

Resources at the BHC

USE THE LIBRARY RESOURCES

Consult the BHC and genealogy consultants from the GSBC. At the Library you have access to Ancestry LE, Newspapers.com (Ridgewood News only), ProQuest Historical NJ Collection, NY Times Historical, and Heritage Quest. The BHC is dedicated to providing the tools needed to research ancestry, and we encourage you to stop by with any questions. Genealogy is like a puzzle—one gathers bits of information piece by piece. Be prepared to work patiently in stages and return to records upon the discovery of further clues.

GENEALOGY CONSULTATIONS:

- Volunteers from the Genealogical Society of Bergen County are available to help by appointment: njgsbc.org/library/gsbcc-genealogy-consultants or gsbc.queries@gmail.com

COMPUTER CLASSES:

- Computer classes in genealogy are offered at the Library, or are offered virtually. See our latest schedule at www.ridgewoodlibrary.org.

MULTIMEDIA LECTURES:

- Programs of the Genealogical Society of Bergen County are held on the 4th Monday of most months at 7pm, in the Auditorium at the Library (or may be offered virtually). To view the latest programs, go to njgsbc.org.

FREE RESEARCH WEBSITES:

- Ridgewood.CatalogAccess.com
- FamilySearch.org
- Usgenweb.org
- www.statueofliberty.org/ellis-island/
- Cyndislist.com

LOCAL HISTORY LIBRARIAN:

- Any questions? Sarah Kiefer, our in-house Local History librarian, is here to help: 201-670-5600 x2135 or skiefer@ridgewoodlibrary.org.

Our Heritage



David Bolger is internationally respected for his success in business and for his legendary philanthropic giving. Mr. Bolger's generosity has improved historic Ridgewood buildings, parks and organizations, and his support of the Ridgewood Public Library has truly enhanced our community's educational and cultural services.

The Library will always benefit from Mr. Bolger's majestic restoration of the original George L. Pease Memorial Library, which gave this Ridgewood landmark new purpose and won top historic preservation honors. Mr. Bolger's leadership gifts led to the creation of our new Heritage Center. Today we enjoy a new barrier-free main entrance, the Library colonnade, beautiful spring gardens, new seating and lighting and video security, all thanks to David Bolger's vision, kindness and generosity. To learn more about the Bolger Foundation, please go to their website: <https://thebolgerfoundation.org/>



125 North Maple Avenue
Ridgewood, NJ 07450
201-670-5600 x2135

HeritageCenter@RidgewoodLibrary.org
www.LocalHistory.RidgewoodLibrary.org

Monday - Thursday 9 am to 9 pm

Friday 9 am to 6 pm

Saturday 9 am to 5 pm

Sunday 1 pm to 5 pm

*Please check Library website for holiday closings



Getting Started



A Guide to Getting Started on Genealogical Research

Getting Started

BEGIN WITH WHAT YOU KNOW

Work from the known to the unknown, one small step at a time. Work backwards from the present, gathering facts. Never skip a generation. Remember that names, dates and places are the building blocks of compiling a family history.

CONDUCT INTERVIEWS

What do you know about your parents and grandparents? Interview your relatives. Write or talk to family members. Ask them about:

- Family names
- When they immigrated, what town they came from/lived in
- What were their dates/places of birth, marriage & death

Ask older family members specific questions about your ancestors:

- What was your grandmother’s maiden name?
- Where did she live as a child?
- What were her parents’ names?
- When did they come to New Jersey?
- Where did they go to church?
- When and where did they get married?

Any clue, no matter how small, may help your search.

TIPS ON CONDUCTING INTERVIEWS

- Think of the interview as not only an opportunity to gain knowledge on your genealogy, but also as a chance to spend time with family members.
- Make sure to ask to see photographs and memorabilia. These are a great way to open up conversations, spark memories, and provide a visual of your ancestors. Ask for permission to make copies and/or scan any documents.
- Create a list of questions, but be prepared to take the conversation in a different direction. Use the question list as a guideline, not a rigid framework.
- Ask permission to record the interview and make sure to test the equipment beforehand. Assure the interviewee that this is for informational purposes only and that it will be shared only with family, if anyone. If the person is uncomfortable with recording the interview, respect his/her request, but make sure to bring pen and paper.

Researching

CHECK FAMILY RECORDS

Some records may already be in your family homes:

- Family records/birth information
- Bible with names and births recorded
- Funeral cards and obituaries; family letters
- Photographs, stories and traditions
- Employment information
- School yearbooks; fraternal societies
- Wills and deeds
- Certificates, awards, discharges, etc.
- Books of remembrance; scrapbooks; diaries; church records; birth, marriage and death records; baptism records; confirmation/communion records

READ, READ, READ

Learn the history and geography of the area where your ancestors lived. Remember that country boundaries may have changed so be sure to consult a good atlas and local histories. You can consult the section “Geography: Gazetteers, Maps & Atlases” (910-917) in the BHC for these research materials. If you’re just getting started researching your family history, you should definitely begin with a genealogy “how to” book. See reference books in the BHC (929), which include general guides; geographical resources; and family materials. Books which may be borrowed are in the BHC Circulating Collection, located right outside the room.

GENEALOGY SOCIETIES

By joining local genealogy societies, you are opening yourself up to a variety of resources. By connecting with others who share an interest in ancestry, you can share information on the latest products, news and educational opportunities. You gain access to societies’ genealogy materials and knowledge base; have the chance to learn different software programs; gain insight on the ins and outs of effective research; and get answers to brick wall questions. You can locate your local societies by visiting Cyndi’s List (cyndislist.com/societies), which has over 3,000 groups, indexed alphabetically by name of the society.

Methodologies

ORGANIZE

Place the information in a system that is comfortable for you: notebooks, genealogy charts, or computer programs. Research logs are effective to maintain and track research. Information to record in your log includes:

- Date of research (all 4 digits of the year)
- Repository (archive, library, cemetery, vital record office)
- Call number (manuscript number, library call number, or microfilm number)
- Description of source
- Comments, notes, or results
- Miscellaneous acts: time period, jurisdiction, surnames, condition of source, ISBN

BASIC METHODOLOGIES

- Write down what you find and where you found it. Which online databases? Which books? What volume and page number? Which microfilm reel? Employ standard citation formation. The citation should reflect the type of document, such as a book; oral history; census record, etc.
- Always record the sources you’ve searched and when you searched them, even if the results are negative. Organize this research log by family, then geographic area.
- Search every possible surname spelling, including phonetic and typographic errors. Remember, the spelling of many family names was not standardized until the 19th century.
- Use all record types: vital records, censuses, city directories, naturalization records, passenger lists, cemetery records, wills, land records, etc.

