DON'T LET THE WORD GENEALOGY FRIGHTEN YOU -----

The key word to good research is *documentation*
ALWAYS TRY TO USE PRIMARY SOURCES!



1. Where do I begin??

A. With myself!

- i. Write down *everything* I know about my immediate family
- ii. Look for: birth, marriage, death certificates; naturalization papers; baptismal (or other church) records; an old Family Bible; diaries//journals//scrapbooks//photograph albums; letters; military records; pension records.
- iii. Contact your oldest living relative -- and, if you're the oldest, contact the next oldest! If by mail, make sure to include a SASE. If by phone, be kind and be to the point. If in person, be kind, to the point, and watch for any signs of: *boredom, tiredness, anxiety over a certain family member or event*. If your relative is willing, interview him/her -- this can also be done with a tape recorder. Ask this relative if he/she has any of the items listed in *ii above.
 - a) If you want information about your own family, contact your oldest sibling.
 - b) If you want information about your grandparent's family, contact your oldest first cousin.
 - c) If you want information about your great-grandparents, include second cousins. *Don't make anyone guess who you are!!*
 - d) If you want information about your great-greatgrandparents, include third cousins....etc., etc.
- iv. An alternative to *iii could be a visit with an extremely good personal friend of some member of the family.

B. Going out into the world!

- i. Travel to the Town Hall or County Court House of the town you are interested in! TREAT THE MUNICIPAL WORKERS KINDLY -- they have *many other jobs to do!* In small towns it's wise to check ahead for hours.
 - a) Ask if there's an index for the *vital records* -- give the year(s) you are interested in.
 - b) Ask if you can examine the original records. If you're real nice, they may make copies of some pages for you, if they're not too busy.If you cannot go there, write (include SASE). This may take some time!
- ii. Travel to the local historical society of the area. In small towns it's wise to check ahead for hours. Again, treat the workers kindly -- most of these people are volunteers!
 - a) Ask for any information which might be available on the family *surname* you are searching.
 - b) If not the family surname -- check the surname of the *wife*!CAUTION: many of these records are secondary sources, and might contain some inaccuracies and inconsistencies!
- iii. Contact the Commissioner of Cemeteries in the town. Many times cemetery records are excellent sources.

iv. In a small town it may be a good idea to contact the local funeral homes. Records are usually passed on from one generation to another. CAUTION: you must be careful with this information -- remember, your ancestor did not fill in these blanks!!

v. LARGE LIBRARY HOLDINGS:

- *Albany State Library, Cultural Education Center (Empire State Plaza), 7th Floor. M-F 9-5. Closed all holidays.
- *Berkshire Athenaeum, 1 Wendell St., Pittsfield, MA. M-Th 10-9, F,S 10-5. Closed major holidays.
- *Connecticut Valley Historical Society, Chestnut St., Springfield, MA. Open afternoons Th-Sn. Check other times.

- a) Family Histories SECTION 929 Caution!
- b) Town & County Histories SECTION 973 Caution!
- c) Census Records (usually on microform -- check with librarian)
- d) D.A.R. Records (check with librarian, and ask for help in how to use them!) Caution!
- e) Cemetery Records (usually under 973)
- f) Newspapers (usually on microform)
- g) Periodicals: T-A-G, NEHGS Register, NYGBR (as examples only!)
- h) Church Records (in some cases it may be better to go directly there!)

vi. Latter-day Saint Materials (CAUTION: these should only be used as a guide -- there are errors in these materials. Important -- this is not a primary source!)

- a) IGI (International Genealogical Index): has millions of names world-wide. It is available at: 1)The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints STAKE CENTER, 411 Loudon Road, Loudonville, NY (Route 9). Open M,W 9-1 T,Th 5-9 Some Saturdays 9-1 Closed major holidays and inclement weather. 2)The Berkshire Athenaeum (see above) Ask librarians on duty to help you -- it's all microform.
- b) Census records -- ask for help -- all on microform.

vii. PROBATE & LAND EVIDENCE: usually available at either the county or town level -- varies from state to state. This is heavy research and is time consuming! Sometimes, however, it offers some of the best hints for a family's whereabouts, and for who was in the family.

and...if all else fails.....

viii. Contact a professional. Check the local historical society for names of trusted individuals. Ask for rates up front! There can be hidden costs (postage, copies, mileage, typing, etc.!). Most charge between \$15.00 and \$25.00 per hour. Most will ask for a minimum of 4 or 5 hours of research, and payment in advance for that. Most will add on the other costs at the end of the project. Most will take anywhere from 4-8 weeks to finish a project. And...If there are no records available, even the best professional cannot make them up!

2. What happens if I can't find anything??

***Even the best researcher knows that there are some ancestors who will never be found. Some records burned. Some have been destroyed by flood. Some have been stolen or defaced. Some were sunk at sea. Some people didn't keep good records. Some people didn't keep any records!