

GENEALOGY GENIUS



A COMPREHENSIVE GUIDE IN BECOMING A GENEALOGY GENIUS

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Introductory

First things first, a family history center is what? Basically, family history centers number to more than three thousand all over the world.

The fact of the matter is that these centers are branches of the family history library of the Latter-Day Saints – which is considered as the main and central repository for a lot of genealogical info the Church missionaries were able to collect.

The purpose of the family history center is to help eliminate any need to have to travel to Utah, Salt Lake City just to use the collection records.

Believe it or not, a lot of the electronic data as well as microfilms collections are generally accessible through the family history centers all over the world.

Also, use of the family history center is free of charge. There are also a lot of volunteer family history center staff available to lend you valuable assistance.

Where are the family history centers located?

A lot of the centers are found in the meeting houses of the Jesus Christ church of the Latter-Day Saints. The administrators of these centers are operated by members of the local LDS Church.

Everyone and anyone is generally welcome to come and enter as well as use the resources available at the family history center.

When are the family history centers open?

Since there are more than three thousand family history centers available around the world, every center thereby determines its own opening hours.

Prior to actually visiting the family history center site, call the center and check in order to verify if the center is open.

What are the services offered by the family history center?

Basically, help in accessing research and resource info is provided by the family history volunteer staff. However, take note that staff volunteers will basically be unable to do the actual research for you.

What they could give you is a thorough orientation about the family history center, answer any or all of your questions with regards to research (the expertise of each family history center staff varies), assist you in your use of the family history center resources as well as help you in ordering microfiche and microfilms from the family history library.

Also, there are various classes offered by many family history centers. These classes offer research genealogical topics which could further assist you in your family history search.

Family history centers are also able to give you referrals to other archives, libraries or institutions that could assist you in your search.

What research tools are offered by the family history center?

Believe it or not, there are various tools as well as software programs available at the family history center. The familysearch program is a collection of computer programs and files that are there to assist individuals in their search for info on their ancestors.

The familysearch program include the family history catalog library, the genealogical international index, the ancestral file (a program which allow other patrons to arrange history family info), the death social security index, the church Scottish records, the military US index.

There are also resources that are published such as histories, genealogies, gazetteers, maps and atlases that are available at the family history center.

All in all, family history centers are best sources for info on genealogical searches that could help you know yourself and your family a lot better.

Chapter 1: Genealogy Made Free - Start Yours Now!

Genealogy, to most people, is just the simple term 'family tree'. One would be foolish to not have any interest on his origin.

To start with one's genealogy is like starting a long hike. There are things one needs to know and prepare for. In addition to that, it would consume some of your time. Just have patience and it will all be worth it!

There are many sites offering free information on genealogy. As the saying goes, it is now just a click of a mouse away. As mentioned, one must prepare some information before starting to look for additional ones. What are these 'information'?

Begin with the basic ones like dates (of birth, marriages and death), family names and first names (use of paternal last name, name after marriage, Chinese last names, middle names and nicknames, etc.), occupations and places. After gathering all these, read on for the free stuff offered on genealogical sites:

Genealogical forms for downloading like charts as basis for the family tree, calendar (used for research), forms for note taking, deed indexes (grantors and grantees), checklist for libraries or archives the researcher visited), journals and worksheets for research, table of contents, index for marriages (statewide), and vital records.

Other forms are outline for biography, log for correspondence, family group sheet (chart filled out by family groups), time capsules, checklist of military records, tradition records, census records checklist (which includes 1790-1930 censuses). One could also have a checklist of books and articles that the researcher finds to be relevant to the genealogical work.

Some software could also be downloaded for free. Examples are the Brother's Keeper Genealogy software, Family Tree Legends (claiming to be a powerful software in genealogical search), Gedmark (used in securing any information on an author on GEDCOM files), GeneWeb (genealogy program

that has Web interface), and GenFinder Freeware, TimeLine Maker (maker of charts that show histories, also, colored printouts

There are also free tools for translation. The need for them? There are many ancient documents not written in English. Such tools that are for free are: Babel Fish Translation Program, Foreign Language Translation on the Internet, free genealogical translation, Google Language tools, Systran Translation (up to 150 words can be translated), and Xanadu.

The free databases are the following: AccessGenealogy, Digital Archives (Norway), Genealogy service provided by Family Search, and Free Family Surname Search.

For other tools, these are downloadable: Timelines (personalized for your own use), dictionary for genealogy, Letter Generator (Italian Form), Relationship calculator and Converter from surname to soundex.

Tools, databases, software and charts are not the only ones that are offered for free on the net. More good news... useful tips and classes on genealogical search are also offered free of charge! Some online classes include guide to genealogical research for beginners, advice for more effective searches, preparation of genealogical history to be published, and guide in searching indexes on family trees.

Now, if you are the type that would go for a more fun and relaxed way of keeping records of your 'finds' of kindred dead or long-lost relatives, then scrap booking is also being offered for free.

With all these, one might be tempted to ask, are these really for free? Well, let's just say that most of these free stuffs are without charge for a number of days. Beyond that, it would be up to the researcher if he would like to continue using the 'free stuff'. Again, such a tedious task as genealogical work could be made easier (or even fun) nowadays. So, would you like to disagree with Charles Darwin's theory that you came from an ape? Then start searching...

Chapter 2: It's Time to Know Where You Came From

Charles Darwin explained (or at least tried to) where humankind began. In his study, the modern Homo sapiens originated from apes.

Most people would not like to embrace such a theory even with the most extensive scientific explanation. This writer would most certainly not want to!

Genealogy, by definition, is studying or tracing the roots of people. Remember our 'family trees'? Well, that is genealogy in its simplest form. One must begin by establishing the closest living relatives that he has then listing down the deceased ones. A basic family tree should look like the following:

You >

Your Father > Your Father's Father & Your Father's Mother

Your Mother > Your Mother's Father & Your Mother's Mother

Before one should delve into the long process of tracing generations that are way back, a person should begin by asking his living relatives. After which, documents or journals (also known as diaries) should be gathered as they are a necessary part of proving their kinship.

As people begin to gather information about past generations, they do not only unearth the names of their ancestors but also such information as the way they have lived their lives and what motivated them. In the process, other relevant information such as political setting, conditions in the society, and how their ancestors have immigrated could also be established.

There are 5 types of genealogical information:

Name of the ancestor's place - this tops the list because the search begins in an ancestor's place. But one should be knowledgeable in different

spellings for certain places. An example of which is the place called Brocton. This village name can be found in both Staffordshire and Shropshire borders, both English counties. Documents pertaining to a person's place of origin are tax and census records, also civil registration.

Occupation - this could be relevant in cases where two people have the exact names. One way to distinguish one from the other is through their jobs. This could also give a hint on their status on the society. One needs to understand the Old English language before he can conclude what his ancestor's occupation really is.

A common example is the words ostler and hostler. Ostlers tend to horses while a hostler is keeper of an inn. Another example is a shoemaker who can also be called a 'cordwainer'. Occupational documents include directories, census records, and again, civil registration.

Last Names or Surnames - extra care should be practiced when dealing with this piece of information. There are several ways a surname could be presented. Cultures all over the globe (well, at least most of them) put the surname after the first names. That is why it is sometimes called the last name. But this is not true for the Chinese culture. They, on the other hand, place their last names first and their first names last (get that?).

There are several ways of getting a surname. The last names of women could be altered when they undergo marriage. The so-called patronymics, on the other hand, allow people to be identified through their paternal parent's surname. Still some undergo modifications such as what happened to the surname Mordecai that was modified into Mort.

First names - together with the last names, these are vital information, too. However, the downside is when nicknames are also being used by our ancestors. In this case, middle names could be of help. There are also some conventions in naming children. Parents from Scotland could follow the 'formula' of naming their children: the first son could be named after the child's father's father, while the next son could be name after the mother's father, and so forth.

Dates - is also vital to establish such occasions as marriages, births and deaths. Connections of parents to their children could be established by such simple information as dates of birth. However, dates have the most errors in transcription so extra care should be practiced when dealing with them.

Now that all the necessary information needed to start a family history were discussed, one needs to know the other sources aside from living relatives and public documents. There are several websites that could help anyone who would want to start with his own genealogical search.

The leader of which are the LDS-compiled genealogy that resulted into the International Genealogical Index, which happens to be the largest compilation of genealogical data through microfilm.

Well, this is just the tip of the iceberg. There are modern ways to research one's ancestry nowadays and what he just needs to do is to sit down and start with the most basic. Then from there, the web is there to help. So, is your interest now piqued? Go get a pen and start searching!

Chapter 3: Use Family Genealogy Sources In Your Search

If you want to know more of where you came from, the best source of finding out is through members of your own family.

Believe it or not, the best sources of your own search of whence it is you came from is from the very people you consider – fortunately or unfortunately – your family.

The following are advice and tips for you to be able to know more about your own family genealogy.

Write, write, write it all

The first step is in the writing down of all and every name that you know from both your parents' sides. Basically, this means all members of your families.

Begin the process with your own name, after which, try to work backwards to the name of your parents and then the names of the parents of your parents, and so on.

Check with legal documents

It would be best to look for your own birth certificate as this basically contain the names of your parents as well as the dates of their births.

Check with your folks

It would be great if you communicate with your parents. Solicit their assistance with the dates and names you need. Most likely, the names of relatives you do not know or have not heard from for a while, will crop up as these names could have been vital during the growing up years of your parents.

Usually, your parents could be able to help you as well as they might have access to – and eventually look up – legal family records such as certificates of death, birth, records in the military, etc.

When you have access to such documents, immediately make a photocopy out of these and return the forms and original documents to your parents or to a place that is secure and safe.

Search pictures and photos

It is also helpful if you go and search through family picture albums, especially the old ones. Do not forget to check any writings at the back of the pictures to see if noted there are dates or details.

Looking at photographs that have been framed is also a good idea. Usually, there are obit notices that are stored at the back of picture photo frames.

Go through journals

Examining journals is also a good way to find out your family genealogy. Leafing through old notes and books could unearth details you never thought existed about your own family.

Do not disregard notes inserted in between pages or any notes written on them. Usually, diaries or journals are discovered in trunks and attics. They could also be found in bookshelves.

Look through stuff

Checking behind mirrors that are old and worn could also lead to unexpected family genealogy discoveries. Look for any messages that may have been taped.

Tell family what you are up to

Visiting or calling relatives is a good idea as they could be more than willing to help in your search. They could also add any details that might be missing in your list.

Soliciting stories from relatives is also a great way to find out more about your family genealogy. Believe it or not, such stories could transform your genealogy to a work of art.

All in all, family genealogy is a great way to know more about yourself and your family while having great fun during the whole process.

Chapter 4: Tracing Your Family Name History

There was a time in human history when people did not have surnames and it wasn't because they couldn't read or write.

It wasn't until the 12th century when surnames began to be used in Europe. but it was only given to a few.

Surnames were not much of a concern in areas where the population was smaller and people did not have a difficult time referring to one another or getting confused as to who was who. However, as population increased, so did the use of the same names for several individuals. It wasn't unusual to have 10 Johns, seven Williams and four Richards all living in the same town.

At first, names were used to identify an individual through a unique characteristic: his family (usually his father), his place of residence, geographical location and even a personal trait like hair color or height. Other unique information about the individual was also used such as occupation and nicknames.

Here are a few examples of how individuals got their surnames:

Through family or father's name.

To distinguish the 10 Johns from each other, their father's names could be used. For example, John the son of Paul, John the son of Andrew, John the son of James. Later on, these identifying last names evolved into their shortened version: John Paulson, John Anderson and John Jameson. John the son of William (Williamson) later on became 'Williams'.

Gaelic ancestors are the source of family names like 'Mac', 'Mc', 'O' and 'Fitz', such as Macdonald, O'Donnell, Fitzherbert. Names like these are patronymic, meaning they are derived from the father or a male ancestor, although some surnames are taken from mothers.

Through residence or geographical location.

Also referred to as topographic surnames, these names are derived from an individual's place of residence. For example, John of the hills, John from the river, John from the woods.

First used in France, topographic family names soon found their way into England. Even when people moved elsewhere, their places of origin were still used to identify them. Some family names can be traced back to an ancestor's exact origin while others have lost their exact places of origin to obscurity.

Names like Westwood and Churchill, for example can mean an ancestor used to live west of the woods and near a church on top of a hill, but which woods and which church?

Other names, like Dunlop are actually based on location, but since language has evolved, the word is no longer associated with its original meaning. It means 'muddy hill'.

Personal/Physical trait or nicknames

These names are derived from an individual's distinguishing trait like skin color, facial features, physical deformities and unusual size or body shape. These make up about 10% of today's family names. For example, John the white (so named because of his paleness), John with the long beard and John the young. Later on, these names changed to John White, John Long and John Young.

Other names derived from an ancestor's distinguishing traits are Baines, which means 'bones' and describes a thin man, Armstrong, Black and Longfellow.

Occupation

Another common source for surnames is an individual's trade. John the carpenter, John the cook and John the smith later on became Messrs. Carpenter, Cook or Cooke and Smith. Other names such as Taylor, Bishop, Miller and Carter all describe what an individual's ancestors did for a living.

Searching for your family name

A lot of resources online may be used to help you find out more about your roots. These sites contain more than 600 million surnames in their databases and there are family trees that are linked. Dates and places are also included and most of these sites are free.

Worth checking: FamilySearch.com, MyTrees.com, GenServ.com, FamilySearch.com, Genealogy.com and GenCircles.com.

Just be aware that your family name now may have already been altered many times or corrupted forms of your original surname. Pronunciations and spellings have changed over the centuries and it can be difficult to determine family name origins.

However, don't be discouraged. With a lot of patience and a little luck, you'll find out more about your ancestors. And you might be surprised at what you'll uncover.

Chapter 5: Family History Search

Tracing one's roots can be challenging. This is because of the many years that have passed and the relatives who have either died or are far away.

Luckily, the individual can still do this by using the Internet because the information stored here is free

The first place to check about the person's family history is by looking through the major search engines. Surely, something has got to be there if that individual was very prominent during that period.

Those who are not that lucky can even sign up in one or two genealogy sites and see what happens later on being a member.

This may sound morbid but the person can even do some research by looking at the obituaries. This is because the date of birth and death is like a paper trail and this can have used to get in contact with long lost relatives.

Those who are unable to get that much information can try checking the online death record index or Social Security Index. After searching for a while, the individual will be able to get some vital information such as the relative's name, social security number and last known address.

Another place to get help in the family history search, which is still, is from the census bureau. The United States as well as other developed countries has put this database online for family members to see.

Obituaries are not able to tell much about a former relative. Looking in a site called USGenWeb can provide a description about the character especially if that person was quite popular. This is one step forward from the traditional way of going into the library and reading old periodicals or viewing microfilm

Those who are able to get certain information from one website can access another to find out more. For example, if the great grandfather served in the military, there is no harm in checking specialized websites like those provided by the army.

The same can be done if the place where the relative worked was in a church or in a hospital since most of these organizations usually have a website that feature its history and current projects.

If the specialized websites were not that successful, another thing worth checking out is Ancestry.com. This has information way beyond the first world war especially when a lot of immigrants left Europe in the hopes of something better in the new world.

The quest for knowing one's path will be long. There will be times that the information provided may not sound good but the person should not be discouraged because this has to be verified to make sure if it is true.

When everything is finished, the individual can look back and see how far the genealogy tree extends. After all, a certain part of who the person is today is made up of something in the past making everyone unique.

Instead of just keeping that information to oneself, the person can put it online so other members can also view it. It may not look like much compared to the history of a nation but believe it or not, each and every member in the genealogy tree contributed something to it.

This proves that some things in life such as the quest for one's family history search are free.

Chapter 6: The A-B-C's Of Family History Genealogy Search

The fact of the matter is that tracing the roots of your family history is a cumbersome if not a very tedious work, yet in the long run is extremely rewarding.

It is a treasure hunt of sorts that could unearth plenty of rare gems. Thanks to the internet, documentation and research has never been as easy. The world wide web could help uncover facts and details about relatives you did not know you have.

The following are tips and advice to help you conduct your own family history genealogy search the best way you can.

Trees and family tree

Make good use of the internet when looking for your family tree. Download tree family charts through the website ancestry.com. Another is through the magazine, Family Tree. Use their own family template charts in creating your own list of ancestor dates and names.

Organize, organize, organize

Early on, know just what it is you plan to do. Consider just how it is you are to record all info you will find in your family history genealogy search even before you see yourself getting immersed in the whole process.

As much as possible, fill and record in group family sheets, charts and pedigrees by hand. You could also consider using a computer or a software genealogical program to assist you in organizing all your data.

Using Personal File Ancestry or Family Maker Tree by Reunion is a good idea. These software programs provide you with the ability to backup all your info in a disk.

Document it all

Of course, mere documentation is not enough. It is important that you document everything as carefully and as appropriately as possible.

First things first, copy the book title, reel number of the microfilm, the number of the page, author, publication year, publisher and whatever detail you could see on the sheet cover.

Also take note of just where it is you got the info. An example would be taking down the name of the library, a website or the records and archive division.

Record for posterity's sake

Any interviews you have conducted with any of your relatives is best to be captured on audiotape or on video, this is so that future family generation could actually hear the words of their ancestors the way they said it and how.

Using a digital video on your shoot is the best option since there is little or no reduction in the quality of the copy. You could save these interviews either on DVD or CD for a lot easier viewing and storing.

Make a type-tree graph

Another suggestion you could do is by making your own tree master graph either through electronic means or via paper. Insert the names of your ancestors, the date of their births, deaths, marriage as you discover each detail.

Make extra copies

Any source material you gather is best to be photocopied especially if they are source printed materials. File them all in folders with appropriate labels such as the name of the relative.

Include the details of their birth dates and dates of death so as to be able to distinguish them between other family members who may have similar names.

All in all, searching for your family history genealogy is fun if you know what you are looking for and how.

Hopefully, these tips and advice are helpful in your own family history genealogy search.

Chapter 7: Establishing Your Family History through a Genealogy Search

Conducting a genealogy search is more than just a hobby or a business to people. There are those who actually derive personal satisfaction in knowing their past and learning more about their ancestors.

For some reason, it gives people a sense of belonging and continuity. A genealogy search can also allow someone to keep a record of family activity throughout the years that would be a valuable source of information for future generations.

If you're thinking of doing a genealogy search to find out more about your family tree, here are a few tips how:

Start your genealogy search with the nearest source.

That's your family. Ask your parents, grandparents, uncles, aunts and cousins. Start with what is current and then work backwards. Look at family Bibles, birth, death and marriage certificates, diaries, letters, military certificates and scrapbooks. Don't ignore the family photo album. Useful bits of information can be gathered from the back of photographs.

Check if there is someone in your family who is currently building your family tree. Perhaps you can combine efforts to make your genealogy search easier.

You might also want to write letters or visit family members who might know about your genealogy. If they don't have the information you need, ask for referrals. You might also want to get in touch with neighbors or people who have worked with older family members.

Check your locality

Go to your local or state schools, courthouses and churches for records about your family. Civil records like wills, deeds, land or property transfers

are kept at courthouses. You can also ask for copies of certificates from the Bureau of Vital Statistics. And don't forget your local library.

Get in touch with organizations that conduct genealogical research and historical societies. There are also private institutions you can get in touch with. If you have an ancestor who was a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-day Saints, then you're in luck. The Mormon Church has one of the most comprehensive genealogical records in the world.

It's also a good idea to get as many references as you can, since you can use these documents for cross referencing.

Common problems you might encounter

Adoption. You might have a little difficulty, unless you can communicate with your biological parents. If not, you will need to get legal advice to know the proper procedures since adoption agencies don't normally reveal records of biological parents to anyone.

No marriage records

This usually is the case when children are born out of wedlock. Other than that, most early marriages don't have hard documents to support them, or records may have been destroyed, lost and yes, even misfiled. You can try to get around this by looking at other documents such as church records or newspaper announcements and bulletins.

Disappearances from records

There are other reasons that people's names disappear from a record other than death. They could have moved to another county, state or even to another country. They could also have gotten married. Another possible cause of sudden disappearances may be attributed to geographical and political boundaries, which might have changed during the time your ancestor lived.

When all else fails...

Conducting your genealogy search to trace your family history can be exciting work. It can also be very exhausting. If you don't want to do your own genealogy search, hire someone who can do it for you. The Board of

Certification of Genealogists in Washington, D.C. and the Association of Professional Genealogists in Denver, Colorado have a pool of researchers that can do the job for a fee.