

The Genealogy Guide

*How To Trace
Your Family History*



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Introduction

Genealogy - defined as 'an account of the descent of a person or family through an ancestral line', or alternatively, 'the investigation of pedigrees as a department of knowledge', is a high faluting description of what, to the rest of us, is known simply as 'tracing the family tree'.

Nostalgia, to the fore in recent years, has found a wealth of collectible interests emerging amongst a public ever eager to get hands on anything connected with the past: old postcards, postage stamps, paper ephemera, 1950s and '60s memorabilia - and family trees! It seems that today we are not content to know just how our ancestors lived - and I mean specific ancestors, namely those whose genes, characteristics and hereditary behaviour are the sum result of our very being. We want to know exactly who those people were: where they lived; what they did for a living; whether that story of highwaymen, criminals and corrupt relatives is factual, or a figment of Grandma's over-active imagination.

Today so many people are eager to trace their own family histories that once desolate Public Record Offices are now able to operate a timetable system, for which those who now fill its halls to carry out their own research, must make an appointment to do so. These treasure chests of registers, records, census documents and various other documented pieces of evidence on the lives of those before us, are now little hives of activity, filled with enthusiastic researchers from the moment their doors open.

But a day is never enough; a day can sometimes culminate in mountains of useful information destined to provide a large proportion of one's family history; it might instead yield nothing.

Perhaps though, one of the very best things about researching your family tree, is the wonderful way it can bring the past to life as you not only read of who your ancestors were, but can also see the exact same things they saw in the course of their lives: churches they attended; street scenes and activities they might have taken for granted; special events; strikes and invaluable insights into yesterday's working environment; shops with staff posing outside, and much, much more.

What Is a Family Tree?

Perhaps so called because of the number of branches emerging from it, a family tree is very little more than a diagram with stems

originating from one individual and leading to two parents, from whom two branches stem to each of another set of parents, and so on almost ad infinitum. Going back in time from the individual researching the history, the tree gathers branches with every generation; hence the name.

What Qualities does the Researcher Require?

Sometimes, especially where unusual names are concerned, and where families have remained in a particular-area over several generations, a family tree can be created in a very short space of time. On other occasions you will reach a dead end, perhaps spend weeks searching for one odd but essential fact, which might not materialise, but which might nevertheless halt your work perhaps indefinitely.

Qualities then for the researcher include those of patience and clarity of mind, an ability to keep going when the going gets tough, an aura of confidentiality, discretion, subtlety.

What Problems might you Encounter along the Way?

Not the least of which problems will find the researcher sometimes faced with relatives who have the exact key required to open a few more doors on the history currently being researched; but they won't give you access to those doors. Sometimes they might even go so far as to directly hinder your work, their intention being to stop you at all costs from discovering that X is not the natural child of Y, or perhaps that Grandma might have been heavily pregnant at the time of her marriage with Grandad, who as Y is not quite happy to have his relationship with X called into question. All these secrets and more, which we in the modern world tend to accept and tolerate, were very real problems for our ancestors.

Problems not necessarily associated with the living might include inaccurate entries in records of births, deaths, marriages and other occurrences, sometimes deliberately, sometimes accidentally. Again you might find your work severely hampered because an illiterate relative has had his or her name entered in official records by a well-meaning clerk who then proceeds to spell it incorrectly. That 'Smythe' then, could very well be the very same Mr. Smith for whom you have searched for so long.

Section One

Where To Begin-Getting Organized

Your research should begin by initiating a good filing system, one which will allow adequate storage and facilitate easy subsequent retrieval of data. Many forms are available free on the Internet. One of the best places for these forms is [Family Tree Magazine.com](http://FamilyTreeMagazine.com). This site has a chart or form for almost any type of genealogical research.

In today's rapidly advancing technological world however, it wasn't going to be long before someone found a way to make our friend the computer do the real work of data storage and retrieval, and those researchers with access to even the humblest of personal computers will now find a suitable program available at relatively little cost or even free. [Legacy Family Tree](http://LegacyFamilyTree) has a free Windows based software available for download. This isn't trial software. It is fully functional and will suit the needs of most.

Whichever method you choose to use, software or pen and paper, you will need to know which charts or forms to use and how to enter the data that you have collected.

The most often used chart is the ascendant pedigree chart. The ascendant pedigree chart will start with you and move backwards through time. Your first entry will be yourself and then there will be two branches where you enter your parents. It will then move onto four branches where you will enter your parents parents (your grandparents) and so on. On these forms you will record the name, birth, marriage and death dates and places of your ancestors.

These charts normally record four or five generations on each page, but are available with up to fifteen generations per page. You will find that the four generation per page format is easier and more convenient to work with.

There is also a numbering system for the pedigree chart known as the ahnentafel numbering system (after the older ahnentafel chart which is not used very often today). The numbering system is very easy and works like this: You would be number one on the chart, your father would be two times the child's number ($2 \times 1 = 2$) and your mother would be two times the child's plus one ($2 \times 1 + 1 = 3$). Your male ancestors will always be an even number and your female ancestors will always have an odd number assigned.

Another type of form you will use, is the family group sheet. The family group sheet is basically the worksheet that is used for your research. This is the form you will use to keep track of your family unit and the cousins, aunts and uncles that are in your family. A separate form is used for each single family unit and you will record dates and places of birth, marriage, death and burial and make notes on this form.

There are some rules you should follow when entering your data on the various charts. These rules will make it easier for you to refer back to the data you have entered.

Names

When entering names, you should enter them in their normal order, first, middle and last (or surname). Putting last names in all capital letters will make it easier for you to follow the different family names and to tell the last, middle and first name apart.

If a female ancestors maiden name is know, you should enter this name, If it is not known, enter either a set of empty parentheses or the husbands last name.

If a female ancestor has had more then one marriage, you should enter her given name and then the maiden name followed by the last name of her previous husband(s).

If an ancestor was commonly referred to by a nickname, you should enter that in quotes after their given name.

If your ancestors last name spelling has changed due to a move to another country or for ease of use, include both spellings on the form. ie. SMYTHE/SMITH.

Dates

When entering dates it is best to use the European standard of day. month and four digit year. For example 12 November 1903. You should spell out the month but, you can abbreviate the longer months using standard abbreviations. If you are unsure of the exact date you can use "about" or "circa" to specify the approximate date.

Places

The generally accepted method for recording place names is to begin with the smallest locality first and then work your way up to the largest. You would therefore begin with the town or city name then the county or district name, then the state or province name and lastly the country name. If you do not have all of this information you can easily research it on the Internet. Just type the search phrase "geographic place names" into Google or another search engine and you will find many online resources.

How To Find Clues In Family Resources

The first step in the-actual investigative process is of course that of gaining access to family documents, bibles ,books, photograph albums and so on. One must also of necessity decide which side of the family will be traced; whether the male or female line.

Usually the male line is traced, making for easier access to similar names throughout the relevant generations. Obviously the process is not nearly so easy when it is the female line which is featured as the center of interest.

Also at this point one may make an educated but very important decision concerning the name concerned. In past centuries many names were derived from places, father's names, and sometimes from the trade one is engaged in, and hence we come by many named 'London', 'Hill', 'Wood' (places); 'Williamson', 'Smithson' and 'Johnson' (father's names or 'son of '); or 'Baker' and 'Smith' (trades).

The normal process of gathering information, as we have already considered, begins with informal chats with members of your family, particularly the older members whose memory can be relied upon to uncover facts which hitherto had passed into those deep recesses and which might otherwise never have been extracted if not for the purposes of tracing your family's history.

Amongst the most relevant information required at this stage are details relating to family members, names (even of those stillborn or who died at birth or shortly afterwards and whose existence might have been temporarily 'forgotten'), dates of birth, marriage details and dates, details and dates of death, and various other family events including baptisms, educational and career-related information, and so on.

Next is the task of interviewing family, friends and relatives; the older the better, as long of course as time has not weakened the memory. Old family legends are often the motivating factor in making that decision to trace and document the family tree. Stories of blue-blooded ancestors, famous relatives, criminals and heroes, all are handed down from generation to generation. Many of these tales will doubtless have been expanded upon and elaborated with time, but it is always worth recording even the seemingly tallest and unlikely of stories; it is not unknown for a germ of truth or even a totally accurate legend to be still making the rounds of the family. Write it all down, or if your

interviewees don't object, take a small recorder with you to tape the conversation ready for transcribing to paper when time permits. Amongst the best sources of information virtually guaranteed to set you straight on course for access to the family history in recent decades, hopefully up to a century or more, are family bibles, photographs (often with messages written alongside or on the reverse), diaries, letters, and tombstones. Access to any of these items, even if you must sit and physically take notes from whatever source is available, will prove a more than worthwhile investment in terms of the time, trouble, and sometimes expense involved.

Photographs

Old photos can be one of the best resources for researching your family tree. Many times the date and place that the photo was taken will be on the back of the photo as well as notes from a family member. The type of clothes that your ancestor was wearing can give you a clue to when it was taken if there is no date. The buildings in the background of a picture may also provide you with a clue as to where the photo was taken.

Postcards

Postcards can also be a good source of information. Many times an ancestor who moved away from the family home sent postcards to keep in touch with their family. Postal marks and photos on the postcards can provide important clues about where to look for ancestors.

Family Bibles

Family bibles are probably the best of the resources you will find in searching out a family tree. Many families kept records of births and deaths as well as smaller family trees in the family bible. Look through the whole bible because sometimes you will find notes written in the margin that can provide clues.

Your Search Begins-Where To Look And What To Look For

Once all family sources have been exhausted, now comes the real challenge of investigating from official-sources, and not just central records offices and county registers. There are many, many other repositories of information available to the researcher, all of which must be considered in relation to the actual family and whether you wish to restrict your investigations to a limited period of history, or instead, uncover anything you are able about your family as far back as time, money, and ability allow.

The most logical and easiest next step is that of obtaining all official documents relating to recent generations as it is possible to obtain, a task usually accomplished from birth, marriage and death certificates held at your county courthouse. All information is of course committed to the basic tree format already waiting on paper or computer disk. Any other information to come to light and which might be clarified or expanded upon from other official sources should be noted for working on when the time is right, and includes such as relatives known to have a military record, those known to travel who will therefore have had their passport applications from 1795 onwards registered and so on.

Once you have a dear indication of your most recent generations, you will be able to track down copies of birth, marriage and death certificates from civil records which go back to the mid 1830s. Since mandatory registration it is relatively easy to trace a tree back to the second half of the nineteenth century. Then the really hard work begins.

Census returns are an excellent source of information relating to household members, and provide information gained every ten years since returns commenced in.

For much information prior to civil registration, we must turn to county records, which can usually and quite easily take the investigator back to the mid 1700s, perhaps earlier where families have remained in one area. Records can be consulted at your county records offices, or sometimes from the International Genealogical Index, or Percival Boyd Index, the latter of which covers the period 1538 to 1837.

Local newspapers might provide obituary details; gravestones also are havens for previously evasive information.

Wills might uncover a skeleton or two for the unsuspecting detective.

The process of accumulation continues. until eventually the trail dries up. It might take you to various little known sources of documentation, perhaps relating to small religious orders or now outdated trades and professions. It might even bring you to the genealogist's dream of finding his or her family recorded in the Domesday Book, which commenced records in 1086.

If your search is local, your task might well be extremely easy in the initial stages, given that our ancestors were not frequently renowned for a travelled existence. Many in fact lived their entire lives in one county, and it is quite conceivable to derive a great deal of information from one day's sifting through county registers, nearly all of which, when completed, are stored in local county record offices. Of course if you are tracing the history of a well-travelled family, then your task becomes more complicated and of necessity far more costly to you.

Returning to the subject of County Record Offices, here one will find official census returns providing names, ages, marital status, occupation and county of birth of everyone living in one particular household. Such records are released to the public only after 100 years, but when opened are generally pounced upon by, genealogists for the wealth of information they contain.

Another useful source of information is the International Genealogical Index, produced by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, more commonly known as 'Mormons'. Most information is stored on microfiche, and includes parish registers for much of Britain. Many Mormon Churches in larger communities have information which they will readily allow access to with prior approval being requested.

How Far Back can a Family be Traced?

Though it is not impossible to trace back to the 11th century, the task obviously becomes far more difficult the further back in time one travels, not the least of one's problems being the level of intelligence, writing ability and accuracy of those responsible for whatever records were made of births, marriages and deaths, if, that is, the record was made in the first place.

Another problem frequently found to impede access to information is that of the family's surname. A common surname will ultimately present very many difficulties as one begins to sort through the hundreds of Smiths, Joneses, and other such names which have survived the passage of time virtually unchanged.

An unusual name however, or one known to originate from a particular region, and your task becomes far, far easier. Some names also derive from the family's primary occupation as we discussed earlier.

Civil Registration

Official registration of births, deaths and marriages, has been compulsory in most of Europe and the U.S. since the mid 1800's

In theory, and often also in practice, it is easy to trace families back to these dates of compulsory registration. This must not however be taken for granted since those 'skeletons' known to exist in most family cupboards can often lead the researcher off on a false trail, or perhaps worse still, not come to light in the first place. Here is where a little detective work comes to the rescue.

The astute researcher might uncover various information the less seasoned historian might instead have dismissed or perhaps not considered at all. Birth certificates for instance are dated on the day registration takes place, which could obviously be days or weeks after the birth. When registration was made compulsory a fine was introduced for registrations made more than 42 days after the birth, as a result of which parents late in registering adjusted the date of delivery to suit their own requirements.

And given that not all people, even those responsible for completing official records, enjoyed the greatest degree of communicative skills, it was not unusual for parents to produce variations of their surname to the official recorder, or for the latter to hastily enter a name he 'thought' the respondent had uttered.

Amongst many inconsistencies that can make life anything but easy for the researcher, are the tendency for many names to be reversed on entry to official records. John Henry, for instance might be entered with his surname featuring first, therefore to all intents and purposes making him today's 'Henry John'. Some Christian names and surnames are still unlikely contenders for their alternatives, but it must not be assumed that this is always the case, and even the most unlikely of

transpositions can find its improbable counterparts mellowed with time. That 'Henry John' might for instance become today's 'Henry Johnstone' - a far more likely proposition.

Much useful information can be derived from birth certificates, which amongst other things include the child's; name and date of birth, the mother's name and maiden name, and usually the father's Christian name, address and occupation. After 1875 the father of an illegitimate child can only be named on the birth certificate with his consent. Other anomalies which might lead to red herrings, or indeed to camouflaging useful information, include such as the actual time of birth of a child, a fact not usually entered for other than to indicate the debut of siblings - multiple births - a fact which might go unnoticed due to the high infant mortality rate of years gone by, when short lives faded quickly into oblivion.

Marriage certificates provide less detailed information but might provide access to evasive information such as the parties' father's names and occupations, addresses at the date of marriage, professions, and so on. One of the so-called skeletons in most family cupboards is that of parents either not married until after the birth of one or more of their children, or else married in haste as an imminent birth approaches. But though it might upset many clients and their relatives to discover such information relating to their dear departed, even people still living, it was not actually all that uncommon an occurrence for couples several generations ago to wait until pregnancy, even birth, to decide to tie the knot.

Death certificates amongst other details will usually include age, occupation, location, date and cause of death.

Adoptions certificates. Even where recorded they often give just the adoptive name of the child and new parents, with no information provided regarding the child prior to adoption, other than the correct date of birth. Incidentally, various legal and social requirements surround access to adoption information, most of it hinging on the age of the individual adopted. It is not always easy to gain access to information even today regarding natural parents, something which might make your job somewhat harder if you are tracing a 'natural' family tree.

Access to Information Prior to Registration

Amongst the most informative of sources available from which to

extract information relating to births, deaths and marriages, along with other essential information, are County or Parish Registers which go back to 1538, though their accuracy is often open to debate. The accuracy of the entry might not however always be attributed to the skill or otherwise of the recorder; if that person to whom the entry pertained was illiterate and could not provide the accurate spelling of his or her own name, then the recorder would use his own judgement and make the entry as he believed it to be.

The fact that such anomalies creep many times into the history of just one family, well explains the changes one often finds to the surname of today's descendants from those whose records were entered centuries before.

County (Parish) Registers

In the majority of instances, parish records are now maintained at central libraries in larger cities, or at the various County Record Offices.

Photocopies of entries in parish registers can usually be obtained for a small sum. Official records such as birth, marriage or death certificates might also be obtained, but will cost you a few dollars for each copy requested; still not a high price to pay for the amount of information most official documents contain, and which can greatly reduce the time you might otherwise spend researching one minor point which might be provided on the certificate itself.

Parish registers in England go back as far as 1538, to the time when Thomas Cromwell ordered all churches to maintain records of baptisms, marriages and burials within the area of their jurisdiction. From 1598, parish clerks were ordered to forward transcripts of the registers every year to their local bishop. This continued until 1837 when civil registration came into being.

Most parish registers are now available for inspection at County Record Offices (CROs), in the main town or city of the county. On a few isolated occasions one comes by registers which have not been deposited as ordered with appropriate bishops, such documents usually being well cared for by the vicar or other representative in the parish concerned.

Of parish registers themselves a few brief notes might be made. Marriage records can prove particularly useful since they provide the

names of both parties, the groom's occupation, their parishes, marital status, and sometimes details of bride's father, parties' ages, and so on.

Marriages during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries can present tremendous problems for the researcher, since the need to have banns read and licences obtained could be expensive, lengthy and problematic. Many couples therefore hid under the cloak of ceremonies carried out secretly by parsons who would ask little if anything of the couple but enough to comply with basic legal requirements. Sometimes no-one checked too carefully on the personal credentials either, and it is almost certain that a great many 'marriages' carried out during the period are anything near as binding as the parties to them might have thought.

Elopements, bigamy and fly-by-night marriages flourished under the practice which can lead many genealogists to despair as the plot grows ever thicker. In 1754 an Act of Parliament was passed aimed at eliminating clandestine marriages. Many ceremonies were to be performed in parish churches or other designated religious premises.

Baptism records provide a great deal of information regarding our ancestors, usually giving the father's surname for legitimate children - the mother's for illegitimate - and also usually indicating the place of birth, father's occupation, clergyman at the ceremony and sometimes a few other snippets of useful information.

Parish registers noted baptisms, not births. Therefore it is usual only to find conformists registered in this way. Any ancestor not recorded in parish registers might therefore belong to non-conformist persuasions such as Quakers, Jews and Roman Catholics, all of which kept their own usually well-maintained records.

Non-conformist records, that is of those not belonging to the Church of England, can make excellent reading and yield much useful information, particularly since various other denominations were a great deal more astute in their approach to record keeping than were the majority of parish clerks. Appropriate details of Roman Catholics, Jews, Non-conformist Protestants and Huguenots, might be available from religious registers, many of them held in followers' meeting places in nearby large towns and cities. Alternatively societies operate to provide access to appropriate information. The readers' attention is drawn to the resources section at the end of this book, from which sources he or she might often find invaluable records available for

consultation.

Census Returns

Such documents with which we are all familiar today, provide a more than useful insight into a variety of general and often highly personal pieces of information, including the names of all people residing in the household at the time of the census, their ages, relationship to the householder (from 1851), their occupations (from 1851), and the place of birth of all members of the family or household.

Returns can be consulted in various ways, usually from Public Record Offices and local County Record Offices, as well as from Mormon Genealogical Libraries. From the latter source one can usually gain immediate access to local returns, or else can, for a fee, be provided with a copy of a return available from any part of the world.

Census returns are provided on microfilm for which reading facilities are available on special machines, which can unfortunately prove more than a little strain on the eyes of the viewer.

As more detailed information became required from the household, censuses eventually provided the following information: Name of place in which household resided, including details as to whether it was a hamlet, village, town or borough; full address; names of all present the house on the night of the census; relationship to head of household; matrimonial status; age; sex; occupation; birthplace; and various other information including whether any person was blind, deaf or dumb

Wills and Administrations

Wills can prove an excellent source of material for the genealogist and, in addition to the relative recently deceased, can usually be relied upon to provide information also regarding numerous other relatives, whether beneficiaries or not.

It must be remembered that not all people made a will; it wasn't always necessary since most people had nothing worth leaving to others anyway. Consequently, unless the your ancestors were engaged in trade or the professions there might be no information here of use to you.

Other Sources of Information

It isn't just to official sources that one might direct time and energy to uncovering facts about one's own family tree. A host of other useful sources are available from family members, friends and relatives, as well as commercial and other concerns. Family bibles, letters, books, certificates and photograph albums can of course provide much reliable information, as can word of mouth - usually - the latter especially so if supported by other people or sources.

Newspaper articles and announcements can also provide useful information not always available from any other source. Announcements of births, marriages, divorces and deaths were often placed in the personal columns of local and county newspapers, or national newspapers where prominent families are concerned. Most families would extract the printed material relating to their relatives, usually keeping the same safe in bibles, photograph albums, shoe boxes along with other documents of one sort or another, or sometimes the more organised family might have its own personal scrapbook in which such documented pieces of evidence might be available for reference.

If cuttings are not available from the family, then most main reference libraries and newspaper publishers' archives are able to produce back copies often extending over several decades for reference by interested individuals. Some County Record Offices are also able to provide reference facilities to old newspapers and periodicals, usually covering the area in which they themselves operate.

In some places, where you might find a complete collection of the newspaper available on microfilm.

Microfilm incidentally comes on a reel which fits into the spindle of a special viewing machine. The film runs between this and another spindle, both of which have handles for the viewer to move around the film in order to select those segments of particular interest.

It's all well and good talking of looking for newspapers through which to probe for a few hours or so, but what exactly are we hoping to find in the course of our endeavours? Perhaps first and foremost we might seek straightforward announcements of births, deaths and marriages, from which other information will almost certainly ensue.

The names, and possibly the address, of the new-born's parents might perhaps be contained in the announcement; a death notice might give an indication as to where burial took place (if you don't know from

other sources); a death notice might also indicate cause of death and disclose any suspicious circumstances or inquests that might have arisen; an obituary might also be enclosed in respect of prominent citizens who have lived in the locality.

Apart from announcements placed by family and friends, and perhaps short write-ups on prominent citizens, there is also the possibility of news coverage of accidents, strikes, and many other events to which the family concerned might have once been party. You would of course usually require information that a particular ancestor was involved in something likely to be so documented as well as have access to a likely date of such occurrence before you can scour the newspapers with any reasonable chance of finding information worth the time and trouble involved.

The International Genealogical Index (IGI)

The Mormon Church of Latter Day Saints maintains a compilation of names. Baptisms and marriages are included to approximately 1875, usually broken down into counties, and then into surnames and Christian names. IGI statistics are available on the Internet as well as at a computer base located in Utah in the United States, a veritable shrine for genealogists. There is a link to this index in the resources section of this book.

Military and Professional Records

Records of those in the armed forces were maintained from 1660 onwards, though not always to the quality or accuracy that researchers of today might have hoped for. Standards incidentally improved shortly into the nineteenth century.

Those seeking out details regarding soldier ancestors might find official discharge papers more than a little useful, particularly where ranks below officer are concerned.

Close to home one might find military museums and military societies maintain fairly extensive records on their colleagues of years gone by.

Many links to these records are also included in the resources section of this book.

For those ancestors engaged in other employment and professional sectors, a number of guilds and museums have emerged over the years, both to protect the interests of living members as well as to

preserve the memory and traditions of those who aren't. Most of the early guilds and professional associations now have their photographs and other documents preserved in special museums dedicated entirely to the trade itself.

Among other useful sources of data are town directories and town books, more prevalent perhaps in the middle of last century than is the case today. Primary among these directories were such as 'Kelly's', in which each parish and its inhabitants were listed according to name, occupation, address and much other personal and employment detail.

The Percival Boyd Index held at the Society of Genealogists, lists some seven million names and-appropriate English marriages and London burials between the period 1538 to 1837.

Various other departments regarding immigration and emigration, poor law, and so on, can also increase the store of information you gain on any particular family or specific individual.

Finally, a wealth of information is available in the various genealogy libraries operating throughout the world, many of which maintain their own records alongside copies of official documentation.

Contacting Other Resources

Although there are many resources on the Internet for genealogical research, the information is still limited. The farther you go back, the more difficult it will become to locate information on your ancestors online. This is where some letter writing skills will prove useful. Whether you use email or snail mail, be polite. Please and Thank you can go a long way in helping you get the information you are seeking. When using the mail always include a self-addressed, stamped envelope. When writing your letter, be as to the point as possible about the information you are looking for. Be patient-Many of the libraries and societies that you contact have limited staffing and it may take several weeks to get to your request.

Putting Your Information Together

Now that you have done your research you will want to have a way to display what you were able to find. You may choose just to have the pedigree chart and supporting documents in a binder, but there are many more creative ways that you can use to display your ancestry to everyone.

With the popularity of scrapbooking you may choose to assemble a scrapbook with pictorial evidence of the locations from which your ancestors originated, reproductions of churches, landscapes, landmarks and even gravestones. You could include reduced size copies of birth, marriage and death certificates as well as photos of individual ancestors when available. Copies of newspaper cuttings can also be included. You could make several of these and give them to those family members who were particularly helpful or give them as gifts.

One popular method of displaying your ancestry is to have your family tree embroidered on a piece of cloth and then framed. This way it can be displayed for everyone to see.

Another option for those so inclined, would be to put your family history into writing, making a book for future generations to read. Using photos, newspaper cuttings etc. liberally throughout would make the book more enjoyable.

The ways that you can use to display or record your family history once you have researched it are limited only by your imagination.

99 Great Online Genealogy Resources

There are many resources now available on the Internet for researching your family tree. The databases for these sites are constantly growing and much of your research can be done for free. Below we have listed the 99 best sites for genealogical research.

[RootsWeb Surname List](#)

Over 1 million surnames available to search.

[My Trees](#)

In exchange for 5 minutes of work extracting names you will get 1 hour free to search there online database.

[Debt of Honour Register](#)

A database of almost 2 million commonwealth forces members who fought and died during the first and second world wars.

[U.S. Federal Land Patent Records](#)

This is a free online database of Federal land conveyance records for the Public Land States and also contains images of more than two million Federal land title records issued between 1820 and 1908 for the states of Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Illinois, Indiana, Louisiana, Michigan, Mississippi, Missouri, Minnesota, Ohio and Wisconsin.

[Interment.net - Free Cemetery Records Online](#)

A free genealogy database containing over 3 million records from over 5000 cemeteries worldwide.

[German Military Grave Registration Service](#)

Free German genealogy database that has more than 2 million names of missing and dead German soldiers from World War I and World War II.

[Geneactes](#)

Select a French département to access online databases containing free transcriptions of French civil registration records of birth, marriage, and death.

[New Brunswick Provincial Archives - Online Research](#)

[Utah Burials & Cemeteries Database](#)

Covers 400,000 burials in 321 cemeteries in Utah.

[Enciclopedia Heráldica Hispano-Americana](#)

A database of over 15,000 Spanish names.

[Distant Cousin](#)

Numerous searchable databases

[Danish Emigration Archives](#)

This is a database of emigrants compiled by the Copenhagen police from 1869 to 1940.

[Cyndi's List](#)

This website has listings for over 150,000 genealogy websites on the Internet, most of them free.

[Dutch Genealogy](#)

If you have ancestors from the Netherlands, then this website is a must visit for you.

[JewishGen Family Finder](#)

This database lists over 80,000 Jewish ancestral names cross referenced to their town name.

[Archives Office of Tasmania](#)

Index of Tasmanian wills, probate records and naturalization applications from 1835 to 1905.

[Utah Census Search](#)

Database of Utah federal census records for 1850, 1860, 1870 and 1880.

[My Cinnamon Toast](#)

A website that specializes in surname research. It has links to many of the surname research sites on the Internet.

[Olive Tree Genealogy](#)

Over 1500 genealogy databases for you to search.

[Michigan Genealogical Death Indexing System](#)

Michigan death records for the years 1867 to 1884.

[Wisconsin Historical Society - Wisconsin Name Index](#)

Over 150,000 obituaries and other records for Wisconsin.

[Ancestor Super Search](#)

Almost 1.5 million English birth, marriage, death, and census records for 1755 to 1891.

[Scottish Documents](#)

Search over 520,000 Scottish wills and testaments dating from 1500

to 1901

[AfriGeneas Library](#)

If you have African ancestry you should search this database of surnames, slave manifests, deed abstracts, slave bills of sale, school rosters, and city directories.

[Obituary Central](#)

Searching for a death record in the U.S. or Canada? This is the website to start at.

[Glossary of Last Name Meanings & Origins](#)

If you want to know the meaning and origin of your surname then this is the place to look. You can even submit your surname to be researched.

[National Archives of Ireland - Transportation Records Database](#)

Records relating to the transportation of convicts from Ireland to Australia from 1788 to 1868 are available for research on this site.

[RootsWeb Mailing List Archives](#)

Many tips, surname questions and other helpful items are available in this archive.

[Galveston Immigration Database](#)

You can search this database for immigrants that arrived by ship in Galveston, Texas.

[The Olden Times - Historic Newspapers Online](#)

Scanned images of actual newspapers from the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries are available here.

[Random Acts of Genealogical Kindness](#)

This is a database of over 4000 volunteers from around the world who will do research for you. Expenses are your responsibility..

[Australia - WWII Nominal Roll](#)

A database of Australian service records from WWII.

[Our Timelines - Timeline Creator](#)

Create a timeline of historical events for inclusion in your genealogical records.

[Free Genealogy Translations](#)

You can get genealogical records translated from 27 languages here.

[GenCircles - Global Tree](#)

You can search over 32 million names here.

[Ohio Death Certificate Index](#)

2 million records for individuals who have died in Ohio.

[Census Links](#)

Search millions of birth, death, marriage and census transcriptions on the Internet.

[1851 Scottish Census & Other Records](#)

You can search for Scottish ancestors here.

[North Dakota Naturalization Records Database](#)

A database of naturalization records for North Dakota.

[Avotaynu Consolidated Jewish Surname Index](#)

A database of 1/2 million Jewish surnames.

[Bremen Passenger Lists 1920-1939](#)

A database of emigrants from Bremen, Germany

[The Mexico / Arizona Database](#)

An index of 18,000 Hispanics who lived in Arizona before 1875.

[Japanese Immigrants to the United States, 1887-1924](#)

A database of Japanese immigrants to primarily Utah, Idaho and Wyoming.

[Bygones](#)

Free software for genealogical note-taking.

[Find Your Family Tree](#)

This is a collection of already existing family trees that you can search. Over 65 million names are in the database.

[WorldGenWeb](#)

Probably the largest genealogical website on the Internet. This is a must visit website.

7. [Lineage's Record Vault](#)

Search through hundreds of thousands of names in this free database of records from the US and England.

8. [Archivia Net - Canada](#)

You can search this database of more than 600,000 members of the

Canadian Expeditionary Forces that were enlisted during WWI.

[Geneabios - Biographies for Genealogy](#)

Find biographies for everyday people at this site or submit you own.

[British Columbia, Canada - Vital Records](#)

Search for birth, marriage or death registrations in British Columbia.

[Ancestry.com - Free Trial](#)

You can get a 14 day free trial to search the over 1 billion names available on this site. You have to give your CC info. Be sure to cancel before the trial period is over or you will be charged.

[The Digital Archives of Norway](#)

Database of Norwegian censuses for 1660, 1801, 1865, 1875 and 1900, lists of Norwegians in U.S. censuses, military rolls, probate registers, church registers and emigrant records.

[1901 Census for England & Wales](#)

You can search through this database of over 30 million people who lived in England and Wales in 1901.

[Obituary Daily Times](#)

This is an ever-growing index of obituaries from all over the world going back to 1995.

[Rootsweb - World Connect Project](#)

A database of 3 billion names in over 300,000 family trees which can be searched online for free.

[International Genealogical Index](#)

Here you can find vital records for over 285 million deceased persons from all over the world. Dating from the early 1500's to the 1900's.

[Canadian County Digital Access Project](#)

A database of property owners from 1874 to 1881.

[USGenWeb Archives](#)

You can search hundreds of thousands of county and state records through this single website.

[US Social Security Death Index](#)

A database of 62 million Americans who have died can be searched online here.

[Hamburg Emigration Lists](#)

This is a database of 5 million emigrants from Hamburg, Germany for the years 1850 to 1934.

[The Genealogical Server \(GenServ\)](#)

Over 21 million individual's names are included in the databases available on this site. You get one free surname search.

[inGeneas Database](#)

This database contains the records of over 50,000 Canadian immigrants from 1750 to 1900.

[Books We Own](#)

This site has over 1500 volunteers who will do genealogical look-ups in books that they have access to.

[Australian War Memorial](#)

Through this site you can search the records of Australian military personell.

[ARC - Archival Research Catalog](#)

Links to databases of interest to genealogical researchers.

[Ellis Island - American Family Immigration History Center](#)

Database of over 22 million immigrants who entered through the Port of New York and Ellis Island from 1892-1924.

[New South Wales Registry of Births, Marriages & Deaths](#)

A database of births deaths and marriages in New South Wales, Australia covering dates from 1788 to 1945.

[FamilySearch - Free Census Search](#)

A free database of the 1880 U.S. Census, 1881 British Isles Census, and 1881 Canadian Census.

[Illinois State Archives](#)

Find Illinois ancestors online through this database of Illinois records.

[Ancestral Findings-Free Genealogy Lookups](#)

You can get one free genealogy research each day through this service.

[Legacy Family Tree - Free Genealogy Software](#)

Free software for making your family tree.

[England & Wales Vital Records From Free BMD](#)

Over 66 million unique records form civil registration in 1837 to date.

[US Geographic Names Information Server](#)

A database of 2 million place names in the US

[Genealogy Help List](#)

Help from volunteers from around the world.

[Geneanet](#)

[Free Genealogy Charts & Forms From Family Tree Magazine](#)

[Digital Library of Virginia](#)

[Immigrant Ship Transcribers Guild](#)

[Le Dictionnaire Tanguay](#)

[Kentucky Vital Records](#)

[Family Search Research Help](#)

[US Civil War Soldiers & Sailors](#)

[Canadian Genealogy center](#)

[Native American Genealogy](#)

[Grave Matter](#)

[Cousin Connect](#)

[Index Of Irish Newspaper Announcements](#)

[California Death Records 1940-1997](#)

[Indiana Naturalization Database](#)

[Manitoba Vital Statistics](#)

[GenForum](#)

[DAR Patriot Index Volunteer Lookup Service](#)

[WWI U.S. Draft Registrations](#)

[Pennsylvania Digital Archives](#)

[Newspaper Abstracts](#)

[Maryland State Archives - Free Genealogy Indexes](#)

[Digital Library of Historical Directories](#)

[Oregon Historical Records Index](#)