



THE HOMESTEADER

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4 Keys To Genealogical Success

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1. START IT.

"When I have some time" is an excuse that minimizes your success every time you use it. Whether it's starting on your family history, sorting the box of photos, or organizing the boxes of research you've already done, now's the time to jump in and get started. You can schedule a weekend to focus on the project, or determine to do a just a little bit once a week. Either way, it will only get done after your best intentions give way to personal motivation.

2. REVIEW IT.

Everything in genealogy leads you to something else. Your initial analysis of each document you find will bring out the most obvious facts. Each subsequent review of the same document should reveal new clues, new leads to follow, new questions to ask. You will get around your brick walls by chipping away at them, and this happens as you review your research and rethink what you've found. Keep asking questions and searching for answers in unique places. Have you looked for autopsy or coroner's reports? Accident reports, alumni associations, denominational archives, hospital records....?

3. SHARE IT.

Sharing some of what you've learned with others in your family will reveal surprising results. Family I've asked questions of for years have suddenly remembered a priceless document, photo, or fact in response to my continued sharing of selected family tidbits. And while the current trend is to do all your genealogy locked away in front of your computer, sharing yourself with other researchers in your local Genealogy Society still brings invaluable results. If you are a lone ranger genealogist, chances are your sparse family files will soon be wasting space under the bed.

4. REVIVE IT.

After your family project has been finished for awhile, pick it up again and see what new information you can find. Work backward another generation, or try to build your tree wider by finding even more distant cousins. Then help someone else who is just starting out, or transcribe local records for the Society in a new project all your own. Thus rekindle the passion; refresh yourself with that initial joy you had when you found those first few pieces of your marvelous family puzzle!



Organizing Your Outbound Postal Mail Correspondence

Before you send your genealogical correspondence, make a copy which you will keep in a basket or file folder, keeping them in date order (newest to the back).

When a response arrives, pull your copy, put the envelope on top of it, and the reply on the very top, and staple. This will give you a permanent record of the questions you asked and the information you shared along with their answers. The envelope provides a definitive date stamp, their address, and the address they have for you should you make a move.

Periodically go through your correspondence file. Obviously, copies which remain there have yet to be answered. Make a photocopy of them when they are about 2 months old, and send it out again with a nice "2nd Request" reminder. Write the date you resent it on your copy, and place it in the back of the stack.

As always, sending a stamped, self-addressed envelope will give you a higher reply response.