

- To trace your family history, begin with yourself and work backward, one step at a time.
- Carefully record the important facts of your own life and what you know of your parents and grandparents.
- Consult other members of your family and close family friends and collect the information they know or have gathered. You may find that a family member has saved family papers, newspaper clippings, obituaries, family Bibles, or other treasures.
- Compile a genealogical chart showing the names of your immediate ancestors with their birth, marriage, and death dates, and the places where each event occurred.
- Check for books on local and family history. The Library of Virginia has a large collection of published family histories.
- Go to a local library, courthouse, state archives, or to the National Archives and Records Administration in Washington, D.C. You must search for original records to document the history you have heard from relatives or the claims you have found in published genealogies.
- Always record the source of any information found.

Helpful Resources at the Library of Virginia

Byers, Paula K., ed. *African American Genealogical Sourcebook* (1995) and *Native American Genealogical Sourcebook* (1995).

Essays on specialized genealogical research with illustrations and examples, as well as a directory of helpful resources.

Carmack, Sharon DeBartolo. *A Genealogist's Guide to Discovering Your Female Ancestors* (1998), *A Genealogist's Guide to Discovering Your Immigrant and Ethnic Ancestors* (2000), and *Organizing Your Family History Search* (1999).

An handy trio of books on how to document your heritage, focusing on crafting family research into a factual and interesting story.

***The Genealogist's Address Book* (4th ed., 1998).**

A national directory for the genealogist containing addresses and other contact information for thousands of libraries, historical societies, religious organizations, and government agencies.

Greenwood, Val D. *The Researcher's Guide to American Genealogy* (3rd ed., 2000).

Created as a college-level textbook, this guide presents the basic principles of research, detailed discussions of records, and strategies for evaluation of research results.

***Guide to Genealogical Research in the National Archives* (Rev. ed., 2000).**

An invaluable resource for understanding and accessing federal records, many of which are widely available on microfilm.

Szucs, Loretto D., and Sandra H. Luebking, eds. *The Source: A Guidebook of American Genealogy* (Rev. ed., 1997).

A basic quick-reference source to genealogical information, including all types of records, their availability, and application, with a unique section on access to business and employment records.

Willard, Jim, Terry Willard, and Jane Wilson. *Ancestors: A Beginner's Guide to Family History and Genealogy* (1997).

Companion book to the PBS series *Ancestors*, containing a useful chapter on how to begin a medical pedigree.

Woodtor, Dee. *Finding a Place Called Home: A Guide to African-American Genealogy and Historical Identity* (1999).

A comprehensive guide to tracing your family tree, presenting step-by-step methods of preserving oral history, researching records, using the Internet, and producing a quality family history.

Basic Genealogical Resources at the Library of Virginia

Census Records: The first U.S. census was taken in 1790 and a census has been taken every 10 years since. However, the censuses and indexes for Virginia for 1790, 1800, part of 1810, and 1890 have not survived. Those for 1810–1880 and 1900–1920 are available on microfilm at the Library of Virginia. From 1850, they list the names of all individuals in the household on the day the census was taken. Age, sex, race, and other types of information appear in various years.

Vital Records: The Commonwealth of Virginia recorded births and deaths from 1853 through 1896 and 1912 to the present. Marriages have been recorded at the state level from 1853 to the present. All are in the Office of Vital Records and Health Statistics, P.O. Box 1000, Richmond, VA 23218. Microfilm copies of the 1853–1896 birth and death registers, 1913–1939 death certificates, and 1853–1935 marriage registers are available at the Library of Virginia. Marriages prior to June 1853 were recorded at the local courthouse.

County and City Records: Deeds, wills, court records, marriages, and other types of documents recorded at the local level of government will be found in the individual courthouses of Virginia's counties and independent cities. The Library of Virginia has microfilm copies of the surviving court records prior to 1865.

Military Records: The Library has microfilm copies of military muster rolls, service records, and/or pension records for most Virginia soldiers who served during the colonial wars, the American Revolution, the War of 1812, and the Civil War. World War I History Commission questionnaires contain biographical information about some World War I veterans living in Virginia after the war.

Bible Records: Bible records primarily consist of photocopies of original family registers found in Bibles. There also are typed transcripts and some compilations of Bible records by patriotic organizations such as the Daughters of the American Revolution. These compilations usually are identified as Miscellaneous Bible Records (MBRC).

Genealogical Notes and Charts: This collection consists of a wide variety of materials compiled by private citizens interested in recording their ancestry and making their research available to the public. The Library continues to accept donations of genealogical materials, but we do not verify the accuracy of the information contained therein.

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Revised July 2002
Reprinted October 2008

