

## CLIMBING YOUR FAMILY TREE

*Want to discover your family's history? Here are answers to questions we are often asked.*

### 1. HOW DO I BEGIN TO SEARCH FOR MY ANCESTRY?

- *Ask your family, even aunts and uncles, to tell you what they know.*
- *Use documents, photos and mementos at home to provide clues.*
- *Write the information in a systematic way. (Forms, charts and software can help.)*
- *Determine full names, dates, and places, wherever you can.*
- *Identify the source of each fact. (Who told you that?)*
- *Make a list of the next questions you want to ask.*

*After you have done your legwork at home, it will be time to explore the world of information outside – at the library, on the internet, and in many other places.*

Here are a few of the how-to books for the beginner available at the Prince William Public Libraries:

- Laura Best. *Scrapbooking your family history*. 2005. (929.1 Bes)
- Matthew Helm. *Genealogy Online for Dummies*. 2014. (929.1 Hel, also RELIC)
- Daniel M. Lynch. *Google Your Family Tree: Unlock the Hidden Power of Google*. 2008. (RELIC 929.10285 Lyn)
- Marcia Y. Melnyk. *Family History 101: a Beginner's Guide to Finding Your Ancestors*. 2005. (929.1 Mel)
- George G. Morgan. *How to do Everything Genealogy*. 2015. (929.1 Mor, also RELIC)
- George G. Morgan. *The Official Guide to Ancestry.com*. 2007. (929.10285 Mor)
- Marsha H. Rising. *The Family Tree Problem Solver*. 2005. (RELIC 929.1 Ris)
- Megan Smolenyak. *Who Do You Think You Are?: the Essential Guide to Tracing Your Family History*. 2009. (929.1072 Smo, also RELIC)
- Maureen A. Taylor. *Uncovering Your Ancestry through Family Photographs*. 2005. (929.1 Tay, also RELIC)

For other titles browse the Library shelf at **929.1** or search the Library catalog (online at [pwcgov.org/library](http://pwcgov.org/library)) under the SUBJECT heading **GENEALOGY**.

### **For the more experienced researcher:**

Colleen Fitzpatrick. *Forensic Genealogy*. 2005. (RELIC 929.1 Fit)

Joan F. Curran. *Numbering Your Genealogy: Basic Systems, Complex Families, and International Kin*. 2008. (RELIC 929.1 Cur)

Judy Jacobson. *History for Genealogists: Using Chronological Time Lines to Find and Understand Your Ancestors*. 2009. (929.1072 Jac, also RELIC)

Elizabeth S. Mills. *Evidence Explained: Citing Sources from Artifacts to Cyberspace*. 2017. (907.2 Mil, also RELIC)

Drew Smith. *Social Networking for Genealogists*. 2009. (929.10285 Smi)

*The Source: a Guidebook of American Genealogy*. 2006. (929.1 Sou, also R and RELIC)

### **For the young researcher:**

Susan Provost Beller. *Roots for Kids: a Genealogy Guide for Young People*. 2007. (J 929.1 Bel)

Boy Scouts of America. *Genealogy*. 2016. (J 369.43 Boy Genealogy)

Caroline Leavitt. *Kids' Family Tree Book*. 2017. (J 929.1 Lea)

Jim Ollhoff. *Beginning Genealogy*. 2011. (J 929.1 Oll)

## **2. HAS SOMEONE ALREADY WRITTEN A HISTORY OF MY FAMILY?**

**To see if the Library has an individual history of your family, check the Library's catalog under your ancestor's surname as a SUBJECT heading. Example: CARTER FAMILY.**

You can reach the PWPL catalog online at [pwcgov.org/library](http://pwcgov.org/library), click on Catalog.

### **Some major lists of published family histories:**

*Family Search Catalog* at <https://www.familysearch.org>, click on SEARCH > CATALOG.

*Library of Congress Online Catalog* at <https://catalog.loc.gov>.

*DAR Library Catalog* at <https://www.dar.org/library/collections/dar-library-catalog>.

Stuart E. Brown. *Virginia Genealogies*. (R 016.9292 Bro)

Patrick G. Wardell. *Timesaving Aid to Virginia-West Virginia Ancestors*. (RELIC 016.929375 War)

WorldCat. <https://www.worldcat.org/>. The world's largest library catalog.

## **3. WHERE CAN I GET BLANK FORMS, CHARTS AND SOFTWARE?**

Sample genealogical forms are available at RELIC.

*Ancestry Library Edition* and [www.ancestry.com/](http://www.ancestry.com/) include free forms.

[www.cyndislist.com/](http://www.cyndislist.com/) has an extensive directory of software and forms.

[www.familysearch.org/en/](http://www.familysearch.org/en/) has sample forms and guides to choosing software.

[www.familytreemagazine.com/forms/](http://www.familytreemagazine.com/forms/) is another source for free forms.

[legacyfamilytree.com/](http://legacyfamilytree.com/) offers a free software download.

#### 4. HOW CAN I GET A BIRTH, MARRIAGE, OR DEATH CERTIFICATE?

Internet sites offer the most current information. [www.vitalrec.com](http://www.vitalrec.com) has links to all U.S. vital records sites and selected foreign sources.

In an online search engine (such as Google) type VITAL RECORDS plus the name of a state or country.

Thomas J. Kemp. *International Vital Records Handbook*. 2017. (R/RELIC 929.1072 Kem) Contains applications used in each state and many foreign countries.

*Where to Write for Vital Records: Births, Deaths, Marriages and Divorces*. 2003. (929.3 Whe, also R and RELIC) Identifies U.S. vital records offices.

#### 5. HOW CAN I FIND FAMILY MEMBERS WITH WHOM I HAVE LOST CONTACT?

**Some commercial websites may provide a certain amount of free information about adult persons, including names, address changes, phone numbers, birthdates and other names at the same address.**

*FamilyTreeNow* [www.familytreenow.com/](http://www.familytreenow.com/) shows current and past addresses, phones, birth year, probable relatives and associates.

*U.S. Public Records Index*, at *Ancestry Library Edition* [[Digital Resource](#)] is available free at many public libraries, including PWPL, and for a fee at [www.ancestry.com/](http://www.ancestry.com/).

*U.S. Search* [www.ussearch.com/](http://www.ussearch.com/) Shows cities of residence, age, associated businesses.

*Zabasearch* [www.zabasearch.com/](http://www.zabasearch.com/) Shows cities of residence, age.

#### Try the following books:

Noel M. Elliot. *Finding anyone, anywhere, anywhen*. 2005. (929.1 Ell)

Kathleen W. Hinckley. *Locating Lost Family Members and Friends*. 1999. (RELIC 929.1 Hin)

Richard S. Johnson. *Find Anyone Fast*. 2001. (R/RELIC 363.289 Joh)



#### Adoptees and their parents can also study these:

Lori Carangelo. *The Ultimate Search Book: U.S. Adoption, Genealogy and Other Search Secrets*. 2015. (362.734 Car)

Paul Drake. *Missing Pieces: How to Find Birth Parents and Adopted Children: a Search and Reunion Guidebook*. 2004. (362.734 Dra)

Tamar Weinberg. *The Adoptee's Guide to DNA Testing: How to Use Genetic Genealogy to Discover Your Long-Lost Family*. 2018. (929.1 Wei)

Check the Library's catalog under **ADOPTees** or **MISSING PERSONS** for other titles.

## 6. DO I HAVE TO TRAVEL TO MY ANCESTRAL HOME TO FIND THE RECORDS I NEED?

Often not. Many genealogical records have been copied and are available in books and magazines, on microfilm and the internet. Here are the genealogy databases that PWPLS currently subscribes to. All **except Ancestry** are available to your home computer with a PWPLS library card. Go to [pwcgov.org/library](http://pwcgov.org/library), and click on DIGITAL LIBRARY > GENEALOGY.

*America's Obituaries and Death Notices.* Full text database. Includes notices from Chicago since 1930, Boston since 1980, Detroit since 1982, many cities from the 1990s.

*Ancestry Library Edition* (most of the same content as at subscription site [www.ancestry.com/](http://www.ancestry.com/)): census images, immigration lists, military records, vital records, directories, family trees, and more (U.S., Canada, British Isles, Europe, and other places around the world).

**Accessible only at PWPLS branch libraries.**

*HeritageQuest Online:* U.S. census images, 28,000 local history and genealogy books, city directories, probate records, selected immigration records, *Map Guide to U.S. Federal Censuses*, Revolutionary War pensions, Freedman's Bank records, U.S. Serial Set.

*Historical Newspapers Collection: New York Times (1851-2014), Washington Post (1877-2001).* Complete images and keyword searching.

Local materials available online at the [pwcgov.org/library](http://pwcgov.org/library) website:

*Local Newspaper Index.* An index of articles and obituaries from *Manassas Journal Messenger* and *Potomac News*, mostly since 1993. Prepared by RELIC volunteers, an ongoing project. Go to <https://eservice2.pwcgov.org/eservice/NewspaperIndex>.

*Historical Digital Archives.* Images of Prince William County materials. Includes indexes to birth, marriage and death records, historic place names, historic photographs, and more. <http://www.pwcgov.org/government/dept/library/pages/relichistoricrepository.aspx>

If you are a registered borrower and can identify what materials you need, our Library may be able to borrow them for you. See our website at [pwcgov.org/library](http://pwcgov.org/library) and click on RESEARCH > INTERLIBRARY LOAN. Materials might come from institutions in the Washington area or from across the continent. Ask a librarian for further details.

**RELIC is an Affiliate Family History Center.** At all PWPL branch libraries you can access digital images of FHL films. For a listing of the millions of rolls of worldwide microfilm collected by the Family History Library in Salt Lake City go to [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org) and click on SEARCH > CATALOG. Those that have camera icons have been digitized.

Advances in technology over the past few years have allowed much genealogical information to be put on the Internet as well as on compact disks (CD-ROM). To see what databases RELIC has, go to <https://www.pwcgov.org/government/dept/library/Pages/RELIC-resources.aspx>, click on CD-ROM databases.

Here are a few important free Internet sites for help with your family research:

### **Basic genealogy sites:**

<https://www.cyndislist.com> (Directory of over 300,000 genealogical links)  
<https://www.familysearch.org> (LDS website; worldwide genealogical databases)  
<https://www.findmypast.com> (Specializes in British and Irish roots, basic search is free)  
<https://www.google.com> (General all-purpose search engine)  
<https://www.rootsweb.com> ("The Internet's oldest and largest free genealogy community")  
<https://stevemorse.org> (One-step genealogical search engines)  
<https://usgenweb.org> (Links to all county and state genealogical web sites)  
<https://www.worldgenweb.org> (Genealogical sites for other countries)

### **More specialized sites:**

<https://archive.org/details/genealogy> (Includes soldiers' service records, U.S. census records, digitized books)  
<https://www.bookfinder.com> (Catalogs of book dealers across the U.S., single search engine)  
<https://books.google.com> (An index to the world's books, millions can be previewed or read free)  
[http://collections.library.cornell.edu/moa\\_new/](http://collections.library.cornell.edu/moa_new/) (Searchable images of 19th century books and journals)  
<https://www.libertyellisfoundation.org/> (Images of N.Y. passenger lists 1892-1924)  
[https://books.familysearch.org/primo\\_library/libweb/action/search.do?vid=FHD\\_PUBLIC](https://books.familysearch.org/primo_library/libweb/action/search.do?vid=FHD_PUBLIC)  
(Searchable images of thousands of family histories)  
<https://www.findagrave.com> (Helps locate the final resting place of family, friends, and 'famous' individuals)  
<https://www.fold3.com> (Growing collection of original documents, many from the National Archives, now focusing on military records) Free access through Library of Virginia.  
<https://www.glorerecords.blm.gov/> (Bureau of Land Management database of federal land patents)  
<https://www.nps.gov/civilwar/soldiers-and-sailors-database.htm> (Database of Civil War troops and military units)  
<https://www.lva.virginia.gov/> (Virginia databases and digital images)  
<https://maps.google.com/> (Locate maps, directions, satellite images)

## **7. HOW DO I FIND WHAT RECORDS MIGHT EXIST FOR MY ANCESTORS?**

Our Library has many indexes and guides that can help you identify the materials you need and the archives that have them. Some examples: (See also under 2 and 6 above.)

### **Guides to Libraries, Archives, Organizations and Research Centers**

*American Library Directory.* (R 027 Ame)

*Ancestry's Red Book: American State, County and Town Sources.* (R / RELIC 929.1 Anc)

Cyndi's List <https://www.cyndislist.com/libraries/>

*Directory of Archives and Manuscript Repositories in the U.S.* (RELIC 016.091025 Dir)

Eric G. Grundset. *American Genealogical Research at the DAR, Washington, D.C.* (RELIC 929.1 Gru)

*Guide to Genealogical Research in the National Archives.* (929.3 Uni, also R / RELIC)

Christina K. Schaefer. *The Center: A Guide to Genealogical Research in the National Capital Area.*

(RELIC 929.3753 Sch)

### Guides and Indexes to Serials

*American Newspapers, 1821-1936.* (R / RELIC 071 Ame)

*Genealogical Periodical Annual Index.* 1964-5, 1974-88, 1991-2001. (RELIC 929.105 Gen and CD-ROM)

*PERiodical Source Index (PERSI).* Available at <https://www.findmypast.com/>, click on NEWSPAPERS AND PERIODICALS.

### Special Research Topics

Barksdale-Hall, Roland C. *The African American Family's Guide to Tracing Our Roots.* (929.1 Bar)

Sharon D. Carmack. *The Family Tree Guide to Finding Your Ellis Island Ancestors.* (RELIC 929.1 Car)

John P. Colletta. *They Came in Ships: a Guide to Finding Your Ancestor's Arrival Record.* (929.1 Col, also RELIC)

William Dollarhide. *Census substitutes & State Census Records.* (RELIC 317.3 DoI)

Mark D. Herber. *Ancestral Trails: The Complete Guide to British Genealogy and Family History.* (RELIC 929.341 Her)

E. Wade Hone. *Land & Property Research in the United States.* (RELIC 929.373 Hon)

E. Kay Kirkham. *A Survey of American Church Records.* (R 929.3 Kir)

James C. Neagles. *U.S. Military Records.* (R 929.3 Nea)

Laura Szucs Pfeiffer. *Hidden Sources: Family History in Unlikely Places.* (929.1 Pfe, also RELIC)

*Printed Sources: A Guide to Published Genealogical Records* (929.1016 Pri)

Christina K. Schaefer. *Guide to Naturalization Records of the United States.* (R 323.623 Sch)

Jonathan D. Shea. *Following the Paper Trail: A Multilingual Translation Guide.* (929 She, also RELIC)

Loretto Dennis Szucs. *They Became Americans: Finding Naturalization Records and Ethnic Origins.* (929.373 Szu, also RELIC)

Maureen A. Taylor. *Capturing Memories: Your Family Story in Photographs.* (779.2 Tay, also RELIC)

Maureen A. Taylor. *Family Photo Detective: Learn How to Find Genealogy Clues in Old Photos and Solve Family Photo Mysteries.* (929.1072 Tay)

To find additional materials in our collection check the Library's catalog for subjects you need. Examples of useful subject headings (some may be subdivided by place name):

CEMETERIES	INSCRIPTIONS
CENSUS	LAND GRANTS
CHURCH RECORDS	MARRIAGE RECORDS
COURT RECORDS	NEWSPAPERS
DEEDS	PROBATE RECORDS
GENEALOGY	REGISTERS OF BIRTHS, ETC.
HERALDRY	WILLS

You can also find useful materials under the name of the place where your ancestors lived or their ethnic or religious group. Examples:

AFRO-AMERICANS -- GENEALOGY.  
INDIANS OF NORTH AMERICA -- GENEALOGY.  
PENNSYLVANIA -- GENEALOGY.  
PRINCE WILLIAM COUNTY (VA.) -- HISTORY -- SOURCES.  
SCOTLAND -- GENEALOGY.  
SOCIETY OF FRIENDS -- VIRGINIA.



## 8. HOW CAN I GET IN TOUCH WITH OTHER PEOPLE RESEARCHING THE SAME FAMILY?

RELIC maintains a **Genealogical Exchange File**. You may submit information on your ancestors by index card or by [electronic form available on our web site](#). We can provide information about others working on the same family. Many Internet sites also can link you with other researchers, notably [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org), [www.ancestry.com/](http://www.ancestry.com/), [www.genealogy.com](http://www.genealogy.com), and [www.rootsweb.com](http://www.rootsweb.com).

Many genealogical magazines provide query sections. Check for journals published in your geographic area of interest.

See also Elizabeth P. Bentley. *Directory of Family Associations*. (RELIC 929.1 Ben)

## 9. IS THERE A LOCAL SUPPORT GROUP TO HELP ME WITH MY RESEARCH PROBLEMS?

RELIC schedules lectures and workshops on special topics most months. You can register for email notification of upcoming activities at [pwcgov.org/library/](http://pwcgov.org/library/) and click on EMAIL SIGNUP, or see a list of current programs at [pwcgov.org/relic](http://pwcgov.org/relic) and click on PROGRAMS. The RELIC staff also offer individual counseling on genealogical problems. Please call for an appointment, 703-792-8380.

Classes in family history research are often held in the Washington area. Check the class schedules of the Northern Virginia Community College for some close to home. Ask at RELIC and the Family History Centers for other training opportunities.

### **For lists of local, regional and national genealogical societies go online to**

Cyndi's List <https://www.cyndislist.com/societies/>

Federation of Genealogical Societies <https://fgs.org/>

U.S. GenWeb [www.usgenweb.org](http://www.usgenweb.org).

## 10. WHERE DO I GO TO HIRE SOMEONE TO RESEARCH MY FAMILY HISTORY?

Contact a genealogical society or researcher where your family lived. Researchers accepted by the Board of Certification for Genealogists can be found at [www.bcgcertification.org](http://www.bcgcertification.org). The Association of Professional Genealogists publishes an online directory. ([www.apgen.org](http://www.apgen.org))

## **GOOD LUCK IN YOUR SEARCH!**

KEY TO LOCATION SYMBOLS USED BY  
PRINCE WILLIAM PUBLIC LIBRARY SYSTEM

The call number after each title in this list shows its shelf location in the Prince William Public Library System. Call numbers used in other library systems may differ.

Books with an "R" before the call number are Reference items. Those with a "RELIC" before the call number are in RELIC. "R" and "RELIC" books may be used only in the Library. "J" before the call number means the book is in the Library's Juvenile collection. Check the Library's catalog to learn which branches own individual titles.

Ruth E. Lloyd Information Center (RELIC)

Central Library

8601 Mathis Avenue

Manassas, VA 20110-5270

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[pwcgov.org/relic](http://pwcgov.org/relic)

Library Hours:

Monday - Wednesday: 10:00 a.m. – 7:00 p.m.

Thursday - Saturday: 10:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Closed Sunday

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