

Genealogy 101, Part 1



I made this collage using Adobe Photoshop, and it includes myself, my children, and many of my ancestors. Copyright 2008, All Rights Reserved, Peggy A. Rowe, & Peggy A. Snyder Hi All, I'm going to attempt to share my enthusiasm



that I have for one of my hobbies by trying to share with you how to begin your own journey into YOUR family tree. I'm going to do it in steps in order to keep each thing I write short and sweet. And so that you learn just a few things at a time and are not overwhelmed. Genealogy is not really a hard hobby to do. I suspect if it were, you'd not find millions of people out there engaged in hunting their ancestors. But, it does take some dedication and time. You have to realize that breaking some of those "brickwalls" you might discover could take years to break down. So, you have to not let yourself become frustrated. I started my journey when I was around 15 years old, when the mini series "Roots" came on T.V. It captivated my imagination, because for the first time I was able to realize that the history of my country, and the world included acts by people who were probably my "folks". I am 45 years old now, and have done a lot of genealogy. I've made lot's of mistakes along the way, dug up some interesting stories, found a skeleton or two, and met up with more "cousins" than you can shake a stick at! My kids honestly think I know people every where I go.... and my husband gets a big kick out telling this story about how we went through this small Oregon town, and his wife got the most dumbfounded look on her face. When he questioned her, she simply answered that she couldn't think of a soul in her family that has lived, been born, died, or even walked through that town. 🤔 That is how much

history I have in the State of Oregon. This is a hobby full of resources. You have picked a great time to enter the journey. The internet has opened up possibilities

that are almost endless. I'll tell you about a few that most folks know about, and I'll tell you about a few most folks probably don't know about. But, first, I'm going to tell you just how to get started. It's the easiest, and least expensive part of the journey. The first thing you do is simply COLLECT. Collect and gather into one place all the information that YOU know about your family. Start with you, your siblings, your parents, and grandparents. Write down EVERYTHING that comes to mind. Write down birthdays, death dates, anniversary dates, burial dates, graduation dates, little stories that you remember about folks that make you laugh and cry. Along with those dates write down as much as you know about where the event happened. For example, I was born in April 62, in Castro Valley, Alameda County, California. And that is the proper way to write it down: City, County, State. You might want to get a manila folder or two, or a binder with pockets inside. Because in the long run you'll need to start sorting your data in some way that is meaningful to you. I have a tendency to sort by SURNAME. (The Surname is your family name, otherwise known as your LAST NAME. My last name as a kid, also known as a maiden name since I am a female (in America) is ROWE, yours might be SPENCER or JONES. Included in this first step is asking family members for as much information as they can remember. I have found that the best way to do this, if it is at all possible, is to give them a personal visit and ask questions. I don't know how many

times, elders have told me, "I don't know anything that matters," only to have them tell me something that helps me to get my tree back one more generation (or more.) There are free form letters available on the internet to help you write letters to the folks you can't visit. Make sure you ask your family members if there are others in the family that you might not know about who would be willing to help. Ask them if you can xerox old photos, you'd be surprised the clues you can get from a photo. Ask them for xerox copies of old family bibles (again, the clue's can break down whole "brickwalls" as one did for me!) Take a tape recorder with you so you can tape the interview. Let these folks tell their stories. If you are at all interested in this stuff, you won't be sorry. Because there are going to be details that once you are at home, you'll probably forget to write down, and then it's possibly lost forever. The next step will be to start transferring your data over to forms called Family Group Sheets and Pedigree Charts. Pedigree Charts are the standard "tree" charts that most people are so familiar with. They usually have 5-6 generations on them, and contain "just the facts" in terms of dates [birth, death, marriage] and where the events happen. The Family Group sheet is a chart of each individual family. The first sheet you do, should probably be of you, your siblings, and your parents. With your parents on top, and the children on the bottom part. All you do is fill in the blanks the best you can. Filling out these sheets, as completely as you can, and "sourcing it out" correctly is

the most important part of doing this hobby in a way that will lead your fellow family genealogists to respecting your work, so do it right, and do it well! You can download free pedigree and family group sheets (and many others) from here:

<http://www.familytreemagazine.com/forms/download.html#> In the next article I will tell you about the next step which is reaching out and gathering information from CENSUS records from the United States and other countries. I'll try to include some links to resources for this research. One thing, you will find as you get on with this journey, is that this probably won't be a just a study in the vital statistics of your family. It will be a journey of learning your families place in the world's history, a study of the world's culture and languages, and of family culture. It can be trying sometimes to have to read the old style writing, and old time medical diagnosis's, but I can assure you, it is very rewarding when you realize where this or that family ritual comes from or why your dad said that! hahaha There are lot's and lot's of genealogical websites out there. Just google Genealogy! if you want to take a look at my lines check out: <http://www.pegrowe.com> (some of the site is under construction, you might have to visit again) and if you have any questions feel free to email me at: pegrowe62 at gmail dot com. 😊 Have a GREAT DAY! Peg