



## Find Your Family History: An Introduction to Genealogy Process and Sources

**Begin with What You Know:** Before delving into the rich world of sources, start with writing down everything you know, or think you know about your family. Call relatives, and ask for help in recalling names, dates of birth and death, places, and other useful information. Set up real interviews you're your relatives, and develop a list of questions to ask. Write it all down, indicating information that may be incomplete or inaccurate.

**Gather up paper:** There is a good chance that you might have records lying around your house that can help you start to develop a family tree. Ask relatives to do the same, and see what you might turn up. Look for:

- Wedding, birth, death, or other family occasions and announcements
- Photo albums and baby albums: don't forget to check the backs of photos for any text or explanation
- Newspaper clippings

**Start Developing a Pedigree or Family Tree:** Serious genealogists keep very well documented charts. Pedigree or family tree charts are available from many online sites, as well as from books. Update the information that you have, and start to identify information that might be missing or incomplete.

**Learn More about the Genealogical Research Process:** Before you move on to sources such as genealogy databases, take a look through some of the excellent genealogy books available at the library. Titles such as *The Everything Guide to Genealogy*, you will find great information on conducting great research

**Use Online Resources:** Online tools such as Ancestry.com are great sources of information. Online databases often have useful help sections. Ancestry in particular is a very rich information source, with many different areas you might want to explore.

**Go on Field Trips:** Online Databases are great, but not all information sources are available online. Local libraries, cemeteries or historical societies can be great sources for information, as can the National Archives. We are lucky enough to live within easy distance to the National Archives Northeast Regional Site in Waltham. Take advantage of this great resource.

## Databases and Web Tools

- Ancestry.com (Fee based, available through the library for free)  
Thousands of family history databases, including vital records, census records, ship passenger lists, military records and lots more. Ancestry.com is the Cadillac of genealogy tools, but it is a fee-based resource. The library does have a subscription, but it is only available within the building.
- HeritageQuest.com (Available via the library from home)  
HeritageQuest Online is a digital resource that combines searchable images of U.S. federal genealogical census records with digitized books containing family and local histories from around the country. It includes 25,000 family and local history books, U.S. census records, and PERSI, an index of over 1.6 million genealogy and local history articles.
- Family Search (familysearch.org)  
FamilySearch is the largest genealogy organization in the world. Millions of people use FamilySearch records, resources, and services to learn more about their family history. Affiliated with the Church of Latter Day Saints, The Family History Libraries are open to everyone, and are a great resource without a Mormon agenda. Mass Family History Search Center 150 Brown St Weston. 781 235-2164
- National Genealogical Society (ngsgenealogy.org/cs/home)  
The mission of the NGS is "To serve and grow the genealogical community by providing education and training, fostering increased quality and standards, and promoting access to and preservation of genealogical records." A great resource.
- New England Historic Genealogical Society (americanancestors.org/home.html)  
There are many small genealogical societies around the country and world, but this one is a good one to start with. Joining a group like this is great for classes, publications and other information for your research.
- National Archives (<http://www.archives.gov/>)  
A treasure trove of great information and instruction. The Waltham center is open to the public, and their class list is great. Take advantage of this amazing local resource. National Archives 380 Trapelo Rd, Waltham, MA 02452 781 663-0130
- Websites of Special Organizations: If you can trace your ancestry back a bit, an organization like the Daughters of the American Revolution ([www.dar.org](http://www.dar.org)) might be helpful to you. Other organizations exist that might be helpful to you based on family history, such as JewishGen ([www.jewishgen.org](http://www.jewishgen.org)) the site for Jewish genealogy, or roots to roots foundation ([www.rtrfoundation.org](http://www.rtrfoundation.org)) for records from Eastern Europe