

Principles of Family History Research

1. **Golden Rule.** Go from the known to the unknown. Start with yourself and document data as you go from step to step. Decide what you know and what you want to learn about. The more specific the goal, the more likely of achieving it.
2. **Identify** each individual by using names, dates, places, and relationships. . Most genealogy computer software provides fields which can be used to identify an individual: General, Birth, Christening, Death, Burial, Marriage and Divorce. Other fields can usually be added. Notes can be used to record biographical and other information.
3. **Organize.** Use appropriate forms to record information. These include pedigree charts, family group records, personal and family history notes and research logs. Computer software programs can be used to record and store information.
4. **Be reliable.** Here is how:
 - Write down and organize source citations as you gather research data. Record the Family History Library call number if available. Most researchers use "Research Logs".
 - Seek original records, or copied images of them as the basis for conclusions. Original records created near the time of an event are more reliable than biographies, indexes and abstracts. Keep original documents in acid-free folders.
 - Identify other records because of their value as guides to locating original records.
 - Cite the source you actually use. If you used an abstract or index, cite it and do not claim it was the actual record. Abstracts and indexes may contain errors.
 - Avoid misleading other researchers by carelessly producing inaccurate information.
 - Acknowledge all use of other researchers' work.
 - Be open to new evidence and sharing results with others.

HELPS: Many people feel intimidated by computers and the newer computer software. For most of us, practice makes us more efficient. If you are a person that feels most comfortable using pen and paper, then for your posterity's sake, use that. PLEASE: Share your knowledge with your family. Let them feel an identity with their roots and know of the decisions that have been made by their ancestors.

To develop a proficiency in the use of any software, use the "Help" topic in the software. Personal Ancestral File (PAF) is free from <http://FamilySearch.org>. Click on "Order/Download Products" on top of the "Home" screen. In addition to downloading version 5 in the language you want, if you have disk space on your computer also download both the "PAF Lessons" and the "User's Guide" in PDF format.

There is an excellent reference booklet produced by the Silicon Valley PAF User's Group titled Family History Documentation Guidelines that costs \$10.00. It can be ordered on the Internet at <http://www.svpafug.org/sys-tmpl/door/>.

Here are some useful Web Sites:

LDS FamilySearch: <http://www.familysearch.org/>
Allen County Library, IN: <http://www.acpl.lib.in.us>
Cyndi's List: <http://www.CyndisList.com/>
Ancestry.com: <http://www.Ancestry.com/>
Helm's Genealogy Toolbox: <http://genealogy.tbox.com/>
GenForum: <http://www.genforum.com/>
Genealogy Online: <http://www.genealogy.org/>
National Genealogy Society: <http://www.ngsgenealogy.org/>
Roots-L Home page: <http://www.rootsweb.com/roots-l/>
Silicon Valley PAF User's Group: <http://www.svpafug.org/sys-tmpl/door/>
Utah Valley PAF User's Group: <http://www.genealogy.org/~uvpafug/>
Canada National Archive: http://www.archives.ca/02/020202_e.html
http://www.pueblo.gsa.gov/cic_text/misc/vital-records/w2welcom.htm
My Family Site: <http://www.nara.gov/genealogy/genindex.html>
New England Historical Society: <http://www.nehgs.org/>
US Genweb: <http://www.usgenweb.com>
Genealogy On the Net: <http://www.geocities.com/Heartland/6266/genealogy.htm>
UK Society of Genealogists: <http://www.sog.org.uk/>
UK & Ireland: <http://www.genuki.org.uk/>