



# Introduction

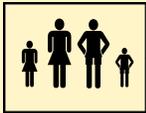
## EDUCATOR

Family history can be used to teach or enhance lessons in a variety of subjects, including language arts, history, writing, health science, computer science, geography, art and social studies.

## OBJECTIVE

The Ancestors Teacher's Guide was written to be used online by students or downloaded and distributed to a class by a teacher. It is a series of lessons that coordinate with the Ancestors episodes, including activities that teach the main ideas the program. Each lesson includes suggested assignments and vocabulary words. Beginning with Lesson 203, a research process that has skill-building value even outside the arena of family history is included.

As you read the lessons, you will note that the lessons are written to the student. Please feel free to adapt them as needed.



## FAMILY: A CHANGING DEMOGRAPHIC

In recent years, much has been said about the changing dynamic of the modern-day family. Indeed, the very definition of the word "family" has been debated. While many students go home to traditional two-parent households, an ever-growing number of them do not.

Students from single-parent households may prefer to use the pedigree chart that diagrams only one side of the family. You may prefer to turn what would otherwise be a family activity into community activities by involving a local senior citizen's center. For instance, instead of conducting oral history interviews with family members, (as suggested for lessons pertaining to Episode 202,) some students, or your entire class, may opt to interview residents at a local senior citizen's center. The interviews could be transcribed and bound into a local history book (thereby creating a compiled record, which fits into lessons for Episode 203).

Amidst debates on the condition and definition of "family" in recent years, the hobby of genealogy has experienced explosive growth. Perhaps this is due, in part, to the healing and empowering effect that has been felt by thousands of people who have begun a search for roots. We trust educators to be sensitive to the individual situations of their students as we recommend family history as a unique and enriching context for learning.

Enjoy.

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# EPISODE 201

## RECORDS AT RISK

### OBJECTIVE

1

IN THIS LESSON, YOU'LL

- RECORD your place in history
- LEARN how to prove your place in history
- DISCOVER the fragility of records, your key source for clues to the past

### TEACHER



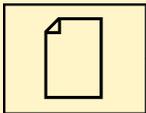
This lesson includes opportunities for class discussion, a video presentation and an online activity. Vocabulary words are included at the end of the lesson though not specifically brought into the lesson in the form of an assignment. Resulting measurable assignments include the creation of a timeline and a writing sample from an historical figure's point of view. While the lesson's main ideas logically build on one another, the activities and assignments suggested can be adapted or omitted according to your needs.

### MAIN IDEA no. 1

EVERY PERSON IS A PART OF HISTORY

Why do you have your own last name, and not someone else's? Why do you speak the language you speak? Why is your hair brown, or blonde, or red? The answers to these questions have to do with events that happened in the lives of the people who came before you. Your ancestors. Perhaps your ancestors didn't realize that the choices they made would effect so many people. Just by living their lives, they created history.

What about you? What choices do you make every day that will affect your children, and your grandchildren? You, too, are creating history, even as you live it.



#### ACTIVITY

When we chart history, we often use a timeline. A timeline helps us see when events happened in a person's life. You can create a timeline for your ancestors, but you probably don't know much about them yet. Perhaps you'd better start with yourself first.

**CREATE** a timeline for your own life. It can take any form and be as artistic as you like, but should include major events, dates, and places. Major events might include learning to ride a bike, moving to another state or house, the birth of a stepbrother or a favorite Christmas.

**DISCUSS** your timeline with your friends or classmates. Find out about the interesting events in their lives and share some of your memories with them.

(SCROLL DOWN TO FIND TIMELINE)

# Timeline

of important events in the life of \_\_\_\_\_  
Your name

Birth  
Age 1  
Age 2  
Age 3  
Age 4  
Age 5  
Age 6  
Age 7  
Age 8  
Age 9  
Age 10  
Age 11  
Age 12  
Age 13  
Age 14  
Age 15  
Age 16  
Age 17  
Age 18

## Documented Proof

The following is a list of three personal events, identified in my timeline above, and the documented proof.

Timeline Event Number	Event Description	My Age	The title of the document and description of its contents that proves the event happened

IDEA no.2

PROVE IT WITH RECORD

*If you had to prove an event on your timeline happened to you, what would you use to prove it?*

Examples: A receipt from the new bike, school records could show that you attended school in one state and moved to another, baby pictures of your stepbrother, memories of family who were with you on your favorite Christmas.

Your ancestors also had birthdays, holidays and school days. They did many of the same things you do. Later in their lives, they married and had children. Some of them hunted for gold, others worked in mills, still others left their homelands to make a new life in America.

*If you had to prove your ancestors had these experiences that they actually lived, how would you do it?*

Well, you would become a family history detective. You would look for clues to their lives in the things they left behind. You'd use records, photographs, witnesses, artifacts—anything you could get your hands on that would tell you more about them.

IDEA no.3

RECORDS ARE HISTORY'S BEST STORY TELLER

While there are many sources that can tell you more about how a person lived or where an event happened, one of the most helpful sources is records. Records are simply written details about a life event.

But records are fragile. Just think of how easy it is to lose your homework! Do you know where your birth certificate is? What about your first grade report card?



VIEW ANCESTORS EPISODE 201: "RECORDS AT RISK"

EPISODE DESCRIPTION

*ANCESTORS: RECORDS AT RISK* explores the way the records can be destroyed and looks at the heroic efforts by many people around the world who are working to preserve them. You'll see how records are kept and stored through microfilming efforts at the National Archives. You'll meet a Russian genealogist who is trying to reconstruct genealogies destroyed in the Bolshevik Revolution and visit the Shoah Visual History Foundation, where the memories of Holocaust survivors are being preserved.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

What are some of the ways records can be destroyed?

Historically, governments have destroyed records. How did the communist regime in the former Soviet Union destroy family records?

Why is the Shoah Visual History Foundation so intent on gathering and preserving memories of the Holocaust?

What are some of the feelings people have when they lose records that tell about their families?

What are some of the ways records can be preserved?

## GO ONLINE



Because records can be so easily destroyed or lost, each one is precious. Records tell the stories of the past.

Take a look at the following link and get an idea about the many different kinds of records that have been created throughout history.

~~<http://www.rootsweb.com/~kyscott/slavedoc.htm>~~ This site, created by Kentucky genealogists Jake and Jo Thiessens, includes text from wills, letters and property inventories. Note the fact that before the Civil War, slaves were considered property and as such, were given to family members the way furniture or cattle might be passed on in a will. Also note the Woodford Co., KY, Circuit Book C., p. 65 record. What do the Thiessens' note happened to the original record?

## WRITING



Choose a record that interests you and, from the clues found in the record, write a diary entry, recording the events of the day as if you were one of the people named in the record. You might write from the point of view of the slave, the slave owner or the person receiving the slave. Then imagine life after the end of the Civil War and write a second diary entry. How have things changed? What are the freed slave's plans for the future? How does the slave owner feel about this new world he now finds himself in?

Similar writing opportunities can be created using the records found at:

~~[http://www.lineages.com/military/ww1\\_draft.asp](http://www.lineages.com/military/ww1_draft.asp)~~ (war records)

## INFORMATION



WHAT HAVE I LEARNED AND . . .

You've seen how fragile records can be, but also learned that they are the best way of finding out your family's history. You know now that many records have survived, and they may contain interesting clues to your family story.

. . . WHAT'S NEXT?

But believe it or not, some of the best clues aren't in a library or an archive. They're right in your own family. In the next lesson, you'll learn how to uncover these clues that can only be found at home. And you'll meet a woman who, though she lives in America, found a journal that told of her family story in Ireland.

## VOCABULARY



**Ancestor:** A person from whom one is descended.

**Genealogy:** The science of studying about our ancestors, through names, dates and events.

**Family History:** Another name for genealogy that goes beyond getting the names and dates of ancestors. Family historians try to find out life stories and little, interesting details about their ancestors, such as what color of eyes they had, or what kind of jobs they worked.

**Generation:** The average span of time between the birth of parents and that of their children (approximately twenty to twenty-five years).

**Timeline:** A way of charting historical events and dates, often including places.

**Record:** A written account of a very important life event such as birth, marriage or death.

# EPISODE 202

## FAMILY RECORDS

### OBJECTIVE

1

#### IN THIS LESSON, YOU'LL

- PLAN to conduct an oral history interview
- GATHER family stories

### TEACHER



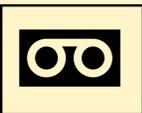
This lesson includes opportunities for class discussion, a video presentation and activities. Vocabulary words are included at the end of the lesson though not specifically brought into the lesson in the form of an assignment. Resulting measurable assignments include notes or an audiotape from an oral history interview. While the lesson's main ideas logically build on one another, the activities and assignments suggested can be adapted or omitted according to your needs.

### MAIN IDEA no. 1

#### MANY FAMILIES KEEP RECORDS FOR FAMILY EVENTS

Many families conscientiously keep track of major events such as births, marriages or deaths. Often individuals keep diaries or journals. Most families take pictures to capture the memories of family events. Whether or not your family has a system of keeping and organizing family records, there is a good chance that some records exist. Even a scrap of paper with a few dates and names can be the clue that leads you to more information about your family history.

"Fine," you say. "I'm sure information about my family exists somewhere, but where?" Good question! The best place to start is at your own home.



#### WATCH ANCESTORS EPISODE 202: FAMILY RECORDS EPISODE DESCRIPTION

*FAMILY RECORD* asks the question, "What clues to your family history lie in your house, and where will these clues lead you?" Meet Suzanne Ballard, who began her search for her roots with nothing more than a few memories and a scrap of paper with some writing on it. The paper had been lost for years, but was found in her Mother's attic. With this piece of paper, she used library and online resources to find out more. Eventually, she uncovered a fascinating piece of her family history in a set of diaries written over 150 years ago by her great-great uncle. Her uncle, a simple farmer, wrote every day and created a record that is a unique look into the life of the working and farmer classes of 1800s Ireland.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

How might you identify people in photos when you don't know who they are?

What did James Harshaw record in his diaries about his neighbors?

Where should a person begin finding information about his/her family?

What kinds of things can be found at home?



### ACTIVITY: GATHER FAMILY HISTORY CLUES AT HOME

Go home and play detective. Look for clues to your family's history. Consider anything that has names of family members on it, dates or places where members of the family may have lived or worked as a good clue. Gather your clues into a large box. You can even decorate the box if you'd like, and name it "THE FAMILY BOX" or anything else that comes to mind. "JOHNSON FAMILY TREASURES", for example.

**USE CAUTION!** Many of these items may be old and delicate. Touch old photos on the edges only. Be careful when handling old books or papers. If your parents or relatives are worried about your handling these items, ask them to look at the items with you and help you write down the names, dates and places you find.

Some of the things you might find include:

Baby book	Christening	Land Grant
Wedding Announcement	Records	Letters/Engraved Dishes
Awards	Social Security Card	Hunting/Fishing License
Account Books	Newspapers	Passport
Newspaper Articles	Bar/Bat Mitzvah Records	Photographs
Written Personal Histories	Journal	Naturalization Papers
Samplers	Family Bible	
Yearbooks	Union Records	

Don't be alarmed if you don't find many of these items. A lot of families move and lose important things. It may be that your relatives have records and artifacts that would be helpful to you.



### ACTIVITY: ASK RELATIVES FOR FAMILY HISTORY CLUES

Call or write your grandparents, aunts, or uncles and ask what they might have at home. If your family has one person who keeps most of the family history information, contact that person first.

Arrange for a visit, if the person lives in the same city or town. If not, ask the person to itemize some family history information they've found on family artifacts and send it to you by letter or e-mail.

## GATHER FAMILY STORIES

As you search for artifacts and records that list events, places and dates, you'll probably find that your Mom or Grandpa or Aunt will want to tell you family stories. As a good detective, you'll recognize that these stories contain more clues to your family history, so you'll want to gather these stories the way you would a newspaper clipping or an ancestor's diary.

But how do you "gather" a story?

**ACTIVITY: PLAN AN ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW**

When you talk to your relatives about family history artifacts, think about which one of them might have the most family stories to tell. Usually, this is the oldest relative, because they have lived through more family events than anyone else has.

Choose a relative to interview. Write a letter or call the person and set up a place and time for the interview. Explain what you want to do and why you want to do it.

You will need to plan well. Follow these guidelines.

- ▶ Think about the questions you want to ask and write them down. [Click here for a suggested list of questions.](#)
- ▶ Plan on the interview taking about one hour.
- ▶ Record the interview, either by taking notes or using a tape recorder. If you use a tape recorder, make sure to test it before the interview so that you're certain it works properly.
- ▶ Make sure that you have fresh batteries, or that you can plug the recorder into an outlet.
- ▶ You may even wish to use a video camera, but if you do, take another person with you to run the camera so that you can concentrate on asking the questions.

During the interview:

- ▶ Start with easy questions. Get some background information first.
- ▶ Don't feel uncomfortable if your relative stops speaking and there is silence. Sometimes the person is just thinking about what to say next. Just wait patiently, and you'll find that they begin speaking soon. Don't be too quick with another question. Allow the person time to think. Try not to interrupt.
- ▶ Remember that thinking back on the past will sometimes bring sad memories. Be sensitive and kind. If the person looks very uncomfortable, ask if he or she would like to continue talking on the topic or go on to another question.
- ▶ Thank your relative for the time and the thoughts that have been shared with you.



## SAMPLE ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

What is your birthdate?  
Where were you born?  
Tell me about the home you were raised in.  
Tell me about the kind of work did your parents did.  
Tell me about your school days.  
Tell me what you did for entertainment when you were young.  
Tell me about family vacations when you were long.  
When you were young, what was transportation like?  
What were your ambitions when you were young?  
How much schooling did you complete?  
Tell me about dating your husband/wife.  
Where you married?  
What was the date of your marriage?  
Tell me about changes you've seen because of technology.

## INFORMATION



### WHAT HAVE I LEARNED AND . . .

After gathering family history information at home and from relatives, you're probably going to need a way to organize your information.

### . . . WHAT'S NEXT?

In the next lesson, you'll learn how to organize and chart your detective strategy with pedigree charts and family group records. You'll also learn about compiled records and meet a woman who found over 400 years of family history buried in the ground.

## VOCABULARY



**Oral History:** A conversation with someone, such as a parent, grandparent, uncle or friend, in which open-ended and close-ended questions are asked to learn information about a person or family.

**Open-ended questions:** Questions that can be answered with a free response, such as the answer to an essay question (e.g., "What do you remember about growing up on a farm?").

**Close-ended questions:** Questions that can be answered with a very short, specific response, usually about some fact (e.g., "What is your maiden name?", "What year did your grandfather die?").

# EPISODE 203

## COMPILED RECORDS

### OBJECTIVE

1

IN THIS LESSON, YOU'LL

- CREATE a pedigree chart
- DISCOVER a detective's best strategy: the research process

### TEACHER



This lesson includes opportunities for class discussion, a video presentation and an online activity. Vocabulary words are included at the end of the lesson though not specifically brought into the lesson in the form of an assignment. Resulting measurable assignments include the creation of a pedigree chart, a list of research questions. Before teaching this lesson, please re-read the Introduction to this Guide.

### MAIN IDEA no.1

#### THE PEDIGREE CHART

The pedigree chart is simply a way to organize the information you find about your ancestors. It is not the only chart you'll use during your family history search, but starting with a pedigree will help you focus your search from here on out.

As you can see, a pedigree is simply a chart that records descent.



#### WATCH ANCESTORS EPISODE 203: COMPILED RECORDS EPISODE DESCRIPTION

In China, pedigree charts look much different than they look in America. In this episode, you'll meet Sheila Hsia, who lives in Hong Kong. Sheila's family had been recording its genealogy for nearly 4000 years, but after China's devastating Cultural Revolution, she doubted the survival of her family's pedigree charts. Join her as she discovers the fate of these important family records and learn why her family book is considered a compiled record.

#### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- What is a compiled record?
- How might compiled records help you in your research?
- How is a pedigree chart used?

## WRITING



### FILL OUT A PEDIGREE CHART

Because Sheila's pedigree was written by many different ancestors over hundreds of years and then gathered into one book, it is considered a compiled record. Chances are, your family doesn't have a pedigree that's been in the family for the last 400 years, so perhaps you'd better create your own! [You can do this right online and print it out.] If you prefer to only record your mother's or father's side, you may do so for the purposes of this exercise.

*(LINK TO PEDIGREE)*

Key points to follow:

Start with yourself on line 1. Your father's full name should appear on line 2. Your mother's full name before marriage should appear on line 3. (Male names will always be recorded on even numbers, except for line 1, and female names will always be on odd numbers).

Use maiden names for females.

Write dates using the day, month, year (27 MAY 1955).

Write place names as completely as possible (city, county, state).

If you've completed lessons one and two, you'll have much of the information you need to start filling out your pedigree chart. But eventually, you'll start to notice the information that's missing. It could be your paternal grandfather's first name, or your mother's place of birth. How do you find this missing information?

## MAIN IDEA no.2

### THE RESEARCH PROCESS - GUIDED STEPS TO DISCOVERING YOUR ANCESTORS

Without even knowing it, you've started to use a research process that many successful family history detectives have used. If you follow this process, you'll be able to find the information you need to fill in the blanks that now exist on your pedigree chart. If you've completed lessons 1 and 2 in this guide, take particular note of where you are in the process.

The steps to finding your ancestors look like this:

Step 1: Write down what you know.

By creating a pedigree, you've already completed Step 1.

Step 2: Decide what you want to learn.

Take a look at the blank spaces on your pedigree. Choose one ancestor to focus on and then decide what piece of information you want to learn about that ancestor. It's best if the blanks you try to fill first are for an ancestor close to you in time, since the chances of finding information about an ancestor who lived 50 years ago are much better than if the ancestor lived 500 years ago.

Step 3: Choose a source of information.

What person, object or record will have the information you're looking for?

Is there a gravestone that could tell you the death date of your great-grandfather? Is there a person who might have already looked for the headstone and may know the date? Or has a genealogical society in the town in which your ancestor died created a compiled record of local death certificates?

Step 4: Learn from the source.

Investigate the source for the information you are looking for. Go to the cemetery, call your relative or perhaps write the local genealogical/historical society.

Step 5: Use what you learned.

Evaluate the results of your search and share your information with relatives who are also family history detectives.

### MAIN IDEA no.3

### COMPILED RECORDS, HERE WE COME!

In step 2, you've used your pedigree to decide which ancestor you'd like to know more about. Write a list of questions about this ancestor, then choose a question to answer in step 3.

If you've got a relative or a family artifact that can give you the answer, then great! Go on to steps 4 and 5, gathering the information and then writing it down on your pedigree.

But, if your answer can only be found in records, then it's time to look for a compiled record.

There are many kinds of compiled records, such as family histories, biographies, local histories and vital records collections. To give you an idea of some that are available online, check out the following sites.

### GO ONLINE



<http://ftp.cac.psu.edu/~saw/royal/royalgen.html>

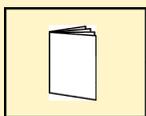
This site is an online compiled record of pedigrees for the royal families of Britain. Take a look at the pedigrees of Queen Victoria or Mary, Queen of Scots.

<http://www.CyndisList.com/biograph.htm>

Cyndi'sList, one of the largest sites for genealogical links, offers this great index of biographies. Biographies are considered compiled records because they usually include information gathered from a number of sources.

<http://familysearch.org>

This site is for the Family History Library in Salt Lake City. The Family History Library is the largest genealogical library in the world. Click on "Browse Categories", and then click on "Family Histories and Genealogies" to see if someone has already given the library information on your family tree.



### LIBRARY ACTIVITY

Your local library or genealogical society might have some compiled records that would answer your research question. To find a genealogical society in your area, contact the Federation of Genealogical Societies at [www.fgs.org](http://www.fgs.org).

### INFORMATION



#### WHAT HAVE I LEARNED AND . . .

Remember that the advantage of finding a compiled record is that someone might have already done a lot of family history detective work. If this person has been a solid detective and has cited the sources from which he or she gathered information, then you have made a fantastic beginning.

#### . . . WHAT'S NEXT?

After checking for compiled records, it's time to dive into original records. Ancestors episode four will show you how, with new technologies, accessing records is now easier than ever!

### VOCABULARY



**Pedigree Chart:** A chart that indicates a person's descent.

**Compiled Record:** A record (usually in book form) consisting of information that has been gathered from original records, other compiled records and verbal testimony. Examples include "The Life of Thomas Walpole Tyrrell" or "The History of the Wright Family" because these books will include information from living people as well as various record sources.

**Original Record:** A record created at or close to the time of an event by an eyewitness to the event. e.g., a birth record by the doctor who delivered the baby.

**Given name:** A person's first name(s).

**Surname:** A person's last name or family name.

**Maiden name:** A female's surname at birth.

**Pedigree:** An ancestral line or line or descent.

**Paternal Line:** The line of descent on a father's side.

**Maternal Line:** The line of descent on a mother's side.

**Archive:** A place in which public records or historical documents are preserved and researched. Unlike a Library, archived records cannot be checked out but can be used in the building.

# Pedigree Chart

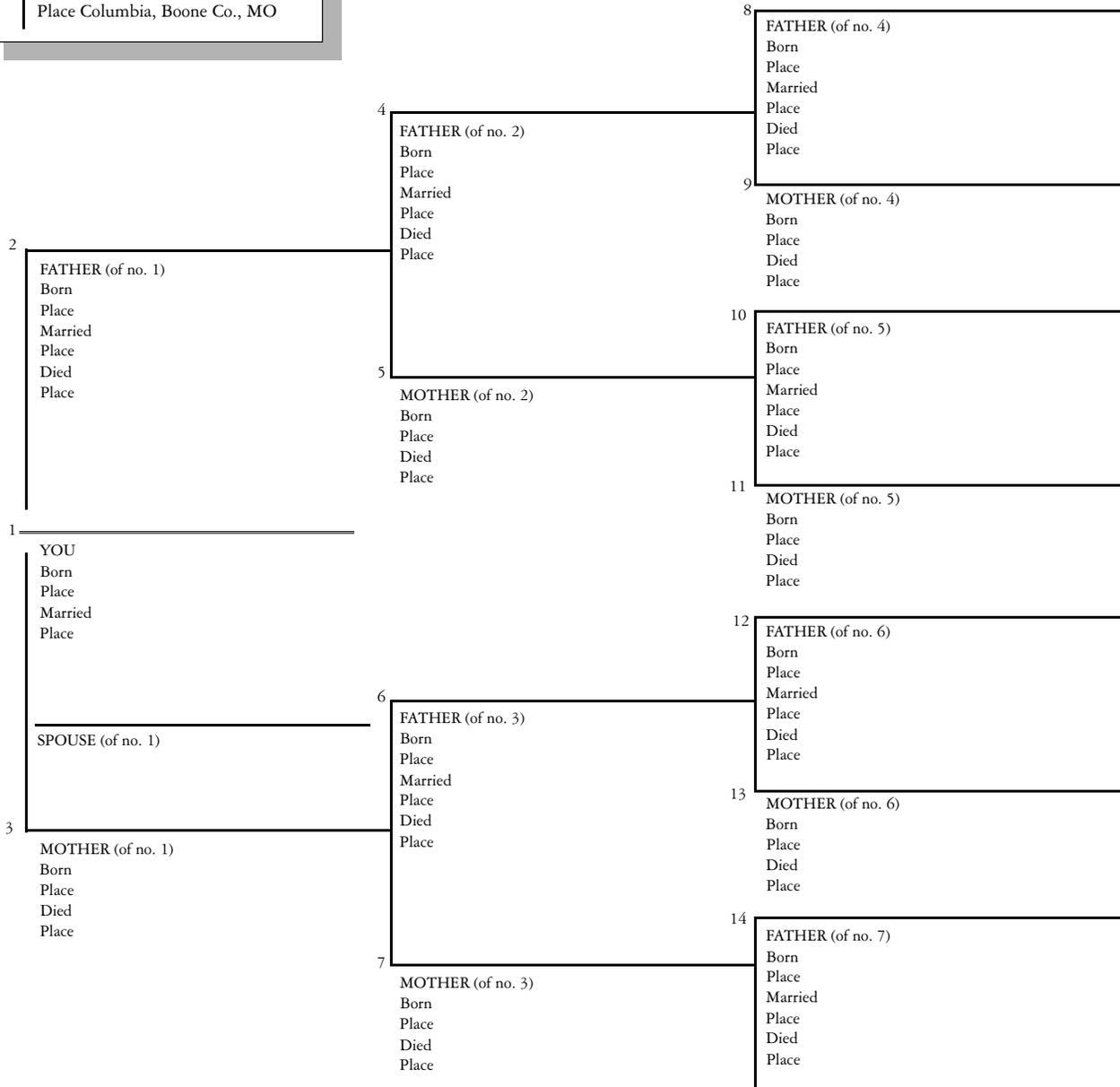
Write what you know about your ancestors on the pedigree chart below. Start with yourself (no. 1). If you don't know exact dates or places, estimate them.

Example:

2 John Francis SMITH

Father (of no. 1)  
Born 5 Oct 1876  
Place Columbia, Boone Co., MO

Person Number 1 on this chart is the same as no. \_\_\_  
on chart no. \_\_\_



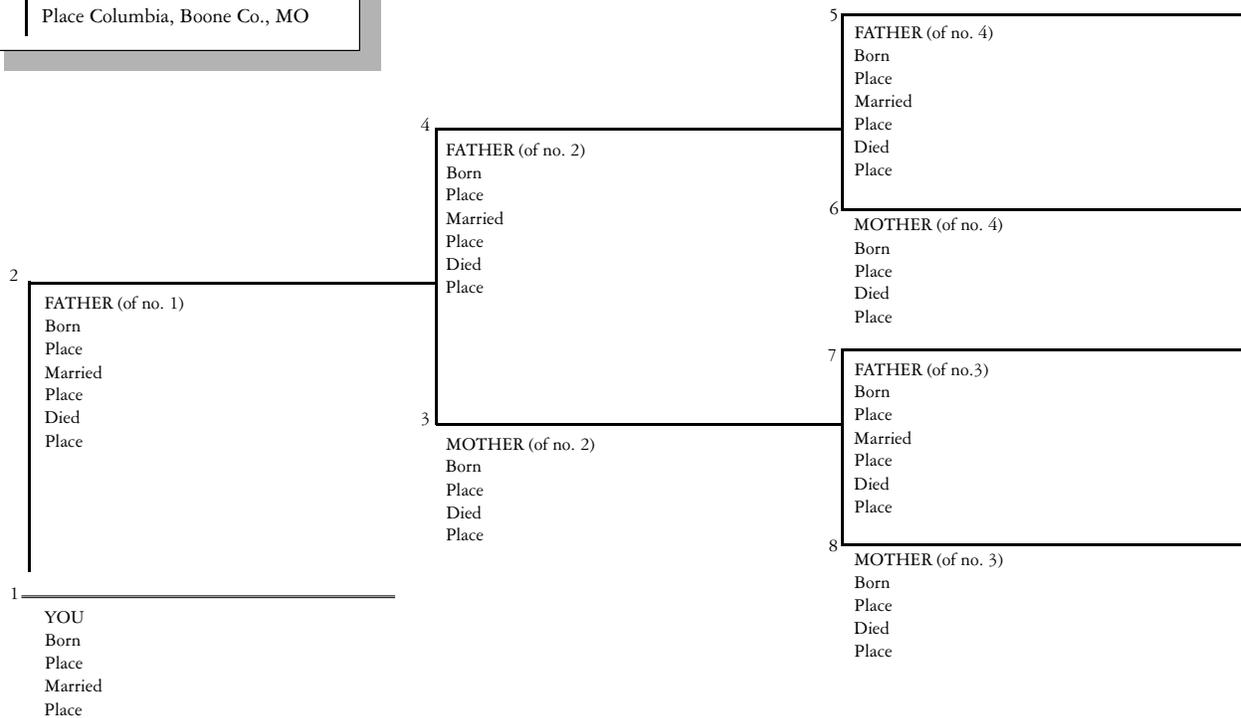
# Pedigree Chart-Father

Write what you know about your ancestors on the pedigree chart below. Start with yourself (no. 1). If you don't know exact dates or places, estimate them.  
Example:

2 John Francis SMITH

Father (of no. 1)  
Born 5 Oct 1876  
Place Columbia, Boone Co., MO

Person Number 1 on this chart is the same as no. \_\_\_  
on chart no. \_\_\_



# Pedigree Chart-Mother

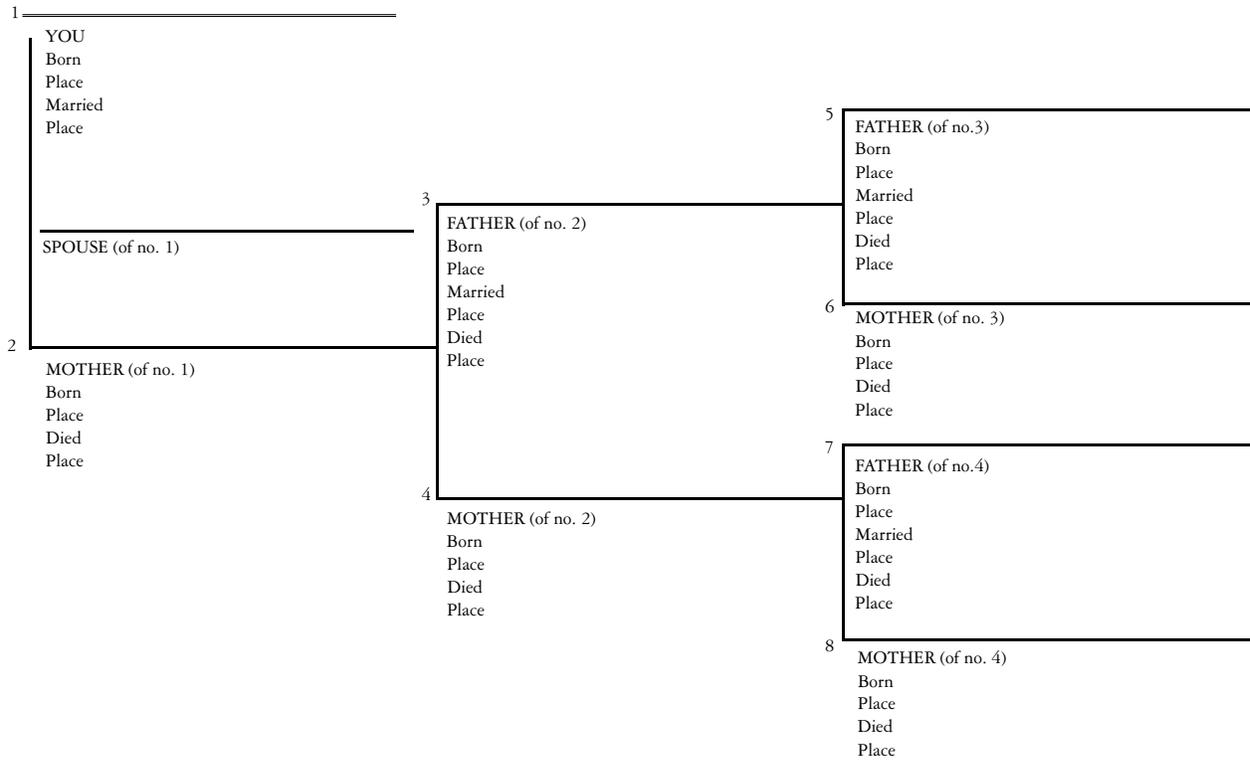
Write what you know about your ancestors on the pedigree chart below. Start with yourself (no. 1). If you don't know exact dates or places, estimate them.

Example:

2 John Francis SMITH

Father (of no. 1)  
Born 5 Oct 1876  
Place Columbia, Boone Co., MO

Person Number 1 on this chart is the same as no. \_\_\_  
on chart no. \_\_\_



# EPISODE 204

## TECHNOLOGY & GENEALOGY

### OBJECTIVE

1

#### IN THIS LESSON, YOU'LL

- LEARN how new technologies have revolutionized family history
- EXPLORE online resources
- CREATE a family group record

### TEACHER



This lesson includes opportunities for class discussion, a video presentation and activities. Vocabulary words are included at the end of the lesson though not specifically brought into the lesson in the form of an assignment. Resulting measurable assignments include a family group record and a summary paragraph. While the lesson's main ideas logically build on one another, the activities and assignments suggested can be adapted or omitted according to your needs.

The Technology and Genealogy television episode is designed for people who have never before used software programs or the Internet. While the first 10 to 15 minutes will be interesting to all students, most will probably have spent enough time with computers to understand an online environment. You are encouraged to show only what you think will be most helpful to the lesson.

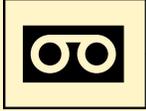
### MAIN IDEA no.1

#### HOW THE INTERNET AFFECTED FAMILY HISTORY OR DID SOMEONE SAY BOOM?

You've heard of the big bang theory, but have you hear of the boom? While people have been keeping track of their ancestors for generations, it wasn't until the Internet that genealogy suddenly became one of the main hobbies for Americans. Almost overnight, people who had rarely thought about their ancestors became family history detectives.

New technology has affected the search for ancestors in three ways:

- ① The Internet allowed people to access the records housed in libraries, archives and other family history research centers.
- ② The Internet also allowed people to share what they'd found with relatives and friends. Often these relatives have new information that they share as well.
- ③ Personal home computers have allowed people to organize information in persona databases. Information that used to take up hundreds of pages now can be stored on CD Rom or on a disk.



## WATCH ANCESTORS EPISODE 204: TECHNOLOGY & GENEALOGY

### EPISODE DESCRIPTION

Meet Megan Smolenyak. (How many “Smolenyaks” do you know?) See how computer resources help Megan find cousins she didn’t know she had, both in the United States and in the Slovak village of Osturna. Experts elaborate on how to use computers and the Internet in seeking out family connections.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

What do you need to get started using a computer to find your family history?

What is the Social Security Death Index?

How do people conduct genealogy online?

What changes has new technology made possible for family history detectives?

What are some of the pitfalls of doing genealogy online?

### MAIN IDEA no.2

### FAMILY GROUP RECORDS

Let’s pretend that you posted a query in a genealogical chat room and your query went something like, “I’m looking for information on my great grandfather, John Lovell, who lived in Allen County, Indiana at about 1900.” A couple of days later, you receive an e-mail from a kindly gentleman who says, “I’m a descendant of Sarah Lovell who lived in Allen County at about that time.” How do you know you’re related?

As you already know, a pedigree chart lists the ancestors from whom you are directly descended. But most of your ancestors had brothers and sisters who also grew up, married and had children. The person who answered your e-mail may be a descendant of one of these siblings and therefore a distant cousin. If this is the case, your new friend may have researched your family back for many generations. His chart will be helpful in extending your own pedigree. So, how do you prove he is a cousin?

There is a chart used in genealogy which keeps track of your ancestor’s siblings. It’s called a family group record.

### WRITING



### CREATE A FAMILY GROUP RECORD

Using the family group record (LINK), fill out the information for your own immediate family first. You will then make a family group record for your father and/or your mother that will include their parents and siblings. Then you create one chart for each grandparent, and so on. Keep creating these charts until you run out of information or have created one for 2 of your 4 grandparents, whichever comes first.

Key points to follow:

- ▶ Under HUSBAND, write your father’s full name requested information about him.
- ▶ Under WIFE, write your mother’s full name (using her maiden name) and information about her.
- ▶ Write the full names and information about each child born to your parents under CHILDREN. List each child (living or dead) in the order of his or her birth.

- ▶ Write dates using day, month, year (05 MAY 1946), just as you did on the pedigree.
- ▶ Calculate unknown dates if possible. For example, a person age 2 in 1926 was born in 1924, write: “1924” and then next to it, put, in parentheses, “age 2 in 1926”.
- ▶ Use the abbreviation for about (abt.) before the year to approximate the year if necessary. (Write: “abt. 1955”).
- ▶ Write place names as completely as possible (city, county, state).

You’ll find that your family group records will have some blank spaces on them, too. That’s just fine. As you learn more about each ancestor, his or her family will come into focus.

There are genealogical software programs that can help you keep track of all of your charts, as well as research notes and other information. But for now, a notebook and the charts you can download from this page should be enough to get you started.

### MAIN IDEA no.3

#### EXPLORE ONLINE RESOURCES

Your pedigree chart and family group records are like the magnifying glass a detective carries with him. They will help you discover more clues to your family story. Armed with these tools, you’re ready to further explore the world of records.

Let’s take a look at what might be available online to answer your family history questions.

#### GO ONLINE



<http://ssdi.genealogy.rootsweb.com/>

This is the online Social Security Death Index that Megan Smolenyak used in the television episode. Give it a try to see what kind of information you might find on one of your ancestors!

<http://www.genexchange.com/query.cfm>

Post a query at this site, if you’d like.

<http://familysearch.org>

This site is full of goodies - from databases to how-to information. Just take a look.

[http://www.geocities.com/Heartland/Plains/3959/Genre\\_v.htm](http://www.geocities.com/Heartland/Plains/3959/Genre_v.htm)

This site offers free genealogical software that you can download, if you think you’re ready for the whole enchilada!

<http://www.familytreemaker.com/submit.html>

Submit your pedigree or see if someone else has already submitted a pedigree on your family at the world family tree site housed by Family Tree Maker.

## WRITING



Write a brief paragraph about the way computers and the Internet have affected family history hunting.

## INFORMATION



### WHAT HAVE I LEARNED AND . . .

Technology has given family history detectives amazing tools to help their research progress, they can share, store, and obtain information faster than ever before.

### . . . WHAT'S NEXT?

Alright, so online sources can help you know where to look for records, but do you know which record will best answer your research question? The following lessons will explore various types of records; why they were created and how they can help you in your search for the missing pieces of your family's history.

## VOCABULARY



**Query:** To pose a question. In genealogical terms, this refers to online and print services that allow you to post questions such as “Looking for information on Ancestor X of (county, state) during (year). Can you help?”

**Family Group Record:** A form used to write information about parents and children of the same family.

**Social Security Death Index:** An online database of more than sixty million people; including their birth and death dates, social security number and place of death.

# Family Group Record

Write name as:  
Jeffrey Ryan MURRAY

Write date as:  
23 Jan 1874

Write places as:  
Las Vegas, Clark, NV or  
Baldrige, Dunfermline, Scotland

Husband's name			
Born			Place
Mar.			Place
Died			Place
Father			Mother
Wife's name			
Born			Place
Mar.			Place
Died			Place
Father			Mother
Children (In order of birth)			
<b>1</b>	Sex	Name	Spouse
Born			Place
Mar.			Place
Died			Place
<b>2</b>	Sex	Name	Spouse
Born			Place
Mar.			Place
Died			Place
<b>3</b>	Sex	Name	Spouse
Born			Place
Mar.			Place
Died			Place
<b>4</b>	Sex	Name	Spouse
Born			Place
Mar.			Place
Died			Place
<b>5</b>	Sex	Name	Spouse
Born			Place
Mar.			Place
Died			Place
<b>6</b>	Sex	Name	Spouse
Born			Place
Mar.			Place
Died			Place
Other marriages			
Sources			



# EPISODE 205

## VITAL RECORDS

### OBJECTIVE

1

IN THIS LESSON, YOU'LL

- LEARN interesting facts about vital records
- DISCOVER jurisdictions and how they affect record-keeping
- REQUEST by letter a copy of an ancestor's death certificate
- CREATE your own genetic pedigree chart

### TEACHER



This lesson includes opportunities for class discussion and a video presentation. Vocabulary words are included at the end of the lesson though not specifically brought into the lesson in the form of an assignment. Resulting measurable assignments include a written letter and genetic pedigree chart. While the lesson's main ideas logically build on one another, the activities and assignments suggested can be adapted or omitted according to your needs.

### MAIN IDEA no.1

I'VE HEARD OF A WORLD RECORD, BUT WHAT'S A VITAL RECORD?

Take a look at your pedigree chart. If you haven't filled out a pedigree chart, you should do so now. (  ) It asks for information on three major events in the life of each person: birth, marriage and death. Birth, marriage or death certificates were usually kept by government officials, and are called "vital" records.

In a way, world records are recorded kind of like vital records. When a person sets a world's record, say for eating the most banana cream pie in one sitting, a judge has to be there. This judge must be someone who is recognized by the organization in charge of recording world records. Not just anyone can approve of a world's record making it into the books of history.

### MAIN IDEA no.2

JURISDICTIONS (or "how did that feller git to be a citizen of Texas?")

Vital records work the same way. If you were born in New York, then no doctor or hospital in Texas has the right to say you were born in New York. Only the New York hospital can issue your birth certificate. Now, if you were to lose your birth certificate, would you look for it in Texas? Of course not! You would request it from the state in which the record was first created.

Now, the same thing applies to your ancestors. If your grandfather was born in Orange County, California, chances are Orange County still has a record of his birth. Now, the Orange County Historical Department might have copied the record and then shipped it off to the Family History Library in Salt Lake City, but this would be a duplicate. The original is still in Orange County.

What you're learning here is the concept of jurisdiction. A jurisdiction is the territory within which authority may be exercised. The Orange County Vital Records office is the first office that has the right to record events that happen in Orange County, just as the officiator from the World Records office is the only one who can approve when new world records are achieved.

Now, some people choose to go to places like the Family History Library to find vital records. To receive copies of their certificates in the mail, others write the vital records offices in the states in which their ancestors were born, married or died. Still others take long journeys, preferring to see the original record, no matter where that record may be kept.



#### REQUEST FOR A DEATH CERTIFICATE FOR AN ANCESTOR

If you know:

- ▶ an ancestor's date of death (within 3 years)
- ▶ where the ancestor died
- ▶ the ancestor's parent's names, including the maiden name of the mother

you can write to a county or state records office and get a copy of the person's death certificate for about \$5. This web site:

**GO ONLINE**



<http://www.familysearch.org/sg/WheToWri.html>

will tell you what to include in your letter, as well as give you the address you need for the county or state courthouse for the jurisdiction in which your ancestor died. Follow the guidelines listed in this site, and within a few weeks, a copy of your ancestor's death certificate will be mailed to you, if it is available. It's best to choose an ancestor who is closer to you in time, such as a grandparent, or a great-grandparent.



#### WATCH ANCESTORS EPISODE 205: VITAL RECORDS EPISODE SUMMARY

When Jeff Gallup's grandparents died, he felt he had lost his only connection to his Sicilian roots, until he took his mother back to Italy. Searching for their ancestors' birth and marriage records in their ancestral village of Piana, Jeff and his mother reconnect with their Italian heritage. You'll also meet experts who will explain how vital records create an important link between generations.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

What is a primary source?

Why would a primary source be your best source of information?

What do you need to know about the state where your ancestors lived or died before trying to find a vital record in that state?

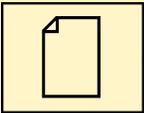
Can you find vital records online?

Why would it be wise to find your ancestor's death certificate before his birth certificate?

What information can be found on a death certificate? A marriage certificate? A birth certificate?

What information could your ancestors' death certificate tell you that might be important for your children to know?

If siblings are listed on a birth certificate, where would you record this information?



### ACTIVITY

Take a look at the death certificate

What was the person's full name?

What was her maiden name?

What was her husband's name?

Do you think that the person listed as the informant was a reliable source of the information?

What was the immediate cause of her death?

Approximately how long after her exploratory surgery did she die?

How old was she when she died?

What was the name of the place where she died?

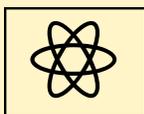
### MAIN IDEA no.3

### VITAL HEALTH INFORMATION

As mentioned in the episode, death records are valuable sources of information because they can give you clues that will lead to other records, such as marriage and birth certificates. But they also provide another valuable piece of information: a cause of death.

You are the sum of all your ancestors. Think about it. You received half of your genes in your body from your father and half from your mother. Sometimes the genes that a person receives from his or her ancestors contain the code for producing certain diseases. Of course, not all disease is genetic, but if you discover that a certain disease runs in your family, then you and the people you love can often do things that will help you avoid developing the disease.

It is very helpful to know the events or circumstances of an ancestor's death. For instance, if your ancestors tended to die of heart failure, then, according to doctors, it would be very important for the members of your immediate family to eat healthy foods, exercise, and avoid stress as much as possible. Knowing these facts might save your life.



## ACTIVITY: CREATE A GENETIC PEDIGREE

You can record what you find about your ancestor's causes of death on your standard pedigree chart, or create a genetic pedigree. A sample genetic pedigree ([LINK](#)) will give you an idea of what yours may look like.

Note that boxes are used for males, circles for females. The information for each person includes the illnesses from which they died, the dates of onset of the illnesses, and the death dates.

Here are some tips to follow when creating your own genetic pedigree:

- ▶ Four generations of medical information is usually sufficient for genetic counseling.
- ▶ Gather medical information on living as well as deceased members of your family.
- ▶ Information from the horizontal line (brothers and sisters, aunts, uncles and cousins) is as important as information from the vertical line (parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents).
- ▶ Talk to your living relatives about what they remember the causes of death to be for specific family members. Verify the information they give you and find additional information for your medical pedigree by gathering death certificates.
- ▶ Look around your house for other records that will help you build a medical pedigree such as obituaries, insurance documents, and hospital records.
- ▶ Treat the information that you gather with discretion.
- ▶ Consult a physician or a genetic counselor if you have questions or concerns about the information you find in your family's medical history.

## GO ONLINE



### ONLINE LINKS FOR FURTHER READING

<http://www.mayohealth.org/mayo/9612/htm/family.htm>

This is a helpful article from the Mayo Clinic. It reviews why collecting family medical information is so important.

<http://www.oz.net/~markhow/writing/helix.htm>

In this interesting article, entitled "Double Helix Genealogy," Mark Howells muses on what the future may look like for genealogists who begin doing family history using DNA samples instead of records.

<http://www.interscience.wiley.com/jpages/0148-7299/>

This is the homesite for the American Journal of Medical Genetics, a key source of research on genetic science.

<http://www.kcts.org/nyelabs/nyeverse/episode/e83.html>

Bill Nye the Science Guy also has a bit to say about genetics.

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/influenza/>

At this companion web site to the PBS show, The American Experience, you can learn all about the Influenza epidemic of 1918.

▼ MORE

## INFORMATION



### WHAT HAVE I LEARNED AND . . .

Now that you know what vital records are and where to look for them, you can fill in some of those blank spaces on your pedigree chart. As you know, vital records are kept by the state, typically, but not all states decided to keep vital records at the same time. Pennsylvania, for example, didn't start recording vital records until 1906. What do you do if you're trying to find the marriage certificate of an ancestor who moved to Pennsylvania in 1880?

### . . . WHAT'S NEXT?

Long before the state decided to record vital records, the church did it. For this reason, religious records are some of the oldest in existence. In the next lesson, you'll find out why these ancient records are some of the most intriguing records to search.

## VOCABULARY



**Vital Record:** A birth, marriage or death certificate as kept by a government official.

**Primary Source:** A record created at or near the time an event occurred, often by an eye witness.

**Secondary Source:** A record created after an event occurred by someone who either remembers the event or has compiled the information from a primary source.

**Jurisdiction:** The territory within which authority may be exercised.

**Gene:** The chemical unit that contains the dominant and recessive traits that are passed on from one generation of species to the next.

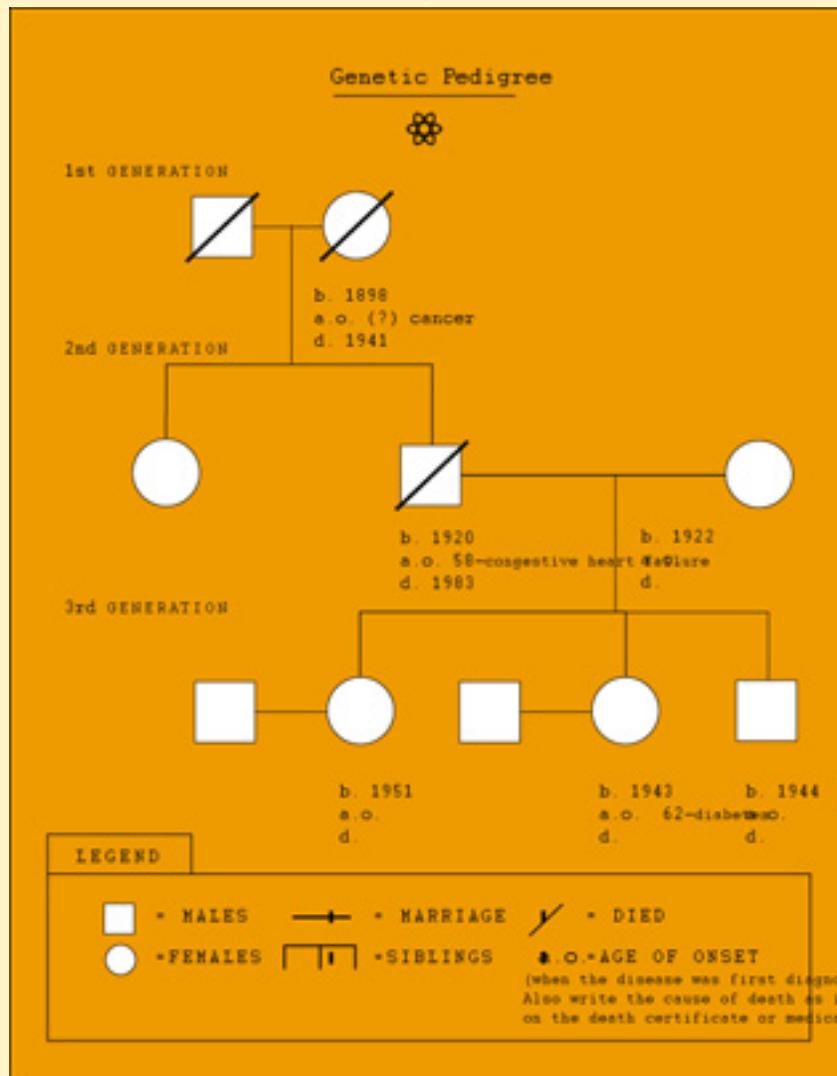
**Genetics:** A branch of biology that deals with the traits inherited through genes.

# Death Certificate



STATE OF UTAH - DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH											
REGISTRAR'S NO. <b>363</b>			<b>CERTIFICATE OF DEATH</b>			STATE FILE NO.					
1. PLACE OF DEATH 4. COUNTY <b>Utah</b>			2. USUAL RESIDENCE (If not deceased here, 2.1 residential, 2.2 business before admission) # STATE <b>Utah</b>			3. COUNTY <b>Utah</b>					
3. CITY, TOWN, OR LOCATION <b>Provo</b>			c. LENGTH OF STAY IN 10			c. CITY, TOWN, OR LOCATION <b>Provo</b>					
2. NAME OF HOSPITAL OR INSTITUTION <b>Utah Valley Hospital</b>			4. STREET ADDRESS <b>730 North 1100 East, Provo</b>			f. IS RESIDENCE ON A FARM? YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>					
e. IS PLACE OF DEATH INSIDE CITY LIMITS? YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>			e. IS RESIDENCE INSIDE CITY LIMITS? YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>			f. IS RESIDENCE ON A FARM? YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>					
3. NAME OF DECEASED (Type in full) <b>ERMA</b>			4. DATE OF DEATH Month <b>June</b> Day <b>3</b> Year <b>1965</b>			5. AGE (In years last birthday) Months <b>59</b> Days <b></b> Hours <b></b> Min. <b></b>					
5. SEX <b>Female</b>			6. COLOR OR RACE <b>White</b>			7. MARRIED <input type="checkbox"/> NEVER MARRIED <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>					
8. USUAL OCCUPATION (Give kind of work done during most of working life, even if retired) <b>Educator</b>			9. KIND OF BUSINESS OR INDUSTRY <b>Teaching School</b>			10. BIRTHPLACE (State or foreign country) <b>Provo, Utah Co., Utah</b>					
11. CITIZEN OF WHAT COUNTRY? <b>USA</b>			12. FATHER'S NAME <b>Frank T. Bennett</b>			13. MOTHER'S MAIDEN NAME <b>Elsie Ashworth</b>					
14. WAS DECEASED EVER IN U.S. ARMED FORCES? (If yes, see 14a and 14b) <b>No</b>			15. SOCIAL SECURITY NO. <b>Mr. Helen B. Brady</b>			16. SIGNATURE <b>Mrs. Helen B. Brady</b>					
17. ADDRESS <b>Mrs. Helen B. Brady, 730 N. 11 E. Provo, UT</b>			18. CAUSE OF DEATH (Enter only one cause per line for (a), (b), and (c).) PART I: DEATH WAS CAUSED BY IMMEDIATE CAUSE (a) <b>Traumatic Intracranial Hemorrhage</b>			INTERNAL MEDICAL HISTORY SUBJECT AND DEATH <b>14 hrs</b>					
CONDITIONS (if any) which may tend to show cause (a), stating the underlying cause last			DUE TO (b) <b>Skull fracture</b>			DUE TO (c)					
PART II: OTHER SIGNIFICANT CONDITIONS CONTRIBUTING TO DEATH BUT NOT RELATED TO THE TERMINAL DISEASE (CONDITION GIVEN IN PART I (a)) <b>Rheumatoid arthritis</b>			19. WILL AUTOPSY BE PERFORMED? YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			20. DESCRIBE HOW INJURY OCCURRED (Enter nature of injury in Part I or Part II if (b) or (c)) <b>H fell backwards striking the back of her head on the steps.</b>					
21. DATE OF INJURY Month <b>6</b> Day <b>3</b> Year <b>65</b>			22. PLACE OF INJURY (e.g., in or about home, farm, factory, street, office, ship, etc.) <b>Home</b>			23. CITY, TOWN, OR LOCATION <b>Provo</b>					
24. COUNTY <b>Utah</b>			25. STATE <b>Utah</b>			26. I attended the deceased from Death occurred at <b>Provo</b>					
27. NAME AND ADDRESS (Street or city) <b>Utah Star and</b>			28. ADDRESS <b>340 W. 2nd St Provo</b>			29. DATE SIGNED <b>6-7-65</b>					
30. NAME, ADDRESS, PHONE NO. OF FUNERAL HOME (Supply in full) <b>Intergent</b>			31. DATE <b>6/7/65</b>			32. NAME OF CEMETERY OR CREMATORY <b>Provo City Cemetery</b>					
33. LOCATION (City, town, or county) (State) <b>Provo, Utah Co., Utah</b>			34. DATE RECD. BY LOCAL REG. <b>6-7-1965</b>			35. REGISTRAR'S SIGNATURE <b>Eddington M. D.</b>					
36. MUNICIPAL OR COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT ADDRESS <b>BERG MORTUARY 185 E. Center Provo, UT</b>			37. DATE RECD. BY LOCAL REG. <b>6-7-1965</b>			38. REGISTRAR'S SIGNATURE <b>Eddington M. D.</b>					

# Genetic Pedigree



# EPISODE 206

## RELIGIOUS RECORDS

### OBJECTIVE

1

#### IN THIS LESSON, YOU'LL

- LEARN how church records help place an ancestor at a specific location and time
- BEGIN looking for “proof of relationship” in records
- LEARN how to determine your ancestor’s religion

### TEACHER



This lesson includes opportunities for class discussion and a video presentation. Vocabulary words are included at the end of the lesson though not specifically brought into the lesson in the form of an assignment. Resulting measurable assignments include a creative writing sample and a letter. While the lesson’s main ideas logically build on one another, the activities and assignments suggested can be adapted or omitted according to your needs.

### MAIN IDEA no.1

#### THE CHURCH’S “VITAL ” RECORDS

Births, marriages and deaths were often recorded by the state, but each state started keeping track of these records at different periods of time. For instance, Pennsylvania didn’t start recording vital records until 1906. What do you do if you’re trying to find the marriage certificate of an ancestor who moved to Pennsylvania in 1880? You look for church records.

Instead of birth records, churches recorded baptisms, which often times meant the baptism of a baby. For this reason, these baptism records are a good substitute for birth records. Instead of death records, churches recorded the burials of members of their congregations. Often these people were buried right on the church grounds.



#### WATCH ANCESTORS EPISODE 6: RELIGIOUS RECORDS EPISODE DESCRIPTION

Meet Greg Spacher, whose digging into Church records uncovers a startling truth about where his family came from. Experts and clergy highlight various religious records and tell how to determine an ancestor’s religious affiliation.

#### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

What records might give you clues to the religious affiliation of your ancestor?

Why is discovering a religious affiliation sometimes difficult?

For immigrant ancestors, how can knowing where they came from help you determine their religious affiliation?

A baptismal record can contain what types of information?

Where might church records be kept?

Why is the following statement by genealogist John Humphrey true or not true: “It was the church records that brought the average man out of his obscurity in the sixteenth century.”

## MAIN IDEA no.2

### PROVING RELATIONSHIP

You may not have realized it, but as each record gives you clues to your ancestors, you begin to understand more about that ancestor's immediate family. In fact, a good ancestor detective always looks for clues in records that will prove relationship, meaning, clues that will tell you who the ancestor's mother was, or who their older brother might have been. On a marriage certificate, for instance, the witnesses to the marriage are often relatives. But is it the bride's uncle or the groom's father? You may not know who it is, but the record has at least given you a name that you can now look for in other records.



### FIELD TRIP!

Visit a local Cathedral, Mosque or Synagogue and talk to that congregation's main record keeper. Find out how long records have been kept there, and what types of information were recorded. Are there duplicate copies made, and where are those records stored?

## GO ONLINE



At <http://www.CyndisList.com/topical.htm>, you'll find a listing of sources for the records of various religions, including:

Catholic  
Huguenot  
Jewish  
LDS & Family History Centers  
Mennonite  
Methodist  
Quaker  
Religion & Churches

If you know

- ▶ the religion of your ancestor
- ▶ where he or she lived
- ▶ and the years he or she would have attended that church

you are prepared to write a letter, requesting information from the church archive or library. Include the ancestor's name and the time period in which the person lived in the community. Request baptismal, marriage or burial information for that person. While some organizations may not have the staff available to do a search for you, others will send you what information is available for a modest fee. Record what you learn on your pedigree chart and family group record.

If you're looking for an immigrant ancestor and don't yet know his or her religion, look at what Cyndi'sList suggests under "Localities" for clues to religious affiliation based on geography.

If you're looking for an ancestor who is in the States but you still don't know the religion, look for a local history for the area in which that person was living and see if you can discover the prominent congregations in the area.

Often ethnic groups share the same religious affiliation. Cyndi'sList can help you there, too.



#### FOR THE FUN OF IT

<http://www.jewishgen.org/>

Includes discussion groups, databases, history and how-to help.

<http://www.jwa.org/main.htm>

This is the homepage of the Jewish Women's Archive, whose mission it is to "uncover, chronicle and transmit the rich legacy of Jewish women and their contributions to our families and communities, to our people and our world."

<http://www.rootsweb.com/~quakers/quakinfo.htm>

Learn more about Quakers and their role in history.

[http://www.npcts.edu/library/Archives/Covenant\\_Archives/index.html](http://www.npcts.edu/library/Archives/Covenant_Archives/index.html)

Take a look at some very old and interesting Evangelical records.

#### WRITING



Select an event recorded in church records. Pretend that you are the rabbi, priest or other religious leader, recording that event in a history that you're writing about the congregation. What information would you consider important enough to record?

#### INFORMATION



#### WHAT HAVE I LEARNED AND . . .

Religious records are "what brought the ordinary man out of obscurity" (1) because they recorded major events in the lives of all church-goers, not just the rich or famous. They can help you fill in the blanks on your pedigree chart and teach you more about what life was like for your ancestors. But, as a good family history detective, you probably want to know more than what you've learned so far. What's another record that could tell you more of your family story?

#### . . . WHAT'S NEXT?

It doesn't have to be Memorial Day to go to the cemetery. Bring a wreath of garlic if you'd like, but don't miss what you can learn about your ancestors from the places in which they're buried.

(1) John Humphrey, professional genealogist and expert featured in *Ancestors*, Episode 206: Religious Records.

VOCABULARY



# EPISODE 207

## CEMETERY RECORDS

### OBJECTIVE

1

IN THIS LESSON, YOU'LL

→ EXAMINE tombstone inscriptions

→ RECORD family history information on a research log

### TEACHER



This lesson includes opportunities for class discussion and a video presentation. Vocabulary words are included at the end of the lesson though not specifically brought into the lesson in the form of an assignment. Resulting measurable assignments include a research log filled out with information found online. While the lesson's main ideas logically build on one another, the activities and assignments suggested can be adapted or omitted according to your needs.

### MAIN IDEA no. 1

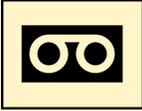
#### FAMOUS LAST WORDS

Think quick: what kind of information would you expect to find on a tombstone? Of course, you find the name of the person who died and usually birth and death dates. You may also find the names of the person's parents, spouse or children, or where the person died.

This information is invaluable when you're trying to confirm or find out birth, marriage or death dates. Sometimes, especially in cases where vital records have been destroyed or don't exist, a tombstone is the best information available. This is particularly true for women, who often don't show up on early vital or census records.

Some people considered their tombstones as a final chance to have the last word. "I told you I was sick" can be found in a Centerville, Utah cemetery, and the tombstone of Rab McBeth, who was hanged in Larne, Ireland, reads: "Who died for the want of another breath." You can find this and other amusing epitaphs at [www.alsirat.com/epitaphs/](http://www.alsirat.com/epitaphs/). It's these kinds of surprises that make cemetery searches uniquely fun.

There are various kinds of cemeteries. Some are civic, while others are connected to a church or other place of worship. In most secular cemeteries, the sexton, or cemetery caretaker, keeps the records of the burials in his or her office. A religious leader will do the same for cemeteries adjoining churches. Older records, however, are often housed in larger church or civic repositories.



## WATCH ANCESTORS EPISODE 207: CEMETERY RECORDS

### EPISODE DESCRIPTION

To Beth Uyehara, her great-grandfather's life was a mystery. The family didn't even know where he was buried. After years of searching, Beth travels cross-country to discover the one tangible marker of her great-grandfather's life- his tombstone. Experts tell what to look for in cemeteries and discuss the kinds of records kept there. A British preservation society shares their methods of preserving information found on deteriorating tombstones.

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

What type of information can be gained from a tombstone?

How do you find out where your ancestor is buried?

Other than tombstones, what kinds of records can be found at a cemetery?

Prior to 1850, what types of people were rarely accounted for in written records?

What can be used to make a worn engraving readable?

### GO ONLINE



At <http://www.geocities.com/Heartland/Prairie/1746/boren.html> you can find biographical information on people buried at the Boren-Reagor Springs Cemetery in Texas. Click on "Biographical Information of Individuals Buried in the Cemetery."

### WRITING



Choose a biography from the site above and write a newspaper obituary. Don't forget to include the date of death and any surviving family members, if they are known.

### MAIN IDEA no.2

#### COVERING YOUR TRACKS

By now, you've had a chance to see many different kinds of records. As you continue gathering information, you'll need to keep track of every place and record you've searched.

Even if you think you've written down every scrap of information found in a record, chances are, at some future time, you'll want to refer back to it. The more records you search, the easier it is to forget which records contained which pieces of information.

A research log that will allow you to re-trace your steps.

At the top of the research log, write the name of the ancestor for which you are trying to find information. Next, write the objective of your search, and under "locality," write the library, archive, or other repository in which you found the records below.

Each time you get a new source of information about an ancestor, write it on your research log as follows:

- ▶ If the source is a person, include the person's name, address, city, state or province, country and phone number.

- ▶ If the source is an object (such as an heirloom or photo), write the name of the object and the location of where it's kept (address, city, state and country).
- ▶ If the source is a record, write the title, author and publisher of the record and its location on the research log.

Include a list of the information learned from the source. For example, you may write that a particular source contains information about an ancestor's:

Birth  
Marriage  
Religion  
Spouse  
Occupation

## GO ONLINE



### FINDING A TOMBSTONE

Choose a tombstone from one of the following sites. Note that these online databases are essentially compiled records, since information from a particular cemetery's tombstones has been gathered into this one resource. Search one of these databases for one of your ancestors and then record it on your research log.

### FOR AN ANCESTOR

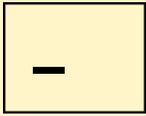
If you know where an ancestor is buried and his approximate date of death, you can check online resources to see if someone has already posted the information available on your ancestor's tombstone.

Perhaps the most complete index of online cemeteries can be found at Cyndi's List, <http://www.cyndislist.com>. Click on "Cemeteries and Funeral Homes" found in her "No Frills Category Index" to find out how to access the information you're looking for.

### FOR THE FUN OF IT

From Cyndi's "No Frills Category Index," look at Halde Cemetery, Waterville, ME (or <http://members.mint.net/frenchcx/haldecm1.html>). Cyndi describes this site as the "oldest Catholic cemetery in the area: 1872-1945; including gravestone, genealogical, funeral home and church death records with map and index."

Visit this cemetery and select a person from their tombstone inscription. Use clues from the tombstone to check out church and funeral home records for the same cemetery. Exhaust these sources for extra information. Top it off with a look at the cemetery's online map. If you visited the cemetery, could you find the grave? Write what you discover on your research log.



## FIELD TRIP!: TOMBSTONE APPRECIATION

A tombstone is truly a work of art. In a way, the tombstone was your ancestor's last chance to leave something of him or herself to the world.

Take a field trip to a cemetery to examine the tombstones. Are there differences among the markers? What are some similarities?

Before you go, check out these helpful tips for successful cemetery searching:

<http://homepages.rootsweb.com/~maggieoh/tomb.html> will get you to Maggie Stewart-Zimmerman's page, which lists tombstone carvings and their meanings. For example, she notes that a butterfly may signify an early death while oak leaves or acorns mean maturity or old age.

<http://www.mindspring.com/~mooregen/tombstone.html>. If you want to preserve the information found on a tombstone, you may wish to make a rubbing of it. Pat Dupes-Matsumoto's site teaches you how to properly make rubbings.

## INFORMATION



### WHAT HAVE I LEARNED . . .

Cemeteries are great places to learn vital information about your ancestor. A tombstone can provide dates as well as clues to information about other family members. While many cemeteries are posting information online, most cemetery research is still done on site, through compiled records, or by writing a letter to the cemetery sexton's office.

### . . . AND WHAT'S NEXT?

But how do you find out where someone might be buried? And what if you have no idea when an ancestor might have died? What are some of the records that could reveal this kind of information? In the next lesson, you'll learn about the United States Census and why it's been called a family history detective's best "people finder."

## VOCABULARY



**Research Log:** A document that helps a researcher keep track of sources searched and where those sources are held.

**Repository:** A place, room or container where something is stored.

**Epitaph:** The engraving on a tombstone in memory of the person buried there.



# EPISODE 208

## CENSUS RECORDS

### OBJECTIVE

1

IN THIS LESSON, YOU'LL

- EXPLORE a census record
- TRANSLATE your name into the Soundex code
- CREATE a class census

### TEACHER



This lesson includes opportunities for class discussion and a video presentation. Vocabulary words are included at the end of the lesson though not specifically brought into the lesson in the form of an assignment. Resulting measurable assignments include ancestor or student surnames written in Soundex code, a class census and a comparative writing sample. While the lesson's main ideas logically build on one another, the activities and assignments suggested can be adapted or omitted according to your needs.

### MAIN IDEA no.1

#### COME TO YOUR CENSUS

In 1790, Congress decided it was a good idea to count the citizens of the U.S. The Government thought a census would provide information that would help them govern the country.

At first the government wanted to count men so that if war were declared, they would know how many men were eligible to serve in the military. Later, the questions on the census changed, depending on the needs of the government at the time.

The census is taken by a person called a census taker or enumerator. In the past, each enumerator went from house to house, counting all the people living in a certain neighborhood and asking them questions such as, "What is your occupation?" or "Where were you born?"



#### WATCH ANCESTORS EPISODE 208: CENSUS RECORDS EPISODE DESCRIPTION

Meet Darius Gray. As an African American, he doubted he would find records documenting his family story. Relive his dramatic breakthrough as he discovers his ancestors in the 1880 census and then documents his family history back to the Revolutionary War era. Experts review the fascinating history of the census with specific instruction on how these important records can pinpoint your ancestor's place in American history.

#### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- What year did the census begin?
- What kind of information can generally be found in the census?
- Why are census records so helpful to family historians?

(cont. questions for discussion)  
What was the job of an enumerator?  
What is the most recent census available and why?  
What are the pitfalls of using the census?  
The 1890 census is unavailable. Why?

MAIN IDEA no.2

USING THE CENSUS

When first using the census, it's a good idea to start with the most recent census in which the ancestors you're looking for might appear.

Censuses are filed by state within each census year. Within each state, the films are arranged by the Soundex code number (explained in main idea #3) and then by a given name of the head of the household, who could be male or female. This is a good time to have your family group chart (link) nearby. If you find your ancestor's brother on a particular street, your ancestor may be living nearby.

MAIN IDEA no.3

THE SOUNDEx

Enumerators were told to go through a neighborhood street by street. They tended to write the names of people as they heard them, not necessarily as the person would have spelled his or her own name. Because of this, the spelling of one name can vary considerably. How do you search for "Smith" when it might be listed as "Smyth," "Smithe" or "Smythe"? Add to this the fact that information on the censuses is still organized just as it was written - house by house, street by street - not in alphabetical order by family - and you'll get an idea of why censuses can be time-consuming to search.

While the information isn't alphabetized, an index has been created to help family history detectives get a little closer to the page on which your ancestor's household might be listed. This index also takes into account the variations in spelling that might have occurred.

This unique index is called the Soundex. It allows variations on the same name to still be indexed together because each variation will code the same. With the code, you can then know where in the census to search.

However, the Soundex has its limitations. It doesn't begin until 1880 and only lists households containing young children. But for many thousands of families, it is a valuable research tool.

Here's how to convert surnames into Soundex code. Let's use the name "Jones" as an example.

The first letter of the surname is always the first letter being coded.

*So for Jones the first letter would be "J,"*

After the first letter, vowels (a, e, i, o, and u) and the consonants h, w, and y are ignored.

*ignore the "o" and "e,"*

After the first letter of the surname, the next three significant letters (other than the letters mentioned above) are coded according to the chart below.

Whenever two letters with the same code appear side by side in a surname, only the first letter is coded. The second is ignored.

1	b,f,p,v
2	c,g,j,k,q,s,x,z
3	d,t
4	l
5	m,n
6	r

*Add to the "J" a number 5 (for "n"), and 2 (for "s"),*

If there are not enough consonants in the name to form the code, add zeros until there are three digits.

Add a zero since there are no more letters to code.

"Jones" is J-520

"Wada" is W-300

If a name contains more letters than are needed to have a Soundex code of three digits, the remaining letters are ignored.

VanDuessen is V-532 (ignore the vowels, the second s & n)

With this code, you can find the Census pages containing these surnames.



#### ACTIVITY

Figure out what the Soundex code is for "Smith," "Smyth," "Smithe," or "Smythe." Next, figure out your own or your ancestor's surname.

#### GO ANOTHER STEP

Your class has a seating arrangement. Ask a few volunteers to divide up the class "geographically" into "neighborhoods" and create a class census. Decide together what information you agree will be the most important to include? How do you account for students that might be absent?

## INFORMATION



### WHAT HAVE I LEARNED . . .

Censuses are an excellent tool for ancestor detectives because they identify ancestors living in a specific area at a specific place in time. Conducted every ten years since 1790, these documents trace families through the growth and westward expansion of the country. They were even conducted during war years, a time period that often tore families apart.

### . . . AND WHAT'S NEXT?

The Census can help you locate ancestors who may have fought in a war. If you find that you have a soldier ancestor, well, then you have a chance to learn about that ancestor's service and see the conflict through the eyes of someone who actually witnessed it.

## VOCABULARY



**census:** A count of the population in a specific place, such as a state or country; a record made of the count.

**enumerator:** A person who counts. In the case of the census, it is the position filled by a person counting the residents of a particular assigned area.

**Soundex:** An index for the census that is coded by the way a name sounds in addition to its actual spelling.

# EPISODE 209

## MILITARY RECORDS

### OBJECTIVE

1

IN THIS LESSON, YOU'LL

- EXPLORE service and pension records
- READ first-hand accounts of life on the front lines
- RECORD a veteran's oral history

### TEACHER



This lesson includes opportunities for class discussion and a video presentation. Vocabulary words are included at the end of the lesson though not specifically brought into the lesson in the form of an assignment. Resulting measurable assignments include creative writing samples and notes from an oral history interview. While the lesson's main ideas logically build on one another, the activities and assignments suggested can be adapted or omitted according to your needs.

### MAIN IDEA no.1

#### DISCOVERING A SOLDIER IN A MOUNTAIN OF RECORDS

Wars generate a lot of paperwork. Governments like to know who is enlisted, where the soldiers are based, where they're fighting, when they're absent from duty, and when there's illness or injury. If your ancestor served in a war, there's a good chance you can find out a lot about him.

Your soldier ancestor might have been involved in the Vietnam War, the Korean War, or World War II. If you know many of your ancestors' names, you may even fill your chart back to the Civil War or the Indian Wars of the late 18th and 19th centuries. British settlers were involved in four wars before they fought for their own independence. Since the Revolutionary War, America has seen eleven major conflicts. (These are the wars in which the U.S. declared involvement. You can see a listing of more wars at <http://www.genrecords.com/library/war.htm>).

While few women appear in early military records, there are wars in which the women served in medical or cooking positions. Some also helped through welfare organizations. Although women contributed in countless ways to keep society moving on the home front, the vast majority of records cover the contributions of men made in formal military units.

You've heard of the tomb of the unknown soldier. These sacred places are where soldiers who are unknown to the rest of their countrymen can be honored. Right now, your ancestors who served in America's wars are also unknown. If you find them, you honor them. After all, it was for their children and grandchildren – for you – that these soldiers fought.

## HOW DO I KNOW IF I'VE GOT A SOLDIER FOR AN ANCESTOR?

Every good ancestor detective knows that when you find a clue, you've got to follow it until you've learned all you can learn. So if you suspect you have a soldier in your family tree, prepare to look for every document that his service may have produced - which may be a substantial amount!

First, look at your pedigree chart. If you haven't started a pedigree chart, take a minute to fill one out. The lesson for Episode 3 will show you how to do this. A pedigree chart will help you focus your search on one ancestor at a time.

A pedigree chart begins with you and moves backward in time to your parents, grandparents, and so on. Eventually, you'll move into the time period of a war. When you've found the names of your ancestors living during a war, the key question then becomes "Is my male ancestor of an age to fight?" Now soldiers in days gone by used to be as young as twelve or thirteen, so keep that in mind. In the Civil War, older men were also used. Basically, if the ancestor is older than sixty or younger than ten, he probably stayed home.

A second chart you should consult is your family group record, introduced in Ancestors Episode 4. If you don't have a soldier directly in your line, it could be that his brother was in the war. This brother's records might also provide information about the rest of the family, particularly if there is a pension file available.



### WATCH ANCESTORS EPISODE 209: MILITARY RECORDS *EPISODE DESCRIPTION*

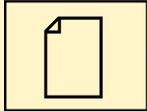
For many years Susan Hadler's only link to her father was a letter he wrote to her just after she was born and just before he was killed in combat during World War II. Follow Susan as she uses military records to connect with the father she never knew. Experts highlight service and pension records and tell how military records are a rich source of family history information.

### *QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION*

- How do you know if your ancestor served in the military?
- What information do you need in order to search for your soldier ancestor?
- How do you find out what regiment your ancestor served in?
- Military records are divided into three major categories. What are they?
- What do service records include?
- What happens if a soldier's request for a pension is rejected?
- What research tool will help you locate military records (and save you a lot of time)?

**MAIN IDEA no.2****SERVICE RECORDS**

A service record includes company musters, rolls, rosters, enlistments, discharge records, discharge lists, prisoner of war records, records of burials and oaths of allegiance. These records document the daily events of soldiers. The number and types of service records available varies from war to war. There are indexes to help you search them, and copies of the originals have been microfilmed. They can be found at the National Archives, Family History Centers, and also at many genealogical or state historical societies across the country.

**ACTIVITY**

Examine the muster roll from the Revolutionary war. A muster is basically the roll of the unit. It was basically used to document who was in attendance and who was missing, or on furlough, much like the roll call your teacher takes.

What is the soldier's name?

What is his regiment?

Which days are documented?

Is he in attendance all of these days?

How much is he being paid, per month, for his service?

**MAIN IDEA no.3****PENSION RECORDS**

After a soldier is discharged from service, he is entitled to payment for the time he spent in the military. However, to activate a pension, a soldier had to apply. If your ancestor's application was rejected, he had to make a case for his eligibility by submitting letters and testimonials about his service and life at home. Friends, family or doctors may have also submitted testimonials or affidavits describing his life and service. Many widows applied for pensions.

**WRITING**

Write a letter to the government as if you were a soldier or a soldier's widowed wife.

Relate your experiences based on service and pension records you found online. Make a case for why you deserve a pension. If you're a soldier, let the government know how your service has affected your life now that you're back at home. If you're a widow, tell how your life has changed.

**MAIN IDEA no.4****FROM THE FRONT LINES**

Once you know which regiment your ancestor fought in, you can look for a published military history. These histories provide fascinating details about the military experience, often in first hand accounts as the duties of the regiment are traced through the hardships of life at war. These histories are located in the libraries of the regiment's home communities, though some may be in state libraries or historical societies.



### ACTIVITY

Use the oral history skills learned in Episode 2 (LINK) to interview veterans in your neighborhood. Soldiers who fought in World War II, Vietnam, Korea or Desert Storm can tell you about their regiments and personal experiences. Write a summary of the interview and compile it into your own version of a “military history,” created by your class.

### GO ONLINE



Take a look at the following sites that discuss particular regiments or recorded military histories.

<http://www.imh.org/imh/buf/buftoc.html>

This site, maintained by The International Museum of the Horse features information on “The Buffalo Soldiers on the Western Frontier.” The Buffalo Soldiers were African American units who fought during the Civil War and served loyally in many duties after the War.

<http://www.hillsdale.edu/academics/history/Documents/War/>

Dave Stewart, Assistant Professor of History at Hillsdale College has placed many fascinating primary documents relating to many US and European wars online for student use. These documents are a fascinating window into war history.

### INFORMATION



#### WHAT HAVE I LEARNED . . .

Military records are a rich source of information about soldiers. There are three major types of military records: service records, pension records and military histories.

#### . . . AND WHAT'S NEXT?

However, bravery at war wasn't the only way our ancestors made a name for themselves. Some people obtained notoriety through their business dealings – perhaps even shady business dealings. People could choose their own destinies in America, but they couldn't always choose what others would write about them. Find out about newspapers as a source of clues to your ancestor's not-so-private life and learn how to sort fact from fiction.

### VOCABULARY



**muster:** The roll call for a military unit

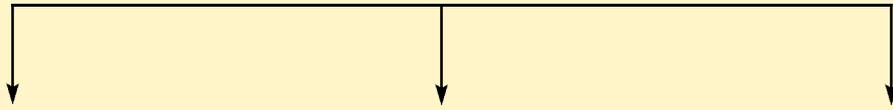
**pension records:** Payment made to a soldier after his service.

**service records:** A group of military records that detail a soldier's military activities.

**affidavit:** A legal written statement often made under oath or affirmed by someone with legal authority.

**furlough:** To be absent from duty.

# Service Records



*A* | 10 | Va.  
 (1776-1778)

*Paul Abner*  
*Prst.* (Capt. John Marks' Company of the  
 14th Virginia Reg't of Foot, com-  
 manded by Col. William Davies.  
 (Revolutionary War.)

Appears on  
**Company Muster Roll**  
 of the organization named above for the month  
 of *Feb* 1779  
 Roll dated *March 6* 1779

Appointed ..... 17  
 Commissioned ..... 17  
 Enlisted ..... 17  
 Term of enlistment *Mar*  
 Time since last muster or enlistment .....

Alterations since last muster .....  
 Casualties .....  
 Remarks *See - transfer*

\* Original designation.  
*W. T. ...*  
 4548 Copyist.

*A* | 10 | Va.  
 (1776-1778)

*Paul Abner*  
*Prst.* (Capt. John Marks' Co., 10th Vir-  
 ginia Reg't, commanded by Col.  
 William Davies.  
 (Revolutionary War.)

Appears on  
**Company Pay Roll**  
 of the organization named above for the month  
 of *Sept* 1779  
 Commencement of time ..... 17  
 Commencement of pay ..... 17  
 To what time paid ..... 17  
 Pay per month *6<sup>00</sup> Dollars*  
 Time of service .....  
 Whole time of service .....  
 Subsistence *per m<sup>o</sup> 10<sup>00</sup> Dollars*  
 Amount .....  
 Amt. of pay and subsistence *16<sup>00</sup> Dollars*  
 Pay due to sick, absent .....

Alterations since last muster .....  
 Casualties .....  
 Remarks .....

About May, 1778, the 1st and 10th (1776-1778) Virginia Regiments  
 were incorporated and designated the 1st and 10th Virginia Regi-  
 ment until about November, 1778. - E. & P., 410, 20.

*W. T. ...*  
 4549 Copyist.

*A* | 10 | Va.  
 (1776-1778)

*Paul Abner*  
*Prst.* (Capt. John Marks' Co., 10th Vir-  
 ginia Reg't, commanded by Col.  
 William Davies.  
 (Revolutionary War.)

Appears on  
**Company Muster Roll**  
 of the organization named above for the month  
 of *August* 1779  
 Roll dated *Sept 6* 1779

Appointed ..... 17  
 Commissioned ..... 17  
 Enlisted ..... 17  
 Term of enlistment *Nov*  
 Time since last muster or enlistment .....

Alterations since last muster .....  
 Casualties .....  
 Remarks .....

About May, 1778, the 1st and 10th (1776-1778) Virginia Regiments  
 were incorporated and designated the 1st and 10th Virginia Regi-  
 ment until about November, 1778. - E. & P., 410, 20.

*W. T. ...*  
 4551 Copyist.

# EPISODE 210

## NEWSPAPERS AS RECORDS

### OBJECTIVE

1

IN THIS LESSON, YOU'LL

- DISCOVER how interesting tidbits found in newspapers can be used as clues to family history
- LEARN how to weigh evidence

### TEACHER



This lesson includes opportunities for class discussion and a video presentation. Vocabulary words are included at the end of the lesson though not specifically brought into the lesson in the form of an assignment. Resulting measurable assignments are a creative writing newspaper entry and class discussion participation. While the lesson's main ideas logically build on one another, the activities and assignments suggested can be adapted or omitted according to your needs.

### MAIN IDEA no. 1

EXTRA! EXTRA! GENEALOGY CLUES TO BE FOUND!

You are living in what's known as the "information age." Through television, cable, satellite, radio, and the Internet, you can get information on just about anything—or anyone—of interest.

One hundred and fifty years ago, one of the best methods of sharing information was through the newspaper. In *The Source: A Guidebook of American Genealogy*, James L. Hansen addresses the evolution of newspapers. Referring to the newspapers of the early 1800s, he writes:

"The early newspaper was very much a local product, designed to convey news of the wider world to the citizens of a particular community. Little attention was given to local news which everyone presumably knew already. Three nineteenth-century developments changed the newspaper dramatically: the invention of the power printing press, the development of the railroads (which allowed much wider distribution of a paper), and the increasing demand for news, particularly during the Civil War."

Mr. Hansen goes on to explain that major city dailies that could gather news with a telegraph and had more press power and train access began to dominate the delivery of international, national and state news. Smaller local papers were then forced to "concentrate on local news if they were to survive and prosper."

This meant that people leaving on vacation would publicize their plans in the paper. A bar mitzvah or a birthday party might be reported. It seems that no detail was too trivial to include, as long as it might be of interest to the locals.



## WATCH ANCESTORS EPISODE 210: NEWSPAPERS AS RECORDS

### EPISODE DESCRIPTION

Clues to family history can come from the most surprising places. Lori Davis was given a mysterious lead when a woman who had known one of her ancestors said, “Look in the San Francisco papers; she was in trouble with the law.” Old newspaper stories detail the escapades of Lori’s great-grandmother, a 1920s high society con woman. Experts add their advice on how to use newspapers to expand family history research.

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

What two pieces of information do you need to know in order to use newspapers in your family history search?

How can you find out if the town still exists or has only changed its name?

What is an obituary?

What kinds of information can usually be found in today’s typical obituaries?

## MAIN IDEA no.2

### CAN YOU BELIEVE EVERYTHING YOU READ?

Information you find in newspapers, just as in any other record, can be incorrect. Family history detectives need to evaluate the information found in all sources. Just because you find a birth date for your great-grandmother in a newspaper obituary doesn’t mean that the date listed is correct. You should always check for original records to compare the information.

In the Ancestors companion instructional guidebook entitled, [A Guide to Discovery: Key Principles and Processes of Family History Research](#), author Jim Tyrrell suggests the following criteria when evaluating evidence.

Information you find is most believable when it is:

- recorded by an eyewitness, meaning someone who had first-hand knowledge or experience with an event, relationship or some other matter in question.
- preserved in its original format
- preserved in a clear and certain way so that it is directly understood, such as “John Ballard married Mary Kee on 17 November 1789”
- consistent with the presumed facts that are found in one or more other sources.



### ACTIVITY

Look at a contemporary local newspaper. Ignore the advertisements and the articles about famous people and politicians and look for notices, announcements and quotes from ordinary, every day people. What types of information do you find? What facts are included, and how do you know they are believable? What facts could the reporter have better explained? What might he or she have left out?

Next, go to the library and look up old papers from the early 1900s. What differences do you notice between old newspapers and the papers of today?

## WRITING



Select a part of a newspaper, such as the obituary or social pages. Write an entry for a paper of today, and then the same information in an entry as it would have appeared in the early 1900s.

## GO ONLINE



Check out these helpful sites.

<http://www.CyndisList.com/newspapr.htm>

Cyndi provides links to modern-day newspapers as well as columns on genealogy at CyndisList.com.

<http://www.historybuff.com/primer.html>

The Newspaper Collectors Society of America offers tips on what makes old newspapers valuable and how to collect them.

<http://www.everton.com/oe3-18/papers.htm>

Everton's Genealogical Helper Online outlines "How Newspapers Can Help You With Your Research."

## INFORMATION



### WHAT HAVE I LEARNED . . .

Newspapers can be a valuable source of family history information. Though you may find many clues to your family history, detectives should be sure to evaluate the information and confirm it against original documents whenever possible.

### . . . AND WHAT'S NEXT?

Though it may sound odd, your ancestor's death is a wonderful source of information on your family. Many ancestors wrote wills and the directions in the wills had to be legally carried out. This process generated a lot of paper that can add unique details to your ancestor's life and death.

## VOCABULARY



**dailies:** A term indicating that a newspaper is printed every day.

# EPISODE 211

## PROBATE RECORDS

### OBJECTIVE

1

IN THIS LESSON, YOU'LL

- LEARN about the probate process
- EXAMINE wills for clues to relationships and ownership of land
- EXPLORE land records as a window into history

### TEACHER



This lesson includes opportunities for class discussion and a video presentation. Vocabulary words are included at the end of the lesson though not specifically brought into the lesson in the form of an assignment. Resulting measurable assignments include a creative writing assignment, class participation and a report. While the lesson's main ideas logically build on one another, the activities and assignments suggested can be adapted or omitted according to your needs.

### MAIN IDEA no.1

#### PROBATE FILES

Every time a person dies, records are created. For example, many people prepare wills before they die. A will lets family and friends know what to do with the land and goods left behind and who should execute the division of it all. Someone must also take responsibility for debts the person left unpaid. If a will exists, we refer the person's estate (or property) as "testate".

If a person dies without leaving a will, his estate is referred to as "intestate." Whether the estate is testate or intestate, the process of distributing a deceased person's estate creates "probate records."

Probate records are a wonderful source of information, partly because of the amount of paperwork generated when property is divided among inheritors. This paperwork often reveals family members and relationships, as well as gives you an idea of the economic status and lifestyle of your ancestors. As you begin to examine probate files, you'll discover the truth in the old saying, "you can't take it with you."

But where are the probate files?

Through census records, you should have been able to place an ancestor in a state and county at a particular year. Usually, family history detectives assume that the probate file can be found in the cities or town in which their ancestors spend the majority of their lives. However, according to Myra Vanderpool Gormley, a professional genealogist and author of Shaking Your Family Tree,

“A will was not always filed where the person resided. It could have been filed where that individual held the largest amount of property. It could be filed in an adjoining county, or where it was written, or even where the lawyer’s office was located. Sometimes it was filed where the heirs lived.”



## WATCH ANCESTORS EPISODE 211: PROBATE RECORDS

### EPISODE DESCRIPTION

For Bruce and Mary Kay Stewart, there’s only one way to do genealogy - hit the road! Turning their RV into a traveling research center, they stop at a county courthouse and uncover a probate record that leads them to an old family homestead in upstate New York. Experts discuss the various records that are generated by the probate process and some of the interesting details found in wills.

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

Why are probate files so important to family history detectives?

Where are probate records housed?

If you can’t visit the place where your ancestor’s probate file is kept, how can you still access the information?

What kind of family information can be found on wills?

What does an “intestate” estate refer to?

What is the “extra bonus” that can be found on petitions?

Why do probate records lead to land records?

What’s the easiest way to search for a land record?

## GO ONLINE



Check out these interesting sites:

<http://www.ca-probate.com/wills.htm>

Most wills are open to the public unless there are specific reasons for privacy. Check out this site, which posts wills of famous and ordinary people.

<http://members.aol.com/mayflo1620/wills.html>

This site posts the wills of some of the Mayflower passengers. Not only are these wills interesting to read, they also provide a look into the way the English language has evolved.

[http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/dave\\_tylcoat/gloss.htm](http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/dave_tylcoat/gloss.htm)

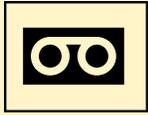
This site attempts to explain unusual language found in old wills.

## WRITING



Using the above sites as a resource, write a will. Include appropriate legal language where possible and applicable.

**MAIN IDEA no.2**



**WHEN THERE'S A WILL, THERE'S A WAY**

Wills can often provide clues to other records. One of the more obvious links is between wills and land records. If your ancestor owned property when he died, chances are that property is mentioned in the will and inherited by a family member.

**RE-TRACE THE STEWART'S JOURNEY ONLINE**

In Ancestors Episode 11, Bruce and Mary Kay Stewart discover land that was mentioned in a family will. Take a look at the documents they discovered to see if you can identify which paragraphs in the will mentioned the land. Using the map, can you find the spot that used to belong to Bruce's ancestor based on the description?

<http://www.rootsweb.com/~nyfulton/Stewartgen.html>

**MAIN IDEA no.3**

**A CLOSER LOOK AT LAND RECORDS**

The following is an excerpt from an article entitled History & Use of Land Records, written by genealogist Linda Haas Davenport. The entire article can be found at <http://main.nc.us/OBCGS/searchland-rec.htm>

**A Look at the History of Land Records**

As the original 13 colonies were established land was owned by a group of Proprietors. These were men who had been granted land from the English King. They in turn sold land to individuals and established common areas within the towns.

These early states used a surveying system call "New England Town Surveys" or modified "metes & bounds".... The metes & bound survey uses descriptions of the local flora, fauna, physical features of the land such as creeks, roads, mountains, neighbors, etc., to describe the land. An example: "Beginning on a white oak the north west corner of Sammuel Vanatres tract of land thence east with the same to John Haas his east boundry line, thence north with the same to where it crosses the Publick road leading from James Goodners into Hanyard to Liberty then with the meandering of said road to the beginning".

As settlements grew out of the bounds of New England, immigrants continued to push back the frontier in search of the American dream. Many were farmers or ranchers attempting to homestead humble tracks of land. Though women homesteaders were not unheard of, there were certainly the exceptions to the rule.

**GOING ONE STEP FURTHER**

Read Linda Haas Davenport's entire article on History & Use of Land Records. Write a report about the elements that can be found in a probate file.

**GO ONLINE**



Land records allow a look at America as it was before parking lots and sprawling malls. If you've read the Little House on the Prairie books by Laura Ingalls Wilder, then you may have an idea about what life in a frontier town was like.

The National Archives has posted documents from the Ingalls family homestead at <http://www.nara.gov/nara/EXTRA/ingalls.html>. These records begin with an application from Laura's father Charles, who, in later documents, is shown to have paid for the land he applied for. Other legal documents include a "Homestead Proof - Testimony of Claimant" and an affidavit in which Charles swears that the land has no valuable minerals on it that he could detect.

## INFORMATION



### WHAT HAVE I LEARNED . . .

Probate files are a look into the life and times of our ancestors. The legal process of disbursing an estate creates a considerable amount of paperwork that can yield many clues to your family history. Land records are often mentioned in probate files. These records allow you to learn even more about where and how your ancestor lived.

### . . . AND WHAT'S NEXT?

For millions of immigrants, the allurements of personal ownership of land pushed them out of the places they were born and onto a new continent. Many came by boat. Others came on foot. In the next lesson, you'll re-trace your immigrant ancestor's journey and discover the records that legalized his or her new citizenship as Americans.

## VOCABULARY



# EPISODE 212

## IMMIGRATION RECORDS

### OBJECTIVE

1

IN THIS LESSON, YOU'LL

- DISCOVER ship's passenger lists
- EXPLORE naturalization records
- IMAGINE what life was like for immigrants en route to America

### TEACHER



This lesson includes opportunities for class discussion and a video presentation. Vocabulary words are included at the end of the lesson though not specifically brought into the lesson in the form of an assignment. The resulting measurable assignment is a creative writing paper. While the lesson's main ideas logically build on one another, the activities and assignments suggested can be adapted or omitted according to your needs.

### MAIN IDEA no.1

#### IMMIGRANTS BEGIN A NATION

Most Americans trace their roots to a homeland outside the United States. Your parents may have recently immigrated from Central America, or perhaps your great-grandparents arrived in New York from Russia then settled in Pennsylvania. Do you live in northern California because your ancestors came from China or Korea? Over one hundred years ago, Africans were forced into immigrating to America and elsewhere as slaves.

In the early days, most people came to America by boat, landing at Ellis Island in New York, or perhaps the ports at New Orleans or San Francisco. Today, some immigrants still arrive by boat while others land at any airport.

If records of arrival exist, it might be possible to trace your ancestor to a homeland where his or her parents were born, and their parents, and so on. Just think of what a discovery such as that would do to your pedigree charts!



#### WATCH ANCESTORS EPISODE 212: IMMIGRATION RECORDS EPISODE DESCRIPTION

Meet Cathy Horn. Through immigration records, Cathy uncovers a chapter of her family history long forgotten. She learns of her great-great grandmother who, as an immigrant mother, was forced to part with her baby, quarantined at Ellis Island with a fatal illness. Cathy's discovery reconnects this lost child to her family tree. Experts describe a variety of immigration records and how to discover the details of your immigrant ancestor's journey.

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

Immigration records are divided into two groups. What are they?  
What types of information can be found on ship's passenger lists?  
What do you need to know in order to search for a passenger list?  
Is searching for an original passenger list the best way to begin?  
Where are immigration records housed?  
What two types of naturalization records exist?  
How might naturalization records help you uncover your immigrant ancestor?  
Where are naturalization records housed?

### MAIN IDEA no.2

#### PASSENGER LISTS

From the 1600s through the early 1900s, most immigrants entered the US by ships. Sometimes, they were counted before they left the port in Europe or Asia. If they survived the journey, they were counted again when they landed in America, and their names entered on a ship's passenger list. These passenger lists contain vital information for ancestor detectives. They include such things as the immigrant's name, age, marital status, occupation, and nationality.

1907 holds the record for the year with the most immigration, boasting 1,285,000 people. Unfortunately, in 1897, a fire broke out on Ellis Island and destroyed most of the records for immigrants arriving before 1855.

### GO ONLINE



Check out these sites!

[http://www.genealogy.com/genealogy/8\\_mgpal.html](http://www.genealogy.com/genealogy/8_mgpal.html)

Author and professional genealogist Myra Vanderpool Gormley outlines helpful tips for searching passenger lists.

<http://media.nara.gov/media/images/51/1/carp26a.jpg>

One of the most famous ships to ever sail was the S.S. Titanic. After it sank, the survivors were rescued by the S.S. Carpathia. A partial listing of the survivors can be found on Carpathia's Ships Passenger List. Note that this list was lost for a while - can you tell why?

[http://articles.citysearch.com/New\\_York/virtualtour/ellis/](http://articles.citysearch.com/New_York/virtualtour/ellis/)

Enjoy a virtual tour of Ellis Island.

<http://www.isn.net/~dhunter/terms.html>

Check out old time shipping terminology.

**MAIN IDEA no.3****NATURALIZATION RECORDS**

Typically, when an immigrant wanted to become a citizen, he would file a “Declaration of Intent” with his local county courthouse. Between two to five years later, he would petition the court for citizenship. If all went smoothly, the immigrant would be accepted as a citizen. Along the way, other documents might be created.

Not only are naturalization records interesting alone, but they also provide clues to the ancestor’s country of origin, his date of arrival in America and sometimes and even what ship he arrived in.

More than one ancestor detective has heard an immigrant story from their oral history gathering and set out to find that ancestor’s immigrant records. Many of these exuberant family historians found out that, after sometimes years of researching, they had the wrong name, or the wrong year of arrival.

Even if you think you know the name of your immigrant ancestor, don’t begin your family history search there. Start with yourself and work backwards in time. Use census records to confirm where your parents, grandparents and their parents lived. Religious records will help fill in the blanks, and perhaps even tell you if your ancestor has moved to the area from another state or another country.

Eventually, you’ll look for naturalization records, since this event is closer to you in time than the actual immigration.

**GO ONLINE**

Look at naturalization records available online.

<http://www.shsw.wisc.edu/genealogy/natlzn/records.htm>

The State Historical Society of Wisconsin has a wonderful page outlining the various documents involved in the naturalization process, with actual documents included. Check it out!

**WRITING**

After taking the virtual tour through Ellis Island, write a letter as if you were an immigrant arriving at Ellis Island with your family. What are your feelings at this time? Are you homesick? Let your friends in the old country know what the ship is like, the food, and anything else you can think of that an immigrant your age might think to tell a friend back home.

## INFORMATION



### WHAT HAVE I LEARNED . . .

Working from yourself backwards in time, you will, most likely, come to an ancestor who has adopted citizenship in America. The records made during this process of becoming a citizen, of being naturalized, will often include information about the immigrant's homeland and immigration to the United States.

### . . . AND WHAT'S NEXT?

Many of the immigrants who arrived in America came to build a better life for themselves and their children. Early African immigrants, brought here as slaves, stayed in America after their emancipation in order to build a better life for their children. Their hard work and dedication created a legacy that we now enjoy. What legacy will you leave to your children?

## VOCABULARY



**Naturalization:** The process by which an immigrant becomes a citizen.

**Immigration:** The process by which a person leaves the land of his or her birth to obtain citizenship or to live in another country.

# EPISODE 213

## WRITING A FAMILY HISTORY

### OBJECTIVE

1

IN THIS LESSON, YOU'LL

- BEGIN to record your life history
- DISCOVER ways to share the family history you've learned with your relatives

### TEACHER



This lesson includes opportunities for class discussion and a video presentation. Vocabulary words are included at the end of the lesson though not specifically brought into the lesson in the form of an assignment. Resulting measurable assignments include a creative writing assignment, a journal or a mini-biography, an oral history interview and summary. While the lesson's main ideas logically build on one another, the activities and assignments suggested can be adapted or omitted according to your needs.

### MAIN IDEA no.1

#### SHARING YOUR STORY

You may think that your life is pretty boring. You wake up, go to school, hang out with friends, do homework . . . not too thrilling, is it? Well, what seems ordinary to you now will be fascinating to read when you're 25 or 50. Think about it. Everyone has a story.

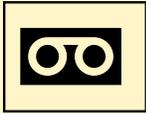
What if you had the chance to read about your Mom's first date? Or your Dad's feelings when his father caught him lying in the sun instead of mowing the lawn? Wouldn't you like to know the things they thought about when they were your age?

### WRITING



While you've been looking at records that will give the clues you need to write your family's history, it's important to remember that you're living history right now. Take one of the two options below to help you begin.

- ① Using your timeline, write a couple of pages that sum up the major events in your life. Put it into a story form as a sort of "mini-biography." Include some good memories and some sad ones. Everyone's life has a little of both.
- ② Begin keeping a diary. Write at least two paragraphs every day for the next week or two. At the end, go back and re-read what you wrote. What are some interesting ideas you had? What are you learning about life and your personality?



## WATCH ANCESTORS EPISODE 213: WRITING A FAMILY HISTORY EPISODE SUMMARY

Taylor McDonald grew up hearing tales about his legendary grandfather, but they remained just “stories” until he set out to write a family history. In the process, Taylor documents his grandfather’s colorful life and finds that he really did help tame the Wild West, and even rode with Pancho Villa. Experts tell how to write, publish and share a family history.

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

What is one of the best methods for gathering family stories?

What are some tips for conducting oral history interviews?

How should records and family artifacts be preserved?

Why might a person wish to publish a family history?

## MAIN IDEA no.2

### YOUR FAMILY STORY

Ancient cultures, such as the Native American and African, have long had a sense of their family history in the form of tribal oral histories. Traditionally, someone in the society keeps in his memory the story of the family. In Africa, this person was known as a griot. Even today, you can still meet griots in Africa who can recite generations upon generations of family history.

Sociologists tell us that in modern-day America, few of us remember the names of our great-grandparents. Hopefully, you’ve been successful enough at your family history detective work to at least know a bit about your great-grandparents.

Do your brothers or sisters know about them? How about your cousins? Surely someone in your family will want to know what you’ve discovered.

For ancestor detectives, writing a family history means more than just writing events that happened in the family. It includes creating a paper trail that other family detectives can follow. It means you’ve done good research, and you can prove it by citing your sources and even including copies of documents. Your research log will come in handy, as will your pedigree chart and the family group sheets you’ve created. This research is the “skeleton” of your family story. Like writing most reports, an outline of events will be very helpful.

But, as you’ve already noticed, records tell more than just names and dates. Sometimes, you find information like an ancestor’s hair color, weight, or eye color. This is the information that will begin putting the “flesh on the bones”. Other elements that will help you flush out your family story include:

- ▶ photos and other artifacts or heirlooms you’ve gathered,
- ▶ stories from your oral history interviews with older living relatives
- ▶ background historical information found in town, county or even US history books

There are many ways to approach writing your family's history. We suggest you begin with yourself, and then go chronologically backwards in time. However, many others choose to start with the oldest ancestor they've found and work down to present day.

Some genealogists spend years researching their family stories and then creating family histories that can be shared with others. Just think of how many ancestors there are on your family tree, and you'll begin to understand why people who begin looking for family history have a hard time knowing when to quit! Although you may not have years of history to draw on, writing down what you've discovered so far is a wonderful way to share your information. While sharing your information, other questions might also occur to you - questions that might be answered through even more detective work.



#### ACTIVITY

Other ways you may choose to record either your own story or your family's history include:

- ▶ attending a family reunion
- ▶ creating a scrapbook of photos and other momentos
- ▶ recording family traditions into your journal
- ▶ interviewing family members on a subject which you all have in common: your enthusiasm for basketball, your interest in a particular trade, favorite pets
- ▶ creating a time capsule of momentos
- ▶ using new technologies to put family photos on CD Rom
- ▶ collecting favorite family recipes and share them with relatives

Choose a project from the list above or conduct an oral history interview with a living family member whose life you find interesting. (For more about oral history interviewing, see the lesson for Episode 202). Use the interview as the basis for writing a summary of the person's life story. Share the story with relatives.

#### INFORMATION



#### WHAT HAVE I LEARNED

There are many ways to share the family history that you discover. You can start by sharing your own history. Next, share the stories and documents you've uncovered in your family history detective work.

While the search for family history can often be difficult, the rewards are difficult to measure. Some people feel they appreciate the history of America more deeply when they've seen it through the eyes of their ancestors. Others find inspiration and strength when they learn of the hardships that their ancestors endured.

Whatever you find to be of value in your own search for family history, the rewards will become even sweeter when you share them with others.