

GENEALOGICAL RESEARCH AT THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

HOW TO BEGIN

Welcome to the Library of Congress and to the Local History and Genealogy Reading Room. Careful and systematic use of the Library of Congress, one of the world's largest and most complex libraries, should help you retrieve the information that may be available about the history of your family.

To compile your family history is to establish a paper trail from yourself backward in time as far as you can go. This trail will consist of documents that tell of events and activities in your ancestors' lives.

Ideally, your first step is to obtain information on doing genealogical research. Most public libraries and large bookstores have good introductory books on research methods. These will specify what records to look for, where to search for them, and what kind of information you can expect to find in a given record or repository.

Your next step may be to interview all the older relatives you can find and to write down what they say, bearing in mind that family traditions become distorted with time, and you will need to verify what you hear.

Documents such as land records, wills, baptismal records, and certificates of birth, death, and marriage pinpoint an ancestor in place and time, and often point out where to look for similar documentation on the preceding generation. For example, your parent's birth certificate may indicate where and when the parent was born and the names of his or her parents (your grandparents). This, in turn, could indicate where and for what approximate time period you can begin your search for your grandparents' marriage records. These records may then provide information on the previous generation, and so on, as far back as the records have been kept.

When these records are lacking you may be able to fill in the gaps with other sources such as family Bibles, obituaries, interviews with relatives, or published information in compiled family histories or genealogical periodicals. Most vital records and other primary sources are available only at the state or local level, in town records and county clerks' offices, and for this reason a library may not be the best place to begin your research.

READER REGISTRATION CARD

As one of the Library's security initiatives, each reader is required to obtain a Library-issued photographic Reader Registration Card in order to use the reading rooms and collections in the Library. Currently, Reader Registration Cards may be obtained at the Reader Registration Station located on the ground floor of the James Madison Building, Room LM 140. Readers must present identification that includes a photograph and a current address, such as a driver's license or a passport,

to obtain a Reader Registration Card. These cards are valid for up to two years and may be renewed.

LIBRARY RESOURCES

Some individuals and societies have published vital records in book form, and whenever you are in a library it is a good idea to determine if it has any published records for the areas in which your ancestors lived. Once you have traced your family back several generations you will have many family names that are relevant to your research, and it is usually at this point that a library's genealogical collection becomes most useful. The following types of materials at the Library of Congress and at other libraries may be of value at the beginning of your search as well as later on when your research is further advanced.

1. Guides and Manuals

- Books that explain how to do genealogical research. These can save you much time and expense.
- Manuals on research for a particular ethnic group
- Guides to vital records for states and counties of the United States and for many foreign countries
- Directories of addresses of historical and genealogical societies
- Indexes to genealogical periodicals

2. United States City Directories

If you know that an ancestor lived in a particular city, you may find his or her address and sometimes profession and name of spouse in these directories. Consult with a reference librarian to identify and locate directories in the Library of Congress.

A checklist of *U.S. Directories on Microfilm in the Microform Reading Room* is found under "Bibliographies and Guides" on the Local History and Genealogy Reading Room home page <<http://www.loc.gov/rr/genealogy>>.

3. Published Census Records and Indexes

Federal population census schedules are at the National Archives and Records Administration, located on Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, between 7th and 9th Streets. The Library has only published census information—the 1790 census, some statewide indexes, and selected published abstracts for individual counties. Check with a reference librarian to identify and locate published census records in the Library of Congress.

4. Published Genealogies and Town and County Histories

Published genealogies are the result of research done on given families; published local histories provide useful background information, and in some cases give clues to new directions for research.

5. Internet Services

The Library subscribes to a number of electronic resources on the Internet. Among them is Ancestry.com that includes numerous data bases. Among the most useful are the *Periodical Source Index*; *the Social Security Death Index*; U.S. census indexes; and Rider's *American Genealogical-Biographical Index*.

RESOURCES IN THE LOCAL HISTORY & GENEALOGY READING ROOM

CARD CATALOGS

FAMILY NAME INDEX (White labels)

How to search: Family name of interest

This catalog is a card index to the published genealogies in the Library of Congress. Entries generally are determined by family names found on the title page (usually no more than three), although many cards for other family names have been added. Some additional access for works published or cataloged between 1968 and 1980 may be provided through the Library's Computer Catalog. For works cataloged by the Library since 1980 the Computer Catalog **must** be searched.

All genealogies in the Family Name Index are shelved in the stacks and should be ordered by filling out call slips and submitting them at the Book Service Desk located near the catalogs.

ANALYZED SURNAME INDEX (Green labels)

How to search: Family name of interest

This catalog began as a detailed index to selected genealogies published until about 1910. Later, it was expanded to include the biographical sketches found in approximately 350 county histories. The Analyzed Surname Index was always selective rather than comprehensive, and was never intended to cover every genealogy or county history. The last drawer of this index, labeled "Local Histories Indexed," identifies the county histories that are covered.

Note: Call numbers found in this index should be verified in the Family Name Index (CS call numbers), or the Local History Shelflist (F call numbers), or the "Local Histories Indexed" drawer.

COATS OF ARMS INDEX (White labels)

How to search: Family name of interest

The Coats of Arms Index provides a guide to illustrations of coats of arms found in books and periodicals in the Library's collections. It covers primarily English

and American sources. This catalog should be used in conjunction with two book indexes, Hanns Jager-Sunstenau's *General-Index zu den Siebmacher'schen Wappenbüchern, 1605-1961* (CR1179.S5J3 LH&G DESK) and the St. Louis Public Library's *Heraldry Index*, 4 v. (Z5312.S25 1980 LH&G). This latter work is found on the shelves opposite the reference desk. Siebmacher's *Wappenbüch* covers both noble and non-noble families in all German-speaking areas of central and eastern Europe; the *Heraldry Index* lists over 100,000 coats of arms found in approximately 800 works.

U.S. BIOGRAPHICAL INDEX (Pink labels)

How to search: Family name of interest

This card catalog, which has no recent entries, provides an index to at least one history for each state and to a few regional histories. It differs from the other card catalogs in that an individual's name (Smith, John) rather than a broad heading (Smith family) appears. The first drawer, labeled "Books Indexed," identifies the histories that are indexed.

Note: Call numbers found in this index should be verified in the Local History Shelvlist (F call numbers) or in the "Books Indexed" drawer.

U.S. LOCAL HISTORY SHEFLIST (White labels)

The cards in this catalog are arranged numerically, just as the books are found on the shelves, from F1 to F1000. This approach is by subject and includes all those books in the Library of Congress collection that deal with local history of the states (of the United States) and their subdivisions (the towns, cities, counties, and regions). A large white chart, *Guide to Materials in United States Local History*, is located to the right of the card catalog. This chart gives the range of call numbers assigned to each state as well as the number within that range for each of eleven specific subject areas. If you encounter difficulty in finding a particular state or region, ask a reference librarian for assistance.

Note: This catalog covers only those books classified as U.S. local history (class F); many books of a legal, religious, or social nature, which may be of value to genealogical or local history researchers, are classified elsewhere and can be found by using the Main Card Catalog and the Computer Catalog.

COMPUTER CATALOG AND REMOTE ACCESS

To locate material cataloged by the Library since 1981, it is necessary to use the Computer Catalog. The Library of Congress home page at <<http://www.loc.gov>> and the Local History and Genealogy Reading Room's home page at <<http://www.loc.gov/rr/genealogy>> both provide access to the Library's online catalog. To search for genealogies on the Library's online catalog, use the search term "Family" after the name of the family, e.g., Hill Family. The Library is beginning to digitize some of its United States local histories. To view **California as I Saw It: First-Person Narratives of California's Early Years, 1849-1900; Pioneering the**

Upper Midwest: Books from Michigan, Minnesota, and Wisconsin, ca. 1820–1910; and **The Capital and the Bay: Narrative of Washington and the Chesapeake Bay Region, ca. 1600–1925**, consult the Library's American Memory project on the Library of Congress home page.

The Local History and Genealogy Reading Room's home page provides general information about the reading room: hours; location; restrictions placed on personal belongings; requirements for reader registration; information about tours; descriptions of the collections; details for presenting gift books to the Library; the full text of the reading room's bibliographies and guides; and links to other Internet sources concerning local history and genealogy.

GENEALOGICAL INDEXES IN BOOK FORM

Several important published indexes to genealogical materials are located on bookshelves and consulting tables in the catalog area of the Local History and Genealogy Reading Room. The following titles are included:

Barrow's *The Genealogist's Guide*
Crowther's *Surname Index to Sixty-five Volumes of Colonial and Revolutionary Pedigrees*
Genealogical Periodical Index
Jacobus' *Index to Genealogical Periodicals*
Marshall's *Genealogist's Guide*
Munsell's *The American Genealogist*
Munsell's *Index to American Genealogies*
New York Public Library's *Book Catalog*
Newberry Library's *Genealogical Index*
(PERSI) Periodical Source Index §
Rider's *American Genealogical-Biographical Index** §
Whitmore's *Genealogical Guide*

* Consult a reference librarian if the directions for using this index are unclear.

§ Also available on the Ancestry.com Internet service.

How to Fill Out a Call Slip for a Bound Periodical

WALCOTT FAMILY—PERIODICALS

CS39 .W3418 Walcott Family.
Walcott Family Bulletin. v. 11. June 1973-
Southport, Conn., etc.; M. Walcott.
v. 30 cm.
Quarterly, June 1973-Mar. 1978; later as a year, summer 1979-
"A member of the Publication of Family History Societies."
Issues for June 1975-Mar. 1977 have no vol. numbering but contain v. 1.
Winter and spring 1978/79 combined in one issue.
Key title: Walcott Family Bulletin, 1894 636-637C.
I. Walcott Family—Periodicals. I. Publication of Family History Societies.
II. Title.
CS39.W3418 929.210941 80-648636
MARC-8
Library of Congress

PERIODICALS

PERIODICALS	PERIODICALS	STAFF USE ONLY
Call Number CS39 .W3418	Author Title (Book/Periodical) Walcott Family	Desk Alt. No. <input type="checkbox"/> Not on Shelf <input type="checkbox"/> Verify Call No. <input type="checkbox"/> Clarify Call No. <input type="checkbox"/> Give Vol. No./Issue <input type="checkbox"/> Fold, Pick Up:
Periodical Vol. No. or Date V. 1 1975	Locality Name and Address, or User Card No. Newspaper Card No. 055555	<input type="checkbox"/> Latest Yr. on Shelf
LIB & Q READING ROOM	Address	<input type="checkbox"/> No Vols. on Shelf
Desk # or Last Name if Hold JG 35	City/State/Zip	<input type="checkbox"/> Other Location (See Messages)
<input type="checkbox"/> Overnight Request	Messages	<input type="checkbox"/> Missing in Inventory
Thompson's Desc. Last Name:		Date

WHAT TO DO NEXT

After you have filled out the call slip with information from the catalog card or computer, select a vacant desk, fill in the desk number and your user i.d. number, and submit the slip at the Book Service Desk. Be prepared to show your Reader Registration Card to the attendant. Either the volume will be delivered to your desk or the call slip will be returned with a report in the lower right corner. If you are not using a desk, mark the slip "Hold" and the book will be held under your name throughout the day at the Book Service Desk. **Books may not be removed from the reading room.**

WHAT IF YOUR BOOK IS “NOT ON SHELF”

Your call slip may be returned with a report that the book is “not on shelf.” There are many possible reasons for this response. A reference librarian can help you review the call number and bibliographic information for accuracy, completeness, and legibility, or determine if the book is in a reference collection or on microfilm. To inquire further, consult Book Service personnel, who may refer you to the Special Search Section in Alcove 7, Main Reading Room, 1st floor, Jefferson Building, where a search can be initiated.

MAY BOOKS BE RESERVED?

You may reserve five books for three days by obtaining yellow slips from the Book Service Desk, filling out and inserting them in the books to be reserved, and shelving them on the reading room’s Three-day Reserve shelves. **Reference books may not be reserved.**

PHOTOCOPYING

Photocopying machines are located in the rear of the Local History and Genealogy Reading Room. They can be operated with a copy card that may be purchased in the cloakroom located on the ground floor of the Jefferson Building in room G39G.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

FINDING AIDS

The reference staff of the Local History and Genealogy Reading Room has prepared a number of bibliographies and guides that are useful for researchers. The following items are available in the reading room and are also accessible from the Local History and Genealogy Reading Room home page <<http://www.loc.gov/rr/genealogy>>:

African-American Family Histories and Related Works in the Library of Congress
Afro-American Genealogical Research
Danish Immigration to America: An Annotated Bibliography of Resources at the Library of Congress
Genealogical Periodicals in the Local History and Genealogy Reading Room: A Guide for Research
Genealogical Research at the Library of Congress
Guides to Genealogical Research
Handbooks for Foreign Genealogical Research: A Guide to Published Sources in English
Heraldry: A Selected List of References
Immigrant Arrivals: A Guide to Published Sources
Irish Genealogical Office Manuscripts: A Guide to the Microfilm

A Select Bibliography of Works at the Library of Congress on Norwegian-American Immigration and Local History
Sources for Research in English Genealogy
Sources for Research in Irish Genealogy
Sources for Research in Scottish Genealogy
Sources for Research in Welsh Genealogy
Surnames: A Selected List of References about Personal Names
Telephone and City Directories in the Library of Congress: A Finding Guide

In addition, *Generations Past: A Selected List of Sources for Afro-American Genealogical Research* may be consulted in the reading room.

MANUSCRIPTS

Various manuscript collections that have genealogical research value may be examined in the Manuscript Reading Room, 1st floor, Madison Building. Consult a reference librarian in the Local History and Genealogy Reading Room for assistance in identifying potentially useful manuscript materials.

MAPS

The Geography and Map Reading Room, Basement, Madison Building, has a collection of maps from all time periods covering all geographic areas. Reference assistance in determining geographic boundary changes is also available.

MICROFORMS

Most microforms are viewed in the Microform Reading Room, 1st floor, Jefferson Building.

NEWSPAPERS AND CURRENT PERIODICALS

All newspapers, including those on microfilm, and many periodicals published within the past year are served in the Newspaper and Current Periodical Reading Room, 1st floor, Madison Building.

RARE BOOKS AND SPECIAL COLLECTIONS

The word "Office" or "Toner" appearing on some catalog cards refers to the Rare Book and Special Collections Reading Room, 2nd floor, Jefferson Building.

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