

## Quick and Easy Guide to Doing Genealogy

### Step 1: Collect and Analyze Known Family History Material

- Collect all known information concerning a family group (parents and children) including: family oral tradition, pedigree and family group sheets, biographical sketches, certificates, letters, etc.
- Once all material is gathered, analyze relationships and date ranges (are the children's birth years too close together)? This will allow you to detect problem areas in a family tree.
- **Note:** It is not a good idea to focus the research only on a direct ancestor. The siblings of the direct ancestor may carry clues in their records about parentage that are not available anywhere else. This is why it is important to research all members of a family.

### Step 2: Preliminary Survey (Has This Family Already Been Researched By Someone Else?)

- Before original research is conducted, the researcher should see if any previous research has already been done for the family.
- A search should be conducted on public family trees under the applicable given and surnames located at:
  - <http://search.ancestry.com/search/db.aspx?dbid=1030>
  - Family Tree at <https://familysearch.org/>
  - <http://wc.rootsweb.ancestry.com/>
- A search on Google for the surname or individual family members should also be conducted. (i.e. "John Smith" 1829..1874).
- A search at [www.worldcat.org](http://www.worldcat.org), may pull up books and manuscripts from various repositories concerning the family.
- Even if it appears that a lot of research has already been conducted, it is still important to analyze the material and determine if the research is reliable and makes sense.

### Step 3: Locality Survey (What records are available for where my ancestor lived?)

- Before research can begin, it is important to understand the history, and resources, of the region/state/county where your ancestor lived. The following questions should be asked:
  - What jurisdiction created and kept the records I'm looking for?
  - When was the county established?
  - Was the region/state/county once part of another region/state/county?
  - Are there any historical events that impacted the region/state/county, where my ancestor lived?

- There are several resources that can help assist with the locality survey stage. The Wiki at <https://familysearch.org/wiki> contains information on the various states and their counties in the United States. Information regarding record loss, links to databases, county boundary changes, etc., can be found in the wiki.
- Another great resource is a book published by Ancestry.com entitled *The Red Book: American State, County, and Town Sources*. This resource contains historical information, county maps, county formation information, and access information to local/regional records. The book can be accessed online at <http://www.ancestry.com/wiki>.
- The collections at Ancestry.com can also be searched by locality as well. Go to the **Card Catalog** by clicking on **Search** in the tool bar at the top of the page. Then in the **Title** search bar, type in the name of the state you are researching in to see what records are available at Ancestry.com.

#### **Step 4: Census Survey**

- When doing genealogical research for a family, it is important to complete a full census survey for every member of the family throughout their lifetime when possible. This will allow the researcher to have a skeletal frame of where the family is living, what they are doing, and any changes in the family dynamics. Ancestry.com has digital images of the censuses from 1790-1940.
- Since 1790, the U.S. Federal Census has been taken every ten years. However, the amount of information available from census to census has evolved. The following are important dates to be aware of:
  - 1790: First Federal Census that was taken in the United States
  - 1850: First census to list the names of everyone (male and female) within the household.
  - 1880: First census to identify relationships between the household members and the head of household.
  - 1890: The census was mostly destroyed by fire. However, the veteran's schedule survived.
  - 1940: Most recent census available to the public.
- The data in a census record concerning an ancestor could provide clues to other records that should be searched. For example, in the 1910 census it asks "whether a survivor of the Union or Confederate Army or Navy?" If the individual did in fact serve, then military records should be searched.
- Helpful tips for finding census records:
  - Always obtain the data from the original record not the abstract.
  - Be flexible with the spelling of your ancestor's name.

- Recognize that you may have to browse the census page by page (within county boundaries) if you know where they were living, but the search algorithms fail to locate them.
- Besides population schedules, there are other types of federal census schedules that could be helpful. These include: mortality, slave, veteran, agriculture, etc. Some of these are available on Ancestry.com and are listed with the population schedules.
- In addition, state censuses should be used when available. The United States Census Bureau has a comprehensive list of state censuses at:  
[https://www.census.gov/history/www/genealogy/other\\_resources/state\\_censuses.htm](https://www.census.gov/history/www/genealogy/other_resources/state_censuses.htm)  
!

### Step 5: Vital Records

- Vital records (records of birth, marriage, and death events) are a crucial resource for genealogical research. Not only do they state the date and locations of vital events, but they also help prove family relationships.
- However, many researchers overlook the bonus details that are included in vital records. **For example**, notice that the birth certificate below states the age of the mother and the number of child the baby is to the mother.

City of <u>Wm. Preston</u>		If in Hospital or other Institution, give its name instead of Street and number.	
FULL NAME OF CHILD <u>Mabel Robertson</u> <small>If child is not yet named, make supplemental report, as directed</small>			
Sex of Child <u>Female</u>	Twin, Triplet, or Other? <u>Single</u>	and Number in Order of Birth <u>1</u>	Legitimate? <u>yes</u>
Date of Birth <u>Aug 26</u> , 190 <u>7</u>			
FULL NAME FATHER <u>George W. Robertson</u>		FULL MAIDEN NAME MOTHER <u>Mary del Johnson</u>	
RESIDENCE <u>Mt. Pleasant</u>		RESIDENCE <u>Mt. Pleasant</u>	
COLOR <u>White</u>	AGE AT LAST BIRTHDAY <u>34</u> (Years)	COLOR <u>White</u>	AGE AT LAST BIRTHDAY <u>26</u> (Years)
BIRTHPLACE <u>St. Green W. Va.</u>		BIRTHPLACE <u>Fountain Green W. Va.</u>	
OCCUPATION <u>Woolgraver</u>		OCCUPATION <u>House wife</u>	
Number of Child of this Mother <u>4</u>		Number of children of this Mother now living <u>4</u>	

- Below is a list of resources that can aid in finding vital records:
  - State websites:
    - Pennsylvania:** <http://www.phmc.pa.gov/Archives/Research-Online/Pages/Vital-Statistics.aspx>
    - Ohio:** <https://www.odh.ohio.gov/vitalstatistics/vitalmisc/whichrecs.aspx>
    - Kentucky:** <http://kdla.ky.gov/Pages/default.aspx> - Click on **Researchers** in the tool bar at the top of the page. Place mouse over **Vital Statistics Records**

**Available for Purchase.** Choose one of the applicable options from the drop down menu.

**Illinois:** <http://www.cyberdriveillinois.com/departments/archives/services.html>

**Indiana:** [https://www.in.gov/iara/2722.htm#Personal and Family History](https://www.in.gov/iara/2722.htm#Personal%20and%20Family%20History)

**West Virginia:** [http://www.wvculture.org/vrr/va\\_select.aspx](http://www.wvculture.org/vrr/va_select.aspx)

- <https://familysearch.org/search> - Click on **Search** in the tool bar at the top of the page. Then click on **Records**. On the **map** located on the **right side**, click on the **United States**. Then click on the applicable state. Search by given and surname, or scroll to the bottom of the page and search in one of the listed databases.
- <http://search.ancestry.com/search/category.aspx?cat=34>
- Also, at Ancestry.com, go to the **Card Catalog** by clicking on **Search** in the tool bar at the top of the page. Then in the **Title** search bar, type in the name of the state you are researching in to see what vital records are available at Ancestry.com.

#### **Step 6: County and Regional Histories**

- County and regional histories are important resources that should be used during the genealogical research process. Not only do they offer historical contextual information, but many of them also contain biographical sketches of people who lived in the community. In other words, your ancestor may have a small biography in a county history that could aid you in the research process.
- Below is a list of resources where county and regional histories could be found:
  - <https://books.google.com/>
  - <https://archive.org/>
  - <https://www.ancestry.com/> - Go to the **Card Catalog** by clicking on **Search** in the tool bar at the top of the page. Then in the **Title** search bar type in the name of the region/state/county.
  - <https://familysearch.org> – Click on **Search** in the tool bar at the top of the page. Then click on **Books**. In the search bar type in the applicable name of the region/state/county.

#### **Step 7: Probate Records**

- Probate records are created to manage the property of an individual after their death.
- A person's probate is either testate (a will was made), or intestate (no will was made).
- Even if a person did not make a will, intestate files can contain crucial information regarding surviving heirs, finances, property, etc.

- Probate records of an ancestor's relatives should be searched for as the information within the files may break open a genealogical brick wall.
- Below are some resources for finding probate records:
  - [http://search.ancestry.com/search/group/US\\_WillsProbate](http://search.ancestry.com/search/group/US_WillsProbate)
  - <https://familysearch.org/> - Click on **Search** in the tool bar at the top of the page. Then click on **Catalog**. In the **Place** search bar type the location/jurisdiction from biggest jurisdiction to littlest, (i.e. **United States, Kentucky, Jefferson**). Scroll down and click on **Probate Records**. A drop down menu will open and will display all of the available probate records.
  - Also, contact the applicable **county courthouse, county clerk's office, or state archives** to see what records are available.

### Step 8: Land Records

- Land records (i.e. deeds, tax, mortgage records) contain valuable information for a family researcher. They can contain the description of the property owned by an ancestor, names of neighbors and associates, names of buyers and sellers, an ancestor's wife's name, and occasionally information on where an ancestor moved to or from.
- Below are some resources for finding land records:
  - <http://search.ancestry.com/search/category.aspx?cat=144>
  - <https://familysearch.org/> - Click on **Search** in the tool bar at the top of the page. Then click on **Catalog**. In the **Place** search bar type the location/jurisdiction from biggest jurisdiction to littlest, (i.e. **United States, Kentucky, Jefferson**). Scroll down and click on **Land and Property**. A drop down menu will open and will display all of the available Land and Property records. Also, scroll down and click on **Taxation** for tax roll records.
  - <https://glorerecords.blm.gov/default.aspx>
  - <http://www.sos.ky.gov/admin/land/resources/Pages/default.aspx> - Click on **Administration** in the tool bar at the top of the page. Then click on **Land Office**. Click on **Military Registers and Land Records** or **Non-Military Registers and Land Records** or **Online Resources**.
  - Also, contact the applicable **county courthouse, county clerk's office, or state archives** to see what records are available.

### Step 9: Military Records

- **Your ancestor may have served in the military.** The United States has been involved with many wars. Some of the wars include: the French and Indian War, Revolutionary War, War of 1812, Civil War, Mexican-American War, etc.

- Besides serving in a national/international war, an ancestor could have served in a local militia during a battle or skirmish against Native Americans.
- Military records depending on the type (registration card, service record, and pension, etc.) contain a varying range of details. For example, pension records from the Revolutionary War can include pages from a family bible with names and vital dates of relatives.
- Below are some resources that could direct you to military records:
  - <https://www.fold3.com>
  - <http://search.ancestry.com/search/category.aspx?cat=39>
  - <https://www.archives.gov/research/military#page-header>

### **African American Research**

- *Finding a Place Called Home: a Guide to African-American Genealogy and Historical Identity* by Dee Parmer Woodtor is filled with advice and tips for anyone doing African-American genealogy.
  - The first step is to gather family oral tradition as well as documents, and pedigree/family group charts from immediate and extended family members.
  - Woodtor also discussed the importance of utilizing the 1870 and 1880 censuses. It is **important** to pay close attention to details, to analyze carefully, and to look for information hidden between the lines so to speak.
  - Adult family members alive during the 1870 and 1880 censuses generally experienced slavery earlier in their life.
  - A family's location in the 1870 census may be where they were living during or before the Civil War.
- Two records in particular are very important for African-American research. They cover most of the decade following the Civil War (about 1865-1874).
  - **Freedmen's Bureau**  
[https://familysearch.org/wiki/en/African\\_American\\_Freedmen%27s\\_Bureau\\_Records](https://familysearch.org/wiki/en/African_American_Freedmen%27s_Bureau_Records)
  - **Freedman's Bank**  
[https://familysearch.org/wiki/en/African\\_American\\_Freedman%27s\\_Savings\\_and\\_Trust\\_Company\\_Records](https://familysearch.org/wiki/en/African_American_Freedman%27s_Savings_and_Trust_Company_Records)
- The following are excellent resources for African-American genealogical research:
  - [https://familysearch.org/wiki/en/Researching\\_African\\_American\\_Genealogy](https://familysearch.org/wiki/en/Researching_African_American_Genealogy)
  - <https://www.archives.gov/research/african-americans>
  - <http://www.pbs.org/opb/historydetectives/technique/african-american-genealogy/>
  - <https://familysearch.org/african-american-genealogy>

- [https://familysearch.org/wiki/en/African American Genealogy](https://familysearch.org/wiki/en/African_American_Genealogy)
- *Finding A Place Called Home: A Guide to African-American Genealogy and Historical Identity* by Dee Parmer Woodtor. Copy available at Filson Historical Society (call number: 929.1072 W898).