

GENEALOGICAL RESEARCH: GETTING STARTED

- **BEGIN WITH WHAT YOU KNOW** -- Work from the known to the unknown one small step at a time. Work backwards from the present gathering facts as you go. Remember that names, dates and places are the building blocks of compiling a family history.
- **CONDUCT INTERVIEWS** -- What do you know about your parents and grandparents? Interview your relatives. Write or talk to your family members. Ask them about family names, where they lived, when they immigrated, what town they came from. What were their dates and places of birth, marriage, and death? Ask older family members specific questions about your ancestors. "What was your grandmother's maiden name?" "Where did she live as a child?" "What were her parents' names?" "When did they come to Michigan?" Any clue, no matter how small, may help your search.
- **CHECK FAMILY RECORDS** -- Some records may already be in the homes of your family: Family records/birth information; Bible with names and births recorded; Family Letters; Stories & Traditions; Employment information; School yearbooks; Fraternal Societies; Wills and Deeds; Certificates, Awards, Discharges, Etc.; Photographs; Books of Remembrance, Scrapbooks, and Diaries; and Church records such as Birth, Marriage & Death Records, Baptism Records, Confirmation or Communion Records.
- **READ, READ, READ** -- Learn the history and geography of the area where your ancestors lived. Remember that old county boundaries may have changed so be sure to consult a good atlas and local histories. If you're just getting started researching your family history you should definitely begin reading a genealogy "how to" book. These are widely available, and should be held by most public libraries. You will also find a useful selection for purchase at any good bookstore
- **ORGANIZE** -- Place the information in a system that is comfortable for you - notebooks, genealogy charts, or computer programs.

While you work, remember the basic methodologies for genealogy:

- Start with yourself and work backwards through each previous generation. Work from the known to the unknown. Never skip a generation.
- Write down what you find and where you found it. What institution? Which collection of records? Which book? What volume and page number? Which microfilm reel? Employ a standard citation format.
- Always record the sources you've searched and when you searched them, even if the results are negative. Organize this research log by family, then geographic area.
- Search every possible surname spelling, including phonetic and typographic errors. You may be rechecking some of your already located information, but note that clerical errors creep into documents & dates may have been entered incorrectly. Remember, the spelling of many family names were not "standardized" until the 19th century, if then.

Genealogy is like a puzzle - one gathers bits of information piece by piece. Be prepared to work patiently in stages and return to records upon the discovery of another clue from other records such as **Vital Records, Censuses, City Directories; Naturalization Records; Passenger Lists; Cemetery Records, Wills, Land Records,** etc.

Useful genealogy records are maintained by the **Family History Centers of the Church of Latter-Day Saints**. They operate numerous centers. There may be one located close to you. You may access some of their information at www.familysearch.org

Now you're ready to start digging into old records by searching relevant genealogical sources.

For further assistance ask a librarian.