

***START
TRACING
YOUR FAMILY
HISTORY***

By Diana Leigh Matthews

ALookThruTime

Table of Contents

What is Genealogy? 3

Why do Genealogy? 4

What can I learn from Genealogy? 5

Misconceptions of Genealogy? 6

Where did Genealogy originate? 8

Peoples interest in Genealogy 9

Things to Remember 10

Basic Terminology 11

Writing Dates 12

How Do I Start Researching My Family History? 13

Write Your Own Story 14

What's Next 15

Places to begin searching for Genealogical Records 16

Free Charts 17

Free Resource 18

What is Genealogy?

[Dictionary.com](https://www.dictionary.com) describes Genealogy as:

1. A record or account of the ancestry and descent of a person, family, group, etc.
2. The study of family ancestries and histories
3. Descent from an original form or progenitor

[Random House Dictionary](https://www.randomhouse.com) {2009} adds:

A group of individuals or species having a common ancestry

So in essence genealogy is your family history. Your parents, grandparents, great-grandparents, etc all contributed in making you the person you are today.

Their genes are part of you.

Maybe you have your grandfather's nose, your great-grandmother's smile, your great-great-grandfather's wit, your mother's eyes, and your other grandfather's imagination. All of these characteristics and traits make you into the special person you are.

The decisions your ancestors made, also influenced your life. For example, my 4x-great-grandfather came to the United States. My 3x-great-grandfather decided to move from Virginia to South Carolina. These men were not thinking of me at the time they made these decisions. They were doing what was best for themselves and their families. However, these decisions led to all of their descendents {including my parents and myself} being born in South Carolina. That had an influence on my life.

We go through our life rarely realizing the lives that we come into contact with and touch. Still every day you are touching lives for the better or worse of mankind. Large decisions, such as where you move, career choices, marriage or divorce, when to have children, etc. not only affect your children, but also your grandchildren, great-grandchildren, great-great-grandchildren, etc. All of these people are touched, whether you ever get to meet them or not.

Why do Genealogy?

The Royal families of Europe {and other countries} have intensive genealogies. They need to know who is next in line and the order of succession. In case of some major disaster and the family were to be wiped out; their records go back far enough that they should be able to find the next person in line to resume running the country. {Remember the movie *King Ralph* with John Goodman? This is the entire premise of that movie.}

The Bible is filled with Genealogies throughout the Old Testament showing the family of Adam and Eve and later the 12 Tribes of Israel. The New Testament begins with the genealogy of Jesus and shows his lineage.

These are just two very popular examples of genealogy. Here are examples of times when genealogies are present in the United States:

- ❖ Presidents
- ❖ Celebrities
- ❖ Mayflower {some of the first occupants of the New World that we have access to trace their records}
- ❖ Often influential people or families that helped to establish a state, county, area, school, etc may have in-depth records of their family history.

There are many reasons to do genealogy:

- to learn more about your roots
- to learn more about your family
- to learn more about yourself {yes, you will learn about yourself on this journey}
- to find a family member
- to find your medical history
- to discover if that famous {or infamous} relative you've heard about is really related
- for membership into a society {DAR, Mayflower Society, etc}

What can I learn from Genealogy?

No one wants to read just a lot of names. Even us die hard genealogist want more, because that gets boring—FAST.

Some things you can learn from genealogy:

- ✓ old memories
- ✓ medical history
- ✓ find old photographs
- ✓ children and spouses
- ✓ military history
- ✓ why your ancestor moved
- ✓ did your ancestor own property
- ✓ occupation
- ✓ illnesses/injuries
- ✓ did your ancestor have a cause s/he stood up for
- ✓ description of what ancestor looked liked {hair color, eye color, etc}
- ✓ cause of death
- ✓ dates of birth and death
- ✓ where buried

These are just a small sampling of what you can learn. Often you will see a name and some dates, such as: John F. Kennedy May 29, 1917-November 22, 1963

The important thing to remember is that dash {-} represents a life that was lived. You want to fill it with as much information and facts as possible. There will be ancestors where you are overflowing with information and other ancestors where you are scratching your head wondering if they even existed.

Misconceptions of Genealogy?

There are many misconceptions of genealogy and I promise this list is not all inclusive. Still these are some of the most common misconceptions:

- Genealogy is easy {Don't be fooled. Genealogy takes a lot of time and energy}
- Genealogy is boring {I've often had more fun with my dead relatives than my living ones. You can make it fun}
- I won't find anything {Just about anyone can find information if you search hard enough}
- I can just pull my information up online {while the digital age has made this a lot easier, you're only going to find your family history **IF** someone else has already researched that line. If you do find it, look for one with references and **VERIFY EVERYTHING**. Too often bad information gets circulated around to the point people believe its fact}
- Census ages are always correct {sorry, but they are rarely correct}
- Official records do not contain errors {sorry, but humans gave the information. You'll be amazed at how often you do find an error}
- Three brothers came to America from XYZ. {Sometimes this is true, but most times it's not}
- My family has no skeletons in the closet {We all have skeletons. Some families refuse to talk about them, while others will brag about them. Please be cautions when proceeding down this avenue. Please respect people's feelings}
- All immigrants were poor or running from something {while many were either poor or running from the law or religious prosecution in the old country, this is not always the case}

- I can find everything about my family in just a few days {Good luck, you may want to find another hobby. You have two parents, four grandparents, sixteen great-grandparents, thirty-two great-great-grandparents, and so forth... and they all had parents, grandparents, siblings and children of their own. To do a good job, you've found a lifelong hobby. Settle in with a good chair, we're going to be here a while.}
- I can find everything I need online. {Oh, I love this one. Things are a lot easier today with census records, military records, etc online. However, there are many more records hidden in courthouses that may never see the light of day. Don't forget to find the little places you need to dig through the actual records}
- I can trace my lineage all the way back to Adam and Eve. {If you can, you probably have a lot of errors. I've seen genealogies this way, and I don't take them seriously. The farther back in time you go, the less likely you are to find good records unless you're kin to royalty (and even those stop at some point)}
- Everyone with my last name is related. {This is unlikely. If you have a very uncommon name then this could be a possibility. For example my Ouzts ancestor had 12 sons. I know everyone with that surname in South Carolina is most likely related to me. However, if we're in California, I'm going to ask you about your line. We may not be related. Also if you have a common surname such as Jones, Smith or Davis, then there is no way everyone with that surname is related to you.}

Where did Genealogy originate?

- ❖ People have been interested in their family for a long time.
- ❖ The Bible is filled with the family histories of some of our favorite Bible characters.
- ❖ Royal families need to know the line of succession.
- ❖ By the 16th and 17th Centuries the population was growing and it became necessary to take a surname. These came from a variety of places: description of person, occupation, father's name, region you were living, etc.
- ❖ Different cultures have different ways of saying their surname. Some have the surname first, while others have the surname last. You will have to find out about your particular surname and the area from which that name originated.

Peoples interest in Genealogy

Remember that not everyone is going to be interested in their family history. No one is going to be interested in **YOUR** family history the way you are. That is because it directly affects you, but not them. Even parents and siblings with your lineage may not have the same interest you have.

You will find five basic levels of interest:

1. NO interest at all
2. Mild interest—wants to hear some stories {usually the most interesting ones}
3. Moderate interest—interested in hearing about what you've learned/found. May consider attending a reunion or walking through a cemetery. Does not want to really help with the research {or very limited help}
4. Considerable interest—will help when asked. The person wants to hear everything you've found and is willing to do some research either on their own or to help out.
5. Addicted—eat, live and breathe family history. Loves to research their line, talks with the dead ancestors, and feels as if they know that ancestor that died long before they were born.

Whatever the level of another, please respect that feeling. Remember, they may have a hobby or interest that does not appeal to you. If they don't share your excitement, find someone else to share with that will understand.

Things to Remember

- Be conscience of others. If a family member doesn't want to share a bad memory, you can't force them
- Thank everyone that helps you {even the woman working at the courthouse when you go to look up records}
- Once you know how to research, pass on the help others have given to you
- Kindness will take you a long ways
- Genealogy takes a lot of time
- Copies/records cost money
- You can find resources everywhere
- Tracing family history takes a lot of patience
- Be sure to include everything you can think of when you're writing/typing information
- If you don't want a family secret made public, don't pass that information on in your research to others
- If a relative {aunt, uncle, cousin, etc} ask you not to include something then please respect their wishes
- List multiple marriages; adopted children and children that died young
- Don't skim over things because everyone knows it. You might know it now, but 100 years from now no one will.
- You can't rewrite your history {good or bad}. Include everything and learn to embrace those notorious characters.
- Don't forget titles such as Rev., Dr., Judge, Major, Captain, etc. when listing an ancestor or family member.

Basic Terminology

Ancestor—a forefather; person from whom you're descended

Ancestry—the lineage of all the ancestors of a person

Collateral Ancestor—two people descended from the same ancestral stock but not in the direct line

Common Ancestor—ancestor shared by any two or more people

Ahnentafel—a table of one's ancestors

Descendent—a person who descends from another person

Family Group Sheet—a report listing a father, mother and each child in the family

Genealogy—study of family history and descent

Maiden Name—a woman's last name or surname before marriage

Nee—often used to denote a woman's maiden name

{ex. Elizabeth Crocket nee Patton=Elizabeth Patton Crockett}

Pedigree—ancestry; bloodline; family tree; lineage

Surname—last name; family name

Writing Dates

In the United States dates are written mm/dd/yyyy {month/day/year}

In the United Kingdom dates are written dd/mm/yyyy

Check to see where the document originated and the way dates were written

Make sure you include the full year. If you write '12 we would think you're talking about 2012 today. However, generations in the future will not know this. Are you talking about 2012? 1912? 1812? 1712? 1612?

Today we're on the Gregorian Calendar. Before switching to this calendar most countries were on the Julian Calendar. Different countries adopted the Gregorian Calendar at different times and dates were changed when this happened. For example the United Kingdom adopted the calendar in 1752, Turkey adopted in 1917 and Spain adopted in 1582. Do your research, especially if you're not sure.

So please be careful and check the common usage for that country and area when writing and reading dates and calendars

How Do I Start Researching My Family History?

Starting is very easy, you're going to start with yourself.

Write your birth date and birth place.

Start with the basics: birth, marriage and death dates and then add the places for each. {Okay, so you can't fill in your own death date, but you will need it for other family members}.

Begin adding other facts: military, career, children, stories you have been told, memories, addresses you lived, schools you attended, etc.

Now to the same thing for your:

- Spouse
- Children
- Parents
- Siblings
- Grandparents
- Aunts/Uncles

*Remember you are telling a life story. Make the information as accurate as possible. The more interesting and entertaining the more people will enjoy learning about their family history. However, DON'T embellish.

Write Your Own Story

- Write your own story for your children and grandchildren
- Share with them all the things you remember and experienced
- Include both happy memories and losses
- Be honest about how you felt
- Include family traditions
- Include other significant family information
- You may want to start just freely writing all you remember and later compile the information into a more comprehensive form
- This is a great start to your genealogical journey
- Your family will always cherish your memories
- Your story is as short or long as you want to make it
- Share this with your family the next time you're together
- If your parents or grandparents are still alive, help them with their own story

What's Next:

Now that you've written your story, you want to begin to learn more about your siblings, parents, aunts and uncles, grandparents and great-grandparents.

Do you have older relatives still alive? The next step is to interview them.

Search for more information. On the next page, I'm providing a list of places to begin your research.

For the United States the 1940 census has been released. Search the census records from 1940-1790.

{More booklets on how to have a good interview, census records and other research tips coming}

Places to begin searching for genealogical records:

- Bibles
- Books
- Bottom of old furniture {dates/names}
- Certificates
- Closets
- Clothing
- Cookbooks
- Diaries and journals
- Family Heirlooms
- Family Trees
- Handmade items
- Important papers/documents {wills, deeds, titles, etc}
- Jewelry
- Letters
- Newspaper clippings
- Photo Album/Pictures
- Postcards
- Resumes
- School Papers
- Scrapbooks
- Sewing Samplers/Quilts
- Trunks and chest
- Yearbooks

Free Resources

Genealogy has been made a lot easier with the advent of the internet and the ease to digitize records.

There are many great sites, but some require payment. I'm providing a list of free resources to help you get started:

[Rootsweb](#)

[Family Search](#) {run by the Latter Day Saints}

[Find A Grave](#)

Many sites are available for free through your local library. You'll have to check with your library for sure. For a fee, you can subscribe for your own account. These sites are:

[Ancestry](#)

[Heritage Quest](#)

[Fold 3](#)

On the following pages I am including some basic genealogy charts for you.

Family History Record

Father: _____ Occupation: _____ Religion: _____
 Birth Date: _____ Place: _____
 Death Date: _____ Place: _____
 Burial Date: _____ Place: _____
 Father: _____ Mother: _____
 Other Spouses: _____ Military Service: _____

Mother: _____ Occupation: _____ Religion: _____
 Birth Date: _____ Place: _____
 Death Date: _____ Place: _____
 Burial Date: _____ Place: _____
 Father: _____ Mother: _____
 Other Spouses: _____

Marriage Date: _____ Place: _____
 Officiant: _____

Children:

	Full Name	Birth Date/Place	Death Date/Place	Spouse Name	Marriage Date/Place
1.					
2.					
3.					
4.					
5.					
6.					
7.					
8.					
9.					
10.					
11.					
12.					

Created by: ALookThruTime



Genealogy Checklist

Family Bible	
Books	
Certificates	
Closets	
Clothing	
Cookbooks	
Diaries	
Journals	
Furniture	
Family Trees	
Family Heirlooms	
Handmade Items	
Jewelry	
Letters	
Newspaper Clippings	
Photo Albums	
Old Pictures	
Postcards	
School Papers	
Sewing Samplers	

Other	
Other	

Created by: ALookThruTime



Biographical Outline

Name: _____	Date	Place	Other Notes
Birth			
Christening			
Birth of Sibling{s}			
Birth of Sibling{s}			
Elementary School			
Scouts			
Middle School			
Organizations			
Volunteer			
High School			
High School Graduation			
College			
Fraternity/Sorority			
College Graduation			
Military			
Jobs			
Jobs			
Marriage			
Children			

Death	
Burial	
Other	

Created by: ALookThruTime



Ancestor Chart

No. 1 on this chart is No. ____ on Chart # ____

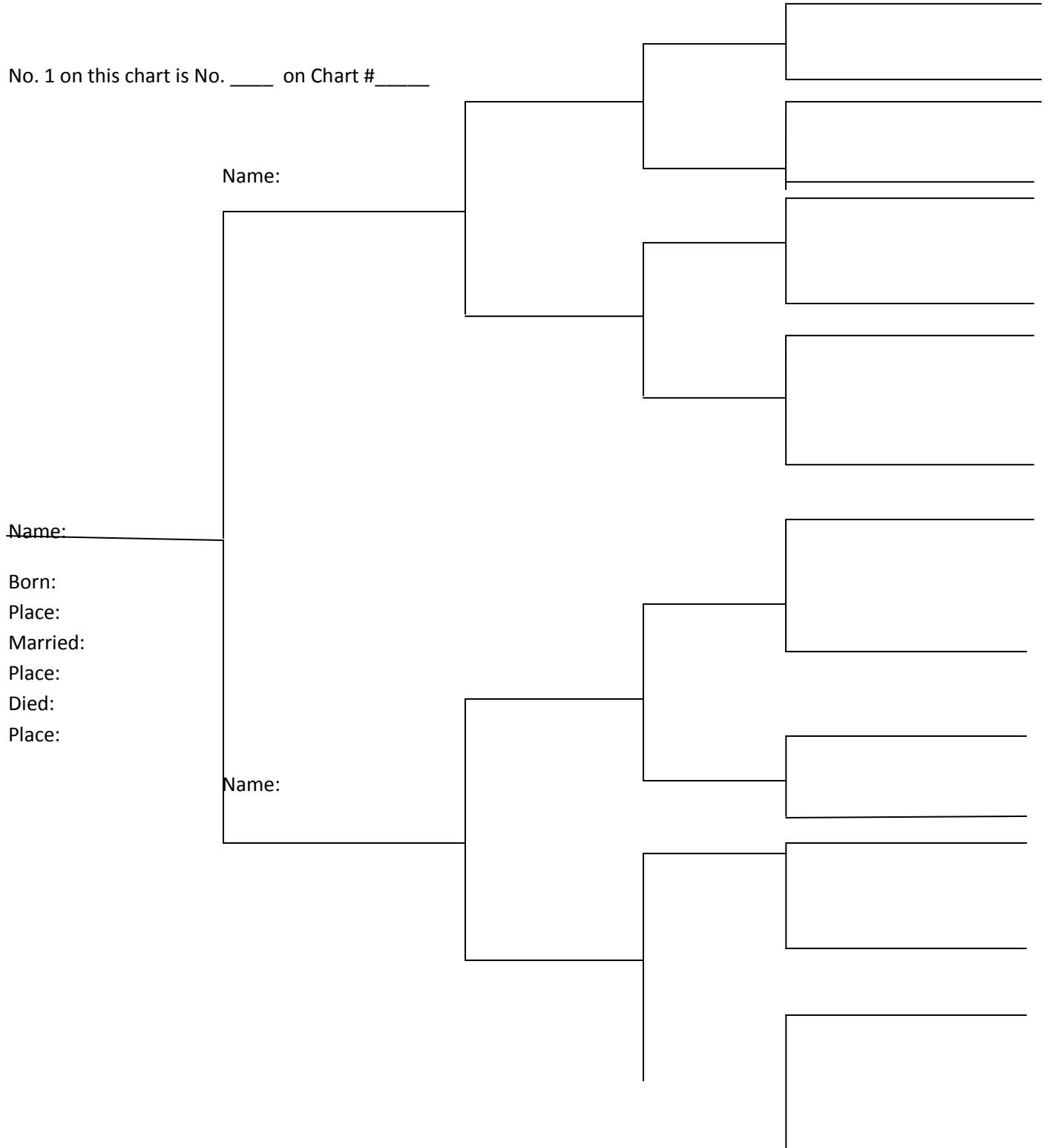


Chart # _____

Created by: ALookThruTime



This booklet has been created by ALookThruTime

www.ALookThruTime.com

Check back soon for new books that have been added

