

## 1 **Beginning Your Search for Ancestors**

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### 2

- Family History Overview
  - Why...? How...? Where...?
  - Local DC area resources
    - DAR Library
    - Family History Center
    - Library of Congress
    - National Archives and Records Administration (NARA)
- Genealogy on the Internet – a *brief* Overview
- Beginning at the National Archives

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#### **Ground Rules**

- Overview...with a few details.
- NOT an expert.
- Lots of opinions.
- Please interrupt with questions.

### 4

#### **Why look for ancestors?**






- Who am I?
- Where did I come from?
- Exactly WHO were my ancestors?
- Strengthen family ties.
- Learn about medical inheritance.
- Create a legacy for your descendants.

### 5

#### **Where do I start?**

- At the beginning - yourself.
- Interview family members, especially older members.
- Locate & preserve documents and photos.
- Visit local/state/federal facilities.
- WRITE IT DOWN!

“The death of an old person is like a library burning down.”  
- Alex Haley

- 6  **What data should I collect?**
- Full names, birth dates and locations.
  - Marriage dates and locations.
  - Death dates, locations and cause of death.
  - Burial dates and locations.
  - Occupations, religious prefs, physical descriptions, photos, etc, etc, etc...
  - FULLY DOCUMENT THE SOURCE.
- 7  **Where do I look?**
- Home and family, including old letters and Bibles.
  - Local libraries.
  - State departments of vital statistics.
  - State archives.
  - Local Resources
    - DAR Library
    - Family History Center
    - Library of Congress
    - National Archives.
  - Internet.
- 8  **DAR Library**
- Free to public
  - Orientations available for group visits.  
(call ahead: 202-879-3229)
  - Hours:
    - Monday - Friday: 8:30 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.
    - Saturday: 9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.
    - Sunday: closed
  - Location: 1776 D St, NW  
(entrance on D Street between 17th & 18th)
- 9  **DAR Library-Special Collections**
-  • American Indian Collection
- General History & Culture.
  - Indian Nation histories.
- American Women’s History Collection
- Role of women in US history.
  - Women’s rights in 19th/20th Centuries.
- DAR Library File Collection

- Materials submitted for membership.
- Ex: Bible records, family studies, pamphlets, research notes.
- Genealogical Records Committee Collection
  - Unpublished compilations: Bible, cemetery, family, vital, county, town, church, etc.
- ② • Manuscript Collection
  - Notes, documents, unpublished genealogies & indexes.
- President’s Collection
  - Books on Presidents, Vice-Presidents and First Ladies.
  - Lineage papers from Presidential Families of America
- WPA Collection
  - State record inventories
  - Other indexes & listings
- US Ephemera Collection
  - “odds and ends”





10  **DAR Library-Digital Resources**





- Genealogical Records Committee Reports Index
  - Probate, court & land records
  - Cemetery transcriptions
  - Family genealogies
- Bible Records & Transcriptions Index
- Patriots Record Project Index
  - Material related to Revolutionary War

11  **Washington DC Temple Family History Center (FHC)**

- Extension of Family History Library in SLC.
- Open to the public.
- Location:
  - 10000 Stoneybrook Drive, Kensington, MD (301-587-0042)
  - Hours:
    - Sun/Mon – Closed
    - Tue/Wed/Thur – 9:30am-4:30am/& 7:00pm-9:30pm
    - Fri – 9:30am-1:00pm
    - Sat – 9:30am-4:30pm
- Other selected FHCs in Metro area:
  - MD—Annapolis, Baltimore, Columbia, Frederick, Seneca,

Suitland.  
–VA—Annandale, Ashburn, Centreville, Falls Church,  
McLean,  
Mt Vernon, Oakton.

- 12  **DC FHC Resources**
- Card catalog (books, microfilm, microfiche).
  - Family History Library Catalog.
  - International Genealogical Index (IGI).  
–Index of names in FHL computer database.
  - Family Group Record Archives (over 8 million names).
  - Accelerated Indexing System (Census & related).
  - Computers – free access to hundreds of genealogical web sites
  - Books – immigration, church records, census, military, maps, atlases
- 13  **Sample FHC Classes/Seminars**
- Beginning Genealogy Group
  - Af-Am Special Interest Group
  - Irish Special Interest Group
  - Eastern European Special Interest Group
  - Finding Ancestors in Military Records
  - Web Site: <http://wdcfhc.org/wordpress/>
- 14  **Library of Congress (LOC)**
- Open to all over 18 years of age
  - Reader's Card (required)  
–Madison Bldg - Rm LM 140. Jefferson Bldg - Rm LJ 139  
–Hours: Mon - Sat: 8:30am-4:30pm;  
(closed Sundays)
  - Classes for first time users  
–Weekly Sessions: 10:00 a.m.-11:30 p.m. and 6:30-8:00pm  
–Held in Jefferson Bldg, Rm 139B.  
–Info: 202-707-3370
- 15  **LOC-Local History & Genealogy Reading Area**
- Location: Jefferson Bldg, Main Reading Room - LJ 100
  - Hours:  
–Monday, Wednesday, and Thursday: 8:30 a.m. - 9:30 p.m.

- Tuesday, Friday, and Saturday: 8:30 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.
  - Sunday and Federal Holidays: Closed
  - Orientation (for this area only)
    - Time: 10:30am – Noon
    - Call (202) 707-3399 to register
    - Note: MUST have Reader Card
- 16  **Local History & Genealogical Collections**
- Books
    - More than 50,000 genealogies & 100,000 local histories.
    - 6,000 indexes, guides and other reference works.
  - CD-ROMs
    - FamilySearch (Family History Library in SLC)
      - Ancestral File.
      - International Genealogical Index.
      - Family History Library Catalog.
    - Social Security Death Index.
    - Military Index (Korea & Vietnam).
- 17  **LH & G Collections-cont'd**
- Internet Subscription Services
    - Fee-based, but free at LOC.
    - AncestryPlus (library version of Ancestry.com).
    - Digital Census images, Gale's Passenger & Immigration Lists Index, Civil War Research Database.
    - HeritageQuest: Census images, family histories, local histories.
  - Vertical File
    - Published genealogies indexed by name
    - Other info - States, towns & cities.
    - Misc genealogical research.
- 18  **National Archives & Records Admin (NARA)**
- Established in 1934, opened in 1937.
  - Two major facilities in DC
    - Archives I - Downtown
    - Archives II - College Park
  - Regional Archives Branches & Presidential Libraries.
- 19  **Local NARA Facilities**
- Archives I – Downtown DC

–Across PA Ave from Archives/Navy Memorial Metro Station (Green/Yellow).

- Archives II – College Park
  - 8601 Adelphi Rd
  - Parking avail - come early, but not before 8:00 am.
  - Shuttle bus avail between I & II.
    - Every hour on hour.
    - Space-available for researchers.

20  **Regional Archives Branches**

- ① • Anchorage
- Atlanta (East Point)
- Boston (Waltham)
- Chicago
- Denver
- Fort Worth
- Kansas City
- ② • Laguna Niguel (L.A.)
- New York City
- Philadelphia
- Pittsfield
- San Francisco (San Bruno)
- Seattle

21  **NARA Facilities (cont'd)**

- Presidential Libraries
  - Roosevelt through Bush
  - Obama Library
    - To be located in Chicago's Jackson Park.
    - Opening some time in 2021
- National Personnel Records Center (St Louis)
- Federal Records Centers
  - Local – Suitland, MD

22  **Archives I – Useful Records (not exhaustive list)**

- Federal Census.
- Ship Manifests & Passenger Lists.
- Naturalization Records.

- Military Records.
- Pension & Bounty Land Records.
- Records relating to African-Americans.
- Records relating to Native Americans.
- Land Records.

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### **Genealogy on the Internet**

- Genealogy/Family History—  
(Google: >276,000,000 hits)
- 3rd most popular subject on Web.
  - #1... adult-oriented.
  - #2... money.
- Web Sites
  - Commercial & Free
    - Link Sites
    - Message Boards
- Mailing Lists

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### **Commercial Web Site Samples**

- Ancestry ([www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com))
  - Subscription Categories – monthly, qtrly, annual
  - Thousands of databases.
  - New databases added frequently.
- HeritageQuest Online
  - Thousands of databases
    - Ex.: Census, Freedman’s Bank, etc
  - Avail in many libraries
- Fold3.com (military records)
  - Membership avail monthly/annual
  - Records from National Archives
  - Many useful for genealogy
  - Associated with Ancestry.com

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### **Free Web Site Samples**

- Cyndi’s List ([www.cyndislist.com](http://www.cyndislist.com))
  - “Mother of all Genie Sites”.

- Site with links (over 366,000).
- Great one-stop site.
- RootsWeb (www.rootsweb.com)
  - Run by volunteers/contributions.
  - “Home” for thousands of mailing lists.
- Mormon Web Site (www.familysearch.org)
  - Access point for their databases.
  - Easy to use.
- Find A Grave (https://www.findagrave.com)
  - Cemetery listings (many listings with photos)
  - Search by name, county, state & cemetery name

27  **State/County/Surname Message Boards (also free)**

- Everyone can read posts and replies
- Can search for specific terms
- State/County
  - Focused on research in a particular state/county
  - Find these on:
    - Genealogy.com
    - Rootsweb.com
- Surname
  - Focused on individual surnames
  - Examples same as above

28  **The Net - Final Thoughts**

- Internet VERY powerful tool for genealogy research.
  - Email may be MOST helpful...
- Thousands of sites.
- Watch out for undocumented “facts”.

29  **But wait...**


**How do I begin?**

30  **First, the bad news...**

- Federal records only.
  - Useful when ancestor has interacted with Fed Govt.
  - Info on birth, marriage, death best found at family/local/state level.
- Colonial period not documented.



- Few records predate Rev War.
- Most described in this presentation from 19th Century.
- Not organized for genealogical research.
  - Maintained as kept by govt agencies.
  - Use by “genie” researchers not considered.

31  **Even so, where do I start?**

- When, how & where ancestor came into contact with Federal government.
- Knowledge of American history & geography very helpful.
- Understanding of immigration, migration and settlement patterns useful.
- Most begin with Census.

32  **Available Federal Census**

- 1790 - 1840
  - Only head of household by name.
  - Others by gender & age only.
  - Age brackets occasionally varied.
- 1850 - 1940
  - All individuals in household named with gender, age, POB, education, etc.
- Census records open to public available on microfilm.
  - Only open to public after 72 years
  - Latest - 1940
- Originals available if needed

33  **Approach for Census Research**

- Begin with 1940 Census and work backwards.
- Determine Soundex Codes for surnames.
  - Soundex Code—based on how surname sounds
  - Indexes arranged by Soundex (1940-1880).
  - Printed Soundex guides available in Research Room
- Using Soundex Files and/or printed Finding Aids, find individual/family in index.
- Using index data, find ancestors in Census.
- Transcribe ALL data or make legible copy with microfilm copiers.

34  **Microfilm Records Available**

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**(not an exhaustive list)**

- ① • Census & selected Indexes.
  - Selected military records.
    - Individual & Unit Records.
    - War Dept Records.
    - Confederate Service Records.
  - Selected Land Records.
  - Passport Applications.
  - Naturalization Index Cards.
- ② • VA Payment Cards.
- Passenger Manifests.
- Selected Indian Records.
- Pension Indexes.
- Freedmen's Bureau.
- US Court Records.
- Southern Claims Commission.

35  **General Info – Archives I**

- Ground Floor Research Room
  - Use Penn Ave Entrance
  - Mon thru Fri: 8:45am–5:45pm.
  - Closed Sundays & Federal Holidays.
  - Volunteer Genie Aides available for assistance
  - Microfilm Records, printed Finding Aids & Library
  - Computers – Ancestry.com, HeritageQuest & other online databases available for use.
- Researcher Card Required
  - Need photo ID
  - Review Researcher Orientation presentation
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor – Actual Records

36  **Archives - Things to remember...**

- Organized differently than a library; doesn't function like one.
- Records belong to the Federal Government.
- Records are arranged by record group.
- Each group comprises records of a major Federal Government dept/agency.
- Records of one agency are kept separate from those of another.

- Records are kept in the same order in which they were created.
- Earliest records in NARA date from First Continental Congress (c.1774).
- Records housed in facilities across the country; majority in Washington, DC area.

37  **Postscript**

- Thanks for attending.
- Questions?