A BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO GENEALOGY

Cass County Public Library – Genealogy Branch

GETTING STARTED

Record What You Know
- Write down the information you already know using basic genealogy charts and forms
  - Charts & Forms available at: www.casscolibrary.org/genealogy/gettingstarted
  - Generation Chart (family tree)
  - Family Group Sheet (focuses on a husband and wife and their children)
- Develop a research plan – decide on whom and where to focus your search
- Remember to record your sources (using a Research Checklist)

Organize Your Information
- Keep all of your research materials and documents organized together in one location
- *Options include:*
  - binders
  - filing cabinets
  - digital cloud storage
  - family tree software
  - note-taking apps & programs like Evernote, Scrivener, etc.
- Digitize as much as possible – scan documents, family memorabilia, photographs, etc.

Interview Family Members
- Try to speak with as many living relatives as possible
  - especially your oldest living relatives
- Take notes or record the conversation
- Clarify names, dates, family members, etc.
- Gather information to help prove (or debunk) family stories
- Ask for family photos (and identification of those pictured)

Research Method Tips
- *Always work backwards*
- Don't assume anything, let the research *prove it*
- Take family stores with a grain of salt
- Continue to hone your craft – educate yourself on new methods and resources
  - Utilize guides and videos available from Ancestry and FamilySearch's Learning Centers
  - FamilySearch's genealogy wiki: www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Main_Page
  - Legacy Family Tree Webinars (*free when viewed live*) https://familytreewebinars.com
- Don't be discouraged by *Brick Walls*
- Embrace the black sheep

BASIC RECORD TYPES

Birth & Death Records
- Availability varies depending on location and time frame
- No *universal* birth or death records in Missouri until 1910
- You can request copies through the Department of Health

- o   Some death certificates available online
- o   Requirements for requests may vary from state to state

Missouri Digital Heritage – Missouri Birth and Death Records
- o   Death Certificates, 1910-1965
- o   Pre-1910 Birth, Stillbirth, and Death Records

Marriage Records
- Prior to civil records, marriage records were kept by the church (some still held there)
- Types of marriage records include:
  - o   Banns (common in New England & South – mid-1800s)
    - ▪ Notices posted weeks in advance to notify the public of the impending marriage – to allow anyone to present a legal impediment to the union
  - o   Bonds (southern and mid-Atlantic states – mid-1800s)
    - ▪ A sum, paid to the governor of the state by a bondsman (often a relative of the groom), to announce the intention to marry and ensure it was legal (only kept if the union turned out to be illegal).
  - o   Licenses
  - o   Civil Registers
- Indexes are often the best alternative to the physical record

Places to look:
- County Courthouses
- Historical Societies & Libraries
- Church Records
- Family Bibles
- Newspapers (and sometimes obituaries)
- Known Gretna Greens (elopements) – Find known Gretna Greens in the United States here: www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Gretna_Greens_in_the_United_States

Census Records
- 1790 -1940, (not all states for all years)
- Privacy law prevents the release of Census for 72 years
  - o   *1950 Census* will not be made public *until 2022*
- 1890 Census was mostly destroyed, except the veteran schedule
- The census is the easiest way to determine where an ancestor lived, family relationships, and it provides clues for finding other records (i.e. immigration/naturalization, military, etc.)
- Each census asks a slightly different set of questions
- An individual's name can be enumerated differently across multiple censuses

Information provided includes:
- Name, birthdate & place of ancestor and family members
- Birth place of ancestors' parents
- Occupations
- Immigration & Naturalization
- Military service
- Presence on *non-population schedules* (i.e. agriculture, slaves, industry/manufacturers, Indian)

Cemetery Records & Obituaries
- Availability for both is hit or miss, especially for women
  - o   Early burials were often unrecorded on family land
- Records are also often indexed and bound

- Obituaries can be requested from local historical societies or libraries (*often a fee*)
- Many libraries have local newspapers on microfilm
- *Find A Grave* – free international cemetery database

Land & Property Records
- Types of records include:
  - War Bounty Land Warrants
  - Cash Entry Land Patents
  - Homestead Records
  - Deeds
  - Tax Records
  - Plat Maps

Land & Property Records Resources:
  - Bureau of Land Management – General Land Office
    https://glorecords.blm.gov
    - patents, survey plats, land status records
  - Ancestry (Use the *Card Catalog* to filter and browse for land record collections)
    - war bounty land warrants, tax records, state homesteads and patents
  - County Recorder / Historical Society
    - local deeds, land transaction lists, plat maps, etc.
  - Missouri Digital Heritage - Land Records 1777 – 1969
    https://www.sos.mo.gov/mdh
    - French & Spanish land grants, U.S. land sales, donations, and grants

Military Records
- Revolutionary War – WWII available online:
  - Ancestry (Library Edition at CCPL)
  - Fold3 (Library Edition at CCPL)
  - Soldiers & Sailors https://www.nps.gov/civilwar/soldiers-and-sailors-database.htm
  - NARA's AAD https://aad.archives.gov/aad
- WWII and Vietnam in the process of becoming available

Your ancestors' **compiled service records** can be requested through the National Archives
- Pre-WWI records: www.archives.gov/veterans/military-service-records/pre-ww-1-records
- Records for WWI–Present: www.archives.gov/veterans/military-service-records

Common Databases:
- National Archives (Compiled Service Records, Bounty Land, Pension Applications and Payment Records)
- Soldiers and Sailors (Civil War)
- Ancestry (NARA Collections)
- American Battle Monuments Commission (Veteran graves)
- Fold3 (Civil War Records, Pension Files, WWI & WWII)
- Missouri Digital Heritage (War of 1812–WWI for MO)

Probate Records
- These are records related to the settling and distribution of an individual's estate after their death
- Often kept in the County Courthouse or archived at local historical and genealogical societies
- Can be dated around individual's death
  - contested or complicated estates are often dated much later
- Typically name the individual's family members who were heirs
- Most probate records are not digitized and are not available online, but may be indexed

- *Ancestry has collections of probate records for all 50 states* - coverage does vary

Church Records
- A wide variety of record types, depending on denomination
- Records are often still held by the church or a repository, some available online
- Records include:
  - Christenings/Baptisms
  - Marriages
  - Burials
  - Congregation Censuses
  - Church Newsletters
  - Communion & Confirmations

- Clues for determining denomination:
  - Look at home for certificates, family bibles, photos, etc.
  - Check other records – obituaries, and marriage and funeral notices often mention the church or denomination
  - Find where they're buried, many churches have cemeteries
  - Small communities may have only had one local church
  - Enclaves of immigrants often visited the same church, ex. German Lutherans

Social Security Records
- Social Security Death Index, 1935–2014 (Ancestry Library Edition)
- Social Security Applications and Claims, 1936 – 2007 (Ancestry Library Edition)
  - A copy of your ancestor's original application can be requested
- Information contained includes:
  - full name, age at last birthday, date and place of birth, father and mother's full name (including the mother's maiden name), gender, and applicant's signature

Immigration & Naturalization Records
- You need to find your earliest ancestor in America
  - ***work backwards***
- Clues regarding your ancestor's origin can be found in:
  - Military records – WWI & WWII draft cards
  - Vital records – birth and death certificates
  - Census records – nativity and citizenship columns
  - Cemeteries & Obituaries

- Immigration Records:
  - Passenger Lists
  - Border Crossings
- Naturalization Records:
  - Declaration of Intent
  - Petition for Naturalization
  - Passport Applications

Immigration & Naturalization Record Resources:
- Ancestry – passenger lists, naturalizations, passports, border crossings, etc.
- Ellis Island Foundation – New York arrivals post-1892 (www.libertyellisfoundation.org/passenger)
- Castle Garden – New York arrivals pre-1892 (www.castlegarden.org)
- "Filby Books" – colonial immigration records (available at the Genealogy Branch)
- Hamburg Passenger Lists – German immigration (available at the Genealogy Branch)

Ancestry Library Edition
- *Can be accessed for **FREE** from any CCPL branch through the library website*
- Over 16 billion historical records, including:
    - birth, marriage, & death records
    - Census records
    - military records
    - immigration & naturalization records
- Best place for beginners to start

Find a Grave
www.FindAGrave.com
- Cemetery records, but also sometimes provides obituaries, relatives of deceased, and more
- Free to use and create an account
- User-contributed information
- Search by name, browse cemeteries, post digital flowers and messages on memorials, request headstone photos

FamilySearch
www.FamilySearch.org
- Free to use and create an account
- Indexes of records held at the Family History Library (SLC, UT)
- Over 200,000 digitized family history publications
- Excellent resources for genealogy education: FamilySearch Wiki

Missouri Digital Heritage
www.sos.mo.gov/mdh
- Over 9 million records from all across Missouri
- Record collections available from state and county archives, historical societies, and other repositories
- *Records include:*
    - Death certificates, 1910 – 1965
    - Pre-1910 birth and death records
    - Missouri Soldier's Database, War of 1812 – WWI
    - County histories and plat maps
    - Land records, 1777 – 1969

GenWeb
www.usgenweb.org
- Rootsweb volunteer project focused on making free genealogy websites for every county in every state
    - User-contributed records and indexes, volunteer look-ups, guides, etc.
- Tip: try Google searching "genweb" + county name to connect quickly to the GenWeb page for that county

Chronicling America
chroniclingamerica.loc.gov
- Ongoing Library of Congress newspaper digitization project
- Digitized Newspapers, 1836 – 1922
    - Over 5.2 million newspaper pages to view and download
    - Search by keyword(s) and/or location
- US Newspaper Directory, 1690 – Present

RESOURCES AT THE CCPL GENEALOGY BRANCH

Genealogy Resources
www.casscolibrary.org/genealogy
- Tips for Getting Started
  - Charts and Forms
- Information regarding submitting research inquiries and requests: www.casscolibrary.org/genealogy/inquiries
- Access to databases
  - *Ancestry Library Edition (In-Library Use Only)*
  - *HeritageQuest (Library & Home Use)*
  - *Fold3 (Library & Home Use)*
- Genealogy Guides www.casscolibrary.org/genealogy/guides
  - Educational PDF quick guides and in-depth research guides on a variety of genealogical and historical research
- Cass County Records www.casscolibrary.org/genealogy/cassrecords

Digital and Indexed Record Collections
www.casscolibrary.org/genealogy/digitalcollections
- Cass County Cemetery Records Master Index
- Runnenburger Funeral Home Records, 1901, 1930–1983
- County Home Register & Death Index, 1902–1941
- Memorial Card & Obituary Collection
- Cass County Newspaper Image Index Project (*Ongoing*)

Mary B. B. Crouch Collection
www.casscolibrary.org/genealogy/crouchcollection
- Crouch Files include 180,000+ names indexed from over a thousand files of research
- Indexes for additional collections of maps, photos, and family charts

Stern Visitations of War Exhibit
www.casscolibrary.org/casscountyhistory
- Digital exhibit that explores the Civil War in Cass County
- Provides insight into local skirmishes, individual testimonies, historical context
  - View maps, photographs, videos, and more

THE BASICS OF DNA TESTING

Types of DNA Tests Available
- Autosomal
- Mitochondrial

Test providers include:
- Ancestry DNA (Autosomal) $99
- 23andMe (Autosomal, plus assorted medical information) $99 – $199
- Family Tree DNA (Autosomal & Mitochondrial/Y-DNA) $99 – $199

Autosomal DNA
- Provides ethnicity *estimates*
  - These numbers are the *average* result after dozens of tests

- o Sometimes you are also given a range of possible amounts based on the highest percentage result and the lowest percentage result received
- Typically requires a saliva sample
- Compares your DNA to a reference panel of DNA samples from a range of ethnicities
  - o Having your parents' or siblings' DNA tested as well can provide additional insight into your results

Mitochondrial DNA
- *Y-DNA*
  - o "Father's line" – direct line of male ancestors, y chromosome
  - o This traces your male line only, *can only be taken by men*
- *mtDNA*
  - o "Mother's line" – direct line of female ancestors, x chromosome
  - o This traces your female line only, *can be taken by both men and women*
- *Haplogroups*
  - o Y-DNA and mtDNA tests results provide a *haplogroup*, not percentages of ethnicities
  - o A genetic line of descent specific to particular *populations of people*, based on shared genetic mutation
  - o Results are different depending on YDNA or mtDNA
  - o *Example:*
    - ▪ <u>Y-DNA Group H:</u> India, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Pakistan, Iran, Central Asia, and Arabia
    - ▪ <u>mtDNA Group H:</u> Europe