

Principles for Beginning Genealogy

With Tom Jones, Ph.D., CG, CGL, FASG, FUGA, FNGS



Step 1: Start with a Focused Goal

Without a focused goal, your research can become scattered and disorganized.

Genealogical research goals are typically of two varieties:

1. Identity—the research is trying to determine who, among several candidates, was your known ancestor.
2. Relationship—who was the parent, wife, child, etc., of your known ancestor.

Be specific in identifying the ancestor you seek.



Step 2: Search Broadly

Performing a broad search for records of your ancestor is critical to the process. A broad search includes searching broadly in time, location, and associates.

Proprietor Name	% of Share	Per Annum	Number of Shares	Value
Jones Mason	100	3/10	10	30
John Little	100	1/2	10	50
John Moore	50	1/2	11-13	40
Thomas Moore & Co. Trustees	50	1/2	4-8	0
Ben. Hays & Co. Little	70	-	5-10	10

Step 3: Understand the Records

If we don't understand the records, we won't get all the information from them that we need to answer our research goal.

- Know why a document was created.
- Follow document creation processes from beginning to end.
- Note differences in records. Is there something that appears in your ancestor's record that is different than the records of others?

Step 4: Correlate the Evidence

See what the similarities and differences are. Those similarities and differences can be very informative to tell you about who your ancestors are.

Step 5: Write Down Results

In this process, we have discovered information that no other living person knows. We have an obligation to our family and other researchers to share that knowledge.

In recording your research, there are two standards to keep in mind:

1. Document so that another researcher will not have to redo your work.
2. Do not add someone to your family tree who should not be there.



Conclusion

This course is a truncated version of a longer course titled Inferential Genealogy. In the full course you will be able to learn from Tom by completing three cases. Tom is your coach through each case, and you will be able to practice all of the concepts presented in this video. View Inferential Genealogy in the research courses on familysearch.org.