

Ancestry.com

Keeping track of information – your means of verifying your data or returning to the source

- Who was the author or creator of the document?
- What is the title of the source? If not original document, cite index.
- When was it written or created – publisher, location, date
- Where in the source is the information – volume, issue, page, series, film number.
- Where is the source document located? If viewed online, when and website.

Source documents you may find on Ancestry.com

CENSUS LISTS: Beginning with 1790 the United States has taken a count of citizens every 10 years. Through 1840 the census named head of household, then listed members of household by gender and age but not name. Beginning in 1850, every person in the household was listed. The census for 1890 was destroyed. Some states conducted census. These were taken midway between the federal censuses. In the federal census, there are Indian census and slave schedules. The questions asked change each time the census is taken. You may find dates of immigration (1900-1930), month & year of birth (1900), how many children born to a woman (1900 & 1910), whether a person served in military (1910 & 1930).

VOTER LISTS: state or county voter registration lists.

BIRTH, MARRIAGE, DEATH: BMD, or b. m. d. Each person in family will have a birth date and location. BMD are considered “vital statistics”. Records in the U.S. may not have been recorded by the state until 1907 or later. Other sources may be baptism records, church records, obituaries or news stories.

MILITARY: Records pre-date the founding of the United States. Each war has service records, pension or bounty land applications, widows’ applications. Draft registration records can be found.

IMMIGRATION & TRAVEL: Documents may include ship passenger lists, passport applications, border crossings, naturalization records.

CITY DIRECTORIES: A listing of businesses and people in a town or county, or several counties. Older directories will be in alphabetical order by last name. Newer ones have sections by name, by address, by phone number, by business.

MAPS, ATLASES, GAZETTEERS: All sources can help you locate where your ancestor lived.

TAX RECORDS: Found at the county courthouse. If a person owned property or a business, he/she paid taxes.

LAND RECORDS: Deeds contain location of property, ownership, dates of purchase and sale. Records in the states that were British colonies will be found at the county courthouse. In Public Land states, the patent or deed from the federal government to the first owner will be at the Bureau of Land Management. <http://www.glorerecords.blm.gov/default.aspx> After that transfer, the records will be found at the county courthouse.

PUBLIC MEMBER TREES: Review with skepticism, especially if there is no documentation. If there is documentation, it may give you hints as to who to research and where.