

## *Family History Research Project*

Created by the History & Genealogy Department, St. Louis County Library

### **Goals**

- ❖ Analyze and interpret historical records to research specific people throughout the 19th and 20th centuries.
- ❖ Develop a greater understanding of how people immigrated to America at different times in American history and their experiences.
- ❖ Identify and locate primary and secondary sources to help prove connections using social science inquiry methods.
- ❖ Organize and present your conclusions based on historical research to help preserve the history and heritage of your ancestors.

### **Missouri Learning Standards/GLE**

Social Studies: 9-12 American History

#### 1. History: Continuity and Change

Theme 1: Tools of Social Science inquiry

C. Develop a research plan, identify appropriate resources for investigating social studies topics, and create and present a research product which applies an aspect of United States history post c. 1870 to a contemporary issue.

### **Introduction**

Genealogy and family history research gives researchers a glimpse into the lives and times of their ancestors. In order to develop a greater understanding of your ancestors and the historical events they lived through, researchers can locate and piece together these stories with careful analysis and interpretation of historical records. Some of the historical records that genealogists and family historians use to research ancestors include census records, military records, court records, vital records, and land records. By learning about these various historical records and figuring out where to locate them, you will find ways to develop and answer many historical questions about your ancestors.

## Materials

- Four-Generation Family Tree Chart
- Family Group Sheet
- Birth year Based on Census Year Chart
- List of Databases for History & Genealogy Research-See Attached
- Historical Resource Chart- See Attached

## Recommending Reading

- Leavitt, Amie Jane. *Design Your Family Tree*. Hockessin, Del.: Mitchell Lane Publishers, 2012. J 929.1 Leavitt Amie
- Ollhoff, Jim. *Beginning Genealogy*. Edina, Minn.: ABDO Pub. Co., 2011. J 929.1 Ollhoff Jim
- Ollhoff, Jim. *Collecting Primary Records*. Edina, Minn.: ABDO Pub. Co., 2011. J 929.1 Ollhoff Jim
- Wolfman, Ira. *Do People Grow on Family Trees? : Genealogy for Kids & Other Beginners: The Official Ellis Island Handbook*. New York: Workman Pub., 1991. TEEN 929.1 W859D

## Activity

### Part 1

1. Fill in the information you already know about your family on the Four-Generation Family Tree Chart & Family Group Sheet.
2. Write down questions and information that you don't know or are uncertain about. Keep this list to help prepare your research questions when you begin your search for historical records and information.
3. Select one type of record that you would like to begin your research with from the resource chart provided.

4. Find the list of suggested resources and databases for the historical record type you have selected.

## **Part 2**

1. Search for your ancestor(s) with the first record type you selected.
2. If you are not able to locate a record for one of your ancestors in the first record group you selected, choose another record type to begin searching.
3. Keep a record of the information you find and do not find for each record group you search.

### **Searching the Records- US Federal Census:**

1. Choose one ancestor to begin searching the US Federal Census with the [Heritage Quest Online](#) database. (OR: Pick one individual from the [American National Biography](#) database to search.)
2. Begin searching this individual in the most recent **census** that they would have appeared in. \*Note the most recent census to be released to the public is the 1940 census. For the best search results, pick an individual who would have appeared on the 1940 census.
3. Work backwards after you have located someone in the 1940 census and try to find that person or one of their family member's on the 1930 census.
4. Review the quick census tip sheet for help with researching the census.
5. Record any new research questions that come up as you research using the US Federal Census.

### **Searching the Records- City Directories:**

1. Search the St. Louis, Missouri City Directories (1863-1923) using the [Fold3](#) database.
2. Be on the lookout for the following information:
  - Name and occupation of head of household
  - Name of spouse- found in parentheses following the name of husband
  - Names of children

- Street name and house number
  - Occupation
  - Work address
3. Abbreviations: To figure out the abbreviations that often appear in city directories, locate the list of abbreviations normally found in the front of the directory.

### **Searching the Records- Historic Newspapers:**

1. Several clues about family ancestors are found through research with historical newspapers. The following are possible topics to research with Newspapers!
- Military service
  - Letters from loved ones
  - The latest fashions
  - Sporting events
  - Organization and society meetings
  - Weather reports
  - Land sales
  - Social history
2. To access the St. Louis County Library's Newspaper Databases go to <https://www.slcl.org/genealogy> and click on **Online Research**. This will bring up an alphabetical list of online resources that includes the Newspaper databases available through SLCL.
3. For St. Louis research the following databases are particularly helpful.
- Historical St. Louis Post-Dispatch [ProQuest]- searchable full text and full image articles 1874-2003
  - St. Louis Post-Dispatch [Newsbank]-full text database with total access from 1988 to present and partial access from 1981-1987

### **History & Genealogy Department**

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