



THIRTEEN TIPS TO TRACING YOUR FAMILY TREE

1. **YOU'RE NUMBER ONE.** . . Start with yourself, your full name, date and place of birth, and other important dates. Then add the full names and dates of your parents.
2. **KEEP THE RECORD STRAIGHT.** . . You may use file cards, loose-leaf notebooks, or any system convenient for you. Enter all the information you find so that you can find it again when you need it.
3. **ONE STEP AT A TIME.** . . Prove the facts as you go. Don't skip generations. You can't prove that John Henry Morgan was your great-grandfather until you can show positive evidence that your grandfather was his son.
4. **PENCIL VERSUS PEN.** . . You need both. Write unproven information in pencil so that it can be changed. Don't make a permanent record until you're sure of your facts.
5. **IT'S A FAMILY AFFAIR.** . . Enlist the help of relatives. If they're nearby, visit them. If they are far away, write or call. Get reacquainted with distant cousins. Learn their family traditions and stories. Ask questions.
6. **DATES ARE VITAL.** . . Exact dates of birth, death, and marriage may be found on vital record certificates, in family bibles, on tombstones, and in other state, federal and local records. Approximate ages appear in the census. Try every source.
7. **THEY WENT THATAWAY.** . . Whichaway? Census records since 1850 show state of birth. Newspaper obituaries, county histories, land and probate records may also give clues to former residences, showing family migration.
8. **WHERE THERE'S A WILL.** . . Probate records can be proof positive of relationship. Even when there is no will, records of estate settlements may show heirs and relationships.
9. **NAMES ON THE LAND.** . . Land transactions have been recorded with great care through most of our history. Records of deeds may show not only land owners, but heirs and relationships on both sides. Tax lists help, too. And look at the neighbors. They just might be relatives.
10. **PENSION PAPERS PAY DIVIDENDS.** . . They're full of dates and places. If an ancestor served in any war, it's on record. You can get a copy.
11. **CHECK THE CHURCHES.** . . Some denominations kept baptismal, marriage and burial records. Others didn't. But some who didn't may have adjacent cemeteries with the dates you need carved in stone.
12. **LEARN TO LOVE LIBRARIES.** . . For it may be that much of the research you need has already been done and is waiting for you right in your local library in printed books, on microfilm or on microfiche.
13. **LAST BUT NOT LEAST.** . . When writing for information, enclose an SASE (self-addressed, stamped envelope). It's a genealogical courtesy.