Building Your Genealogical Skills
Class #2: Researching

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Glossary
- Genealogical information: Names, dates, places associated with birth, marriage, and death facts. Also relationships or kinship.
- Records: Contain one or more pieces of genealogical information
- Repository: Places where multiple sources are stored
- Sources: Contain multiple records
- Ahnentafel: German for ancestor table. A genealogical numbering system that begins with a person and works backwards
- Register or modified (NGSQ) numbering: Begins with an ancestor and works forward. The difference between Register and NGSQ is whether numbers are assigned only to people with additional information (Register) or whether every descendent receives a number (NGSQ).

How to Research: Overview

NB: Searching ≠ Researching

General Principles
Try to consult multiple sources. Don't stop at the first answer that fits your question. You are going to want to gather as many records about a family or individual that you can find so that you can truly identify the uniqueness of your particular ancestor. And TRACK YOUR WORK.

Research Plan
A research plan helps you think systematically about your research. It includes the following components:

1. Goal: What do you want to know?
2. Known Facts: What do you already know about the subject of your research and the specific research question?
3. Working Hypothesis: What do you think the answer is? OR What is the time period and location that has the answer?

4. Sources: Which records might hold the answer? Do those records exist for my location?
5. Search Strategy: Which repositories have the sources and in what order should I search?

Research Log

Research logs are underutilized by most genealogists. However, it is an invaluable habit to form and maintain. Research logs help prevent needless rework. At a minimum a log should include the name of the person or place that is being researched, the date of the search, the sources searched, and the search objective. You also need to include a space for results. Be sure to capture negative searches so that you don't research that source again.

Where to Research: Repositories

Repositories, Records and Sources

Beginning genealogists sometimes get confused about the difference between records, sources and repositories. A repository is a place where multiple sources are stored. A source contains multiple records and records contain one or more pieces of genealogical information. Think of nesting dolls or concentric circles.

Repository

Source

Record
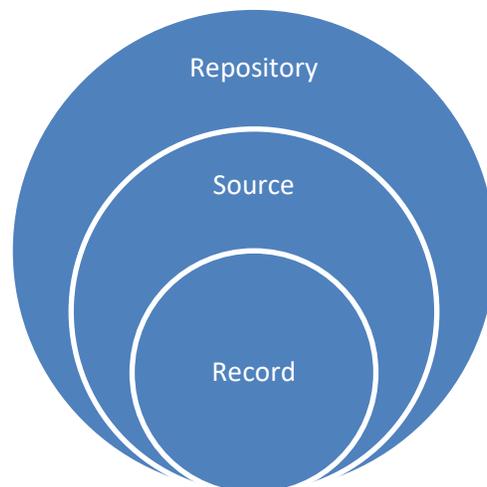
Perhaps the most valuable repository is your own house and the houses of your family. Other brick and mortar repositories include:

- Federal and State Archives
- Town or City Halls
- Local Historical Societies
- Public or Private Libraries
- College or University Archives
- Lineage Societies
- Genealogical Societies
- Regional Museums

American Ancestors
by New England Historic Genealogical Society

The major online repositories include AmericanAncestors.org (NEHGS), FamilySearch.org, Ancestry.com, and Fold3.com. Warning! Not Everything is Online!

Online Repositories
To get the most out of an online repository, be sure to read the database descriptions. What are the places and time periods covered? Make liberal use of the site's catalog. Consult the research wikis or help files. The FamilySearch wikis are one of the best tools to help you understand what is available for a time and place.

In terms of searching, "Less is More." Don't be too specific when starting a search; you can always filter your search as you go on. When you find something, look at the records before and after your target. Seek the original; don't trust the transcription (or indexing)

How to Research: Finding Aids
Don't be timid about using Finding Aids

Finding Aids
1. Michael J. Leclerc, *Genealogist's Handbook for New England Research (*Boston : New England Historic Genealogical Society, 2012.)
2. The New York Genealogical and Biographical Society, *New York family history research guide and gazetteer* (New York, NY : New York Genealogical and Biographical Society, 2015).
3. Alice Eichholz, *Red book : American state, county, and town sources* (Provo, Utah : Ancestry, 2004.) - see also https://wiki.rootsweb.com/wiki/index.php/Red_Book:_American_State,_County,_and_Town_Sources
4. Loretto Dennis Szucs and Sandra Hargreaves Luebking, *The source : a guidebook to American genealogy* (Provo, UT : Ancestry, 2006.) see also https://wiki.rootsweb.com/wiki/index.php/The_Source:_A_Guidebook_to_American_Genealogy
5. Town and County Histories – check online. Many of these were published prior to 1920 and thus are digitally available online.
6. NEHGS Subject Guides (Click on Education at top of AmericanAncestors homepage; select Read)
7. Portable Genealogists – American Ancestors

17ᵗʰ Century Finding Aids
1. Clarence Almon Torrey, *New England marriages prior to 1700* (Boston, Massachusetts : New England Historic Genealogical Society, 2011)
2. Meredith Colket, *Founders of early American families : immigrants from Europe, 1607-1657* (Cleveland, Ohio : General Court of the Order of Founders and Patriots of America, 2002.)
3. Hollick, Martin E. (Martin Edward), 1963-

4. Martin E. Hollick, *New Englanders in the 1600s : a guide to genealogical research published between 1980 and 2005* (Boston, Mass. : New England Historic Genealogical Society, 2006.)
5. Robert Charles Anderson, *Great Migration Directory, 1620-1640* (Boston, MA: New England Historic Genealogical Society, 2015).

Miscellaneous Finding Aids
1. City Directories
2. Maps
3. Newspapers
4. Diaries
5. Journals (private and published)
6. Adoption records
7. Organization records
8. Lineage society records
9. Fraternal organization records
10. Employment records
11. Social Security
12. Bank records
13. Insurance records
14. Driving records
15. Phone books
16. Yearbooks

Organizing All That Stuff
See Rhonda R. McClure, "Getting Organized," Subject Guide at American Ancestors.
https://www.americanancestors.org/education/learning-resources/read/getting-organized

Rule number 1 for organization is to use a system you can maintain – there is no one "right" way to organize – everyone's brain is different. Consistency is the key and is leaving a paper trail. Using standard forms simplifies your task.

Think of organizing as three different types of tasks:

- Organizing your research process
- Organizing your findings
- Organizing your files

Organizing the Research Process
Use the Tools/Forms!

- Pedigree chart
- Family Group Sheet
- Research plan

- Research log

Organizing Your Findings

Use a paper or digital notebook to keep track of questions that arise. Use to-do lists to help you remember what you wanted to do with the piece of information you just found.

Some genealogists find a note-taking software to be helpful:

- Evernote
- OneNote

Organizing Your Files

Software is a tool – not a crutch! Beware the temptation to let the software do your thinking for you!

Organizing Paper Materials

1. Option 1: One folder per person

2. Option 2: One folder per couple

   - Individual stays with birth family until marriage

   - Family group sheet

   - Photocopies of records with source citations
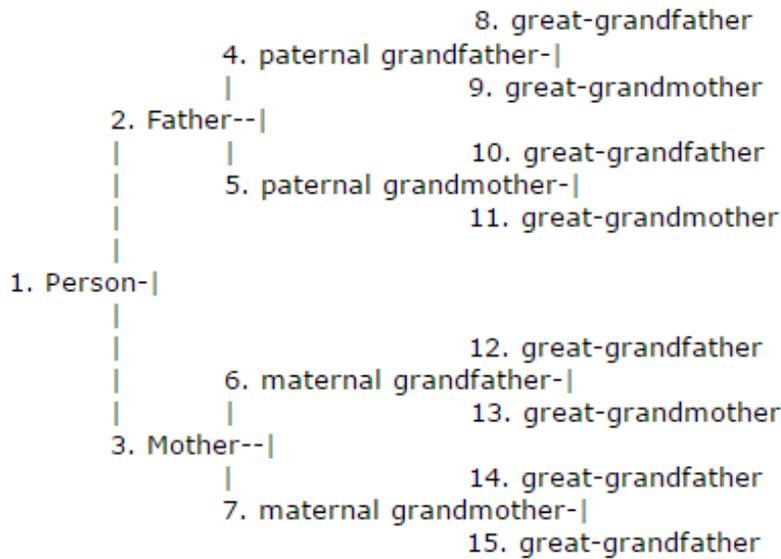
3. Option 3: Binders

Organizing Digital Materials

1. Folder Structure - Nesting folders

   - Top level is typically Family name

   - Subsequent levels are branches, individuals, types of records, e.g.

     – Vitals
     – Census
     – Military
     – Land
     – Probate
     – Newspaper

2. Decide on a file naming scheme. The following is tried and true:

   - Who (surname, given name), what (type of document), when (year), where (location)

American Ancestors
by New England Historic Genealogical Society

Organizing Your Summary

See Joan Curran, Madilyn Crane and John H. Wray, *Numbering Your Genealogy* (Arlington, VA: National Genealogical Society, 2008).

Ahnentafel Works Backwards from the Present

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                                    8. great-grandfather
                4. paternal grandfather-|
                |                   9. great-grandmother
    2. Father--|
    |           |                  10. great-grandfather
    |          5. paternal grandmother-|
    |                              11. great-grandmother
    |
1. Person-|
    |
    |                              12. great-grandfather
    |          6. maternal grandfather-|
    |           |                  13. great-grandmother
    3. Mother--|
                |                  14. great-grandfather
                7. maternal grandmother-|
                                   15. great-grandfather
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Register – Descends and only numbers individuals carried forward

Genealogical Summary

1. Henry[1] Dispaw/Desper was born say 1618 (assuming marriage at 25), and died in Lynn, Massachusetts, in October 1676.[10] He married in Horsemonden, Kent, 10 April 1643, **Helen Jarret**, who died probably prior to 1673 when her husband and son Henry, both potters, immigrated to Massachusetts.

Henry Dispaw left a will dated 27 February 1674[/5?], proved 26 June 1677, mentioning sons Henry and Edward. The other children, whose baptisms are shown below, evidently died or remained in England.

Children of Henry[1] and Helen (Jarret) Dispaw/Desper, all baptisms in Horsemonden:

2. i. Henry[2] Dispaw, b. ca. 1644; m. (1) _____; (2) Catherine _____.
    ii. Joan Dispaw, bp. 13 Sept. 1646.
3. iii. Edward Dispaw, bp. 24 March 1649/50; m. Sarah _____.
    iv. Christopher Dispaw, bp. 7 Feb. 1654.
    v. William Dispaw, bp. 27 March 1657.

THIRD GENERATION

4. Theunis[3] De Clark, son of Jacobus[2] DeClark (2), born May 20, 1708 at Tappan, christened there June 23, 1708.

Married Nov. 4, 1732 in New York City, Catherine Nax (Nack), dau. of Matthew Nax and Angenetje Schaats.

Children of Theunis[3] De Clark and Catherine Nax (christened at Tappan).

+12. Jacobus,[4] born Oct. 20, 1733, chr. Oct. 21, 1733. Md. Jannetje Springstein.
13. Angenetje,[4] born June 13, 1735, chr. July 13, 1735.
14. Matthys,[4] born Sept. 30, 1737, chr. Oct. 23, 1737. Died young.
15. Matthys[4] born Oct. 24, 1739, chr. Dec. 2, 1739.