Getting Started With Your Family History

Session Three

Identify Key Records

Objectives

Learn how to research the localities where your ancestors lived

Learn the types of records available

Land Records

Court Records

Military Records

Immigration and Naturalization

Compiled Genealogies

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Localities

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Researching Localities

- Research on the Internet
  - FamilySearch wiki
  - Family History wiki on Ancestry.com
  - USGenWeb site for State and County
  - Wikipedia Entry for County and Cities

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Researching Localities

- Books, Microfilm, On-Site
  - County Histories (Mug Books)
  - Privately Published Books on County Records
  - Newspapers
  - Church Records
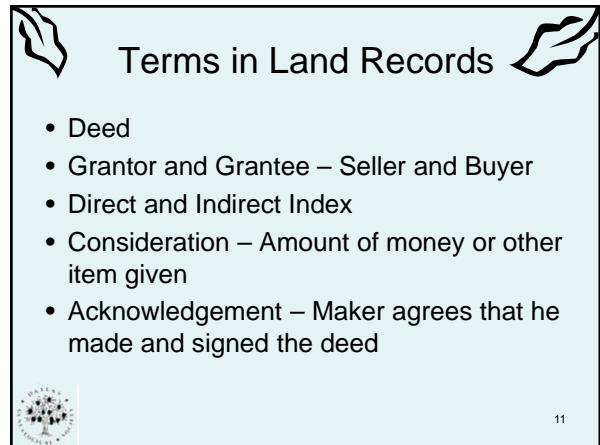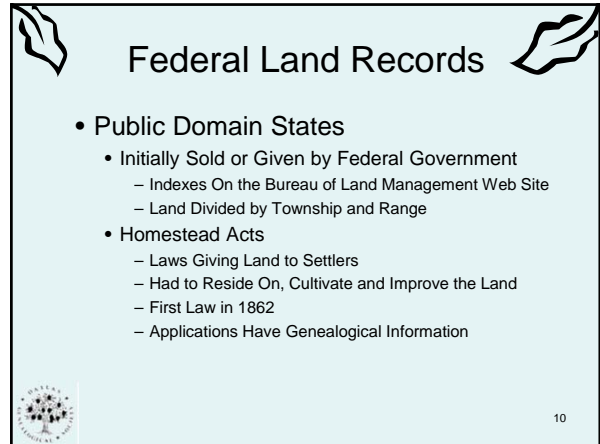 - City Directories
  - Funeral Homes

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Researching Localities

- Names of Courts
- Court Procedures and Jurisdictions
- Boundary Line Changes
- Ethnic Groups
- Languages Spoken
- Major Events in Area e. g. Katrina today, Dust Bowl in 1930's, African American Great Migration 1915-1970

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Land Records

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Federal Land Records

- Public Domain States
  - Initially Sold or Given by Federal Government
    - Indexes On the Bureau of Land Management Web Site
    - Land Divided by Township and Range
  - Homestead Acts
    - Laws Giving Land to Settlers
    - Had to Reside On, Cultivate and Improve the Land
    - First Law in 1862
    - Applications Have Genealogical Information

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Initial Acquisition of Land

- Pre – Revolutionary War
  - Spanish
  - French
  - British
  - Mexican
- States
- Federal Public Lands

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Terms in Land Records

- Deed
- Grantor and Grantee – Seller and Buyer
- Direct and Indirect Index
- Consideration – Amount of money or other item given
- Acknowledgement – Maker agrees that he made and signed the deed

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State Land Records

- Issued by the State
  - 13 Original States
  - Daughter Colonies of Tennessee, Kentucky, Maine, Vermont, West Virginia
  - Texas and Hawaii
  - Land described in metes and bounds
  - Records are in States and Counties

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Terms in Land Records

- Preemption – Claim to prior right in land
- Real Property – Property that cannot be moved
- Personal Property – Anything that can be moved
- Assign – Transfer rights to another

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State Land Terms

- Metes and Bounds – Describes land by measures and boundaries
- Calls – Descriptions of the boundaries
- Plat – Drawing and text showing the boundaries of piece of property
- Survey – Process of measuring the property
- Meanders – Turns of waterways

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Individual Land Sales

- Sales After the Initial Government Sale
- Recorded On Local Level
- Dower Rights in Some Jurisdictions
  - Wives had lifetime right to real property
  - She had to release those rights at time property was sold
  - Gives you her first name

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Terms in Federal Land

- Baseline and Principal Meridian – Point from which land is centered
  - Baseline = East-West line
  - Meridian = North-South line
- Township and Range – Six square miles of land divided into sections
- Aliquot parts – Exact subdivision of a section

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Deeds

- Transfers property from one owner to another
- Read several deeds in county to determine the "boilerplate" language
- Transcribe the deeds – forces you to read them completely
- Read and record the acknowledgement and dower release

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Court Records

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Federal Courts 1911-1952

- Supreme Court
  - Special Federal Courts – Court of Claims, Courts Martial, Indian Claims Commission
- Court of Appeals
  - United States Regulatory Commissions
- District Courts

Szucs, Loretto Dennis and Sandra Hargreaves Luebking, *The Source: A Guidebook to American Genealogy, Third Edition*, (Provo, Utah) Ancestry Publishing, 2006

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http://www.uscourts.gov/FederalCourts.aspx

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American Court System

- State Supreme Court
- Intermediary Court of Appeals
- Superior Courts
- Inferior Courts

Szucs, Loretto Dennis and Sandra Hargreaves Luebking, *The Source: A Guidebook to American Genealogy, Third Edition*, (Provo, Utah) Ancestry Publishing, 2006

States have different names and procedures for these courts. Determine them during locality research

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Probate Courts

- Will and Probate
  - Testate – has a will
    - Attested - in writing and witnessed
    - Holographic - handwritten by testator and not witnessed
    - Nuncupative – oral, deathbed before witnesses who record it and take it to court quickly
    - Administered by an executor
    - Will can be contested

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Probate Records

- Intestate – no will
  - Estate divided according to law
  - Administered by an administrator
  - Search for all heirs – find out names of other siblings

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Guardianship

- Responsible person of legal age appointed to handle affairs of underage or incompetents
- Also called a conservator, curator, tutor or receiver
- Sometimes a parent can be appointed guardian for his or her child

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Other Courts

- Criminal Courts
- Family Courts – Divorces and Adoptions
- Civil Courts
- Justice of the Peace Courts

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Military Records

- World War I to Present
  - Many Army records destroyed in fire in 1973
  - Draft registrations survived
  - Within past 75 years only available to veteran and next of kin

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Local Court Records

- Court Minutes
- Juror Lists
- Road Crew Lists
- Voting Lists
- Petitions

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WWII Records

- "Old Man" World War II Draft Registrations
  - Conducted 27 April 1942
  - Born between 28 April 1877 – 16 February 1897
- Holocaust Collection at National Archives
- Records being digitized on fold3.com - subscription required
- 75 year privacy restrictions apply
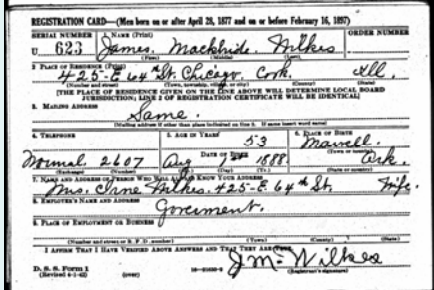
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Military Records

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WWII Draft Registration

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Military Records

- World War I Draft Registrations
  - Three registrations
    – 5 June 1917 – Born between 1886 – 1896
    – 5 June 1918 - Born between 1896 – 1897
    – 12 Sept 1918 – Extended down to age 18 and up to 45
      » 13 Sept 1872 to 12 Sept 1900
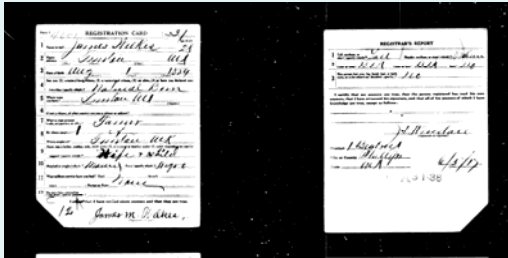
  – Located on Ancestry ($) and FamilySearch (Free)

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Pre WWI - Military Records

- Types
  - Military service records
  - Pensions claims records
  - Bounty land warrant applications (for service in Mexican War and earlier)
- Finding Aid for Regular Army
  - Microfilm: *Register of Enlistments in the U.S. Army, 1794-1911* by NARA

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WWI Draft Registration

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Spanish American War

- Volunteers
- Most from Illinois, New York, Ohio and Pennsylvania
- 16,000 served
- Rough Riders from around country - 1,235 served
- Records on microfilm with NARA

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Military Records

- Pre-World War I Records
  – Located in National Archives and Records Administration
  – Microfilmed by Family History Library
  – Digital Records at fold3.com
  – Digital Records and Indexes at Ancestry

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Military Records

- Civil War
  - Civil War Soldiers and Sailors System (Online)
    - Identifies whether Union or Confederate
    - Identifies Regiment and Rank

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Military Records

Confederate
- Compiled Service Records
- Pensions – In state they were living at time of application, not where they served
- States have pension records

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Civil War

- Union
  - Compiled Service Records
  - Draft Records
  - Exemption Lists in newspapers of area
  - Pensions

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Immigration and Naturalization

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Research Methods

- Identify the immigrant clearly
- Learn the historical background
- Search American records thoroughly first
- Learn the immigration process
  - Ellis Island did not change immigrants' names

- Loretto Dennis Szucs (Editor), Sandra Hargreaves Luebking (Editor) *The Source: A Guidebook Of American Genealogy* (Third Edition) (Provo, Utah) Ancestry, a division of MyFamily.com,Inc, 2006 (online at Ancestry.com wiki

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Immigration

- Ellis Island Online Database – After 1892
- Ship Passenger Lists – Prior to 1892
  - Ancestry
  - FamilySearch
  - Stevemorse.org

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Naturalization

- After 1906 – Federal Court
- Before 1906 – Any Court
- 3 Step Process
  - Declaration of Intent
  - Petition (2nd or Final Papers)
  - Certificate of Naturalization

Prior to 1922 women took the citizenship of their husbands. No naturalizations.

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Compiled Genealogies

- Published
  - Family History Library
  - FamilySearch.org – Books tab
  - Local libraries
  - Libraries in localities where your ancestor lived
  - Worldcat

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Local and County Societies

- Dallas Genealogical Society
- Mesquite Genealogical and Historical Society
- Fort Worth Genealogical Society

- Collin County Genealogical Society
- Mid-Cities Genealogical Society
- Counties Where Ancestors Lived

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Compiled Genealogies

- Online
  - Public Family Trees on Ancestry.com
  - Geni.com
  - GenCircles.com
  - FamilySearch
  - Rootsweb WorldConnect

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State and National Societies

- National Genealogical Society
- Federation of Genealogical Societies
- Ethnic Societies

- Texas State Genealogical Society
- New England Historical and Genealogical Society
- Other State Societies where ancestors live

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Genealogical Societies

- Advantages
  - Education
  - Friendships
  - Support
  - Skill Developing

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Summary

- Research the locality your ancestor lived in
- Determine if he owned land and when to place him in a locality at a certain time
- Research court records in the locality

- Find military records if he served
- Find immigration and naturalization records if a recent immigrant
- Research compiled genealogies but verify
- Find genealogical societies and become involved

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