



Genealogy

Clan Strachan Society

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Introduction to Genealogy

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Genealogy has been considered the poor step-child of history for generations. The main reason for this opinion is some genealogists throughout history have not been very concerned with accuracy of their data.

Many were too quick to use assumptions and the result has been not only a lack of credibility with historians, but many false genealogies have been printed and continue to show up in various works as being credible.

The first genealogist to bridge this dilemma was the late New Englander Donald Lines Jacobus. Jacobus started and edited *The American Genealogist*, as well as several multi volume books on New England genealogy. He emphasized the importance of having documented sources. If there are no valid sources, don't assume any. Jacobus brought credibility to the profession and hobby.

Clan Strachan has adopted this attitude of documenting one's genealogy. Family tradition is fine for starters, but don't believe it without proving or disproving the

story/stories. Some traditions may be 90% fact, while another may be only 10%. I have several family members who aren't too pleased with me because I've disproved some sacred family traditions. In compiling one's family history include the tradition, but also include what is factual or what is not, backed up with sources. For without documented sources for one's family history or genealogy, it is just myth!

Beginning research

To begin compiling one's family history, one must begin with one's self. Gather together birth and marriage certificates. Include military documents such as DD-214 and school diplomas. These documents are considered "**primary**" sources, and whenever possible should be used to gather data from. Another primary source is census records, wills, and probate records.

Another type of record is called "**secondary**," which are published books, death certificates and records found in the family Bible. These records have data that is recorded after the fact. Usually accurate, but another source is

good to compare with. Most of one's collecting of data should be from one of these two groups.

When using published books, make sure there is documentation.

A third group is data found on tombstones, family traditions, family papers, and personal memories (like family traditions: 90% fact, or 10%), etc. These are the last level of acceptable sources.

Once data for oneself is gathered, advance backward to one's parents, grandparents, great-grandparents, and so forth. Prove each generation's data with documented sources.

Most important is not to wait until it is convenient to get information from elderly relations. Each passing second may be their last. When they are gone, that memory and information those memories contain are gone forever!