

## **GETTING STARTED ON YOUR FAMILY HISTORY**

**People decide to do their family history for many different reasons.**

You may want to find out if there are any health issues that you may have inherited.

You may want to find out if you're related to royalty or someone famous.

You may want to find your biological family if you're adopted

You may want to find out when and where your family came from, or if the stories Grandpa told were true.

**Some folks are more fact oriented**

They may just want the names, dates, locations, and facts related to their ancestors.

**Some folks are more story oriented**

They're looking for stories about their ancestors to tell

**Whatever your reasons or inclination, doing your family history can be fun and fascinating.**

## WHAT SHOULD YOU DO FIRST?

**Get familiar with some basic genealogy concepts, practices, and resources.**

**Start with the Research Wiki on Familysearch.org at [https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Main\\_Page](https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Main_Page)**

Family Search is owned by the Mormon Church but is available to everyone, not just church members.

You will need to set up a free account to do searches and view images, BUT you do NOT need an account to look at the Research Wiki.

Start by entering the word Genealogy or Research Resources in the search box above the blue box titled 'List of all Localities' on the Wiki home page.

The results are different, but both terms will be very helpful in getting you started in your research.

The Wiki is also very useful once you start your actual research and need more background info about a state or country, and what types of records are available, and where to find them.

## **You can also do a web search for “getting started with family history”**

Results will show a wide variety of results about:  
learning centers, help pages,  
other sources to look at, where to find records,  
even online books about genealogy.

## **Get familiar with the Genealogical Proof Standard or GPS**

Knowing about it early on will save you lots of grief in the long run. It has 5 tenets:

Research - should be reasonably exhaustive

Citations - should be complete and accurate

Analysis - of collected info should be done

Resolution - of any conflicts has to be done

Write down - your well reasoned conclusions

## **Doing background work is something you'll continue to do throughout your research**

As you discover new places and time periods you need to know about, and

As you become more sophisticated in your knowledge and research capabilities.

**Consider joining a genealogy group at some point.** They can be great sources for:

Learning research and writing techniques and skills,

Learning about various records and repositories,

Getting advice from more experienced researchers;

Collaborating and sharing information, etc.

## WHAT DO YOU DO NEXT?

### **Write down the facts you do know**

About yourself - name, birthdate and place, parents, siblings, etc.

Then, working backwards in time, do the same for your known relatives [or at least the closest or more recent ones].

### **Go through your own belongings to try and fill in the gaps**

Do you have your parent's marriage license, or their death certificates?

Did you or your parents inherit stuff from relatives and now it's in a box in the basement?

Write down whatever info you find. Remember to include where that info was found.

Now, or later, take photos or scan any documents. Make sure to clearly identify them.

**Talk/write/text/email or whatever with any relatives you're aware of.**

There's guidance online about how to go about it.

Be polite, and be patient. Not everyone will be willing to do it.

Get whatever details you can about their lives that they're willing to share

Birth dates, marriage dates, info on their spouses, kids, or in-laws, etc.

Find out what they know about any of the ancestors or other relatives.

Are there any stories your family tells? They may not be accurate but they're a place to start.

Document who you communicated with, when, and where.

Identify what they told you and how they knew that info.

Did their mom tell them, did they know the person, etc.

You want to be able to judge the reliability of the info.

Find out if they have any family related items or know who does

Items such as Bibles, photos, scrapbooks, newspaper articles, documents, or even any artifacts that belonged to your ancestors.

All of these can help fill in the details on your family tree.

See if they'll share them with you, or at least send you pictures of things.

**Start thinking generally about how you want to keep track of everything.**

Don't wait until you have so much info that it will be a pain to copy it over to whatever format you decide on.

Do you want to keep it all on paper? Use file folders or notebooks?

Are you a plastic bin kind of person or a file cabinet one?

Do you want to keep it online in a tree on a commercial site?

Do you want to keep it online but just on your computer, using just word processing software and/or spreadsheets?

Do you want to buy commercial software, e.g., FamilyTree Maker that allows you to keep stuff on your computer but also synch with your online trees?

There is no right or wrong way to do it. Do what you feel comfortable with.

Most folks change their approach one or more times during their research.

You will always have some items to deal with such as originals of documents and photos, family Bibles, etc. that you don't want to destroy.

### **Think about what info is missing and what you want to learn first /look for next**

Keep it simple - look for one thing for one person at a time, e.g., a birth date or place.

Think about what types of records might have the info you need:

Birth info may be on a birth certificate, or in a church baptismal register.

Occupations may be in a census, on a pay stub, or in a marriage record.

And there are soooo many more types, way too many to cover here, but I've included them in the handout posted online.



Think about who would have created those types of records - was it a government, a church, a business, etc.?

Think about where the record would physically be kept.

Would it be in a government or state archive, state or institutional library, in a businesses such as a funeral home, or even a local historical society?

Think about whether the records might be online and where.

Census records are on Ancestry.com, Familysearch.org, etc.

Military records are at the National Archives, Fold3, FindMyPast, etc.

Marriage records, deeds, probate records, etc. may be on Ancestry, or other commercial databases, but also at USGENWEB, town websites, genealogy society websites, etc.

Other records may only be available offline.

## **FILLING IN THE GAPS [aka the Research Process]**

**Start looking for info in those sources you decided might have the info you need.**

**Recommendation: Start online with the latest census**, looking for either yourself or your parents in the 1940 census, and then work backwards on each of them to the earlier ancestors.

It's an easy way to get started.

It usually will provide you with a good amount of basic info.

It will lead you to ideas for other types of info to look for.

From 1940 back to 1850, the census shows names of everyone in the household, their ages, sex, and birth location.

Censuses after 1850 will also give you additional information depending on which year it is.

From 1840 back to 1790, they'll always show the name of the head of household and the number of males or females in various age ranges. For example, 2 females under age 5, or 1 male 15-20.

These censuses in different years also asked for other types of info but it's often not in the transcription summaries, only on the original microfilmed image.

**Try to find as many [at least 2-3] different sources of the info as possible**, to help you verify its accuracy.

**Always look at the original image of any record, if there is one.**

Transcriptions and summaries almost always leave out some good stuff.

They can also include mistakes, both big and little

**“Write” down what you find and where you found it.**

**Keep a research log.**

They can be fancy and complicated, or plain and simple, e.g., just a list.

Logs help you keep track of what you've already done so you can go back to the source, it helps avoid duplicating work, and logs can also show where you haven't looked.

## Analyze the info you find

Always make sure you've got the right person. It's very easy to follow the wrong person or family. Names and spellings can vary, but is the person:

- with the same people in the censuses?
- about the same age or a reasonable advancement from the last record?
- the same religion, or doing the same kind of trade?
- in a different location? If so, how did they get there? Does it make sense?

Was the source an original one - what type of record was the info in?

If it was a secondary source did the author provide their sources for the info?

Always check out those sources.

Does any of the info you found contradict other pieces of the same type of info?

If it does, don't IGNORE any contradictions - you have to resolve them.

[Remember the GPS!]

**Put what you've found on your pedigree charts, timelines, online software, etc.**

**Repeat the process over and over, for the many people and types of info you look at.**

**You will use this same process whether you're looking for information online, or in published sources, on microfilm, in the US or overseas.**

## WHERE CAN YOU DO YOUR RESEARCH?

### There are 3 main ways:

Online at home.

Online and offline resources available in local repositories.

Offline resources in out-of-the-area repositories.

### Online at Home

There are lots and lots of websites you can access from home, and you can spend YEARS doing research just on these sites.

Start off with doing as much research online as you can. Again, start with the census.

### Some of the most helpful sites, with the most useful records, are:

[www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org)

This is the LDS/Mormon church's genealogy site and it is free.

Has US and international records.

Has images of original documents, printed family histories, genealogy related books, indexes and summaries of all sorts of records, etc.

The family tree on FamilySearch.org is one tree that everyone uses, rather than individual ones. While people are only supposed to change info if they can *prove* it's correct, that doesn't always happen. Sometimes your correct info is replaced by erroneous info. There are official recourses you can take.

Card catalog is very helpful and you've already heard about their Wiki.

[www.Ancestry.com](http://www.Ancestry.com)

Fee based, but you can have a brief free trial, but only once.

Has both US and international records, but additional money is needed to access the international ones.

There's a free "Library" edition of Ancestry that is often accessible at your local library. However, you can't create a tree on it and you have to download any records to a flash drive, you can't save them onto the library computer.

It's the best source for Federal census records.

Like Familysearch and the other main databases, it has original images of records as well as indexed records and summaries. They also have books, online learning resources, a searchable card catalog, etc.

The family trees on Ancestry are individually done, there is not a common tree that everyone contributes to. You can mark them as public or private.

[www.findmypast.com](http://www.findmypast.com)

Subscription based. Can do a 14-day free trial.

Excellent if you have ancestors in the England, Wales, and Ireland but has records from all over the world.

Like the other databases, has images of original documents, indexes and summaries of records, online newspapers, etc. It does not have a searchable catalog.

Uniquely, there's also a History Hub with articles focused on different types of history - can help put your ancestors' lives into context.

Trees are individually done.



[www.myheritage.com](http://www.myheritage.com)

Subscription based, but has a 14-day free trial.

Has US and international records.

Trees are individually done.

Has the same type records and capabilities as other databases.

Doesn't seem to have a searchable catalog.

[www.americanancestors.org](http://www.americanancestors.org)

Subscription based but can do basic searches for free, just can't always see everything.

Unlike the other databases, it has a Guest Membership for free that doesn't have a time limit on it. It allows you to do searches and use much of their site but with access to only about 50 or so of the several hundred databases that members can use.

Started off focused solely on New England states but now has info for much of the US and worldwide records as well.

It has the same types of features and records as the others. It has a searchable catalog. Trees are done individually.

American Ancestors belongs to the New England Historical and Genealogical Society which has been around for almost 200 years.

They have an outstanding collection onsite in Boston of original documents, manuscripts, microfilm, and other resources available for research by their members.

[www.fold3.com](http://www.fold3.com)

A fee based site, but has a 7-day free trial.

They are digitizing ALL of the War of 1812 pension records and case files which contain an enormous amount of info often not found anywhere else.

They've done a LOT of them, but there are still more to do.

THOSE pension records are free, you don't have to have a Fold3 subscription or even sign up for a free trial.

Focuses on military records,

Has some international and non-military records but don't go there first for those type records.

[www.USGENWEB.com](http://www.USGENWEB.com)

This is a free site being done around the country by volunteer genealogists.

It's a great source for transcriptions of cemetery tombstones, local newspaper articles, local marriages, deeds, obits, etc.

Once you're on the site, you select a state and from the state's site, you can select by county.

There's also an international version at [www.worldgenweb.com](http://www.worldgenweb.com)

[www.archives.com](http://www.archives.com) [.com NOT .org]

Charges a fee. They do have a free trial as well.

It's a good source for newspapers, but you can't get to them unless you join.

It does have many other record type categories as well, including digitized family and local history books online. There isn't a catalog.

Trees are done individually.

[google.com](http://google.com) [or any web searcher]

Often just doing a basic web/google search is a good place to start and it's free!

Web searches can show results for major genealogical databases and sources of info, but also websites created by towns, counties, other countries, ethnic groups, religious groups, and so on.

Google Books is a great source for genealogists because often the books we're looking for are old enough they are out of copyright and can be found online.

Google's maps will also prove to be very useful.

[www.archives.gov/research\\_room/genealogy](http://www.archives.gov/research_room/genealogy) [notice - .gov]

This is the National Archives genealogy webpage. Everything is free.

It is one source where you can access the 1940 Federal Census for free, BUT for now you can't search by name, only by location.

Most of the records at the National Archives are on paper or film, but there are some things you can search online.

There is an electronic catalog and lots of different finding aids and guides to help you learn what they have and how to access it.

### 3 Gravestone/Cemetery Sites:

Find-A-Grave at [www.findagrave.com](http://www.findagrave.com).

Free, lets you search for people or cemeteries. Has some international info.

Any biographical text provided on the site that ISN'T on the tombstone is only as good as that person's research. Like with family trees, always verify it.

[www.interment.net](http://www.interment.net) and [www.Billiongraves.com](http://www.Billiongraves.com)

Both are similar to find-a-grave. They're also free.

Websites hosted by State Libraries and Archives, counties, and even many towns/villages, as well as many European locations.

They often have local info they've digitized.

Some have done a great job and posted lots of original sources online, others are just getting started.

Almost every genealogy website will have links to other genealogy resources.

**Sites that focus on just providing links to other locations of info/records:**

Cyndi's List at [www.cyndislist.com](http://www.cyndislist.com)

An amazing compilation of over 227 categories each with links to all sorts of resources on the web and it's free and updated daily.

It's a very good place to start to see what types of info are out there.

Linkpendium at [www.linkpedium.com](http://www.linkpedium.com)

From the home page you can select by location or surname and the results will show you links for websites with records to go to.

Access Free Genealogy at <https://accessgenealogy.com/>

Has links to a wide variety of genealogy databases. Not as broad a coverage as Cyndi's List but helpful.

National Genealogical Society - [www.ngsgenealogy.com](http://www.ngsgenealogy.com)

On its website, there's a Learning Center tab with all sorts of "how-to" info you can access for free, and as a member there are even more resources.

This is not a source for data, but it's a great source for learning how to do genealogy well.

## **Online and offline resources available locally outside-of-your-home**

When you're ready to explore sources of info besides those accessible from home, there are, especially around here, lots of great options, including the:

National Archives [NARA] in DC and MD,

Library of Congress,

Daughters of the American Revolution [DAR] Library also in DC,

Family History Centers run by the Mormon Church in MD and VA

Virginia Rooms in the Fairfax and Arlington Libraries,

Special Collections Library in Alexandria,

RELIC [Ruth E Lloyd Information Center] genealogy and local history center located in the Manassas Library

Thomas Balch Library in Leesburg,

Maryland Genealogical Society in Baltimore

Mount Vernon Genealogical Society's Research Center.



Online, most of our public libraries provide access to some genealogy related databases, as well as a variety of other types.

Some you could pay to access from home, but they may be too expensive, or you don't need them enough to want to pay for them.

Others are only available to institutions.

Their websites will usually tell you what they have, what may be available to you from home with a library card, and which ones are only available while you're physically at their location.

These can be databases such as library editions of Ancestry or HeritageQuest, or a variety of newspaper databases, JSTOR [a source for scholarly journals], etc.

Online resources could also, depending on the repository, be databases related to their own holdings.

At the DAR Library for example, from home you can search the Genealogical Records Committee Index or their Bible Records, 2 collections unique to the DAR, and get results, but you can see a lot more at the library itself.

And, at the library you can also access American Ancestors.org, Early American Newspapers, etc.

Family History Centers through their FHC Portal, accessible only at the FHC's themselves, offer a whole set of databases, including:

19th Century British Library Newspapers, ArkivDigital [Swedish Records], as well as Find My Past, Fold3, MyHeritage Library Edition, Newspapers.com, and a host of others.

Offline resources at the local repositories come in many forms.

There may be microfilm to view, such as at the National Archives and Library of Congress. The McLean Family History Center has over 3,000 microfilm rolls.

All of the libraries and Family History Centers have published sources useful for your genealogy research. You may even be able to borrow items through inter-library loan from some of them.

Many repositories, such as the National Archives and DAR, have large manuscript collections and other unpublished resources.

But even small libraries have vertical files of local info and maybe other types of unpublished materials.

Always check the online catalogs for what a repository has.

## **Out-of-the-area resources you should visit, include:**

State libraries and archives in states where your ancestors lived

Local libraries; courthouses; funeral homes and cemeteries; genealogical, historical, social or religious societies; and any other organizations where your ancestors lived.

Any repositories holding records relevant to your ancestors. Be aware that they may be located nowhere near the places the ancestors lived.

Records held by family members or individuals such as ministers, often end up in repositories far away from the initial residence.

Some major repositories focused on genealogy are the:

Family History Library in Salt Lake City, Utah;

Midwest Genealogy Center in Independence MO near St Louis;

Godfrey Memorial Library in Middletown, CT;

Allen County Public Library in Fort Wayne, IN; etc.

Before going on a trip, but really any time you research outside of your home, you'll need to do some homework.

This will save time when you get there and avoid making wasted trips.

How to prepare could take several lectures, but generally, before you go:

Search their website, online catalogs, and any other online resources to determine what they have. Is it info you need?

Determine what's accessible, their rules and requirements, etc.

## **HINTS/Things to consider when doing your research**

**Always work backwards!** Start with the latest generation and work backwards as far as you can go. If you try to skip a generation, or work forward from someone in the far past, you're going to mess up and make mistakes such as following the wrong tree or family!

**Document/keep your sources WITH the information you find.** The worst thing in the world is to find a great piece of information in 2021 and then in 2025 want to go back to see what else was there and you don't know where you found the info. It's a real killer!

Also, often when you're just starting out, you'll look in a resource for a particular piece of info and maybe even find it. Then later, after you've done more research, you'll wonder if that resource also had some info that you didn't know was relevant at the time. Always document where you found things.

**Treat all family trees with a certain amount of suspicion.** While some are good and reflect careful research and accurate info, it's amazing how many are really bad ones are out there. They're a wonderful source for hints, but always take the time to follow up the info with your own research.

## **Don't worry too much about how names are spelled -**

Spelling wasn't standardized until the 20th century. It's not unusual to see a name spelled 3 different ways in the SAME document, both here and overseas.

Not only was spelling not standardized, but many people didn't read or write and when they asked someone to write it for them, that person just "gave it their best guess."

However, different spellings can sometimes mislead you.

For instance you think you're looking for Watkins because that's how *your* family always spells it. BUT, you also need to look at Watkin, Wadkin, and maybe even Watkiss or Walkin.

Sometimes it helps to say a name or word out loud to figure out if something written down could be your guy or gal.

## **Family surnames were NOT changed by the folks at Ellis Island!**

Ellis Island hired people who spoke and wrote the various languages and they were usually working off of passenger lists created in the home country.

Names, if they WERE changed, were done by their owners AFTER they left Ellis Island, or over time, or inadvertently by courthouse clerks or other officials.

## **Keep Track of Geographical Boundaries.**

Geographical boundaries of counties, provinces, duchies, etc. were constantly changing [and sometimes still do], so you really need to use maps for that time if you want to refer to the correct name for the place and know what was nearby.

In the US, when a part of the county splits off to become a new county, the records STAY in the original county, the new county will only have new records created there.

There are lots of free, interactive maps on the web where you can pick a year and it will show you the counties for that state at that time.

To get an idea of an area, google maps are very helpful.



## **Tombstones are not always reliable sources of information.**

Very often they have the **WRONG** birthdate and sometimes even the wrong death date.

Even death certificates can have wrong info depending on who the informant was.

**NEVER make excuses for, or avoid, conflicting evidence** - you **HAVE** to resolve it!

Remember the GPS.

**Always look at EVERY possible record that might give you an answer**, especially if you're not finding the answer easily. One might at least give you a clue.

**Remember the FAN [Friends, Associates and Neighbors] Club or Network.**

Often you won't be able to find info on a direct ancestor. By looking at records for FAN members in the census, in church records, etc. you can often find info relevant to your ancestor, or at least hints of where to look next.

For example, maybe your great grandmother died before death certificates were required, but her much younger brother died after they were required.

Looking at his death certificate could give you a parent's name or birthplace, etc. that you couldn't find from your great grandmother's records.

### **Keep religion in mind.**

Regardless of your own church affiliation, active or non-existent, remember that the church was involved with your ancestors.

Religion had a huge impact on our ancestors' lives, either in how they worshipped, rules regarding their daily lives, what types of records were kept and where, etc.

In Europe, if people weren't members of the State recognized church, their records might be found there anyway because the "non-conformist" churches weren't allowed to perform certain functions. In the US in colonial times this was also the case.

Depending on the denomination, you can find records showing when they got communion, when they got in trouble for cursing, when they helped out the local poor, etc. as well as baptism, marriage and burial information.

Vestry records and parish meeting minutes can also be very helpful.

## **When looking for brides/grooms, don't look too far away geographically -**

People generally WALKED, so typically they married someone in a range of 4-6 miles, until routes of transportation were better, and even later when railroads showed up.

This doesn't always apply to coastal/river bank communities where boats allowed folks more mobility.

In the US, people did sometimes go further than in Europe because folks were so spread out, but typically it was someone in the same county and often not too far from Dad's, or a relative's, place.

In Europe families tended to marry within their own social circle - fathers tried to ensure their daughters were going to be cared for, as well as hoping the son-in-law could bring additional resources to the family.

Social strata also wasn't quite as important, in the US often due to a lack of available population.

Look for churches and schools in the area where they might have met; also check for where fairs or court days were held, folks might have met there as well.

## **Please don't ever show a woman on a genealogy pedigree chart by her married name**

Use only maiden names, or an "X" if you don't know it - UNLESS it actually was THE SAME surname which does happen but not that often.

## **Often multiple copies of records were required.**

That was a good thing because if one set got destroyed, you might have 2 or more other versions to look for.

In the US we did that with census records - the local guy made the first list, then he made a copy to go to the State and then someone made a copy to go to the US gov't.

For church records overseas, often the local priest/minister made the first record. Then he had to make a copy to send to the next church level up, and so on.

Because each level's needs were different, and people make mistakes, you may find different info in each version.

**Church registers kept track of sacraments so you're going to find baptism, marriage and burial dates, not birth and death dates.**

Typically you find birth dates only if the register was done in a church that didn't believe in infant baptism, or if the minister added it.

Make sure to indicate if it's a birth date or a baptism date. Baptism dates could vary from a few days after the birth, to a month, or even a year. And if the religion didn't believe in infant baptism, they could be teens or even adults before being baptized.

Later, as governments started requiring civil registration, you start seeing birth, marriage and death dates instead.

**Make sure you look for tax records,**

Tax records are a good way to find folks who didn't own land because they would often have to pay either a poll tax or a tax on a horse, or tools, etc.

It can also be a way to estimate a birth year by seeing when a person showed up on the tax lists. Just be sure you know the laws for that time period about when someone was eligible to be taxed - sometimes it was as early as 16.

## **The calendar we used in the US changed in 1753.**

Before 1753, the new year started on 25 March, aka Lady Day.

In early/mid Sep 1753, the system changed to 1 Jan being the first of the year and we lost about 11 days as well.

In Europe, some countries changed in 1753, others did it earlier and some did it later. The new version was the Gregorian version, previously it was the Julian calendar.

That's why you'll see dates written as 1752/3 or 1693/4 to indicate the year would have been different under the "old" system.

For more details, look it up on the web. There are lots of sites about it.

It's important to know which system was used because you can have someone under the old system dying in Feb 1748 and being born in Nov 1748 under the old calendar.

## **Save those digital images -**

If you find an image of an original document online that you really want, or want to have easy access to, don't wait, download it to your PC or a flash drive, etc.

Information, or even whole sites, can disappear off the web, so save it while you can. Sometimes you can find them through cached sites or the "wayback machine" but not always.

HOWEVER, if you then use that photo or image in a posted or published work of your own, make sure you obey the copyright laws and regulations, even on a family tree!

## **Be aware that when you download images they usually don't come with info on where they were located,**

Try to name the image/file you save with at least some minimal source and date info.

What I do is name it with the basic info and then on the timelines I have for individual people, I put the FULL source information in the relevant spot on the timeline.

If you're using a genealogy software package, often they have options to bring the source info along with the image when it's copied, or you can use software tools to grab the source and copy it to your tree, etc.

## **Get everything you can out of every newspaper.**

Many of the sites charge a fee, but there are many that don't, such as Chronicling America on the Library of Congress website, newspapers on the Library of Virginia website, etc.

There are lots of books explaining how and where to find newspapers. They're not just for obituaries!

Especially in older, or small town newspapers, look in the ads, the business section, the government section, the gossip/personal pages, etc. You can find valuable genealogical info in pretty much every part of the paper.

It's also a great way to fill out the details of your ancestors' lives - what was going on around them, what things cost, etc.

Don't forget to look for articles and obituaries in ethnic newspapers in the US - they often have much more info and more accurate info for a person than do the English language papers.

**Remember, not everything is online.** You will have to travel to a courthouse, church, historical society, library, or even abroad.



## **“TECHNOLOGY” RELATED TO GENEALOGY**

### **Social Media Collaboration**

There are many sites on social media related to genealogy. Some of them are hosted by geographic locations, others are hosted by institutions, societies, and others by individuals.

They can be found as Facebook Genealogy Groups, GoogleGroups, FamilySearch Online Communities, on Twitter, and you can even find documents on Pinterest.

Social media sites are excellent generally for translation help, identifying people in photos, and getting help familiarizing yourself with a particular location.

Online Message boards at Ancestry, Genforum, etc. can also connect you to other people working on your lines, maybe answer your questions, etc.

## **GEDCOM Files**

This is a file standard used for exchanging genealogical data between different genealogy software programs and websites.

It allows you to download your family tree data to a standard GEDCOM file that can then be uploaded to another program or website that recognizes the GEDCOM standard.

## **DNA**

You can test for the male y-DNA line; the female mitochondrial [mtDNA] lines, or do the autosomal DNA test which looks at both male and female DNA, it's used most for determining cousins. DNA will not solve all your problems. It can provide clues.

Tests are available from many different sources. FamilyTreeDNA is the only one I'm aware of that still does the y-DNA test. Ancestry only does the autosomal DNA test.

There are whole sections on the sites like FamilySearch, Ancestry, etc dealing with DNA.

**Commercial software to help organize your genealogy info, create trees, print pedigree charts, produce photo/memory books, etc.**

FamilyTree Maker [FTM] - can sync with ancestry.com; works on PC and MAC

Rootsmagic - can sync with ancestry.com; works on PC and MAC

Legacy - works on PC's only

**Free software that does things similar to the commercial software**

FamilySearch.org - lets you add your ancestors and info to a “common family tree” that anyone can access and change. Has tools to save photos, documents, notes, audio files, etc. about your ancestors

GRAMPS at www.gramsproject.org - a crowd developed genealogy software, it's free and seems to have all the functionality of the above packages

## **Software/apps to store info, cut and paste info, etc.**

Evernote, GoogleKeep, Microsoft's OneNote, etc. - let you create notes; clip and organize items and content from websites, even full pages; turn photos into note; do audio recordings; etc. Replaces all those sticky notes from the past.

Basecamp - a project management tool that lets you store all your information, organize it, and also collaborate and share info with others.

RecordSeek at <http://recordseek.com> - lets you put a source from any website into FamilySearch and Ancestry.

## **Sources for Scanning photos and documents**

PhotoScan by GooglePhotos - free app takes 4 images of an item, then stitches them together.

CamScanner - lets you scan documents as well as enhance the results, crop etc.

Pixlr, Adobe Photoshop Fix, etc. - allow you to "restore" scanned images of damaged photos, edit them, etc.

Portable scanners, such as the FlipPal mobile scanner allow you to scan images by running over them, take multiple images of a document and stitch them together, etc. Often allowed in libraries and archives when other portable scanners aren't.

### **Digital scrapbooks, photo albums, etc.**

JoyFlips is just one of many packages that let you download photos and create albums, rearrange photos, etc. They usually allow you to include audio files about the files, record stories, etc.

Familysearch Memories also lets you create online albums, record audio notes for pictures or documents, record longer audio files, etc.

Ancestry had the same capabilities as the two others already mentioned. Now they have something called MyCanvas, but apparently with the removal of Adobe Flash, they're having to re-work it so give it some time.

There are also many sites that let you create fan/circular style pedigree charts, and other audiovisual type materials.

## Physical Aids to help you out

Shotbox - Portable light box that allows you to put your cell phone on top of it, put what you're taking pictures of inside the box and then using a cable, take the pictures; there are other versions of light boxes as well

Portable feeder type scanners that aren't allowed in libraries and archives

Pre-printed materials such as pedigree charts, family history sheets, research logs, timelines, etc etc. etc.

## Sources for Learning

There are all sorts of **online webinars, videos, articles, guides, etc.** on the commercial sites like Ancestry, American Ancestors, and Legacy, as well as on YouTube and FamilySearch.

Additionally there are various genealogy society web pages, library websites, and even blogs with info. All of these can be sources for information about techniques, resources, and repositories.

## Online General “Reference” Helps

**Translation help - [deepl.com](https://deepl.com)** - allows you to cut and paste lots of text into it to be translated. There’s also <https://translate.google.com>

**Birth Date Calculators** based on death date and age on a tombstone

**Calendar conversions** from Julian to new Gregorian calendar, French Revolutionary Calendar to Gregorian calendar, etc.

**Maps** - Google Earth and Google Maps, gazetteers, distance calculators, online interactive maps showing boundary changes/creation of counties over time, etc.

**Cousin relationships** - lots of different charts are online to help you figure out your relationship to various cousins/generations. You know, that old 2nd cousin 3 times removed thing.

**Questions?** Please email me at [albreedlove@comcast.net](mailto:albreedlove@comcast.net).