



Introduction to Genealogy

Or How to Grow Your Family Tree

Presented by Holly Sammons
5 November 2012

What is Genealogy?

- According to Webster, **genealogy** is “an account or history of the descent of a person, family or group...” It can be “an enumeration of ancestry and their descendants in the natural order of succession.” (Webster’s Third New International Dictionary)
- The study of genealogy, or family history is a popular pastime. According to Business Week it is the second most searched topic on the Internet.
(Falconer, Bruce. "Ancestry.com." *Bloomberg Business Week*. 20 Sept. 2012.)



Why “do” your genealogy?

- To satisfy your curiosity about yourself and your roots.
- To provide your children with a sense of who their ancestors were, where they came from and how they lived their lives.
- To qualify for a lineage or heritage society.
- To assemble and publish a family history book, whether for family members or for profit.
- To preserve family cultural and ethnic traditions for future generations.
- To use for a medical history.
- To dispel/prove facts and myths about the family.



5 Steps to Start Your Family Research

1. Read – prepare before you begin. Get a library book, take a tutorial.
2. Start with yourself – write down everything you know, and then ask living relatives for help.
3. Document everything – Keep good records.
4. Organize! Find a system that works and stick to it.
5. Be skeptical – unchain yourself from family legends/myths, spelling no longer counts, not everything you read/hear is true



How to begin?

- Get a good “how-to” book on genealogy. Take an online tutorials.
- Start with **YOURSELF**
- Compile as much information as you can about your parents, siblings, aunts, uncles, grandparents.
- Begin on the right foot – using good record keeping practices.



Recording Your Work

- Record **EVERYTHING!** Even if you think you don't need it or it doesn't apply.
- Use charts.
- Cite sources.
- Develop good recording habits, be consistent, using standard genealogy formats:
 - Standard date format; 5 November 2012
 - Use entire name, capitalize surnames, record women's maiden names
 - Full geographic names, Syracuse, Onondaga, New York



Be a skeptic

- Question family stories – myths/legends/facts aren't always accurate
- Spelling no longer counts (when looking back)
- Do NOT believe what you find online.
- Question every fact, weigh the evidence, compare sources.



Set Goals

- Avoid the urge to do everything at once.
- Pick one family line to work on.
- Make a list of tasks to do.
- Be prepared when you venture out.



The Internet is ONLY a beginning

- Libraries
- Courthouses
- Town clerks
- Archives
- Cemeteries
- Historical Societies
- Family History Centers
- Historical sites
- Ancestral beginnings...





Networking

- Listservs
- Genealogical organizations/clubs
- Classes
- Librarians
- Historians
- Family
- New “cousins”



Local Help

- Your library
 - Books, databases, computers, Interlibrary loans, librarians
- Central New York Genealogical Society
- Local History and Genealogy at OCPL
 - 447 So Salina St, Syracuse
 - 435-1900
 - lhg@onlib.org



5 Important (free) Websites

- Local History and Genealogy Dept. at OCPL
<http://www.onlib.org/web/lh/index.htm>
- Cyndi's List - <http://www.cyndislist.com/>
- Family Search- <https://familysearch.org/>
- Rootsweb – www.rootsweb.com
- Search engines – www.google.com
www.mocavo.com