

Genealogy Research – Getting Started

1. Gather what you already know

Check your attic, collect all those old papers, folders and photos that have been hidden away gathering dust. Talk to your relatives, oldest first. Write down the stories and details (remembering that some of the stories will have been “embroidered” over the years).

2. Decide where you’re going to keep your information

You’ll want some sort of physical file system for your papers (e.g., manilla folders), and a computer program to make and keep your family tree. You can purchase stand-alone software and/or keep your tree on an online program like *Ancestry.com* (\$) or *FamilySearch.org* (free) or *AmericanAncestors.com* (\$). (Just be aware that other people can and most likely will change the data on your *FamilySearch* tree as it is a cooperative public group situation.)

3. Start collecting data and filling in your tree

Start with yourself and work backwards in time. You can fill in the blanks on a paper Pedigree Chart or fill in your data on your computer and then print the chart out. Be sure you have factual proof to back up every piece of data you fill in – and someone else’s tree does not count!! Look for things like censuses, vital records (birth records, marriage certificates, death records), wills, real estate records – you get the idea.

4. Here are the categories of info you can look at, roughly in the order we suggest:

Censuses (This will give you an idea of the size and location of family over time)
Vital Records (Birth, death, marriage, certificates & registers)
Church records (esp. for Colonial New England)
Newspapers
Biographies/Local histories
Military records
Immigration records, ship manifests
Wills, probate, court records
Land records

5. Keep a list of where you looked and didn’t find anything

That way, hopefully you won’t end up repeating the same search again later!

ENJOY YOURSELF, AND TRY NOT TO STAY UP ‘TIL 2:30!