Beginning Genealogy

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1. **Learn**.
   Resources for genealogy education are available in many forms, including: books, websites, webinars, local classes (such as adult ed.), genealogy journals, and much more. I recommend familysearch.org's Wiki. It's free and has many resources, including free research guides for topics and places. You may also consider joining a genealogy or historical society as they have a wealth of research knowledge, and they often have educational materials and programs. Don't feel you have to learn everything right away; learn at your own pace and enjoy the journey!
2. **Start with yourself.**
   Write down what you know about your family, including aunts and uncles and any of your grandparents and their known siblings. Names, dates, locations, events, and anything else you think may be helpful can be included. Sometimes the oddest bits of information turn out to be helpful clues!
3. **Look around the house** . . .
   for documents and other items that can provide clues and information, such as funeral cards, pictures, obituaries, marriage certificates, family cookbooks, heirlooms, and so on. Check with other relatives to see if they have any of these kinds of items that could provide information or insight.
4. **Interview relatives.**
   Record the stories of family members, especially older relatives but be sure to consider other family members, too. Ask permission to record the interview and be prepared with questions. You'll find a list of websites that provide ideas for what to ask, as well as other tips, at this link: https://www.cyndislist.com/oral/interviews/. Use open-ended questions and avoid those that can be answered with "Yes" or "No". It's also helpful to have pictures and other memorabilia to help spur memories and make the person feel more comfortable.
5. **Get organized.**
   Use charts and/or family tree software to keep track of what you're learning from relatives and documents, and to keep track of your research. You can use pencil and paper, or use one of the free charts at https://familysearch.org/wiki/en/Genealogy_Research_Forms. Family group sheets, pedigree charts, and research logs are the best ones to start with and can also be found at many other websites using your favorite search engine.
6. **Work your way backward from the present**.
   If you skip generations you're more likely to make mistakes and end up with the wrong people. The goal is to find YOUR family. Each generation provides information about the previous one, so doing thorough research one generation at a time, starting with yourself, will help prevent mistakes.

7. **Learn about the kinds of documents** . . .
   you'll need to find, and how to find them. This will involve learning a little about the history of each time period and location in which you research. You won't need to become an expert, but it will help to understand what was happening in your ancestor's world, and why and WHEN these documents were created. Were they created at the time of the event, or 40 years later? Where they were created, whether they still survive, and where they are currently stored are equally important considerations.
8. **Read the <u>whole</u> document.**
   Pay attention to details, find all the clues. It's exciting to find that document, but be sure to pay attention to everything in it because each document can help lead to the next.
9. **Keep an open mind**.
   Name spellings varied, boundaries changed, and sometimes our ancestors did things we didn't expect. Don't assume he/she never moved, or that the family lore is all true.
10. **Collaborate**.
    Genealogists love to share and help each other. There are blogs, websites, pages and groups on Facebook, and also local groups such as genealogical and historical societies. All are full of people who are willing to listen and help.
11. **Share**.
    Regardless of whether your family wants to hear about what you're learning about family history, it's a good idea to share either online or in book form. After all this work, you want to be sure to pass along this treasure for future generations. Remember, it's not only for those of us who are here now; these stories are for great-great-grandkids, great-nieces and nephews, and even for those who aren't related. Every person's story is a part of everyone's history.

Happy Hunting!!