

## **BEGINNING YOUR GENEALOGICAL JOURNEY & BEYOND** (by Katherine R. Willson, Ann Arbor, MI)

(Bold underlined words refer to additional handouts &/or links on my website [www.SocialMediaGenealogy.com/resources](http://www.SocialMediaGenealogy.com/resources))

### **GETTING STARTED:**

- 1) Always start with yourself - fill out a **PEDIGREE CHART** and a **FAMILY GROUP SHEET** (FGS) for yourself and your immediate family (spouse & children, or self & parents) before working on your Mayflower descendents. 😊
- 2) **INTERVIEW** any of your living relatives before it's too late.
- 3) Gather up copies of your immediate family's birth, marriage & death certificates to verify information being added to the pedigree chart (information added without a reliable source is useless).
- 4) Gather up copies of newspaper birth announcements, engagement announcements & marriage announcements (is someone in the family already the "keeper" of these documents?) to verify information in the pedigree charts.
- 5) Gather up photos of your own immediate family members (including photos of tombstones and cemetery info, if deceased) and label them as best as possible (who/when/where).
- 6) Put all your documents into archival page protectors of various sizes.
- 7) Add your information to an online tree at websites like [www.Ancestry.com](http://www.Ancestry.com) & [www.FamilySearch.org](http://www.FamilySearch.org) (neither will charge a fee to keep your tree online) so others who are researching the same families can find you.

### **CONTINUING THE JOURNEY:**

- 1) Try to locate birth, marriage & death certificates for all 4 grandparents - they may have copies if they're alive, or someone else in the family may have them if they've died, or you can order them from the county that the event took place in (or the state, as a last resort, since they charge more).
- 2) Use [www.FamilySearch.org](http://www.FamilySearch.org)'s search function to locate census forms (notoriously inaccurate, but often a good lead), World War I & II Draft Registrations, naturalization indexes, passenger lists and birth/marriage/death records.
- 3) Don't forget to browse below [www.FamilySearch.org](http://www.FamilySearch.org)'s standard search field for specific locales and their holdings.
- 4) If you can't find naturalization indexes or passenger lists on [www.FamilySearch.org](http://www.FamilySearch.org) or [www.Ancestry.com](http://www.Ancestry.com) (libraries have a free edition), place an order with the National Archives ([www.Archives.gov](http://www.Archives.gov)) - you only pay for what they find.
- 5) [www.Archives.gov](http://www.Archives.gov) and [www.Fold3.com](http://www.Fold3.com) are excellent repositories of military information.
- 6) Use **GOOGLE** and **FACEBOOK** to see if others are researching the same families.
- 7) Use the popular online cemetery databases to see if you can locate your ancestors: [www.FindaGrave.com](http://www.FindaGrave.com), [www.BillionGraves.com](http://www.BillionGraves.com), [www.Interment.net](http://www.Interment.net), [www.LocateGrave.org](http://www.LocateGrave.org), etc. If not, consider adding the info yourself.
- 8) Keep up-to-date **INTERNET RESEARCH LOGS**, **GENERAL RESEARCH LOGS** & **CORRESPONDENCE LOGS** to avoid repeating the same work. Review the logs monthly.
- 9) Write effective queries using a "who/when/where" approach, save them to your computer, paste them on message boards online, email them to genealogical & historical societies in your ancestors' areas, and mail them to churches and libraries in those same areas - they may have additional resources.
- 10) These genealogical/historical societies may be able to send you a copy of the land plat maps for your ancestors' time period - look at the neighboring surnames (many families married those in their own town).
- 11) Societies and churches may also be able to send you a copy of town or church anniversary publications (100 years, etc) that may contain information about your ancestors.
- 12) When you feel like you've hit a brick wall, print out the **GENEALOGICAL RESEARCH CHECKLIST** and determine which records you haven't yet found.
- 13) Search for your ancestors' surnames at [www.Books.Google.com](http://www.Books.Google.com) - if you find a hit, click on the "Find in a Library" link on the left and use your library's Interlibrary Loan system to borrow the book for free.
- 14) Do **NEWSPAPER RESEARCH** using archived digital copies of historical newspapers.
- 15) When you feel like you've hit another brick wall, use all your documents to create a timeline for your ancestor & include major events of the time and migratory routes if the family moved from one place to another. Use the blanks in your timeline and the knowledge of additional possible places of residence to make a new research plan.

### **BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE:**

- 1) After all the work you've put into your genealogical research, don't risk having it all tossed into the recycle bin after your death. Attach a **GENEALOGICAL CODICIL** to your will.
- 2) Try to locate living distant relatives by using [www.ZabaSearch.com](http://www.ZabaSearch.com) & [www.Piple.com](http://www.Piple.com), searching for family surnames in similar areas that your ancestors lived, and mail them your query.