

Research Logs

What is a research log?

- A record of what you are looking for, where you looked, and what you found.

Why use a research log?

- Track positive and negative searches.
- Note the date a database was searched.
- Create source citations to be used other places.
- Show at a glance what has been found.
- Evaluate information and evidence.
- Be more productive and efficient in research.
- Avoid duplication of effort.
- Break through brick walls with better record keeping.

All research begins with a question. Focus that question by formulating a research objective. Place this objective at the top of the research log to guide your searches.

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What are different types of research logs?

- The handwritten research log form
- The electronic research log

The Handwritten Research Log Form

- Download a template from *FamilySearch* or design your own template.
- Print several copies to fill out by hand.
- Use in archives where only paper is allowed.
- Keep copies in binders or file folders.
- Sample research log: https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Use_Appropriate_Forms

The Electronic Research Log

- Can be created in a table format in Word or Google Docs.
- Using a spreadsheet format in Excel or Google Sheets allows you to have multiple pages in a single spreadsheet for different generations or family members.
- With a spread sheet, each column can be sorted to view specific searches.
- Keep your research log in your computer files with each ancestor or family.
- The ability to cut and paste information from websites makes it simple to fill out.
- Add links to online records to quickly access them again.

Set an Objective for the Research Log

- Determine what the research question - identify an ancestor, prove a family relationship or discover ancestor actions.
- Create an objective by using key identifiers of name, birth, residence, marriage, death.

What Categories to use for a Research Log

- **Date**
 - List the date the search was performed.
 - Some databases are updated periodically and need to be rechecked later.
- **Repository**
 - Record the website, library, archive, or other physical location that holds the source.
 - The repository could be your own files if it is an inherited letter or document.
- **URL/Call#/Microfilm#**
 - In this column copy and paste the URL from the website.
 - Because some URL's can be long, use Bitly.com to create much shorter links for your research logs. <http://bit.ly/2mNTL6b>
 - If researching at a library or archive, record the unique call number or microfilm number.
- **Searching for**
 - List the specific search – record type, name, date if applicable.
 - Sort the data by this column to organize the research log by record type.
- **Locality**
 - List the specific location: city, county, state, or country.
 - Sort the data by this column to organize the research log by locality.
- **Source Citation**
 - Create a source citation the first time the source is viewed using the components of a citation.
 - Author of the source
 - Title or description of the source
 - Publication information for the source
 - Location within the source and location where the source can be viewed
 - If the search is negative, there won't be any specifics of an event to list, so just name the database, where it is located and the date it was checked.
- **Results/Comments**
 - If nothing was found use NIL which is short for "not in location."
 - Add comments about why it might not have been there.
 - If a record was located detail all the information.
 - Copy names exactly as they appear in the record.
 - Use the copy and paste function to add information from a website abstract.

- For lengthy documents such as a will or deed, abstract the information or add a link to a full transcription on a Google doc.
- **Document Numbers**
 - Add document numbers as the last task in writing the report
 - Match document numbers between the research log, report, family group records, and documents
 - Attach the source citation and document number to each document submitted with the report
- **Tips for Accreditation Candidates**
 - Fill out each part of the research log as you search a source
 - Include all negative searches on the research log
 - Create the complete source citation the first time you view the source

Sample Research Log

DATE	REPOSITORY URL, Call # Film #	SEARCHING FOR	LOCALITY	SOURCE CITATION	RESULTS
7 Jun 2017	<i>Ancestry</i> http://ancstry.me/2rVSNGJ	1820 Census George W. Dillard	Georgia, Greene County	1820 U.S. Census, Greene County, Georgia, Capt E Woodhams District, population schedule, p. 202, line 2, George W. Dillard household; digital image, Ancestry (http://www.ancestry.com : accessed 7 June 2017); citing NARA microfilm publication M33, roll 8.	Free White Persons Males 0/10 2 Males 10/15 1 Males 16/25 1 Males 26/44 1 Females 0/10 1 Females 0/15 1 Females 26/ 44 1
11 Feb 2018	<i>General Land Office Records</i> http://bit.ly/2HhYW5R	Land Patents for George W. Dillard	Alabama, Chambers County	George W Dillard,(Chambers County, Alabama), 1837, cash entry patents no. 3733, 3768, 3770, 3771, "Land Patent Search," images, General Land Office Records (www.glorerecords.blm.gov : accessed 17 March 2018).	State Volume Patents, dated 10 April 1837, St Stephens Meridian, Section 29, Chambers County, Alabama: # 3733, 3768, 3770, 3771.
7 Jun 2017	<i>FamilySearch</i> https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:33SQ-GPP6-94XQ	Marriage record for George W Dillard and Margaret Armour	Georgia, Greene County	Greene County, Georgia, "Marriage Licenses 1786 To 1810," p. 9, Dallard-Armour marriage, 9 November 1801; "Georgia, County Marriages, 1785-1950," image 21 of 659, <i>FamilySearch</i> (https://familysearch.org : accessed 7 June 2017); citing "Marriage Records 1786-1849," FHL microfilm # 159,052.	Nov. 9th 1801 George W. Dallard to Peggy Armour; self & Nicholson [vouchers]
19 Jun 2017	Family History Library Salt Lake City, UT 978.8473/C1 B3k v.1	Newspaper mention of George W. Dillard	Georgia, Muscogee County	Elizabeth Evans Kilbourne, <i>Columbus, Georgia, Newspaper Clippings (Columbus Enquirer Volume I, 1832-1834)</i> , (Savannah, Georgia: E. Evans Kilbourne, 1997-2009), 4.	Saturday, March 26, 1831: "Candidates for Office: We are authorized to announce George W. Dillard as a candidate for Clerk of the superior Court of the county of Muscogee. . ."