

SAM'S GENEALOGY TIPS

Getting Started: The Basics

- Start with what you know. Work backward one generation at a time.
- Take time to get organized. Collect photos, official documents (baptism, marriage, and death records), letters, bibles, and other items which contain family history. Separate different family lines into separate boxes, files or binders.
- Talk to older members of the family. They may well be willing to send you other family photos and documents. You may find a relative who has already begun to collect family history. Record the family stories.
- Invest in a genealogy software program. Some can be downloaded from the internet for free. It will help you to organize all of the information you collect on family members.
- Look for public records on the internet: census records, birth, marriage, death records, newspaper articles, county histories containing biographical sketches of some individuals. There is a wealth of information out there! Check out my favorite genealogy websites. I have found these to be the most helpful.
- Scan photos and documents as you go; label and organize by family on your computer.
- Subscribe to mailing lists researching your family surnames. Join local genealogical societies.
- Learn how to conduct research on family history. Explore the variety of courses on genealogy, many of them free, that are available online.
- There are often discrepancies in information found on the various documents. Family lore often provides leads, but the details may be inaccurate. Confirm the family stories with public records. Public records may also be wrong. Genealogical conclusions are based on careful evaluation and analysis of all available information.
- Document sources: write down where you got each piece of information. Did that birth date come from a birth, marriage, or death record? A census record? A gravestone? Your Aunt Josephine? Is Josephine's information corroborated with a public document? Provide enough details on the location of public documents that another person can also retrieve the information. Documentation provides legitimacy to your research.