

THE FAMILY HISTORIAN'S

Genealogy Research Organizer

Bundle



Thirty-four printable worksheets, charts & trackers to organize a lifetime of family research — from first interview to brick-wall breakthrough.

PRINTABLE PDF

US LETTER

34 PAGES

For personal use • Print again and again as your tree grows

What's Inside

Every page prints cleanly on US Letter paper. Print the whole bundle — or just the sheets you need, as often as you need them.

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Tip: for worksheets you will reuse — research logs, census trackers, correspondence logs — print a stack of blanks and keep them in a three-ring binder with tab dividers matching the sections above.

How to Use This Bundle

A practical workflow for turning scattered notes into documented family history.

1 Begin with what you already know

Every family historian starts in the same place: their own memory. Before you open a single database, fill out one **Ancestor Profile Sheet** for yourself, then for your parents and grandparents. Write down full names, dates, and places — even the uncertain ones. Mark guesses with a question mark rather than leaving them blank; a flagged guess is a research lead, while a blank line is just a blank line.

2 Interview the living while you can

The most irreplaceable records in genealogy are the people still here to tell the stories. Use the **Family Interview Guide** to prepare, then record — with permission — rather than relying on notes alone. Ask about the ordinary details: what the kitchen smelled like, how people got to work, what the family argued about at holidays. Dates can be found in courthouses. The sound of a grandmother's laugh cannot.

GOLDEN RULE

Work backward from the known to the unknown, one generation at a time. Prove each link with records before moving further back — a tree is only as strong as its weakest connection.

3 Build your charts as a map, not a trophy

Fill in the **Four-Generation Pedigree Chart** next. Its empty boxes are your research agenda: every blank space is a question waiting for an answer. The **Five-Generation Chart** extends the map further. Keep a pencil handy — charts filled in pen freeze mistakes in place.

4 Track one ancestor through every census

The **Census Tracker** is the single fastest way to spot inconsistencies: ages that drift, birthplaces that change, children who appear and vanish. Record every census year an ancestor should appear in, note what you found — roll, page, household — and mark the years you still need to check.

How to Use This Bundle

Part two: researching, citing, and breaking through.

5 Log every search, including the failures

Use the **Research Log** to record each search *as you make it*: the date, your objective, the exact source you checked, what you found, and what you'll try next. This one habit separates productive researchers from frustrated ones. Failed searches are findings too — knowing that the 1880 census has already been checked three ways saves you from checking it a fourth.

6 Cite as you go

The **Source Citation Log** uses the fields professional genealogists rely on: author, title, repository, and where exactly the record lives. A fact without a source is family lore. You don't need perfect citations on day one — but record enough detail that someone else could retrace your steps to the same page.

7 When you're stuck, get systematic

Every researcher hits a **brick wall** — the ancestor who simply will not be found. Resist the urge to search harder; search *smarter*. The Brick Wall Worksheet walks you through listing everything you know, everything you've tried, and your working hypotheses. Most breakthroughs come not from new records but from re-examining old ones with a fresh question.

- **Research their people, not just them.** Siblings, neighbors, witnesses, and in-laws leave records your ancestor didn't — the "FAN club" approach.
- **Widen the geography.** County lines moved; people didn't. Check every county within a day's ride.
- **Question the name.** Spellings shifted with every census taker's ear. List every variant you can imagine.

8 Preserve what you find

Log every letter and archive request in the **Correspondence Log**, inventory every photo and heirloom in the **Document & Artifact Inventory**, and place each ancestor's milestones against world events on the **Timeline Worksheet**. Future generations won't inherit your hard drive — they'll inherit what you organized.

MAKE IT A HABIT

End every research session by spending five minutes updating your logs: what you searched, what you found, what's next. Your future self — picking this up after a six-month break — will thank you.

Ancestor Profile No. 1

One ancestor, fully documented. Complete a sheet for each person you research — start with yourself and work backward.

FULL NAME (FIRST, MIDDLE, LAST — MAIDEN NAME IN PARENTHESES)

ALSO KNOWN AS / NICKNAMES

SEX

BIRTH DATE

BIRTH PLACE (TOWN, COUNTY, STATE/COUNTRY)

BAPTISM / CHRISTENING DATE & PLACE

DEATH DATE

DEATH PLACE (TOWN, COUNTY, STATE/COUNTRY)

BURIAL PLACE (CEMETERY, TOWN)

CAUSE OF DEATH (IF KNOWN)

MARRIAGE DATE & PLACE

SPOUSE(S) — FULL NAMES

FATHER — FULL NAME

MOTHER — FULL MAIDEN NAME

OCCUPATION(S)

RELIGION / CHURCH AFFILIATION

MILITARY SERVICE (BRANCH, UNIT, DATES)

IMMIGRATION (SHIP, ARRIVAL DATE, PORT)

CENSUS APPEARANCES (YEARS FOUND)

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION & PERSONALITY (FROM RECORDS OR FAMILY MEMORY)

LIFE NOTES & BIOGRAPHY — STORIES, HARDSHIPS, ACHIEVEMENTS, CHARACTER

RESEARCHED BY

DATE

Tip: attach this sheet to the front of the ancestor's file folder, with supporting records filed behind it.

Ancestor Profile

No. 2

One ancestor, fully documented. Complete a sheet for each person you research — start with yourself and work backward.

FULL NAME (FIRST, MIDDLE, LAST — MAIDEN NAME IN PARENTHESES)

ALSO KNOWN AS / NICKNAMES

SEX

BIRTH DATE

BIRTH PLACE (TOWN, COUNTY, STATE/COUNTRY)

BAPTISM / CHRISTENING DATE & PLACE

DEATH DATE

DEATH PLACE (TOWN, COUNTY, STATE/COUNTRY)

BURIAL PLACE (CEMETERY, TOWN)

CAUSE OF DEATH (IF KNOWN)

MARRIAGE DATE & PLACE

SPOUSE(S) — FULL NAMES

FATHER — FULL NAME

MOTHER — FULL MAIDEN NAME

OCCUPATION(S)

RELIGION / CHURCH AFFILIATION

MILITARY SERVICE (BRANCH, UNIT, DATES)

IMMIGRATION (SHIP, ARRIVAL DATE, PORT)

CENSUS APPEARANCES (YEARS FOUND)

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION & PERSONALITY (FROM RECORDS OR FAMILY MEMORY)

LIFE NOTES & BIOGRAPHY — STORIES, HARDSHIPS, ACHIEVEMENTS, CHARACTER

RESEARCHED BY

DATE

Tip: attach this sheet to the front of the ancestor's file folder, with supporting records filed behind it.

Ancestor Profile

No. 3

One ancestor, fully documented. Complete a sheet for each person you research — start with yourself and work backward.

FULL NAME (FIRST, MIDDLE, LAST — MAIDEN NAME IN PARENTHESES)

ALSO KNOWN AS / NICKNAMES

SEX

BIRTH DATE

BIRTH PLACE (TOWN, COUNTY, STATE/COUNTRY)

BAPTISM / CHRISTENING DATE & PLACE

DEATH DATE

DEATH PLACE (TOWN, COUNTY, STATE/COUNTRY)

BURIAL PLACE (CEMETERY, TOWN)

CAUSE OF DEATH (IF KNOWN)

MARRIAGE DATE & PLACE

SPOUSE(S) — FULL NAMES

FATHER — FULL NAME

MOTHER — FULL MAIDEN NAME

OCCUPATION(S)

RELIGION / CHURCH AFFILIATION

MILITARY SERVICE (BRANCH, UNIT, DATES)

IMMIGRATION (SHIP, ARRIVAL DATE, PORT)

CENSUS APPEARANCES (YEARS FOUND)

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION & PERSONALITY (FROM RECORDS OR FAMILY MEMORY)

LIFE NOTES & BIOGRAPHY — STORIES, HARDSHIPS, ACHIEVEMENTS, CHARACTER

RESEARCHED BY

DATE

Tip: attach this sheet to the front of the ancestor's file folder, with supporting records filed behind it.

Ancestor Profile

No. 4

One ancestor, fully documented. Complete a sheet for each person you research — start with yourself and work backward.

FULL NAME (FIRST, MIDDLE, LAST — MAIDEN NAME IN PARENTHESES)

ALSO KNOWN AS / NICKNAMES

SEX

BIRTH DATE

BIRTH PLACE (TOWN, COUNTY, STATE/COUNTRY)

BAPTISM / CHRISTENING DATE & PLACE

DEATH DATE

DEATH PLACE (TOWN, COUNTY, STATE/COUNTRY)

BURIAL PLACE (CEMETERY, TOWN)

CAUSE OF DEATH (IF KNOWN)

MARRIAGE DATE & PLACE

SPOUSE(S) — FULL NAMES

FATHER — FULL NAME

MOTHER — FULL MAIDEN NAME

OCCUPATION(S)

RELIGION / CHURCH AFFILIATION

MILITARY SERVICE (BRANCH, UNIT, DATES)

IMMIGRATION (SHIP, ARRIVAL DATE, PORT)

CENSUS APPEARANCES (YEARS FOUND)

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION & PERSONALITY (FROM RECORDS OR FAMILY MEMORY)

LIFE NOTES & BIOGRAPHY — STORIES, HARDSHIPS, ACHIEVEMENTS, CHARACTER

RESEARCHED BY

DATE

Tip: attach this sheet to the front of the ancestor's file folder, with supporting records filed behind it.

Ancestor Profile

No. 5

One ancestor, fully documented. Complete a sheet for each person you research — start with yourself and work backward.

FULL NAME (FIRST, MIDDLE, LAST — MAIDEN NAME IN PARENTHESES)

ALSO KNOWN AS / NICKNAMES

SEX

BIRTH DATE

BIRTH PLACE (TOWN, COUNTY, STATE/COUNTRY)

BAPTISM / CHRISTENING DATE & PLACE

DEATH DATE

DEATH PLACE (TOWN, COUNTY, STATE/COUNTRY)

BURIAL PLACE (CEMETERY, TOWN)

CAUSE OF DEATH (IF KNOWN)

MARRIAGE DATE & PLACE

SPOUSE(S) — FULL NAMES

FATHER — FULL NAME

MOTHER — FULL MAIDEN NAME

OCCUPATION(S)

RELIGION / CHURCH AFFILIATION

MILITARY SERVICE (BRANCH, UNIT, DATES)

IMMIGRATION (SHIP, ARRIVAL DATE, PORT)

CENSUS APPEARANCES (YEARS FOUND)

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION & PERSONALITY (FROM RECORDS OR FAMILY MEMORY)

LIFE NOTES & BIOGRAPHY — STORIES, HARDSHIPS, ACHIEVEMENTS, CHARACTER

RESEARCHED BY

DATE

Tip: attach this sheet to the front of the ancestor's file folder, with supporting records filed behind it.

Family Group Sheet No. 1

One married couple and their children — the building block of every family tree.

HUSBAND

FULL NAME

BIRTH DATE

BIRTH PLACE

DEATH DATE

BURIAL PLACE

FATHER / MOTHER

OCCUPATION

MARRIAGE DATE

OTHER MARRIAGES (HUSBAND)

WIFE

FULL NAME (MAIDEN)

BIRTH DATE

BIRTH PLACE

DEATH DATE

BURIAL PLACE

FATHER / MOTHER

OCCUPATION

MARRIAGE PLACE

OTHER MARRIAGES (WIFE)

CHILDREN (IN BIRTH ORDER)

#	FULL NAME	BIRTH DATE & PLACE	MARRIAGE DATE & SPOUSE	DEATH DATE & PLACE
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				
7				
8				

NOTES — FAMILY STORIES, SOURCES CONSULTED, QUESTIONS REMAINING

Family Group Sheet No. 2

One married couple and their children — the building block of every family tree.

HUSBAND

FULL NAME

BIRTH DATE

BIRTH PLACE

DEATH DATE

BURIAL PLACE

FATHER / MOTHER

OCCUPATION

MARRIAGE DATE

OTHER MARRIAGES (HUSBAND)

WIFE

FULL NAME (MAIDEN)

BIRTH DATE

BIRTH PLACE

DEATH DATE

BURIAL PLACE

FATHER / MOTHER

OCCUPATION

MARRIAGE PLACE

OTHER MARRIAGES (WIFE)

CHILDREN (IN BIRTH ORDER)

#	FULL NAME	BIRTH DATE & PLACE	MARRIAGE DATE & SPOUSE	DEATH DATE & PLACE
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				
7				
8				

NOTES — FAMILY STORIES, SOURCES CONSULTED, QUESTIONS REMAINING

Family Group Sheet No. 3

One married couple and their children — the building block of every family tree.

HUSBAND

FULL NAME

BIRTH DATE

BIRTH PLACE

DEATH DATE

BURIAL PLACE

FATHER / MOTHER

OCCUPATION

MARRIAGE DATE

OTHER MARRIAGES (HUSBAND)

WIFE

FULL NAME (MAIDEN)

BIRTH DATE

BIRTH PLACE

DEATH DATE

BURIAL PLACE

FATHER / MOTHER

OCCUPATION

MARRIAGE PLACE

OTHER MARRIAGES (WIFE)

CHILDREN (IN BIRTH ORDER)

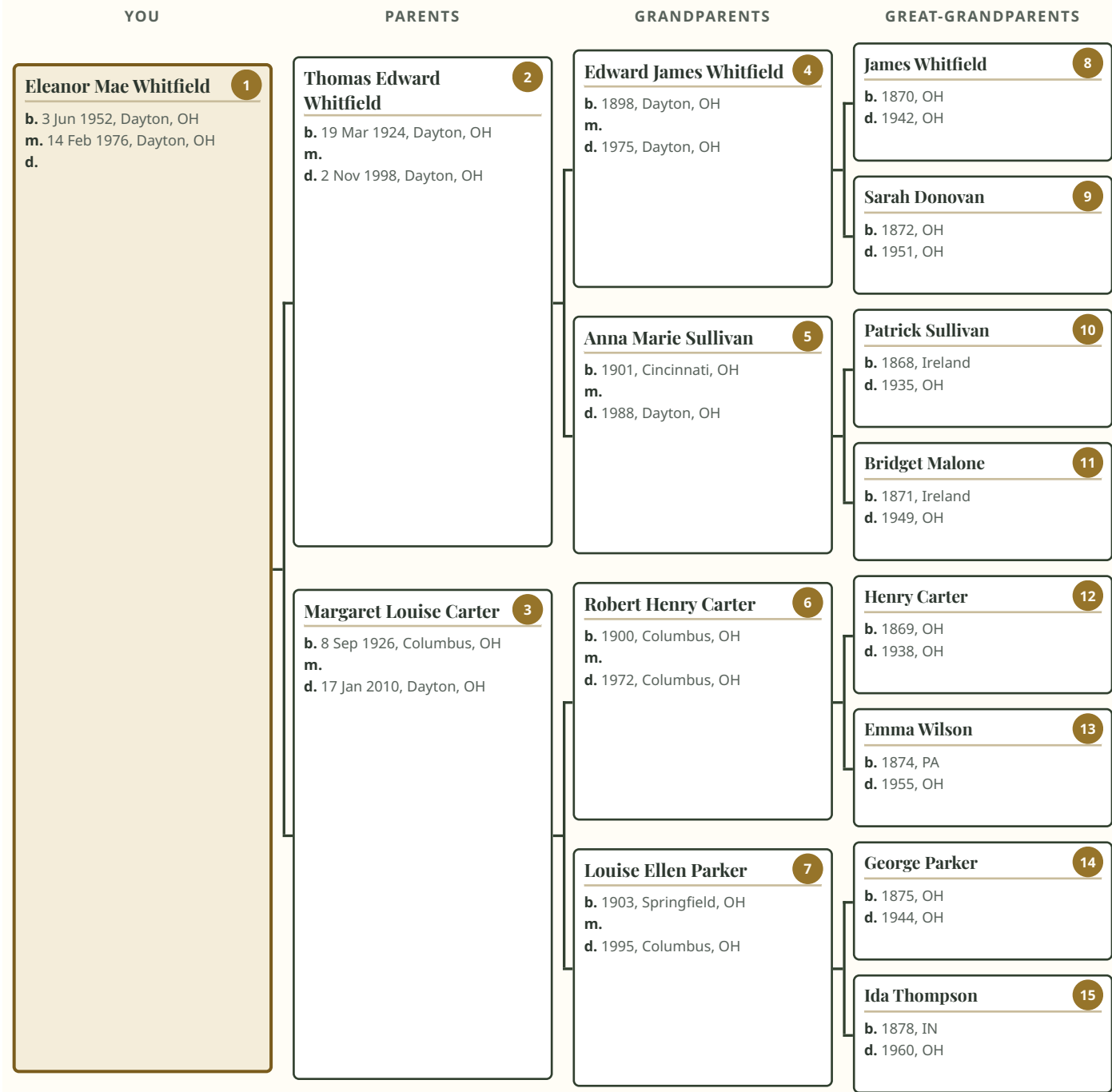
#	FULL NAME	BIRTH DATE & PLACE	MARRIAGE DATE & SPOUSE	DEATH DATE & PLACE
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				
7				
8				

NOTES — FAMILY STORIES, SOURCES CONSULTED, QUESTIONS REMAINING

Four-Generation Pedigree Chart

Abnental numbering: you are 1, your father is 2, your mother is 3, and so on — each father's number is double the child's.

FILLED EXAMPLE



Four-Generation Pedigree Chart

Fifteen ancestors on one page. Work one generation at a time, and verify before you ink. Fill in pencil first.

YOU

PARENTS

GRANDPARENTS

GREAT-GRANDPARENTS

1

b.
m.
d.

2

b.
m.
d.

3

b.
m.
d.

4

b.
m.
d.

5

b.
m.
d.

6

b.
m.
d.

7

b.
m.
d.

8

b.
d.

9

b.
d.

10

b.
d.

11

b.
d.

12

b.
d.

13

b.
d.

14

b.
d.

15

b.
d.

Five-Generation Pedigree Chart

Thirty-one positions — everyone from you to your sixteen great-great-grandparents.

YOU	PARENTS	GRANDPARENTS	GREAT-GRANDPARENTS	2ND GREAT-GRANDPARENTS
1 b. m. d.	2 b. m. d.	4 b. m. d.	8 b. d.	16 b. d.
				17 b. d.
			9 b. d.	18 b. d.
				19 b. d.
		5 b. m. d.	10 b. d.	20 b. d.
				21 b. d.
			11 b. d.	22 b. d.
				23 b. d.
	3 b. m. d.	6 b. m. d.	12 b. d.	24 b. d.
				25 b. d.
			13 b. d.	26 b. d.
				27 b. d.
		7 b. m. d.	14 b. d.	28 b. d.
				29 b. d.
			15 b. d.	30 b. d.
				31 b. d.

Descendant Chart — Generation 3

Continue each child's line here. If a child had more than two children, print extra copies of this page.

GRANDCHILD 1 — CHILD OF #2

b. _____

d. _____

Spouse _____

THEIR CHILDREN

.....

GRANDCHILD 2 — CHILD OF #2

b. _____

d. _____

Spouse _____

THEIR CHILDREN

.....

GRANDCHILD 1 — CHILD OF #3

b. _____

d. _____

Spouse _____

THEIR CHILDREN

.....

GRANDCHILD 2 — CHILD OF #3

b. _____

d. _____

Spouse _____

THEIR CHILDREN

.....

GRANDCHILD 1 — CHILD OF #4

b. _____

d. _____

Spouse _____

THEIR CHILDREN

.....

GRANDCHILD 2 — CHILD OF #4

b. _____

d. _____

Spouse _____

THEIR CHILDREN

.....

GRANDCHILD 1 — CHILD OF #5

b. _____

d. _____

Spouse _____

THEIR CHILDREN

.....

GRANDCHILD 2 — CHILD OF #5

b. _____

d. _____

Spouse _____

THEIR CHILDREN

.....

GRANDCHILD 1 — CHILD OF #6

b. _____

d. _____

Spouse _____

THEIR CHILDREN

.....

GRANDCHILD 2 — CHILD OF #6

b. _____

d. _____

Spouse _____

THEIR CHILDREN

.....

GRANDCHILD 1 — CHILD OF #7

b. _____

d. _____

Spouse _____

THEIR CHILDREN

.....

GRANDCHILD 2 — CHILD OF #7

b. _____

d. _____

Spouse _____

THEIR CHILDREN

.....

U.S. Federal Census Tracker

One row per ancestor. For each census year, note county/state, roll & page, and what the household reveals. Years marked † had most records lost (1890) or are partially restricted — check state censuses instead.

ANCESTOR	1790	1800	1810	1820	1830	1840	1850	1860	1870
NAME / DATES	CO./STATE ROLL-PG NOTES	CO./STATE ROLL-PG NOTES	CO./STATE ROLL-PG NOTES	CO./STATE ROLL-PG NOTES	CO./STATE ROLL-PG NOTES	CO./STATE ROLL-PG NOTES	CO./STATE ROLL-PG NOTES	CO./STATE ROLL-PG NOTES	CO./STATE ROLL-PG NOTES
NAME / DATES	CO./STATE ROLL-PG NOTES	CO./STATE ROLL-PG NOTES	CO./STATE ROLL-PG NOTES	CO./STATE ROLL-PG NOTES	CO./STATE ROLL-PG NOTES	CO./STATE ROLL-PG NOTES	CO./STATE ROLL-PG NOTES	CO./STATE ROLL-PG NOTES	CO./STATE ROLL-PG NOTES
NAME / DATES	CO./STATE ROLL-PG NOTES	CO./STATE ROLL-PG NOTES	CO./STATE ROLL-PG NOTES	CO./STATE ROLL-PG NOTES	CO./STATE ROLL-PG NOTES	CO./STATE ROLL-PG NOTES	CO./STATE ROLL-PG NOTES	CO./STATE ROLL-PG NOTES	CO./STATE ROLL-PG NOTES
NAME / DATES	CO./STATE ROLL-PG NOTES	CO./STATE ROLL-PG NOTES	CO./STATE ROLL-PG NOTES	CO./STATE ROLL-PG NOTES	CO./STATE ROLL-PG NOTES	CO./STATE ROLL-PG NOTES	CO./STATE ROLL-PG NOTES	CO./STATE ROLL-PG NOTES	CO./STATE ROLL-PG NOTES
NAME / DATES	CO./STATE ROLL-PG NOTES	CO./STATE ROLL-PG NOTES	CO./STATE ROLL-PG NOTES	CO./STATE ROLL-PG NOTES	CO./STATE ROLL-PG NOTES	CO./STATE ROLL-PG NOTES	CO./STATE ROLL-PG NOTES	CO./STATE ROLL-PG NOTES	CO./STATE ROLL-PG NOTES
NAME / DATES	CO./STATE ROLL-PG NOTES	CO./STATE ROLL-PG NOTES	CO./STATE ROLL-PG NOTES	CO./STATE ROLL-PG NOTES	CO./STATE ROLL-PG NOTES	CO./STATE ROLL-PG NOTES	CO./STATE ROLL-PG NOTES	CO./STATE ROLL-PG NOTES	CO./STATE ROLL-PG NOTES
NAME / DATES	CO./STATE ROLL-PG NOTES	CO./STATE ROLL-PG NOTES	CO./STATE ROLL-PG NOTES	CO./STATE ROLL-PG NOTES	CO./STATE ROLL-PG NOTES	CO./STATE ROLL-PG NOTES	CO./STATE ROLL-PG NOTES	CO./STATE ROLL-PG NOTES	CO./STATE ROLL-PG NOTES
NAME / DATES	CO./STATE ROLL-PG NOTES	CO./STATE ROLL-PG NOTES	CO./STATE ROLL-PG NOTES	CO./STATE ROLL-PG NOTES	CO./STATE ROLL-PG NOTES	CO./STATE ROLL-PG NOTES	CO./STATE ROLL-PG NOTES	CO./STATE ROLL-PG NOTES	CO./STATE ROLL-PG NOTES
NAME / DATES	CO./STATE ROLL-PG NOTES	CO./STATE ROLL-PG NOTES	CO./STATE ROLL-PG NOTES	CO./STATE ROLL-PG NOTES	CO./STATE ROLL-PG NOTES	CO./STATE ROLL-PG NOTES	CO./STATE ROLL-PG NOTES	CO./STATE ROLL-PG NOTES	CO./STATE ROLL-PG NOTES

Tip: ages, birthplaces, and immigration years often shift between censuses — those inconsistencies are clues, not errors. Circle anything that changes and chase it in the next source.

U.S. Federal Census Tracker

One row per ancestor. For each census year, note county/state, roll & page, and what the household reveals. Years marked † had most records lost (1890) or are partially restricted — check state censuses instead.

ANCESTOR	1880	1890†	1900	1910	1920	1930	1940	1950
NAME / DATES	CO./STATE ROLL-PG NOTES	CO./STATE ROLL-PG NOTES	CO./STATE ROLL-PG NOTES	CO./STATE ROLL-PG NOTES	CO./STATE ROLL-PG NOTES	CO./STATE ROLL-PG NOTES	CO./STATE ROLL-PG NOTES	CO./STATE ROLL-PG NOTES
NAME / DATES	CO./STATE ROLL-PG NOTES	CO./STATE ROLL-PG NOTES	CO./STATE ROLL-PG NOTES	CO./STATE ROLL-PG NOTES	CO./STATE ROLL-PG NOTES	CO./STATE ROLL-PG NOTES	CO./STATE ROLL-PG NOTES	CO./STATE ROLL-PG NOTES
NAME / DATES	CO./STATE ROLL-PG NOTES	CO./STATE ROLL-PG NOTES	CO./STATE ROLL-PG NOTES	CO./STATE ROLL-PG NOTES	CO./STATE ROLL-PG NOTES	CO./STATE ROLL-PG NOTES	CO./STATE ROLL-PG NOTES	CO./STATE ROLL-PG NOTES
NAME / DATES	CO./STATE ROLL-PG NOTES	CO./STATE ROLL-PG NOTES	CO./STATE ROLL-PG NOTES	CO./STATE ROLL-PG NOTES	CO./STATE ROLL-PG NOTES	CO./STATE ROLL-PG NOTES	CO./STATE ROLL-PG NOTES	CO./STATE ROLL-PG NOTES
NAME / DATES	CO./STATE ROLL-PG NOTES	CO./STATE ROLL-PG NOTES	CO./STATE ROLL-PG NOTES	CO./STATE ROLL-PG NOTES	CO./STATE ROLL-PG NOTES	CO./STATE ROLL-PG NOTES	CO./STATE ROLL-PG NOTES	CO./STATE ROLL-PG NOTES
NAME / DATES	CO./STATE ROLL-PG NOTES	CO./STATE ROLL-PG NOTES	CO./STATE ROLL-PG NOTES	CO./STATE ROLL-PG NOTES	CO./STATE ROLL-PG NOTES	CO./STATE ROLL-PG NOTES	CO./STATE ROLL-PG NOTES	CO./STATE ROLL-PG NOTES
NAME / DATES	CO./STATE ROLL-PG NOTES	CO./STATE ROLL-PG NOTES	CO./STATE ROLL-PG NOTES	CO./STATE ROLL-PG NOTES	CO./STATE ROLL-PG NOTES	CO./STATE ROLL-PG NOTES	CO./STATE ROLL-PG NOTES	CO./STATE ROLL-PG NOTES
NAME / DATES	CO./STATE ROLL-PG NOTES	CO./STATE ROLL-PG NOTES	CO./STATE ROLL-PG NOTES	CO./STATE ROLL-PG NOTES	CO./STATE ROLL-PG NOTES	CO./STATE ROLL-PG NOTES	CO./STATE ROLL-PG NOTES	CO./STATE ROLL-PG NOTES
NAME / DATES	CO./STATE ROLL-PG NOTES	CO./STATE ROLL-PG NOTES	CO./STATE ROLL-PG NOTES	CO./STATE ROLL-PG NOTES	CO./STATE ROLL-PG NOTES	CO./STATE ROLL-PG NOTES	CO./STATE ROLL-PG NOTES	CO./STATE ROLL-PG NOTES

Tip: ages, birthplaces, and immigration years often shift between censuses — those inconsistencies are clues, not errors. Circle anything that changes and chase it in the next source.

U.S. Federal Census Tracker — Continued

Extra space: track additional ancestors, or log state and territorial censuses taken between federal years.

ANCESTOR	CENSUS YEAR & TYPE	LOCATION / ROLL / PAGE	HOUSEHOLD & FINDINGS

Tip: many states took their own censuses (often in years ending in 5). They can fill gaps left by lost or restricted federal schedules.

Research Log

Log every search as you make it — including the ones that find nothing. A logged dead end is a finding.

DATE	ANCESTOR	OBJECTIVE	REPOSITORY / SOURCE SEARCHED	FINDINGS	NEXT STEPS

Tip: be specific enough that you could hand this log to another researcher and they could repeat your search exactly.

Research Log

Log every search as you make it — including the ones that find nothing. A logged dead end is a finding.

DATE	ANCESTOR	OBJECTIVE	REPOSITORY / SOURCE SEARCHED	FINDINGS	NEXT STEPS

Tip: be specific enough that you could hand this log to another researcher and they could repeat your search exactly.

Research Log

Log every search as you make it — including the ones that find nothing. A logged dead end is a finding.

DATE	ANCESTOR	OBJECTIVE	REPOSITORY / SOURCE SEARCHED	FINDINGS	NEXT STEPS

Tip: be specific enough that you could hand this log to another researcher and they could repeat your search exactly.

SOURCE CITATIONS

Source Citation Log

Record where every fact came from, with enough detail that anyone could retrace your steps to the same page.

SOURCE NO.	ANCESTOR / FACT THIS SOURCE SUPPORTS
<u>1</u>	
AUTHOR / CREATOR	TITLE OF SOURCE
PUBLICATION / CREATION INFO (PUBLISHER, DATE, PAGE)	REPOSITORY (ARCHIVE, LIBRARY, WEBSITE)
CALL NUMBER / URL / FILM NUMBER	DATE ACCESSED
NOTES ON RELIABILITY — ORIGINAL OR DERIVATIVE? PRIMARY OR SECONDARY INFORMATION? INFORMANT?	

SOURCE NO.	ANCESTOR / FACT THIS SOURCE SUPPORTS
<u>2</u>	
AUTHOR / CREATOR	TITLE OF SOURCE
PUBLICATION / CREATION INFO (PUBLISHER, DATE, PAGE)	REPOSITORY (ARCHIVE, LIBRARY, WEBSITE)
CALL NUMBER / URL / FILM NUMBER	DATE ACCESSED
NOTES ON RELIABILITY — ORIGINAL OR DERIVATIVE? PRIMARY OR SECONDARY INFORMATION? INFORMANT?	

SOURCE NO.	ANCESTOR / FACT THIS SOURCE SUPPORTS
<u>3</u>	
AUTHOR / CREATOR	TITLE OF SOURCE
PUBLICATION / CREATION INFO (PUBLISHER, DATE, PAGE)	REPOSITORY (ARCHIVE, LIBRARY, WEBSITE)
CALL NUMBER / URL / FILM NUMBER	DATE ACCESSED
NOTES ON RELIABILITY — ORIGINAL OR DERIVATIVE? PRIMARY OR SECONDARY INFORMATION? INFORMANT?	

Tip: cite as you go. Reconstructing sources weeks later is where citations go to die.

SOURCE CITATIONS

Source Citation Log

Record where every fact came from, with enough detail that anyone could retrace your steps to the same page.

SOURCE NO.	ANCESTOR / FACT THIS SOURCE SUPPORTS
4	
AUTHOR / CREATOR	TITLE OF SOURCE
PUBLICATION / CREATION INFO (PUBLISHER, DATE, PAGE)	REPOSITORY (ARCHIVE, LIBRARY, WEBSITE)
CALL NUMBER / URL / FILM NUMBER	DATE ACCESSED
NOTES ON RELIABILITY — ORIGINAL OR DERIVATIVE? PRIMARY OR SECONDARY INFORMATION? INFORMANT?	

SOURCE NO.	ANCESTOR / FACT THIS SOURCE SUPPORTS
5	
AUTHOR / CREATOR	TITLE OF SOURCE
PUBLICATION / CREATION INFO (PUBLISHER, DATE, PAGE)	REPOSITORY (ARCHIVE, LIBRARY, WEBSITE)
CALL NUMBER / URL / FILM NUMBER	DATE ACCESSED
NOTES ON RELIABILITY — ORIGINAL OR DERIVATIVE? PRIMARY OR SECONDARY INFORMATION? INFORMANT?	

SOURCE NO.	ANCESTOR / FACT THIS SOURCE SUPPORTS
6	
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Tip: cite as you go. Reconstructing sources weeks later is where citations go to die.

Brick Wall Worksheet

For the ancestor who refuses to be found. Slow down, get systematic, and let the worksheet do the heavy thinking.

ANCESTOR IN QUESTION (FULL NAME, APPROXIMATE DATES, LAST KNOWN LOCATION)

WHAT DO YOU WANT TO LEARN? (ONE CLEAR QUESTION)

HOW LONG HAS THIS WALL STOOD?

WHAT YOU KNOW FOR CERTAIN — ONLY DOCUMENTED FACTS, NO GUESSES

WHAT YOU HAVE ALREADY TRIED

SOURCE / REPOSITORY SEARCHED	DATE SEARCHED	RESULT (BE HONEST — “NOTHING FOUND” COUNTS)

WORKING HYPOTHESES — NUMBER EACH, THEN LIST EVIDENCE FOR AND AGAINST

HYPOTHESIS 1

EVIDENCE FOR

EVIDENCE AGAINST

HYPOTHESIS 2

EVIDENCE FOR

EVIDENCE AGAINST

NEW AVENUES TO TRY

✓	IDEA	WHERE TO LOOK
☐	Research siblings, in-laws & neighbors (FAN club)	
☐	List every spelling variant of the surname	
☐	Check neighboring counties & shifted county lines	
☐	Look for probate, land & tax records — not just vital records	
☐	Re-read old finds with the new question in mind	
☐	Consider DNA matches as a new starting point	

MY NEXT SINGLE STEP (SMALL, CONCRETE, THIS WEEK)

Family Interview Questions

Ask with curiosity, listen without interrupting, and record with permission. The follow-up question is usually the best one.

INTERVIEW WITH

DATE & PLACE

Childhood & Growing Up

1. Describe the house you grew up in — the rooms, the yard, the neighborhood.
2. What did a normal school day look like, from morning to night?
3. Who were your closest friends, and what did you do together?
4. What chores were yours? Which did you hate, and which did you secretly like?

1. What games did you play, and what toys do you still remember?
2. Was there a teacher who changed you? What did they see in you?
3. What was your favorite meal as a child, and who made it best?
4. What scared you when you were small? What made you feel safe?

Family Stories & the People in Them

1. Which relative do I most remind you of, and why?
2. Tell me about your grandparents — what were they like day to day?
3. Is there a family story everyone tells at gatherings? Tell it the way you heard it.
4. Was there a relative nobody talked about? What do you know now?

1. Who was the family peacemaker? Who was the troublemaker?
2. What did your parents argue about, and how did they make up?
3. Are there family traits — habits, sayings, talents — that keep repeating?
4. What is something about our family you hope never gets forgotten?

Family Interview Questions, continued

Give people time — the deepest memories often surface after a pause.

Home, Work & Daily Life

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. What was your very first job, and what did you earn?
..... | 1. Who did the cooking, and what dish meant “celebration”?
..... |
| 2. Describe the work you did longest. What were you proudest of there?
..... | 2. How did people get around — car, bus, walking? What was the first car?
..... |
| 3. How did the family make ends meet during the hardest year you remember?
..... | 3. What technology arriving in your lifetime changed daily life most?
..... |
| 4. What did a Sunday look like in your household?
..... | 4. What did “a good living” mean to your parents’ generation?
..... |

Traditions, Faith & Food

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1. What holidays did your family celebrate, and how — in detail?
..... | 1. Did the family have reunions or regular gatherings? Where, and who came?
..... |
| 2. Was faith part of family life? How did it show up on ordinary days?
..... | 2. What superstitions, sayings, or blessings get passed down in our family?
..... |
| 3. Are there recipes that have to be made exactly the old way? Whose are they?
..... | 3. How were births, weddings, and funerals handled — the customs, not just the events?
..... |
| 4. What songs were sung in your house? Who sang them?
..... | 4. What tradition do you wish the younger generation would keep?
..... |

Migration & Places

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1. Why did the family settle where it did? Who decided, and when?
..... | 1. Did anyone immigrate? What do you know of the journey over?
..... |
| 2. Has anyone in the family moved far away — what pulled them, what did they leave?
..... | 2. What places feel like “home” to you, even if you don’t live there now?
..... |
| 3. What is the farthest back you can trace where we lived?
..... | 3. Were there moves the family never talked about? What happened?
..... |
| 4. Describe the hometown as it was when you were young — the main street, the landmarks.
..... | 4. If you could stand in one place from your childhood for an hour, where would it be?
..... |

Family Interview Questions, continued

End with gratitude. Then write down what you felt, not just what you heard.

Military Service & Hard Times

1. Did anyone in the family serve in the military? What do you know of their service?
.....
2. How did wars — declared or not — touch the family directly?
.....
3. What was the hardest period the family went through, and how did you get through it?
.....
4. Was there a year when everything changed? Walk me through it.
.....

1. Who helped the family when help was needed most?
.....
2. What did people do for fun when there was no money for fun?
.....
3. What illness or loss shaped the family most?
.....
4. What did hardship teach this family that comfort never could?
.....

Love, Marriage & Family

1. How did you and your spouse meet? Tell it like a story.
.....
2. What did you know about each other on the wedding day — and what did you learn later?
.....
3. What advice about marriage would you give someone starting out?
.....
4. What moment made you feel like a parent for the first time?
.....

1. Which of your children surprised you most, and how?
.....
2. What did you hope for your children that you never said out loud?
.....
3. How has the family changed most between your childhood and now?
.....
4. What does this family do better than most?
.....

Advice, Reflections & Looking Forward

1. What are you proudest of in your life — not the obvious answer, the real one?
.....
2. What is the biggest mistake you made, and what did it teach you?
.....
3. If you could give your 20-year-old self one piece of advice, what would it be?
.....
4. What do you want your great-grandchildren to know about you?
.....

1. What has mattered more than you expected? What has mattered less?
.....
2. Is there something you've never told anyone in the family? You can tell me.
.....
3. How do you want to be remembered?
.....
4. What question do you wish someone would ask you?
.....

Document & Artifact Inventory



PRESERVE IT TWICE

Digitize everything irreplaceable at 300 dpi or better, and keep copies in two places — for example, an external drive and cloud storage. Label every scan with names, dates, and who holds the original.

Correspondence & Request Log

Track every letter, email, archive request, and courthouse inquiry — sent, waiting, or answered.

DATE SENT	TO / FROM	SUBJECT / RECORD REQUESTED	METHOD	REPLY DUE	RESPONSE / OUTCOME

METHOD: LETTER • EMAIL • PHONE • IN PERSON • ONLINE FORM

FOLLOW UP KINDLY

Archives and county clerks are often short-staffed. A polite follow-up after four to six weeks — referencing your original date — gets better results than a fresh request.

Ancestor Timeline Worksheet

A life set against history. Fill in what you know; the gaps show you what to research next.

ANCESTOR

LIFESPAN (BIRTH - DEATH)

YEAR	AGE	LIFE EVENT (WITH PLACE)	HISTORICAL CONTEXT — WHAT WAS HAPPENING IN THE WORLD?

Tip: place wars, migrations, epidemics, and economic panics beside personal milestones — context often explains why an ancestor moved, married late, or vanished from the records for a decade.

Ancestor Timeline, continued

Continue the timeline — or start a second ancestor on this page.

YEAR	AGE	LIFE EVENT (WITH PLACE)	HISTORICAL CONTEXT — WHAT WAS HAPPENING IN THE WORLD?

Tip: place wars, migrations, epidemics, and economic panics beside personal milestones — context often explains why an ancestor moved, married late, or vanished from the records for a decade.

Thank you.

You didn't just buy worksheets — you picked up the tools to make sure your family's stories outlive all of us. That matters more than you know.

Getting the most from your bundle

- **Print the reusable sheets in multiples.** Research logs, census trackers, and correspondence logs are meant to be consumed — keep a stack blank and ready.
- **One binder, one ancestor at a time.** File each ancestor's profile sheet first, with records behind it in chronological order.
- **Date everything you write.** A note without a date is a mystery for your future self.
- **Back up your paper.** Photograph or scan completed sheets — paper is wonderful until the basement floods.
- **Share what you find.** Send copies to relatives. Family history kept to yourself is just a hobby; shared, it's an inheritance.
- **Come back to the brick wall.** New records appear online every month. Revisit stuck ancestors twice a year with fresh eyes.

Happy researching —
your family's story is worth the work.

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