

- To trace your family history, begin with yourself and work backward, one step at a time.
- Carefully record the important facts of your own life and what you know about your parents and grandparents.
- Consult other members of your family and close family friends and collect the information they know or have gathered. You may find that a family member has saved family papers, newspaper clippings, obituaries, family Bibles, or other treasures.
- Compile a genealogical chart showing the names of your immediate ancestors with their birth, marriage, and death dates, including the places where each event occurred.
- Look for family names in books on local and family history. The Library of Virginia has a large collection of published family histories.
- Search for family records such as census, birth, death, or marriage in online genealogical resources.
- Go to a local library, courthouse, or state archives, or to the National Archives and Records Administration in Washington, D.C. In order to document the history you have heard from relatives or the claims you have found in published and online genealogies, you must search for original records.
- Always record the source of any information found.

Helpful Resources at the Library of Virginia

Online genealogical databases such as Ancestry.com, HeritageQuest, and Fold3.

The Genealogist's Address Book. 6th ed. Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing, 2009.

A national directory for the genealogist containing addresses and other contact information for thousands of libraries, historical societies, religious organizations, and government agencies.

Greenwood, Val D. *The Researcher's Guide to American Genealogy*. 4th ed. Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing, 2017.

Presents the basic principles of research, detailed discussions of records, and strategies for evaluation of research results.

Jacobson, Judy. *History for Genealogists: Using Chronological Time Lines to Find and Understand Your Ancestors*. Revised ed. Baltimore Clearfield Press, 2016.

Helps family researchers place their ancestor in historical context.

Kemp, Thomas J. *International Vital Records Handbook*. 7th ed. Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing, 2017.

The go-to guide for vital records information throughout the world.

Rose, James M. *Black Genesis: A Resource Book for African-American Genealogy*. 2nd ed. Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing, 2003.

Provides an overview of sources for African American genealogy and a survey of types of records that can be found in each state.

Shown Mills, Elizabeth. *Evidence Explained: Citing History Sources from Artifacts to Cyberspace*. 3rd ed. Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing, 2015.

A definitive guide to citing information found in a variety of resources used for genealogical research.

Smith, Robyn N. *The Best of Reclaiming Kin: Helpful Tips on Researching Your Roots*. Elkridge, MD: Robyn N. Smith, 2015.

Excerpts from the "Reclaiming Kin" blog regarding African American genealogical research.

Basic Genealogical Records at the Library of Virginia

Census Records: The first U.S. census was taken in 1790 and a census has been taken every 10 years since. However, the censuses and indexes for Virginia for 1790, 1800, part of 1810, and 1890 have not survived. Those for 1810–1880 and 1900–1940 are available on microfilm as well as on Ancestry.com and HeritageQuest at the Library of Virginia. From 1850 on, they list the names of all individuals in the household on the day the census was taken. Age, sex, race, and other types of information appear in various years.

Vital Records: The Commonwealth of Virginia recorded births and deaths from 1853 through 1896 and 1912 to the present. Marriages have been recorded at the state level from 1853 to the present. All are in the Office of Vital Records and Health Statistics, P.O. Box 1000, Richmond, VA 23208-1000. Microfilm copies of the 1853–1896 birth and death registers, 1913–1939 death certificates, and 1853–1935 marriage registers are available at the Library of Virginia. Some vital records are available on Ancestry.com. Marriages prior to June 1853 were recorded at local courthouses and may be available on microfilm at the Library of Virginia.

County and City Records: Deeds, wills, court records, marriages, and other types of documents recorded at the local level of government will be found in the individual courthouses of Virginia's counties and independent cities and/or at the Library of Virginia. Check with an archivist regarding availability.

Military Records: The Library of Virginia's collection contains a variety of manuscript, microfilmed, and photographic copies of military records attesting to the service of many Virginians during various conflicts in American history.

Bible Records: The Library of Virginia's Bible records consist primarily of photocopies of original family registers found in Bibles, along with some typed transcripts and compilations of Bible records by patriotic organizations such as the Daughters of the American Revolution. These compilations are usually identified as Miscellaneous Bible Records (MBRC). Many of these records are available online in the Library's catalog.

Genealogical Notes and Charts: This collection consists of a wide variety of materials compiled by private citizens interested in recording their ancestry and making their research available to the public. The Library continues to accept donations of genealogical materials, but we do not verify the accuracy of the information contained therein.

An informational resource, "Genealogical Records at the Library of Virginia," is available on the Library of Virginia's website at www.lva.virginia.gov/public/guides/generesearch.pdf.

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