BEGINNING GENEALOGY

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THE GENEALOGY RESEARCH PROCESS (This is a circular process)

For an excellent refresher of this process, see
https://familysearch.org/learn/wiki/en/Research_Process

1. Develop a Research Plan.

The purpose of a research plan is to focus your research. Your research plan should discuss what you already know, what you are searching for and where you plan to perform your research. You can record the results in the research plan.

2. Perform the research.

Record exactly what you searched for including different spellings of a surname, different combinations of on-line searches, exactly where you searched and the date and place of the search. When doing the research remember to read the introductory and explanation material, record the exact source (copying the title page helps), look at neighboring pages and if possible making a copy of the document found. When you make copies, record the source information on the copy. If you download an image, record where you stored the image in your research report. If your search yielded no results, note that information, so you don't repeat the search another time. See http://tinyurl.com/o3y9yel for a discussion of the Research Report.

3. Record and Evaluate the Information.

Enter the information into your genealogy software or online family tree. As you are recording the information, note differences in spelling of names. These alternate spellings can be used when doing future research. Record every bit of information including negative or conflicting information and evaluate the new information as to its reliability and how it compares with what you already know. Note discrepancies.

Information you find in books, CDs, the Internet, etc. may not be correct. Errors occur in transcription or the person presenting the information may just be wrong. Always go to the original source to verify the information and look for details not transcribed. Every piece of information should be confirmed, if possible, by documents that were created at the time of the event. See http://tinyurl.com/jahzyby for more hints on document analysis. See http://tinyurl.com/oc2o97w for a discussion of sources, evidence and proof.

Clearly indicate the source of each bit of information you obtain. Include everything necessary to immediately find the information again. Also record where you have filed the document or image in your home file or on your computer. An excellent guide for source citation & analysis of evidence is *Evidence Explained, Citing History Sources from Artifacts to Cyberspace*, by Elizabeth Shown Mills.

4. Develop questions for future research.

What documents can you research that will confirm evidence you already have or add more meat to the facts? Have you researched every document that you can find where this person might appear? Can you find the original documents cited in the databases on-line or in research done by others? Have you researched neighbors, relatives and other associates. Create a new research plan to answer these questions.

GENEALOGY SOFTWARE

Many packages are available to organize your research and generate reports including charts and family group sheets. See http://tinyurl.com/8cj67 for one software review. GenSoftReviews features user reviews http://gensoftreviews.com/ Some of the packages listed are no longer supported. Pick software that allows you to enter conflicting dates for vital records and has a full citation capability. Once you decide on software, join a mailing list to learn tips for using the software and ask questions of experts. See

https://mailinglists.rootsweb.com/listindexes/overview?category=Software for a list.

Legacy Family Tree http://www.legacyfamilytree.com Standard Edition is free.

RootsMagic http://www.rootsmagic.com RootsMagic Essentials is free. Support for FamilySearch's Family Tree.

Tips for Recording Data in Your Genealogy Software
1. Write up a style sheet for recording names, places and dates. Standard practice is to record dates in the format DD MMM YYYY where MMM is the first three letters of the month - Sep.

2. Hopefully your software has separate fields for given name and surname. Best not to use all caps for the surname when entering data. Your software should allow an option to print the surname in all caps in reports if you wish.

3. Spell out the place names and include the word county. ex. Rockville, Montgomery County, Maryland.

4. Don't forget to backup your data and scanned images often to a separate medium and store those backups away from your home at a relative's or in a safe deposit box.

Online Family Trees
Another way to record information about your family and to share that information is to record the information directly on the web. At https://www.ancestry.com/ click on **Trees** and then **Start a New Tree**. Other genealogy web sites also offer this capability, including www.familysearch.org/ - **Family Tree** (free service) and http://www.myheritage.com/ Remember that once you store your information on the web, you lose control over it.

WHERE TO RESEARCH

Your goal is to search every document that may provide information about the person you are researching. Pick a family to research. This will allow you to focus your research. You can always switch to another family. Start from the most current generation (you or your parents) and work back. Find out as much as you can about a generation before moving back to the next older one. Research siblings, in-laws and even neighbors. Their documents may contain information that will help in researching your ancestor.

1. Gather and Organize Everything That Is Known Whether you are beginning to do genealogical research or are searching for a particular ancestor or relative, it is important that you talk to everyone in your family and gather all the information that is known about the people you wish to research. Learn about all family members including siblings, in-laws, etc. Don't forget to look at old letters, birth and marriage announcements, bible records, yearbooks, pictures and newspaper clippings. Scan these pictures and documents to help preserve them. Organize these documents and scanned images so that they can easily be found again.

Encourage your older relatives to record their life experiences. The Family History Center has an Oral History Room that you can schedule. There you can talk to a relative and the interview will be recorded on a DVD that you can take with you when you leave. Consider recording or writing your own life history. Talk about games you played as a child, your family life, etc.

2. Census Research If your ancestor was living in this country in 1940 or earlier, search in the US Census Records. Start with the 1940 census and work your way back. Census information will tell you who was living where and provide clues to their birth dates and other information. If you can find your ancestor in a census as a child, the schedule will also show his or her parents, siblings and perhaps even a grandparent. Remember, however, that you do not know who provided the information to the census taker so it may or may not be totally accurate. Ancestry, MyHeritage, FamilySearch and Heritage Quest web sites have indexed and scanned census data

and are a good place to start. The National Archives has these records on microfilm and free access to Ancestry.

3. Search On-line Search for your ancestors online at http://www.familysearch.org/, http://www.myheritage.com/ http://worldconnect.rootsweb.com/ and http://www.ancestry.com If you are researching an usual given or surname, don't forget to do a Google search. Remember that any information found in databases or family files provides clues to your family that must be verified.

4. Search Records Not Available On-line Millions of original records have been digitized and made available online but there will always be records that are only available in their original format. You will have to search for these records in the location your ancestor lived by going to the Court House, Libraries and Archives in that locality. Search probate, court, land, church, tax and other records that were created at the time and in the place your ancestor lived. These records may provide the only information available about your ancestor. If you do not find your ancestor mentioned, look for siblings, other family members and neighbors. Tracing their ancestors may lead you to yours.

5.DNA is an exciting new area of research. Don't take a DNA test unless you are prepared to learn uncomfortable information about your ancestry. You should be sure that people who take a test for you also clearly understand what matches may show. You will still need a paper trail to make the most use of your matches.

EDUCATION

Read as much as you can in genealogical journals about research techniques and sources available for your locality of interest. Attend seminars and conferences and take classes. Learn about the history and culture of the area. Join a local genealogical society. Come to the Family History Center on Tuesday mornings to join other beginners and learn research techniques. Read blogs (see https://blog.feedspot.com/genealogy_blogs/) and look at webinairs.

GENEALOGICAL ORGANIZATIONS.

National Genealogical Society, 3108 Columbia Pike, Suite 300,Arlington, Virginia 22204-4304. Quarterly journal and newsletter and yearly conferences. Their home study course is excellent and they now offer courses on-line. http://www.ngsgenealogy.org/

Afro-American Historical & Genealogical Society. For local chapters see https://tinyurl.com/yaceca3u

Fairfax Genealogical Society, PO Box 2290, Merrifield, VA 22116-2290. Meetings, classes, newsletter, all day seminars. http://www.fxgs.org/

Montgomery County Genealogical Society, 111 West Montgomery Avenue, Rockville, MD 20850-4212. Monthly meetings. http://montgomeryhistory.org/genealogy/

Jewish Genealogy Society of Greater Washington, PO Box 1614, Rockville, MD 20849-1614. Monthly meetings, newsletter. http://www.jewishgen.org/jgsgw/

Prince George's County Genealogical Society, PO Box 819, Bowie, MD 20718-0819. Meets monthly except summers in Greenbelt, MD. http://tinyurl.com/j35g7o3

Genealogical Proof Standard
Research should be reasonably exhaustive.
Evidence is drawn from reliable sources, correctly interpreted.
Contradictory evidence should be soundly rebutted.
All statements of fact are documented.
All deductions are carefully reasoned and explained in writing.

GENEALOGICAL GUIDES AND MANUALS

Bettinger, Blaine T. and Debbie Parker Wayne. *Genetic Genealogy in Practice.* Arlington, VA: National Genealogical Society, 2016.

Bettinger, Blaine T. *The Family Tree Guide to DNA Testing and Genetic Genealogy.* Cincinnati: Family Tree Books, 2016.

Burroughs, Tony. *Black Roots: A Beginner's Guide to Tracing the African American Family Tree.* New York: Simon & Schuster-Fireside, 2001.

Carmack, Sharon DeBartolo. *Organizing Your Family History Search.* Cincinnati: Betterway Books, 1999.

Croom, Emily Anne. *Unpuzzling Your Past.* 4th ed. Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co.,2010.

Eichholz, Alice. *Red Book: American State, County, and Town Sources.* 3rd ed.

Hansen, Holly, ed. *The Handy Book for Genealogists.* 11th rev.ed. Revised Edition Logan, Utah: Everton Publishers, 2008. This book provides information about the history of the formation of each county in every state, the types of records available in each county and the addresses to write for the records. Also includes brief information about nineteen countries and migration routes.

Greene, Bob and D. G. Fulford. *To Our Children's Children: Preserving Family Histories for Generations to Come.* New York: Doubleday, 1993. A comprehensive list of questions to ask when writing your memories. Could also be a guide for questions to ask your relatives.

Greenwood, Val D. *The Researcher's Guide to American Genealogy.* 4th ed. Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co., 2017. This is the most comprehensive guide for beginners to genealogical research.

Grundset, Eric G. and Steven B. Rhodes. *American Genealogical Research at the DAR.* Washington, D.C.: National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution, 1997.

Jones, Thomas W. *Mastering Genealogical Proof.* Arlington, VA: National Genealogical Society, 2013.

Kurzweil, Arthur. *From Generation to Generation: How to Trace Your Jewish Genealogy & Family History.* Jossey-Bass, 2011.

Mills, Elizabeth S. *Evidence Explained: Citing History Sources from Artifacts to Cyberspace 3rd Revised Edition.* Genealogical Publishing Company, 2017. Also available for download.

Rising, Martha Hoffman. *The Family Tree Problem Solver.* Cincinnati: Family Tree Books, 2011.

Rose, Christine and Kay Germain Ingalls. *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Genealogy.*3rd ed. New York: Alpha Books, 2012. An excellent, easy to read book for beginners.

Smith, Drew. *Organize Your Genealogy: Strategies and Solutions for Every Researcher.* Cincinnati: Family Tree Books, 2016.

Smith, Franklin Carter and Emily Anne Croom. *A Genealogist's Guide to Discovering Your African-American Ancestors.* Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co., 2009

Szucs, Loretto D. and Sandra H. Luebking (eds). *The Source: A Guidebook of American Genealogy.* Third ed. Salt Lake City: Ancestry, 2006. This is an excellent guide for where to find various records.

U.S. National Archives and Records Service. *Guide to Genealogical Research in the National Archives.* 3rd ed. Washington, D.C.: National Archives, 2000. Provides a good overview to sources available in the National Archives.

Various Authors. *NGS Research in the States Series.* National Genealogical Society. In print or E-book. See https://www.ngsgenealogy.org/ris/

GENEALOGICAL RESOURCES IN THE WASHINGTON D.C. AREA

A picture ID for identification may be necessary either to gain access to the building or to order documents once within the building. Have bills in the $1 to $5 range to pay for copies and always have a couple of dollars in quarters. It is a good idea **not** to carry original documents with you, especially to the National Archives. Hours are subject to change, especially on week-ends and evenings, so call ahead or check the web site before you go.

National Archives. 7th & Pennsylvania Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20408 (202-501-5340) (Monday - Friday, 8:45AM to 5:45PM) Original Civil War Pension files. There are usually volunteers available to get you started and the staff is very helpful. http://www.archives.gov/
> The nearest metro stop is Archives/Navy Memorial on the Yellow Line. For genealogy research, enter on the Pennsylvania Avenue (north) side, directly across Pennsylvania Avenue from the Metro entrance.

LDS Family History Centers. The largest Center in the area is located at 10000 Stoneybrook Road, Kensington, MD. (301-587-0042) (Tuesday - Saturday 9:30 to 4:30 and Tuesday-Thursday 7 PM to 9:30PM. Open for African-American researchers Monday 9:30 - 1:00) Computers provide access to several subscription web sites, including Ancestry and Fold3. Some books and films of digitized records are available in the permanent collection. The Center is staffed by volunteers who will give you a short orientation tour and help you get started. http://www.wdcfhc.org/
> Take the Beltway to the Connecticut Avenue exit. Go North towards Kensington. Turn right at the light onto Beach Drive. Follow Beach Drive until it dead-ends at Stoneybrook Drive. Turn left and follow Stoneybrook Drive up the hill, past the Mormon Temple. The Center is in basement of the large red brick church building on the left. A Ride-On bus connects to the Silver Spring Metro Station. Call the Family History Center for details. There are other centers in the area that are smaller and have fewer hours. The Kensington Center has a list or look on-line.

Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) Library. Located at 1776 D street, N.W., Washington, D.C. (202-879-3229) (8:30 AM to 4 PM, Monday - Friday and 9 AM to 5 PM on Saturday.) Records include state and local histories, Revolutionary War histories, family genealogies, documentation files in support of DAR membership applications, city directories, and general reference books. http://dar.org/natsociety/
> Take the Orange/Blue Line to the Farragut West Metro stop at 17th and I Streets. Then walk south on 17th Street to D Street. Enter on D Street, between 17th and 18th Streets.

Library of Congress (202-707-5537) (Monday, Wednesday and Thursday, 8:30 AM to 9:30 PM; Tuesday, Friday and Saturday, 8:30 AM to 5 PM.) http://www.loc.gov/
> Take the Blue or Orange Line to the Capitol South Metro Station, which is at 1st and D Streets SE. Walk north along 1st or 2nd Street, crossing C Street to Independence Avenue. See below for specifics.

Library of Congress Main Reading Room Located in the Thomas Jefferson Building on 1st Street SE between East Capitol Street and Independence Avenue. Now the location of materials formerly in the Local History & Genealogy Reading Room: American genealogies, local histories and city directories. Good for finding research already done on your family. Ask the librarian to explain the cataloging system and introduce you to the facilities to help save some time. **You will need to obtain a user card** at the Reader Registration Station in the Madison building - enter via the Independence Avenue entrance.

Library of Congress Newspaper and Current Periodical Room. Located in the James Madison Building between 1st and 2nd Streets SE on Independence Avenue. Enter on Independence Avenue and ask the guard for directions. Newspapers on microfilm from major US and foreign cities.

Jane C. Sween Library of the Montgomery County Historical Society. 111 West Montgomery Avenue, Rockville, MD 20850-4212. (301-340-2974). (Wednesday thru Friday, 10 AM to 4 PM, Saturday, 12 PM to 4 PM) Research fee for non-members. Publications and records relating to Montgomery County including a surname index to Montgomery County families, general books on genealogical research and Maryland publications. http://www.montgomeryhistory.org/jane-c-sween-library

GENEALOGY AND THE INTERNET

In the past few years, many resources have become available through the Internet. Researchers can easily communicate with other researchers all over the world, exchanging information on specific families, research techniques, and cultural traditions in specific areas, etc. One word of warning. Unless you are viewing scanned original documents any information on the internet must be considered second-hand and must be verified from original documents. **Although it is possible to extend your ancestral lines back many generations just through contacts on the Internet, there is no guarantee that the information you have obtained is accurate or complete.**

*Ancestry.com http://ancestry.com/ This is the premier subscription genealogy site. Some of the resources are available at no charge. Most indexes and databases require a subscription, including indexes to the US Censuses and scanned images of the original census records.

Cyndi's Genealogy Home Page http://cyndislist.com/ Cyndi Howells has created a web page that everyone interested in genealogy should visit. She has links to hundreds of sites of genealogical interest, with more being added.

FamilySearch Internet http://www.familysearch.org/ The is the LDS Church's genealogy internet site. You can search for ancestors, take courses, join discussions and search the Catalog for digitized sources which you can then view by clicking on the film number. Registration is required but is free.

*Fold3 http://www.fold3.com/ A subscription site with a wide variety of scanned images of military records including the complete Revolutionary War pension files. The company has an agreement with NARA to digitize their holdings.

Jewishgen http://www.jewishgen.org/ Devoted to learning about Jewish genealogy and sharing information about Jewish families. Find people doing research on the same family or on the same town in Eastern Europe. A number of indexed records from Eastern Europe are available.(Jewishgen is support by member donations. If you find it worthwhile, consider providing a donation to keep it available at no charge.)

Library of Virginia http://www.lva.virginia.gov/public/using_collections.asp A wide variety of digitized original records for Virginia.

Maryland State Archives http://msa.maryland.gov/ Has a wide variety of digitized images for Maryland counties and information on researching in the state. Digital images of Maryland County land records are available at http://mdlandrec.net/

*MyHeritage http://www.myheritage.com/ Similar to ancestry.com, this subscription site also has databases, images of records and family trees.

Stephen P. Morse one-step http://stevemorse.org/ This site offers templates for accessing records at sites containing passenger arrival records, census records, births, deaths and other vital records, and calendars in "one step". Using these templates one can search using criteria that are often not available by going directly to the web site being searched.

US GENWEB Project http://usgenweb.org/ The US GENWEB Project is an effort to provide genealogical information for every county in the United States. From the US site, you can go to any state in the union and then to individual counties. Information at the sites varies and may include information about local libraries and archives, histories, surname indexes, transcribed records, etc.

World GENWEB Project http://worldgenweb.org/ This outgrowth of the US GENWEB Project has links to genealogy home pages for countries all over the world.

*Available at no charge at the Family History Center.

Research Calendar

Surname: _____

Locality: _____

Repository: _____

Date: _____

Source	Page	Call #	Purpose of Search	Results of Search	Comments	Doc #