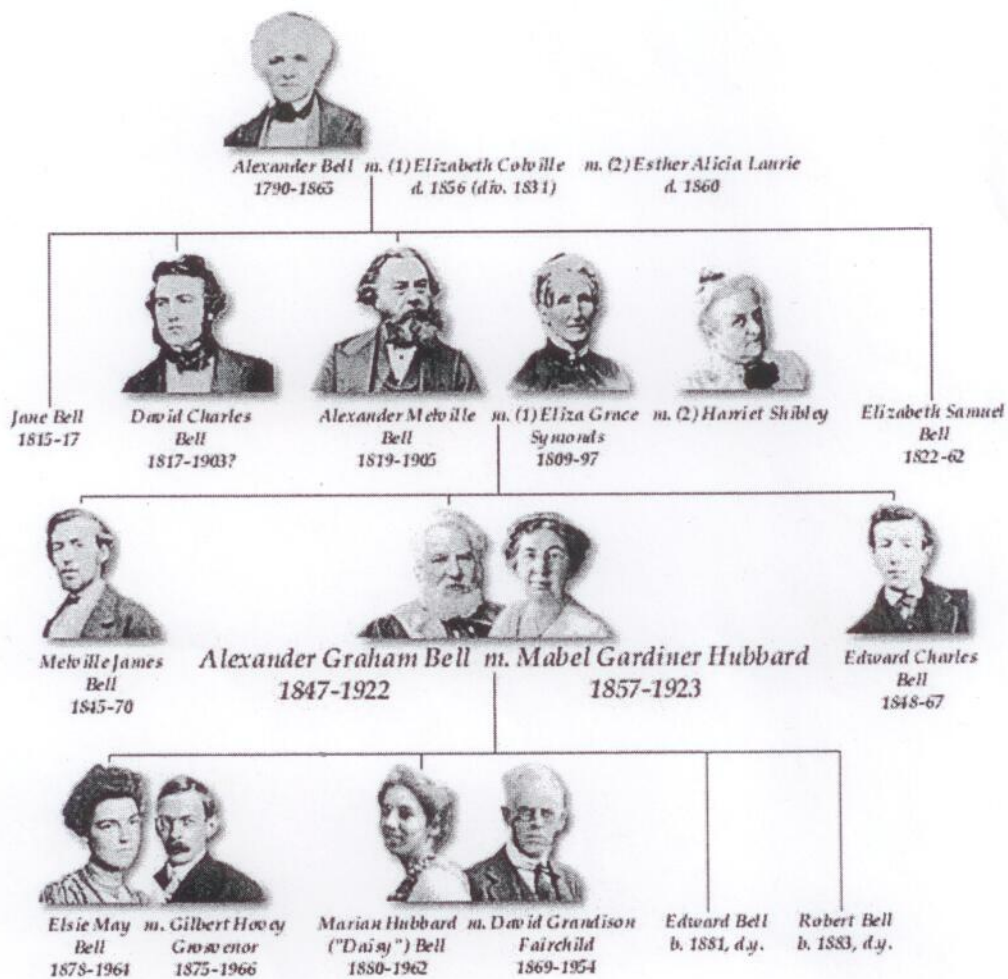


Genealogy

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Genealogy

What To Do First

Knowing where to begin can be confusing and intimidating. By following a few key steps, you will begin your research in a beneficial way.

Start with yourself, and work backwards. Record your own details first and then the details of your parents and siblings. Next, record the details of your grandparents and all their children. Continue to work back, one generation at a time, based on the facts you have already found.

Talk to everyone around you. Gather names, places, dates, and events. Encourage your family members to tell their stories. Record what you hear (see Organizing Information) but consider what you are told to be hearsay until you can verify the information, usually through archival sources. Treat every statement as a clue to your ancestral story.

- About Names
- About Places
- About Dates
- About Events
- Gather your family's documents and record the details. Marriage records, old letters and photos, birth, naturalization, citizenship, and death certificates, etc., all tell stories and frequently contain the names of ancestors, places of origin, details of immigration, and names of other relatives. Obtain copies of documents and photos, or take digital pictures of them and retain those for viewing again later. Looking at a document or photo again (even months or years later) can sometimes reveal things you overlooked or did not understand earlier.
- Choose the approach you want to use for your research. Although most people research both sides of the family, some researchers follow their paternal ancestry only, while others focus on their maternal line. Some researchers record only those people who are related by blood, plus their spouses. Others record the members of extended families and build very large family trees incorporating adopted relations, common-law or same-sex partnerships, etc. Yet other researchers choose to undertake a One-Name Study (See Choosing a Strategy).
- Join a local genealogy society. Many local societies have collections that include resources specific to where you live and may have created finding aids and indexes that can be invaluable in searching for ancestors. Society members are eager to offer guidance and encouragement to beginners, making your society a most important resource (See Learning More).
- Visit local libraries and archives. Many libraries and archives have both genealogy resources and local history collections. Get to know your librarian, who can suggest research strategies and arrange for inter-institutional lending on your behalf for many materials not held locally. Your archivist will be well versed in the history of your locality and will help you find documents that will be relevant (See Finding Information).
- Don't expect to find your complete family history on the Internet, or in the library, or through some other researcher. Finding a complete family tree is very rare, although in the course of research you may discover that others have recorded some branches of your family. Become used to the fact that your research will never be "finished"; there will always be an earlier ancestor or another cousin to find!

- Expect to discover family "secrets." All families have skeletons in the closet, and your family will not be an exception. This raises issues of privacy and confidentiality. You must recognize that particular family stories, if made public, could be embarrassing or hurtful to family members. You must use discretion and tact in deciding how and whether to make such information available to others in any form, whether in small publications produced for immediate family, or in published family histories, or on an Internet website. That such information is true is not always sufficient reason to reveal it. Consider suppressing potentially damaging information from public view.
- Don't expect someone to do your research for you. However, you may rely on librarians and archivists to help you discover resources that will be useful. The thrill of genealogy comes in discovering new facts about your ancestors, yourself.
- Give credit where credit is due. Genealogy is a highly collaborative activity, and you will share information you have and receive information from others. Give other researchers credit for any substantive information they provide. Research is work, although it is enjoyable work; and we all appreciate recognition for good work that we have done. Cite your sources, including your fellow genealogists (See Organizing Information).
- Follow the rules. Libraries, archives and research centres apply rules for the consultation of their material. Also, be careful when handling old books and original archival documents.

Choosing a Strategy

For many people, researching Family History means tracing members of a family, showing the relationships among them, recording their family stories, collecting their treasured photos and documents, and sharing all that with other family members.

Genealogy, on the other hand, is often considered to be a more rigid, even scientific, activity that incorporates standard ways of recording information, rigorous methods for assessing evidence, an academic component providing formal learning, and professional accreditation. Genealogists plan and attend conferences; publish books and articles; contribute to other disciplines such as medicine, genetics and history; and promote and lead efforts to preserve and make accessible records of the past.

Specialized terms are used in family history and genealogy. Consult the Glossary to find out what they mean.

The first strategic principle is quite simple: begin your research with yourself and work backwards. Doing this helps to avoid the possibility of documenting people who are not your ancestors.

Many folks work happily on whatever branch of their family they find easiest and, when they hit a brick wall, they switch to another branch.

Some people focus on only one side of a family:

- the paternal (father's) side of a family is often easier because the last name usually does not vary when traced back in time;
- the maternal (mother's) side of a family is more difficult because the maiden names of women who assumed their husband's surnames are not often known.
- Some researchers decide to follow a family surname and its variants broadly in a One-Name Study. Still other researchers may concentrate on a particular ethnicity that occurs in their family.

If you document blood relatives plus spouses, extend your research one step further to find the names of the parents and siblings of the spouse. Doing this provides information that can be useful when collaborating with other researchers to establish links between families.

Recording information about extended families means documenting persons who are part of your family through:

- marriage only (e.g., your sister-in-law's brother's children);
- adoption, fostering or guardianship (formal or informal)
- married or unmarried unions (including same-sex partnerships);
- "honorary" family membership (such as Aunt Jessie ... who wasn't really your aunt, but was a close family friend).
- Most important: choose a strategy that suits your interest and brings satisfaction.

Finding Information

Finding information is the nucleus of genealogical research. You will begin with yourself and your own family, talking to relatives and noting details they provide.

Today, most people turn to the Internet first. The Internet is a wonderful tool that just keeps getting better for genealogists. Used appropriately, it can be a great starting place ... but it is only a start. Vast amounts of information are NOT on the Internet, and you will not find everything you are looking for online.

Libraries and archives are the traditional places of research for genealogists. They hold the books and records that you need. Many libraries also provide access to online tools and databases.

Joining a genealogy society is one of the best ways for the beginner to become acclimatized to the world of genealogical research.

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Organizing Information

As you gather information on your family, you will want to record it in some way.

You will print out or make copies of the information you find and make scans or collect images in digital form. As you collect this information, you will use standard tools to record the data more easily.

Almost all genealogists use the computer to store and retrieve the information they have gathered. Numerous computer software programs have been developed.

As prevalent as computers are in today's world, manual methods of organization can still be useful for dealing with the piles of paper you have gathered. Expect paper to accumulate, and find a way to deal with it!

Preserving precious family artifacts such as paper documents and photographs is important and worthwhile, but must be done in an appropriate way to ensure their safekeeping for future generations.

And finally, as you organize your data, you must keep track of the sources you consult.

Learning More

With genealogy, you never run out of new things to learn! As you progress in your research, you will learn more about your ancestors. More formal ways of learning can supplement the knowledge you acquire from day to day.

Courses

Formal courses in genealogy do exist. Some are listed here:

In Canada, the National Institute for Genealogical Studies [www.genealogicalstudies.com/eng/gstudies.html], affiliated with the University of Toronto, offers online courses for both amateur and professional genealogists at various levels.

Local school boards, community colleges, universities, libraries and archives also offer genealogy courses and workshops as part of their programs.

As well, there are certification programs and professional associations for genealogists, some of which are listed here:

Board for Certification of Genealogists [www.bcgcertification.org/]

International Commission for the Accreditation of Professional Genealogists [www.icapgen.org/]

Bureau québécois d'attestation de compétence en généalogie

[www.federationgenealogie.qc.ca/?page=bqacg_fr&lang=fr]

Genealogical Institute of the Maritimes [<http://nsgna.ednet.ns.ca/gim/index.html>]

Association of Professional Genealogists [www.apgen.org/]

Conferences

Conferences are regularly held and fit every budget, from small, local, one-day gatherings to large, week-long, national and international meetings. Most of these are sponsored by societies, or associations of societies. Many of the Canadian genealogical societies have conferences. Check the society websites for announcements on conferences, workshops and seminars.

Societies

Canadian genealogical societies present member-run programs and workshops that can be free or included with the cost of a society membership. These learning opportunities are just some of the benefits of joining a society.

Glossary

- Ancestor:** Any person from whom another person is directly descended, for example, parents, grandparents, great-grandparents and so on.
- Ancestry:** The group of people from whom a person is descended.
- Birth:** The moment a person is born.
- Border entry:** The location on land where new immigrants first enter a country.
- Characteristics:** Features that distinguish people or places from others.
- Country of origin:** The country in which a person is born.
- Cultural mosaic:** A country like Canada wherein many different cultures thrive and preserve their distinguishing characteristics.
- Cultural diversity:** A country or region inhabited by people from many different ethnic backgrounds.
- Culture:** The arts, beliefs, habits, institutions and other human endeavours considered together as being characteristic of a particular community, people or nation.
- Death:** The moment a person dies.
- Debarcation:** Departure from a vessel or aircraft.
- Descendants:** A person's children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, great-great-grandchildren and so on.
- Embarkation:** Boarding a vessel or aircraft or setting out on a journey.
- Emigration:** Leaving one country to live in another.
- Family events:** Events that are meaningful or significant to a specific family.
- Family history:** The reconstruction of the daily lives of a person's ancestors based on information gathered and the writing of their biographies.
- Family tree:** A chart that shows how people in a family are related to each other.
- Genealogist:** A person who specializes in studying the history of a family.
- Genealogy:** The study of a person's ancestors and the collection of information (names, dates) about that family.
- Generation:** People born about the same time and related to a person at the same level (parents, grandparents, great-grandparents). A period of approximately 30 years separates each generation.
- Given name:** The name parents give their child at birth.
- Heraldic symbols:** Official symbols granted to a family (coats of arms, blazons, etc.).
- Hereditary:** Physical or psychological traits passed on to children by their parents.
- Immigration:** A person's entry into a new country to settle there.
- Maiden name:** A woman's family name before marriage. Some women keep their maiden names after marriage, while others take their husband's surname.
- Marriage:** The legal union of two people who have chosen to spend their lives together.
- Maternal ancestor:** An ancestor on the mother's side of the family.
- Migration:** Movement from one place to another.
- Multicultural:** A number of distinct cultural groups living within a country or region.
- Paternal ancestor:** An ancestor on the father's side of the family.
- Point of entry:** The first place (border entry or port) immigrants arrive when entering a country.
- Port:** A city or town having a harbour where ships or boats take on or unload cargo or passengers.
- Pull factors:** Reasons people choose a new country or location in which to live.
- Push factors:** Reasons people leave their country or home to move to another.
- Quarantine:** The isolation and restriction placed on the movement of people or animals to prevent the spreading of a dangerous or contagious disease.
- Relative:** A person connected to a family by birth or marriage.
- Sibling:** A person's brother or sister.
- Spouse:** A husband or wife.
- Surname:** A person's family name or last name.
- Systematically:** How something is done following step-by-step procedures.
- Timeline:** A table outlining the schedule of events for successive years within a particular historical period.
- Wedding:** The celebration of the union of two people in marriage.

Genealogy Quiz:



1. A person who leaves one country to move to another is...
 - a, an emigrant
 - b, an immigrant
 - c, an ancestor

2. A person who comes to live in a new country is...
 - a, an emigrant
 - b, an immigrant
 - c, an ancestor

3. A person who moves to another location within a country is...
 - a, an immigrant
 - b, a migrant
 - c, an ancestor

4. Many people came to Canada between 1896 and 1914 because of the offer of free land. This is an example of..
 - a, push factor
 - b, destination
 - c, pull factor

5. The first place an immigrant arrives when entering a country is...
 - a, a port
 - b, border entry
 - c, a port or a border entry

6. Research done using step-by-step procedure is called...
 - a, systematic
 - b, random
 - c, recorded

7. Official symbols granted to a family is...
 - a, heredity
 - b, embarkation
 - c, family history
 - d, heraldic symbols

