

A Genealogists Workflow

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The hunt is on!

1. Enter what you know. Source it!

It doesn't matter where you record it whether it be paper, a computer program, or on the web, recording it is what is important.

Pros and Cons of each:

- Paper is hard to keep up with and keep organized to you can find everything, but is many times easier to understand and read.
- Computer Programs can crash, have to be backed up, have to be upgraded as technology changes, but are easily searchable and helps you find what you have, provided you enter it all.
- Web based record keeping is a challenge with privacy issues and limitations on what you can enter and how you enter it, but is easy to share with other family members.

You may choose to use one, two, or all three systems in some form, but think about organization and reorganization as you move through your genealogical journey. You can find some vital records on line.

2. Once you enter what you know, look for paper documentation. People often don't have even their own vital records! Start with vital records. The way we know them today, as certificates, started around 1920. So if you are looking for vital records for someone that was born or died before that, don't write the state where the event happened wanting one. You are wasting your time and money. These records are obtained from State Health agencies. There are web sites that will help you get them, for a fee. Order direct from the agency and it is cheaper. Each state has a web site that will have how you go about ordering from them and the laws that pertain to them. Each state has its own laws. If you have Oklahoma that you want, you have to prove your relationship to the person. Don't forget to source them. You don't want to order them a second time! Exception – New England has town records where they have registers of Births and Deaths, some of these records go back into the 1600s.

A good starting place for them is at: www.familysearch.org has many indexes and actual records; <http://www.deathindexes.com/> for on line death records. To order them go to: <http://www.vitalrec.com/>

3. Some will say look for what has already been done. You don't want to repeat research. However, you have to know what you are looking at and making a determination that the research is good or bad.
 - a. Is it sourced with census, vital records, and court records? Use it! Find the sources.
 - b. Is it just a bunch of names? Run away from it, don't use it.

This applies to family books and family trees on line. There are a look of places that have trees on lines. A small percentage are sourced with good sources. Another family tree is NOT a good source. A family book is not a good source, unless you can find a copy of it and it has sources.

4. The next step is the census records, many think this is the first after recording what you know, and if the people you are looking for were born before 1940, it probably is. Work them in every census year and actually look at the census record, don't just merge it into your database. You never know what other family member(s) may be lurking around with the immediate family you are working on. This is where computer based programs come in handy. They help you keep things sourced and do some of your record keeping for you.
5. Back to vital records. Vital records are Birth, Marriage, and Death (BMD) Marriage records are recorded at county level in each state. Records vary greatly depending on time frame and the county clerk. You may find, bonds, licenses, certificates, or just registers. Many vital records are on line through familysearch.org, ancestry.com, some historical societies, state archives, and more. New England states have town records for all vitals.
6. Once these are exhausted or you have pre-1920 Births and Deaths you turn to alternative sources for these items. Military records, Cemetery records, Church records, obituaries (in that order) Military records include draft records, service records, and pension records. They can be located on line in several places, at the National Archives and also State Archives. States had militia and pensions. You may also find military information in county court records. Cemetery records can be found in book format and on the web in several places. Church records are harder to locate. You need to know what denomination your people were. Most recorded marriages and deaths, if the official officiated the service. Births are dependent on denomination. Early parish registers in the United States contain vital records, depending on the location. Finding them means figuring out what parish covered the area your families lived in. There are web pages that you can find to help you figure this out. Obituaries can be helpful, sometimes they only said a person died, others give you family history. It may not all be correct. It depends on who wrote it for the paper.
7. Seek out wills and probate records. These are usually at county level, but in some places they are at a state level. Probate records vary greatly. Guardian, Administration, Minutes, Estate, Real Property.... They can be loose papers in packets or in book format. Many have been abstracted or microfilmed.
8. Seek out property records. Start with the Bureau of Land Management website for public lands, private lands with grants at state level. Then move to county level. Remember to look at county formation times. One deed may be recorded in more than one county and even state if the moved and sold land after the move. Deed records is where you find proof of lineage in pre-1900 times at least 80% of the time.
9. Start over starting with census when you find new family lines. Find all the children of a couple and follow them too. Don't work only one line directly back. You never know where or who will lead you to the next generation.

Other free site URL's

www.findagrave.com & <http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~t42cemeteries/> & <http://interment.net/>

<http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/> & <http://usgenweb.org/>

<http://www.glorerecords.blm.gov/>

Tresa's Web Browsing Tips

1. Open three browser windows.
 - a. One for census research
 - b. One for vital record research
 - c. One for other research
2. Open within each browser window tabs for the different sites you are going to be looking at or may be looking at in this research session. i.e. each census year your research is targeting.