

How to Do Family History Research

Follow four simple steps:

Step 1: Identify what you know about your family.

Write what you know about your ancestors on pedigree charts and family group sheets. Gather information from family members and relatives. Look at family Bibles, journals, letters, obituaries, and other records. When you find new information, be sure to write down the source.

Step 2: Decide what you want to learn about your family.

Identify insufficient information from a pedigree chart or family group sheet that you would like to know. Identify questions you want to answer about your ancestor such as "When and where did he die?" Prayerfully, select one question as the Goal. Generally, find out about the ancestor's death before the marriage and the marriage before the birth.

On a *Research Log*, write your ancestor's name, the Goal (event in question), approximate date of the event, and the locality (place of the event) that you want to research.

Step 3: ABC's of Research.

A - Decide which record to search.

There are two main types of genealogical records - Original and Secondary.

Original Records are created near the time of an event by someone with first-hand knowledge of the event are more reliable than biographies and abstracts done by others. Documentation generally satisfies you and your reader that what is stated is factual. The best documentation comes from original records instead of secondary records. When found, copy original records, quoting important information in your records, and reference and file then in an orderly and safe system. Original Vital (government) records are **testimonies of birth, marriage and death** (birth information on a death certificate is a secondary source). Civil **court** proceedings are good original records. So are Church Records that testify of **Christenings and Marriages, Death and Burial**. Consult **Cemetery** and Government Population **Census** Records. Also remember Probate (**wills, deeds, land, military, and immigration**) records. Most original records are found in the area of residence.

Secondary Records include almost all published works. These "compiled records" include records of previous research by others such as a biography, letters from descendants, area and family histories, printed genealogies or indexes and abstracts of records. Bible records and tombstone inscriptions are good secondary sources. All Internet data and even the LDS International Genealogical Index (IGI) are secondary records. The LDS Ancestral File data and all similar database records are but a pointer to needed research. A cited secondary source is an indicator to a researcher that points in a certain direction.

Generally, first search compiled records, then search original records.

Family Search® data files maintained by **The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints** contains the following:

Ancestral File™ is a Family Search® computer file that contains genealogies of millions of names from around the world. The information is mostly about deceased people and is linked into pedigrees to show their ancestors and descendants. An important feature of Ancestral File™ is that it has the names and addresses of those who contribute information and all are invited to coordinate their research efforts and then correct any misinformation. Data for individuals are names, dates, and places of birth, marriage, and death, but there are no notes or source information.

The **International Genealogical Index (IGI)™** Family Search® data lists dates and places of births, christenings, and marriages; and names of parents, spouses, or children of millions of deceased people who lived in the period from the early 1500's to the early 1900's. This data has been extracted, or gathered, from thousands of original records. The **LDS Ordinance Section** will check this Index to see if ordinances have been completed for your ancestors. There is a main file and addendum. Data is grouped by similar given name and surname spelling.

TempleReady is a computer software program to prepare names of deceased ancestors for LDS temple ordinances. It can be used to update personal ordinance records from the **LDS Ordinance Index**.

The **Family History Library Catalog™** Family Search® CD lists and describes over three billion books, microfilm, microfiche, maps, and other holdings of the LDS Family History Library™ in Salt Lake City, Utah. Family Histories (listed by surname), Biographies, Genealogies, and other compilations are found in the catalog. Information can be found by surname search or specifying a locality and then the type of record such as "New York - Biography". Many of these materials are on microfilm and can be loaned to local Family History Centers™ for a small fee. The Catalog will guide you to birth, marriage, and death records; cemetery & census records; church registers, family histories and many other records.

The **Pedigree Resource File** FamilySearch® records are compiled genealogies being submitted to the Church by people throughout the world. They will be placed in the Granite Mountain Records Vault for preservation. They are also being published in a CD-ROM product. It may be available for use at a Family History Center near you at no charge. An index of the current Pedigree Resource File discs may be viewed on the Internet at FamilySearch.org.

The **U.S. Social Security Death Index** are Family Search® computer files of millions of people who have died in the United States since 1962 whose deaths were reported to the United States Social Security Administration. An ancestor's Social Security number is not needed to use the index. The index helps to identify the city where the death occurred and provides names of living relatives.

Other **Family Search**® computer files include the **Scottish Church Records** of nearly ten million names, primarily in Church of Scotland (Presbyterian) parish registers, and records from a few other denominations. This index contains entries from the late 1500's through 1854 when the civil registration started. The **Military Index** lists 110,000 U.S. service personnel who died in the Korean and Vietnam Wars.

B - Obtain the record

Use the call number from the Family History Library Catalog™ to locate a microfilm, microfiche, or book. Instructions for operating microfilm and microfiche readers are on the machines. Instructions that explain how to read and use some of the records are also available and library staff members will assist you.

C - Search the record

Look for facts and clues. Search broad time periods. Check for spelling variations. Record the results on the research log and make a photocopy of what you find. When you do not find anything, note “nil” on your log. This will help you or someone else avoid searching the same record again at a later time.

Step 4: Use the Information.

Did you find the information you were looking for? Is the information complete? Does it conflict with other information you already have?

Organize. File photocopies in a convenient, organized way such as by family. Keep folders of document “hard copies” separating one family from another. Write the family’s surname and the husband’s and wife’s first names on the folder tab and keep documents for their family in that folder. When the children start their own family, start their folder with their wedding certificate. Place a Research Log in each folder which serves as a table of contents for that folder. Include searches that were not useful (nil). If a document covers several families, file the document in the oldest ancestor listed and note its location in the log of the other families.

What Next?

Set a new Research Goal, prayerfully decided upon while doing an analysis of your family records.

The *Research Process* advocated by the Family History Library suggests the following eight steps to research:

1. Gather information on your family.
2. Verify the information (especially inconsistencies).
3. Look for previous research.
4. Seek to contact others with common interests.
5. Review what you have and decide what you want to learn.
6. Select a record to search to obtain that information.
7. Find and search that record.
8. Use (evaluate) the information.

Steps 3 and 4 in the above process is what is called the *survey phase* in the research process. Consult the writings of Alan E. Mann, Accredited Genealogist at <http://www.geocities.com/Heartland/6266/genstart.htm> for more information about this.

Filling out Pedigree & Family Group Forms:

- When recording a woman’s name, use her maiden name.
 - Format of dates: day, month, year (dd,mmm,yyyy)
 - Format of places: smallest to largest jurisdiction (town, county, state, nation). No hospital information in place field.
 - Continue the numbering system on pedigree charts.
 - On Family Group Sheets, record the children in their birth order.
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OBJECTIVE	RECORD TYPES	
<i>To obtain information about:</i>	<i>Look in the Family History Library Catalog, Locality section for these record types:</i>	
	<i>First look for:</i>	<i>Then look for:</i>
Age	Census, Vital Records, Cemeteries	Military Records, Taxation, Obituaries
Birth date	Vital Records, Church Records, Bible Records	Cemeteries, Obituaries, Census, News papers, Military Records
Birthplace	Vital Records, Church Records, Census	Newspapers, Obituaries, Military Records
City or parish of foreign birth	Church Records, Genealogy, Biography, Obituaries, Naturalization and Citizenship	Emigration and Immigration, Vital Records, History
Country of foreign birth	Census, Emigration and Immigration, Naturalization and Citizenship, Vital Records	Military Records, Church Records, News-papers, Obituaries
County origins and boundaries	History, Maps	Gazetteers
Death	Vital Records, Cemeteries, Probate Records, Church Records, Obituaries	Newspapers, Military Records, Court Records, Land and Property
Divorce	Court Records, Divorce Records	Newspapers, Vital Records
Ethnicity	Minorities, Native Races, Societies	Church Records, Emigration and Immi-gration, Naturalization and Citizenship
Historical background	History, Periodicals, Genealogy	Church History, Minorities
Immigration or emigration date	Emigration and Immigration, Naturalization and Citizenship, Genealogy	Census, Biography, Newspapers, Church Records
Maiden name	Vital Records, Church Records, Newspapers, Bible Records	Military Records, Cemeteries, Probate Records, Obituaries
Marriage	Vital Records, Church Records, Census, Newspapers, Bible Records	Biography, Genealogy, Military Records, Probate Records, Land and Property, Nobility
Occupation	Census, Directories, Emigration and Immigration, Civil Registration, Occupations, Probate Records	Newspapers, Court Records, Obituaries, Officials and Employees
Parents, children, and other family members	Vital Records, Church Records, Census, Probate Records, Obituaries	Bible Records, Newspapers, Emigration and Immigration, Land and Property
Physical description	Military Records, Biography, Court Records	Naturalization and Citizenship, Civil Registration, Church Records, Emigration and Immigration, Genealogy, Newspapers
Place-finding aids	Gazetteers, Maps	Directories, History, Periodicals, Land and Property, Taxation
Place (town) of residence when you know only the state	Census, Genealogy, Military Records, Vital Records, Church Records, Directories	Biography, Probate Records, History, Land and Property, Taxation
Places family has lived	Census, Land and Property, History	Military Records, Taxation, Obituaries
Previous research (compiled genealogy)	Genealogy, Periodicals, History	Biography, Societies, Nobility
Record-finding aids	Archives and Libraries, Societies, Genealogy	Periodicals
Religion	Church Records, History, Biography, Civil Registration	Bible Records, Cemeteries, Obituaries, Genealogy

An interactive on-line presentation of "A Guide to Research" may be found at:
http://familysearch.org/Eng/Search/rg/guide/Guide_to_Research.asp