

Research Tips

Helpful pointers to keep in mind when researching your genealogy:

1. Always take a notebook or a pad of paper that is 8-1/2" x 11" in size. The papers in your files should all be a standard size; therefore, your notes should always be a standard size of paper.
2. Always make copies of original documents, certificates, and other one-of-a-kind documents. The copy will be placed in your research notebook while the original will be filed and stored in a safe place, such as your home safe or a safe-deposit box.
3. Whenever possible, make a photocopy rather than transcribing or abstracting a document. You will then be sure not to miss important information, or inadvertently make an error in your notes. Be sure the copy is readable before moving on to your next source.
4. Label all of your binders and research materials with your name, address and phone number. In the unfortunate situation that you leave one of your valuable research files at a repository, the staff will know who to forward it to.
5. Write the source information, or citation, from every book or document you look at before you begin reviewing it. There are two very important reasons for doing so:
 - a) To ensure that you do not forget to write this information down; and
 - b) Even if the source has no information that is helpful in your research, you should so make a note so that in the future you won't waste time looking at a source that was already reviewed.
6. Remember to be courteous to all repository staff and fellow researchers. They deserve to be treated with respect, and your research time will be more pleasant. When the staff members at a repository are treated with respect and courtesy by a researcher, they often will be most helpful to that researcher.
7. Pack a travel bag that includes extra pencils, pens, eraser, paper clips, coins for the photocopier, tissues, etc.
8. Create a small business card with your name, address, email address and other contact information on one side, and the surnames and geographic locations you are researching on the other side. These cards are very helpful to hand out to fellow researchers and to leave behind at repositories. You might just find a long-lost cousin.

9. Copy all place and people names exactly as you find them. Never change the wording to what you think it should be. This is particularly important with women's names. In many cases women will be recorded with their maiden name, even if married at the time. Record each name exactly as you find it. If you wish to add comments of your own for your own future clarification, place your comments in square brackets []. These brackets denote that the wording inside them is in your own words and not a part of the original source.
10. Write clearly and legibly. This cannot be stressed enough. Write numbers clearly so that they will not be misinterpreted later. Sloppy writing could cause extra work if you must go back to the original source to decipher your notes.
11. When taking notes, limit each page of notes to a single surname. You may find multiple surnames in the same source document when researching, but be sure that your notes from that source are separated by surname. This will make filing the papers easier when you return home.
12. Handle records with care. You may be looking at rare, one-of-a-kind documents. Ensure that you leave these delicate records in the same condition in which you found them.