

GENEALOGICAL RESEARCH

Getting Started



START WITH YOURSELF

Fill in a pedigree chart which starts with you and shows the line of your direct ancestors. The five-generation chart is the most common (you and four generations). List yourself in the first column with your vital information. In the second column, on the top line, record your father and his vital information. On the bottom line, record your mother and her vital information. In the third column, on the top, record your paternal grandparents and their vital information. On the bottom, record your maternal grandparents and their vital information. Continue on recording the next generation. Enter all the known information and then work to fill in the blanks. (Pedigree chart forms are available in the Genealogy Center at Kitsap Regional Library, Sylvan Way Branch.)

FILL IN A FAMILY GROUP SHEET

This form is used to record information on a family unit. It includes your ancestors, collateral and allied relatives.

- ◆ Ancestor is one from whom you are descended (also known as your direct line).
- ◆ Collateral Relative is someone with whom you share a common ancestor but who is not in your direct line.
- ◆ Allied Relatives are those that are related by marriage, e.g. in-laws.

The Family Group Sheet also includes space for names of the couple and their children, along with fields to record birth, marriage, death dates and places for each. You should have a Family Group Sheet for every couple on your Pedigree Chart. (Family Group Sheet forms are available in the Genealogy Center at Kitsap Regional Library, Sylvan Way Branch.)

Some Tips:

- ◆ Dates are written DDMMYYYY format, e.g. 12 November 1911. This avoids confusion: 121111 could be December 11, or November 12, 1811 or 1911.
- ◆ Locations are listed from smallest to largest, e.g. Bremerton, Kitsap, Washington, United States.
- ◆ It is important to record your sources at the same time you are adding information (names, dates and places). In the long run, it will save you time.

CREATE A CHRONOLOGICAL PROFILE (AKA TIMELINE)

There was more to your ancestors' lives than names, dates and places that the Family Group Sheets portrays. You probably have information on education, military service, occupation, where they lived, and so on. Recording this information on a timeline shows you at a glance the lives of your relatives and if the information is logical.

BEGIN AT HOME

Check family Bibles, newspaper clippings, birth and death certificates, marriage licenses, diaries, letters, scrapbooks, photographs, baby books, military papers, etc.

VISIT OR WRITE RELATIVES

This is especially important with older family members who might be able to contribute information, such as stories, documents and photos.

RECORD ALL SOURCES CONSULTED ON A RESEARCH LOG

You can readily see later what sources you have used and where the source was located. Cite the source for every piece of information you use. (Research Log forms are available in the Genealogy Center at Kitsap Regional Library, Sylvan Way Branch.)

DEVISE AN ORGANIZATIONAL SYSTEM THAT WORKS FOR YOU

There are many guides available, e.g. Organizing Your Family History Search by Sharon DeBartolo Carmack.

To learn more, sign up to take the class: Genealogy 101 - Beginning Genealogy

USE FEDERAL CENSUS RECORDS

A Federal Census has been taken every 10 years since 1790. The more recent ones available can be helpful in defining family compositions, property owned, places and dates of birth of family members.

CAUTION: Use this information as a guide, as a family member or a neighbor not knowing correct data sometimes gave information to the census taker. Copies of each Federal Census are available at the National Archives (there is a branch in Seattle) or they can be ordered through the LDS Family History Centers.

Also, on the internet, Census records are available at HeritageQuest.com and Ancestry.com (paid subscriptions or access free at any library). It is best to photocopy the census page or transcribe the information onto a blank census form for the appropriate year. Note the neighbors living nearby; with limited transportation in the early dates, marriages between families living near to one another were very common. (Blank Federal Census forms are available to copy in the Genealogy Center at the Kitsap Regional Library, Sylvan Way Branch.)

To learn more, sign up to take the class: Genealogy 102 - Tracking Your Family Through the Census Record

LOCATE BIRTH, MARRIAGE AND DEATH RECORDS

In the United States, birth and death registration was required beginning about 1905 (state requirements vary). Before 1890, consult counties, church records and family Bibles. (A Vital Records Chart is available to copy in the Genealogy Center at the Kitsap Regional Library, Sylvan Way Branch.)

CONSULT COUNTY RECORDS FOR DEEDS, WILLS AND PROBATE RECORDS

These are invaluable in providing information on family relationships.

To learn more, sign up to take the class: Genealogy 103 - Vital Records: Filling in the Blanks

CITE YOUR SOURCES

You will need to document every piece of information you find to prove your connections. This will save you time if you ever need to verify that information due to a discrepancy, sharing it with others or wanting to join a lineage society. (Family rumors or stories are great, but they still have to be proven.) A good resource is "Evidence Explained: Citing History Sources from Artifacts to Cyberspace" by Elizabeth Shown Mills.

COMPUTER SOFTWARE PROGRAM

This is an efficient way of storing your family data. You enter the information once, than you can run several different types of reports. There are many genealogical software programs available for free or at a reasonable price. (A list of the most popular genealogical software programs is available to copy in the Genealogy Center at the Kitsap Regional Library, Sylvan Way Branch.)