

Where Do I Start?

Robyn Echols

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- Notes

Two PARTS to Family History work:

- Research
- ORGANIZE

Talk to Family Members

- Start with oldest family members first.
 - Don't wait too long – sometimes their minds go before their bodies.
- Ask them to save family history information for you.
- When they tell stories at family get-togethers, GO HOME AND WRITE THE STORIES DOWN!

Ask Family Members for:

- Copies of printed histories & other documents
- Obituaries, marriage & birth announcements, funeral programs

Gather or Create Oral Histories or Family Films:

Newspaper articles:

- Good – A copy of the article
- Better – Includes newspaper header with location and date and/or relationship info

Photographs:

- Original or print copies are nice, but digital are also great
- Be sure someone writes down the names, dates and locations

ORGANIZE

- Shoebox method:
 - Gather everything together into a box to be organized later
- File method:
 - Store paper records by type in file folders
- Notebook method:
 - Put all paper documents in binders or photo albums

Gather everything into one place -- **Acid-free containers preferred!**

- Family documents
- Mementos
- Photographs
- Newspaper clippings
- Family Group Sheets
- Awards, medals, etc.
- Written histories
- History books & maps
- School & work records

What to Collect?

- Pedigree charts and family group sheets:
- Notes, letters, personal papers
- Family Bibles – Be sure to check inside:
- Vital statistic certificates – Birth, Marriage & Death:
- Mementos or keepsakes: Label them so you know which ancestor originally owned them – try to get the story behind how they came to the family and WRITE IT DOWN.
- Miscellaneous papers & objects:
 - Old identification cards, awards & certificates
 - Receipts, coins, books, licenses, tax forms, including those that give LOCALITY information
 - Jewelry, awards and trophies that tell a story
- Military papers, pins & patches: Try to get as much information as you can about the individual. You can research the other details later:

Preserve your photographs and family records -- Or, what you can do on Sundays or for Family Home Evenings

- Put all your documents into acid-free folders or page sleeves and store them in a binder or an accordion-fold portfolio:

Store important documents protected from acid, heat, dampness, light and fire:

- **Worst choices:** cardboard, acidic folders, particle board drawers, scattered around loose & exposed to dust, sunlight or being accidentally thrown out.
- **Better choices:**
 - Protected in plastic inside a labeled box
 - In acid-free box, even if exposed to light or some acidic substances
- **Even better choices:**
 - Dark, non-acidic box or metal file drawers for old photos and documents
 - A fire-resistant safe for ultimate fire protection for important documents and electronic media
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- Plastic sheet protectors, portfolio pockets and dividers for documents stored in a plastic binder or file system

Scan family photos, documents and written family histories:

- Save them to CDs, flash drives & your computer
- Update storage methods as technology develops
- Share them with other family members (If something happens to your computer or your house burns down, you can ask for copies back from your family.)

Scan photos front and back:

Create a shadow box to display some of your family history mementos and photos

Document mementos:

- Create a document with thumbnail pictures of mementos /keepsakes, etc.
 - Jewelry
 - Scout and club awards and pins
 - Military pins, medals, patches & insignia
- Record a brief history of the item, including the person to whom the item belonged.
- When saving images of your photos, heirlooms (mementos, keepsakes), name the image to show who they came from, such as: "Virginia England_circa 1910-20"

Write in your journal – in a book or on your computer

Best websites for starting your family history:

FamilySearch.org—From that site, follow the links to:

- FamilyTree
- Record Search
- Trees
- Catalog (Family History Library Catalog)
- Books
- Learn (Research Wiki, Research Courses, Discussion Forums)
- Blog

Indexing—reach it from www.familysearch.org:

- Help make family history documents more available
 - Sign up using your FamilySearch account
 - Read the simple instructions
 - Start indexing
- Another EXCELLENT Sunday or evening activity

Try FamilySearch FamilyTree

Other resources:

- **Visit your Family History Center**—Come receive help from our consultants and learn more about many other programs available without charge through our premium services sites.
- Cyndi's List— www.cyndislist.com
 - A free site with links to many research sites
- **Ancestry.com**
- **Visit your local county library genealogical collection**