

How To Start Your Family Tree:

Start with Yourself

Always start with yourself and work backwards - record all your family history knowledge, root through all your photos, documents, and artifacts; get them organized.

Interview the Living

Ask your relatives for information – the most valuable and free resource you have is the knowledge and information your living relatives have about their ancestors. Don't procrastinate! Ask them about their photos, documents, and artifacts, too.

Choose a Genealogy Software Program

All genealogy software programs are capable of reading and writing GedCom files. The suffix is .ged. This means that you can transfer information from one program to another and you never have to reenter your data. If you're not sure you want to spend any money at this point, you can start with a free program.

www.legacyfamilytree.com has a free Standard Edition, Deluxe Edition, \$29.95

Reunion by leisterpro.com is the standard for Mac users but it may be a bit pricey for beginners. For the budget minded, or just until you decide you are really serious about genealogy research; PAWriter II is available free at www.lanopalera.net/index.html. It is listed at the bottom of the Genealogy list on the left hand side of the home page.

RootsMagic is rapidly becoming a favorite because it works directly with both ancestry.com and FamilySearch.org. It works with both Windows and Mac for \$29.95.

Family Tree Maker is probably the best known; for many years it was owned by Ancestry.com but is now available from mackiev.com. It is available in two different versions, one for Windows and the other for Mac. Each costs \$79.95. There is a multiple license which includes both versions and it can be used on three different computers; \$99.95.

Organize your research findings

There are many filing systems using binders or file folders but the most important thing is to find a system that works for you; one that makes sense and is

easy for you to get your filing done so that you can put your hands on a piece of paper when you want to find it. It is really hard to find something in sliding stacks of paper on your dining room table.

Research the Census

After home sources, census research is the basic building block for determining where your ancestors lived at a particular time and the makeup of their families. Determining location is the key to finding vital records. Census research is very easy these days because all the extant US censuses from 1790-1940 are online and fully indexed.

Additional Resources:

Napa Valley Genealogical Library 1701 Menlo Ave. 252-2252

<http://www.napavalleygenealogy.org/> Napa Valley Genealogical Society Web site

Napa Family History Center at the LDS Church Trower & Dry Creek Road, 257-2887- call ahead to make sure they're open

<http://www.countyofnapa.org/library/> Napa City-County Library

Free Web Sites:

www.cyndislist.com - comprehensive links to all things related to genealogy

www.deathindexes.com - links to death records online

www.familysearch.org - LDS site includes Family History Library Catalog and millions of records

www.findagrave.com - At last count, 158 million cemetery records, many with photos

www.genuki.org.uk - large collection of genealogical information for the United Kingdom and Ireland

www.books.google.com - digital books and newspapers, lots more

Search for *Getting Started in Genealogy Online* by William Dollarhide, a 2006 book, full text available

www.rootsweb.com - connect with other researchers through WorldConnect Project, message boards and much more

www.usgenweb.org - a page for every county in US

www.worldcat.org - union catalog of the world's libraries

<http://genealogy.about.com/library/lessons/blintro.htm> self paced classes

<http://rwguide.rootsweb.ancestry.com/> guides to research

<http://www.arkansasresearch.com/guideindex.htm> getting started - not just for Arkansas

Subscription Web Sites:

Free use at the Napa Valley Genealogical Library:

Ancestry.com - millions of records

Genealogybank.com - newspapers

AmericanAncestors.org - images of early New England records

Napa Valley Genealogical Library
February 2017

Definitions for Genealogy

Some basic definitions you will find useful in genealogy:

- 1) Internet or World Wide Web: think of it like a giant library with billions of books, magazines, newspapers, pictures, images, and loose files.
- 2) Internet Access: a service that you pay for so that you can see those billion bits of information on your own computer. Examples: Comcast, ATT, etc.
- 3) URL: address of individual pages on the internet. Example: www.apple.com
- 4) Internet Browser: programs, usually free, that you download on your computer so you can bring up individual pages by address. Examples: Internet Explorer, Safari, Firefox, Chrome, etc.
- 5) Search Engines: programs, usually free, which allow you to search for individual words contained in web pages. Example: Google
- 6) Genealogy Web sites: Ancestry.com and FamilySearch.org are the biggest, they each have billions of records online, with some duplication. Ancestry is a commercial subscription site while FamilySearch is the official site of the genealogy arm of the Church of the Latter Day Saints of Jesus Christ, known as the LDS or Mormon church, and is completely free.
- 7) Genealogy Software Program or Database: a program which you download onto your computer. They range in price from free to about \$100. They allow you to keep track of all of your research by entering what you know about each person and linking them by their relationships to each other. You can create various charts and reports and export data via GedCom files. Examples: Family Tree Maker, Legacy, RootsMagic, Reunion.
- 8) GedCom: acronym for **GE**nealogical **Data** **COM**munication. In simple terms GedCom is a standardized method of formatting your family tree data into a text file which can be easily read and converted by any genealogy software program. Files are noted as .ged.

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Online Census Research

The goal is to find each person in your family in every census in which they should have been enumerated during their lifetime. Start with the subscription web site Ancestry.com which is available for patron use at the Napa Genealogical Library. The most efficient way to search is from the Home screen, choose SEARCH, Click on CENSUS & VOTER LISTS. In the Narrow by Category box on the right hand side, choose U.S Federal Census Collection. Choose the most recent census a person should have been in. On the Search screen, make sure that the Match all terms exactly box is unchecked. At some point you will want to click on Exact and open up About these settings. There you will find what happens when you choose a particular setting and how to use wild cards.

Now you are ready to start your actual search. Enter a first and last name, birth year, state in which they were born; results are more accurate if you choose from drop down list. Don't bother to use capital letters. That is enough to start with. Click on SEARCH. You should see a list of results of up to 50 records. On the left side, you will see a bar with a slider for each filter you entered. Experiment with moving them from Broad to Exact to see how the list narrows down. Be sure to click on UPDATE each time you move a slider. If you need to narrow your search by adding filters, click on Edit Search and add such items as "mother first name" or "spouse first name". Remember that only elements that were indexed for a particular census year can be used as filters. For example, "mother's maiden name" won't work for a married woman unless she was very modern and continued to use it after marriage.

Hover your mouse over View Record and a transcription will pop up. Click on See More and it will give you a more complete version of the transcription plus other tools. You can also click directly on View Record and get to the same screen. Click on another member of the household and see the changes to the transcription. On the left side of the screen, there are links to a blank census form, a View/Add alternate info, and Report issue. A blank form makes it easy to read the various headings. View/Add alternate info is where you can correct errors in the index, or add middle or maiden names. Report Issues allows you to report inappropriate material, or missing or broken links and images. Click on View Image to see a digital copy of the original census return. Be sure to always check the original image. There is always information which was not indexed and there are many errors in the index. While you are at it, check the neighbors; you never know when you'll find relatives. Return to the View Record page; on the right side of the screen (or at the bottom if your window is narrow) there will often be Suggested Records. If the next census record that you need to check is listed, you can use that link to get to it without having to go back to enter your search criteria again. Remember that some of the

suggestions may be for someone with the same name and not your person of interest so review them carefully.

The View Image screen gives you a wealth of information and options. Your search person should be highlighted in yellow and the remainder of the household in green. Using the tools on the right side you can zoom in to read the original better, you can print, download, rotate, flip, invert the image; you can report a problem with the image (missing, wrong, or unreadable). You can see pages before and after, using the arrows on the side. Finally, you can set the screen to split between the image and the Index for each line on the image. If there are errors in the index, click on the error and the Add alternate info screen will pop up. Follow the prompts to make corrections or add information such as maiden name or nicknames. Not only will it make it easier for others to find the record; it will also be easier for you to find it again.

Strategies or Tricks to use when a simple name search does not produce results.

When a common name produces too many results you can add elements to better define your search. The specific census year will have an expanded search page. Remember to add on only items that would be indexed. Example: most adults would not be living with their parents so the parent's names would not be indexed. Always give birth year as a range of at least 1 year. The census only asked for age, not year of birth so depending on month of birth, the age given could be a year younger than expected. Larger ranges are useful when you don't know an exact year of birth or in cases where people shave years off their age.

If you are having difficulty finding someone, think outside the box. Could they be using an uncommon nickname or just initials? Could they be recorded with a stepfather's name? If the first name is hard to spell; look for a family member with a more standard name. If the name is too common; look for a family member with a more unusual name. Could the first and last names be reversed?

Try an index on a different web site or look at microfilm.

CENSUS RESOURCES

www.ancestry.com

All census images from 1790 through 1940 including slave schedules and 1890 Veteran schedule, as well as other 1890 census substitutes (1890 census records lost in fire and subsequent water damage). Every name index to all images. Be sure to check the Learning Center at ancestry.com for First Steps, Getting Started, Learn More.

Click on Get Help and then enter topic "wild card" for complete explanation of wild card use.

Subscription service: available at the Napa Genealogical Library at no charge.
For home use: 14 day free trial; \$19.99/month; \$189/year. Additional charges for the complete World version or All Access.

Also available at the Napa County Library (inside library only)

www.familysearch.org

Free web site provided by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, often called the LDS or Mormon church. They currently have US Census 1790-1940 plus a wide variety of State and Specialty censuses. Some of them are indexes only, some are images only. The number changes every month as their goal is to digitize and index all the microfilm currently held in Salt Lake.

www.archives.gov/research/census/

Official National Archives site with lots of information about census records but no actual records online.

<http://censustools.com>

Forms to download to organize census research

<http://www.cyndislist.com/census.htm>

Comprehensive index to census information online

Census on Microfilm

Napa Valley Genealogical Library 1701 Menlo Ave, 252-2252
All California census 1850-1920
Miscellaneous other census - check catalog

Sutro Library 1630 Holloway Ave, San Francisco, 415-469-6100

All US census 1790-1930, except California

Sutro is located on the 5th Floor of the newly renovated J. Paul Leonard-Sutro Library on the San Francisco State University campus

California State Library 900 N Street, Room 200, Sacramento, 916-654-8777

All California census 1850-1930

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Szucs, Loretto Dennis & Wright, Matthew, Finding Answers in U.S. Census Records, Ancestry publishing Co, 2001

929.1 x27s

Thorndale, William and Dollarhide, William, Map Guide to the U.S. Federal Censuses, 1790-1920, Genealogical Publishing Co., Inc., Baltimore 1987,

912 x25+ 1790-1920

Various printed indexes to early census years; check under State names in locality catalog.

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