

Getting Started in Genealogy

1. **Do a survey of all the sources you have at home**, such as bibles, letters, certificates, newspaper clippings, etc. Then interview all your relatives. Recording their recollections on tape is the best idea, but at least write down everything they tell you. Now you can fill out the pedigree chart with all the names, dates, and places you have.
2. **Decide on one family line to research.** By working on just one line at first, it is easier to build your research skills more quickly and effectively. As you work on each family, make a family group sheet showing the parents and children.
3. **First you need to confirm the information you found in step 1**, if there is no proof. Then you will move back from what you know into the unknown. You will do this by consulting original records other people have compiled.
4. To know which records to consult, it is a good idea to **read a book on genealogical research**. At the Greenville County Library, they are in 929.1.
5. **You can start by seeing if a family history has been written** (929.2). You can also check the many computer databases to which people have contributed information, and the genealogy sites on the Internet. But never accept what other people have written without checking their sources for the information.
6. **You can continue by consulting books of compiled records.** In the Greenville County Library, books with South Carolina genealogical records are in 929.3757. These records are often abstracted from the originals.
7. **Next you are ready for original records.** The Greenville County Library has census, deed, probate, and many other records on microfilm.
8. When you consult records such as census, deeds, or probates, **find out if there is an index and how the index works.** The Greenville County Library has indexes for most of their census microfilms either in book form or on microfilm. All the deeds and probate records have separate indexes. However, never use the information found in an index as final, without consulting the original source.
9. **When you come to the library, bring all your information with you.** The library staff needs to know what information you have and what you are looking for in order to know what records to suggest you search.
10. If the Greenville County Library does not have the records you need, **ask about renting microfilm** from the Family Search program of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, or about obtaining books or photocopies from periodicals on interlibrary loan.
11. **The more research you do, the more you will learn about the sources and researching techniques.** The more skilled you become, the more effective you will be. But beware...genealogical research is habit-forming.