

Hi everyone, I'm Kyle. I'm here in the Genealogy Research room of the North Carolina Government and Heritage Library. With me is Cheryl, the head of reference here. Hi Cheryl.

Hello Kyle. Welcome.

Thanks. Can you tell me a little more about the Genealogy Research room?

Sure. We have published family histories, we have books from North Carolina and other states, we have genealogical periodicals, newspapers, databases, and a lot more. So, you've come to the right place to begin your genealogical research.

Great, can we talk a little bit more about getting started?

Sure.

Cheryl, I've heard the terms "genealogy" and "family history" thrown around, are they the same thing?

They're sometimes used interchangeably but there is a difference. With genealogy, you're finding the names of people, the ancestors, their descendants. You're recording the date and place of birth, date and place of marriage, date and place of death; just the basic facts of a person's life. Whereas with family history, that is more than just the names, dates, and places. It includes family stories; it includes other bits of information about a person, how they fit into the events of the world around them. It's what brings genealogy alive.

I remember doing my family tree in third grade and pretty sure it was quite literally just a drawing of a tree with some blanks for names and pictures. I'm sure you all have something more robust than that. Can you show me some documents that might help me with genealogy research?

Sure, there are a number of different forms and charts that can help you with your research. One is a Family Group Sheet and on a Family Group Sheet you record a couple and all of their children and the basic facts about them. Then another good form to use is a Research Log. On the Research Log you keep track of all the resources you've used when you've researched a particular family or an individual. Now the most helpful one that people start out with is an Ancestor Chart. First of all, you record the number of the chart. Then you put an individual; you note the place of birth, the birth date, married, place of marriage, all those facts. And then you record the father and all the information about the father, and the mother and so on, back each generation.

What do you think would be some good questions for me to ask my family member or those closest to the person I'm trying to research?

Yes, it is a good idea to ask the oldest family members first, as well as other people in your family about their memories. To begin with, you want to ask the vitals, such as the full name, birth date, all the dates and places, that sort of thing. And you want to ask questions about their education, what degrees, where they went to school, that sort of thing. And also ask about military service. Then you want to get into the open-ended questions where you can get into more of a discussion about your family. For example, what is your earliest memory or your fondest childhood memory? Do you have any family traditions that have been passed down? What church or religion was your grandfather raised in? Or what did your grandfather do for a living?

Great, all of this sounds very interesting and I'm ready to get started. What kinds of advice do you have for those people that are just getting started with their research?

First, start with yourself, then work backwards. Research the names, dates, and places and the relationships of people in your family. And then you want to add the family stories, the interesting tidbits, about the lives of the people. It's also very important to find proof for each bit of information; just because you saw something online does not make it so and you want to verify that. The other thing is to document, document, document. And that means you dig deep. You use multiple sources of information, multiple types of records in order to prove something. Another important thing to do is to cite all your resources. If you want to look something up again five years down the road, can you find that one bit of information? Or twenty-five years from now, somebody's reading your research, could they also look up that document and find it? The other important point is to stay organized. Keep that research log of all the places you've checked and give details on the resources you used. The other thing is to study the history, the geography, the topography of the areas in which your ancestors live. That could help you as you dig deeper into your research. For example, if your ancestors lived near a river, than that's probably the way they arrived at that location. Look down the river to see where they came from.

Is there anything else I need to know?

Set aside your expectations of what you may find. For example, you may have heard your family came from one country but it turns out they came from another country. You may have thought you had a Patriot in the American Revolution but it turns out you had a Tory ancestor. Also you may discover you had an ancestor who spent some time in jail or even abandoned his family, moved to another state, and started a second family. Remember that court officials, census takers, people in the past, they made mistakes too and they often wrote names down the way they sounded, so look for variant spellings of names. Don't expect to find everything you need. Some ancestors did not leave very many official documents. Other documents have been lost over time. In the twenty-first century, we expect lots of documents to exist on people, we have information recorded about us all the time. Years ago however, some ancestors did not leave very many official documents, or if they did, they've been lost. They could've been burned in courthouse fires, floods could've destroyed them, neglectful clerks could've done

something with them or taken their documents home. So there are all kinds of reasons documents have been lost over time. Be patient. It takes a long time sometimes to dig out one piece of information. Overall, have fun and enjoy the adventure.

Thanks so much Cheryl. I want to thank you for taking the time to go over this information with me. Now that you have some of the basic terms and forms for doing genealogy research, I encourage you to get started on your own.