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Constructing Your Family Tree

The Ancestral Detective: Basic How-To Tips to Researching the Family Tree

Researching your family tree can be one of the most rewarding things you will ever do. It can help you to gain a sense of place. It can help give you a background that you can understand and identify with. It is, however, an arduous, and at times, overwhelming process that will take years. When you get ready to start your genealogy research, consider the following four areas: the family home, your own information about important family events, interviews with family members, and research that has already been completed by others.

The first thing to consider when you start your research is the family home. This may be your home or that of another relative. While you don't necessarily have to be examining the home itself (though you could be if it is been in the family for years), you should be looking at heirlooms, gifts, and papers that have been handed down from generation to generation. These things can give you little bits of information about your relatives from the past and their lives. They can also help to give you some context in which to start your research.

When you begin this search, it is important not to overlook anything, as items can have dates or manufacturer's stamps that can help you identify places and dates. These relics can also help you understand your relatives in the context of time in terms of their tastes and social status within their time period. Clothing like wedding dresses and military uniforms can help demonstrate your relatives' sizes. Furniture is a good indicator of social status. Jewelry is likely to be engraved and, therefore, provide some dating clues. Books and letters can provide some clue as to the educational status of your family members. Toys and other kinds of collectibles can provide some level of understanding as to the popular past times of the period you are researching.

Once you've located the heirlooms that are valuable to your research, be sure to store them properly. Light, temperature changes in any extreme, insects, moisture, dust, and mold are all real problems with object storage. Be sure to choose a storage location and container that is free from these problems. Before you do any sort of cleaning or displaying, be sure that you know how to best care for the type of object you are dealing with. Sometimes simply handling an object can destroy it. Do a bit of research on how best to deal with your particular object or consult a conservator.

Once you've determined how to handle the object, clean it carefully, and choose the best method of display for it. Be sure to let relatives know, whether in person or on paper, a little about the object. After all, the secret treasure shouldn't go to the grave with you as it did with your ancestors.

Once you've found your family heirlooms, work on researching your own memories. Start by making a simple family tree with birth dates, death dates, and any other information you can come up with. Start with you and your children and work back as far as you possibly can. This list, no matter how incomplete, will help you decide where you have gaps in your information and where you need to start your research. Once you've made your list, consult a few other relatives to determine where you are correct or to fill in the missing pieces.

This brings us to our next step: interviewing family members. You should not only interview them to discover the basic information, you should also interview them to assemble some sense of oral history: a story of their lives from their perspectives. Remember that open-ended questions get the best responses, and try to be respectful at all times.

One thing you should consider as you begin the path to family research is looking at what others have done before you. If you already know someone in your family who is working on a family tree, contact them to share notes. You might also try looking at places like the World Family Tree to see what has been submitted about your family lines.

Discovering your ancestral roots can be a challenging process, but it is usually well worth the information in the end.

Give the Gift of Genealogy – Five Gifts That Reflect the Family Tree

What to give the person who has everything....hmmmm, how about the gift of heritage? Researching your family tree has become very popular, raising interest in many people as to where their ancestors came from, how they got here, and what they were doing. With that in mind, here are a few gift ideas that will help a person along the way in reflecting a family tree.

1) Family tree research software. In the old days hundreds of hours of research in the library, cross checking and cross referencing, would be required to do what simple, inexpensive software can help you do these days. Anyone involved in genealogy will appreciate a good family tree research program. Most programs are user friendly and intuitive.

2) A coat of arms. If your family is in any of the lines that offer a crest, or heraldry, then a reproduction to hang on your wall will make a great addition to family room décor. There are a great many reputable companies that specialize in reproducing coats of arms. If your family has one, then it will be appreciated for years to come.

3) A family history. Many times genealogy researchers compile family histories telling the story of a particular family from their first trip from the old country to the new world. If a history of your family has been compiled, it may be available for purchase and will

be an heirloom the whole family will enjoy reading.

4) A history of surnames. Where did your name come from? How about your wife's name? What is your mother's maiden name? A history of surnames provides fascinating reading.

5) A collection of old photographs. If you are an active family tree researcher you are probably also a collector of old photos, and may have many that could be duplicated, or even scanned and put into electronic form. Giving a person a collection of old photos of family members, with captions identifying the family members is sure to be appreciated and really won't cost you very much to put together. You just need to scan the photos, add identification captions, print them out on nice glossy paper, and insert them in a low cost photo album. This will be a conversation starter for years and something that will probably be passed down among the generations.

All of these will make great gifts for anyone interested in genealogy. Other possible gifts would include a family bible, to be used to keep your own records for the future; a subscription to a good genealogy magazine that would provide hours of fun filled reading every month for a year; tuition for classes in history or research at the local university or community college to help a genealogist enhance knowledge and skills; or how about taking that old photo of your great grandmother and having it reproduced into a large enough to hang portrait?

Genealogy used to be thought of as a stuffy hobby for people who liked to hang out in dusty libraries and back rooms, but these days it is a hobby the whole family can enjoy. One great thing about genealogy study is that it can help your children get an appreciation of history. If you've traced your own family history for instance back to the Oklahoma land rush, then watching a movie about the Oklahoma Sooners will be fun for the whole family. If you know you had ancestors in the Civil War, then watching *North and South*, or any movie that covers the time period will be appreciated and bring history to life.

If you have a relative who was living in New York during the 1890's then a movie covering that time period would be interesting. If you know what your own ancestors were doing during a particular time period, you have a good understanding of what you might have been doing yourself during that period had you been alive. Passing this love of history, and imaginative way of looking at things on to your children will serve them well in years to come and allow them to get a head start on many of their classes. Giving the gift of genealogy will help them, and provide you will a sense of wellbeing and enjoyment. Enjoy.

How Computer Software Can Streamline Your Genealogy Research

Computer software can make your family tree research a breeze, relatively speaking – pun intended, of course. Using family tree software allows the creation of online data

bases to sort records; the storage of digital photos with other documents, scanning of old records, easy sharing with other researchers, and a world of information at your fingertips through the Internet.

When looking for appropriate genealogy software, look for easy to use features that seem intuitive. Many programs will allow matching of information from various online databases. Some have features that check various name combinations that are similar and rate connections according to probability. These features are quite handy. It is also helpful if the program allows you to input data from other genealogy programs or databases and spreadsheets like Microsoft Access and Excel.

The software you choose should be well organized and easy to read, displaying needed information on the screen in an easy to follow format. Many allow you to click on name tabs of a child or a parent and view the personal data, which can include the name of spouse, place and date of birth, marriage, death and of burial. Good software will also allow you to tie in other lineage information, such as adoption records, stepchildren, biographies, descendant charts, and other information you will find helpful.

Some deluxe software programs go a step further and offer extra features. These can include a county verifier for counties in the US, allowing the user to view all of the counties in a state with their founding dates to hunt for discrepancies. All genealogists who have tried to find a location in a county that has been dissolved or reorganized can appreciate this feature. Another nice added feature in some deluxe software is the ability to search for a location by various means: county, state, country, town, city or province.

Some software even has a potential problems report, this will highlight dates the genealogist should double-check. Another nice feature is the reformatting of inconsistently formatted databases to make sure that records match. And another deluxe feature is web site creation. Some programs will allow the user to make their own genealogy web sites without knowing HTML or other computer code. By creating web sites a user is able to share work easily with other genealogists without having to retype information, make photocopies or spend a bundle on postage. And think of the time that is saved.

Before personal computers became popular genealogists had to spend many hours in libraries and research centers. The tool of choice was the microfilm reader. Photocopy machines received a workout. Handwritten notes were extensive, and subject to misinterpretation. Today's computers, with good software and the Internet provide a world of opportunity for the genealogist that would have seemed like magic only thirty years ago.

Additionally the need to visit libraries in many cases is now no longer necessary. While there are times when information is still only available on microfilm, many libraries have converted their microfilm to digital format and have made it available online, allowing a person to do research from the comfort of their own home. Imagine doing your genealogy research in your pajamas, at 4 a.m. if that is the time you prefer. Good genealogy software makes it possible.

When looking at software, remember that most of the best companies have enough faith in their programs to offer a 30-day free trial period. You can try the software out, use it for a month and make sure that it truly fits your needs and desires. Then if you choose to buy, paying online with a credit card allows you to keep using the software permanently without having to reinstall. This is another improvement over the past, and certainly an improvement no one complains about.

Whether you use Windows 95, 98, ME, 2000, NT or XP, there are many good programs on the market for genealogists. And it doesn't matter if you are a beginner, intermediate or an expert. All researchers can benefit from good genealogy software, so give it a try and you'll certainly be glad you did.

How Creating a Timeline for Your Family's History Assists Your Search

Successfully filling in a family tree and uncovering the details of your family history can be an incredibly complex and overwhelming process. Charts and other organizational timelines, either on paper or in computer programs, can help you gather all of the genealogical material you have discovered in a comprehensive and presentable manner. Timelines come in a variety of forms. For example, genealogy charts focus on either the descendants or ascendants of a particular family member; family group sheets focus on specific individuals in a family, their spouses, and their children; and chronological profiles plot the life of a single individual. Each form basically builds on the other forms, and they are often used in conjunction with one another.

The most basic type of timeline is an ascendant chart, also known as pedigree chart. It typically begins with you, on the left of the timeline, and branches out to the right, going backwards in time through your parents, your parent's parents, and onwards. It can include between four and fifteen generations of ancestors, with four generations being the easiest to work with visually.

Earlier ancestors can each receive charts of their own. Pedigree charts often includes birth, marriage, and death dates and places, as well as maiden names and nicknames, but they do not include citations of the sources where you received your information. Take special care to include as much information as possible on the pedigree chart, however, including full names, complete locations, and complete dates so that you know what, if any, information you are missing. You can refer back to the charts later and add more information or change incorrect information.

Each individual in a pedigree chart typically receives two family group sheets, one for his role as the child of two of your ancestors and one for his later role as the spouse and parent of two of your ancestors. Each sheet contains vital data on a married couple, such as the dates and locations for their births, christenings, marriages, deaths, burials, employment, military service, and their parents' and children's names. Their children's birth and death dates and locations and the names of their spouses are also included.

The sources where you found the information for a family group sheet must also be included so that facts can be both double-checked by you and referenced by others.

Descendant charts are the most difficult of the multi-individual charts to complete. They are typically derived from completed ascendant charts and family group sheets. They begin with the earliest proven person in your paternal or maternal line, also known as your progenitor, and move forward in time through his or her descendants. On a descendant chart, you can include all of your progenitor's descendants or only the descendants which lead directly to you.

Sometimes you may want to delve into one of your ancestor's lives in greater detail, or you may want to record your life or your parents' lives in greater detail for future generations. In this case, you can create a chronological profile that will help you move beyond simple birth, marriage, and death dates in order to better see gaps or discrepancies in your information. A profile often serves as a road map, of sorts, pointing you in the direction you need to take your genealogical research.

A chronological profile should be set up with separate vertical columns for the date on which an event occurred; the age at which the event occurred; a description of the event itself; and the sources containing the information you provided about the event. Events that should be recorded include the birth, death and marriage dates of all of your ancestor's immediate descendants; the location of his residence and place of employment in different census years; the details of his education, employment, and involvement in the armed forces; the details of any religious events, such as christenings or conversions; information from tax records and court records; and the death dates of immediate relatives.

Plotting the small details of your ancestor's life may allow you to catch problems with your data, both big and small, that you might have otherwise missed. Marriages at birth or at very tender ages, impossible reproductive feats, or military service at odd ages could indicate either that you should double-check your sources for errors in your note-taking or that the source itself is incorrect. Chronological profiles also highlight missing pieces of information. Perhaps you had to leave large chunks of your ancestor's life blank, or maybe large gaps between his marriage and the birth of his children could indicate missing descendents. Locating the gaps in your knowledge will help guide your research.

Locating Family Members Who Immigrated to America

Centuries ago, the first of hundreds of thousands of immigrants arrived in America. Over the years, they have appeared at America's doorstep for a variety of reasons. In the early days of the sixteen hundreds, they came with a sense of exploration and a hope for a better life. That hope carries over into America's immigrants even today. As time passed, people started coming for very different reasons. Many had farms destroyed in other countries and came to America with the hope to find new farms. Others came with

the hope of getting an education or to find a better paying job to support their families. Still others came to get those better jobs so they could send money back to their home countries.

With the World Wars, many immigrants arrived in America to escape the oppression of horrible government regimes. Whatever the reason, whatever the time, this culture of immigration has made America a wonderful melting pot of cultures. It can, though, make it immensely difficult to locate family members who immigrated to America because of the sheer numbers of immigrants that have arrived over the past three centuries.

By the 1820s, American immigration numbers began to skyrocket to over ten thousand. Prior to this era, immigration was documented, but poorly. As a result, it can be a much more difficult task to track family members who immigrated to America before eighteen twenty. After that year, immigration officials began to insert more protocols into the system to ensure immigrants were tracked appropriately.

By eighteen seventy, America was seeing so many immigrants, more laws were passed to limit the numbers of foreign born people into the country. As a result, any family members who came in after that time were more carefully documented, making it even easier to track them down. By the 1920's, more quotas were put into place, as were more tracking regulations. All of these laws have made it easier and easier to find your family's immigrants.

When you get ready to start your search, a date is helpful, but not necessary. There are several ways you can go about locating family members who immigrated to America. You can start by using a paid service. There are a number of these on the Internet. You simply choose a service you like, offer them all of the information you have, and let them handle the tracking process for you. This can be a bit costly, but in the end, it can save you a lot of time and hassle.

If you are interested in handling the research yourself, you can start by examining passenger manifests to ships that would have carried immigrants. Again, a date here is helpful, but not completely necessary. A port of arrival is also helpful. Without these two things, you are going to spend an extensive amount of time shooting in the dark for the right passenger manifest. Some of the services that provide these indexes require payment. Others provide the service for free. Both the Internet and your local library will be invaluable sources as you begin your search for passenger lists.

Another important thing you can do in your search to track your family immigrants is network with others. Try enlisting the help of other interested family members. Two heads are always better than one when you are attempting to deal with this much data. There are also literally hundreds of genealogy bulletin boards on the Internet that you can consult for help. Simply post a query and wait for others to respond. If you are uncomfortable posting a query to a website, you can try posting a query in a genealogy magazine. There are several reputable publications that can help you track the family members you need to find.

One final way to attempt to track your family members is to look at indices that have already been compiled. The LDS family research center is one of the largest genealogical libraries in the world with thousands of family trees and extensive information already compiled. There are also a number of other databases available on the Internet for your searching purposes. Some require a fee while others are completely free.

Searching can be a difficult process, but finally locating family members who immigrated to America can be intensely useful to your family history.

How to Follow-up Leads for Possible Native American Ancestors

One of the most difficult tasks in creating a family tree is following up leads in your Native American ancestry. Many modern tribes today do not keep records that go back very far. One of the first places you should begin to look is the Bureau of Indian Affairs. The BIA was established in 1824 and was originally part of the War Department. Most of the bureau's tasks included treaty making and breaking and recruiting other tribes to help fight in the war.

According to the Bureau of Indian Affairs, they do not keep a national Indian registry or any kind of database. They also do not do any genealogy research. They will tell you that some offices around the country have records concerning Indian ancestry, but they will still insist that there is not any list or database. However, some branches of the Bureau of Indian Affairs will tell you that there are "current records of lists commonly called rolls", but there is no supporting documentation to go along with these rolls. When you call the Bureau of Indian Affairs you should be prepared to give the name of the tribe, names and birthdates of the person, and relationships. You must provide specific information otherwise offices will not provide useful information.

Another good place to look is by checking microfilm census records. Annual census rolls were taken of individual tribes by government agents, usually under the supervision of the Bureau of Indian Affairs. The census data was gathered and the amount of information is different with each record. All of them include names, either American birth names in English, Native American or both; age and/or date of birth, gender, the person's relationship to the head of household, and a roll number. Beginning in 1930, (and in some cases even earlier), many censuses also designate the person's degree of Native American blood, their marital status, and often the place of residence.

The key to using these microfilms will mean knowing how to use them, and to know which one you want to look at. The best method for this is to know what geographical area to start looking in. You should also know the name of the agency that made the original record. Historical records will also help guide you in the right direction. The more information you have when you start, the easier it will be to locate the right microfilm. A list of microfilm rolls for the tribes named below may be found on most libraries record page.

You can also contact some local offices that deal with Indian archives for information. Unlike the Bureau of Indian Affairs, these tend to have more information and usually are more willing to work with people doing their own research. You will have a better chance by contacting them than you will by contacting the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

Here are some addresses of places to contact for more information on Indian Ancestry:

The Oklahoma Historical Society 2100 N. Lincoln Oklahoma City, OK 73105,

Chief, Archives Branch Federal Archives and Records Center P. O. Box 6216 Fort Worth, TX 76115

Heart of America Indian Center 1340 E. Admiral Boulevard Kansas City MO, 64124 (816) 421 - 7608, fax (816) 421 - 6493

American Indian Center 4115 Connecticut Street St. Louis, MO 63116 (314) 773 - 3316

Northern Cherokee Nation of the Old Louisiana Territory 1012 Business Highway 63 North Columbia, MO 65201 (573) 44 3 -8424

Southwest Missouri Indian Center 2422 W. Division Springfield, MO 65802 (417) 869 - 9550, fax (417) 869 - 0922

Saponi Nation of Missouri Mahenips Band c/o 3445 CR 4990 Willow Springs, MO, 65793 (417) 469 - 2547

Cherokee National Historical Society and Cherokee Registration Office P. O. Box 515 Tahlequah, OK 74464 - 0515 (918) 456 - 6007

For Delaware, Osage, Shawnee and Kaw tribes: Kansas State Historical Society 120 West Tenth Topeka, KS 66612 - 1291

Bureau of Indian Affairs Muskogee Agency, 4th Floor Federal Bldg. Muskogee OK 74401

LDS Library 35 North West Temple Street, Salt Lake City, UT 84150

Newberry Library 60 West Walton Street Chicago, IL 60610 - 3394

Using all of these sources, as well as your local library will enable you to get a lot of useful information for you ancestral search.

Fact or Fiction: How to Know When You Have a True Lead

In Your Family Research

Deciding to create a family genealogy requires knowing where to search and how to find accurate information. One of the problems that will occur when recording family history is finding leads that do not hold true about your history. Because of this, it is important to know when you have a true lead in your family research and when it is simply more information that you can set aside. There are several ways to help you in determining whether your family research is fact or fiction.

The first thing that will help you recognize whether your family research is true is by noticing the type of evidence that is being used in your information. Direct evidence is recorded information that does not need any interpretation or further research. This is the best way to know that you have a family lead. If you have direct evidence, it will clearly fit into other evidence that you have found. It will also not need any interpretation with the date that it was recorded and with the people or events that were occurring. Indirect evidence, however, is usually information found from circumstances. This is second hand information and does not lead directly to your family history and will require more effort and search.

Finding the basic facts for your genealogy not only includes finding primary sources and knowing which ones are valid, but also documenting accurate facts. When comparing information, always look into records that you know will be applicable to your search. Marriage records, baptisms, burials, minutes, military pensions, etc. are all types of accurate information that can be used as primary sources. These will help you to build a foundation when documenting your genealogical history. From here, you will be able to link other sources from magazines and newspapers to your genealogy.

Another thing to look at when deciphering between true or false information with your family is the sources that you are using. Every source, whether it is on a website or from a newspaper, should have certain sightings attached to it in order to ensure that it is the right quality. The first type of sources that you should use are recorded when the event of your ancestor has taken place. These are the best ways to find leads with your family research. You will recognize certain dates and people in these types of sources that can help lead to the right conclusions. Secondary sources, on the other hand, are records that were put down after a significant amount of time passed with the history. While these can help fill in some holes or gaps with your research, they will also require more time and effort to find more substantial facts.

The information that is received from the sources should always have information attached to the sources that proves that the evidence is not being generated falsely. This means that you should be able to document all of the information that you find from the genealogy source that you are using. Names, dates, websites, etc. should all have complete documentation. If they don't, then they are probably not direct links to your lineage.

After you have discovered a certain amount of evidence and decided on whether the information is accurate or not, then you can begin interpreting the data. With everything that you have found, there are gaps and holes that can be filled in. This will lead to more accurate and consistent information about your family history. It will also allow you to find contradictory information that you may have thought was direct or secondary evidence before. When you find leads, it is important to decide what the gaps are that need to be filled in, which allows you to validate the information about your ancestry.

By doing thorough investigations of genealogy information, you will be more likely to find the accurate information needed. Documenting sources, comparing information, filling in gaps of information, and finding primary sources will all help to ensure that you are finding factual information about your genealogy. By not investigating and looking into the details of your family history, you may run into false information or sources that will move you in the wrong direction when discovering your genealogy.

Separating Fact From Fiction in Historical Family Stories

As you sit down to do a genealogy interview with your grandfather, he leans over and whispers to you, "You know, your great-great-grandmother was a Cherokee Indian Princess, don't you?" You will probably encounter this at some point in your family history research. Most people do. It can be extremely difficult to decipher fact from fiction as you are working through your research. While most of the stories you hear will have bits of truth embedded in them, it can be difficult to separate fact from fiction.

One of the first ways to decide what is and is not true is to familiarize your self with the common family history myths most genealogy researchers encounter. The first one is the story about some member of your family being an Indian princess. This myth almost always takes place in the Cherokee tribe, though you might occasionally hear of a Navajo or Apache princess. There are many reasons this myth might have evolved, but the primary one was prejudice against Native Americans.

In past years, it was very difficult for most parts of American society to accept any white males marrying Native American women. Giving her the status of princess, while usually completely false, made it a bit easier to deal with. It is important to remember, though, that simply having Native American ancestry may also be a complete myth. It has become a rather popular ancestry to acknowledge in the past few years, so it is important to find some solid evidence before you jump into the belief.

Another popular myth is that three brothers immigrated to America. You rarely hear about seven brothers or two brothers and one sister. As a result, it can make tracking passenger manifests and other documentation difficult if the numbers and the genders of the immigrants are skewed. You will want to try to confirm that there were actually three brothers instead of one brother and two uncles or whatever other numbers, genders, and relationships your family immigrants may have had.

The myth of having a stowaway immigrant history is also a popular one. Everyone seems to have had a great grandfather who was a stowaway on a ship. It seems to be more interesting. The truth is, though, that this was not a common practice. Even if you truly did have a stowaway in your family, they will be listed on the passenger arrival list of the ship, typically in the index or on the last page, as they were usually discovered before the ship managed to dock.

Another interesting genealogy myth is the one about having someone famous in your background. It's hard to have the name Smith without considering the possibility that you were once related to John Smith, the explorer. That, however, doesn't make it so. You will have to do some serious research, here, because it is possible that you were actually related to someone famous, but it is not likely. It is just a story people tell to make them feel as if they are legitimizing the family line. One final popular myth is that the family surname was switched at Ellis Island. No such practice ever existed. The most Ellis Island officials ever did was comparing the passenger names to the list created at the departure of the ship. In all likelihood, any names that were switched occurred because the immigrants themselves wanted the names changed to better fit with current American society at the time.

Once you've figured out the popular myths, it's time to start working the truth out of your own family stories. It is best to rely on actual documentation, or primary sources, for your major finds. However, that is not always possible. As a result, if you must rely on oral history interviews, one of the best tips is to be sure to verify the information you have gotten through two or three other people. Relatives are notorious for trying to make the family sound a bit different than it actually is, and talking to several family members can usually help you find the level of truth that you need in your research.

Sorting out fact from fiction in family myths can be very difficult sometimes, but doing it well the first time will help you get an accurate family history that will help generations to come will appreciate.

Logging the Family History – Why Documentation Is Important

Once you've begun the process of researching your family history, you've probably also begun the long practice of writing your family story. The family story is a concise, logical document that can help others to view your research in a reader-friendly format. It can help them become truly interested in the research that you have done. One of the most important aspects of any family story, though, is the documentation of sources.

Most people believe that because they have no intention of publishing their work or submitting it to anyone besides family members in any way that the sources do not need to be documented. However, documentation is essential for a number of different reasons. First, documentation can make your research go smoother. By that, I mean the research can be both easier and faster through the process of documentation, because

most people do their genealogy research in little bits. As a result, it can make it go smoother if you log where you got certain bits of information. That way you can go back to the source if you require more information at a future date.

Proper documentation can also help you and others from completing duplicate research. If you document your sources, someone who decides to build on your research in the future will know which sources have and have not been used. Likewise, it is a huge time-saver for you if you know which sources the research you are building on was written with. You don't have to consult sources that will take you in circles.

Another reason to use proper documentation is to help others have a bit of confidence in your research. Many people have found that they have to correct certain family legends as their ancestral research begins. Documentation can help those who come after you to realize that you have done your homework; in other words, none of what you have written is subject to the family legends and lore of the past. Moreover, you will want to have proof of your research in case you ever decide to publish your findings or in case you ever need to contact a professional researcher.

One final reason to document your research is because it is not a difficult process. When most people think of documentation, they think back to their school days with footnotes, end notes, works cited pages, and extensive bibliographies. While there is a proper format, which we will discuss next, the truth of the matter is that you only need to leave enough information for others to tell where your source material came from. For example, you might want to record something like 1850 census, DeKalb County, Missouri, page 291.

While that type of entry may be adequate, it is only a bare minimum entry. If you want to be a bit more thorough, or you intend to publish your findings, there is a basic citation format that will be very important to your work. Try this order: author, article title, publication title, publisher place, publisher name, year published, page numbers. With this format, you can list up to three authors. If the work you are dealing with has more than three, list the first author and add "et al" to the entry.

You will want to list both the article title and the book title if you are dealing with an anthology type text. This can help people discover exactly what you were looking at within that text. Put your article title in quotation marks, and place your text title in italics.

The information about the publisher is the most extensive for a number of reasons. First, most publishing houses have more than one location, and if they have produced similar books, it can be hard to figure out which publisher you are trying to deal with. Second, publishing houses come and go frequently. As a result, it can be hard to locate a publisher after they have left their business. The final bit of this entry is the page number or numbers, as the case may be. This can be immensely helpful to the next researcher, as they will not have to sift through the mountain of text you had to.

Documentation can be very important to your research. If you don't want to document, consider documenting for those who will inevitably come after you.

Recording Historical Information for Future Family Genealogists

One of the most important parts of finding your family genealogy is making sure that it is recorded. This will help when future family members want to find specific information about their family. It will also help you to know exactly where you left off with recording your history, in case you have to set the research aside for a certain amount of time. By recording all of the historical information that you find, it will help to let others know about the facts that you found, instead of living off of the myths that have been passed down.

One of the main reasons behind recording your historical information is to be able to provide others with accurate information. By beginning a search on your genealogy, others in the family will be able to help with your mission of finding lineages. Others in the family can review the information that you find after they have found new resources. This will allow more information to be retrieved about your lineage, as well as a sharing of primary documentation with your family.

Once you have recorded information, future family genealogists can then compare the validity of the information that you have found. Many times, someone else in the family will be able to fill in gaps or holes of information that you were not able to find. By allowing them to be able to find the information that you have, they can then compare their information and add onto the history of the family. This will allow a more accurate amount of historical information in relation to your family lineage to be recorded and continuously added onto.

If the others in your family are beginning to take an interest in the genealogy and history of their family, and didn't before, providing them with the sources that you have found will help in giving them a jump-off point for their searches. This way, they won't have to put in any extra energy and search time for information that has already been found. They will know exactly where to go in order to begin their searches. By simply recording where you went to find your information, you are allowing others in the family to move further forward with their searches, instead of having to retrace what you have already done.

If you are not concerned about the future family genealogists finding information in your family, then you should still record your family history for references for future research that you may want to do. This is especially important if you have found a fact later on that is different than the assumptions that have been made. At a later time, you can then go back to the same source in order to find more information in relation to the details.

If you may have missed information, or need a jumping-off point to get new information, having the recorded information and location of what you found will make it easier to find more detailed information later. This not only includes valid information that you are using in relation to your genealogy, but also the information or sites that did not include any information that was true or of use to you.

When you are documenting a source, you can use certain basic principles to make sure that you have enough information down for someone else to be able to trace the same information. For books, this includes the title, author, publisher, date published and page number. For recording a census, you can include roll number, state, county, city, page number, and family number. There are several sources available online that will help you to keep an organized and detailed account of the information and resources you are using. By doing this, you can trace back to where you found the information from before and allow others the same access to this information.

Tracing your family genealogy usually requires a large amount of time to find the accurate resources and information about your lineage. By giving others information on the resources that you have found, it will make the recording of the lineage become easier and much more accurate over a longer period of time. It will also give others a jumping-off point when they are finding out about their family. Providing resources and information about what you have found out about your family will help in creating an accurate genealogy.

Tips to Organizing Your Information for Your Family Tree

There are 12 steps to keep you organized when making a family tree.

1. Gather all the supplies for your project.

You will need file boxes with lids, colored hanging file folders, standard green hanging files, manila folders, pens, highlighters, labels for folders, dot or star stickers, lined paper, additional boxes to expand your storage, a carrying case to hold all of this in, and a wall size pedigree chart. Pedigree charts can be found on most ancestry websites or at your local library.

2. File your family pedigree charts

Print a complete set of all your pedigree charts starting with yourself and working back. Label one of the green hanging folders "Pedigree Charts" and place all of these charts in it. Pedigree charts can be located at most ancestry and genealogy sites. Fill them out as much as you can. The more info you can fill out now, the easier it will be later.

3. Print a copy of the Circled 5 generation Pedigree Chart

Print a color copy of the Circled 5 Generation Pedigree Chart. You are the 5th generation. Your sixteen great grandparents are the first generation. Use the color code provided with the chart to fill in the rest. This chart can be found at most genealogy websites.

5. Put 16 hanging file folders in your box

This step needs no explanation. Just place 16 hanging file folders in your box. You may need more later on but 16 is the basic you will need for all your great grandparents.

6. Label the colored hanging file folders with your family surnames.

Label each of the folders with the surname of each of your 8 great grandfathers, and the maiden names of your 8 great grandmothers. If you don't know the surnames (last names) of your great grandmothers, do as many as you can and try to contact family members that may know other names.

7. Put a highlighted copy of your 5-generation pedigree chart in each of the colored folders.

Print 16 more copies of your 5-generation pedigree chart with you as 1 on the chart.

On one of the pedigree charts, highlight the names of all persons with the same last name using the color assigned to that last name. File the highlighted pedigree chart in its last name hanging file folder.

Repeat the process of highlighting a last name line and filing the pedigree chart in its hanging folder for each of the 16 last names of your great-great grandparents. This may seem tedious, but you will appreciate how much easier it makes things later.

8. Set up a file for each family on your 5-generation pedigree chart.

Set up manila folders for each of the families by putting a colored labels on the file tab. Match the label color to the color of each family group record. Be sure to use sticky labels. Sticky labels are great because if you have to change something, you just place a label over the existing one. They help keep things organized.

9. File the manila folders

Place the manila family folders in hanging folders, matching the color of the label on the manila family folder to the color of the hanging file folder. Color-coding everything makes things so much easier to find later.

10. Put these items in each family folder

In a family folder place the family group record of the family, documents you have already gathered for that family, and any notes you have taken on the family.

11. Set up other useful files

Set up other files containing letters, photos, emails, birth certificates, etc. Anything that you can think of that may fit into its own category, make a file for it. It makes it much easier to locate later.

12. Expand to other boxes as needed

When one of your files gets too big to fit into your box, simply move it to another box. Take as many boxes as you need to get all the information you need. Having multiple organized boxes is much better than having it all in one box unorganized and a jumbled mess.

Following these easy steps will help keep you organized while creating your family tree. With such a big undertaking, organization is important.

Kissing Cousins – Deciphering Family Relationships in Your Ancestral Tree

Joining the world of genealogy research can be quite exciting at times. At other times, though, it can be confusing and difficult. Not only can it be hard to locate sources of information about your family, it can also be hard to figure out who is related to whom. There are so many terms for relationships that most people do not know how to deal with the inundation of information. Hopefully, though, the below text will help sort a few things out.

Let's start with cousins because there are so many different terms in this area, it can be really hard to sort things out. If someone came up to you and said they were your fourth cousin three times removed, it would be complicated to figure out whom they belonged to. Cousin, at its very base, means people who have the same grandparents. These people can also be referred to as first cousins. They are the children of aunts and uncles. Second cousins are people who have the same great-grandparents, but not the same grandparents.

So if you think about your children and the children of your cousins, they are considered to be second cousins. It follows that third, fourth, and fifth cousins would have a very similar pattern. Third cousins would share the same great-great grandparents. Fourth cousins would share the same great-great-great grandparents. Fifth cousins would share the same great-great-great-great grandparents. It's rare to actually know your fifth cousins, but genealogy research can certainly uncover them for you.

In addition to cousins, you also have cousins who have been "removed." This does not mean they were excommunicated from the family or anything. It means that these particular cousins are from two different generations. Once removed means one generation of difference, twice removed means two generations of difference, and so on. Take this example to sort things out. Your mother's first cousin is your first cousin once removed. Here's another one. Your grandmother's first cousin is your first cousin twice removed.

It still seems a bit complicated, doesn't it? It not only seems complicated to you, it can seem extraordinarily complicated to anyone who plans to read the research you are so carefully compiling. In addition to the other documentation you should consider using; you might want to think about downloading or copying a relationship chart to sort things out.

A relationship chart is a simple document that can help you figure out who is who in your family and how they are related to each other. Both the top and the left side labels will mirror each other. They should be: child, grandchild, great grandchild, and great-great grandchild. The middle of the chart gets a bit more complicated, as the relationships get more complicated.

The first column, moving down, should read "sister or brother," "nephew or niece," "grand-nephew or niece," and "grand-grand-nephew or niece." The second column, moving down, should read "nephew or niece," "first cousin," "first cousin, once removed," and "first cousin, twice removed." The third column, moving down, should read "grand-nephew or niece," "first cousin, once removed," "second cousin," and "second cousin, once removed." The final column should read, moving down, "grand-grand nephew or niece," "first cousin, twice removed," "second cousin, once removed," "third cousin." This sounds incredibly complicated, and to some degree it is and always will be. In reality, most people simply aren't going to care when it hits this degree of complication, but a relationship chart like this one can really help you sort things out as you try to write your own family history.

To further complicate the family relationships you are trying to determine, don't forget that some families may have a situation with double-cousins. This means that the siblings from one family married the siblings from another family. For example, perhaps your grandmother and her sister married your grandfather and his brother, respectively.

You should be aware that the word "cousin," and many other familial terms have changed over the course of time. Some are even Latin. As a result, it is not a bad idea to check with a standard family term glossary as you are trying to complete your research. There are many of these in your local library. You can also look around online to find a standard familial term glossary.

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