



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 might just learn more about an ancestor's life than you'll find in records.

Records & Resources: Where to Start?

Census Records. The U.S. Federal Census was taken every 10 years since 1790; 1930 is the most recent available. Considered the "backbone" of family research, the records show all members of a household that year, and significant facts on each person (i.e. **age**, country of **origin**, and **occupation**).

Search Online Databases. The Library 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:
<http://www.buffalolib.org/libraries/collections/genealogy/subjectguides.asp>

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

Genealogy Handbooks & Guides

A genealogy “**how-to**” book will identify the types of records you can use for family history research, and help you find alternate options when your search hits a dead end. The following books can be found in the Central Reference Department and can be checked out.

CS16 .B46 2003

Genealogy for the first time: Research your family history / Best, Laura.
New York: Sterling Pub. Co., 2003.

CS16 .M69 2004

How to do everything with your genealogy / Morgan, George G.
New York: McGraw-Hill/Osborne, 2004.

CS16 .R46 2003

Genealogy 101: How to trace your family's history and heritage / Renick, Barbara.
Nashville: Rutledge Hill Press, c2003.

CS16 .R68 2005

The complete idiot's guide to genealogy / Rose, Christine.
Indianapolis: Alpha Books, 2005.

CS16 .S646 2009

Who do you think you are?: The essential guide to tracing your family history / Smolenyak, Megan.
New York: Viking, c2009.

CS16 .S98 1998

Family history made easy / Szucs, Loretto Dennis.
Salt Lake City, Utah: Ancestry, 1998.

CS47 .G35 2001

The genealogy handbook: The complete guide to tracing your family tree / Galford, Ellen.
Pleasantville, NY: Reader's Digest, 2001.

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*CS16 .A454 1998

First steps in genealogy: A beginner's guide to researching your family history /
Allen, Desmond Walls.
Cincinnati, Ohio: Betterway Books, 1998.

*CS16 .H85 2006

Tracing your family history: The complete guide to locating your ancestors and finding out where you came from / Lise Hul.
Pleasantville, N.Y.: Reader's Digest, 2006.

*CS47 .C75 2003

The Genealogist's Companion and Sourcebook / Croom, Emily
Cincinnati, OH: Betterway Books, ©2003

*CS47 .C76 2001

Unpuzzling Your Past: The Best-Selling Basic Guide to Genealogy, 4th ed. / Croom, Emily
Cincinnati, OH: Betterway Books, 2001.