

# Genealogy & Family History Research: Who Are You?

If you wonder about your ancestors, but do not know how to go about finding them, then this is the way to begin. Begin with what you know, yourself. Obtain your birth certificate, and marriage certificate if applicable. With the ever increasing need to protect personal information, many states are being very restrictive in who may obtain your birth certificate, so if you do not have a copy, get one so your descendants will

not be faced with this battle. Now you can prove who you are, where to do you go from here?

Start a journal, and write down the names of your parents, and please use the maiden name of your mother so her history is not lost over time. Interview your parents if they are still living, and record stories about their lives and memories. Ask their permission to obtain their birth and



Special Guest

Shannon Gorman

marriage certificate. Scan the important documents you collect and make sure you keep your digital copies separate from your paper copies in case of fire or theft.

You are now well on your way to protecting the story of your family, and documenting your lineage. There is difference in doing lineage research and writing family history notes. Lineage research requires proof, and family history books are the opinion and beliefs of the writer. Most people start out doing family history research and then after months of work, realize they need to document the

lineage on which they are building their family history.

Once you have yourself and your parents set, you are ready to move on to the next

generation, your grandparents. Most people will be able to access census records that will help with grand parents and great grand-parents. Let your family know you are interested and see if any aunts, or uncles, have copies of the grand parents or great grand parent's birth, marriage and death certificates. Find out if anyone kept a Family Bible. Photographing these records is fine if the person who owns

them does not want to let them out of their sight. I do not encourage people to let their Family Bible's out of their sight.



By now you can start to fill in one of the many family tree charts that are available from various organizations. Use a pencil to write on the chart until you have "proof" as any experienced researcher will tell you, names are not always what you think they are. Knick names are often used and in many cases, people born in the early 1900's do not have

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## Family

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official birth certificates, so the name on the paperwork you unearth may not be the exact name you thought it would be.

Once you are back into the 1910 and earlier time frame, you will be relying primarily on census, Bible, and court records to prove your lineage. Family history and genealogy books are interesting, and can provide good leads, but they rarely contain "proof". Do not overlook the impor-



tance of land records. Geography is important in family research as it will help you concentrate your research where your ancestors lived and keep you from being side tracked by someone with the same name as your ancestor.

Who will help you with your research? Well, there are quite a few venues available to you that are free. I will leave this for another day, but keep in mind, that if you are obtaining information from a website or database that does not require "proof" then you are still going to have to find the "proof" yourself so do not overpay for the lead. The leading genealogy websites all allow information to be uploaded with zero proof. Your local library will have access to these websites for free so use the library until you

are sure you want to invest hundreds of dollars to have access to these websites at home. African American and Native American ancestry documentation is increasingly more available and needs people willing to help document families.

For more information on finding your ancestors, please feel free to contact me at [clinchbend@gmail.com](mailto:clinchbend@gmail.com). The Clinch Bend, NSDAR chapter members can help you find your ancestors that may have served in the American Revolution, and I will help guide other types of family research for free as long as you do not expect me to do the work for you. Guiding and facilitating are offered because I truly believe it is important to know who you are. It provides a sense of con-

nection and stability to know how your ancestors lived and the contributions they made to the world as we know it today. The people that were not

famous, contributed a great deal, it just takes someone like you who cares enough to find out what they did and then to share it.

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