

22 Steps in Researching Your Family Tree

'Discovering Your Past Blog Series'

Strategies & Tips - Obtaining Vital Records

Strategies that can be helpful when it comes to obtaining and verifying vital records and obituaries:

- **Begin with what you know:** Start your search with the information you already have, such as your ancestors' names, dates of birth, and locations. This can help you identify potential sources of records and cross-reference information.
- **Use online databases:** Many online databases, such as Ancestry.ca, GenealogyBank, and FamilySearch, offer access to a wide range of records, including vital records and obituaries. These databases can be searched by name, location, and other criteria to help you locate the records you need.
- **Visit local archives and courthouses:** Not all records are available online, and you may need to visit local archives and courthouses to obtain certain records. Be sure to check the hours of operation, any restrictions, and whether an appointment is required.
- **Use multiple sources:** Cross-referencing information from multiple sources can help you verify that the records you find are accurate and relevant to your research. For example, you may use census records, city directories, and obituaries to confirm details about a person's life.
- **Seek out help from professionals:** If you're struggling to locate records or verify information, consider seeking help from a professional genealogist or librarian. They may be able to offer guidance on where to look for records and how to interpret them.
- **Be patient and persistent:** Obtaining and verifying records can be a time-consuming process, and it's essential to be patient and persistent in your search. It may take several attempts to locate the records you need, but the effort is well worth it for the valuable insights and connections you can gain.

10 Tips for Obtaining and Verifying Vital Records and Obituaries

- **Be organized:** Keep track of the records you have located and the ones you still need to find. Make notes on where you found each record and what information it contains.
- **Be thorough:** Don't rely solely on one source of information. Use multiple sources to cross-check information and confirm its accuracy.
- **Understand privacy laws:** Be aware of the privacy laws that may affect your ability to access certain records. Birth and death records, for example, are typically restricted to close family members or with a court order.
- **Be prepared to pay fees:** Some websites or archives may require a fee for access to certain records or services. Be prepared to pay these fees if necessary.
- **Be patient:** Obtaining and verifying records can take time, especially if the records are not available online. Be patient and persistent in your search.
- **Keep an open mind:** Be prepared to uncover information that may contradict what you already know or believe about your ancestors. Keep an open mind and be willing to revise your understanding of your family history based on new information.
- **Be respectful:** When visiting archives or courthouses, be respectful of the staff and any rules or procedures they have in place. Remember that they are there to help you and to protect the records in their care.
- **Document your sources:** Keep careful records of where you found each piece of information. This will help you track your progress and make it easier to cite your sources later on.
- **Don't overlook obituaries:** Obituaries can be a valuable source of information, including the names and relationships of family members, birth and death dates, and even details about a person's life and personality.
- **Don't give up:** Genealogical research can be challenging, but don't give up if you hit a dead end or can't find the records you need. Take a break if you need to, but then come back to your research with fresh eyes and renewed determination.