

Combining Historical Research with your Genealogy

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How would you go about researching an historical event or person?

- Survey available research articles, books, Internet, etc.
- Use what you found to identify additional information through citations and bibliographies.
- Survey all repositories that might have information.
- Obtain original and derivative sources.
- Research inconsistencies.
- Check your assumptions.
- Write up findings/makes changes/edit.
- Cite your sources!

Combining history with your genealogy may seem different than just researching your ancestor but in some ways it is the same. When researching, remember that you are looking at your ancestor's community, neighbors and era. To make your research interesting, you want to explore their occupation, their religion, their way of life.

What places should you be researching?

Family History Library	FamilySearch Center	ArchiveGrid	PERSI	Archives
State Library	Museum	Library of Congress	University Library	Public Library
Private Library	Church Archive	Genealogy/Historical Societies	Organizational Archive	Membership Society

I have four suggestions for adding history to your genealogy:

1. **Research the person in question**, your ancestor. Develop a timeline for their life. Figure out what they were doing during the years. Ask yourself as you research, what was going on in history during their lifetime.
2. **Research their family**. When you exhaust resources on the individual, start looking at their family. This can mean immediate family like a spouse or kids and parents and siblings. Even cousins and in-laws may yield clues.
3. **Research the community**. Elizabeth Shown Mills calls an ancestor's community their FAN club; friends, acquaintances and neighbors. Our ancestors didn't live in a vacuum and in order to fully research their lives we need to look at original source materials that come from their community and the people they knew.

Some resources to consider include:

Newspapers. Remember that these can usually be borrowed through interlibrary loan or may be available online through a genealogy service or digital newspaper projects.

Manuscript Collections. Find by searching library and archive catalogs and ArchiveGrid. These collections include unpublished materials that range from photographs and journals to business records and correspondence.

Images. Might be available through an online digital archive or through a museum or library. Consult websites like Flickr the Commons <<https://www.flickr.com/commons>>.

Correspondence. Neighbors, ministers, community members and family members may have written about your ancestor. That's where using ArchiveGrid, [PERSI](#), or a university manuscript collection can be helpful.

Local, state, regional and/or national histories. These could be found microfilmed at the Family History Library or digitized through sources such as Heritage Quest, Ancestry.com, Internet Archive or Google Books.

4. **Research the time period.** What was life like during your ancestor's time? What records exist during that time period? What events affected them?

Bibliography

Websites

World Cat < <http://www.worldcat.org/>>

Repositories of Primary Sources

<<http://www.uiweb.uidaho.edu/specialcollections/Other.Repositories.html> >

Archive Grid <<https://beta.worldcat.org/archivegrid/>>

HistoryPin < <http://www.historypin.com/>>

Connected Histories < <http://www.connectedhistories.org/>>

Hathi Trust Digital Library < <http://www.hathitrust.org/>

Google Books <<https://books.google.com/>>

Google Scholar <<http://scholar.google.com/>>

JSTOR < <http://www.jstor.org/>>

Digital Public Library of America <<http://dp.la/>>

Books

Hunt, Linda. *Bold Spirit: Helga Estby's Forgotten Walk Across Victorian America*.

Moscow, Idaho: University of Idaho Press, 2003.

Luxenberg, Steve. *Annie's Ghosts: A Journey into a Family Secret*. New York:

Hyperion, 2009.

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