



Basic Research Information

How do I begin?

- Start with what you know which means starting with yourself and work backwards.
- Find as much information as you can about your parents, grandparents, and more distant ancestors. Write the information down.
- Always include maiden names for females, if known. Females will be listed under that name until they were married.
- Include dates and places of births, marriages, and deaths and include the places your ancestors lived between their birth and death, if known. You should always use continental dating (DD MMM YYYY where DD is the day of the month, MMM is the 3 letter abbreviation of the month, and YYYY is the year. For example, 03 Mar 1897 would be March 3, 1897.). Place names should be written in the following format: City or Town, County, State, such as Durant, Bryan, Oklahoma.
- Talk to or write other family members. They often have information or documentation you need. Another family member may also be working on your family tree.
- Record your information on forms referred to as family group sheets and pedigree charts. Indicate a source for each fact. Organize your information so that you can locate an individual in your growing collection of information.

Where do I find the information I need?

- At home: Sources of information include birth certificates, marriage licenses, death certificates, divorce decrees, newspaper clippings, family bibles, diaries, and letters.
- Local and state government offices: A state's Bureau of Vital Statistics can be contacted for copies of birth and death certificates. Records that can be found at a county courthouse include marriage, divorce, land, deeds, and wills (probate). Cemetery records are also sometimes useful.
- Most libraries have books on how to do genealogical research. They also will have books on the history of the area. Most large city libraries have an area dedicated to genealogy. Many university libraries also have genealogical and historical collections available to researchers.
- Genealogical and historical societies, both local and state, are good sources for information. Many have copies of county school records, family histories, censuses, old newspapers, cemetery records, and funeral home records, etc.
- The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (Mormon) Family History Library has "branch" locations called Family History Centers at many of their local facilities. The Family History Library contains a large collection of genealogical documents that may be useful in research. Their Familysearch website has many documents online (www.familysearch.org).
- Records available through the National Archives in Washington, D.C. and the National Archives' regional branches include federal census records from 1790 – 1930, special censuses of various Indian tribes, military and service related records, and passenger arrival records. National Archives website is www.archives.gov.
- The Internet: Several websites, such as Rootsweb (www.rootsweb.com) and Family Search have online guides that give helpful information about how and where to search. Rootsweb and Ancestry.com (www.ancestry.com) also allow people to post their family trees. You may find some of your ancestors included in someone else's tree. Also posting information from your own family tree may provide a link for others that are researching another branch of the same family.

What if I cannot or do not want to do the work myself?

- Researchers are available for a fee. Contact the Board of Certification of Genealogists or the Association of Professional Genealogists and request their listings of genealogical researchers for hire:

Board of Certification of Genealogists
P.O. Box 14291
Washington, D.C. 20044
www.bcgcertification.org

Association of Professional Genealogists
P.O. Box 40393
Denver, Colorado 80204
www.apgen.org

- Local archives, libraries, and societies may also provide the names of individuals in the area who will search records for you.