

Genealogy Roots and Branches, LLC

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Dawn Carlile's 2025 Lecture List

Methodology & Records

Abstracting, Extracting, and Transcribing Records (All Levels)

Learn the difference between these three methods of recording information found in genealogy records, how it's done, which method you use in which situation, and for what purpose.

Analyzing and Evaluating Vital Record Information (All Levels)

We don't always understand what the information in vital records is trying to tell us. In our haste to find the dates, places, and parent's names, we often miss information that may shed light on your ancestor's life and provide additional clues. Careful analysis of vital records and their information will lead to more records.

Analyzing Information and Creating a Research Plan (All Levels)

To get the most value out of our research, we need to analyze the records and documents we find. We then take what we have learned and create a plan for further research. What should we be looking for? What is analysis? What is a research plan?

Fact or Fiction? Analyzing Online Family Trees (All Levels)

I found my ancestor in several (many?) online family trees but should I trust them? They're not all good or all bad. Before adding those people to your own tree, take steps to analyze that information and evaluate each source attached to them to keep you from adding erroneous relatives to your family.

Cemetery Research (can also be a 3-hour workshop) (All Levels)

How do you find where your ancestors are buried? What records do cemeteries keep? What are all those symbols and artwork on headstones trying to tell you? How do you locate a grave in a cemetery? Can you clean a headstone? We'll answer all these questions.

Census Records, the Who, What, When, Where, Why, and How (All Levels)

You are in the right place if you have ever wondered about the census's inner workings. We'll cover the history of the U.S. Federal Census, the census takers, unique questions, and the extra schedules for some census years.

There Were State Censuses, Too (All Levels)

We've all used the Federal census but may not know about the censuses taken by individual states. They often ask questions not on the Federal census. Learn which states took a census and when and where to find them.

Federal Census Non-Population Schedules (All Levels)

Go beyond the population schedules and learn about agriculture, manufacturing, mortality, slave, and the Deaf, Dumb, and Dependent (DDD) schedules. If your family were farmers, you must look at the Ag schedule to learn about their crops, livestock, and the farm goods they sold. If they owned or worked for a manufacturer in a city, you can add these details to their story. And the DDD covers more than just the three Ds.

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Researching in Church Records (All Levels)

Church records include baptism, confirmation, marriage records, deaths, and burials, as well as administrative and financial records. Resources for locating the church records in online and offline repositories. Examples will focus on Quaker, Catholic, and Presbyterian records and where to find them.

City Directories (All Levels)

What do you do between the Federal Census to locate your family? What about that twenty-year gap from 1880 to 1900? City and County Directories can provide surprising details about your ancestors. Learn about those details and where to find the directories. They are not limited to just cities as many cover surrounding communities and the county as well.

Why You Should Research the Collateral Lines (All Levels)

What are collateral Lines? All the other relatives that are not your direct descendants such as aunts, uncles, cousins, and in-laws. You can learn a lot about your ancestors by looking at their records. Information found in researching collateral relatives may provide the answers you so desperately seek about your direct line ancestors.

Courthouse Records Beyond Probate and Land Records Intermediate/Advanced

There are many other records in the courthouse besides land deeds, wills, and probate records that may provide details about your family and help you bust through your brick wall. We'll cover the names of the different courts, the types of court records you may find, and how they may help you.

Death Records: Medical Terminology and Epidemics (All Levels)

Deciphering the cause of death and those funny numeric codes on death certificates can lead to a better understanding of your ancestor's death. There are many epidemics of which we should be aware that affected our ancestor's lives. Having just lived through the COVID epidemic, we can relate to the epidemics of past generations.

Deciphering Old Handwriting Intermediate/Advanced

Deciphering the fancy (or terrible) handwriting, bad spelling, faint ink, and writing that bleeds through from the other side of the paper are issues we frequently encounter reading records in the courthouse, on microfilm or digital images, and in old diaries and letters. Tips and tools for getting around these issues will be discussed.

Homestead Records (All Levels)

The Homestead Act was signed in 1862, and millions of our ancestors claimed land under the Act, which generated valuable records of use for genealogists. Learn about the requirements to receive a homestead, the records created, and where to find them.

Early Immigration Records 1600s – 1855 (Intermediate/Advanced)

You may have been told no records during the colonial period, but some are available. Learn what records are available for immigration during the colonial period through 1855 and where you might find them.

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Guardianship Isn't Just for Minor Children. (All Levels)

We often think of guardians being appointed for minor children of deceased parents, but guardians are also appointed to manage the property, finances, and care of adults who are incapacitated, disabled, or lack the mental ability to care for themselves. These records can provide important family information.

Immigration 1855 – Early 20th Century (All Levels)

Immigration laws varied over the years and impacted who was allowed into the country. Learn about the more significant laws, reasons for immigration to America, and the records created by those arriving in America in the 17th - 20th centuries.

Using Land Records to Fill in the Blanks (All Levels)

Learn how researching land records can provide valuable information on your ancestors, from where the land was located, how wealthy they might have been, confirm familial relationships, and identify neighbors. Covers Federal land states vs State land states, township and range systems, and metes and bounds.

Platting Your Ancestor's Land (Intermediate/Advanced)

We often find deeds for land bought or sold by our ancestors that describe the land boundaries, but we have no idea what they mean or where they are located. We will review the rectangular survey system used in the Federal Land States and the metes and bounds survey system used in the State Land States.

Maps for Genealogists (All Levels)

Maps can be used to follow your ancestor's migration route and why they took a particular route or settled in an area. We will look at various historic maps from US maps to township and land ownership maps, railroad maps, and Sanborn fire maps. Both online and offline resources for historical maps are provided.

Naturalization Records (All Levels)

We will discuss how to know if your ancestor naturalized, cover naturalization laws, the naturalization process, where to find records, and what clues they might provide to solve your research problems with examples from various courts and time periods.

Newspaper Research (All Levels)

We all look in newspapers for obituaries and death notices, but there is so much more in newspapers that might provide the key to solving your brick-wall problem. Understand why your searches don't provide good results and what OCR is. We will cover how to find what newspapers were published in and around where your ancestors lived, where and how to access those newspapers, and tips for searching in the digital and microfilm records available.

Free Online Newspaper Resources (All Levels)

Our genealogy dollars are limited so save money by using the free resources for online newspapers. Many small and medium-sized newspapers are not on the large subscription sites and are often available to research online for free. We'll explore a variety of resources and demonstrate how to use them.

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Finding Foreign Newspapers (All Levels)

Did you know you can access many foreign newspapers from home? Learn about foreign newspapers from other countries, foreign language newspapers printed in the U.S., and resources for locating these newspapers both online and offline.

Passenger Lists (All Levels)

We will discuss the availability of pre-1820, 19th, and 20th-century passenger lists, where to find them, and what information they may reveal about your ancestors. We will also review the many different US ports where immigrants arrived.

Passports (All Levels)

Passports have been around since 1789 but were not always a requirement for travel. Find out who issued passports, who applied for one, where to find them, and what details they may contain. You may be surprised that your ancestors applied for a passport.

Periodical Research (All Levels)

More thorough genealogy research, whether researching people, locations, or events, requires searching in periodicals. Learn how to locate them using the Periodical Source Index, aka PERSI, even out-of-print or defunct publications, and get copies of articles without leaving home.

Researching in Railroad Records (All Levels)

Railroads opened more opportunities for our ancestors to migrate to new places across the U.S. Knowing where the railroads operated, their destinations, advertisements, and maps will add context to your ancestor's lives. Did your ancestor work for the railroad? Find out what records are available for railroad employees.

Tax Lists May Help Solve Your Genealogy Problems (All Levels)

Tax lists often provide information even if your family did not own land and may indicate their financial status. They can help identify relationships, indicate when a family moved into or left an area, and hint at when someone married, died, or became of age.

Using Timelines to Break Through Brick Walls (All Levels)

Timelines are a useful tool to help organize your family research and figure out where or why your ancestors lived where they did or why they moved, making it easier to flesh out their lives. You might be surprised by what suddenly becomes clear when looking at a timeline of a person's life.

Understanding Wills & Probate Records (All Levels)

Probate records are more than just wills. Learn what records make up a probate and the terminology you will see in those records. We will also cover the widow's dower and guardianship for minor children.

WPA - Works Projects Administration (All Levels)

President Franklin D. Roosevelt implemented the Federal Works Progress Administration in 1935 to provide work for the unemployed during the Depression. WPA workers created records and record inventories that genealogists use. We have access to the WPA employment records. Learn where to find these records, their genealogical value, and how to discover if your ancestor was a WPA worker.

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Miscellaneous Topics

AI – Basic Tasks That Save Time (All Levels)

Overwhelmed by AI? Anyone can do these basic tasks; no extensive training is required. Save time by letting artificial intelligence tools do the work for you so you have more time for research.

Create a Presentation to Share Your Family History (All Levels)

Whether it is for a family reunion or the holidays, it is a wonderful time to share your family history. See how easy it is to create a slide show with a few family photos and record images that won't make your relatives' eyes glass over. The demonstration will be using Google Slides, although the process is similar if using PowerPoint or other free presentation software. No experience is required.

FamilySearch Labs Full Text Search (All Levels)

If you haven't used the FamilySearch Full Text Search tool, you may miss out on records about your ancestors. This tool debuted in early 2024 with court and deed records not included in their searches and is adding other collections previously not indexed online and saves the researcher many hours of reading through records page by page looking for their ancestors' names.

Tips for Getting the Most Out of FamilySearch.org (All Levels)

Learn how to find the newest digitized records, the various search methods available, how to navigate the different search options, and how to download record images and books.

Did Your Ancestors Belong to a Fraternal Organization? (All Levels)

You will find many fraternal organizations throughout the history of America. We'll look at many of them and their records on their members and activities. Is your ancestor among them?

State-specific Research

Accessing Free Digital Collections for Oregon and Washington Research (All Levels)

Our genealogy dollars are limited, so save money by using free resources! Luckily, there are many free online resources for researching Oregon and Washington roots. Digital collections offer access to many records, photographs, and documents unavailable elsewhere. Take a tour through these collections and add to your resources.

Researching the Oregon Territory (All Levels)

The Oregon Territory once encompassed the current states of Oregon, Washington, and Idaho and portions of Montana and Wyoming. Provisional and Territorial Government records prior to Oregon statehood on February 14, 1859, may contain information on your fur traders, early explorers, and pioneers who lived and settled there.

Researching Oregon Trail Ancestors (All Levels)

The Oregon Trail extended approximately 2,000 miles from Independence, Missouri, to Oregon City, Oregon, from 1840 to 1869. More than 50,000 people traveled to Oregon, and a great number died on the journey. This talk will cover resources for researching people and their lives along the trail.

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Top Ten Genealogy Resources at the Oregon State Archives (All Levels)

The Oregon State Archives has a vast collection of records, including state birth, marriage, and death records. Learn which records are available online and which ones must be accessed onsite, as well as tips and strategies for preparing for a trip to the archive and where to locate county records.

Military Research

Civil War Records (All Levels)

You'll learn ways to find out if your ancestor served in the Civil War, where to locate records of their service, and if they or their heirs applied for a pension file.

Civil War Pensions (All Levels)

Pension files can contain a lot of genealogical information as well as information about the veteran's service and disability if they were disabled. We'll discuss soldiers, widows, and minors pensions.

A Civil War Pension Application for Minor Children Provides Many Answers (All Levels)

Uncovering a Civil War Pension Application for Minor Children answered many questions and revealed an illegitimate child, an unknown marriage, and a court clerk's error in a divorce case.

Researching Your Confederate Ancestor (All Levels)

We'll review what records are available for researching Confederate soldiers and where you can find them online and offline. You might be surprised at some of these resources.

Revolutionary War Records (All Levels)

The 250th anniversary of the Revolutionary War is next year, 2026 and many people are checking to see if one or more of their ancestors served in the war. This class will focus on the Patriot side (us) but will mention the Loyalists (British). You'll learn what records were created, where you may find them, especially those online, and where to locate information on the war itself.

Talks in development:

Military Research - Indian Wars

Military Research - Spanish-American War

Military Research - War of 1812