

Getting Started in Genealogy

By Dave Tiefenbach

How to Start

- **Start with yourself.**
 - Gather all your important papers and record the information. (*Sources*)
 - ✓ Baptismal certificates
 - ✓ Bible
 - ✓ Birth certificates
 - ✓ Diplomas
 - ✓ Divorce papers
 - ✓ Letters
 - ✓ Marriage certificates
 - ✓ Military records
 - ✓ Naturalization information
 - ✓ Photos, just a few
 - ✓ Anything else that has valuable information about you.
 - Record information. (*Facts*)
 - ✓ Ancestral (Pedigree) chart – a chart showing a person and up to six generations of ancestors.
 - ✓ Cemetery record – keep a record of cemeteries and results of visit.
 - ✓ Correspondence log – keep a record of everyone you have corresponded with for your research.
 - ✓ Family Group Sheet – a record showing the facts and events for a single family.
 - ✓ Research log – a log of your research for a person.

Blank copies of the above forms are included at the end of these instructions. (Compliments of Ancestry.com and RootsMagic).

- **Perform the above for your spouse, children, siblings, parents and grandparents etc.**

- **Take a road trip (great hobby for RVers). Visit repositories in locations of your family.**

- Cemeteries – visit your deceased relative, take pictures of gravestones, record plot location and inscriptions.
- Churches – baptismal & marriage records
- Court houses – look for records of your family.
- Family – talk to them about your ancestors.
- Libraries – look for genealogical section; ask librarian for help.
- State Archives – look for records of your family.

- **Internet Research**

- **Ancestry.com** is the largest for-profit genealogy company in the world, it operates a network of genealogical, historical record and genetic genealogy websites. The company claims to provide access to approximately 16 billion historical records. www.ancestry.com

Even though Ancestry charges for membership, there are about 1,900 free collections. Go to www.ancestry.com click on **Search>Card Catalog**, in keyword box type “**free.**”

- **Cyndi's List of Genealogy Sites** is a categorized and cross referenced list of links for genealogical research. The site contains roughly 332,000 links in more than 200 categories. Cyndi's List supplements operating expenses with affiliate advertising (**free**). www.cyndislist.com

- **FamilySearch** is a genealogy organization operated by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and is the largest genealogy organization in the world. FamilySearch maintains a collection of records, resources, and services designed to help people learn more about their family history. FamilySearch gathers, preserves, and shares genealogical records worldwide. It offers **free** access to its resources and service online. www.familysearch.org

- **Find A Grave** is a website that allows the public to search and add to an online database of cemetery records. It receives and uploads digital photographs of headstones from burial sites taken by unpaid volunteers at cemeteries. Find A Grave then posts the photos on its website. (**Free**) www.findagrave.com

- **Additional Help**

- **Family Tree Magazine** is a publication about genealogy and family history. Topics include resource guides for specific ethnicities, technology how-to articles, history and genealogy news.
www.familytreemagazine.com
- **SaddleBrooke Genealogy Club.** The MISSION of the club is to promote interest in the study of genealogy, to help others in their pursuit of ancestors and to encourage fellowship among the members. The club is open to SaddleBrooke residents who wish to research their ancestors. Membership consists of people just beginning their research and people who have a great deal of experience in ancestral research. The club meets the first Thursday of every month.
www.sb-genealogy.org
- There are many on-line resources for getting started, one being www.familysearch.org Click on **Search>Research Wiki**, in the search box, type **Family History for Beginners**.

- **Organization**

- It's important to keep copies of all records found for future reference and to prove your facts. If you are not computer literate, you will need a file cabinet, file folders and a system for organizing. The book **Organize Your Genealogy: Strategies and Solutions for Every Researcher**, may help.
- The best way to organize your material is with your computer and a scanner. You will need a genealogy program such as Family Tree Maker, www.mackiev.com/ftm/ \$79.95 for one computer, or my personal choice, RootsMagic, www.rootsmagic.com \$29.95 can use on up to five computers.
- Both programs assist family historians in tracking, organizing, printing, and sharing family history. Using your computer as a storage device will allow you to store all documents and other media such as photos related to your research. You can print off many different reports to share with people or start you own personal history book.