



Planning and Implementing a Research Trip

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Not everything is on the Internet and many times it is not possible to get assistance from libraries or societies in far-away places. At some point it may become necessary to plan a research trip to the home of your ancestors. Research trips can be fun and frustrating at the same time. Preparation is the key to success.

OBJECTIVE:

1. Why On-Site Research
2. What to do at home
3. What to do when you get to your location

Why On-Site Research

- Find original records
- Talk to relatives
- What does the area look like
- Not everything is on the internet

What to Do at Home

- Travel Plans: How are you getting to the location of your on-site research? Which mode of travel would be the most cost effective
- Rental Car
- Where will you be staying, hotel or friends: staying with friends or relatives may not always be possible, check on-line sources to determine what is available in the area where you will be researching. Sometimes staying a bit further away from your research area may be cheaper.
- Where will you eat, groceries or restaurant: Eating out is always expensive, so if possible try to get a room with a small kitchen to make your own meals.
- While traveling will you use credit, debit or cash: Always good to travel with some cash to pay for tolls, copies, etc. Also, paying with cash may help keep expenses down.
- Check to determine what records are available on line: Do your homework. You do not want to spend time looking at records on-site that can be viewed at home. Also, check times and record availability for places you are going to visit.
- Connect with distant relations and make plans to meet
 - Facebook
 - White Pages

- E-mails
- Anything to connect with Individuals
- To Take:
 - Camera
 - Computer
 - Money (change, real money)
 - Chargers
 - Writing instruments
 - Lists of what to gather
 - Lists of what to visit
 - Maps (paper)
- Take someone with you: If you are staying for an extended period of time, take someone with you. It gets lonely on the road.
- Who has the Records: Check online to see where the records are that you want to view. Many courthouses are now moving their older records to off-site storage facilities. Check with the facility to determine if the record you want is available at the facility or if the record will need to be brought in from the off-site facility. It will cost to bring the record to you and then you will need to pay for any copies as well.
- Are the Records Available
- Create a Research Plan
- Learn the lay of the Land: Larger cities will be more interesting due to possible crime issues. If you have relatives in the area ask them about what areas of the city are safe and which area to avoid.

Visiting Churches

- The best time to visit a Church is Sunday worship services. It gives you an opportunity to not only see the inside of the church of your ancestor attended but to introduce yourself to the minister or priest to make an appointment to view the church records.
- While many older churches have been modified over the years, you may still want to take a picture of the interior. Always ask permission to take interior pictures.
- Each church is different. Some churches will let you examine the church records while others will examine the records after you have given them the names of individuals.
- Always give a donation

Visiting the Court House

- One of the most important places to visit is the county court house. The court house usually holds land, probate, tax, vital and other assorted records. If you are traveling by car to the court house where will you park? Usually there is public parking or metered parking on the street. Always take cash with you as some places are not setup to take debit or credit cards.
- You will pass through security. It is best to put all items in your briefcase and send it through the scanner. Each courthouse is different so just obey the rules for each. Be flexible.
- Some facilities have constructed separate research rooms for family researchers. These rooms may copy machines and various records to help you with your research. Follow the rules of the facility
- The staff is there to do the work of the county not family research. Be patient and polite

- The cost of copies will vary from courthouse to courthouse. The cost may vary from department to department in the same courthouse.

Visiting a Society or Library

- Parking: There may be free parking but there is always the possibility of pay parking garages or on street meter parking.
- Bills and Coins: Always carry change as some facilities are not equipped to handle credit or debit cards.
- Follow the Rules
- Copies: Copy costs will vary from institution to institution.
- What can you bring in: Some institution allow briefcases but most will not. A folder, laptop and pencil seem to be the norm
- Always make a donation.

Visiting a Cemetery

- Check for an office: Church cemeteries will usually not have an office to check who is buried in the cemetery. However, city and corporate cemeteries will keep lists of the buried. These records will usually give the location of the buried. Plus, the cemetery office will usually keep a map of the cemetery so always take one.
- Is the grounds keeper available: Church cemeteries, located in rural areas, will always have a grounds keeper. If they are available check with them for the burial site of your ancestor.
- Walk a number of rows at a time: If you must walk a cemetery, walk it about three rows at a time.
- Take the camera

Take a Break

Don't stay indoors your entire trip. Visit the houses where your ancestors lived. If possible talk to individuals in the neighborhoods where your ancestors lived. Visit historical sites in the area. Walk the cemeteries. Sometimes the interesting items are not in the repositories but outside of the repositories.

Helpful Articles

Tips for Planning a Genealogy Vacation

http://genealogy.about.com/od/research_trips/fl/Tips-for-Planning-a-Genealogy-Vacation.htm

Ten Questions to Ask a Research Facility Before you Visit

<http://genealogy.about.com/od/libraries/a/questions.htm>

Genealogy Research at the Courthouse, Archives or Library

http://genealogy.about.com/od/basics/a/onsite_research.htm