

TRACING YOUR FAMILY HISTORY

Begin with **yourself**. Work from known facts toward the unknown.

There are 4 key points of identification in genealogical research----**names, dates, places and relationships**.

A. **Names** are written in the order they are said---first, middle and last name. Example: Naomi Louise WOLF. Nicknames may be in quotes. A woman is ALWAYS listed by her maiden name. Her information transfers from her father's "file" to her husband's when she marries.

B. **Dates** are written day, month (spelled out or abbreviated) and the complete year. Example: 26 April 1908 or 26 Apr. 1908. Whichever way you do it, be consistent.

C. **Places** are listed smallest to largest. Example: city, county, state/province, country. Example: Valley, Miami, Kansas, USA. It is recommended that you spell out the state name instead of using the 2-letter postal abbreviation.

D. **Relationships** use the biological connection between two people.

A FAMILY GROUP SHEET should be filled out for each couple listing their children in birth order.

A PEDIGREE or ANCESTOR CHART shows your family tree. You will need one pedigree chart and many family group sheets.

HOME SOURCES: memorabilia from work, clubs, organizations. Birth, marriage, death records. Old photos. Family Bibles. Interview your oldest living relatives.

VITAL RECORDS: records of birth, marriage, divorce, deaths. These were made at the time of the event and are recorded at county and state levels. Other examples of original records - probate, land, tax and poll lists, naturalizations.

CENSUS RECORDS: The federal census has been taken every ten years beginning in 1790. The latest one available to the public is 1940. 1850 census was the first to list individual family members by name. 1890 census was burned with very little available except the Veterans Schedule. Compare Family Group Sheet to the make-up of the family in census records.

DOCUMENTATION: Write down where you searched for information, whether or not found anything. This should help prevent you from researching that source again. For books, copy the title page plus the pages about your family. Write on it what library, city, state, and date you copied the data. For websites, list the URL and name of website, date viewed. If the website lists an original source, note that. Document well enough that another person could go to the same source and find the record.

FREE WEBSITES: Heritage Quest can be accessed through Billings Public Library using your library card number. ANCESTRY LIBRARY EDITION is available at Billings Public Library. Familysearch.org LDS website. USGENWEB.org is search by state and county. Cyndislist.com links to thousands of genealogy websites. Glorerecords.blm.gov has homestead records and military scrip. nps.gov/civilwar/soldiers-and-sailors-database database of Union and CSA soldiers and sailors.

YELLOWSTONE GENEALOGY FORUM: Programs on 4th Tuesday of month, except December; 7 pm at 1711 6th St West. Genealogy Room at Billings Public Library. Help available M-TH, 1-3 pm, and Thursday evenings. Website <http://www.yellowstonegenealogy.org/>

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