

Sources of Information for Genealogical Research

Family Documents & Artifacts

Information about your family may be recorded in a variety of records. The following types of personal documents are useful to identify basic vital information such as names, dates and places. They will most likely be in the possession of your immediate family or other relatives. Heirlooms and artifacts can provide information about how your relatives lived.

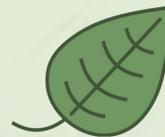
- Family bibles
- Birth, baptism, marriage, death, and burial records
- School report cards and diplomas
- Family letters
- Scrapbooks, photo albums and photographs
- Diaries and journals
- Artifacts and heirlooms



Public Records

Records are available from various levels of government (local, state and federal) and religious organizations. These types of records include:

- Vital statistics records - birth, death, and marriage records
- Deed and property records
- Probate records
- Tax records
- Maps
- Census records
- Cemetery records
- Immigration, emigration, and naturalization records
- Military records



Secondary Sources

Much family information is available in published formats and on the internet. Publications such as newspapers and books can also provide useful information about family history. Online databases can include all sorts of records, including indexes and public records.

- Online databases, such as Ancestry.com
- Books
- Newspapers
- Local or family newsletters
- Published biographies
- Compiled genealogies



Oral Information

Speaking with relatives can help fill in the blanks on a family tree. Older relatives, especially, might remember generations that are no longer alive. Other family members may have already researched your family history and might be willing to share their work. Some useful tips for contacting relatives include:

- Be respectful and considerate
- Decide what specific information to ask for
- Take accurate notes
- Respect privacy, as there may be information that some are unwilling to share
- Be willing to share your information
- Document your sources
- Record your conversation for future reference, if your relative allows



Genetic Information

Genetic genealogy uses DNA testing to determine the genetic relationship between individuals. A DNA test may suggest clues that can lead to new relatives, surnames, or locations. A few common reasons to use DNA in genealogy research include:

- To learn more about one's ancestry
- To confirm that one's family tree reflects one's actual ancestry
- To confirm the relationship between two people
- To validate a theory of where people came from
- To find relatives for those that were adopted, gave up a child for adoption or otherwise do not know their ancestry
- To learn from which ancestor(s) certain traits were inherited

