

Resource Documentation: Source Citation

(Who, What, When, Where, Why, and How)

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A good genealogy or family history researcher will give credibility to their work when they remember to follow one simple rule: **Document your sources!** Not only should you document your sources – as you conduct your research, but also record the pertinent analysis you have made of those historical documents. Include in your documentation the reason you believe the information and your conclusions are correct.

Facts about a source that you might use for a complete, meaningful citation:

1. Where you found it
2. Condition of the record
3. Legibility of the record
4. Supplier of the information
5. His or her reliability
6. Recorder of the information
7. His or her reliability
8. All dates in the record
9. All places in the record
10. All names in the record
11. Your interpretation of the record
12. Anything significant in the record

Other elements to include in notes:

1. Author's name (and editor and compiler, if appropriate)
2. Type of record
3. Institution authoring, collecting, compiling, publishing, or holding the original
4. Title of book, journal, microfilm, or CD-ROM
5. Volume and number for a journal
6. City of publication (and state, if not obvious)
7. Name of publisher
8. Year of publication
9. Month and year for a journal

10. Page number, frame number for microfilm of loose papers, column number on newspapers
11. Microfilm institution, series number or name, roll number, item number
12. For census: state, county, township, post office, enumeration district, supervisor's district, all page numbers, dwelling and family numbers, line number
13. Date of record
14. Condition of record
15. Location of record
16. Location of record if not widely available.

CITATION SOURCES

Chicago Manual of Style (For Authors, Editors, and Copywriters). Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 15th edition, 2003.

Lackey, Richard S. *Cite Your Sources: A Manual for Documenting Family Histories and Genealogical Records*. Jackson, Mississippi: University Press of Mississippi, 1985.

Mills, Elizabeth Shown. *Evidence: Citation & Analysis for the Family Historian*. Baltimore, Maryland: Genealogical Publishing Company, 1997.

Mills, Elizabeth Shown. *Evidence Explained: Citing History Sources From Artifacts to Cyberspace*. Baltimore, Maryland: Genealogical Publishing Company, 2nd edition, 2009.

Mills, Elizabeth Shown. *Professional Genealogy: A Manual for Researchers, Writers, Editors, Lecturers, and Librarians*. Baltimore, Maryland: Genealogical Publishing Company, 2001.

Silicon Valley PAF Users Group. *PAF Documentation Guidelines*. Silicon Valley PAF Users Group, 2000.

Turabian, Kate L. *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 7th edition. 2007.

GENERAL RULES FOR JUDGING THE RELIABILITY OF GENEALOGICAL EVIDENCE

<i>Class or Category</i>	<i>Source of Evidence</i>	<i>Type of Evidence</i>	<i>Rating of the Evidence</i>
1 st	Testimony of Witnesses: Evidence from a witness who has personal knowledge of the facts sought to be proven. An “eye witness.”	Testimonial: Primary Evidence	Excellent – depending on the competency and credibility of the witness
2 nd	Official records, such as vital, land, probate, and other court records	Secondary Evidence	Excellent – but still hearsay. Nevertheless, apt to be correct in most cases
3 rd	Testimony of Witnesses: Evidence from a witness who does not know the facts from his own personal knowledge. (Testimonial family declarations)	Testimonial: Secondary Evidence	Generally reliable, but still hearsay. In isolated cases more reliable than Class 2.
4 th	Private records, such as church, corporation, and other business records.	Secondary Evidence	Reliability varies greatly, but generally dependable.
5 th	Family records: Diaries, journals, letters, Bible records, and any other records completed by a member of a family. (Documentary family declarations)	Secondary Evidence	Reliability varies from poor to reliable. If it is a contemporary record made by one having personal knowledge, rate it excellent.
6 th	Newspaper files: Contemporary accounts of births, marriages, and deaths.	Secondary Evidence	Generally reliable. The hazard here is the informant and printers’ errors.
7 th	Family genealogies: Printed and manuscript works	Secondary Evidence	Poor to reliable. The test is who compiled the work and when, and from what sources.
8 th	General printed works: County and other local histories. Newspaper accounts: Obituaries, biographies, genealogies that are not contemporary accounts	Secondary Evidence	Fair. Often unreliable, but there are some excellent local histories. Judge each on its merits.
9 th	Traditions: Stories or information presumably passed from one generation to another.	Secondary Evidence	Unreliable. It is necessary to search additional sources.
10 th	Folklore: Legends, stories, and other information not originating in the family.	Secondary Evidence	Very unreliable.

Documentation Guidelines for Birth, Marriage, and Death Records

Birth Record	Marriage Record	Death Record
Date of Search	Date of Search	Date of Search
Place of Search	Place of Search	Place of Search
Film or Record Call #	Film or Record Call #	Film or Record Call #
Legibility of Record (excellent, good, fair, poor)	Legibility of Record (excellent, good, fair, poor)	Legibility of Record (excellent, good, fair, poor)
Announcement, certificate, hospital, newspaper notice, baptism, other	Application, banns, bond, certificate, consent notice, intention, newspaper notice	Burial, certificate, headstone, mortuary, obituary, sexton, other
Date	Proclamation, register entry, return, index, other	Date
Place recorded, Book #, Page #	Date	Place recorded, Book #, Page #
Name, sex, legitimate, multiple	Place recorded, Book #, Page #	Name
Name	Groom	Age (years, months, days)
Stillborn	Age	Residence
Birth date	Birth date	Date of death
Birthplace	Birthplace	Time of death
Time of birth	Residence	Cause of death
Attending physician or midwife	Occupation	Place of death
Name of father	Marriage #, Single, Widowed, Divorced	Length of time at place of death
Address	Name of father	Attending physician
Age at last birthday	Birthplace	Address of physician
Birthplace	Occupation	Sex
Occupation	Maiden name of mother	Single, married, widowed, divorced
Maiden name of mother	Birthplace	Name of spouse
Age at last birthday	Occupation	Date of birth
Birthplace	Bride	Birthplace
Occupation	Age	Name of father
Number of children born to this mother	Birth date	Birthplace
Number of children now living	Birthplace	Maiden name of mother
Informant	Residence	Birthplace
Address	Occupation	Occupation
Date of baptism	Marriage #, Single, Widowed, Divorced	Name of employer
Place of baptism	Name of father	Informant
Sponsors	Birthplace	Address of informant
Other information	Occupation	Place of burial (including lot and block)
	Name of mother	Mortician
	Birthplace	Address of mortician
	Occupation	Service
	Bondsmen	Date
	Consent given by	Hour
	Married by	Other information
	Witness	Obituary extract: survived by (name, relationship, location); predeceased by (name, relationship)
	Other information	

Additional Documentation Guidelines

Documentation Source A	Documentation Source B
Event Year	Source Title
Event	Author
Foreign Country	Publication information Copyright date
State/Shire	Source call number
County	Repository address, telephone number, or person
Town/Parish:	Individual reference (certificate number, volume, page number)
Title of Source	Date of entry
Author	Actual Text (Abstract/Extract/Transcript/Scanned Image)
Publisher	Comments (Evaluation of material)
Copyright Date	
Volume, Folio, or Edition	
Page number, house or line number	
Repository address or person	
Call number	
Item number	
Actual Text (Abstract/Extract/Transcript/Scanned Image)	
Comments (Evaluation of material)	