



SOUTH CAROLINA FAMILY AND COMMUNITY LEADERS
Affiliated with National Volunteer Outreach Network, Country Women's Council, U.S.A., Associated Country Women of the World and in partnership with Clemson University Cooperative Extension Service
SCFCL website: <http://www.scfcl.com>

Leader Training Guide

WHO AM I? WHERE DID I COME FROM? Basic Genealogy

Objectives: This lesson offers suggestions on how to explore your genealogy and provides an outline of how to begin the process.

Lesson Overview/Introduction: Most people have wondered about their family's background. Not just their immediate family but distant relatives as well. Some explore out of curiosity, some out of medical concerns, and some out of their love of history. No matter the reason, discovering more about your family can be exciting, scary and challenging all at the same time.

Lesson:

How to Get Started

1. Get organized
 - a. Think about how you are going to keep track of information and how you are going to organize your notes.
 - i. It is important to cite your sources so that you can evaluate the information (ex. Sometimes you will find two pieces of contradictory information—it will be easier to deal with if you know where you got the information!)
 - b. You can download family tree and family group charts from ancestry.com for free.
 - i. <http://c.mfcreative.com/pdf/trees/charts/anchart.pdf>
 - ii. <http://c.mfcreative.com/pdf/trees/charts/famgrec.pdf>
2. Talk to Your Family, Takes Notes
 - a. Your family is a great source. Older family members may remember names or stories to help you sketch an outline of names and places. Other family members may also be researching the family—and you can share information! This information might not always be 100% correct, but it will give you a place to start.
3. Work Backwards, starting with the present and going back generation by generation.
4. Cite your sources
 - a. I can't emphasize this enough. Not only will you need to go back and double check information at some point, if another family member wishes to use these sources, you need to know where the information came from!

5. Do background research on the history of the area. You won't know why your ancestors did what they did unless you know what was happening in the bigger picture.
6. Get a feel for libraries, archives and who can help you
 - a. Ancestry.com and HeritageQuest.com can be accessed at public libraries. If you are comfortable using a computer, these programs are fantastic resources that put information from all over the country at your fingertips
 - b. Check with your public library. Many main libraries now have "genealogy rooms" and a librarian who is specially designated to help you.
 - c. The South Carolina Department of Archives and History has copies of county records, as well as many other genealogical resources.
 - d. There are often local resources: there are records at your county courthouse, but there are often local historical societies, research rooms at local museums or local records housed at colleges or universities.
7. Types of Records:
 - a. The **census** is a good place to start because it is easily accessible and can give you some structure to work with in your research. There is a 72 year restriction on these records for privacy reasons, so the 1930 census is the most recent. Start here and work backwards. An issue with the census is that the same questions were not asked in every census; the farther back you go, the less information will be available. The census is available through sites like Ancestry.com and Heritagequest, but is also available in microfilm and occasionally print (usually the earliest years). Talk to your librarian about how to access these records
 - b. **Vital Records:** death, marriage and birth records were created at the state and county level. In SC, these records were not kept until the twentieth century. A good source for more recent ancestors or family members is the Social Security Death Index. This can be accessed online.
 - c. **Published Records:** Obituaries can often be accessed via historical societies and local libraries. City directories, a precursor to the phone book can help you find where a family member lived. Local histories (such as town or county histories) often contain biographical information of local families. Occasionally you will find a published family history on your line, but this is somewhat rare.
 - d. **Archival Sources:**

- i. **Church records** contain birth, marriage and death information. Check with parish or diocesan offices. Baptist church records are available through archives like Furman Special Collections and the Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives.
 - ii. **Cemetery** records can often be found online through resources like SCGenWeb. Some local genealogical societies also compile this information in print.
 - iii. **Military records** can be found through different means. Revolutionary war service can be indexed through the *Index to Revolutionary War Service Records* or traced through bounty land grants given to veterans. Civil War ancestors are most easily accessed via databases like the Civil War Soldiers and Sailors System. The SC Department of Archives and History has digitized Confederate pension claims.
 - iv. **County records**: many of the most easily accessible records illustrate your ancestors' interaction with local government—deed transfers, court cases, wills, etc. Many of these kinds of records can be found in published indexes. They can also be found at county courthouses and the SC Department of Archives and History
- 8. African American Records: Locating information on the ancestors prior to emancipation can be very difficult. There were “slave schedules” to the censuses of 1850 and 1860, but names are not listed. Sometimes wills or plantation records list slaves by name, but it is often difficult to identify the slave owner (freed slaves did not take their owners' last names as often as we think)
- 9. Adoptions: these records are generally closed, even if everyone involved is deceased. You will need to begin by familiarizing yourself with adoption disclosure laws in the state where the adoption occurred. There are several Web sites and books listed at the end of this document that can provide some help.
- 10. Advice:
 - a. Be flexible and evaluate information carefully. Sometimes there are variations in the spelling of names, or an ancestor is not who or what we originally expected. Evaluation of information is a key skill for a genealogist. You should ask yourself where information can from and if it is valid before you take it as “fact.” This is particularly true with secondary sources—where the research was done by someone else!

- b. Take advantage of the resources available to you: librarians and archivists! They are here to help you.

Lesson Summary:

The basic steps of tracing your genealogy can be followed by anyone. There are resources available to assist in the process. Talk to relatives, research official records, visit your local library, and keep good records of your findings.

Suggested Activities & Materials:

Utilize these web sites and books as additional resources.

Web Sites

Civil War Soldiers and Sailors System. <http://www.itd.nps.gov/cwss/>

Social Security Death Index <http://ssdi.rootsweb.ancestry.com/>

Ancestry.com wiki http://www.ancestry.com/wiki/index.php?title=Main_Page

And, more specifically, the section of this site on South Carolina:

[http://www.ancestry.com/wiki/index.php?title=South Carolina Family History Research](http://www.ancestry.com/wiki/index.php?title=South_Carolina_Family_History_Research)

South Carolina Department of Archives and History <http://scdah.sc.gov/>

Web Sites re: Researching Adoption:

<http://www.cyndislist.com/adoption.htm#General>

<http://www.southcarolinaadoptions.com/>

Books

Askin, Jayne. *Search: A Handbook for Adoptees and Birthparents*. Phoenix, AZ: Oryx Press, 1998.

Blankenship, Bob. *Cherokee Roots*. Cherokee, NC: B. Blankenship, 1992.

Burroughs, Tony. *Black Roots: A Beginner's Guide to Tracing the African American Family Tree*. New York: Fireside Book, 2001.

Greenwood, Val D. *The Researcher's Guide to American Genealogy* Third Edition. Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Company, 2000.

Strauss Jean A.S. *Birthright: The Guide to Search and Reunion for Adoptees, Birth-parents, and Adoptive Parents*. New York: Penguin Books, 1994.

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Ancestry.com wiki

http://www.ancestry.com/wiki/index.php?title=Main_Page

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