

Odds and Ends Thoughts: These were collected from Ramblers researchers. Many come from our mistakes or are that one thing we wish we had done or known earlier.

In the Beginning:

1. Limit the number of families/persons you are researching. You can expand after you learn a little more.
2. Start with yourself and go back - do not try to jump back to 1800. Prove each step along the way so you do not spend time and \$\$\$ finding out about someone else's history.
3. Start with WHAT you know and WHO you know. Find as many living relatives and interview them. Be ready when you call or visit. Have sheets and charts to allow you to follow the flow. Ask for any items of family history they may have- Bibles, photos, scrapbooks, memorial service items, obits, marriage announcements, etc. Do a follow up call. You jogged their memory and more will come through with a little time to process.
4. Have a digital camera, smart phone, IPAD etc. ready to copy items you find on the go.
5. Spelling variations of names- look at your own junk mail to see some of these
6. Find/name as many siblings of your direct ancestors as this could help you find the next ancestor. ie Your direct ancestor might not have had a death certificate but his brother might have. Naming patterns exist that become more obvious. Maybe granddad lived in the household of one of the siblings so is buried in that home place.

Documentation

7. Document your source for any data. Includes who you interviewed and when.
8. Do not re read every book! Make a research log that has where you have already looked.
9. Make a copy of the Title page of each book sourced or write on documents in pencil the source (courthouses, book, page) Also note library.

Some things about time:

10. Georgian Calendar - 1756
11. Note what month the census was taken as this could help determine a person's age.
12. Create a timeline/chronological order of what you know about the person. No need looking at records if you have proof he died five years earlier.
13. For some records ie military look at the person's age - do the records make sense? A five year old would not be a soldier and neither would a 90 year old.
14. Probate can take over a decade- keep looking!

Getting Through a Brick Wall

15. Check surrounding counties and neighbors. People traveled in packs. County lines changed more often than you think. The ancestor did not move but the name of his location changed.
16. Research neighbors and siblings on the census- especially those with odd names
17. Look for obituaries in newspapers. Older and smaller towns often included a wealth of information.
18. Remember to use state archives if possible. They have items unique to their area.
19. Ask yourself questions - what exactly are you looking for?
20. Go back through your documents/papers as you may have missed something.

Clues in Military Resources

21. Pension applications (American Revolution, Civil War, Mexican-American War, etc)
22. Draft Registrations for WWI have many birthdates and places for those born pre 1900s.
23. Widow's Pensions

Miscellaneous

24. The port of entry for a person/family will be the first port where the ship touched American soil, not where they got off the boat!!
25. Have a plan before you go to a library or an Archives. Look up call numbers before you go to save time. Each library catalog is different and you just must experiment. Also check for any library closure dates etc. No need to go there if they are closed for repairs. Check to see if books/documents must be preordered- this happens in archives with rare/little used documents that are stored elsewhere.
26. Learn something about the local history of the area your ancestor lived. Disasters, epidemics, cultural changes may have accounted for their movements.
26. Look at migration patterns. Clues to where they may have come from.
27. Be aware of changing boundary lines between states and counties.
28. Probate records can be years after a person's death.
29. In burned counties look for re-recorded records.