

Trilogy at Vistancia Genealogy Club

Member Handbook



“Preserving the Past — Inspiring the Future.”

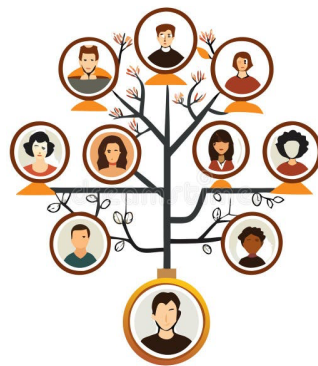
<https://www.tvagenealogy.club>

Welcome to the Trilogy Genealogy Club

The Trilogy Genealogy Club (TGC) is truly special. There are very few people like us, each driven by a passion to explore both our past and our future. We look back centuries to uncover the lives of our ancestors, and we look forward to considering the generations to come. We dedicate a meaningful portion of our lives to discovering, exploring, sharing, and preserving the family stories that have become history.

At any moment, we find ourselves weaving together the bold strokes of history with the intimate details of our ancestors' lives. The great forces shaping American society also shaped their lives: Old World religious and political upheavals, the Jamestown and Plymouth colonies, slavery, the Declaration of Independence, and the Revolutionary War. The Louisiana Purchase, Manifest Destiny, Seneca Falls, the Trail of Tears, the Civil War, Reconstruction, and the Black Codes. Yet we find great value in our forebears' personal decisions. Their choices amid these great events shaped not only their lives, but ours.

Discovering new biographical information about a great-great-grandmother is rewarding — but extraordinary insight comes when you understand *why* she made certain choices. Not as notes on a page, but as living moments of courage, joy, sorrow, ambition, or fear. In that moment, you stop... catch your breath... and feel the fullness of her life. Her decisions became the foundation stones on which you stand, shaping who you are and your place in today's world.



Our History

Founded in 2008 by **Mike O'Beirne**, TGC has been in continuous operation since that time. The club is dedicated to helping members advance their family history using a variety of approaches — from traditional research and documentation to modern tools such as DNA analysis, digital archives, and storytelling.

TGC provides a supportive, friendly environment where every member—from beginner to advanced genealogist—can learn, grow, and share. Members benefit from educational programs, shared resources, and the camaraderie of others who understand the joy of discovery.

General Information

- **Regular meetings:** First Monday of each month, October through May.
- **Summer Sessions:** June through September, casual hands-on learning for member questions.
- **Location:** Meetings are held from 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. at the Center for Higher Learning, Kiva Club.
- **Annual dues:** \$10, which help fund programs, speakers, and resources.
- **Website:** <https://www.tvagenealogy.club>
- **Email:** tvagenealogyclub@gmail.com

Our Mission and Vision

Our mission is to provide a structured and supportive environment for genealogy and family history research. Through monthly meetings, hands-on workshops, online resources, and a monthly newsletter, we help members build, refine, and share their family trees and histories.

Our vision is for every member to feel empowered to explore their ancestry—to discover who their ancestors were, where they came from, what their world was like, and how they faced life's challenges. We believe genealogy thrives through **curiosity, collaboration, and community**, and we are committed to ensuring that each member finds both inspiration and success in their research.

Whether it's mastering emerging technologies such as **AI, DNA testing, and online archives** or organizing your research systems, we are all both **teachers and students** here.

Looking Forward

Our vision is not limited to the "past lane." The future of genealogy needs our voices. Think ahead 100 years: someone will want to know our stories and the stories of our ancestors that we've captured. Our research isn't just about dates and documents — it's about preserving the human stories that shaped America and our lives.

As genealogists, we are not just researchers; we **are legacy builders**. Every family story we uncover, every connection we make, adds to the tapestry of human history. TGC provides the means, the tools, and the community to do so. From historical research to storytelling to DNA testing, **Trilogy Genealogy Club is here to support you in your genealogy journey**

The Value of Your Membership

Your annual membership dues provide tremendous value and help the club continue its mission of education, support, and community connection.

As a TGC member, you enjoy:

- Access to our **website** and **E-Library**, containing numerous genealogical references.
- **Monthly newsletter** with research tips, updates, and inspiration.
- **Educational presentations** and **guest speakers** with specialized expertise.
- **Meeting handouts**, tools, and guides from our programs.
- **Peer support** for ongoing research and problem-solving.
- **Special programs and workshops** to build research skills.
- Access to our **TGC YouTube channel**, with how-to videos on essential genealogy tools.
- Opportunities to **share your discoveries and family stories** with fellow members.

Your membership not only supports club operations – it strengthens a community where history is preserved, connections are made, and every story matters.



“1890 Census – Gone but Not Forgotten”

Website

<https://www.tvagenealogy.club>

The TGC website is a treasure trove of resources to help you with your genealogy research. Here's how you can make the most of it:

Why use the website:

- Access meeting presentations and handouts anytime
- Explore the E-Library with genealogical references and research guides
- Watch club-produced YouTube videos for tutorials and tips
- Connect with members and learn from their shared experiences
- Stay updated on club news, events, and volunteer opportunities

How to Use the Website Effectively:

1. **Start with the Home Page** – Latest news, announcements, and links to resources.
2. **Check the Meeting Materials** – Download handouts from past meetings to reinforce your learning.
3. **Visit the E-Library** – Search for guides, articles, and reference materials to support your research.
4. **Watch Tutorials & Videos** – Learn step-by-step methods for researching records, organizing your family tree, or using DNA testing.
5. **Use Contact & Support Links** – Reach out to fellow members or club officers if you need guidance or have questions.

Tip: *Bookmark the website and check it regularly! New content and updates are added throughout the year.*



Genealogy Research OneNote Notebook (GRON)

TGC member and former President, **Vicki Reisenfeld**, has created and maintains a fantastic Microsoft OneNote database to support your genealogy research.

GRON is an exclusive benefit for TGC members and requires website login credentials.

The **GRON (Genealogy Research OneNote Notebook)** contains over 3,000 pages covering a wide range of topics, including:

- Beginner tips & tricks
- How-to articles and videos
- Overcoming research “brick walls”
- Writing your family history
- Technology tools for genealogy
- Ethnic- and time-specific research (Jewish, Native American, Mayflower, etc.)
- Where to find records: websites, archives, publications
- Coverage by genealogy topic, record type, all 50 US states, and many foreign countries

About OneNote:

- OneNote is a digital program from Microsoft that organizes data and allows sharing between users.
- The GRON file is stored on Microsoft OneDrive, so it's available anywhere you have internet access.
- OneNote is compatible with PCs, Macs, laptops, desktops, tablets, and phones.
- If you have a Microsoft Office subscription, you already have OneNote and can access GRON.

Accessing GRON:

1. Log in to the **TGC website** using your member credentials.
2. Navigate to the **Club E-Library**.
3. Click the **Genealogy Research OneNote Notebook (GRON)** link to open it in OneNote.

Tip: GRON is a living resource — regularly updated by Vicki — so check back often for new tips, articles, and research tools.

YouTube Channel

Our TGC YouTube channel is a member-focused resource designed to provide how-to video guidance on many of the club's most important tools and research techniques.

Why use the YouTube channel:

- Learn step-by-step methods for genealogy research, using club tools and resources
- Watch tutorials organized into topic-based playlists
- Access guidance that complements the website, GRON, and meeting materials
- Check back regularly — new videos are added continuously

How to Use the Channel:

1. Click the playlist titles on the website (**blue underlined links**) to go directly to the TGC YouTube channel.
2. Browse playlists by topic — each playlist contains multiple videos relevant to that area.
3. Once on YouTube, you may need to sign in to your Google account to view the videos.
4. Watch tutorials at your own pace, pause, rewind, and revisit videos as needed.

Tip: The video tutorials are designed to help you make the most of your genealogical tools and enhance your research skills.



HOW TO BEGIN YOUR FAMILY HISTORY RESEARCH

Begin your family history research by recording what you know, gathering documentation, and utilizing online and local resources to build your family tree.

Record What You Know

Start by documenting your own information and that of your parents and grandparents. Include names, birth, marriage, and death dates.

Use an ancestor (pedigree) chart or genealogy software to organize this information.

Create a Family Tree

You can build your family tree online using websites such as **Ancestry**, **MyHeritage**, or **FamilySearch**. If you prefer a non-digital tree, that's fine too, just be sure to scan and save your documents digitally for preservation.

You can also use genealogy software like **Family Tree Maker** or **Legacy Family Tree**. Many of these programs sync with the major websites so you can access hints and records.

Choose the option that best fits your research goals, storage preferences, and level of control.

***Tip:** Always keep multiple backups – export a GEDCOM file regularly and store copies in the cloud, on external drives, flash drives, genealogy software, or as printed charts and binders.*

Follow Best Practices

- List women by their **maiden names**.
- Enter dates as **day month year** (example 22 May 1804).
- Enter place names from smallest jurisdiction to largest: *Long Beach, Los Angeles, California, USA*. Spell out state names; do not abbreviate.
- Record **source citations** for all records to maintain accuracy and credibility.

Gather Documentation

Collect **vital records**, including birth, marriage, and death certificates. Look for letters, photographs (label them), and other documents, such as military records, immigration documents, deeds, or employment records that provide context about your ancestors.

Accurate documentation is crucial to ensure the reliability of your research.

Talk to Relatives

Prepare your questions ahead of time. Ask family members to share stories, traditions, and any existing records or photos. Take photos of heirlooms and record information about each item's history.

Set Realistic Goals

Begin with manageable projects, such as completing a three or four-generation ancestor chart. Expanding gradually helps you stay focused and avoid being overwhelmed.

Identify Your Questions and Make a Research Plan

Why create a research plan? Online searches can generate hundreds of results. A **research plan** helps you focus on the most relevant record collections and use your time efficiently.

Organize Your Findings

Keep a **research log** to track what you've searched and what you've found.

Use charts, spreadsheets, or genealogy software to keep your research organized and accessible.

Online Resources

Explore online genealogy platforms such as **Ancestry or FamilySearch**. These sites provide record databases, family tree tools, and hints connecting you to potential relatives.

***Tip:** Always verify records and family connections before adding them to your tree - online hints and trees are not always accurate.*

Local Resources

Visit or contact county courthouses, county recorders, libraries, historical societies, state archives, or churches for records not available online. Some libraries have genealogy sections with resources and knowledgeable staff who can assist you.

***Tip:** Most U.S. states did not keep official birth and death records until 1890-1915.*

Deeds and wills are usually housed in county courthouses, though earlier records may be at the state archives or state historical society. Many have been digitized and are available online.



***“You know you're a genealogist
if you know more about the past than the present.”***

TAKING YOUR FAMILY HISTORY RESEARCH TO THE NEXT LEVEL

Strengthen Your Foundation

Even if you've been researching for a while—or have been handed a family tree from relatives—it's important to **verify all information**. Mistakes happen, and old records may have been copied without proper documentation. Take time to confirm names, dates, and relationships using original or high-quality sources.

- Cite every source completely and consistently.
- Record both what you find **and** what you searched but didn't find.
- Look for **multiple records** that confirm the same fact.

The Genealogical Research Process (GRP)

Professional genealogists follow a five-step process to ensure accuracy and focus.

1. **Define a research question**
Identify a specific goal such as: *Who were the parents of Sarah Payne born about 1820 in Virginia?*
2. **Review what you already know**
Summarize prior research, identify gaps, and note conflicting information.
3. **Identify and locate sources**
Go beyond vital records—explore deeds, probate, court, land, tax, and military records.
4. **Analyze and correlate evidence**
Compare facts from different sources using timelines, maps, and charts.
5. **Draw conclusions and document findings**
Write a short proof summary explaining your reasoning and cite every source.

Tip: *Working from a specific question keeps research manageable and helps you avoid “chasing hints.”*

The Genealogical Proof Standard (GPS)

The GPS is the foundation for credible genealogical conclusions. Use it to evaluate your own work and information shared by others.

1. **Reasonably exhaustive research** – Check a variety of sources.
2. **Complete and accurate citations** – Document where every fact came from.
3. **Thorough analysis and correlation** – Compare data to identify patterns or inconsistencies.
4. **Resolution of conflicting evidence** – Explain how you resolved discrepancies.
5. **Written conclusion** – Summarize your findings clearly and logically.

Tip: *If you can explain and defend your conclusion with sources and logic, you've met the GPS.*

Evaluate and Interpret Evidence

As you move forward, focus on the *quality* of your sources, not just quantity.

- **Original vs. Derivative Sources:** Use the record closest to the event when possible.
- **Primary vs. Secondary Information:** Primary comes from someone with firsthand knowledge.
- **Direct vs. Indirect Evidence:** Combine indirect clues to form strong conclusions.

Create **timelines** and **correlation tables** to organize your findings and spot contradictions.

Use DNA as a Research Tool

DNA testing can support or challenge your documentary research and help identify unknown ancestors.

- Choose an autosomal DNA test (Ancestry, MyHeritage, or FamilyTreeDNA) for broad cousin matches.
- Use DNA results to **confirm family lines** or **resolve relationship questions**.
- Combine DNA evidence with traditional records—DNA alone rarely proves relationships without documentation.
- Keep notes on matches, shared segments, and any correspondence with genetic cousins.

Tip: Always get consent before testing others and respect privacy when sharing results.

Expand Your Research Horizons

Intermediate researchers look beyond basic vital records to find stories and connections.

- Explore **land, probate, and court records** for details on family relationships.
- Use **city directories, newspapers, and tax lists** to track people between censuses.
- Study **migration patterns** and **neighboring families** to understand movements and connections.
- Practice **FAN research** (Friends, Associates, Neighbors) — people often moved and intermarried within these circles.

Tip: Context is key. Learning about the time and place helps you interpret your ancestors' choices and records.

Organize, Write, and Share

Keep your research well-documented and easy to update.

- Maintain a **research log** noting sources searched and outcomes.
- Write **brief summaries or proof statements** for each ancestor.
- Store digital copies securely and back them up in more than one place.
- Consider writing a **family history book, biographical sketches, or ancestor stories** to preserve your work for future generations. Even short written pieces add valuable context and personality to your research.

A Few Resources to Help with Your Family History Research

Organizations, Societies & Local Resources

Trilogy Genealogy Club (TGC) – <https://www.tvagenealogy.club>

Trilogy at Vistancia's resident genealogy club, supporting research through meetings, education, and community.

West Valley Genealogical Society (WVGS) – <https://azwvgs.org>

Arizona-based society offering classes, library resources, and local research help.

National Genealogical Society (NGS) – <https://www.ngsgenealogy.org>

National membership organization promoting genealogy education, publications, and research standards.

Mesa, Arizona FamilySearch Center – https://www.familysearch.org/en/centers/mesa_arizona

One of the largest FamilySearch Centers in the U.S., offering free access to premium genealogy databases, microfilm, and staff assistance.

Major Genealogy Research Sites, and Directories

Ancestry – <https://www.ancestry.com>.

Subscription site with extensive historical records, family trees, and DNA testing.

FamilySearch – <https://www.familysearch.org>

Free worldwide genealogy records, trees, and indexing projects.

MyHeritage – <https://www.myheritage.com>

Global genealogy platform offering family trees, DNA testing, and records.

The Family History Guide – <https://thefhguide.com>

Free online learning resource that teaches genealogy step-by-step.

National Archives – Ancestor Charts & Forms –

<https://www.archives.gov/research/genealogy/charts-forms>

The U.S. government's repository for federal records, including military, immigration, census documents, and free printable charts and forms for family research.

Bureau of Land Management (GLO Records) – <https://glorerecords.blm.gov>

Search federal land patents and homestead records.

Fold3 – <https://www.fold3.com>

Military records site (operated by Ancestry) focused on U.S. service documents.

Newspapers.com – <https://www.newspapers.com>

Digitized historical newspapers — great for obituaries and local stories.

Find a Grave – <https://www.findagrave.com>

Free database of cemetery records and photos contributed by volunteers.

American Ancestors – Research Plan Template – <https://www.americanancestors.org/tools/research-templates>

Downloadable forms for creating and organizing a genealogy research plan.

Creating a Genealogy Research Plan Like a Detective – <https://www.thoughtco.com/how-to-develop-genealogy-research-plan-1421685>

A step-by-step guide showing how to treat genealogy research like an investigation—defining your question, identifying key records, developing a plan, and tracking your results.

DNA Painter – <https://dnapainter.com>

Visual tool to map and analyze your DNA matches.

Your DNA Guide – <https://www.yourdnaguide.com>

Education and tools to help interpret DNA results.

Cyndi's List – <https://www.cyndislist.com>

Massive, categorized index of online genealogy resources, including charts, forms, and research logs.

Genealogy Software

Family Tree Maker – <https://www.mackiev.com/ftm>

A popular genealogy software for building and syncing trees with Ancestry.

Legacy Family Tree – <https://legacyfamilytree.com>

Desktop software with tree management tools and free educational webinars.

Books

Evidence Explained: Citing History Sources from Artifacts to Cyberspace by Elizabeth Shown Mills

The standard reference for understanding, analyzing, and citing genealogical evidence.

Genealogy Standards by Board for Certification of Genealogists (BCG)

Outlines the principles and standards for reliable genealogical research and documentation.

Mastering Genealogical Documentation by Thomas W. Jones

A practical guide to writing clear, consistent citations for all types of genealogy sources.

The Source: A Guidebook to American Genealogy edited by Loretto Dennis Szucs and Sandra Hargreaves Luebking

Comprehensive overview of American record types and research techniques.

Research Like a Pro with DNA: A Genealogist's Guide to Finding and Confirming Ancestors with DNA Evidence by Diana Elder, Nicole Dyer, and Robin Wirthlin

Explains how to combine documentary and DNA evidence to confirm relationships and break brick walls.

Questions?

Email us at tvagenealogyclub@gmail.com

Notes:

THIS HANDBOOK HAS BEEN COMPILED BY THE
TGC BOARD AS A QUICK-START REFERENCE GUIDE TO
SUPPORT YOUR FAMILY HISTORY
RESEARCH PROJECTS.

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