Lecture Topics

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(All topics are one hour in duration unless otherwise noted.)

General Topics (Methodology)

Climbing Your Family Tree

This basic lecture and slideshow provide an entry-level introduction to family history for novices. It is suitable for groups that want an overview of "getting started," such as school groups, civic organizations, or first-time genealogy conference attendees.

Creating a Research Plan

Even the most disorganized researchers can expect quality research products when they focus on specific questions and complete and answer them in a reasonable time. Experienced professionals know that this is the essential element of their work. This lecture focuses on balancing time, quality, and resources and looks at various types of research plans used by professionals. Practical examples are shared and a step-by-step process is included. Acceptable genealogical standards, resources, and examples are emphasized.

Did He Serve? Researching Military Service Records

Even if your ancestors were too poor to own land or valuable personal belongings, chances are that one or more of them served in some arm of the United States military within the past 200–plus years. Men as young as 16 or as old as 60 may have participated in the local militia units. However, most men who served were between the ages of 18 and 30.

Don't overlook military records in your genealogical research. They can reveal vital statistics, ancestors' locales, health histories, and politics. Some files may even contain *original* birth, marriage, or death records. Many types of records exist relating to a veteran's military service. This lecture covers compiled service records, bounty land records, pension files, records relating to service, (draft records, post or regimental returns, correspondence, muster rolls, etc.) and published indexes to use as starting points in military research.

Dos and Don'ts for Your Research

This topic presents some clear-cut rules to ensure that your family history efforts are accurate and follow accepted standards for genealogical research. Also included are some clues to help jump-start stalled projects.

eBooks for Genealogists

Learn about free and paid every-word searchable eBooks that can be used online or downloaded to a reader such as Kindle, smartphone, or iPad. This session explores numerous types of eBooks available, from biography and history to government documents—all with application to family history research or continuing education. Digitized or electronic books, commonly known as eBooks, are widely accessible today on the Internet. eReaders can help us

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learn more, carry books with us everywhere, and leave more room in our offices for family heirlooms and important documents. This lecture focuses on the kinds of available reader devices, such as Kindles or Nooks, reader programs for a PC, Mac, iPad, or smartphone, and the numerous sources of free or paid eBooks, including Google Books, Library of Congress, National Archives, Amazon, and others. Attendees will discover how to find and download eBooks from the Internet, and how to evaluate the kind of reading device that best suits their needs.

Enough is Enough! Or is it?

Tips and a step-by-step case study help attendees learn how to decide when adequate research has been conducted to meet the goals of a project. This session covers determining what other sources might be available, analyzing, and organizing research to ensure that a reasonably exhaustive search has been conducted.

Federal Records Relating to Rivers and Canals

Many federal records pertain to the development and use of waterways in the United States. This lecture shows examples and explains the relevance of some of the applicable records found at the National Archives in Washington, DC, in its online holdings, and at its regional facilities in Chicago, Atlanta, Kansas City, and others. Photos and documents will be examined from diverse NARA record groups such as Records of the Office of the Chief of Engineers (RG 77), Records of the Inland Waterways Corporation (RG 91), Records of the Bureau of Land Management (RG 49), and from holdings of the Library of Congress, such as the *Serial Set* and map collections. The process for finding these and similar records will also be explained.

Finding the Record You Don't Know Exists

Any competent researcher can find a record once its existence is known. The successful advanced genealogist will consider the possibility that an unknown record and even a previously unknown record type might exist, and develop a plan for finding that record if it does. This research—in archival, manuscript and special collections—is often key to successful research, and this session will focus on strategies to develop and execute a research plan for finding the record you don't know exists in those types of repositories.

Getting to Know You, Getting to Know More About You

Each person who walked this earth was made up of much more than birth, marriage, and death dates. Don't you want to really get to know your ancestors—where they came from, what languages they spoke, what they did for a living, who they were? Using traditional and Internet resources, creative researchers can fill in many details about their families. This session includes case studies dealing with military service, biographical details, immigration possibilities, and historical artifacts. See how easy it is to find a single record or fact that leads to numerous other sources online and in original records.

How to Learn New Things

How do we learn about ancestors in new locations, records, or topics? This lecture focuses on a structured approach that results in success for beginners new to family history research and for experienced researchers turning their focus to a new geographical area or time period.

Investigating Your Ancestors

Everyone loves a good mystery, but not when the mystery is, "Who is my great-grandfather?" or "Where did he come from? He just showed up here." Genealogists can use common techniques employed by criminal investigators to help solve the mysteries of lineage.

One expert defines a criminal investigation as "a thorough, objective search for truthful information," and that should also describe a genealogist's quest for the truth about his or her ancestors. Since every case and every family is different, there are no fixed rules for an investigation. However, a good family history researcher, like a good criminal investigator, proceeds in a systematic, organized way, analyzing and evaluating all the evidence, and building a truthful case. Sometimes there is not enough evidence to prove a case, and both the investigator and the family historian must be able to move on to another case or family line.

This lecture points out criminal investigation techniques that can be employed by genealogists to effectively search for and identify ancestors, record evidence, analyze and draw accurate conclusions, and write comprehensive but concise reports.

Manuscripts and More

Original documents, museum holdings, and ephemera can provide answers or information found nowhere else, but only if you know how to locate them. Discover some of the riches to be garnered from materials at the Library of Congress, NARA, the Smithsonian, and other local repositories.

Mapping for Genealogists

If you want to learn practical applications for a variety of mapping tools (both online and software programs), this is the session for you. Learn about geography, from platting an individual piece of land, to identifying its location in a given area, to mapping an entire community. Learn how to identify the correct courthouse in a given era for the records you need, and how topographical maps can provide clues to ancestors' occupations.

Maps: Where to Find Them and How to Use Them

Maps enable genealogists to understand more about an ancestor's migration, community, and occupation. Learn about traditional and online resources for finding historical, topographical, birds-eye view, and other maps of interest, and how to interpret the maps' symbols and notations.

Murder at the Sawmill

The centuries-old hill culture glories in fightin', cussin', and stickin' up for blood relatives. This case study focuses on a close-knit rural community of people in Missouri's Ozarks long related by blood and by intertwining relationships that go back to similar terrain in Tennessee, North Carolina, and Virginia and, likely, beyond that to the hills of Scotland and the northern borderlands of England. Petty differences among people who are more alike than different lead to violence, resulting in a murder trial that causes rifts within families and in the community. The case study presents incidents and cultural mores leading up to the murder and then follows the criminal case from the arrest up through the Missouri Supreme Court final ruling.

Newspapers and Periodicals at the Library of Congress

Explore the vast holdings of worldwide historical newspapers and magazines available through the Library of Congress. Find resources at your fingertips online, or access journals on a variety of topics relevant to family history research at the library.

Our National Treasure: The Library of Congress

Even if you never visit Washington, DC, you should explore the holdings of the Library of Congress. We'll mine the online collection for its wealth of documents, maps, books, photographs, even sound recordings, and learn to successfully search the online catalogs.

Private Land Claims

A private land claim is made by a person, business, or organization to land within the public domain where the claim originated under a previous regime. In this session, attendees will learn about land that was granted to individuals by the governments of France, Spain, or Mexico prior to U.S. acquisition of an area (such as the Louisiana Purchase territories and the Southeastern and Southwestern United States), the process of proving legal ownership, and how to find resulting records in which owners received title to the land under the U.S. government.

Reporting the Facts: Record as You Go

Whether your work is "just for my own family" or for a paying client, a report that keeps you apprised of research progress is critical. Most researchers struggle to write the results of their research *after* it is completed. This presentation offers a better solution: write as you work to ensure accuracy, best analysis and use of the facts, and avoidance of the dilemma of "not enough time to write the report well."

Rogues and Rascals: Divorced, Litigious, or Downright Criminal Relatives!

Many researchers from "good" families never consider looking for ancestors in records like court minutes, divorce actions, or prison logs. This lecture helps attendees to explore the possibility that *unsavory* characters add spice to our family stew, and actually should be referred to as *savory* characters.

Divorces were more common than most of us realize in the early 1900s and before. Land was important in early America, and simple farmers often filed lawsuits that resulted in long drawn-out proceedings naming many people intertwined with the family. Even good citizens sometimes ran afoul of the law, resulting in prison sentences for such criminal actions as making or selling moonshine whiskey. Wills often quietly told stories of the "bad apple" in the family by their absence or meager inheritances.

This lecture presents ideas for unlikely sources to search, with examples from the lecturer's own family. We will take a humorous look at why genealogists should be delighted to find such records.

Rural Research

Research in cities involves using a seeming plethora of resources that identify a person almost from year to year – city directories, tax lists, detailed maps of property holders or renters, neighborhood school and church records, nearby funeral home or cemetery records.

Can these resources also transfer to rural research? Not usually. Rural records are less plentiful and a lot less obvious. Add to the fact that there are fewer resources the additional chance that natural or manmade tragedies more likely destroyed the courthouse or some of its records in rural communities—fire, flood, tornados, pillaging—and what *can* we work with in rural family history research?

Sharing Your Family History

Will your many years of genealogical research end up in a trash bin when you're gone? Not if you organize it, even a small piece at a time, and share it with others now. Not everyone will write a 300-page family history tome, but all genealogists *should* share the stories they uncover. This session demonstrates simple ways to share photographs in free or inexpensive online and print albums or scrapbooks, communicate easily with relatives via a family website, start or participate in a DNA surname project, create a family photo and signature quilt, produce a DVD slide show with your story, or create a printed monograph for sharing.

Social Security Sleuthing

This lecture describes the history of Social Security from 1935 to the present, and what a Social Security number can reveal about a possible residence or birthplace. The SS-5, Application for Social Security Number, provides important details like mother's and father's names, applicant's date and place of birth, and an original signature. Instructions are provided for successfully ordering a copy of the SS-5. The Social Security Death Master File is described in detail—who should be listed and who should not, dates covered, and the kinds of information available from the file. A comparison is made among several versions of the Social Security Death Index widely available on the Internet or at Family History Centers. Social Security claims files may contain verifying information to establish birth date and place. The lecture includes instructions and addresses for obtaining more information from the Social Security Administration.

Source Citation Principles

Why is citing your sources imperative? A source citation gives credit where credit is due and provides a roadmap that will lead anyone viewing the information back to its unique origin. Even more importantly, citations help us evaluate the reliability and credibility of each piece of information that we use in our research. This lecture discusses and demonstrates basic citation elements and standards for source citations.

Understanding State Land States: Metes and Bounds

State land states comprise the original thirteen colonies, their "children," Hawaii, and Texas. In this session, attendees will identify state land states and explore some of the unique methods of land distribution, division, and measurement within these states. Methods for locating state-level resources also will be explored.

Using NARA's Finding Aids and Website

Amazing records can be accessed at the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), but maneuvering your way through the labyrinth to locate them requires knowledge of the available resources. What is a DP, PI, RG, or RIP, and when should you use ARC or OPA or AAD? Where is that NARA database you found just yesterday? This session presents some simple methods for understanding the NARA research process and navigating NARA finding aids and the website.

What's at the County Courthouse?

If you have done your census research and located a family in a particular area at a given time, you should next explore the local records available for that family. Records available at the local level may vary from county to county, and certainly from state to state. However, the same *types* of records were created in every locale. Just think of the times in your life that you have gone to the town hall or county courthouse. You may have obtained a marriage license, perhaps received a divorce decree, or filed paperwork for adoption or guardianship of a minor child. As administrator of a relative's will, you may have filed settlement papers for his or her estate. If you have bought or sold land or real property, you or your representative recorded these transactions and your deed at the county courthouse. Perhaps you've been involved in a minor civil lawsuit. The records of this exist at the county courthouse. And surely, as a good citizen, you've registered to vote? These records may be on file at the town hall or county courthouse. Get the picture? Your ancestors left behind valuable genealogical information at their county courthouses, too.

Local records include the usual birth, marriage, death, and probate records. But you'll also find receipts for wolf scalps, commitments of the insane, care of the poor and orphaned, loyalty oaths from the Civil War era, military discharges, licenses, records of stray animals, naturalizations, school censuses, tax records, and a host of other revealing documents. If you aren't digging through those records, you're missing some revealing details about your people!

Where Do I Go From Here?

Most genealogists start with the census, vital records, newspapers, home sources, and other intuitive resources. When you've exhausted these usual starting places, you may need to seek clues in printed or online sources that lead to biographical or historical information about your ancestors. These clues can guide you to such original governmental records as military service, property holdings, taxes, offices held, court cases, and more. Note: This is intended as a beginning-level lecture.

Where Would You Go If You Had Five Days in Washington, DC?

Researchers who have never traveled to and researched in Washington, DC, are often overwhelmed by the possibilities and just don't know where to start. This session provides an overview of the many repositories available in the DC metro area, introduces attendees to their websites and stresses the importance of advance preparation, and answers questions about the differences and similarities of records to be found at such facilities as the National Archives, Library of Congress, DAR Library, Smithsonian libraries, Society of the Cincinnati, and other less-frequented resources. The presenter, a long-time annual researcher in Washington who now

resides in the area, also provides tips for traveling to and within the city, hotel accommodations, navigating the Metro system, and saving money on transportation, lodging, and meals.

You Can Go Home Again!

Is your mother's sister your *ahnt*, your *ant*, or your *aint*? Have you ever been the recipient of a *Yankee dime*? Does your dad describe the garage floor as *greasy* or *greazy*? Is a *cobbler* a shoemaker or a delicious dessert? Do you like your coffee *regular*? Do you supply your picnic guests with *seltzer*, *soda*, or *sodie-pop*? Is *drawer* a movable part of your nightstand, or how you create a picture? Does water rush through a *gully*, a *wash*, or an *arroyo*? Does your grandmother clean her kitchen *zinc*? Did your grandfather use a *gunnysack*, a *tow sack*, a *burlap bag*, or a *poke* to carry goods?

Our dialects, accents, and regionalisms provide important clues to our roots. It's usually simple for anyone to determine that a speaker is a "Northerner" or a "Southerner." But listen more closely for clues in the form of pronunciation, usage, and regionalisms that can lead us to identify a dialect from a specific region. This lecture and audio or video clips will identify some common word usages and pronunciations associated with specific geographic areas of the United States that will afford genealogists possible new clues to help determine the origins of past generations of their families.

Regional Topics

Clues in Missouri Migration

Missouri's unique location in the middle of the United States almost guaranteed migration from the East that would eventually flow through to the West. Today, many Americans trace ancestry to the Show Me State but lack clues as to where their ancestors lived before coming to Missouri. This lecture explores the migration paths and geographic roots of settlers and how these previous residences often determined where they settled within Missouri.

Many Missourians claim Pennsylvania roots as a result of westward migration. Some early travelers followed Forbes's Road or Braddock's Road through Pittsburgh into the Northwest Territory, perhaps stopping for a few generations in Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana, or Illinois before journeying on the Ohio River to the Mississippi, and then continuing on that great river to Missouri. Others took overland wagons or stagecoaches west from Baltimore to St. Louis along the National Road, closely following the route of today's Interstate Highway 70. And some, primarily Scots-Irish or early Germans, took a roundabout route from southern Pennsylvania, traversing the Great Valley Road south into Virginia or North Carolina, and later migrating to Tennessee and Kentucky before landing in Missouri. Understanding these migration routes and trends may lead researchers to clues about the possible origins of an ancestor who settled in a specific area of Missouri.

Missouri Research from a Distance

Learn what Missouri records and information are available to anyone via the Internet, such as federal land sales, births, deaths, probate files, court cases, military service records, newspapers, and maps.

Spanish Archives Materials: Not Just for Hispanics

Spain once claimed, explored, or controlled a large number of our existing fifty states. Many records exist for Americans who lived in Spanish territories. From old Spanish land grant deeds to records of United States citizens who traveled through Spanish territories in the South (Mississippi, Louisiana, Florida), many records can help the Hispanic and non-Hispanic genealogist find more details about their ancestors. This lecture provides an overview of the areas once controlled by Spain and suggestions of where to look online or in United States repositories for information from the Spanish Archives.

West from Missouri

In the 1800s, Missouri, the "Show Me" state, was a jumping-off place for travel west. The Santa Fe Trail began in Missouri, and ended in New Mexico Territory. The Oregon Trail went from Independence to the promise of a new life in the West. Many persecuted Mormons left Missouri and went north to Iowa to take the Mormon Trail west to a new home in Utah. The Butterfield Overland Mail route led from St. Louis to Fort Smith, Arkansas; El Paso, Texas; Tucson, Arizona; and Los Angeles and San Francisco, California.

In the 1900s, new factors caused westward migration from Missouri. The dust bowl caused some Missouri farmers to take Route 66 to hopes for a better life on the West Coast. Factories and new Army and Air bases sprang up in Colorado, New Mexico, Texas, California, Oregon, and Washington as a result of World War II, providing large numbers of new jobs to be filled. As Missouri's timber and mining industries wound down, new resources in the West attracted Missourians who had made their living this way for generations.

This lecture focuses on why emigrants converged on Missouri in the 1800s to leave for points west. It explores the importance of the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers for transportation of goods, and the role of St. Louis and Missouri as "the Gateway to the West." Why did they leave from Missouri? What did they hope to find in the West? How many actually went west in the 1800s? What kinds of records did they leave behind, and where can these be found? This lecture answers these questions, and more, about further migration in the 1900s.

Westward Ho! But How?

Before the American Civil War, great numbers of United States citizens headed west for military service in the Mexican War period or after, to seek riches in California's gold fields, or to farm the fertile valleys of Oregon and Washington. Many had no choice but to amble across the great American prairies in ox-drawn wagons, an often-grueling journey of an entire summer's duration. Other travelers sailed around South America, a journey that could take as long as seven months. Fortunate travelers could cut their travel time to as little as two to three weeks from New York to San Francisco. These travelers to the West took a steamer from eastern or southern ports to Panama, then rode the railroad across the Isthmus of Panama, and hopped another steamer from the west coast of Panama to United States western ports.

Where are the records of these immigrants to the United States West? This lecture focuses on Americans who traveled west by way of Panama, and the records they left. Of course, many can be documented from NARA's passenger arrival records at various U.S. West Coast ports. But what of those who died of cholera outbreaks while waiting in Panama? This lecture will identify sources of records for military and civilian travelers who were able to move more quickly

and easily from eastern or southern American soil to the West Coast, and for the unfortunate ones who died en route.

When You're Not Who You Thought You Were

Today's genealogists increasingly recognize the value of DNA testing for its ability to verify or negate traditional research results and sometimes to scale previously insurmountable brick walls. But what if DNA testing identifies a totally different surname or ancestor than the expected one or reveals a previously unknown close family member? What paths lead to finding a true biological identity?

Computer & Internet Topics

De-mystifying GEDCOM

New genealogists or new computer users often ask what GEDCOM is and how they can create and export a GEDCOM file to share, download one from a website, or import one from another program into their own genealogy database. This lecture demonstrates in straightforward steps what a GEDCOM file is, how its structure allows programs to share data, and even how simple it is to edit a GEDCOM file yourself. The instructor will provide an easy-to-follow live demonstration of the creation of a custom GEDCOM file and step-by-step instructions for exporting this file. She will also demonstrate how to download a GEDCOM file from a website and then import it into a genealogy program.

Digitizing Your Way to Organization

This session demonstrates the use of a scanner with an automatic document feeder and several commonly used computer programs for organizing your genealogy files electronically. This means every document a researcher has collected can be a convenient mouseclick away. The session includes a demonstration of creating PDF files from scanned images, as well as using optical character recognition (OCR) to convert an image to a word processing document. Also included is a demonstration of the use of a digital camera and stand to photograph documents.

Good Genealogists Evaluate Their Internet Sources

The vast resources on the Internet can offer solutions to brick-wall problems or can lead to even more gnarled chains of so-called facts to unthread and sort out. Learn how to analyze web sources to determine which offer reliable evidence. This step-by-step approach provides a foundation for judging the various types of information found on the Internet.

The Lowdown on Downloading

Learn to download digitized books, forms, or family trees from such online sites as NGS, Google Book Search, HeritageQuest, Library of Congress, FamilySearch, Ancestry, Footnote, or your public library. Keep the file for future use, search every word of text-based files, and print just the pages you need. This presentation demonstrates simple step-by-step instructions for downloading and using PDF, image, GEDCOM, or text-based files and online cloud storage services such as Dropbox.

Using a Personal Computer to Create a Family History

This lecture discusses how to use a personal computer with a Windows-based or Macintosh word processing program to create a camera-ready family history that can then be photocopied, printed on-demand, or produced and bound by a professional printer.

Topics will include saving a text file from most genealogy programs as a basis for the family history, and formatting it in the word processor, then using the word processor's tools to create headers, footers, automatic table of contents and index, reference notes for source citations, and automatic numbering for illustrations. We will discuss scanning graphics and including them in the word processing document.

Word Processing Tricks for Genealogists

Old dogs *can* learn new tricks! People who try a new word processing feature are often surprised at how easy it is, and at how much it helps them in their work. It takes time to learn new features of your program, but the investment pays off in the amount of time saved when you have practiced and memorized the new trick.

This lecture focuses on learning to customize word processing documents with templates and style sheets to make later work or changes much easier. It also shows the ease with which "advanced" features most users never explore can be used: inserting graphic images and wrapping text around them; copying a graphic from a website; sorting a list; automatically generating a list of figures, table of contents, or index; and setting up headers and footers for double-sided printing. A host of other practical word processing tricks is presented to help genealogists organize their research and have time for more!

Publishing and Miscellaneous Topics

Designing a Publication

Basic design issues are important whether you are creating a family newsletter for a few readers, or a quarterly publication to be read by hundreds. This lecture discusses the importance of fonts, type size, white space, and graphic illustrations. Production considerations, such as the type of printing equipment to be used, cost, available people resources, use of color, and frequency of publication are detailed as factors in design.

Samples of well-designed publications will be shown, and the audience will learn to evaluate why a publication is a good design or a poor design.

Effective Editing and Writing

If you have trouble deciding whether to use "that" or "which" in a phrase, use the baptismal method of punctuation (sprinkling commas randomly through the text), or are confused about using hyphens to create phrases used as adjectives, your editing skills may need help. Likewise, if you frequently draw a blank when starting a new writing project, you might benefit from some tips for writing. This presentation is the place to find tried-and-true methods to hone your editing and writing skills.

Indexing from A to Z

Learn how to maximize use of an index as a reader. Then discover the science and mechanics of indexing—from determining what belongs in it to creating and organizing logical categories. See a step-by-step demonstration of using Microsoft Word to mark and create an automatic index.