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Start Your Search in the Bottom Left-Hand Dresser Drawer

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Course Description: Some of the most valuable genealogy records are as close as family and friends. You'll find records in scrapbooks, shoeboxes, safe-deposit boxes, under beds, pockets of old clothes, and any number of other places. We'll discuss types of records you'll find, how to handle them, and how to use them in your genealogical research.

Genealogy Information Found at Home

The following table lists the possible items in the home that can provide valuable genealogical information. At home is the best place to start. The genealogy process is to start with the known and work to the unknown.

Personal Records	Certificates	Family Records
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Autograph Album• Baby Book• Biography• Bookplates• Diary• Funeral Book• Guest register• Journal• Letters• Personal Knowledge• Photographs• Scrapbooks• Travel Account/Log• Wedding Book	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Achievements/Awards• Adoption• Apprenticeship• Baptism• Birth• Christening / Blessing• Confirmation• Death• Divorce• Graduation• Marriage• Membership• Ministerial / Missionary• Ordination	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bible• Books of Remembrance• Family Bulletins / Letters• Family Group Sheets• Family Histories• Family Traditions• Genealogies• Letters & Postcards• Local Histories• Manuscript Histories• Pedigrees• Printed Histories

Military Records	Legal Papers	Announcements
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bounty Award • Citations • Disability • Discharge • Firearms • Military Service • National Guard • Pension • Ribbons / Sword • Selective Service • Separation papers • Service Medals • Uniform • War Rosters/Memorials 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Abstracts of Title • Adoption Papers • Bonds • Contracts • Deeds • Guardian Papers • Land Grants • Leases • Loans • Mortgages • Summons / Subpoenas • Tax Notices • Water Rights • Wills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anniversary • Birth • Birthday Celebration • Death • Divorce • Engagement • Funeral • Graduation • Memorial Cards • New Home • New Job / Promotion • Professional • Travel • Wedding

Membership Records	Health Records	School Records
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awards • Member ID Cards • Programs • Publications • Uniforms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hospital Records • Immunizations • Insurance Reports • Medical Records • X-rays 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alumni Lists / Frats/Sororities • Awards / Honor Roll • Diplomas / Transcripts • Report Cards • Yearbooks / Publications

Citizenship Papers	Newspaper Clippings	Licenses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alien Registration • Denegation / Denials • Deportment • Naturalization • Passport • Vaccination • Visa 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Announcements • Home Town Newspapers • Human Interest • Obituaries • Professional / Trade • Special Events • Vital Statistics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business • Drivers • Firearms • Hunting • Motor Vehicle Registration • Occupation • Professional

Employment Records	Household Items	Books
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apprenticeship / Graduation • Awards / Citations • Income tax • Pension / IRA / 401k • Retirement papers • Severance papers • Social Security • Union / Professional Assoc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clothing • Coat of Arms • Dishes • Engraved Jewelry • Friendship Quilt • Insignias • Needlework • Plaques • Sampler • Silverware • Souvenirs • Tapestries • Tools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Atlases • Baby book • Bibles • Foreign Language • Inscriptions • Journals • Prizes • Test books • Treasured Volumes • Vocational • Yearbooks

Financial Records
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accounts / Receipts • Bills / Check Stubs • Estate records

Step by Step Research Process

Step 1. Identify Known Family information

- Collect family information from home records and relatives.
- Check for previous research that has been compiled for your family. Find published family histories. Search computerized family trees such as Ancestral File, Pedigree Resource File, and Ancestry World Tree/Rootsweb WorldConnect.
- Record the information, including sources (where you found the information).
- Organize and file documents, photocopies, and other printed material.
- A lot of the information you collect in this step will be second-hand, from what are called secondary or derivative sources. This data will need to be verified.

Step 2. Decide what you want to learn about your family

- Print out a pedigree chart and appropriate family group record(s).
- Examine your data. Start with you and your immediate family, and then work backward through the generation's one ancestor or family at a time.
 - Generation 1—You
 - Generation 2—Your Parents
 - Generation 3—Your Grand Parents
 - Generation 4—Your Great Grand Parents
- Identify data that you collected in Step 1 that needs verification.
- Identify any missing or questionable data.
- Determine a question you want to answer.

- Form a hypotheses or educated guess based on what you already know and any customs or common practices that apply.

Step 3. Select records to search

- Plan your search strategy to achieve your research objective.
- Determine what type of record(s) might contain the information that you need.
- Determine where you might find the record(s).
- Determine if any other resources, such as an index or catalog, might help you find that record.

Step 4. Obtain and search the record

- Follow the search strategy you outlined in Step 3.
- Order a microfilm, use a computerized database, do an Internet search, visit a library . . .
- Take notes, make photocopies, print out web pages . . .
- Record the source citation on your research log and on any photocopies or notes you make.
- Include comments about the record.
- Summarize what you find in each record on your research log, including negative results.

Step 5. Evaluate and use the information

- Read carefully the information you've found.
- Look for clues in addition to the obviously stated facts.
- Consider the reliability of the source.
- Add new data to your family records or genealogy computer file.
- File any documents and printed materials.

Research Guidelines

- Work from the known to the unknown. Clues in what you know may lead to new sources.
- Search one generation at a time. It is usually easier to prove parentage than to prove descent.
- Search for an ancestor's entire family rather than following just the direct line. Records for other family members can provide clues about your ancestor.
- Search a broad time period. Look for several years (or more) before and after you think an event may have occurred.
- Watch for spelling variations—they seem to be the rule rather than the exception! It may be helpful to start a list of spelling variations for each of your family names.
- Use maps, gazetteers, etc. to find out about your ancestor's location. Be aware of county boundary changes—these changes may affect where you look for records.
- Keep a research calendar, log, or notebook to plan and record your research activities. You may use a pre-printed form. Or use a word processing or spreadsheet program to create your own. As you spend more time researching, you will realize that you need more than one log.
- How you set up your logs will be an individual choice based on a number of factors, a major one being your own "style." You may decide to have a log for each couple on your pedigree chart, or for a certain locality, or for a certain record type. You may want to keep a separate log for online research.