Identifying Your Ancestors, and Overcoming Hurdles

A process summary of multiple best-practice FamilySearch articles written by experienced genealogists

For further information, see: **"Research Resources"** at https://familysearch.org/wiki/en/Research_Resources

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Create a Family Group Record	Decide Research Objective	Select Information Sources	Create a Research Log	Conduct Research	Form Conclusion	Share Your Findings

Document As You Go [15]

Create a Family Group Record
- Decide on one of your ancestor's to be researched [9]
- Identify all of the facts that you already know about your ancestor, along with any guesses
- Gather additional facts and guesses about your ancestor, from both family members and others
- Enter all of your ancestor's facts and guesses into a Family Group Record [1,8]
- Create at least one source-footnote for each fact and guess in the Family Group Record [7]

Decide Research Objective
- Decide your research objective [9]
- Identify the single easiest fact that you want to find out about your ancestor *e.g.: place of birth* [2]

Select Information Sources
- Identify available information sources held in your ancestor's country or locality *e.g. census records, death records* [5]
- Understand both the strengths and the weaknesses of each information source [3]
- Select information sources for researching your ancestor

Create a Research Log
- Review the Genealogical Proof Standard [4]
- Create a new Research Log for your ancestor [6]
- Enter selected information sources into your Research Log, **before** starting your research [2,7]

Conduct Research
- Undertake research using your Research Log, updating it as you go [6]
- Broadly search each selected information source [10]
- Research your ancestor in a community context [10]
- Consider name variations [11,16]
- Apply advanced research strategies [2]
- Transcribe handwriting [12]
- Assess evidence reliability [13]

Form Conclusion
- Correlate results [14,18]
- Resolve contradictory evidence [17]
- Form your conclusion
- Write a "proof statement", using the Genealogical Proof Standard [4]

Share Your Findings
- Share your findings and conclusions with both FamilySearch, and others
- Cite all information sources in FamilySearch, using the appropriate citation format [7]
- Add notes to FamilySearch, as needed

Some Important Research Principles

- Start with yourself, and then work backwards through your ancestors.
- Do not skip an ancestor, until you have completed reasonably exhaustive research.
- Do the easy research first.
- Focus on researching one new fact at a time *e.g.: place of ancestor's birth.*
- Document everything as you go.
- Collect multiple records for each ancestor, especially primary records. They are eyewitness accounts of events.
- Review the entire record, as it may contain important additional information.
- Do not trust transcriptions, as they can often contain errors.
- Proximity implies relationships *e.g.: a minister who performs your ancestors' marriage, may be related to your ancestors.*
- Ask lots of questions about your ancestor, such as why they immigrated. Imagine all the possible reasons, and then attempt to disprove or prove each reason.
- Cite all information sources.

References and Notes

1. FamilySearch Wiki, "**Family group record: roadmap for researchers**", at https://familysearch.org/wiki/en/Family_group_record:_roadmap_for_researchers (accessed 13 August 2017)
2. FamilySearch Wiki, "**Solving Tough Research Problems-Overcoming Brick Walls**", at https://familysearch.org/wiki/en/Solving_Tough_Research_Problems%E2%80%94Overcoming_Brick_Walls (accessed 13 August 2017)
3. FamilySearch Wiki, "**Advanced Techniques for Census, Parish Register, Probate, and Land Records (National Institute)**" at https://familysearch.org/wiki/en/Advanced_Techniques_for_Census,_Parish_Register,_Probate,_and_Land_Records_(National_Institute) (accessed 8 August 2017)
4. FamilySearch Wiki, "**Understanding the Genealogical Proof Standard**" at https://familysearch.org/blog/en/genealogicalproofstandardpart1/ (accessed 13 August 2017)
5. FamilySearch Wiki, "**What's Hot—The Research Wiki**", at https://familysearch.org/wiki/en/Main_Page (accessed 13 August 2017)
6. FamilySearch Wiki, "**Research Logs**", at https://familysearch.org/wiki/en/Research_Logs (accessed 15 August 2017)
7. FamilySearch Wiki, "**Cite Your Sources (Source Footnotes)**", at https://familysearch.org/wiki/en/Cite_Your_Sources_(Source_Footnotes)#Internet_sites (accessed 6 August 2017)
8. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, "**Family Group Record**" (template) in https://www.lds.org/bc/content/shared/content/images/gospel-library/manual/34824/31827_000_000.pdf researchers (accessed 13 August 2017)
9. FamilySearch Wiki, "**Steps to Success in Genealogical Research Step One (National Institute)**" at https://familysearch.org/wiki/en/Steps_to_Success_in_Genealogical_Research_Step_One_(National_Institute) (accessed 13 August 2017)
10. FamilySearch Wiki, "**Research a Family in Community Context**", at https://familysearch.org/wiki/en/Research_a_Family_in_Community_Context (accessed 9 August 2017)
11. FamilySearch Wiki, "**Name Variations in United States Indexes and Records**", at https://familysearch.org/wiki/en/Name_Variations_in_United_States_Indexes_and_Records (accessed 10 August 2017)
12. FamilySearch Wiki, "**Language Resources and Handwriting Helps**", at https://familysearch.org/indexing/help/handwriting#!/lang=en&title=Alphabet%20(Secretary%20Hand) (accessed 11 August 2017)
13. FamilySearch Wiki, "**Evaluate the Evidence**", at https://familysearch.org/wiki/en/Evaluate_the_Evidence (accessed 6 August 2017)
14. Use a matrix of some kind, such as a spread sheet, or table to compare details contained in each record such as birth dates, places, spouse, parents
15. FamilySearch Wiki, "**Document as You Go!**", at https://familysearch.org/wiki/en/Document_AS_YOU_GO! (accessed 6 August 2017)
16. FamilySearch Wiki, "**Traditional Nicknames in Old Documents - A Wiki List**", at https://familysearch.org/wiki/en/Traditional_Nicknames_in_Old_Documents_-_A_Wiki_List (accessed 13 August 2017)
17. FamilySearch Wiki, "**How to Successfully Apply the Genealogical Proof Standard**" at https://familysearch.org/blog/en/genealogicalproofstandardpart3/ (accessed 14 August 2017)
18. FamilySearch Wiki, "**Inferential Genealogy, Step 4: Correlate the Evidence**", at https://familysearch.org/wiki/en/Inferential_Genealogy (accessed 15 August 2017)

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