Introduction to Genealogy at the National Archives

Claire Kluskens

Learn how to do basic genealogical research using Federal records at the National Archives including census, immigration, and military service and pension records.

Session 1

www.archives.gov/calendar/genealogy-fair
Claire Kluskens is a genealogical projects archivist specializing in immigration, census, military, and other records of high genealogical value. She spearheaded the completion of more than 300 National Archives microfilm publications. She lectures frequently and has published extensively in national, state, and local genealogical publications. Claire has been a National Archives staff member since 1992 and has done genealogical research since 1976.
Getting Started on Your Research

An Introduction to Using Records in the National Archives

Claire Kluskens
Genealogy: A Lifetime Hobby Makes History Relevant

- Geography
- Economics
- Politics
- Social factors
- Religion
- Climate
- and other forces shaped our ancestors lives.
Begin with Yourself

- First, Get Organized, Get Your Tools
  - Box or Binder
  - Full-sized paper or notebooks
  - Pencils, pens, pencil sharpener, stapler.
  - Four- or five-generation ancestor chart
  - Family group sheets
  - Genealogy computer program? or word processing program
Begin with Yourself

● Fill out your ancestor chart

Ancestral Chart

Chart No. ____________

Cont. On Chart ____________

Born
Place
 Married
Place
 Died
Place

Cont. On Chart ____________

Born
Place
 Died
Place

Cont. On Chart ____________

Born
Place
 Married
Place
 Died
Place

Cont. On Chart ____________

Born
Place
 Died
Place

Cont. On Chart ____________

Born
Place
 Married
Place
 Died
Place

Cont. On Chart ____________

Name of Spouse

Cont. On Chart ____________
Begin with Yourself

- Fill out a family group sheet for each ancestor and each ancestor’s siblings.

### Family Group Sheet

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<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Occupation(s)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Born</td>
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<tr>
<td>Christened</td>
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<td>Military Service</td>
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<tr>
<td>Died</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Cause of Death</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buried</td>
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<td>Date of Will</td>
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<tr>
<td>Married</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mother</td>
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<table>
<thead>
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<td>Other Marriages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Other Information Records (ie. Census, Passports, etc...)
Begin with Yourself

Organize any “old family papers” you may have:

Certificates of birth, marriage, death.
Newspaper death notices.
Military papers, Social Security Cards,
Photographs, everything....
Interview Your Relatives

- Parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins....

- They may know names, dates, places, family stories.

- They may have “old family records” pertinent to your ancestors.

- Stories, family traditions, “life in the olden days”
Starting points

- Collect basic facts
  - Names of ancestors, their siblings, other relatives
  - Dates of birth, marriage, death, divorce
  - Places of birth, marriage, death, divorce
  - Occupation
  - Military service
  - Other biographical details
Linking it all Together

Name plus some additional fact that links him or her to a specific geographic location or event on a specific date. 

\textit{AND the source of that information.}

Name by itself is not enough.
Why Knowing the Source is Important…

Fred T. Brown

Death certificate .... Died 1921

Gravestone .......... Died 1922
Why Knowing the Source is Important…

Sarah M. Presley Hayford
Death record……. Died 2 Apr. 1902
Newspaper……. Died 3 Apr. 1902
Join Genealogical Societies

- National Genealogical Society
- Afro-American Historical and Genealogical Society
- State genealogical societies: the state in which you live, and the states in which your ancestors lived
- County genealogical societies: county in which you live and counties in which your ancestors lived
- Historical societies
Why Join Genealogical Societies?

- Publications
  - Articles useful to you
  - Vehicle for *you* to publish in
- Information about the area
  - History, records, research facilities, more
- Networking
- Education - conferences, classes, etc.
Publish or Your Research Perishes!

- Publications by Genealogical Societies:
  - County
  - State
  - National

- Self-publish.
  - Write up your family story – do it well.
  - Make sure copies of your “book” are with other family members, libraries where your family lived, libraries with “national” collections.
Learn How to Do Genealogy Right

- Borrow books from your public library on how to do genealogy, relevant aspects of history, and so forth
- Take genealogy classes
- Follow the research standards recommended by the National Genealogical Society
Do Research in Real Records

- Federal
- State
- County
- Libraries: books, microfilmed records, more!
- Other: cemeteries, churches, funeral homes, private organizations
Federal Records (NARA)

- Census: 1790–1940
- Military Service Records, Pension Records, Unit Records, World War I and II Draft Registration Cards
- Immigration Records: 1820–1950s, entry at sea or land border ports of arrival
- Naturalization Records
- Many other possibilities
Doing Research in Archival Records: The “misspelled name”

- The name may not be spelled as you expect to find it.
  - The “ear” test:
    - What did the census taker (or other record keeper) think was said?
    - Probably didn’t ask how it was spelled.
The misspelled name

Westurn .... Western, Weston

Hayford .... Hefford, Hafford, Heyford

Siml .... Symel, Chimel

McCuller .... McAlley
Census, 1790–1940

- Start with 1940 and work backwards
- Find everyone in the entire extended family in every census
  - To get a complete picture of the family
  - Work yourself around brick walls
- Indexes (computer or in book form) have mistakes.
Census, 1790–1930

- What do you do when you “can’t” find the person using an index?
  - Try spelling the name a different way
  - Use “brute force” -- If you know where the person lived, read the census for that town/township/village/district, etc., page by page, line by line.
Census, 1790–1930

- Census is arranged geographically
  - By state
  - Then by county
  - Then by local jurisdiction
Census, 1790–1940

- 1870–1940: Every person listed by name
  - Name
  - Age & gender
  - Race
  - Marital Status
  - Occupation
  - Birthplace
  - 1880–1930: birthplace of parents
  - & more
Census, 1790–1940

- 1850–1860: Every free person listed by name
  - Name
  - Age & gender
  - Race
  - Marital status
  - Occupation
  - Birthplace
Census, 1790–1940

- 1850–1860 Slave Schedules
  - Name of slave owner
  - List of slaves by age and gender: no names
Census, 1790–1940

- 1790–1840: Name of head of household
  - All household members listed by gender and age categories: no names
  - Slave would be part of master’s household
Sample Census Search for an African-American Family in Autauga Co., Alabama
Sample Search: “Jese” Washington Family - beginning with 1930

  - Jese, 63
  - Ella, 58
  - Harry, 17
  - Dotty, 16
  - Betty, 15
  - Arch, 14
  - Quince, 13
  - plus Albert Walter, grandson, 14
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<th>Relation</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Race</th>
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Sample Search: Joe Washington Family – now back to 1920

- 1920: Live in Washington, Autauga County, Alabama. T625, Roll 1, E.D. 3:
  - Joe, 45
  - Ella, 40
  - Ida, 24
  - Anna, 16
  - Eddie, 15
  - Foster, 14

- Lula, 12
- William, 10
- Harry, 9
- Dollie, 8
- Bomista [?], 6
- Archie, 5
- Quincy, 3
- Albert, 4, “step son”

- Notice: Parents are 45 & 40 instead of expected 53 & 48
1920 Census Image
Sample Search: Joe Washington Family – now back to 1910

- 1910: Live in Washington, Autauga County, Alabama. T624, Roll 1, E.D. 3:
  - Joe, 36
  - Ella, 35
  - Ida L., 13
  - Clarence, 12
  - Anna, 9

- Eddie, 7
- Foster, 5
- Lula, 3
- William, 2
- Harrie, 9/12

- Note: Parents are 36 & 35 instead of the “expected” 35 & 30
Sample Search: Joe Washington Family – now back to 1900

- 1900: Live in Washington, Autauga County, Alabama. T623, Roll 1, E.D. 3:
  - Joe, Sept. 1869 (30)
  - Ella, Jan. 1878 (22)
  - Clarence, July 1898 (2)
  - Idalee, July 1897 (3)
  - George, Sept. 1899 (8/12)
Sample Search: Joe Washington Family – now back to 1890

- Very little of 1890 Census survives.
- Most destroyed as a result of a fire in Commerce Department Building in 1921.
With the information I had, I tried online indexes, but did not find him. He must be on the census somewhere. Strategies:

- Search Autauga County line by line.
- May be in a different county.
- Have to use other records to find parents & origins, or siblings….
Sample Search: Joe Washington – now back to 1880

- He should be a son in someone’s household.
- Age range is variable based on later censuses:
  - 1880: Age ? – somewhere between 5 and 13
  - 1900: Age 30 (Sept. 1869)
  - 1910: Age 36 (1874)
  - 1920: Age 45 (1875)
  - 1930: Age 63 (1867)
Joe Washington’s wife

- Autauga County Marriage Records
- Vol. 9, Page 408
- Joe Washington to Ella Livingston (1895)
- Be sure to get copy of original record; may have more information than what is online.
Joe Washington’s wife

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<tr>
<th>NAME</th>
<th>SPOUSE</th>
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</table>
Ella Livingston’s family – back to 1880

- **Issues:** We’re working with little information. Likely in Autauga County.
- **Ella’s age range is variable based on later censuses:**
  - 1880: Age ? – between 2 and 8 years old.
  - 1900: Age 33 (1878)
  - 1910: Age 35 (1875)
  - 1920: Age 40 (1880)
  - 1930: Age 58 (1872)
Ella Livingston’s family – back to 1880

- 1880: Living in Prattville, Autauga County, Alabama, T9, Roll 1, E.D. 2. Likely match:
  - Hill Livingston, age 45
  - Mary, 30
  - Melissa, 16
  - George, 12
  - Archie, 12
  - Clara, 11
  - Hilliard, 7
  - Ella, 6
  - Edgar, 3
  - Hattie, 6 months

- “Hill” is likely short for Hilliard.
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Name</th>
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<th>Residence</th>
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<td>Joe</td>
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Notes:
- All persons will be included in the enumeration who were living on the 1st day of June, 1880.
- Children born since June 1, 1880, will be included.
- Members of families who have died since June 1, 1880, will be omitted.

Enumerated by me on the 11th day of June, 1880.

Thos. W. Smith, Enumerator.
Ella Livingston’s family – back to 1870


- Where’s his wife and children?
1870 Census Image
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**Page No.** 26

**Schedule 1—Inhabitants in**

**Post Office:** [Pittsboro](#)

**State of North Carolina,** enumerated by me on the 23rd day of June, 1870.

**William B. Rhodman,** Asst. Marshal.

**Notes:**
- Inquiries numbered 1, 10, and 12 are not to be asked in respect to Inhabitants. Inquiries numbered 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, and 20 are to be answered (if at all) merely by an affirmative mark, as |.
- The name of every person whose place of abode on the first day of June, 1870, was in this family.
Ella Livingston’s family – back to 1880

- 1870: Living in Beat No. 5, Autauga County, Alabama, M593, Roll 1. Likely match:
  - Alexander, Mary, age 30
  - Alexander, Malissa, 6
  - Alexander, George, 3
  - Alexander, Arch, 3
  - Alexander, “Clarence,” 9/12 (Sept. 1869)
  - Livingston, Hilliard, age 33
Military Service Records and Military Pension Records, ca. 1775-ca. 1906

- Revolutionary War
- War of 1812
- Civil War
- Miscellaneous wars
- Indian Wars
- Spanish-American War
- Philippine Insurrection
Military Service Records

- Indexed by War, then by name
- Provides basic facts & possibly more
  - Name
  - Age
  - Location of enlistment & how long
  - Unit(s) in which served & rank(s)
  - Basic information about his service
Compiled Military Service Records

[Image of compiled military service records from Revolutionary War era]
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Service No</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
<th>Date</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>John Brown</td>
<td>Sergeant</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>1776</td>
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<tr>
<td>John Smith</td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>1778</td>
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<td>Jane Doe</td>
<td>Corporal</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>1780</td>
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<td>William Roe</td>
<td>Midshipman</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td>1782</td>
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</table>

*Note: This is a sample table from a military service record. Actual records may include more detailed information.*
Military Pension Records, ca. 1775-ca. 1916

- Indexed
  - Revolutionary War
  - War of 1812
  - “Old Wars”
  - Civil War & later

- More details about service, family members (widow and dependent children), medical condition
World War I and II Draft Registration Cards

- **World War I**: All men age 18-45 (whether or not they served)
  - Three different types of cards (information content varies)
  - Name, date & place of birth, occupation & employer, next of kin & their address, physical description

- **World War II**: 4th Registration (“old men”), age 45 & up
Immigration Records

- Ship Passenger Arrival Records, 1820–1957
- Land Border (Canada): 1895–1950s
- Land Border (Mexico): 1903–1950s
Immigration Records

- Ship Passenger Arrival Records, 1820-1957

National Archives Microfilm Publication T844, Passenger Lists of Vessels Arriving at Baltimore, Maryland, 1891-1905, Roll 31, vessel Cassel, arrived 20 Aug. 1902, Franz Polak, line 13
Immigration Records

- Land Border (Canada): 1895–1950s
- Land Border (Mexico): 1903–1950s
Naturalization Records

• The process of becoming a citizen

• Two steps:
  – Declare Intent to become a citizen (2 yrs.)
  – Petition for naturalization (3 yrs.)
Other Federal Records

- What relationship did your relatives have with the Federal Government?
  - Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen & Abandoned Lands
  - Freedman’s Savings & Trust (Freedman’s Bank)
  - Bureau of Indian Affairs
  - Southern Claims Commission
  - Postmaster
  - Other Federal Employee
  - Buy or Obtain Land from the Federal Government
State Records

- **Vital Records**
  Birth and death records kept at the state level, since the early 1900s, with copy at the county level.
County Records

- Vital records: birth, marriage, death, divorce
- Land records: deeds, mortgages, taxes
- Court records: naturalization, probate, litigation, criminal justice
- Voter registration
- Other
Libraries

- Microfilmed original records (census and more)
- Newspapers (microfilmed) for death notices, obituaries, news stories, etc.
- Books for compiled records, histories, genealogies, and more
Keep Researching

- There’s always more to learn about your family.
- Stay organized!
- Keep writing your family’s history as you go along! (Don’t wait for “someday”)
- Remember that names are not always spelled how you expect to find them.
- Different records may give conflicting information.
Thank You!

More Information

- NARA
  www.archives.gov

- NARA Genealogy
  www.archives.gov/research/genealogy/topics
Presenter didn’t get to your question?

You may email us at inquire@nara.gov