

Branches Genealogy Informational Packet

Sources used for research include cemetery listings, wills, land records, slave records, death records, city directories, obituaries, family bibles, and oral history from the family. Before 1790, ship's passenger lists and church records are good sources. This document is to inform you of some of the types of records we use in our research and how they provide information and also of some of the historical culture of the time and how it gives clues that a researcher can use to find your ancestors.

CENSUS. The Census Records is the most often used source for Genealogists. The official U.S. Census is described in Article I, Section 2 of the Constitution of the United States. It calls for an actual enumeration of the people every ten years, to be used for apportionment of seats in the House of Representatives among the states. The first official Census was conducted in 1790 under Thomas Jefferson, who was the Secretary of State. That census, taken by U.S. marshals on horseback, counted 3.9 million inhabitants. Since that time, the decennial Census has been conducted every ten years, generally on April 1 in years ending in a zero (US Census Bureau). The word "census" is derived from the Latin word "censor," which was the title of the Roman official in charge of civil registration, taxation, public works, and public morality. When taking the first census, workers provided their own paper, and information was submitted on paper ranging from four inches to three feet. Enumerators write down the responses that are given to them; they are not authorized to ask for any kind of proof, such as birth, marriage, or property ownership records. In 1920, enumerators were paid between one and four cents per person, depending on the urban or rural setting of the district to be counted. Censuses are available for the years 1790, 1800, 1810, 1820, 1830, 1840, 1850 (including slave schedules), 1860 (including slave schedules), 1870, 1880, 1890 (fragment, census substitute, and veteran's schedules), 1900, 1910, 1920, 1930 (Ancestry.com). U.S. census results are used to apportion seats in the U.S. House of Representatives. To avoid political manipulation, federal law requires the census be completed by means of an actual headcount, rather than a statistical estimate of the population. Federal Census Records began in 1790 and were taken every 10 years as they are today. Census records are not available for general research for 72 years after the census was taken. The 1930 Census was not available until 2002; the 1940 Census will not be available until 2012. They were done for tax purposes-not genealogy-but they are a great way to track a family and verify information found on other sources.

HOWEVER...Up to ½ of the population was illiterate, or at least semi-illiterate, at the time of the first census; therefore people were unable to tell a census enumerator how to spell their name and may not have understood certain questions. This is a time when most people were immigrants to this country, so some people did not speak English very well if at all. Or the enumerator did not speak English very well. For example, our family name Reasonover can be found as Risenhoover, Resonova, Rizenhoffer, even once as Bisenhorn. This can be because either the pronunciation or illiteracy or even misinterpretations in handwriting of the time. Until 1850 a census taker was required to furnish paper, pens (quills), and inks themselves. They sometimes watered down the ink to make it go further, or wrote in pencil. Needless to say, some records are hard to read. It was also not uncommon for a census taker to be chased away from



house or be drunk when he got there. The enumerators were usually local residents, and only had to be able to read and write and have a horse. To some, it was just a job, but others took it a little more seriously and made sure the information was correct...at least what they knew to be correct. They were instructed to list the information as it was true for a specific date. For example, if the information had to be correct for June 1 and because of weather, terrain or transportation issues, it may have taken several months to complete a census for a county. If it was September before the enumerator reached a family they were to reconstruct the information for June 1. Some people couldn't remember in September who may have been living in their household on June 1, much less remember who may have been living there 6 to 8 months (or more) earlier. Keep in mind that there were quite often persons that boarded in homes on a constant basis and traveled within areas working on farms for their keep. There can be some confusion also because of births and deaths during the span of time the enumerator was actually at a household taking their information-add on top of this that they may have been asking a 7 or 8 year old to recall this info.

In researching these records, you have to be aware of changes in township boundaries and county lines, sometimes even state boundaries that change from one census to the next. Most people don't know that about 1/3 of Hamilton County, Tennessee became James County, Tennessee in 1870. This included the Ooltewah, Birchwood, and Apison areas. If you are researching someone that was in Hamilton County in 1860, in 1870 you would have to look for them in James County, even though they didn't move. James County went bankrupt in 1919 and the lands again were included in Hamilton County Census in 1920. North Carolina owned the lands west of the Great Smoky Mountains before 1790. These lands were ceded and the US Congress created the "Territory of the US South of the River Ohio" (commonly called the Southwest Territory). In 1784, settlers in the western lands created the small independent "State of Franklin" which lasted until 1788. By the end of the revolutionary War, more settlers came into the area-mostly from southwest Virginia. Although North Carolina owned the land, it was the Virginians who first settled in any great numbers. They first created farmsteads and then small villages and had an estimated population of about 28,000 people before the area became a state. Tennessee became a state in 1796, but the entire 1800 Tennessee Census record was lost. Except for two counties-Rutherford and part of Grainger-the 1810 Census was entirely lost as well. Only about half of the counties are listed in the 1820 Tennessee Census due to all of eastern Tennessee County Census records having been lost. Obviously this makes it difficult to research a family you think may have been early Tennessee settlers.

On the 1790 through 1840 census, only the Head of Household is named. Ages are listed in age brackets: 0-under 5, over 5 to 10, over 10 to under 16, etc. Females were listed at "Free White Females". The Head of Household may not even be married males, yet have him mother, sisters, aunts and other females not related to him. You can not simply assume a man was married and had children, as this could include any females in the household not necessarily family. A female could be found as head of household only if she was a widow-not living with a son. Before 1850, census takers did not follow a direct route in enumerating the county. They may go from one house to the next, in a zigzag patten, or do a section on his way to visit someone, etc. This makes it difficult to make sense of the area the family is living in. You can't assume the person listed next to someone is actually living next door. In 1850, enumerators were given maps and instructions with which to take the census, so you can pretty much rely on the information concerning neighbors of families from then on.

It is not uncommon for settlers to own hundreds or thousands of acres in the rural areas. You can usually find a black smith, the school teacher, a shoemaker, the sheriff, and maybe a merchant in these areas. A lot of neighbors married neighbors and you find a lot of brothers from a family married to sisters of another family. There were not a lot of people to choose from. Most adult children were given land when they married and so lived on the same land their parents and even grandparents lived. It is also not uncommon to find several families living together. (Don't be surprised to find that you are related to yourself a few different ways).

Beginning in 1850, the entire family was listed. This is the first time you can find a whole family listed together and the first time females were listed by name. But, keep in mind, a census taker may have gotten the information for a family from a neighbor, or a child in the household while the adults were not there. Since the enumerator was from the area, he may have written it down from personal knowledge. So, the ages, birthplace, etc. of a family may not match previous or later records. Sometimes enumerators got a bit carried away with ditto marks. They may "ditto" the head of household's last name for everyone in the household, making it difficult to know if there were step-children, in-laws, or boarders, etc. in the household. Ditto marks are also used a lot for birthplaces and occupations. The enumerator was required to turn in four copies of some of these records. He would sometimes have his wife or children help in making these hand written copies, possibly explaining changes in handwriting from one page to the next and some of the discrepancies on the records.

A lot of records in the south were destroyed by Union troops during the Civil War and ALL of the 1890 Census Records were destroyed. A fire at the Commerce Building in Washington DC destroyed a large percentage of the 1890 Census. Many Genealogy organizations, including the DAR, petitioned for the remaining documents, including the waterlogged volumes, be preserved. Despite public outcry, the Census bureau destroyed the documents 13 years later. In the 1940's and 1950's a few volumes were discovered and moved to the national Archives. Only 6160 names were recovered from an estimated original count of 63 million. Some states have tried to compile information from this time frame by using marriage, birth and death records.

Slave schedules were kept prior to the Civil War. This listed the land owner and all of his slaves by sex and age but not name. A slaveholder had to have a will and the slaves had to be listed in the will as they were considered property. A will is possibly the only time a slave's name was mentioned in print until after the Civil War. Their marriages, births and deaths were not recorded. On occasion, the slaves were freed upon the death of their owner, but more likely were left to the wife and children or were sold. At times, a freed slave took the last name of his former owner after the Civil War and/stayed with the family that once owned him. Research for African Americans is undoubtedly difficult. Obviously, long before the English and European settlers arrived here, Native Americans inhabited ALL the land. Slowly but surely, they were removed by settlers and the US Government. The Indians of the Southeast were removed by the 1836-via the Trail of Tears. Many families moved to central Georgia during this time and were given land grants signed by the President.

Just as last names can be hard to follow, so can someone's given name. In German society, a child was given a first name and a calling name. For example, John Jacob may be the name on record, but the child went by Jacob. There was not a set rule, but usually the first two

sons were named after the child's grandfathers. The father's side was usually used first, unless the mother's father was deceased before the father's father. So it is common to see the same given name used for generations. Females were named the same way, after the Mothers. Referring back to the Reasonover family, Joseph Reasonover was born in 1786. He had a son Joseph Reasonover who named his son Joseph Reasonover along with all of his other brothers naming their sons Joseph Reasonover (for their father) in the same generation. There was still a Joseph Reasonover from this line 200 years later in the 1980's still living on the same land purchased in 1812. Interesting, but it makes for confusing research. Sometimes families used nicknames or shortened versions of their name to differentiate between the many similarly names children. Commonly, Mary was Polly or Molly, Margaret was Peggy or Maggie, Martha was Patsy, Sarah was Sally, and Ann was Nancy or Nan. Sometimes a new given name used in the family is a clue to a surname for someone marrying into the family. Sometimes maiden names were used for first names or children were named for neighbors, or someone popular to the area or naturally for someone famous. There are a lot of people with the given name George Washington and Benjamin Franklin. The names Robert and Lee became popular in the south, as did Ulysses in the north.

VITAL RECORDS. Civil vital records—for births, deaths, and marriages—mark the milestones of our lives, and are the foundation of family history research. Chronicling the personal moments of our lives through the objective perspective of the public record, vital records can offer details often found through no other genealogical resource. They can be useful in proving or disproving other sources, give you a more complete picture of your ancestor, help you distinguish between two people with the same name, and help you find clues to earlier life events. To compliment these records, the Birth, Marriage, and Death Records Collection includes the Social Security Death Index (with over 70 million names to search), and a modern obituary archive that receives continual updates. With these tools, you can gain access to information regarding your ancestor's lives, such as the locations and causes of their deaths, the names of children or parents, their wedding dates and locations, and the many other details that help us record and remember the important moments in the lives of our families. Birth records usually show the name of the child, gender, date and place born, parents' names, and sometimes other data, such as parents' birthplaces. Marriage records usually show names of the bride and groom, date and place married, and sometimes other information, such as ages. In addition to the name of the person, death records usually provide marital status (single, married, widowed, or divorced), cause of death, date and place of death and burial, and sometimes the occupation, date and place of birth, age, parents' names and their birthplaces (usually state or country), and other useful information. The more recent the death record, the more information you will find.

CHURCH RECORDS. Churches were initially the sole keepers of vital records; ministers in many American colonies were required by law to report christenings and burials to civil authorities. Official birth certificates were not issued by most states until 1910 or later. Marriage licenses are the most common form of marriage records in the United States. Church death registers are valuable resources for tracing an immigrant's place of birth. In the early 1800s, the first time a female's name may be recorded is on her headstone. The information in this section was taken from *The Source: A Guidebook of American Genealogy*.

MILITARY RECORDS can often provide valuable information on the veteran, as well as on all members of the family. Compiled service records consist of an envelope containing card abstracts taken from muster rolls, returns, pay vouchers, and other records. They will provide you with your ancestor's rank, unit, date mustered in and mustered out, basic biographical information, medical information, and military information. The National Archives also has pension applications and records of pension payments for veterans, their widows, and other heirs. The pension records in the National Archives Building in Washington, D.C. are based on service in the armed forces of the United States between 1775 and 1916. Pension application files usually provide the most genealogical information. These files often contain supporting documents such as: narratives of events during service, marriage certificates, birth records, death certificates, pages from family Bibles, family letters, depositions of witnesses, affidavits, discharge papers and other supporting papers. Bounty land warrant application files relate to claims based on wartime service between 1775 and March 3, 1855. If your ancestor served in the Revolutionary War, War of 1812, early Indian Wars, or the Mexican War, a search of these records may be worthwhile. Bounty land records often contain documents similar to those in pension files, with lots of genealogical information. Many of the bounty land application files relating to Revolutionary War and War of 1812 service have been combined with the pension files.

WILLS AND OTHER COURT RECORDS. Court, land, and probate records are an often overlooked, but important part of genealogical research. For example, court cases can often involve dozens of litigants and defendants, many of whom may be related. Land records, such as deeds, are among the most important documents available for tying a specific person to a specific place; especially in those cases where time, place, and circumstances have made vital records difficult to research. Probate records can supply interesting details, such as the total value of estates and lists of surviving family members. The family historians who take the time to research these types of legal documents will often be pleasantly surprised by the rewards that are in store. These types of records can help you locate ancestors' residences, determine occupations, find financial information, establish citizenship status, or clarify relationships between people—depending on the type of records that your ancestors' names appear in. The Courts, Land, & Probate Records Collection contains a variety of records. Probate records are created at the time of an individual's death and are the legal records associated with the dividing up of a deceased person's property. These records might include information about an individual's financial situation and assets, their occupation, the names of their heirs and other family members. A will is a legal document in which an individual declares what they want done with their possessions or estate after their death. These might include information about immediate family members or distant relatives. A deed is typically a legal document that transfers property rights or grants land ownership to a person. These records might include information about residences and family members. There are many types of land records—title abstracts, land purchases, grant, and more. Land records are typically one of the records kept from the very early days of settlement in an area and may be available when other records are not. These records provide information on relationships between individuals, approximate relocation dates, and the financial state of a family.