



Getting Started with Genealogy

Genealogy is the study of **family history**. Each of us is descended from a long line of ancestors, and tracing their lives can be a fascinating research process. By using information you already know along with the resources and records available, you can explore the past and preserve your family history for future generations.

- **Start with yourself!**

Begin by listing what you already know about your family, starting in the present and working backwards one generation at a time. Write down vital facts such as dates and locations of births, marriages, and deaths.

- **Record information**

A *pedigree* or ancestor chart is a good way to begin to organize information, and can help you identify the missing pieces of the genealogy puzzle. You'll also want to note the source of each "fact" as you'll often find conflicting information.

- **Explore home sources**

We often already own items that provide clues on our family history. You may be able to find birth, marriage, and death records, family bibles, obituaries, funeral memorial cards, military papers, yearbooks, legal papers, and old letters.

- **Talk to relatives**

A great way to uncover clues on your family history is to interview relatives. Often, by asking open-ended questions, you'll learn more about an ancestor's life than can be found in records.

Records & Resources: Where to Start?

Census Records. The U.S. Federal Census was taken every 10 years since 1790; **1940** is the most recent available. Considered the "backbone" of family research, these records usually show all members of a household in that year, and significant facts on each person (i.e. **age**, country of **origin**, and **occupation**).

Online Databases. B&ECPL subscribes to Ancestry Library Edition (similar to Ancestry.com) and HeritageQuest. Both include Federal Census records and can be used from any library computer. Ancestry LE also contains millions of other resources, such as immigration and military records.

Vital Records. Death certificates are a good place to start, as they often provide birth date and place, occupation, spouse's name, and parents' names. With this information, you can then look for birth and marriage records to learn more about your ancestor's life.

Church & Cemetery Records. In many cases, religious institutions are the only source of early vital information such as births (*baptisms*), marriages, and deaths (*burials*).

City Directories. These yearly address directories help establish where a person lived at a certain point in time, and can help pinpoint when someone moved, or the year of death. Occupation is often listed as well.

For more information on these and other records & resources, visit the Grosvenor Room website:

<https://www.buffalolib.org/special-collections/guides-publications>

Grosvenor Room • Buffalo & Erie County Public Library • 1 Lafayette Square • Buffalo, NY 14203

Genealogy Handbooks & Guides

A genealogy “**how-to**” book defines the types of records and methods used for family history research. The following books are in the Central Library’s Non-fiction Department and can be checked out.

CS16 .B457 2018

The Family Tree Toolkit / Berry, Kenyatta

CS16 .H64 2012

Branching out: genealogy lessons for adults: helping you inspire the next generation / Holik, Jennifer

CS16 .S98 1998

Family history made easy / Szucs, Loretto Dennis

CS21 .B45 2018

The Family tree historical newspapers guide / Beidler, James M.

CS21 .B48 2016

The family tree guide to DNA testing and genetic genealogy / Bettinger, Blaine T.

CS21 .M65 2013

Getting started in Jewish genealogy / Mokotoff, Gary

CS21 .N45 2017

The Family Tree cemetery field guide: how to find, record, & preserve your ancestors' graves / Neighbors, Joy

CS21 .R57 2003

Black genesis: a resource book for African-American genealogy / Rose, James M.

*CS47 .C75 2003

The Genealogist's Companion and Sourcebook / Croom, Emily

*CS47 .C76 2001

Unpuzzling Your Past: The Best-Selling Basic Guide to Genealogy, 4th ed. / Croom, Emily

CS49 .H34 2018

Family tree factbook: key genealogy tips and stats for the busy researcher / Haddad, Diane

CS403 .D65 2013

The Family Tree guidebook to Europe: your essential guide to trace your genealogy in Europe / Dolan, Allison

CS409.5 .A59 2016

The Family Tree Polish, Czech & Slovak genealogy guide / Alzo, Lisa A.

CS483 .A365 2009

Tracing your Irish family history / Adolph, Anthony

CS614 .B45 2014

The Family tree German genealogy guide: how to trace your Germanic ancestry in Europe/ Beidler, James M.

Magazines

Your Genealogy Today

Internet Genealogy

For more books, search the online catalog:

https://bepl.ent.sirsi.net/client/en_US/default

