



Maris Grove Genealogy welcomes you to the wonderful world of your ancestors. We meet the 4th Friday of every month at 2 p.m. in the Brinton Clubhouse classroom.

We share what we have learned about our ancestors and what was going on in the world when they lived. We help each other with ideas about where to go to find records. Some of our members have been searching for years and others are just getting started.

Beginning below, you will find some suggestions for getting started.

Some of the reasons that we search our family tree are:

1. **The Past:**
 - a. Family stories
 - b. Old family portrait
 - c. Ancestor's involvement in a famous historical event
 - d. Helps you join a lineage society.
2. **The Present:**
 - a. Health reasons – a need to trace your medical history
 - b. Social purposes – to find and reconnect with living relatives.
3. **The Future:** To pass on a legacy to future generations.
 - a. Family traditions
 - b. The culture of your old country.

Someone once said, *"We are all an accumulation of, not only our own life experience, but also those of our ancestors."*

Effective Strategies for Building a Family Tree

Genealogy is as much about having the correct perspective and managing expectations as it is about family history. The ten strategies listed below will give you a better outlook on what is required to be successful with your own family history research.

1. **Talk to your relatives.** A major advantage in talking to relatives is that it forces you to first collect information on your living relatives, many of whom know a wealth of information about your family.
2. **See if someone has already done your family tree.** Finding old records can be difficult. Unfortunately, historic records tend to be handwritten. Surprisingly, many families have published their family trees in book format. You can use a rare book search engine (ex. biblio.com) to discover out-of-print books.
3. **Focus your research effort.** How do you cope with a large family tree? For starters, you have to be selective in your research. A popular approach is to take one branch of the family tree and follow it back as far as possible. Another possibility is to go sideways and try to record all branches of the family tree that are still alive today.

4. **Use libraries for internet research.** Searching old records on the internet can be expensive. Another way to keep costs down is to use your local library. Many libraries maintain internet subscriptions to the most popular genealogy databases (including Ancestry). By using your local library to access the information for free, you can avoid the cost of paying for these services.
5. **Keep good records.** To be successful in your family history research, you have to be prepared to treat it like a hobby. Make sure to keep careful notes. Document all your sources and all of your work. There are formal ways to document genealogy research. Keeping a journal can be a simple and useful way to get started.
6. **Be prepared for conflicts.** It is common for genealogists to come across conflicting information on the same individual. Take something as basic as date of birth. The more you go back in time, the more likely you are to across situations where a given individual has different dates of birth listed on various documents. Many people could not read and often had only a vague idea of when they were born. Over their lifetime, it is perfectly possible they listed different birth dates on different forms, particularly if it was to their advantage. For example, a woman might change her birth date on a marriage certificate to make herself look younger. A man might change his birth date on a military enrollment form to make himself older. Keeping careful records and questioning all sources of information will help sort out conflicting facts.
7. **Have fun.** Successful genealogists are ones that go slow, focus their efforts, don't expect to find everything conveniently packaged for them on the internet, question all their sources and keep good records.

Educational Sites

1. **Genealogy TV** (<https://genealogytv.org/>) provides helpful videos on various genealogy topics.
2. **rootstech.org** is another website providing lectures on various topics.
3. newsletter@genealogyintime.com is a website where you can sign up for a monthly newsletter updating you on new research sources.
4. **Middletown Free Library** (www.middletownfreelibrary.org) offers free genealogy classes on the first Wednesday of the month from 10:15 a.m. to 11:45 a.m. You can also visit the library and use their ancestry.com website either on their computers or your own laptop.
5. **Genealogy! Just Ask!** (genealogyjustask.com) is a free genealogy research assistance service. They will help you identify resources to document your ancestors free of charge (via e-mail, Facebook, Skype, etc.) however, if you want them to obtain records that are not freely accessible to them, they will charge a fee for the cost of obtaining the record and providing copies to you.

Genealogy Websites

Ancestry.com (\$) Take the most used genealogy data subscription site for a spin. Anyone can click on the Learning Center tab and then First Steps for the site orientation.

Archives.com (\$) This service gives you access mainly to US censuses, vital records and old newspapers in the United States and some in the United Kingdom.

Atlas of Historical County Boundaries (<https://www.newberry.org/atlas-historical-county-boundaries>) (free) You'll come back to this tool again and again. Many genealogical records are created by counties, the boundaries of which may have changed over time.

BillionGraves.com (free) Search an enormous GPS-tagged database of tombstone images. You can also upload tombstone photos you've snapped.

Castle Garden (www.castlegarden.org) (free) Immigration records pre Ellis Island

Chronicling America (<https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/>) (free) The Library of Congress' portal to historical newspapers has two important areas of content: digitized newspaper pages (1836-1922) from 25 states and Washington D.C. and an index to all known newspapers published in the United States and where to find them today.

Cyndi's List (<https://www.cyndislist.com/us/>) (free) highly respected directory of free genealogical resources and databases online.

Dead Fred (<https://deadfred.com/>) (free) Genealogy photo archive.

FamilySearch.org (free) This is one of the best online sources available. Search millions of digitized and indexed records from around the world. Some results point to offsite sources of digitized records. Don't ignore the Learn tab. It's packed with keyword- searchable articles and online sources.

FamilyTreeMagazine.com (free) Their website offers abundant tools and how-toP for beginners. The Get Started tab introduces you to the research process. Find free forms and cheat sheets under the Research Toolkit tab.

Find a Grave (<https://www.findagrave.com/>) (free) Dig up ancestral burial information from millions of tombstone images here. Search by individual or cemetery name.

Findmypast.com (\$) The flexible membership options (like a la carte pricing for looking at search results) will appeal to many beginners.

Fold3.com (\$) This is the go-to sources for digitized military records from Revolutionary War forward.

Genealogy Bank (<https://www.genealogybank.com>) (\$) This is best known for its 6000 plus historical newspaper sites.

General Land Office Records (<https://www.blm.gov/services/land-records>) (free) You can find many records generated when our ancestors bought land from the federal government, especially in the Midwest and West. Access images of more than 5 million land title records back to 1820.

Google (<https://www.google.com>) (free) In addition to the ability to search for names and places, Google offers several genealogy-friendly tools. **Google Translate** helps you translate text and websites into or out of English. **Google Books** includes an online library of out-of-print resources such as local histories and compiled genealogies. **Google Maps** and **Google Earth** help you locate ancestral addresses.

Newspapers.com (\$) is the online home of 200+ million pages of historical newspapers from 5,400 newspapers from around the United States and beyond.

World Vital Records (<https://www.myheritage.com>) (\$) A budget-friendly beginner option, World Vital Records provides digitized and index data from many parts of the world (find an interactive map on the home page). Find censuses, vital and military records, yearbooks, newspapers and more.