



## Researching Your Family History – Getting Started

**Begin with YOURSELF.** Write down your name, birth date, birth location. Record this information on Line 1 of the Pedigree Chart.

**Work from the present, backward in time,** one generation at a time. Record your father's name on Line 2 of the Pedigree Chart, and your mother's name on Line 3. Fill in what you know of their birth dates, marriage dates, etc. Record your father's parents on lines 4 and 5 (males always on the top line, females on the lower line), and your mother's parents on lines 6 and 7. Continue filling in the chart as far as you can, using what you know.

**Ask family members to assist** you in filling in the gaps in your chart. Be sure to record where you obtain each piece of information. Interview older family members to learn more about your family.

**Ask family members about family records and documents** that they may have. Documents such as photographs, scrapbooks, family Bibles, birth records, marriage records, death records, funeral cards, school records, military service records, deeds, business ledgers and old letters may hold important clues to your family's history. Analyze each document, and record pertinent facts in your family pedigree chart and family group sheets. Again, write down the source for each bit of information.

**Consult public records and other sources.** When you have exhausted the information available through yourself and family members, you are ready to begin searching other sources of information. Public records such as census records, vital records (birth, death, marriage & divorce), deed transactions, court proceedings, tax records, voter registrations, etc. are rich sources of family history information. Other private resources, such as church records are also good sources. Consult historical archives and genealogical societies for more resources. Analyze the records carefully, write down what you find, and be sure to note the sources of the information.

**Look on the Internet** for family history information. While the amount of family history information available on the Internet is expanding rapidly, it is important to remember that many of the best sources, such as courthouse records are not on the Internet, and that not all family history information posted on the Internet is reliable. When using family trees posted by others, you will want to check the sources yourself, and verify the accuracy of the information.

**Continue this process,** working each family line backward from one generation to the next.

**Keep Learning! Attend classes and workshops** to learn more about methods in researching family history and available sources of family history information. Consider joining a local genealogical society, and take advantage of their experience and educational offerings.