



SENATOR JOHN HEINZ
HISTORY CENTER
IN ASSOCIATION WITH THE SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION

The Thomas and Katherine Detre Library & Archives, located on the 6th floor of the Senator John Heinz History Center, is *the source* for Western Pennsylvania history. The catalog of holdings can be found at: <http://www.heinzhistorycenter.org/libraryArchives>. For more information, or to schedule a research appointment, call: 412-454-6364 or email: library@heinzhistorycenter.org.

GENEALOGY: WHERE TO START

WHAT TO DO

1. **WRITE** down all you know concerning yourself, your parents, your children and grandchildren, and your grandparents.
2. **INTERVIEW** relatives, especially older members of your family. Take notes or record them on tape. Be sure your questions are understood. Try to get the “flavor” of their times and places as well as names of family members and specific dates and locations where they lived.
3. **DOCUMENT** the information you gather by seeking out family bibles, photo albums, trunks, old letters, and scrapbooks. Check your home, your parents, grandparents, cousins, aunts, uncles....even old friends and neighbors may have some valuable sources of family information such as photographs or holiday cards.
4. **LOOK** for printed genealogies on any of your family surnames in your local library. Other libraries to search are historical societies, Latter Day Saints, Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR), National Genealogical Society, National Archives, or the appropriate state archives.
5. **RECORD** the most recent happenings first. Work back from the known to the unknown.
6. **CITE** your sources. Always document the source of the information you find so that you or subsequent researchers can go back to that same source and find the same information. One example of a book that explains citations is *Evidence! Citation and Analysis for the Family Historian* by Elizabeth Shown Mills.

WHERE TO LOOK

- **Court records** provide good documentation through wills, estate inventories, land records, tax records and court records. Some birth, marriage, and death records may sometimes also be found in courthouses. Ask what types of records were kept and are available in each courthouse where you search. For unique local reasons, unusual types of records were sometimes kept.
- **Church records** provide the best source for early births, baptisms, marriages, and deaths/funerals. Cemetery records can also provide documentation for a burial and list birth/death dates.
- **Census records** contain information about the members of a given population and are excellent source for documenting your family's whereabouts at a given time. Remember though, that census records are only as reliable as the person giving the information. Consider names with similar spelling—sometimes the census taker did not get it right. Prior to the 1850 census, only the head of household was listed by name, and the others were grouped by age and sex.
- **Old newspapers** help in providing death notices and obituaries. Obituaries usually refer to military service, employment and membership in organizations as well as listing surviving family members. Sometimes birth and marriage announcements are found in newspapers as well.
- **Books on local and county history**, although not considered official documentation, can also provide helpful clues and context.
- **City Directories** can help you find information about an individual such as his or her occupation, address, ward, marital status, and lot and concession number in the county. They will also have publications commemorating various anniversaries of the town or city or of churches in that place. Perhaps the name you are searching will be listed among residents of a particular area or as a participant in a local celebration.
- **How-to-book on genealogy**. Some sample titles are:

The Researcher's Guide to American Genealogy, 3rd ed. by
Val D. Greenwood, Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Company, 2000

The Source : A Guidebook of American Genealogy. edited by
Lorretto Dennis Szucs and Sandra H. Luebking. Salt Lake City: Ancestry
Publishing, 1997