

# THE RESEARCH PROCESS

## Step 3b: Select records to search

### Helpful Guessing Skills

- Guessing a Place for every event on that family group. Usually you need to guess where an event happened to be able to guess where to look for records of that place.
- Guessing a Date for every event on that family group. You need to guess dates to narrow searches when indexes are not available or cover only limited periods.
- Guessing a Name Variation for every name on that family group. Your ancestors may have always spelled their name a certain way, but the clerks who wrote their names probably used some surprises. Learn to look for ancestors under unexpected spellings and names.

### Selection Criteria

#### Record Content

##### Information

Does the record have the kind of information you are looking for? If, for example, you need to find out about a marriage, does the record give marriage information?

##### Location

Is the record from the place where you believe the event occurred? Are there other local jurisdictions that may have similar records that you should search? Did the boundaries of a jurisdiction change while or after your ancestor lived there? Did your ancestor move to nearby jurisdictions? Select records from every jurisdiction where the family lived and consider nearby jurisdictions. Sometimes you will need to do an area search

##### Time

Does the record cover the time period during which the event took place? Be sure to establish broad ranges of time to search

## Record Access

Is the record in a repository you can visit? Can you get a copy? Are you permitted to use the record?

## Reading the Record

Are there skills or knowledge you need to read the record, such as (1) ability to read foreign languages, (2) ability to read old handwriting, or (3) knowledge of terms used? Remember that records are usually in the language of the country and many early records are in Latin.

## Finding Information

Can you locate the information in the record? Do you have the information necessary to recognize the relative you are seeking? Will there be so many of that name (such as Smith) that you must know the first name? Will the search be too extensive if you don't know a specific place? How many microfilms or volumes will you need to search if you don't know the year? Before you select a record, determine if you may need the following:

- an index
- the ancestor's given (first) name
- the name of the county or town
- a limited time period
- more specific information about the ancestor's religion, military service, or occupation

## Interest, Inspiration, and Intuition

As you select a specific record, follow your best judgment. If you feel strongly interested or your intuition suggests a record not recommended by the strategy, then select that record.

# Research Logs

Research logs document where you search, and what has or has NOT been found.

Good research logs help you:

- Cite your sources. This shows quality research.
- Sort out what has and has not been found.
- Organize and correlate copies of documents.
- Weigh evidence to make better conclusions, and better lineage links.
- Show your search strategies and questions.
- Reduce unwanted duplication of effort.

G. David Dilts, "Citing Sources Using the *Chicago Manual of Style*," [\*Genealogical Journal\* 24: 4 \(1996\), 149-53](#) [FHL Book 973 D25gj v. 24 1996]. See also Elizabeth Show Mills, [\*Evidence Explained\*](#) (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing, 2007)[FHL Book 929.1 M625ee].

Research logs vary in form and content. The following elements work well for most researchers.

- Ancestor's name and years: husband being researched, for example, William FRAZIER 1826-1881.
- Researcher's name: your name.
- Date of search: for example, 8 May 2001; Records you plan to search without a date until searched.
- Place of research: use full mailing address, telephone/fax number, e-mail address, or Internet URL.
- Purpose (objective) of search: event and person being sought (use symbols), for example, \* Robert (Event symbols for objectives and results: \*=birth ∞=marriage †=death)
- Call number: library or archive call number, for example, FHL book 977.162 D3d
- Source Description: author, title, where the original is (that is a publisher or repository), date, and page.
- Scope of Your Search: What exactly did you search, what did you record, what parameters limited what you recorded as results?

- Document Number: a number you make up to show where will you file your copy of the source.
- Results: a summary of the persons and events found.

### **Research log at familysearch**

[https://familysearch.org/wiki/en/images/5/50/Research\\_Log.pdf](https://familysearch.org/wiki/en/images/5/50/Research_Log.pdf)