

Using the Pedigree Chart - - Handout

Gail Burk, © April, 2011

Introduction

1. Start with yourself and work backwards
2. Work from what you know to what you don't yet know
3. The Pedigree Chart shows direct ancestors only
4. Select among various formats

Formatting Considerations

1. Use maiden names for women
2. List dates to avoid confusion
 - a. day - - month (spelled out) - - year (four-digit number)

Beginning to Search for Clues

1. Look for vital statistical documents for family members
2. Be aware of nicknames - - they may differ substantially from formal given names
3. Remember that our ancestors may use less common spellings of common names
4. Be aware that our ancestors' names may have been misspelled on documents
5. Use all capital letters for surnames, and lower case letters for first and middle names
 - a. To avoid confusion in identifying surnames
6. Always look at changes in geography for clues about family migrations
 - a. Speculate about why a family might have relocated - - jobs, school, to follow other family members
7. Always consider what world events were occurring during an ancestor's lifetime
 - a. Clue to possible military service or family migration

8. Look at unusual first and middle names for possible clues to ethnic ancestry

Additional Things to Consider

1. Look at unusual given names for possible clues to surnames of earlier ancestors; e.g., mother's or grandmother's maiden name used as a first name
 - a. Unusual spellings may suggest possible ethnic or nationality clues
2. Pay attention to geography
 - a. Look for geographic nexus as clue to how people may have connected
 - b. Begin a timeline to suggest when families might have moved from one place to another, based on geographic intersections
3. Pay attention to historical events
 - a. Clues to possible military service or family migration
4. Look at ages of ancestors
 - a. Older age at marriage may suggest possible prior marriages

Going Back in Time

1. Begin new pedigree chart, showing name of great-grandparent on line 1
 - a. List great, great-grandparents on lines 2 and 3, 4 and 5
 - b. Prepare a separate new pedigree chart for each great-grandparents as you learn more information about that person
2. Look at geography in vital statistics
 - a. For clues about where ancestors lived
3. Analyze dates & places
 - a. Speculate about why an ancestor might have lived in a particular place at a specific time

4. Continue to look at names and the hints they provide
5. Find some answers!

Conclusion

1. Enter data accurately
2. Be consistent about format
3. Nothing is etched in stone - - consider multiple sources in researching each “fact”
4. Make notes of conflicting data, your research questions, comments about the sources, and your speculation about family activities, ethnicity and migration
5. Begin a timeline for each ancestor to aid in focusing future research
6. Review your pedigree chart periodically, look at it with fresh eyes
7. Be creative in looking for clues in your family’s artifacts