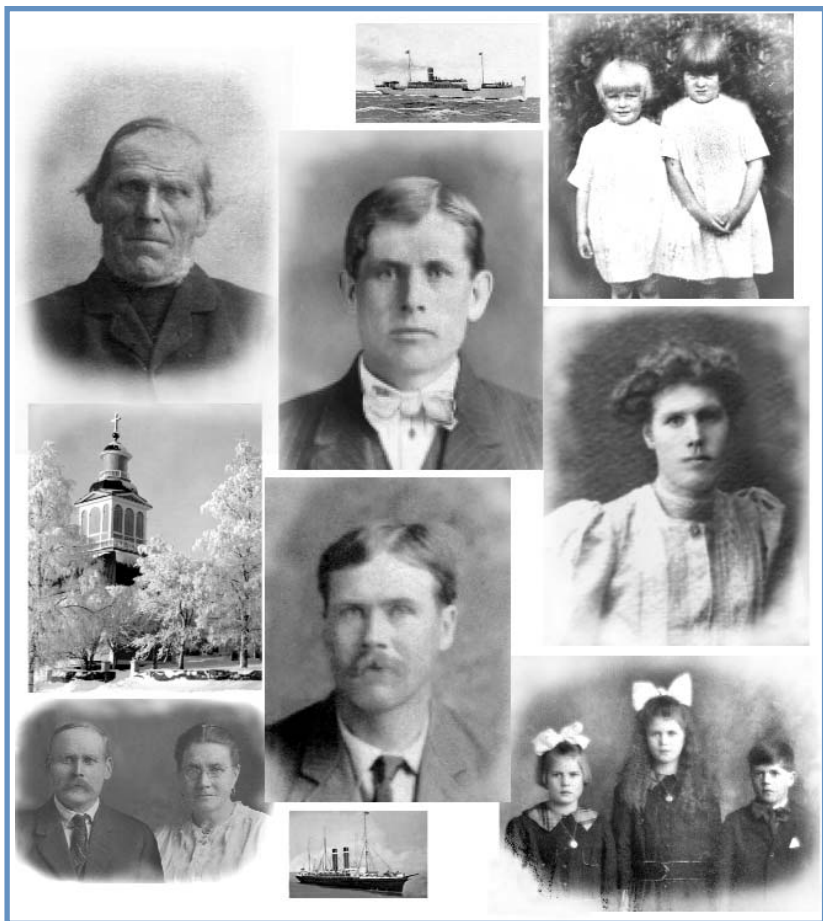


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# Researching & Writing Your Family History



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# Researching and Writing Your Family History

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Genealogy is one of the most popular hobbies in America today. We have become fascinated with discovering our roots. After much painstaking research over periods of years, we will, hopefully, end up with a completed family tree and an accompanying history.

But while those are great historical works in their own right, they are also yet one more important demonstration of how small and interconnected our planet really is. For example, in west central Finland are at least 200 people to whom I am related. I did not even know of their existence until I first began my genealogical search in 1985. And here in the United States, I have met about 30 people to whom I am related whose roots are in that very same part of Finland.

Knowing where you came from and who your ancestors were fills in what is otherwise a very huge gap in our interpretation of the word “family.” We are the sum total of all that has come before us, and when you begin to “meet” your ancestors through your research, this will become readily apparent. And, when you meet your long-lost distant cousins, you may be pleasantly surprised to find that you have a lot more in common with them than just your DNA.

The following is a brief introduction to researching and writing your family history. Be prepared to work hard at it, and at the same time, be prepared to have fun!

## Researching With An Open Mind

Any form of research requires that you keep an open mind about anything and everything. If you don’t, you may miss a valuable piece of information along the way, or you may end up on a wild goose chase. Nowhere is this more true than in a genealogical search. So keep the following in mind as you research.

## Spelling

Spelling in general in the United States did not even begin to become standardized until about 200 years ago, but it didn't apply that much to proper names. In addition, spellings for names can and do change over periods of time, especially over centuries. Alternate spellings may be adopted by certain branches of a family and not by others. Some languages may use certain letters interchangeably, such as a "C" and "K" or a "V" and "W."

## Name Changes

Contrary to popular belief, most names were not changed at Ellis Island by unscrupulous clerks. Many people simply wanted to be Americans and they "Americanized" their own names. Smythes, Smithsons, and Smetoviches became "Smiths." Some people took names that were altogether different, such as a Leventlow taking the name "Miller" because that was his occupation, or a Mascagnini taking the name "Albertson" because his father's name was "Alberto." People also came to this country with passport names that were different than the name they used in their homeland. Dig deep to be sure you know all the possible names your ancestors may have used during their lives.

## Birth and Other Dates

One of the most confusing dates is the birth date. This is because many church records do not always record the birth date, but may instead record the christening or baptism date, which could have occurred anywhere from three to ten days after the birth. The same thing happens with death dates and burial dates. Also, you must be very careful not to mix up American and European styles of dating. In the United States, the month comes first, as in June 7, 1885 written 6/7/1885. In Europe, the day comes first and would be written 7 June 1885 or 7/6/1885. Also, when people copy down dates, they sometimes miscopy, either transposing dates or writing down an old-style 7 as a 4 or 1 as a 7, or by misreading a handwritten "Jun" (June) that looks more like "Jan" (January).

## Birth Places

Just because a document says your great-grandfather came from Genoa, Italy does not mean that he did. He may have simply sailed from the port of Genoa and may have come from a tiny town miles away. Or, he may have lived in Genoa at the time he departed for America, but he may have been born in a small town outside of Milan. Your father may have told you that your grandparents were French, but that does not mean they came from France. Your great aunt may have told you that your family originated in Munich, Germany, but that could be misinformation that is generations old, and they may really have come from some neighboring community. Borders of countries and the names of countries can change over time.

## Natural & Adoptive Parents

Not every mother is a biological mother of the children she raised, and this is important when you start tracing maternal lines. The woman you know of as your great-great-grandmother could have married your great-great-grandfather immediately after the death of his first wife in childbirth – a very common occurrence. Your biological great-great-grandmother may be someone else entirely.

Husbands frequently adopted their wife's children from a previous marriage in which the biological father is deceased. Death at an early age was common, especially for women in childbirth, and a single father would be pretty much unheard of in the old days. Some men were married three or more times to ensure that their children always had a mother. You are related to all of the descendants of those marriages, but while you may want to tell the story of a non-biological ancestor, you will probably only want to trace the line of your biological ancestor.

## Research Etiquette

One of the most important things a family genealogist should learn is good research etiquette. Good manners ensures cooperation from other family genealogists. Genealogy research, particularly on the

Internet, is dependent on an ongoing exchange of free information. Many people have done extensive research on your tree, but maybe not on your particular line. They may have spent a lot of time and money in doing this, may have traveled to do it, may have purchased a ton of records from vital statistics and other agencies. So, when they share that valuable information with you, you need to be your most gracious and grateful self, and express that gratitude immediately.

Always thank anyone who responds to your request for help, even if they did not have the information you wanted. They still took the time to look through their files and then respond to you. Offer to exchange information with them about your line or about any other lines you may have come across in your search. Not everyone is searching all of the time for new information, but may welcome it. Respond with that information immediately.

## **Exchanging Family Information**

You must always be willing to share your records and to continue to exchange information. That is how family genealogists work. If you do not participate in this kind of interchange, there is a good possibility that you will develop a reputation for being uncooperative, and it may prevent you from obtaining further information that is out there and already researched.

Always be courteous and prompt in responding to any and all enquiries about your own family. Be prepared to have long or ongoing E-mail or phone discussions with other genealogists that may last for weeks, months, or even years. All of these people know each other from working on their family trees. I know at least a dozen other people searching my tree and we've been in contact for years. When anyone gets new information, such as a correction to an old line, or new births and deaths, we bulk E-mail that information to everyone else. This keeps our family trees constantly updated.

## Premature Linkage

Another part of genealogical etiquette revolves around linking to existing trees prematurely, a.k.a. “in error.” Unfortunately, this happens quite frequently by unwitting family genealogists who come across a piece of information that looks right but which they do not investigate further, making the assumption that they are related to a line of a family to which they are not related.

Premature linkage creates two serious problems: 1) you are preventing a legitimate descendant from linking to that tree and are forcing them to research further for no reason, and 2) you are creating misinformation that will then be spread to other family genealogists, as well as to anyone with whom they are in contact. With today’s technology, this creates a worldwide error in a very short period of time, and one that is very difficult and time-consuming for everyone to correct.

No matter how much something appears to be correct, dig deeper. Verify everything with all the records and documents you can possibly lay your hands on. Question everything. Never take anything at face value.

## Research Methods

### Getting Organized

Before you even think about searching for your ancestors, know that you will be dealing with a ton of information and some of it will be conflicting, some will appear to be irrelevant to your search, some will be for other lines in the same tree, etc. Keep everything. Never throw any of it away, even if you know it is not for your particular line of the family, because someone else may need it and you will be able to give it to them after they have given you something you need. In other words, it is a good way to reciprocate in kind.

Keep files and file folders for each line, for each individual, or for whatever works best for you. Keep all your trees in separate files. Keep original documents in a separate file or under sheet protectors

in a binder with tab dividers for each person they pertain to. Keep maps, photos, and histories in separate files. Carefully label everything in pencil (not pen), making sure that you do not put glue or tape on top of photos or other valuable documents.

Make a cover sheet for each person you are researching, showing alternate spellings of names (because you have to search every alternative you can think of and you may find the person you are looking for under a variety of names), addresses where they lived, churches they attended, names of their children (and variant spellings for the children's names), names of people who knew them, notes on what they did in life (e.g., military services, farmer in a particular county, attended a particular school, owned a business, etc.), where they are buried, when they were married or divorced, etc. On the back of that cover sheet, or on a separate attached blank sheet, make a list of all the questions you need to get answered about this person.

## **One Line At A Time Research**

Start your research with only one single line of a tree and get it right as far back as you can. For example, if your father's name is Mitchell, research grandfather Mitchell, great-grandfather Mitchell, great-great-grandfather Mitchell, great-great-great-grandfather Mitchell, and so forth. Do not start a search on grandfather Mitchell's wife's family until you have the entire Mitchell line complete. Sticking with one line only ensures that by the time you are done you will have the correct lineage. Then you can feel safe in starting to fill in all the other branches of your tree, one line at a time.

## **Working Backwards**

When you do genealogical research, you will always be working backwards, starting with your parents, then your grandparents, then your great-grandparents, etc. This is the only correct and logical way to do genealogical research. NEVER do this any other way as it will always be a complete waste of time if you do. For example, just because great-grandfather McDougall came from a particular town where there are tons of MacDougalls dating back to the same

common ancestor born in 1143, does not mean that you should start searching in 1143, or even in a more recent generation in 1651 or 1732. Families used to be very large. That ancient McDougall could have had eight children who survived to adulthood and had large families of their own, who in turn had their own big families. Many such family trees are positively gigantic. The family tree on my mother's side alone has 52,636 members dating back to the year 1450, the year my 12x great-grandfather was born. On the other hand, my father's side of the family has only 191 members dating back to ca. 1620.

## Where To Begin

Before you begin to interview family members and family friends, it is important to have some written documentation on which to base your questions. This is the time to collect all of the written documentation you can so that you can verify it with the people you interview. Sometimes the written documentation is in error, and this is where you can find that out.

Get together as much information as possible about your parents, grandparents, great-grandparents, etc., from any and all documents you have or can obtain from various agencies, such as:

birth dates	baptismal dates	marriage dates
death dates	burial dates	titles and deeds
photographs	scrapbooks	diaries
passports	citizenship papers	drivers licenses
social security	military records	school records
medical docs	letters and cards	family Bibles

Contact family members you know, family members you don't know, and friends of family members. Have a list of questions for all of them and see who knows what. Sometimes they will lead you in the right direction; sometimes they won't. When they do have information, it can be really wonderful. I contacted a woman to whom I am not related, and she came through with a ton of information about my

grandmother and even sent me some old snapshots of my grandparents from the 1920s and 1930s.

## Searching the Internet

Before you begin your interviews, you can also search the Internet and contact government agencies to obtain census reports, passenger lists of ships bringing people to the United States, newspaper articles, family trees researched by other family genealogists, and much other valuable information.

Learn to limit or expand your searches by using first and last names or by using a last name and a town name, or by using the names of the husband and wife together, for example:

search for: "John Albert Smith"(looking for all John Albert Smiths)

search for: "John Smith"(looking for all John Smiths)

search for: "John Smith" Mill Creek, Missouri (John Smith in Mill Ck)

search for: "Smith, Missouri"(looking for Smiths in Missouri)

search for: "John and Elvira Smith"(using wife's name too)

search for: "Elvira Jolene Madison" (using wife's maiden name)

search for: "Elvira Smith" Missouri (using wife's name to find husband)

search for: "John Smith" 1848 (using birth year)

search for: "John Smith" September 4, 1848 (using birth date)

search for: "John Smith" December 13, 1907 (using death date)

General searches can be done using search engines such as altavista.com, which is good for European searches in particular, or you can use google.com, dogpile.com, yahoo.com, or any others that you find as you go along in the search process.

You can search genealogy websites such as ancestry.com, genealogy.com, rootsweb.com, etc., and you can search websites that specialize in ancestors from a certain country or a certain family. There are records for Ellis Island and the LDS archives. You can look at the passenger lists for the ships your European ancestors took to come to America, and you can even look at pictures of the ships themselves. There are also websites for descendants of slaves and for certain family names. Yours might be one of them.

Another place to search is in the postings in genealogical forums for your family name, as they often contain a lot of information that is not yet posted anywhere else on the web and may, in fact, never be posted on the web. These are searches in progress where someone has a lot of family data and is trying to piece it all together so that they can link it up to the right tree. Their data may help you, or yours might help them.

## **Fact Checking Your Data**

When you find information, remember that it is only as accurate as the person who wrote it down. It's like the saying "garbage in, garbage out." Always consider the source. There is data that came directly from original documents, meticulously copied by people who reviewed those documents; there is also data that is just passed along and may be carelessly copied. Do not be afraid to ask people where they obtained their information and to ask if they have actually viewed original documents or if they have copies of those documents that you can review. And always offer to pay them for their time or reimburse them for postage and copying.

## **Archiving Your Data**

You can't rely on a hand-drawn family tree for very long, because it is always growing and changing, especially during the initial research stage. Back in 1989, I started out using a hand-drawn tree on large sheets of graph paper that were all taped together. It was seven feet wide by four feet tall, and it hung in my front hallway (the only wall big enough for it) for three years. I finally invested in Family Tree Maker software. It is one of the most widely used genealogical software programs in the United States, and that is a real advantage when you are exchanging data on a regular basis. There are other excellent programs available, but this one is my favorite. If budget is a concern, you can download, at no charge, a very nice piece of genealogical software called Brother's Keeper. There are probably other free downloads as well. Surf the Net until you find something that works for you.

## Compiling Histories

This is the “fun” part of genealogy. It’s the part where you really get to find out who’s who and who did what and where and why and with whom, etc. You will really enjoy hearing all the stories about your family members. I guarantee it.

Ask friends and family members to tell their stories and memories of deceased family members. Some will be happy to write their story for you, which you can then edit for your final family history. I obtained many great stories this way. Letters and diaries are very revealing, as are newspaper articles that are written when someone is born, dies, is married, or does something noteworthy in their community. Also, see if any books have been written about your ancestors or that mention your ancestors.

Visiting a hall of records and doing a title search can reveal some very interesting stories in and of themselves. Such files often include records of any legal action taken by or against your family members, and in cases of a bankruptcy proceeding, you may even find lists of their assets, which should give you a better indication of what they owned and how they probably lived. Sometimes the obituaries find their way into these files as well.

People love to read how their ancestors lived. Remember that as you write. It may all sound boring to you now, but believe me, someday people will be amazed to learn that you listened to music on something called a CD or that you still had television, or that your car actually ran on gasoline.

Collect and use as much information as you can. If any information you acquire doesn’t quite fit, put it in an appendix. A few things you might want to include: family recipes, lists of who is buried where, former residence addresses, health problems, causes of death, name origins, maps of the old country, passenger ship lists, census pages, vital statistics documents, property deeds, pages from family Bibles, etc. There is no end to the kind of information you can use in compiling your history.

## Conducting An Interview

You will sometimes only get one chance to interview someone, for example, if you travel out of state to meet with them. Some senior citizens may need more than one meeting, often for as little as an hour at a time, as they may tire easily.

Get a good portable tape recorder with either a built-in condenser microphone or a separate, hand-held mike. Get good quality tapes. Test the machine before you do the interview to make sure it is working properly. Arrange to interview your family members and family friends at a time that is convenient for them.

Never walk into an interview unprepared or make an extremely open-ended request such as, "Tell me your story." This is especially important when you are interviewing someone who is elderly or whose memory wanders. They may have a lot to tell, but it may not come out in any order that you can follow. Remember, you have to write this all up later. So start by being as organized as you can in the very beginning.

Compile a list of questions (or use the ones in the pages that follow). Organize your questions into chronological order and/or in order of subject matter. The importance of organizing the interviews will become very apparent when you get to the point where you are actually using the interviews to write the histories.

Take any documents you have with you, and verify their accuracy before you begin asking questions. For example, if you only have four birth certificates and suspect your grandmother may have had more children who did not survive, ask her or ask your mother, or ask whoever you are interviewing who would know this information.

## Interview Questions

The following are some of the kinds of questions you might want to use in your interviews. Note also that these same questions can be used to trigger your own memories when you are compiling your memoirs or family history from your own personal knowledge.

Some people might not want to reveal everything, and so don't be surprised if they just shrug and ignore a question altogether. Other people might really want to go into some detail on a particular topic. The responses you get will depend on the individual and will probably vary greatly. Feel free to expand on any of these questions when you ask them. Only you will know what information you already have and what you still need to learn.

These questions will help you in tracing your ancestry, will provide you with information about those ancestors, and will help you uncover a wealth of anecdotal information about your ancestors – information that will make them come alive.

## **Ancestry**

What were the names of your parents (grandparents, great-grandparents, etc.)?

When and where were they born?

When did they come to America?

Who came first to America?

How did they finance their trip?

What port did they come through?

What ship(s) did they travel on?

Were they married here or in the Old Country?

How long were they married?

Were either of them married previously?

What was their marriage like?

What did they do for a living?

Where did they live?

What kind of house or apartment did they live in?

Did they own their own house?

What are the addresses where they lived?

What was their health like?

How many children did they have?

What were their children's names?

When were their children born and when did they die?

What religion did your parents practice?

What was the level of education of your parents?

Where did they go to school?

What kinds of jobs did they have?

Did they have money or did they struggle a lot?

What stories do you remember about them?

What were their personalities like?

What kinds of hobbies or interests did they have?

## **Childhood and Teen Years**

When and where were you born?

Where did you live as a child?

What did you look like?

What are the addresses of the places you lived?

What was the weather like where you lived?

What were the towns like where you lived?

What was your relationship like with your parents?

Did you live near other relatives?

What was your relationship like with other relatives?

How was your family different from others?

What foods did you grow up eating?

What were your favorite foods?

What did you like to do when you were a child, a teenager?

Did you have any pets?

What kinds of hobbies or interests did you have?

Did you have private instruction outside of public school?

Where did you go to elementary school? High school?

What were your favorite subjects in school?

What kind of a student were you?

Did you have any favorite teachers?

What kinds of school activities did you participate in?

- Who were your friends in elementary school? High school?
- What was your neighborhood like?
- Who were your neighbors?
- When did you learn to drive?
- Who taught you to drive?
- What kind of car did you learn in?
- When did you get your first car?
- When did you start dating? Who was your first date?
- Did you have a steady girlfriend/boyfriend?
- What did you like to do for fun?
- Where did your family go on vacations?
- What was your health like as a child? A teenager?
- What was your daily life like as a child or teenager?
- What kinds of rules did your family have?
- Were you a problem child? Smoking? Drinking? Drugs?  
Cutting class?
- What are some of the things that happened to you when you were young?
- What was the most important things that happened to you when you were young?
- What was the worst thing that happened when you were young?
- What did you dream about doing when you got out of high school?
- Who were your childhood heroes and role models?
- What did you like best about your childhood?
- Was your childhood a happy one or a not so happy one, and why?
- What is your happiest memory of your childhood years?

## **Adult Years**

- Did you go to college or a trade school? Where?
- How was your education paid for?
- What did you study? How did you decide what to study?
- What kind of a student were you?

What was your first job?

What other jobs did you have?

What jobs did you like the most? The least? Why?

What was your financial condition like over the years?

Where did you live first when you moved away from home?

Did you live with a roommate(s)? Alone?

What was it like to be away from your parents for the first time?

Who else did you live with after moving away from your parents?

Did you have a car? What kind of car was it?

Did you have any girlfriends/boyfriends?

Who were your closest friends?

What things did you like to do with your friends?

What was your relationship like with your parents as an adult?

What kinds of hobbies or interests did you have as an adult?

What kinds of goals and dreams did you pursue, or not pursue?

Where did you travel as an adult?

Who did you travel with?

When and how did you meet your spouse?

What first attracted you to him/her?

What was your courtship like?

When did you decide to get married?

What was your wedding like?

Where did you go for your honeymoon?

Where did you live as newlyweds?

When did you have your first child?

What was it like becoming a parent for the first time?

How did you perceive your role as a parent?

Did you enjoy being a parent?

Do you feel you were a good parent, a bad one, so-so?

What parenting mistakes did you make?

How did you correct those mistakes?

- What dreams did you have for your children?
- How did you help your children realize their dreams?
- Did you see any family traits in your children?
- What did you like to do together as a family?
- What are your fondest memories of your children?
- How did you discipline your children?
- How did you praise your children?
- What was different between your upbringing and your children's?
- What was the most important thing you wanted your children to learn from you?
- What were your greatest concerns regarding your adult children and their lives?
- What are the things that you admire about each of your children?
- What did you learn from your children?
- Where did you live, addresses and cities?
- When did you buy your (first) house?
- What is the most important thing you learned from being married?
- What was the hardest thing about being married?
- What did you love most about your spouse?
- If you were widowed, describe that experience?
- If you later remarried, how did that relationship come about?
- If you divorced, what was that like?
- If you then remarried, how did that all unfold?
- What was your second spouse like?
- What was your second marriage like?
- Did you ever have stepchildren? Adopted children? Foster kids?
- How did you feel about your stepchildren? Adopted children? Foster children?
- If you are a grandparent, describe how you felt when your first grandchild was born.
- What was your role in the life of your grandchildren?

What did you teach your grandchildren?  
What did you learn from your grandchildren?  
Were you ever in the military? What branch of the service?  
Did you fight in a war(s)?  
What was life in the military like, especially during wartime?  
What rank did you earn? Any medals or honors?  
Were you ever injured or seriously ill as an adult?  
Do you know of any family diseases or tendencies towards certain diseases?  
What type of religious beliefs have you embraced in your life?  
Do you feel those beliefs have served you well?  
Did you ever have doubts about your chosen faith?  
What were your biggest fears in life?  
Did you do volunteer work or belong to any clubs?  
What kinds of volunteer work did you do?  
In what ways have you changed as a person from childhood to adult to senior citizen?  
What are some of the life lessons you learned as an adult?  
What kinds of crises or struggles did you face as an adult?  
What did you learn from living through those crises and struggles?  
What changes in your life affected you the most?  
How did the death of your parents affect you?  
If you could live your life again, what would you do differently?  
Do you have any regrets about anything in your life?  
What changes did you see in the world during your life?  
What technology evolved that changed the world as you knew it?  
How did those changes affect you in your life?  
What do you most want your children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, etc., to know about you?  
What do you most want them to remember you for?  
What kind of person are you today?

What dreams and goals do you still hope to fulfill in your life?

What is the hardest thing about growing older?

What is the biggest challenge in being a senior citizen?

What is the best thing about growing older?

When did you retire, or did you retire?

How do you most like to spend your days?

What is most important to you in life now?

What are your most prized possessions?

What is your favorite thing to reminisce about?

What things in your life have given you the most inspiration?

How do you feel about your world and the world at large?

What do you predict will happen in the world in the years to come?

What would you still most like to see or experience?

For what are you most grateful today?

## Writing Your Family History

All the statistical information you have acquired tells a story, but it may not be very interesting to read that John Peterson married Jane Carlyle in Cook County, Iowa and their children were Harriet, Robert, Stanley, Mary, Elizabeth, and George. George Peterson married Mathilda Gregory and their children were Marcus, Robert, Thomas, John, George, Eliza, and Susannah. Marcus moved to Alturas County, California in 1856 and married Eleanor McCarthy, and their children were ...

The information you obtained in your interviews will provide the real interesting part of your ancestry, the part that makes all those names come alive, makes them real people. But, you cannot expect an interview to be transcribed and be intelligible or usable "as is." You will have to edit it, add punctuation and break run-on sentences into shorter sentences. People talk very differently than the way they write.

Just because you remember the people your subjects are talking about doesn't mean your children or grandchildren or anyone who comes after that will know who they are. Be sure you put in full names and birth and death dates next to a name when it first appears so that everyone will know who is being talked about.

## Organizing Your History

When I first started to write my family history, I started to write it like a novel. It didn't work. Way too many people – many with the same name – and far too many stories about each. What I found worked better was to write a general background about where my family came from and where they came to live in America. Then I wrote individual profiles for each ancestor by generation, letting other people who knew them tell stories about them, when such information was available. This made my history a lot more interesting. My relatives, many of whom I had never met, came alive on the page. My ancestors likewise took on dimension and were “real” to me.

Everyone's history will be a little bit different, because the amount and type of information we all have is different. Some people's histories will be based on the place they lived and the people they knew, and other histories may be more personality-based. Some histories may be genealogies only, with just a spattering of personal data along the way. Other histories, like mine, will be all of the above.

## Avoiding Confusion

When you write your histories, be sure that you always use full names and cite birth dates/death dates next to them (the first time you use the name or if you haven't mentioned him/her in the text for awhile), so that generations to come can follow who you are talking about. This becomes very important when you have so many people who have the same names, e.g., John Sr.'s son is John Jr., John Jr.'s wife Susan has the same name as John Sr.'s mother, etc. What I usually do is put a name that is not used in parenthesis, put nicknames in quotes, and put an Americanized name in brackets:

(Matts) Arvid (Forsbacka) Forström (07/21/1882-11/13/1917)  
(Svea Wilhlemina) "Minnie" Forstrom (02/26/1906-04/02/1927)  
Anders Joel Mattsson Stål [Joel Steele](07/13/1885-02/05/1954)  
(Maria) Rosa (Bozzini) Buzzini (09/04/1874-08/15/1946)  
Judith Jemina Pedersson [Judy Peterson] (03/11/1903-07/19/1996)  
Artur Viking Carlsson (Smedjebacka) (11/11/1910-02/08/1999)  
Angela de Mugetti-Parma [Angie Parma] (02/20/1898-04/22/1963)

Even if a relationship seems very clear, clarify it anyway. As we become further removed from the people we write about, it becomes harder for the reader to know who's who. None of the people are living, or by the time someone reads the history, those people are no longer living, and they will probably never have met them.

## Photos & Illustrations

Histories are especially interesting when they are accompanied by photographs, either original photos or photographs of painted portraits. Pictures of people as well as their houses, their farms, their storefronts, etc., are always interesting and do wonders at making a history come alive. The same is true of original clippings from newspapers, photocopies of diary pages, receipts, deeds, etc.

If you plan to print out your history, you should scan your photos into the computer and save them in TIF format at about 300 dpi resolution. Offer to pay relatives to send you a good scan or high quality color photocopy of the photo(s) you want. Most of my relatives sent me originals, which I scanned and then returned to them.

## Creating A Book

Once you have compiled your family history, you will probably want to assemble it into some useful book-type format so that everyone can have a copy. Nowadays, you can go to your local photocopy place and have them bind your book for you. If you have a very large family, you can go to a local printer and have it printed, or you might want to investigate Print On Demand services via an Internet search.

If you have a lot more photos than you can use in your book, you might want to scan them all as low resolution JPEG files and put them all onto a CD for your other family members to enjoy.

Before you get your book photocopied or printed, make sure it is as complete and as accurate as it can be. And, whether you did it in a word processing software or a page layout software, be sure that it is grammatically correct, that all names are spelled correctly, that you have run spellcheck, and that it has been proofed for errors by at least three other people besides yourself. You may think you caught all the typos, but as a professional writer and editor, I can assure you that you probably did not. But a fresh set of eyes probably will.

## Kinship Terminology

### Degrees of Cousins

The degree of a cousin (first, second, third, etc.) is determined by the same relationship any two people have to a common ancestor. For example, if you both have the same grandparents, you are first cousins (1C), also called “cousins german” or “full” cousins, and your cousins are genetically like half-siblings. If you have the same great-grandparents, you are second cousins (2C); same great-great grandparents, you are third cousins(3C), etc. If you have the same grandmother but different grandfathers, you are half-first cousins (1/2 C); same great-grandfather but different great-grandmothers, you are half-second cousins (1/2 2C).

### Removals of Cousins

All of these relationships are further modified by their removals, which are the generational relationships you have to a particular descendant or ancestor of your cousin. With descendants, for example, the child of your first cousin is your first cousin once removed (1C1R), sometimes erroneously called your second cousin; the grandchild of your first cousin is your first cousin twice removed (1C2R); a child of your second cousin is your second cousin once

removed (2C1R); the grandchild of your third cousin is your third cousin twice removed (3C2R), etc., the degree remaining the same and the removals increasing with each new generation.

## Ancestral Cousins

With ancestors, the degrees and removals are a little more complicated. For example, the parent of your second cousin is your first cousin once removed (1C1R); the parent of your third cousin is your second cousin once removed (2C1R); the parent of your second cousin once removed is your first cousin twice removed (1C2R); the parent of your fourth cousin is your third cousin once removed (3C1R); the parent of your third cousin once removed is your second cousin twice removed (2C2R), the parent of your second cousin twice removed is your first cousin three times removed (1C3R), etc., with the degrees declining and the removals increasing as you go farther up the tree in ancestors. It's a lot easier to figure out a relationship if you have genealogical software or else you can try looking up a relationship using the Cousin Tree or the Kinship Chart in this book.

Despite all of these somewhat complicated designations, you are correct in simply calling a cousin a cousin without any further description to designate the way in which they are related to you. But technically, they are genetically different, and as such they are usually defined specifically for the purposes of determining heredity of a disease, suitability for marriage, inheritance of property, etc. In 21st century or modern genealogy, reference is usually made only to the definitions of the various first and second cousins, but there is no limit on the degree to which any two cousins may be related, or to the number of ways in which any two cousins may be related. And, trying to figure out how any two cousins are related, especially as they become more distantly related, is a task best left to a piece of software such as Family Tree Maker, which will print out a kinship report that explains every way in which you are related to everyone else in the family tree.

## Kinship Chart

On top row, find your relationship to the common ancestor. Follow the column straight down. In the left column, find the other person's relationship to the common ancestor. Follow that row straight across. The relationship is where the selected row and column meet.

CA	C	GC	G GC	2G GC	3G GC	4G GC	5G GC	6G GC
C	S	N	GN	G GN	2G GN	3G GN	4G GN	5G GN
GC	N	1C	1C 1R	1C 2R	1C 3R	1C 4R	1C 5R	1C 6R
G GC	GN	1C 1R	2C	2C 1R	2C 2R	2C 3R	2C 4R	2C 5R
2G GC	G GN	1C 2R	2C 1R	3C	3C 1R	3C 2R	3C 3R	3C 4R
3G GC	2G GN	1C 3R	2C 2R	3C 1R	4C	4C 1R	4C 2R	4C 3R
4G GC	3G GN	1C 4R	2C 3R	3C 2R	4C 1R	5C	5C 1R	5C 2R
5G GC	4G GN	1C 5R	2C 4R	3C 3R	4C 2R	5C 1R	6C	6C 1R
6G GC	5G GN	1C 6R	2C 5R	3C 4R	4C 3R	5C 2R	6C 1R	7C

CA = Common Ancestor

C = Child

GC = Grand Child

G GC = Great Grand Child

#G GC = # of "greats" (2G GC = Great-great grandchild)

#C = Degree of Cousin (1C = first cousin, 2C = second cousin, etc.)

#R = Number of Removals (1R=once removed, 2R = twice removed)

S = Sibling (brother/sister)

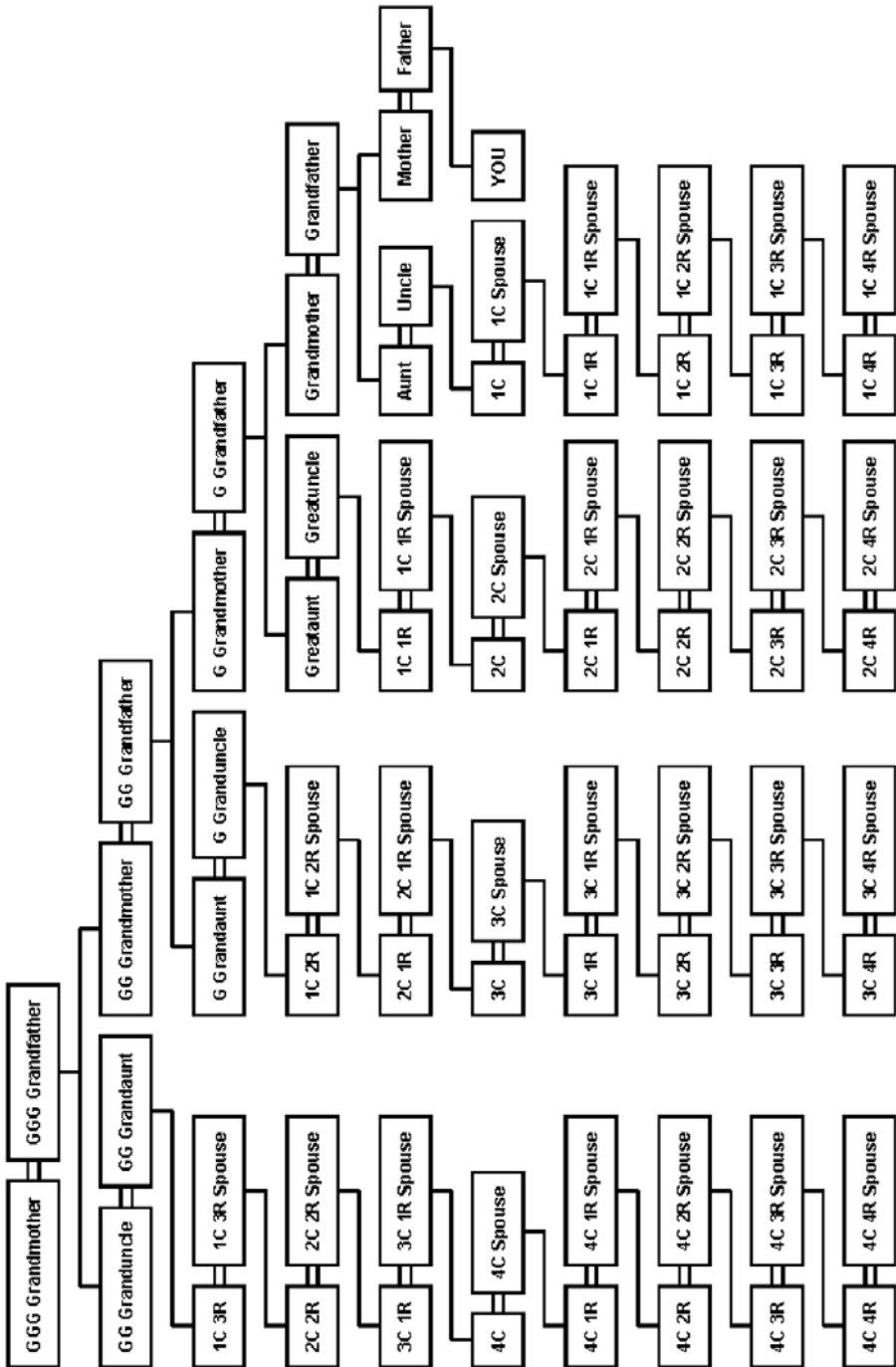
N = Niece/Nephew

GN = Great Niece/Nephew (Grand Niece/Nephew)

G GN = Great Great Niece/Nephew (Great Grand Niece/Nephew)

#G GN = Number of "greats" (2G GN = Great-great Great Niece/Nephew)

## Cousin Tree



## **Marriage Between Cousins**

One of the problems with living in a small community in centuries gone by was that intermarriage between first cousins or marriages involving an uncle/niece or aunt/nephew were not uncommon. Today, we know about recessive genes and some of the hereditary or genetic disorders that can occur if two people possess the same recessive genes and so, for the most part, marriage between such close relatives is pretty much a thing of the past. However, while the incidence of genetic diseases is high in children of interfamilial marriages, most of these unions more commonly resulted in children who were stillborn; less vigorous and therefore less likely to survive infancy or early childhood diseases; suffered from ill health throughout their lives; or were born with a deformity of some kind.

The most common problems with children of married cousins were miscarriage, still birth, neonatal death, childhood mortality, and sterility. The most common hereditary or genetic disorders in children born to cousins and other relatives include muscular dystrophy (a group of forty muscular and neuromuscular diseases that cause weakness and atrophy of the muscles), aniridia (a rare defect causing incomplete formation of the iris and therefore loss of vision), multiple polyposis of the colon (numerous malignant polyps in the colon in adults), and neurofibromatosis or Von Recklinhausen disease (a nervous system disorder that affects the development and growth of nerve cell tissues and results in tumors that grow on nerves and abnormalities of the skin and bones).

## **Multiple Relationships**

One of the interesting but often very confusing things that happens when you have a family tree with so many marriages between cousins and other relatives, is that you become related to people in numerous ways through the various lines or branches of the family tree. You may have two female cousins who married their two male cousins in the early 18th century; your grandparents could be second cousins; your great aunt may have married her cousin who is also your grand-

father's uncle. All of those occurred in my family. As a result of such interfamilial marriages, you will have multiple relationships in your family: your mother may also be your third cousin once removed (3C1R). Your grandparents may also be your 2C2R and 6C2R. Your own sibling or cousin may also be your 4C. A half-cousin may be a full 4C or a 6C1R. All of those occurred in my family too. And, like me, you could be your own 4C too!

## Summary

Genealogy is so much more than just a very popular hobby. It is hard and very detailed work that can take years to complete. But the rewards from all that work can be so very satisfying. When you take a look at your completed tree and see all the many people it took to bring you into this world, and then look at your family history and discover that you now know a lot of those people, it can make you very humble and it can also make you very proud.

## Books

*Board for Certification of Genealogists, The BCG Genealogical Standards Manual*

Carmack, Sharon Debartolo, *Organizing Your Family History Search: Efficient and Effective Ways to Gather and Protect Your Genealogical Research*

Carmack, Sharon Debartolo, *A Genealogists Guide to Discovering Your Female Ancestors: Special Strategies for Uncovering Hard-To-Find Information About Your Female Lineage*

Carmack, Sharon Debartolo, *Your Guide to Cemetery Research*

Case, Patricia Ann, *How To Write Your Autobiography: Preserving Your Family Heritage*

Colletta, John Philip, *They Came In Ships: Finding Your Immigrant Ancestor's Arrival Record*

Croom, Emily Anne, *Unpuzzling Your Past: The Best-Selling Basic Guide to Genealogy*

Croom, Emily Anne, *The Sleuth Book for Genealogists: Strategies for More Successful Family History Research*

Croom, Emily Anne, *Genealogists Guide to Discovering Your African American Ancestors: How to Find and Record Your Unique Heritage*

Doane, Gilbert H. and James R. Dell, *Searching for Your Ancestors*

Everton, George B., *The Handybook for Genealogists: U.S.A.*

Greenwood, Val D., *The Researcher's Guide to American Genealogy*

Hinckley, Kathleen W., *Locating Lost Family Members and Friends: Modern Genealogical Research Techniques for Locating the People of Your Past and Present*

Hone, E. Wade, *Land and Property Research in the United States*

Johnson, Richard, *How to Locate Anyone Who Is or Has Been in the Military*

Kemp, Thomas Jay, *International Vital Records Handbook*

Kirkham, E. Kay, *How to Read the Handwriting and Records of Early America*

Luebking, Sandra H. and Alice Eichholz, *The Source: A Guidebook of American Genealogy*

Meyerink, Kory L., *Printer Sources: A Guide to Published Genealogical Records*

Mills, Elizabeth Shown, *Evidence! Citation and Analysis for the Family Historian*

Neagles, James C., *U.S. Military Records: A Guide to Federal and State Sources, Colonial America to the Present*

Spence, Linda, *Legacy: A Step-by-Step Guide to Writing Personal History*

Sperry, Kip, *Reading Early American Handwriting*

Stevenson, Noel C., *Genealogical Evidence: A Guide to the Standard of Proof Relating to Pedigrees, Ancestry, Heirship, and Family History*

Thorndale, William and William Dollarhide, *Map Guide to the U.S. Federal Censuses 1790-1920*

Tillman, Norma Mott, *How To Find Almost Anyone, Anywhere*

U.S. National Archives & Records Administration, *Guide to Genealogical Research in the National Archives*

## About the Author

Joelle Steele is a writer, artist, publisher, and educator. Her works include almost 700 articles, 30+ books, 50+ short stories, 65+ contract templates, and numerous poems, lyrics, jingles, promotional pieces, Web pages, advertisements, illustrations, photographs, and fine art paintings. She frequently weaves her many interests into her works, including horticulture, genealogy, writing, art, photography, cats, and astrology.

Since 1994, Joelle has created and developed several Web sites on which she sells her work and provides a variety of informational resources. She also teaches many different classes through the extended education programs at colleges in the South Puget Sound area of Washington state.

In 1984, Joelle became interested in genealogy. She has since researched, written, and edited *An Illustrated History of the Steele, Furu, and Forström Families in Finland and America*, the story of her Swedish Finn ancestors, and also researched and wrote *A Brief History of the Bozzini, Crosetti, and Martelli Families in Italy and America*, the story of her Italian ancestors.

## eBooks by Joelle Steele . . .

- ◆ The Astrological Prediction of Earthquakes & Seismic Data Collection
- ◆ Living & Breathing: How to Make Your Characters Come Alive
- ◆ Researching & Writing Your Family History
- ◆ Unblocked: How to Expand Your Creativity by Overcoming and Preventing Creative Blocks
- ◆ Cooking for Fluffy: Healthy Home-Made Feline Diets
- ◆ Grandma Helny's Old-Fashioned Swede-Finn Recipes
- ◆ Create and Maintain A Successful Web Site
- ◆ Get the Job & Make a Profit: Sales, Marketing, and Estimating Techniques for Horticultural Companies
- ◆ How to Start Your Own Interior Landscape Business
- ◆ Indoor Watering Techniques
- ◆ Indoor Plant Soils and Nutrients
- ◆ A Tapestry of Eden
- ◆ Physics of Love
- ◆ Thursday's Child

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