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You

Here's How!

Branch Out and Research Family Tree

This is part of a continuing series of free-lance columns that help explain how to deal with everyday situations in our lives and/or how to make life more enjoyable.

By TROY CORLEY

If you've always wanted to climb your family tree, Southern California is a good environment for exploration. Genealogy buffs will discover some of the best resources for researching family ancestry, no matter where in the country or the world your family is from. You can discover the patriots, scoundrels and everyday folk in your family's past.

The first step is to check out a general how-to book on genealogy from the local library. It will give an overview of the research involved and provide tips on organizing the information.

Family tree tracing also involves getting in touch with parents, grandparents and any other relatives you can write or talk to. Ask for the names of siblings, spouses, children, parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles; also ask for the dates and places of births, marriages and deaths.

Any tidbit is potentially valuable. Fragments of dates, places and names will fit into the puzzle later if they are recorded on paper now. Put this data on pedigree and family-group sheets, which are available from some of the sources mentioned later.

Get copies of U.S. birth, marriage and death certificates from the state or county in which the event occurred. For state records, consult a federal government booklet titled "Where to Write for Vital Records." For county records, check "The Handy Book for Genealogists" by Everton Publishers. Many public libraries have these publications in the reference section.

If your family has roots in Los Angeles County, there are two excellent sources: the L. A. County Hall of Records, 227 N. Broadway, and the L. A. County Archives, 222 N. Hill St., Room 212.

The Hall of Records is open Monday to Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. On the ground floor, Room 10, are the county's records of marriages, births and deaths. Ask a clerk for assistance. For information by phone, call (213) 974-6613.

The county archives is adjacent to the Hall of Records and has

current and old court-case files, including probate, divorce and civil-lawsuit records. The archives are open Monday to Friday, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Telephone (213) 974-3179.

Before asking to view a particular file, you must have a case number. Get this number by checking a surname index on microfiche across the street in the Superior Court Building, Room 118C, 111 N. Hill St., (213) 974-5171. Hours are Monday to Friday 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Once you date one family line back to 1910 or 1900, you're ready to check the U.S. Census records.

The regional branch of the National Archives, 24000 Avila Road, Laguna Niguel, has all the extant U.S. Census records from 1910 back to 1790, except for most of the 1890 record, which was destroyed by fire. For the 1910, 1900 and 1880 records, first search the microfilm surname index called the "miracode" or "soundex." Instructions are on the microfilm or you can ask the librarian for assistance. The archives branch is open Monday to Friday and the first Saturday of the month 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.; closed on federal holidays. Telephone (714) 643-4220.

Other pieces of the family puzzle can be found in wills, deeds, cemetery records, military records, ships' passenger lists, published family genealogies and foreign records, to name a few. Copies or abstracts of these records are found in genealogical libraries and collections.

A popular place to search is the Los Angeles Genealogical Library, 10741 Santa Monica Blvd., West Los Angeles, (213) 474-9990. Open Mondays and Fridays, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.; Tuesday to Thursday, 9 a.m. to 9 p.m.; Saturdays 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Its collection is stuffed with genealogical gold mines. There are 46,000 rolls of microfilm, including the U.S. Census up to 1900 and parts of 1910; and an 88-million-name microfiche index called the International Genealogical Index (IGI). Foreign records include indexes to births, marriages and deaths for Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland for 1864 to 1958; birth, marriage and death records for all of England and Wales for 1837 to 1903 (up until 1906 for births); several French-Canadian records, and dozens of records from Eastern Europe.

A branch of the Genealogical Department of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, the library is free to the public. The church's most extensive collection of genealogical data was gleaned from various sources around the world and is kept in massive underground vaults in Salt Lake City, Utah.

Consult the microfiche and microfilm indexes of these records for additional material that can be ordered from Salt Lake City and viewed at the library. Costs per microfilm roll are \$2.25 for a two-week loan, \$3.25 for a six-month loan and \$5 for an indefinite loan.

Another favorite research haunt is the Genealogical Department at Los Angeles Central Library, 630 West 5th St., (213) 612-3317. There are 40,000 books, magazines, microfilm reels and manuscripts.

Use the card catalogue to find surnames and locations. Many materials are not on the stacks so you must fill out a request slip. Hours are Monday to Thursday, 10 a.m. to 8 p.m.; Fridays and Saturdays, 10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.

If you come across U.S. ancestors who lived during the Civil or Revolutionary wars, search the military records at the Sons of the Revolution Library, 600 S. Central Ave., Glendale, (818) 240-1775. The library also specializes in New England and Virginia genealogical data and has more than 20,000 volumes of records.

The library asks for \$1 donation per visit or you can join the library for a \$10 annual membership fee. The price is well worth it once you begin to research for clues in the Civil War era and earlier. Hours are Wednesdays, noon to 8 p.m.; Thursday to Saturday, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.; closed Sunday to Tuesday, all legal holidays and the entire month of October.

One more valuable research library you shouldn't miss is the Southern California Genealogical Society Library, 122 S. Golden Mall, Burbank, (818) 843-7247.

The SCGS Library has an excellent collection of genealogical periodicals and maintains more than 4,500 bound volumes and other genealogical materials. Hours are Tuesdays, 10 a.m. to 9 p.m.; Mondays, Wednesday to Saturday and the first and second Sundays of the month, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

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