

**Birmingham Public Library
Linn-Henley Research Library
The Tutwiler Collection of Southern History & Literature Department**

“Introduction to Family History and Genealogical Research”

Genealogy is the study of family history. Tracing your own family’s history is a journey of discovery that can be as exciting as hunting for treasure and as satisfying as solving a puzzle. Clues in the information you already have will help lead you step-by-step to new facts and revelations on each generation. The search is fun and fascinating. The results will help you understand the past and leave an extraordinary gift for future generations.

Start With Yourself

You are the beginning “twig” on your family tree. Start with yourself, the known, and work toward the unknown “roots.” Find out the vital information about your parents, write it down, then look for data about your grandparents, great-grandparents, etc.

Names, Dates, Places, and Relationships

You will be concerned with pulling from the many and varied documents of recorded history four key items: names, dates, places and relationships. These are the tools of the family searcher. People can be identified in records by their names, the dates of the events in their lives (birth, marriage, death), the places they lived, and by relationships to others either in or implied in the records.

Relatives as a Source

Visit or write those in your family who may have information, particularly older relatives. More often than not others before you have already gathered family data. You should write letters, make personal visits, e-mail, and do telephone surveys to find out about such persons and what information has already been collected.

Finding Distant Relatives

Before launching your research program in libraries and archives, search for distant relatives who may have already performed research. Advertise your family interest in the national, regional and local genealogical magazines.

Church Records

A few churches have records of important events in the lives of members but many do not. Investigate the possibility of finding genealogical data in the records of the church to which your ancestor belonged.

Home Sources

The place to begin is at home. Here you may find many sources, such as in family Bibles, newspaper clippings, military certificates, birth and death certificates, marriage licenses, diaries, letters, scrapbooks, backs of pictures, baby books, etc.

Primary and Secondary Resources

Research records are referred to as either "primary" (usually original documents) or "secondary" (those that are compiled or published based on original documents).

"Primary" Resources: Those that recount an event at or close to the time it happened; original records of events and may include: diaries, journals, state or federal census records, courthouse records such as deeds, will probates, birth or death records, baptism or marriage records. Also included as primary sources would be ships' passenger lists and military records.

"Secondary" Resources: Published records, including: family histories, indexes or compilations of census or marriage records, any sort of history (county, state, etc.), and collections of cemetery inscriptions, for instance.

Primary records are, of course, the most reliable sources, but secondary records can provide you with many clues for further research.

Vital Records

Some states began to keep records of births and deaths earlier, but for most of the United States, birth and death registration became a requirement around the turn of the century, about 1890-1915. Before that time these events will be found recorded generally only in church records and family Bibles. Marriages will be found recorded in most counties, dating often as early as the establishment of the county.

Jefferson County Department of Health

1400 Sixth Avenue South

Birmingham, Alabama 35233

<http://www.jcdh.org/>

(205) 933-9110

Hours: Monday – Friday (7:45 - 4:15).

You must be there by 4:00 p.m. to be served before closing.

Alabama Birth Certificates

A limited amount of information concerning births of a few individuals before 1881 is available. An act of 1881 provided that all births were to be registered with a county health officer. Starting in 1881, births were recorded in the county courthouse of the county where the birth occurred. Most counties did not keep up with them. Such records, when they survive at all, are found today in the individual county probate courts. The date for the beginning of mandatory state-level registration of births in Alabama is January 1, 1908.

Birth certificates are restricted for 125 years other than to immediate family members. Immediate family members are:

- Mother/Father
- Brother/Sister
- Son/Daughter
- Husband/Wife

- Maternal grandparents (if they state on the application that they are the legal guardian or they are raising the child and financially support the child)

Copy cost is \$15.00 for the first copy and \$6.00 for each additional copy if ordered at the same time. The person applying has to be 14 years old or older. If further information or forms are needed please call (205) 930-1106. The center for health statistics has birth certificates starting in January 1, 1908. Written authorization required for anyone other than an immediate family member.

Alabama Death Records

A limited amount of information concerning deaths of a few individuals before 1881 is available. An act of 1881 provided that all deaths were to be registered with a county health officer. Starting in 1881, deaths were recorded in the county courthouse of the county where the death occurred. Most counties did not keep up with them. Such records, when they survive at all, are found today in the individual county probate courts. The date for the beginning of mandatory state-level registration of deaths in Alabama is January 1, 1908.

Death certificates are restricted for 25 years other than to immediate family members
Immediate family members are:

- Mother/father
- Brother/sister
- Son/daughter
- Husband/wife
- Grandchild
- Son in law/daughter in law

The informant can apply for a death certificate. Copy cost is \$15.00 for the first copy and \$6.00 for each additional copy if ordered at the same time. The person applying has to be 14 years old or older. If further information or forms are needed please call (205) 930-1106. The center for health certificates has death certificates starting in January 1, 1908. Written authorization required for anyone other than an immediate family member. **The Church of Latter Day Saints on Altadena Road in Birmingham has the Alabama Death Certificates from (1908-1959) for 0.25 each. Also the Family and Regional History Program at Wallace State Community College has Alabama Death Certificates from (1908 to the mid 70's) for 0.25 each.**

Alabama Marriage Records

A marriage license had been required since the territorial period in 1799. Marriage licenses were issued by the clerk of the county in which the bride resides. To enter into a marriage contract a man had to be at least 17 years of age and a woman had to be at least 14 years of age. If a man was under 21 or the woman under 18 and as yet unmarried, the consent of the parents or guardian of the minor was required before a license could be issued. Before 1888, a marriage certificate indicated the names of the bride, groom, bondsman, and officiate along with the license bond and marriage date. Starting in 1910 records may also include the names of the parents, physical descriptions, ages and

occupations of the parties, the number of previous marriages for each, and the blood relationship, if any, between the parties.

Marriage certificates are not restricted. The center for health statistics has marriage certificates starting August 1, 1936. The person applying has to be 14 years old or older. If further information or forms are needed please call 205-930-1106. Copy cost is \$15.00 for the first copy and \$6.00 for each additional copy if ordered at the same time. **You can also get a marriage certificate from the county courthouse from the county that the marriage took place for (0.50 - \$1.00) a copy.**

Alabama Divorce Records

Divorce records are in the Acts of Alabama until 1865. These early decrees are thus a part of the legislative record and are published in the Senate and House Journals. After 1865 the county chancery court was authorized to issue final divorce decrees. In 1917 the chancery court was merged with the circuit court of the county.

Divorce certificates are not restricted. The center for health certificates started registering divorce certificates in 1950. The person applying has to be 14 years old or older. If further information or forms are needed please call 205-930-1106. Copy cost is \$15.00 for the first copy and \$6.00 for each additional copy if ordered at the same time. **You can also get divorce certificates from the county circuit court (domestic relations) in the county that the divorce took place for (0.10-0.50) a page.**

Adoption Records

Currently, biological birth certificates are open to adoptees, under certain conditions, when the adoptee becomes age 19.

Alabama Department of Human Resources
Family and Children's Services Division
50 North Ripley Street
Montgomery, Alabama 36130
Call: (334) 206-5426

Deeds and Wills

Records of property acquisitions and disposition can be good sources of genealogical data. Such records are normally in the county courthouses. Often the earliest county records or copies of them are also available in the state archives.

Federal Records

The Federal census was taken every 10 years since 1790. The last census released to the U.S. public is 1930. They are locked up for 72 years from the census date. The 1940 census will be released in 2012.

Libraries, Societies, and Archives

Visit the state, regional or local institutions in your area. Libraries, historical and genealogical societies, and archival depositories are all good sources for genealogical and family history data.

Local Genealogical Libraries

Birmingham Public Library

Linn-Henley Research Library

2100 Park Place

Birmingham, Alabama 35220

The Tutwiler Collection of Southern History and Literature Department

(205) 226-3665

<http://www.bplonline.org>

Hours: Monday and Tuesday (9:00 - 8:00)

Wednesday - Saturday (9:00 - 6:00)

Sunday (2:00 – 6:00) p.m.

Alabama Department of Archives and History (or the Alabama State Archives)

Reference Room

P.O. Box 3000100

Montgomery, Alabama 36130

(334) 242-4435

<http://www.archives.state.al.us>

Hours: Monday through Friday (8:30-4:30)

Closed on Weekends

Family and Regional History Program Wallace State Community College

P.O. Box 2000

801 North Main Street

Hanceville, Alabama 35077

(256) 352-8263

robert.davis@wallacestate.edu

Hours: Vary seasonally

Jesus Christ Church of Latter Day Saints (Family History Center)

2780 Altadena Road

Birmingham, Alabama

(205) 967-7279

<http://www.familysearch.org>

Hours: Wednesday and Thursday (10:00 - 8:00)

Saturday (10:00 - 2:00).

Closed: Monday, Tuesday, Friday and 1st Saturday.

(Hours vary sometimes)

Samford University Special Collections

800 Lakeshore Drive

Birmingham, Alabama 35229

(205) 726-2749

<http://library.samford.edu/about/special.html>

Hours: Monday-Friday (8:00 - 4:30).

The hours of the collection may vary when University is not in session.

Local Genealogical Societies

Birmingham Genealogical Society (BGS)

P.O. Box 2432

Birmingham, Alabama 35201

<http://www.birminghamgenealogy.org>

Membership - \$15.00 a year (Individual)

\$20.00 a year (Family)

Meets – 4th Saturday of each month (except November)

Location – Meets at the Linn-Henley Research Library in the Richard Arrington, Jr. Auditorium (4th Floor) from (2:00-3:00) p.m.

Membership Includes – A subscription to the Society’s quarterly magazine “Pioneer Trails” and a monthly newsletter.

Alabama Genealogical Society (AGS)

800 Lakeshore Drive

P.O. Box 2296

Birmingham, Alabama 35229

<http://algensoc.org/>

Membership - \$20.00 a year (Individual)

\$25.00 a year (Family)

Location – Two times a year, spring (Samford University) and fall (Alabama State Archives)

Membership Includes – A subscription to the “AGS Magazine” twice a year, and a quarterly newsletter.

Birmingham African-American Study Group (BAASG)

P. O. Box 12011

Birmingham, Alabama 35202

<http://www.birminghamgenealogy.org>

Membership - \$15.00 a year

Meets- 2nd Sunday of each month (except May and June on different days)

Location - Meets at the Linn-Henley Research Library in the Richard Arrington, Jr. Auditorium (3^{4th} Floor) from (3:00-5:00) p.m.

Census Records

The Tutwiler Collection of Southern History & Literature has many Federal Census records on microfilm for the years 1790-1930. The census is taken every 10 years, but released to the public every 72 years. Our collection contains all available census records and indexes for Alabama (1810-1930), as well as various records for other states.

We also subscribe to two online genealogy databases: Ancestry.com (Library Edition), and Heritage Quest. Ancestry.com can only be accessed if you are inside the library. Heritage Quest can be accessed remotely at home with a current Jefferson County Library card.

The census has changed over the years. From 1790 to 1840 only the name of the head of household was recorded. The other members of the household are placed in age groups,

categorized by sex and race. Beginning in 1850, every member of the household is listed by name.

Census films are stored in the Microforms Room located on the third floor of the Linn-Henley Research Library. The films are filed in chronological order, then alphabetically by state and county for each census.

Census Indexes

The census indexes for the years 1790-1870 are in book form and are shelved in the Microforms Room. The indexes are shelved alphabetically by state.

Beginning in 1880 the census indexes are compiled on a microfilm called SOUNDINDEX. The Soundindex film may be found immediately following each state in the appropriate year.

Soundex on Microfilm

1. Find the Soundex Code for each name you are researching. This name code is found in the Soundex Index, located on the shelves as the state regardless of state or year.
2. Pull the Soundex film which contains the name code you need. Many different codes are on the same roll of Soundex, so your exact name code number may not appear on the label.
3. The Soundex microfilm can be used on the same microfilm readers used for the census records. Soundex is 16mm wide and can be distinguished from 35mm wide census film.
4. When viewing the Soundex film, the Soundex code will be found in the upper left hand corner of the card being viewed. Several surnames may have the same codes, so always remember to search for the given name first within a name code group and then for the surname list.
5. When you find the correct person, you should note the following information from the upper right hand corner of the Soundex card: ED (Enumeration District), sheet number, and line number. The name of the county will be located underneath the name of the individual. It is essential that the name of the county be noted. Within this information you should continue on to the indicated census record.
6. Pull the census microfilm that contains the county listed on the Soundex card. Check the reel of microfilm to be sure that you have not only the county you need, but also the ED (Enumeration District). Many times a county will be on 3 or 4 different reels so check to be sure you have the correct Enumeration District (ED) as well as the correct county. Within the state and county you are seeking, you should then locate the correct Enumeration District (ED). The number can be

found in the upper right hand corner of each page. Once you find the ED you then locate the page number within that ED. The name should appear on that page.

Information in Federal Census Records

- 1930: Schedules give the relationship of Head of Household, sex, age, marital status, age at first marriage, race, if naturalized citizen, year of immigration to U.S., mother tongue, place of birth of mother and father, occupation, if person owned home or rented and value of home or amount of rent, and ownership of radio set.
- 1920: Schedules give the relationship to Head of Household, sex, marital status, race, if naturalized citizen, nativity and mother tongue, place of birth of mother and father, occupation, and if person owned their home or rented is also noted.
- 1910: Schedules give relationship to Head of Household, sex, color/race, age, marital status, years married, mother of how many children, number of these children living, person's birthplace, father's and mother's birthplace, occupation and whether a veteran of the Union/Confederate, Army/Navy.
- 1900: Schedules give exact month and year of birth of every person in the United States, and are the only ones that do. Gives relationship to the Head of Household, color and sex. Gives birthplace of mother and father, year of immigration and if a naturalized citizen.
- 1890: Destroyed by fire in 1921. A special census of Union Veterans of the Civil War and their widows can be used for some states. Information contained: name of veteran (or if he did not survive names of both veteran and widow); veteran's rank, company, regiment or vessel; dates of enlistment and discharge; length of service; disability. Persons listed under assumed names are recorded under both the real name and the alias. Some Confederate states enumerated Confederate Veterans as well although they were not supposed to do so.
- 1880: The first census that gives the name and relationship of each individual member of the family to the Head of Household; also gives birthplaces of parents of each person enumerated.
- 1870: The first census that enrolled Native Americans. Identifies survivors of the Civil War. First census that indicates parents of foreign birth.
- 1860: Gives about the same information as 1850.
- 1850: First census to state name and age of every free person in the United States; also lists state, territory or country of birth; special enumeration of persons who were married within the census year, July 1, 1849 to June 30, 1850.
- 1840: Name and age of any pensioners living in the household were specially enumerated; found to be 80 percent accurate.

1830 and 1840: Names Head of Household; other members broken down by 5-year age groups under 20, and by 10-year groups over 20.

1800 - 1820: Names Head of Household; other members broken down in 10-year age groups; number of slaves listed. 1800 was the first census to name all free persons who were Head of Household.

1790: Names only Head of Household.

How to Locate a Family Member on the 1930 Federal Census on Microfilm

1. There are two types of Soundex film with the same color on the outside of the box for ONLY the 1930 census.

A. It starts off with the first type which is your regular Soundex boxes (rolls 1-127). The regular Soundex set covers everyone in the state of Alabama EXCEPT for people living in Jefferson, Mobile, and Montgomery Counties. These Soundex cards are hand written on the film just like the 1920 Soundex cards are.

You will need to copy down: the ED, sheet number, and county the person is residing in.

B. At the end of the regular Soundex series, the second set starts (rolls 128-198). These are Soundex boxes ONLY for people living in Jefferson, Mobile, and Montgomery Counties. These are typed cards, and show five cards to a page.

You will need to copy down: the county the person is residing in and the three numbers in the upper right hand corner, going from left to right in order.

These numbers are the: Volume, ED, and Sheet number.

NOTE: If the person you are looking for lives in St. Clair County, for example, and you use the Soundex boxes for Jefferson, Mobile, and Montgomery Counties, you will not find them even if you have the correct Soundex number. YOU MUST HAVE THE RIGHT SET OF BOXES.

2. Next pull your census film for the county your person resides in. If the county you need spills over more than one box pull both of them. Put the first box in the reader and go to the first page to see all of the ED's on that film. Find the box that matches your ED. [Ex. Etowah County]. Only Jefferson County ED's are listed on the outside of the box, because there are 12 boxes of film.

3. When you have the right county census box, find the ED number first. Remember to use the second number only. The 1930 census uses a new two digit number for the ED.

For the 1930 census, the Bureau of the Census developed a new ED numbering

system for the 52 of the 56 jurisdictions. Within each state, each county has a distinct number that is followed by the specific Enumeration District number. The county numbers were assigned based on the alphabetical order of counties within each state. American Samoa, the Canal Zone, Guam, and the Virgin Islands, however, did not use this system. [Alabama County Code Sheet]

Sometimes no one lived in an ED, in which case the enumerator wrote “no population” on the sheet. These EDs are noted by “NP” in the catalog. Some of the EDs contain as few as one person. Care must be taken when viewing the film in order not to miss these small EDs. In a few cases, the Bureau combined two EDs. The number that was not used is listed as “void”.

4. Next find the sheet number. Note that the sheet number is NOT the page number, like in the 1920 census. The family number is numbered on the left hand side of the Page. IT IS NOT THE LINE NUMBER.

Library Catalog

<http://www.bplonline.org>

Materials in the Tutwiler Collection are cataloged and arranged by the Library of Congress classification system. The following classifications will lead you to titles in a general subject area. Everything in our Collection is considered Reference, so it will not be able to be checked out. You can make photocopies of most of the materials.

BX (Church & Religious Histories), CS71 (Family Histories), E51-99 (Native Americans), E185 (African-Americans), E201-298 (War Between the States), E201-298 (American Revolution), F221-235 (Virginia), F247-250 (West Virginia), F251-265 (North Carolina), F266-280 (South Carolina), F281-295 (Georgia), F306-320 (Florida), F321-335 (Alabama), F336-350 (Mississippi), F366-380 (Louisiana), F380-395 (Texas), F406-420 (Arkansas), F431-445 (Tennessee), and F446-460 (Kentucky).

As of January 15, 2003, the Tutwiler Collection of Southern History & Literature Department of the Birmingham Public Library is also an authorized branch library of the Family History Library and part of the research system of the Genealogical Society of Utah. So you can order microfilm from Salt Lake City, Utah, here at our library.

Interlibrary Loan (ILL)

Purpose of Interlibrary Loan is to acquire books, photocopies of non-circulating materials (such as magazine articles), and government publications not already owned by the public libraries of Jefferson County for library patrons. Location of Interlibrary Loan is located on the First Floor of the Birmingham Public Library in the Information /Circulation Department. ILL request may be submitted at any public library in Jefferson County. Interlibrary Loan is available to anyone 18 years of age or older with a current Jefferson County Library Card. This service is free of charge. Occasionally, however, the lending library will charge a fee. The patron may preauthorize acceptance of any fees on

the ILL request form or be notified of any fees before the material is ordered. For more information call (205) 226-3730.

<http://www.bplonline.org/services/InterlibraryLoan.aspx>

Birmingham Public Library Genealogical Databases

Alabama Biography (WPA Index), Alabama Coal Mine Fatalities (1898-1938), Alabama Episcopal Church Registers, Alabama Inventors Database, Alabama Mosaic, Ancestry Library Edition, BPL Digital Collection, Heritage Quest, Jefferson County Probate Court, Loose Papers (1852-1936), News Library: Birmingham News, Obituary Index: Birmingham Area Newspapers, Red Mountain Cemetery, Records of Interments (1888-1906), and Sanborn Maps: Alabama (1867-1970).

http://www.bplonline.org/virtual/onlinedatabases/db_list.aspx?id=11

Free Genealogical Websites

Social Security Death Index

<http://ssdi.rootsweb.com>

U.S. Vital Records

<http://www.vitalrec.com>

Alabama Vital Records

<http://adph.org/vitalrecords>

Genforum

<http://www.genforum.com>

The World Connect Project

<http://wc.rootsweb.ancestry.com>

U.S. Gen Web Project

<http://www.usgenweb.com>

Alabama US Gen Web

<http://www.algenweb.us>

Bureau of Land Management

<http://www.glorerecords.blm.gov>

Latter Day Saints (LDS)

<http://www.familysearch.org>

Alabama State Archives

<http://www.archives.state.al.us>

Southern Maps

<http://alabamamaps.ua.edu/historicalmaps/index.html>

Search engine

<http://www.google.com>

About Genealogy

<http://genealogy.about.com/>

Blank Genealogical Forms

<http://www.ancestry.com/charts/census.aspx>

Genealogical Charts

<http://www.misbach.org/pdfcharts/>