

Creating a Genealogy To-Go Bag

By Carolyn H. Brown

What you take is determined by:

- Where you are going?
- How long you will be gone?
- What you will be doing?
- How much space you have for extras?



Essential Small Items

- Mechanical pencils & extra leads
- Pen & highlighter
- Small stapler & extra staples
- 6" ruler
- Paperclips & small snap clips
- Small scissors
- Calculator & magnifying glass
- Pad of Post-It Notes & place tabs

Pack all of this in a Ziplock plastic bag, or better yet, the bag pillowcases come in. They are much better constructed and will last for a very long time.

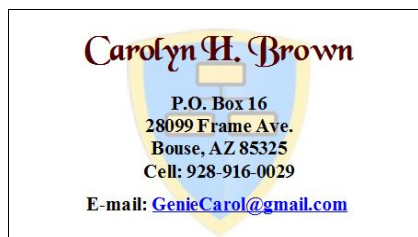
Prepare Before You Go

Using the library's online catalog print the list of books & films you plan to search. Make sure you have the film or book notes for each item. Organize the lists by state/county and surname.

Never take original documents with you. If you must take a document, make sure it is a copy.

Packing for a Day in the Library

Take a large canvas zipper bag with your ID tag on it. Family Search has created a great canvas bag that works well, or you can use a small roller bag. Pack light by taking only your cell phone, wallet, ID card, money in small bills for change, one credit card, medical cards, a flash drive, and the essentials bag discussed above. Create your own business cards with the surname you are researching on the back. See sample below.



<i>RESEARCHING:</i>			
Bartmess	Clayton	Hampton	Ore
Boatfield	Conn	Haines	Parcher
Boice/Buys	Cox	Hutchinson	Parks
Brown	Creasey	Martin	Smittkamp
Bugg	Dowdy	Mosteller	Spraggins
Bullifant	Gardner	Nance	Turner
Churchill	Gould	Nay	Walker

Notebook Items

Most of us like to carry a notebook of some fashion. Prepare the top sheet with your name, contact information and a list of your surnames. Leave the notebook open on the table, so anyone walking by can read your surnames. A sheet of light yellow paper (Mylar is better) to use when trying to read light images on the microfilm reader. Take extra blank 8.5 x 11 paper for notes.

Completed Paper Forms

Many people seem to want to take pounds of paper to the library. Try to keep this stack to the very minimum if you can. Some essential items you will need are your Ancestry Chart for 5 or 10 generations; Family Group Sheets only for the families you will be searching; Ancestry List – sorted by surname; and the library catalog list you created as you were preparing for this trip.

Ancestry List

Using your spreadsheet program create your own ancestry list from your Ancestry Chart. If you are using a genealogy program, print out the number of generations you are planning to work on. Each chart should be numbered by the program. Each person will be numbered within each chart. In your spreadsheet program create the following column headings.

Chart Person Last Name First Name Spouse Birth Date Birth Place Death Date Death place

Copy from your Ancestry Charts the information corresponding to each individual in the chart. Once all of the data is entered, sort the fields below the heading by Last Name.

A	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
1	CHART	PERSON	LAST_NAME	FIRST_NAME	SPOUSE	BIRTH_DATE	BIRTH_PLAC	DEATH_DATE	DEATH_PLAC
2	3	12	---	Ann	Harry Mynors	abt 1580	England		
3	242	7	---	Eleanor	George Wallis	abt. 1629		After 1690	Greenland, NH.
4	3	7	---	Ellinor	John Minor	abt. 1600			
5	7	5	---	Joan	William Hampton	ca. 1590	Eng.		VA
6	7	3	---	Joan	Thomas Hampton	abt. 1625	Gloucester Co., VA		
7	172	3	---	Sines	Vincent Brown	1802	SC		
8	242	1	Allard	Grace	Elias Parcher	1687	Portsmouth, NH	aft 1714	
9	242	4	Allard	Hugh		abt. 1639	Eng.	aft. 1694	
10	242	2	Allard	James	Honor Wallis	1661	Isle of Shoals, NH	aft. 1722	
11	104	13	Bacon	Rachel	John Pinnell	abt. 1763			

Using this chart you can easily see all of your direct line ancestors by surname, no matter which chart they appear on. You can also sort the list by date or place, allowing you to research one set of records by date and another by place. This chart can be a time saver when you are in a hurry at the library.

Blank Forms

Over the years I have found a need for many different forms. The ones I use most when researching in a library are:

Each census year (starting in 1790 thru 1940). If you are using the microfilm of the census it also helps to have the form for the Soundex cards. With Ancestry.com having all of the censuses online, there is little need for these forms. All of the following forms were created in a wordprocessor using the table option.

Microfilm log - This form is used to log every microfilm or microfiche you are planning on viewing. This gives you a list of what you plan to do and what you have done. Keep this list so you won't repeat your research.

MICROFILM LOG

Film Number	Film Location	State or Topic	Film Name	Date Reviewed	Film Comments

Book log - As with the microfilm log the book log lets you know what you plan to do and what you have done.

BOOK LOG

Book Number	Book Location	State or Topic	Book Name	Date Reviewed	Comments

Wills and court orders index list - This list is a major time saver when researching wills, probates

and court orders from the county books. The county books usually have an index in the front of the book, or the index may be on a separate microfilm reel. Even if the index is in the front of the book this form can save you a lot of time. By extracting the index by surname to this form, you have a list of exactly what you are planning to research by surname, book, and page. It is easy to keep track of what you have done, what you want copies of, and what you have to do.

INDEX TO COURTHOUSE RECORDS - WILLS, COURT ORDERS & OTHERS								County: _____
Court Record Type: _____				Reel Number: _____				State: _____
Surname	Given Name(s)	Spouse	Book	Page	Day	Month	Year	Notes

Deed index list - This list is very similar to the wills and court orders list, except it gives space for both the grantor and grantee. Like the wills and court orders list, you should extract every name in the index for the surname in question, however for deeds you will have to work both indices.

With the wills and court orders, and the deed index lists, you can find the reel you need, go through it from front to back one time, make your notes and then take the reel to the microfilm printer and print the pages you have selected on the list.

If you are working several surnames in the same county, you may wish to copy all of the surname items in the index of interest at one time. Take the list to your computer and input it into a spreadsheet. Sort the file by book and page number and print it. This way you only have to go through the film once, not one time for each surname. Another great time saver.

INDEX TO COURTHOUSE RECORDS - DEEDS						County _____	State _____			
GRANTOR		TO	GRANTEE		Book	Page	Day	Month	Year	Notes
Given Name(s)	Surname		Given Name(s)	Surname						

Internet Login ID & Password Log - This is a log to keep by your computer all the time. Each time you need to create a login ID and password just to use a website, log that information on this page. That way you will never again have little pieces of paper all over your desk with the hundreds of login ID's you have created.

INTERNET LOGIN ID AND PASSWORD LOG

Site Name	Internet Address	Login ID	Password	Notes

It may help if you use the following system for creating login ID's in the first place.

Use a four-letter word that means something to you, e.g., *Abcd*—first letter in caps to make the password stronger, three or four numeric digits that mean something to you, followed by two or three alpha digits identifying the website, e.g., *an* for Ancestry.com. As an example: *Abcd123an* would be the password for Ancestry.com. Now no two passwords are the same, but all are easy to remember.

Note that the four-letter word should be one both you and your spouse can easily remember. Don't use a word that others who know you can possibly guess, i.e., your pet, city, state, street or anything of that nature. The three or four numeric digits should be easy to remember, but not wasy for someone else to guess like 1234, or 0000, etc.

Using this method so both you and your spouse can access the same websites with little problem. For your banking sites establish another unique word using this method, however, the numeric digits could be created by combining your ages. Each time one of you has a birthday, change the password for those websites. Thus keeping those accounts more secure.

Source Labels

Create a page of labels in your wordprocessor for each type of document you will be searching. Save the files to your flash drive and take a few blank labels sheets with you. Place a label on the front of each document you print.

For example:

FOR A CENSUS COPY LABEL:

Year: _____ State: _____
County: _____ ED: _____
Township/Town: _____
Page #: _____ Film #: _____

FOR A BOOK COPY LABEL:

Book Title: _____
Author: _____
Page #: _____ Pub. Date: _____
Repository: _____

FOR A LEGAL DOCUMENT COPY LABEL:

Document Type: _____
Year: _____ State: _____
County: _____ Book #: _____
Page #: _____ Film #: _____

Small Electronic Devices

Take your small electronic device; i.e, iPad, Kindle Fire, iPhone or a Droid phone/device, and all cords for the device. Make sure you have the appropriate genealogy program applications with a copy of your genealogy files. The Evernote app is the best note application available. It works on your electronic device as well as your computer. With Evernote it is easy to transfer the files you create on the device to your computer. A stylus makes using these small devices easier to type with. If your device needs WiFi, then a Wireless Internet connection device like Verizon's MiFi are great to have along. This allows you to have a secure connection to the Internet, rather than using the open access provided by the facility.

Prepare a Flash Drive

Hang your flash drive on a lanyard around your neck. A flash drive is very easy to lose or forget when you use it in one of the facilities computers. The lanyard is very obvious and a great reminder that you left something behind.

Files to Include on the flash drive are:

All forms you will need in PDF format.

Any documents you will need for your research in PDF format.

Any family history books you have written.

Standard Computer Items

Many people like to take their computer to the library, however I have found the smaller the device the easier it is to handle. When taking your laptop computer, take all cords you may need, plus a laptop computer locking device. Many computers have been stolen in libraries. You should also carry at least one flash drive as explained above. To make using the computer easier, carry along a small mouse. As with the smaller electronic devices I suggest taking your own wireless Internet connection device for your personal security. If you must use the Internet access provided by the facility, make sure your virus software is up to date. To make the whole experience better use a rolling computer bag with a lock on the bag.

Packing to Travel for a Stay With Friends and Family

Since you are only going to be at your destination a short time, carry the smallest electronic device you have with all of your genealogy files on it as explained above. Make sure you have a flash drive with all forms you may need, a copy of important documents and selected family photos. You can use the flash drive to bring back photos from someone else's collection. Don't forget your essential small

items bag, a digital voice recorder with cord, a digital camera with cord, and an extra microchip.

Preparing for a Few Months in Your RV

So you are taking off for an extended trip, which can be a month, to several months, or a life style. You need to make sure you are ready for any computer mishap. You will need a computer backup hard drive with all of your files backed up before you leave. RV parks are famous for bad electric power. When a big rig pulls in next to you and plugs in, your rig will get a power surge. These power surges can blow up the power supply on your electronic devices. For insurance, leave a flash drive (or DVD's) which contain all of your personal files at home or with someone. You will want a printer and scanner for all of those great documents you find. Make sure you have all cords to all hardware you are taking with you..

In case something does go wrong and you need to recover your computer files, you will want a copy of them with you. You will need your backup hard drive so you can recover your personal files. You will also want to include everything listed above for the visit to the library and for a short stay with family. Don't forget to have a supply of extra batteries for all devices, and your wireless Internet access device. I also include a CAT 5 cable, just in case my wireless access device can't make a connection. Then I can take my computer to the park office, which usually has a LAN connection.

Computer Recovery Bag

When traveling with your computer for an extended period you should include all of the items it will take to restore your computer should you have a problem. If your computer can't be repaired, or you choose to buy a new one, you need to be prepared. You will need all documentation for any hardware you have with you. Keep all of this in a plastic zipper bag (i.e., sheet bag) with all of the CD's required to restore your computer. You will also need all of the CD's for the programs you have added to your computer – with documentation. Your backup hard drive will take care of your personal files.

Genealogy Related Items to Carry With You

Take along those DVD's of classes and webinars you may want to review again. Don't forget the address book of all of the relatives and genealogy buddies you plan to visit on the way. You may want to make sure you have a digital copy of all important documents with you for reference.

Happy Travels!

All of us know that the items you leave behind are the ones you will need.

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