

## RESEARCHING YOUR FAMILY HISTORY AT THE PARKWAY CENTRAL LIBRARY FREE LIBRARY OF PHILADELPHIA

This guide will introduce you to the genealogical resources of the Parkway Central Library of the Free Library of Philadelphia (FLP) and to other important libraries and archives in the Philadelphia area; it will also help you develop a basic research strategy.

### SELECTING A GUIDEBOOK AND INTERVIEWING RELATIVES

Before doing anything else, read a general guidebook on genealogy. The Social Science and History Department (SSH) on the second floor has several that you can borrow. When selecting a guidebook, make sure it has a usable index, a good chapter on how to interview relatives, and family tree and family group sheets that you can photocopy. At this point, make a workbook consisting of a family tree diagram with you at the beginning point of the tree, about ten family group sheets, and add some 8 ½ x 11 loose-leaf. Now you are ready to interview family members.

### IDENTIFYING SOURCES OF GENEALOGICAL INFORMATION

After interviewing all of the family members you can, begin formulating reference questions based on missing or unsubstantiated information on the family tree diagram and the family group sheets. Who, What, When, and Where are common first words in research questions. For each research question, ask yourself (1) what kind of document would contain the answer? (2) what institutions would have such a document?, and (3) where are these institutions located? For understanding documents and the genealogical information they contain, the best book is *The Source* (929.1072 So84e - SSH). For identifying document custodians and locations, the best books are *Ancestry's Red Book* (929.1072 An21r2 - SSH) and *The Genealogist's Address Book* (929.1025 B444g - SSH). The most important places to do genealogical research in the Philadelphia area are listed on the last two pages of this guide.

### USING THE COLLECTION AT THE PARKWAY CENTRAL LIBRARY

The main emphasis of the genealogical collection is on Pennsylvania history. Materials in the collection are almost entirely secondary sources, not original records. However, the Free Library does subscribe to the Internet genealogy databases HeritageQuest Online (includes census records and other resources of interest to genealogists) and Fold3, formerly Footnote, a continually-expanding repository for a variety of records such as City directories, military records, newspaper articles and naturalization records. Please consult a librarian about how to access these electronic resources. Standard guides, indexes, and bibliographies are kept in the subject departments; however, many titles are kept in closed stacks and must be located through the catalog and then requested at the reference desk in each department.

Start in the SOCIAL SCIENCE AND HISTORY DEPARTMENT at the genealogy reference area to the left of the Map Collection. Important resources here include *Passenger and Immigration Lists Index* and supplements (929.373 P2657a), *Philadelphia Naturalization Records* (929.373 P53n), *Genealogies in the Library of Congress* and supplements (016.929 K128g), and *Genealogical Periodical Annual Index* (016.929 G286p). You should also browse in the Philadelphia Local History Collection where you will find the genealogy-related sets of the published *Pennsylvania Archives* (LR974.8 P3821).

The SOCIAL SCIENCE AND HISTORY DEPARTMENT has some genealogies of individual families shelved in the closed stacks. To locate a genealogy of the Howell family, for example, go to the online catalog, type in the subject heading HOWELL FAMILY, make a note of the call number if you find a relevant title, and request the book at the SSH service desk. If you are looking for a biography of a prominent Philadelphian, ask to search the *Philadelphia Biography Master Index*, *Encyclopedia of Pennsylvania Biography Index*, or the Biography Clipping File.

The MAP DEPARTMENT in SSH has many ward and fire insurance maps of genealogical interest, *Pennsylvania Land Records* (974.8 M924p), *Old Towns and Districts of Philadelphia* (974.81 C153o), *Philadelphia Street Name Changes* (917.4811 P53p), and an informative Cemetery Clippings Binder.

The NEWSPAPER AND MICROFILM CENTER has an extensive microfilm collection of Philadelphia city directories from 1785 to 1936 with some gaps, telephone directories from 1879 to the present, and an extensive collection of Philadelphia newspapers from 1719 to the present with indexes to some of them. Use this collection to locate obituaries once you know a death date.

The PRINT AND PICTURE COLLECTION has numerous photographs and other graphic material of interest to the genealogical researcher. They also have an index to pictures of early ships.

The BUSINESS, SCIENCE, AND INDUSTRY DEPARTMENT has the *Philadelphia Realty Directory and Service*, 1926 to 1955 (333 P53r), *Philadelphia Old and New, From the Cradling of Liberty to the Centralization of Commerce* (330.9748 C765p) which gives brief descriptions of old Philadelphia businesses, and the *Morton Allan Directory of European Passenger Steamship Arrivals* (R387 A15). The Department also has Philadelphia business directories on microfilm from 1848 to 1936, with some gaps.

The GOVERNMENT PUBLICATIONS DEPARTMENT has most of the 1790 U.S. census as well as Philadelphia censuses from 1790 to 1930. Indexes for Philadelphia are available up to 1870. *An Urban Finding Aid for the 1880 Federal Population Census of Philadelphia* (304.6021 St62u), *The Index to Registration of Deaths City of Philadelphia 1803-1860* (Gov Pub STATES/P38-1224), and *The War of the Rebellion: a Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* (Gov Pub W 45.5) are also available. The Department also has a number of census enumeration district finding aids for the 1900, 1910, 1920 and 1930 Philadelphia censuses.

There are many other items of interest at the Free Library; for a complete list, see the FLP WWW pages at [libwww.library.phila.gov/explore/guides/genealogyAdv.cfm?topicTitle=Genealogy](http://libwww.library.phila.gov/explore/guides/genealogyAdv.cfm?topicTitle=Genealogy)

Consult the catalog or ask a librarian for assistance. The Social Science and History Department of the Parkway Central Library is the main collection for genealogical questions. Call, write or e-mail The Free Library of Philadelphia, Attn: SSH, 1901 Vine St., Phila., PA 19103. 215-686-5396, [libwww.library.phila.gov/faq/eref.cfm](http://libwww.library.phila.gov/faq/eref.cfm) .

## VITAL RECORDS

The Free Library of Philadelphia does not maintain vital records. An excellent guide to obtaining records (Birth, Marriage, Divorce, Death, etc.) in Pennsylvania is the Pennsylvania Department of Vital Records website at [www.health.state.pa.us/vitalrecords](http://www.health.state.pa.us/vitalrecords)

For vital records in Philadelphia only, the following guide (arranged as a chart, beginning with repositories of local birth records) should serve as a general outline. All repositories are described at the end of this list. Many earlier records are incomplete and scattered. Your best resources for these are church archives or the collection of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania (HSP). ADOPTION RECORDS may be requested from the Pennsylvania Adoption Registry described in the Pennsylvania vital records website, or by calling 1-877-PA-HEALTH.

BIRTH	1860-June 1915	Philadelphia City Archives (PHA)
	1906-present	Pennsylvania Department of Vital Records (DVR)
MARRIAGE	1860-June 1915	PHA (records only, not official certificates)
	1885-present	Orphan's Court (CHO)
DIVORCE	1851-1875	Philadelphia City Archives (PHA)
	1875-present	Philadelphia Court of Common Pleas (CHC)
DEATH	1803-June 1915	Philadelphia City Archives (PHA)
	1906-present	Pennsylvania Department of Vital Records (DVR)
WILLS	1692-present	Register of Wills (CHW)
PASSENGER LISTS	1728-1808	Pennsylvania State Archives
	1800-1945	National Archives, Mid-Atlantic Branch (NAR)
NATURALIZATIONS	1800-1930	PHA (no records 1905-1913)
	1790-1990	National Archives, Mid-Atlantic Branch (NAR)
HOUSE DEEDS	1683-1952	Philadelphia City Archives (PHA)
	1952-present	Department of Records (CHR)

For vital records in Pennsylvania but not in Philadelphia, consult the Pennsylvania vital records website, or call DVR at 215-560-3054 for further information. For records outside Pennsylvania, consult *Where to Write for Vital Records* at [www.cdc.gov/nchs/howto/w2w/w2welcom.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/howto/w2w/w2welcom.htm)

### GENEALOGICAL RESOURCES OUTSIDE THE FREE LIBRARY

HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF PENNSYLVANIA (HSP), 1300 Locust St., Philadelphia, PA, 19107, 215-732-6200, call for hours. A user fee is charged. This library houses the collections of both the Historical Society of Pennsylvania and the Genealogical Society of Pennsylvania. *A Guide to the Manuscript Collections of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania* (011.31 H629g - SSH) is also available. HSP website: <http://www.hsp.org>

GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY OF PENNSYLVANIA (GSP), 2207 Chestnut St., Philadelphia, PA, 19103-3010, 215-545-0391 (fax: 215-545-0396), call for hours. The GSP's collections include wills, deeds, census and tax lists, church registers and funeral, cemetery and family Bible records, Irish tax records, Philadelphia Orphan's Court records, family papers and correspondence, published genealogies, town and county histories, and periodicals. The GSP maintains a list of commercial genealogical researchers. GSP website: <http://www.genpa.org>

NATIONAL ARCHIVES - MID-ATLANTIC BRANCH (NAR), moved from 9<sup>th</sup> & Chestnut Sts., Philadelphia, PA, 19107, 215-606-0100 to 14700 Townsend Rd., Philadelphia, PA, 19154-1096 (in the Byberry East Industrial Park), call for hours. The holdings of this archive are described in *Guide to Records in the National Archives - Mid Atlantic Region* (016.974 Un3g - SSH). See also *Guide to Genealogical Research in the National Archives* (016.9291 Un3g - SSH).

PHILADELPHIA CITY ARCHIVES (PHA), 3101 Market Street, Suite 150, Philadelphia, PA, 19104, 215-685-9401, call for hours. The holdings of this archive are described in *Descriptive Inventory of the Archives of the City and County of Philadelphia* (016.9748 P53d - SSH) and *Subject Index to the Photographic Collection of the Philadelphia City Archives* (016.9748 P53de - SSH).

REGISTER OF WILLS (CHW), City Hall, Broad and Market Sts., Room 185, Philadelphia, PA, 19107, 215-686-6261, call for hours.

ORPHAN'S COURT (CHO), City Hall, Broad and Market Sts., Room 415, Philadelphia, PA, 19107, 215-686-2234, call for hours. Use this office for marriages after 1885.

COURT OF COMMON PLEAS (CHC), City Hall, Broad and Market St., Prothonotary's Office, Room 266, Philadelphia, PA, 19107, 215-686-6663, call for hours. Use this office for divorces after 1875.

DEPARTMENT OF RECORDS (CHR), City Hall, Broad and Market Sts., Room 111, Philadelphia, PA, 19107, 215-686-2260, call for hours. Use this office for deeds after 1951.

PENNSYLVANIA STATE ARCHIVES, 350 North Street, Harrisburg, PA, 17120, 717-787-2701, call for hours. The holdings for this archive are described in *Guide to Genealogical Sources at the Pennsylvania State Archives* (016.9293 P384g2 - SSH).

PENNSYLVANIA STATE LIBRARY, Office of Commonwealth Libraries, 333 Market St., Harrisburg, PA, 17126-1745 (mail), Forum Building, Walnut St. and Commonwealth Ave. (visit) 717-787-4440. The holdings of this library are described in *A Guide to the Genealogy / Local History Section of the State Library of Pennsylvania* (026.929 St29g - Education, Philosophy, and Religion Dept.).

DIVISION OF VITAL RECORDS, COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA (DVR), 110 North 8<sup>th</sup> St., Suite 108, Philadelphia, PA, 19107-2412, 215-560-3054; office hours Monday-Friday 8:00 AM-4:00 PM, excluding State holidays.

CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER DAY SAINTS - BRANCH GENEALOGICAL LIBRARY, 2072 Red Lion Road, Philadelphia PA, 215-673-2770, call for hours. The Mormon Church has the largest genealogical collection in the world. Most of their microfilm collection can be borrowed through this branch library. The only way to get a clear idea of the scope of this vast collection is to go there and examine their catalog. LDS Genealogy Website: [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org)

CHURCH ARCHIVES - For a list of church archives and other information resources in the Philadelphia area, consult the Genealogical Society of Pennsylvania website at [www.genpa.org/RepositoriesPhilaGen.html](http://www.genpa.org/RepositoriesPhilaGen.html) and *Directory of Archival and Manuscript Repositories in the Delaware Valley* (027.0749 D628o2 - SSH). For resources outside the Philadelphia area, see *Ancestry's Red Book* (929.1072 An21r2 - SSH) and *The Genealogist's Address Book* (929.1025 B444g - SSH).

The libraries and archives listed below are the best places to look for the material indicated. When in doubt, read a guide or handout that describes the holdings of the repository or talk to a librarian or archivist that works there.

	FLP	HSP	GSP	NAR	PHA	CHW	CHO	CHR	DVR	CHC
Biographies	X	X								
Cemeteries/Burial Returns	X	X	X		X					
Censuses	X	X		X						
Church Records		X	X							
Court Records		X	X	X	X		X			
City Directories	X	X								
Passenger Lists	X	X		X						
Naturalization	X	X		X	X					
Maps	X	X			X					
Gazetteers	X	X								
Genealogies-Published	X	X	X							
Genealogies-Manuscript		X	X							
Histories	X	X								
Deeds and Land Records		X			X			X		
Military Records	X	X		X						
Newspapers	X	X								
Periodicals	X	X	X							
Probate Records		X				X				
Tax Records	X	X	X	X	X					
Vital Records (Birth, Marriage, Divorce, Death)					X		X		X	X