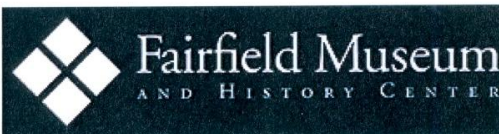


# Getting Started On Your Family History Research



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# Guidelines and Suggested Sources for Beginning Research of Family History and Genealogy

## 1. Gather all of the information (even traditional or “family myths”) that you can about your family and family members from relatives and family friends.

You may find such information by talking to family members, including parents, sisters, brothers, grandparents, uncles, aunts, cousins, great aunts and uncles, and great grandparents.

Be sure to talk to the eldest members of your family first.

Gather information regarding:

- names
- relationships
- dates of birth, marriage, death
- places of residence
- religious affiliations
- nationalities

Search around your home or the homes of relatives (with their cooperation) for materials such as these:

family Bibles	letters	funeral cards and programs
wedding invitations	marriage announcements	deeds and land grants
photographs	church records	scrap books
wills	driver’s license	obituaries and newspaper clippings
draft card	financial journals	birth announcements
divorce papers	yearbooks	genealogies
samplers	personal diaries and journals	

Look everywhere; ask everyone! Sometimes the most unlikely person has the vital clue that will lead you to success!

Or you may find information outside the home:

gravestone inscriptions	citizenship records	census records
land records	tax records	court records
military records	immigration records	maps and atlases
published periodicals	published family genealogies	

## 2. Gather whatever geographical and historical background that you can about the individuals in your family.

Study maps (town, state, and noting those living adjacent to the homes of your ancestors); gazetteers to learn the history of boundary changes and name changes; and migration routes followed by groups of settlers.

## 3. Collect the data you have gathered into a chart so that you can clarify relationships and show any missing information.

Standardize your records so information is understandable and quickly found. Be sure to note the sources of your information.

#### 4. Records:

Census: some colonies did one before 1790; Federal censuses have been conducted every ten years since 1790. The 1930 census is the most recent available to the public; the 1890 census was destroyed by fire.

Probate Records: wills, letter of administration or guardianship. In Connecticut, these are on microfilm at the State Library in Hartford, as well as copies in the individual jurisdiction probate offices.

Land Records: deeds, mortgages. In Fairfield, you would visit the Town Clerk's Office in the Town Hall.

Town Records: vital records (birth, marriage, death), tax lists, town meeting minutes. Some of these records are housed in the Fairfield Museum and History Center, but most are at the Town Hall.

Court Records: divorce, lawsuits, some immigration records. Housed in the offices of the various courts.

Church Records: some older church records have been published in books or periodicals. Look for admissions, dismissals, baptisms, marriages and burials. In Connecticut, a large number of church records are on microfilm in the State Library.

Military Records: available at the National Archives and/or the Adjutant General of the State of Connecticut or in Washington, D.C. Pension records for soldiers who served in all of the early wars of this country are also in the National Archives. State militia records can be obtained from the Adjutant General of the state. The National Archives also has regional centers where many records are on microfilm.

**5. Library Materials:** Once material has been gathered from all of the above sources, it is time to visit libraries, historical societies and genealogical societies with genealogical collections. Types of references you may find include:

Indexes: the card catalog or OPAC (online public access catalog) or other index files

Genealogies: published family histories or collective works such as *The History and Genealogy of the Families of Old Fairfield*.

Periodicals: *New England Historical and Genealogical Register*; *New York Genealogical and Biographical Record*; *American Genealogist*; *Connecticut Ancestry*; *Ancestry*; and other local publications for the state.

Histories: church, town, county, state, cemetery inscriptions and records.

City Directories: provide location of the house, the occupation and the name of the spouse; often include the death date, the arrival and departure of an individual.



### Digital/online resources

1. Ancestry Plus (Library edition): The premier source for genealogical research online, available by subscription and to users at the FMHC Library: <http://www.ancestry.com/>
2. Heritage Quest: Free site that you can access through your public library or at the FMHC library: <http://heritagequestonline.com>
3. Family Search: The Church of the Latter-Day Saints provides one of the largest family history databases in the world, free of charge: <http://familysearch.org>
4. Ellis Island: Searchable database of immigrant arrivals taken from passenger lists, 1892-1924 as well as information about ships: <http://ellisland.org>
5. RootsWeb: aims to connect people to share genealogical research: <http://www.rootsweb.com>
6. U.S. GenWeb: worldwide site committed to keeping quality genealogical information free to all: <http://usgenweb.org/>
7. Cyndi's List: A great index of online genealogical sites: <http://www.cyndislist.com>
8. National Archives: request copies of military records: <http://www.archives.gov/veterans/>
9. Connecticut State Library: Excellent source for Connecticut genealogy research: <http://www.cslib.org>