

Session 1 “Getting Prepared”

Wednesday February 17, 2021 7:00 PM Zoom

Background and General Overview

- How I got started and current statistics on my family trees

I spend most of my retirement time working on genealogy projects. Before retiring in 2009, I spent most of my professional career managing software development in the Mutual Fund industry. Starting in 2014 with a 2-page paper family tree, (I found 4 more pages later), penciled by my mother in the 1980s, and an old faded mystery photo found in a shoebox, I expanded that effort in building my extended family tree online. My extended family tree currently contains 7,300 people, 13,000 attached record sources, 2,400 photographs, and 40 PDF stories. In addition to my own family tree, I have created over 80 other family trees for friends, in-laws, and a High School Reunion effort focused on locating missing class members. I have traveled to Italy twice since 2015 and worked with an Italian genealogist there to research my father’s roots in northern Italy as well as conduct research on the person identified in the mystery photo. My last Italian genealogy trip in 2018 included spending 2 days at the Italian State Archives in Rome researching my great grandmother’s first cousin Monsignor Valerio Anzino, the person in the mystery photo. The results of my Anzino research were published by me at [Valerio Anzino.com](http://ValerioAnzino.com). I have researched records in the US, Canada, Ireland, England, Germany, France, Italy, Poland, Ukraine, Belarus, Romania, Lithuania, Palestine, Turkey, South Africa, and Russia. I am a records-based genealogist, in contrast to a DNA genealogist. My knowledge of and experience in genealogy has focused on finding and interpreting written records to establish family connections and uncover stories. In addition to building many family trees, I leveraged my background in computers and built software tools to help me analyze all of the information that I have gathered which ultimately allowed me to see family connections that had previously escaped me.

- These sessions are focused on records-based genealogy, not DNA genealogy
 - [Compare DNA Genealogy services](#)
 - Oversimplification of DNA vs Records-Based
 - Am I 80% Ashkenazi Jew vs who was the rabbi at the brit milah of my great grandfather in Pultusk, Poland on March 3, 1882?
 - Did I likely come from Lithuania vs what was the name of the Shtetl that my great grandfather was born in?
 - Am I 20% German vs who stood next to great grandma when she emigrated in 1907 on the “SS Latvia” from Bremen, Germany?
 - How exactly am I related to the people on my DNA report? vs This is exactly how I’m related
 - DNA genealogy and records-based genealogy are not mutually exclusive, they are complimentary.
- What are your goals?
 - Do you want a family tree connecting ancestors to descendants?
 - Do you want to discover stories?
 - Do you want to locate long lost relatives and reach out to them?
 - How accurate and thorough do you want to be?
 - The answers to these questions will help determine how much money and time you spend.

- Be prepared to change your goals after you get started
- There will be dollar costs in addition to the time costs
 - Costs are a function of how detailed you want to be as well as your specific goals
 - Examples of costs
 - Online Family Tree system subscription, (i.e. [Ancestry.com](https://www.ancestry.com))
 - \$100 to \$200/year based on plan...<https://www.ancestry.com/cs/offers/subscribe>
 - [Jewishgen.org](https://www.jewishgen.org) donations... \$ Amount up to you
 - Hard copies of documents from municipalities (typically \$15-\$50)
 - [White Pages.com](https://www.whitepages.com) Professional subscription
 - [Newspapers.com](https://www.newspapers.com) subscription (bundled with some BOS systems)
 - Travel to Europe and elsewhere to locate source records
 - Document translation services

Tasks to complete before entering any information into a tree

- Talk to the oldest living members of your family and record what you hear
 - Record conversations
 - Video or Audio (The Best)
 - Typed or handwritten notes (Good Enough)
 - Script the conversation, but be prepared to go off script
 - Talk about one branch of the family at a time, if possible
 - IMPORTANT!!! There are always elements of truth in family stories even when most of the story ends up just being a story
- Select an online “Book of Record” (BOR) system, and select a subscription type
 - Online vs PC based systems
 - Online systems can automatically attach source documents
 - Online systems are integrated with document searching
 - Online systems can connect other family trees to yours
 - PC based systems can print prettier diagrams
 - Research alternative choices
 - Look at Editing controls
 - Can others edit my tree without my approval?
 - Does the system provide me the ability to selectively allow others to edit?
 - [Toptenreviews.com](https://www.toptenreviews.com)
 - Some alternatives
 - [Ancestry.com](https://www.ancestry.com) (Biggest Market Share)
Genealogy Sessions 2 and 3 are based on using [Ancestry.com](https://www.ancestry.com) as the online BOR
 - [Familysearch.org](https://www.familysearch.org)
 - [Myheritage.com](https://www.myheritage.com)
 - [Geni.com](https://www.geni.com)
 - [Findmypast.com](https://www.findmypast.com)

- Choose a computer device, (a PC or a Macintosh), to conduct most of your work
 - The larger and higher resolution the screen is, the better
- Create and organize a PC or Mac folder system as a family tree contents repository
 - While most of your tree document sources will be automatically attached by your BOR, some document sources will come from you and will need to be scanned, uploaded, and attached.
 - Photos and document sources in your family's possession
 - Birth (Certificates, baptisms)
 - Marriage (Licenses, Certificates, Newspaper Announcements)
 - Death (Certificates, Burial Markers, Obituaries)
 - Immigration (Ship Manifests, Naturalization documents)
 - People and group photos
 - PDF stories
 - Separate file folders for family specific branches
- Locate and gather hard copy photographs and documents
 - Call and/or email your extended family members
 - Have family members USPS mail the photos to you and you scan them
 - or
 - Have family members scan or take smart phone photos and email them to you
 - Be prepared for poor quality photos
 - Scan using your "All-in-One" printer or a smart phone scanning app
 - Scan at the highest resolution possible
- Get familiar with basic photo editing programs like PC Paint or Mac Photo Editor
 - Crop and straighten
 - Resize
 - Rename
- If your ancestors came from Eastern Europe, conduct some basic research on how country boundaries changed from the mid-1800s to post WWI.
- Learn enough Hebrew, (or ask relative or friend), to read fathers names, sometimes mothers names, on burial markers
- Prepare yourself for hours of viewing scrollable lists
 - Use a large computer screen at high resolution
 - Use a handheld mouse to enable quick scrolling
 - Familiarize yourself with ways to zoom in and out
 - Have clean eyeglasses and a properly lit room
- Prepare yourself for lots of ambiguity, fuzziness, and surprises!
- At many junctures you will need hours of relatively uninterrupted time
 - Much of family tree building involves solving problems

Session 2 “Getting Started ... Guiding Principles and Effective Practices”

Wednesday February 24, 2021 7:00 PM Zoom

- Starting your family tree
- Names, addresses
- Document sources
- Photographs
- Searching for documents (Search Algorithms)