



Free Genealogy Resources

How to get started before spending a lot of money!

Purdue Women's Club Genealogy Interest Group

Mary Anne Robinson

November 6, 2017

What does genealogy cost?

Ready to spend \$18,000? This is typical for television ancestry shows, searching for ancestors.

No, you're not related to Charlemagne. But it's tempting to check.

Who do you think you are? How much are you willing to spend to prove it?

The growing urge to find roots has spawned a billion-dollar genealogy industry.

Genealogy sites are the most frequently visited, second only to pornography.

Do you have to spend this much to find your past?



Charlemagne

Photograph: Archivo Iconografico/Corbis

Before you spend any money

- You do not need to spend a fortune, or really *any* money, to get started.
- Here are good ways to get started, for free:
 - *Document what you know*
 - *Determine what you want to learn*
 - *Create an organizational strategy*
 - *Investigate free links*
 - *Visit local libraries*
 - *Create a family tree and GEDCOM*
 - *Collect source documentation to prove what you know*

Document what you know

- In one place, write/type everything you think you know
 - *Dates and places of birth for you, your spouse, children, grandchildren, parents, siblings, nieces/nephews, crazy aunts, weird uncles and inlaws.*
 - *Include everyone – full relatives, half and step relations, adopted family*
 - *When and where did the marriages occur? Divorce? When and where?*
 - *Who has passed away? Where are they buried?*
- If you do not know something, leave it blank for now.
- You will be surprised how often you refer back to this record.
- Your first forms will be the Family Group Sheet and the Family Tree

Starting forms

The family tree

- <https://www.archives.gov/files/research/genealogy/charts-forms/ancestral-chart.pdf>

The family group sheet

- <https://c.mfcreative.com/pdf/trees/charts/famgrec.pdf>

Many free versions of both forms are available, search until you find one you like, or make your own

The Family Tree



Ancestral Chart

Chart No. _____

			Cont. On Chart _____
		Born Place Married Place Died Place	Cont. On Chart _____
	Born Place Married Place Died Place	Born Place Died Place	Cont. On Chart _____
		Born Place Died Place	Cont. On Chart _____
Born Place Married Place Died Place		Born Place Married Place Died Place	Cont. On Chart _____
	Born Place Died Place	Born Place Died Place	Cont. On Chart _____
_____ Name of Spouse		Born Place Died Place	Cont. On Chart _____

Determine what you want to learn

- To fill in the gaps in the immediate family?
 - *Talk to family members. What do they remember or know?*
- To confirm a family story, such as a connection to a historical figure?
 - *Start your tree, connecting children to parents as far back as you can*
 - *Research the historical figure online. Mayflower descendants, politicians and royalty tend to have published genealogies. War patriots have muster and land records. Does anyone connect to your family?*
 - *A confirmed connection to a known person is usually made through a group such as the Mayflower society, and it will cost money.*

Connections to war service are often confirmed, connections to royalty usually not

Determine what you want to learn (cont.)

- To learn how your family got to this country? This state?
 - *Census records may tell you the state or country of origin*
- To create a history for your descendants or extended family?
 - *Write it down as you go, as you begin to collect personal elements – occupations, church memberships, photographs*
- To know your ethnic identity?
 - *Finding your ancestor's country of origin through the census will help.*
 - *Native American or African roots can be confirmed through paid dna testing, but not precisely how or where your family came together. You will want to do the paperwork.*
 - *For Native American roots:*
https://www.bia.gov/sites/bia_prod.opengov.ibmcloud.com/files/assets/public/pdf/Guide_to_Tracing_AI_and_AN_Ancestry.pdf
 - *For African American roots:* <http://rwguide.rootsweb.ancestry.com/lesson25.htm#>

Create an organizational strategy

- How do you want to manage your search?
 - *Are you a binder, paper and pen gal?*
 - *Do you want to keep everything on a computer, but private?*
 - *Do you want to keep everything online, and shared with others?*
 - *Do you have easy access to a computer, email, internet?*
 - *Do you have months to devote, or just an hour or two a week?*
- Create a strategy that is comfortable for you to start, and will allow you to always continue from the last point you stopped working.

Investigate free links

- Cindi's List, the mother lode of free genealogy information: <http://www.cyndislist.com/free-stuff/printable-charts-and-forms/>
- The National Archives: <https://www.archives.gov/research/genealogy/other-websites/database-links.html>
- US GenWeb: <http://www.usgenweb.com/>
- Family Search (LDS church) <https://www.familysearch.org/>
- Burial records: <https://findagrave.com/>
- RootsWeb.com: <http://home.rootsweb.ancestry.com/>
- Each site is likely to lead you to many more free links

Visit local libraries

- Tippecanoe County Library
 - TCPL subscribes to two genealogy databases, Ancestry Library Edition and HeritageQuest, with access to a wide range of genealogy resources, including the US census in a searchable form.
 - HeritageQuest is available from home, Ancestry is available at the library.
 - There are also several databases for newspapers.
 - Many resources for local history are housed here.
- LDS Family History Center
 - West Lafayette Indiana Family History Center, 3224 Jasper Street
 - Family History Centers provide free access to subscription genealogy websites, such as Ancestry.com, [findmypast](#), [Fold3.com](#), [HeritageQuest Online](#), many others
 - You can search [FamilySearch Catalog](#) before visiting. It lists holdings in Salt Lake City, the central library of FamilySearch gathering records for over 115 years. Most records were recorded onto microfilm and microfiche.

Create a free family tree

- Most sites allow you to create a free family tree, though many require you to subscribe to see sources and hints, from <https://genealogists.com/2015/07/20-best-online-family-tree-builders/>
 - **Ancestry: Online Family Tree** <https://www.ancestry.com/family-tree/> Enter facts you know about your family to begin. As you fill in more details, Ancestry will offer pop-up hints to help you fill in the missing pieces.
 - **My Heritage: Family Tree** <https://www.myheritage.com/> My Heritage has a free online family tree builder. The site provides you with free online family tree search capabilities, tutorials on how to make your tree and international, searchable genealogy records. Access to sources usually requires a subscription
 - **Findmypast: Family Tree** <https://www.findmypast.com/family-tree> With the Findmypast online family tree builder, you can build a family tree and access it anywhere.
 - **Family Tree Now** <https://www.familytreenow.com/> Family Tree Now family tree builder claims you will never be charged fees to search, view details or fill in your tree.

Create a GEDCOM

- What is a GEDCOM and why do I want one? From Cindi's list <http://www.ged4web.com/gedcom.aspx>
- The GEDCOM, the GENEalogical Data COMmunication standard proposed by the Family History Department of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and adopted by the genealogy community. The purpose of GEDCOM is to simplify the exchange of computerized historical and genealogical information.
- A GEDCOM is a file saved on your hard disk or cloud. It is not automatically created, you must create it. It is a standard that any genealogy program can read.
- If using a computer program like Family Tree Maker, PAF, Brothers Keeper, Generations, and many more, you can create a GEDCOM file. Check the help files in the program you are using to details about how to make one.

Collect source documentation

- What are good documentation sources?
 - *Copies of birth, death, marriage and divorce records*
 - *Census forms, phone directories*
 - *Land deeds, tax, wills and probate records*
 - *Yearbooks & diplomas*
 - *Sacramental records – baptism, confirmation*
 - *Fraternal and sorority memberships*
- Not as good, but useful
 - *Obituaries, newspaper articles, Find-a-grave text*

An Ancestry.com tree is *never* a genealogy source

Once you are ready to spend money

- Most free family tree sites have subscription options, tiered to include what you want.
- You may want to have your dna tested. If you want to find distant cousins, you will need to upload your family tree to the test site.
- Family tree packages able to handle large trees and fancy reports are available, a package that synchronizes with your family tree may be a good idea.
- There is no one “best” website or genealogy package, but this group and other amateur genealogists will be happy to lend their feedback.

Other crazy free sites

- [Chronicling America « Library of Congress](#): Free searchable online newspapers for tons of US cities, before 1943
- [Day of the Week Calculator by Ancestor Search](#): Your great grandmother was born on October 5, 1880, but wouldn't it be fun to know the day of the week?
- [How to Find the Temperature on Any Date in Any City in US.](#)
- [Free genealogy family history photo search by surname – Dead Fred .com](#)
- [David Rumsey Historical Map Collection](#): Over 42,000 historic maps and images.
- To add a personal touch to your documentation: [57 Tips, Angles, and Prompts for Writing Your Family History](#)
- [Wikipedia](#): Not a source, but it can give you the basics of history for a context for your family story