



Foundations of Genealogy, Part 2

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Good Research Techniques

Whether you are just beginning on your family history research or you have been researching for years, it is important to practice good research techniques. Look for:

- ❖ Multiple sources for proof of your facts
- ❖ Original documents whenever you can find them
- ❖ Friends, associates, and neighbors; what Elizabeth Shown Mills calls the FAN club
- ❖ All possible variations of spelling

Always Analyze

- ❖ Documents and Photos
- ❖ Articles and Artifacts

You are looking for clues to take you to the next step in your research.

Ask Questions and Look for Discrepancies . . .

- ❖ As you look at your findings
- ❖ As you enter data into your genealogy program
- ❖ As you discuss your stories with others
- ❖ As you gather more information

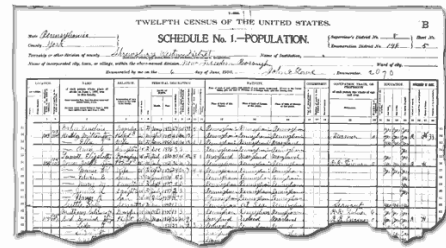
Begin (or resume) your research with the census.

Start with the present and work backwards for all family members. The more families you can piece together, one generation at a time, the better.

Use *HeritageQuest* or *FamilySearch* for free access or *Ancestry.com*, either at home or in the library. *Ancestry's* search engine is the most powerful.

Save either printed or digital images so you can analyze the sheets carefully. Look for clues on each census to move your research forward:

- ❖ Who were the neighbors?
- ❖ What occupations did people have?
- ❖ What military service did they engage in?
- ❖ What other families with familiar names are on the sheets before and after?
- ❖ What migration path did they follow?
- ❖ Are married children back home? Why?
- ❖ Are grandchildren, cousins, nieces, or nephews living with the family? Why?



Spelling

DOES NOT COUNT IN GENEALOGY!

- ❖ Many of our ancestors were barely literate, and if they weren't, the clerks with whom they dealt might have been not a lot better.
- ❖ They were not concerned about spelling things “right.”
- ❖ Names were spelled inconsistently everywhere, often in the same document.
- ❖ Complicating matters were “foreign” names that became Anglicized.
- ❖ Handwriting in documents adds to the problem and names are easily mis-indexed.

Good researchers:

- ❖ Accept any variations of names that make sense based on what they know.
- ❖ Are extremely flexible as they search.
- ❖ Say their names out loud and try to predict how they might have been pronounced by an immigrant and by those with whom he/she interacted.
- ❖ NEVER discount any fact based solely upon spelling!

What to Do Next?

1. Once you have used census records for your ancestors, branch out into vital records:
 - ❖ Try to obtain birth, marriage, and death records for everyone possible.
 - ❖ Look for records online, in libraries, archives, and courthouses.
2. Learn the history of your ancestors' **home towns** and about the times in which they lived.
3. Read the **newspapers** that have been digitized and microfilmed.
4. **Connect with cousins** and others researching the same families/locations.
5. Take **classes** and attend **conferences/workshops**, to learn more on a particular subject.



Ancestry.com and FamilySearch.org

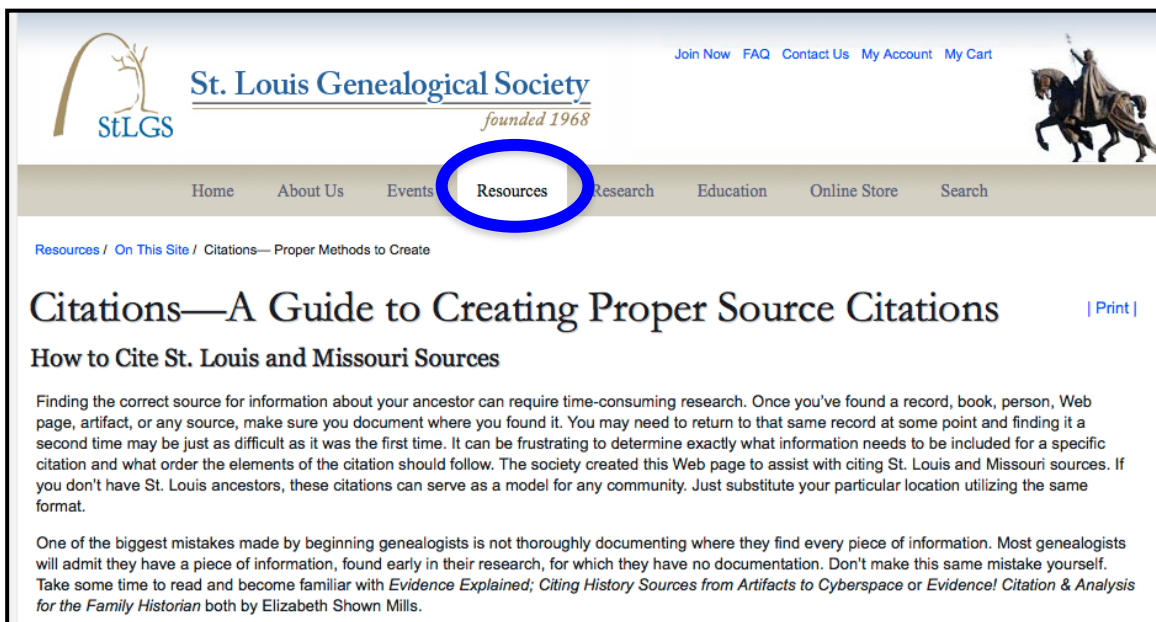
These are both wonderful resources IF you:

1. Concentrate on actual records and not interpretations.
2. Use the excellent learning resources on both sites.
3. Verify anything and everything you find on submitted family trees.
4. Cite all your sources properly. Someone else's unsourced tree is NOT a source!

Use the member-submitted family trees ONLY to get clues about things you are missing. NEVER add anything to your own files without proving it first. Look at anything you find with a critical eye.

Remember Proper Source Citation for Online Research

Use any of Elizabeth Shown Mills's guidebooks or the free citation templates at the StLGS website www.stlgs.org/. Go to *Resources/On This Site/Citations* for help with any kind of source citation.



The screenshot shows the St. Louis Genealogical Society (StLGS) website. The header includes the StLGS logo (founded 1968) and navigation links: Home, About Us, Events, Resources (circled in blue), Research, Education, Online Store, and Search. The main content area is titled "Citations—A Guide to Creating Proper Source Citations" and includes a sub-heading "How to Cite St. Louis and Missouri Sources". The text explains the importance of documenting sources and provides a link to a guidebook by Elizabeth Shown Mills.

Family Stories

Every family has stories handed down from one generation to the next. Often the stories contain some truth but not necessarily the whole truth. Be thorough in your research; do not accept the stories without proving them.

Try not to perpetuate myths. Good researchers check out every detail!

Sources

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St. Louis Genealogical Society website, <https://stlgs.org> Members have access to online classes, research forms, databases, instructional pamphlets, and many other free or discounted products and events.

Soundex

Why was Soundex Used?

Soundex is a system based on phonetics, so names that sound alike are grouped together, making it easier to locate variant spellings. Before federal censuses were indexed and widely available online, the Soundex system made it possible to find people without reading entire enumeration districts.

The only census years that were Soundexed were from 1880–1930, and not all years were complete.

- 1880: Only households with children age ten and younger
- 1900: Not all states and some in Miracode, similar to Soundex
- 1920: All states done
- 1930: Only ten states and a few portions of others

Some vital records in large cities and some passenger ship records were also indexed based on the Soundex system

How Do I Use Soundex?

If you cannot find someone in an online census index, try searching by Soundex. Some libraries still have microfilms of old Soundex cards. If you are using them:

- Go to the file that contains the correct state and Soundex number for the year you need.
- Search the film for your person. You will find the Soundex number in the upper left corner of each card on the film.
- Notice that the film is arranged by code number and **then by first name**.

The Soundex System

Soundex codes consist of **one letter** and **three digits**.

Letter	No. Equivalent
B, P, F, V	1
C, S, K, G, J, Q, X, Z	2
D, T	3
L	4
M, N	5
R	6

The letters A, E, I, O, U, Y, W, & H **within a name** are disregarded.

- Use the first letter of the surname to begin coding.
- Assign numbers to the next three consonants in the surname.
- Disregard remaining letters.
- Double letters are coded as one letter: tt=3 (not 33)
- Letters with the same code are treated as one: ck=2 (not 22)
- When you run out of letters, use 0's to make the three digit code.

Years Birth and Death Registration were First Required

<u>State</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>State</u>	<u>Year</u>
Alabama	1908	New Mexico	1919
Alaska	1913	New York	1880
Arizona	1909	North Carolina	1913
Arkansas	1914	North Dakota	1908
California	1905	Ohio	1909
Colorado	1907	Oklahoma	1908
Connecticut	1897	Oregon	1903
Delaware	1881	Pennsylvania	1906
District of Columbia		Rhode Island	1852
	Birth: 1871	South Carolina	1915
	Death: 1855;	South Dakota	1905
Florida	1915	Tennessee	1914
Georgia	1919	Texas	1903
Hawaii	1896	Utah	1905
Idaho	1911	Vermont	1857
Illinois	1916	Virginia	1912
Indiana	1882	Washington	1907
Iowa	1880	West Virginia	1917
Kansas	1911	Wisconsin	1907
Kentucky	1911	Wyoming	1909
Louisiana	1914		
Maine	1892		
Maryland	1898		
Massachusetts	1841		
Michigan	1867		
Minnesota	1900		
Mississippi	1912		
Missouri	1910		
Montana	1907		
Nebraska	1905		
Nevada	1911		
New Hampshire	1905		
New Jersey	1848		