

# Basic Genealogy

## A Guide to Researching Your Family Tree

By the Springfield-Greene County Library Local History and Genealogy Staff

### 1. PREPARE

Before researching outside of your home, it is helpful to understand types of records available—their accessibility, terminology and reliability. Reading one or more basic “how-to” books or online tutorials will help ensure successful searching. Some examples are:

- **Cyndi’s List: Beginners** *www.cyndislist.com/beginner.htm*
- **The Complete Beginner’s Guide to Genealogy, the Internet and Your Genealogy Computer Program** 025.06 C
- **First Steps in Genealogy: A Beginner’s Guide to Researching Your Family History** 929.1 A
- **Genealogy 101: How to Trace Your Family’s History and Heritage** 929.1 R
- **Online Roots: How to Discover Your Family’s History and Heritage With the Power of the Internet** 929.1 P
- **Unpuzzling Your Past: The Best-Selling Basic Guide to Genealogy** 929.1 C

### 2. GATHER

Interview parents, grandparents and other relatives. Anecdotes and memories are just as important as dates and relationships. Take notes! If possible, record or videotape interviews.

Gather family records and photographs. Include official records (birth/death/marriage certificates and legal documents), but don’t forget informal records of family events such as photo albums, baby books, newspaper clippings, school programs and fraternal organizations. Take necessary steps to preserve and share these valuable records.

- **How to Tape Instant Oral Biographies** 920.0028 Z
- **A Preservation Guide: Saving the Past and the Present for the Future** 025.84 S
- **Recording Your Family History** 920.0028 F
- **Uncovering Your Ancestry Through Family Photographs** 929.1 T

### 3. ORGANIZE

Organize information and complete a generation chart (sometimes called an ancestor or pedigree chart) for your ancestors. This will serve as your “road map” for research. For each couple on the generation chart, complete a family group sheet. Genealogical software programs can help you organize information.

Use maiden names for women and record dates with date of month first, followed by name of month, then year using four digits (for example, 4 July 1776).

Consider making an “ancestor profile” for everyone in your family tree. You can include photographs, medical information, hobbies, aptitudes, education diaries and religious affiliation—anything to form an idea of what that person was really like.

- **Beyond Pedigrees: Organizing and Enhancing Your Work** 929.1 W
- **The Genealogist’s Computer Companion** 929.1 M
- **Managing a Genealogical Project** 929.1 D

- **Numbering Your Genealogy: Sound and Simple Systems** 929.1 C
- **The Organized Family Historian: How to File, Manage and Protect Your Genealogical Research and Heirlooms** 929.1 F
- **Organizing Your Family History Search** 929.1 C

## **4. RESEARCH** **Begin with yourself, then work backwards by generation.**

### **STANDARDS**

Evaluate the reliability of information. Was information recorded when the event occurred? When possible, verify information using original records, not compilations.

Carefully record each source of information. Make your description detailed enough so that others can easily find these records. Keep a research log.

- **Evidence! Citation and Analysis for the Family Historian** 929.1 M
- **Cite Your Sources: A Manual for Documenting Family Histories and Genealogical Records** 929.1 L
- **Standard for Sound Genealogical Research** [www.ngsgenealogy.org/comstandsound.htm](http://www.ngsgenealogy.org/comstandsound.htm)

### **GUIDES**

- **Ancestry's Red Book: American State, County and Town Sources** 929.107 C
- **The Genealogist's Address Book** 929.1 B
- **Guide to Genealogical Research in the National Archives** O16.929 U
- **Locating Lost Family Members and Friends** 929.1 H
- **Printed Sources: A Guide to Published Genealogical Records** O16.929 P
- **The Researcher's Guide to American Genealogy** 929.1 G
- **The Source: A Guidebook of American Genealogy** 929.1 S

### **VITAL RECORDS**

Most states did not keep records of births and deaths until 1910. Marriage and divorce records are usually kept at the county level beginning at the time of county formation. Access to information varies from state to state. For further information, see:

- **The Handy Book for Genealogists: United States of America** 929.1 H
- **International Vital Records Handbook** 929.1 K
- **Social Security Death Index** [ssdi.genealogy.rootsweb.com/cgi-bin/ssdi.cgi](http://ssdi.genealogy.rootsweb.com/cgi-bin/ssdi.cgi)
- **Vital Records for the United States** [www.vitalrecordsus.com/](http://www.vitalrecordsus.com/)
- **Cyndi's List: Religion and Churches** [www.cyndislist.com/religion.htm](http://www.cyndislist.com/religion.htm)
- **Missouri Death Certificates 1910-1955** [www.sos.mo.gov/archives/resources/deathcertificates](http://www.sos.mo.gov/archives/resources/deathcertificates)

Vital records may also be found in church records. These may be located in denomination archives or in manuscript collections.

### **COURT RECORDS**

Court records exist on national, state, county and local levels and may include land, naturalization, probate and tax records as well as vital records (especially marriages and divorces). Knowing the court system in a particular state is essential for utilizing these records. *County Courthouse Book* contains a good summary of the system in each state.

- **County Courthouse Book** 347.73 B
- **State and Local Government on the Net** [www.statelocalgov.net](http://www.statelocalgov.net)

## CENSUS

The United States has taken a census every ten years beginning in 1790. Since privacy laws mandate that 72 years must pass before the census schedules are available to the public, the 1930 is the most recent available to research. The amount of information varies from year to year: 1850 was the first to list everyone in the household by name and 1880 was the first to give birthplace of parents. Now available in digitized formats as well as microfilm, most censuses can be easily researched. Printed indexes or the Soundex/Miracode exist for most years. Online indexes exist for every year through AncestryPlus.com and/or HeritageQuest Online. The entire 1880 U.S. census has been indexed by the LDS Church and can be searched online at [www.familysearch.org/](http://www.familysearch.org/).

More information on the U.S. census can be found in:

- **The American Census Handbook** 016.929 K
- **The Census Book: A Genealogist's Guide to Federal Census Facts, Schedules and Indexes: With Master Extraction Forms for Federal Census Schedules, 1790-1930** 929 D
- **Map Guide to the U.S. Federal Census, 1790-1920** 911.73 T
- **National Archives: Genealogists/Family Historians – Census Records** [archives.gov/genealogy/census](http://archives.gov/genealogy/census)
- **Your Guide to the Federal Census for Genealogists, Researchers and Family Historians** 317.3 H

## MILITARY

Compiled service records, pensions and unit histories as well as personal papers can be sources of information about U.S. military service.

- **Civil War Soldiers and Sailors System** [www.civilwar.nps.gov/cwss](http://www.civilwar.nps.gov/cwss)
- **National Archives Military Records** [www.archives.gov/genealogy/military](http://www.archives.gov/genealogy/military)
- **Missouri Soldiers Database: War of 1812-World War I** [sos.mo.gov/archives/soldiers](http://sos.mo.gov/archives/soldiers)
- **Uncle, We are Ready: Registering America's Men, 1917-1918: A Guide to Researching World War I Draft Registration Cards** 355.2 N
- **U.S. Military Records: A Guide to Federal and State Sources, Colonial America to the Present** 317.3 H

## IMMIGRATION AND NATURALIZATION

Many passenger lists did not survive especially in colonial times. Some customs passenger lists exist between 1820-1891. Immigration passenger lists may be found between 1891-1954. Before the Immigration and Naturalization Service was established in September 1906, papers for obtaining naturalized citizenship could be filed in various courts. The massive indexing project by P. William Filby, **Passenger and Immigration Lists Index** (Detroit, MI: Gale Research Co., 1981 with supplements in 1985, 1990, 1995, 2000), is now available on CD-ROM and online. See also:

- **American Family Immigration History Center (Ellis Island)** [ellisland.org/](http://ellisland.org/)
- **American Naturalization Records, 1790-1990: What They Are and How to Use Them** 929.1 N
- **American Passenger Arrival Records** 929.1 T
- **Castle Garden: Americas's First Immigration Center** [www.castlegarden.org](http://www.castlegarden.org)
- **Cyndi's List: Immigration and Naturalization** [www.cyndislist.com/immigrat.htm](http://www.cyndislist.com/immigrat.htm)
- **A Genealogist's Guide to Discovering Your Immigrant and Ethnic Ancestors** 929.1 C
- **They Became Americans: Finding Naturalization Records and Ethnic Origins** 929.1 S
- **They Came in Ships: A Guide to Finding Your Immigrant Ancestor's Arrival Record** 929.1 C

## SHARE

One of the greatest gifts you can leave your children, grandchildren and other relatives is a record of your family history research. Consider publishing your research and donating to a library or archive. The National Genealogical Society, [ngsgenealogy.org/comstandsharing.htm](http://ngsgenealogy.org/comstandsharing.htm), provides standards for sharing information with others.

- **Bringing Your Family History to Life Through Social History** 929.1 S
- **Digitizing Your Family History: Easy Methods for Preserving Your Heirloom Documents, Photos, Home Movies and More in a Digital Format** 929.1 M
- **A Family Affair: How to Plan and Direct the Best Family Reunion Ever** 394.2 C
- **Producing a Quality Family History** 808.06 H
- **Publishing Your Family History on the Internet** 929.1 W
- **Web Publishing for Genealogy** 929.1028 C
- **Writing Family Histories and Memoirs** 929.1 P

## INTERNET SITES

Access Genealogy [accessgenealogy.com/](http://accessgenealogy.com/)

Ancestry.com [ancestry.com/](http://ancestry.com/) (Some items require paid subscription.) Accessible at the Library as Ancestry Library Edition.

Cyndi's List of Genealogy Sites on the Internet [www.cyndislist.com/](http://www.cyndislist.com/)

Family Search Internet Genealogy Service (LDS Church) [familysearch.org](http://familysearch.org)

Genealogy and Local History Resources Mid-Continent Public Library [www.mcpl.lib.mo.us/genlh](http://www.mcpl.lib.mo.us/genlh)  
GenForum [genforum.com](http://genforum.com)

Greene County, Missouri, Archives [www.greenecountymo.org/web/Archives/](http://www.greenecountymo.org/web/Archives/)

Heritage Quest Online (subscription through Library)

Linkpendium.com [www.linkpendium.com/](http://www.linkpendium.com/)

Local History and Genealogy Reading Room (Library of Congress) [lcweb.loc.gov/rr/genealogy/](http://lcweb.loc.gov/rr/genealogy/)

Missouri State Archives [sos.mo.gov/archives](http://sos.mo.gov/archives)

National Archives and Records Administration Genealogists/Family Historians [archives.gov/genealogy](http://archives.gov/genealogy)

National Genealogical Society [www.ngsgenealogy.org](http://www.ngsgenealogy.org)

Ozarks Genealogical Society [www.rootsweb.com/-ozarksgs/](http://www.rootsweb.com/-ozarksgs/)

RootsWeb.com Home Page [www.rootsweb.com](http://www.rootsweb.com)

State Historical Society of Missouri at Columbia [www.unsystem.edu/sbs/](http://www.unsystem.edu/sbs/)

The U.S. GenWeb Project [usgenweb.org](http://usgenweb.org)

WorldGenWeb Project [worldgenweb.org](http://worldgenweb.org)



**Springfield-Greene County Library District**

P.O. Box 760 • Springfield, MO 65801-0760 • [thelibrary.springfield.missouri.org](http://thelibrary.springfield.missouri.org)