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My Great-Grandfather's Secrets: ***Using DNA, Oral History, and Historical Context to Discover Untold Stories***

Top 5 Tips for Oral History

- Start with Open Ended Questions.
 - Encourage detailed stories rather than yes/no answers.
- Document the Source
 - Always note who told the story, when, and under what circumstances. This will help future verification.
- Cross-Check with Other Sources
 - Oral history can be inaccurate or embellished. Compare stories to primary documents like census data, birth/death certificates, and historical documents.
- Focus on Themes, Not Details
 - Details may get lost or exaggerated over time, but the general themes of stories often hold valuable clues.
- Accept the Inaccuracies
 - Oral history is often influenced by personal bias or family dynamics. Be open to the fact that some stories may never fully align with documented facts.

Recording

Note: The best equipment for recording an oral history is what you already have! If you're just starting out, don't want to spend money on fancy equipment, or you need to record someone on the fly, there is nothing wrong with recording someone on your phone and exporting the .mp3 to the cloud or another device.

- Free iPhone Apps for Recording Phone Calls [what I have personally used]
 - Rev Call Recorder <https://apps.apple.com/us/app/rev-call-recorder/id1314427915>
 - Call Recording by NoNotes <https://apps.apple.com/us/app/call-recording-by-nonotes/id522637615>
 - This app is not as good as Rev Call Recorder in my opinion.

- Free Apps for Oral History Interviews [iPhone & Android]
 - Voice Memos [iOS only]
 - StoryCorps App <https://storycorps.org/participate/storycorps-app/>
 - Rev <https://www.rev.com/apps-and-tools/voice-recorder>
 - Smart Recorder [Android only]

<https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.andrwq.recorder>
 - Voice Recorder [Android only; free with ads]

<https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.media.bestrecorder.audiorecorder&pli=1>

Basic Sources You Need to Look for to Cross Check the Story

Vital Records

- Birth Certificates: To verify dates of birth, parentage, and place of birth.
- Marriage Certificates: To confirm marriages, names of spouses, and often parents' names.
- Death Certificates: Useful for confirming dates, places of death, and sometimes causes of death or burial locations.

Census Records

- Federal and State Censuses: Provide household information such as names, ages, relationships, and residence location at various points in time. Also helpful for tracking migrations.
- US Federal Slave Schedules (pre-1865): For African American ancestors, to trace enslaved people when no vital records exist.

City Directories

- City Directories: Provide details about an individual's residence, occupation, and sometimes family members. These directories are invaluable for tracking people between census years, particularly in urban areas.

Land and Property Records

- Deeds: Establish property ownership, land transfers, and even names of family members.
- Homestead Applications: Confirm land claims and personal details of individuals who applied for land through the Homestead Act.

Military Records

- Draft Cards and Military Service Records: Verify service in the armed forces, including dates, locations, and sometimes descriptions of the individual.

- Pension Records: Offer detailed family information, including spouses and dependents.

Probate and Wills

- Wills and Probate Records: Provide insights into family structure, property, and inheritance patterns, helping confirm relationships mentioned in oral history.

Church and Parish Records

- Baptismal, Marriage, and Burial Records: Especially useful for earlier time periods or when vital records aren't available, particularly in Catholic or Protestant communities.

Immigration and Naturalization Records

- Passenger Lists: Track immigrant ancestors, their origins, and arrival in a new country.
- Naturalization Papers: Confirm citizenship, place of birth, and immigration details.

Court and Legal Records

- Divorce Records: Provide family structure details and reasons for the dissolution of marriages.
- Civil and Criminal Court Cases: Offer insight into family disputes, property issues, or criminal activities.

Newspapers

- Obituaries: Useful for verifying death dates, family relationships, and burial locations.
- Announcements (Birth, Marriage, Death): Corroborate key family events with dates and details.

Tax Records

- Tax Assessments and Lists: Confirm residence, property ownership, and financial status of individuals over time.

Voter Registration Records

- Voter Lists and Poll Books: Confirm residence, citizenship status, and eligibility to vote, often providing details about an individual's location and family.

Employment and Apprenticeship Records

- Apprenticeship Indentures: Verify skills, trades, and sometimes parental information.
- Employment Records: Confirm work history, often providing personal and family details.

Additional Resources

- Story Corps
 - Great Questions for Anyone:
<https://storycorps.org/participate/great-questions/>
- Oral History Interview, Questions and Topics - JewishGen
 - <https://www.jewishgen.org/InfoFiles/Quest.html>
- Oral History Association Principles and Best Practices
 - <https://oralhistory.org/principles-and-best-practices-revised-2018/#Introduction>
- Oral History Resources - Baylor University - Institute for Oral History
 - <https://library.web.baylor.edu/visit/institute-oral-history/resources>
- Online Resources for Learning About Creating Oral Histories
 - <https://www.familysearch.org/en/blog/online-resources-for-learning-about-creating-oral-histories>
- Oral History and Family History - Oral History Society
 - <https://www.ohs.org.uk/for-family-historians/>

Selected List of Recorded Presentations on DNA from The Genealogy Center

At the Genealogy Center, we offer two free virtual programs each week—Tuesdays at 2:30 PM ET and Thursdays at 6:30 PM ET—many of which are recorded, including several presentations on DNA research.

Checkout our other recorded programs here:

<https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PL8AE558B5D8661B31&si=46og4LUvQ56m3sje>

- “Incorporating Newspapers Into Your DNA Research
https://youtu.be/gxplcDh3kxw?si=De1vKCN_v3GntI3b
- “A Case Study: Combining FAN Club Research and DNA to Break Through Brick Walls” <https://youtu.be/wGck712ERa4?si=dk-J4nVDRSDv6Y1>
- “Working with DNA Matches: Beginning to Sort Your Matches”
<https://youtu.be/zaeeGJwZqCA?si=eXMP4nROM0CSYp4k>
- “Sorting Your DNA Match Lists”
<https://youtu.be/i6xrOnpsCt4?si=l92z7nE32HQPSW1p>
- “Identifying Unknown Parents or Grandparents Through DNA”
<https://youtu.be/RvHPpJIZ0-8?si=EslhbyCr8iBMbTOI>
- “DNA Ethnicity Results FAQs”
<https://youtu.be/iUPKW2lo0g?si=aG7dOcCB4vbxe43O>