



Glossary

A

abstract - Summary of essential facts in a document or record

administrator/administratrix - Masculine and feminine forms, respectively, for one appointed by a court to administer the estate of a person who died without a valid will

administrator's bond - Bond posted by an administrator to guarantee the proper performance of his duties

affidavit - A written or oral statement made under oath

ahnentafel - List of ancestors in numerical order

ahnentafel numbering system - System used to number a person's ancestors

a.k.a. - Alias (also known as)

alien - Foreign-born resident of a country who has not been naturalized

ancestor - Person from whom another person is descended--for example, a parent, grandparent, or great-grandparent

ancestor chart - Form for recording genealogical information on several generations of a person's ancestors; also known as a pedigree chart

application for letters of administration - Written request submitted to a court asking for authorization to act on behalf of the estate of a decedent

B

baptism - Christian ceremony by which water is applied by sprinkling, pouring, or immersion as a sign of admission to membership in a church

baptismal record - Written account of a baptism

biography - History of a person's life written by another person

birth certificate - Written account of a birth in the form of a certificate created for and maintained by a government agency

birth record - Written account of a birth

blood relationship - Relationship between persons descended from a common ancestor

bondsman - Surety on a bond

burial record - Written account of a burial

C

c. or ca. - Abbreviation for “circa”— about

catalog - Listing of items, such as the holdings of a library, arranged systematically

census - Periodic official enumeration of the population

census day - Day set by law for the federal or state censuses to begin; also “as of” date for which certain statistics were taken

census, decennial - Population enumeration taken every ten years as required by the U.S. Constitution

census schedule - Completed census form

certified transcription - Transcribed copy of a document signed and certified as a true copy by the official with custody of the original

circa - Latin term meaning “about”

citation - Reference to a source of information

civil record - Record created by and for a government agency

Co. - Abbreviation for “County”

cograntor - One of two or more persons conveying land by deed

collateral relationship - Relationship between persons descended from a common ancestor, but not in the direct line--for example, a great-aunt, uncle, cousin, or nephew

common ancestor - Mutual ancestor of two or more persons

compilation - Collection of information or materials from various sources

compiled military service record - Term used by the National Archives for a jacket containing cards with information about an individual’s military service abstracted from original documents

congregation - Local group of a religious denomination

consanguinity - Blood relationship--relationship among descendants of a common ancestor

cousin - Person not in one's direct line with whom one has ancestors in common

cousin, first - Person with whom one has grandparents in common and his/her ancestors

cousin, removed - Person descended from a common ancestor, but by a different number of generations; one generation would be "once removed," two generations would be "twice removed"

cousin, second - Person with whom one has in common great-grandparents and his/her ancestors

cousin, third - Person with whom one has in common great-great-grandparents and his/her ancestors

D

DAR - Abbreviation for National Society Daughters of the American Revolution

death certificate - Written account of a death in the form of a certificate created for and maintained by a government agency

death notice - Brief account of a death published in a newspaper

death record - Written account of a death

decedent - Deceased person

declaration of intention - Document filed by an alien in a court declaring his or her intention to apply for citizenship after fulfillment of the residency requirement; also known as "first papers"

deed - Document that transfers title to property from one private party to another

deed of gift - Document that transfers title to property from one private party to another without a normal purchase price

deed of partition - Document by which two or more persons who are co-owners of property divide the property into individual ownership of distinct parts of the property

delayed birth certificate - Birth certificate issued, often many years after the event, to a person whose birth was not officially recorded when it occurred

denomination - Religious organization

derivative source - Material based upon an original source; abstracts, compilations, databases, indexes, transcripts are examples of derivative sources

descendant - Person who is the offspring of another person; for example, a child, grandchild, or great-grandchild

direct evidence - Relevant information that answers a question or solves a problem without additional information

digital image - Scan of a document

dower - Right of a widow to a life estate in a portion of the real property owned by her deceased husband

dwelling number - Number assigned to a dwelling, including a single household or multiple households, on a census schedule

E

endnote - Reference to a source of information or comment placed at the end of a complete work

enumeration district - Beginning in 1880, the district of not more than 4,000 persons assigned to a federal census enumerator

estate - Property composing the assets of a decedent

evidence - Evidence that is relevant to the problem; it is either direct or indirect

evidence analysis - The process used to determine the validity of a source, information, or evidence

extract - Word-for-word copy of part of a document or record; it is enclosed in quotation marks

F

family Bible - Bible in which family births, marriages, and deaths are recorded

family group sheet - Form for recording genealogical information on a husband and wife and their children

family historian - Person who collects and compiles information about a family's history

family history - History of a person's family or ancestors

Family History Centers - Local branches of the Family History Library

Family History Library (FHL) - Genealogical library of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Salt Lake City, Utah

family number - Number assigned to a household on a census schedule

federal population census - Enumeration of the population by the federal government taken every ten years since 1790

FHL - Abbreviation for “Family History Library”

“final papers” - Petition for naturalization with supporting affidavits filed by an alien in a court

finding aid - Guide to the use of specific research materials or a specific repository, such as an index or catalog

first cousin - Person with whom one has in common grandparents and his/her ancestors

“first papers” - Declaration of intention filed by an alien in a court

footnote - Reference to a source of information or comment placed at the bottom of the page to which it pertains

Freedom of Information Act - Law permitting access to public records maintained by government agencies

G

gazetteer - Geographical dictionary

genealogy - Study of the origins and descent of families; a written history of the descent of a person or family from an ancestor

genealogist - Person who collects and compiles information on the descendants of an individual or the history of a family

given name - Person’s first or middle name

grantee - Person to whom land is conveyed by deed

grantor - Person who conveys land by deed

Gregorian calendar - Calendar system created by Pope Gregory to correct accumulated errors in the old (Julian) calendar; also known as the New Style calendar

H

half brother/sister - Person with whom one has one parent in common

half cousin - Person with whom one has one grandparent in common

hearsay - Secondhand information such as oral history or family tradition

heir - Person who inherits the property of a decedent

heir at law - Person designated by law to inherit the estate of a person who died without a valid will

household - Persons who live together in a house or dwelling

I

ibid. - In the same place; Latin abbreviation used in a list of citations to refer to the immediately preceding entry

Image copy - Digital, film, or photo image; provided that it has not been altered, it is treated as an original

immigrant - Person who enters a country of which he or she is not a citizen with the intention of establishing permanent residence

index - Alphabetical listing of names, places, titles, subjects, etc., with page numbers, document numbers, or other identification as to where they can be found

indirect evidence - Information relevant to the research question that does not answer the question on its own; it has to be combined with other information to solve the problem

informant - Person who gives information; for example, the person who provides information about the decedent and his family for a death certificate

information - Statements found in a source; see primary information and secondary information

in-print book - Book currently available from the publisher

inst. - Abbreviation for “instant”

instant - Latin word meaning “current month”

interment - Burial

interment book - Book in which records of burials are recorded by a cemetery

inventory - Detailed listing of property included in an estate

J

Julian calendar - Calendar in use before the adoption of the Gregorian calendar; also known as the Old Style calendar

L

LDS - Abbreviation for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

lineal relationship - Relationship between persons descended from a common ancestor in the same line; for example, a parent, grandparent, child, or grandchild

local birth record - Written account of a birth recorded by a town, city, or county

local death record - Written account of a death recorded by a town, city, or county

local history - History of a county, town, or other locality

locality - City, town, township, or other subdivision of a county

local vital record - Record of a birth, death, or marriage filed with a town, city, or county

“long form” - Photocopy of a vital record

M

maiden name - Surname of an unmarried woman

marriage bond - Document executed to guarantee that no impediments existed to an intended marriage

marriage certificate - Written account of a marriage created for and maintained by a government agency; also, a document given to the newly married couple by the person who performed the marriage

marriage certification - Report of the facts of a marriage to a town or county certified by the officiator

marriage consent - Permission granted, usually by a parent, for the marriage of a minor

marriage intention - Notice of an intended marriage published by a New England town

marriage license - Document issued by a town or county authorizing the performance of a marriage

marriage record - Written account of a marriage

marriage register - Written record of marriages performed in a civil or ecclesiastical jurisdiction

marriage return - Report of the facts of a marriage returned to a town or county by the officiator

married name - Surname of a married woman

maternal ancestors - Ancestors of one's mother

microfilm - Film containing reduced photographic copies of printed or other graphic material

midwife - Person who assists in childbirth

military record - Written account of an individual's military service

monthly meeting - In the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers), the equivalent of a congregation in other denominations

mortality census schedule - Federal census form for enumeration of deaths during the twelve-month period preceding the census taken at the 1850, 1860, 1870, and 1880 censuses

N

National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) - Repository of the permanently valuable records of the U.S. federal government

native-born - Adjective used to describe a person who acquired citizenship by birth

naturalization - Legal process by which citizenship is conferred on an alien

naturalization record - Document created during the naturalization process

naturalized citizen - Person who acquired citizenship through the naturalization process

nickname - Name used as a substitute for a person's given name

O

obituary - Newspaper article about a death

official record copy - The clerk's official copy; it is treated as the original when the original does not exist or cannot be accessed

original source - Record created at the time of, or shortly after, an event by someone with personal knowledge of the facts, or the testimony of a person involved in the event; the record is in its first recorded form

P

passenger arrival record - Document listing names of persons who arrived in the destination country on a ship or by air

paternal ancestors - Ancestors or forebears of one's father

pedigree chart - Form for recording genealogical information on several generations of a person's ancestors; also known as an ancestor chart

pension application file - Collection of documents relating to the application by a veteran or his dependent(s) for a pension based on military service

periodical - Publication issued at regular intervals, such as a newsletter, magazine, or journal

perpetual calendar - Set of calendars for finding the day of the week for a given date during a wide range of years

petition for naturalization - Application for citizenship filed by an alien with supporting affidavits; also known as "final papers"

petition for probate - Written application to a court to admit a will to probate and give the executor authority to carry out its provisions

population census schedule - Federal census form for enumeration of the population at ten-year intervals since 1790

port of embarkation - Port from which a ship sails

port of entry - Port at which a ship arrives

primary information - Details provided by a person with firsthand knowledge of an event

probate file - Envelope or jacket in which have been filed the probate records pertaining to the estate of a decedent

probate record - Record created in the process of settling the estate of a decedent

published source - Book, periodical, newspaper, microfilm, or other media which makes information widely available to the public

Q

quitclaim deed - Document transferring the interest the grantor has in the property; does not guarantee that the grantor is the sole owner or has a clear title to the property

R

Regular Army - Standing professional army, as distinguished from a volunteer militia or a group drafted for a particular war

religious record - Written account of a baptism, marriage, burial, or other event recorded by a religious congregation

repository - Library, courthouse, archives, or other place where books, manuscripts, documents, and other materials are housed

reprint edition - Previously published book reprinted without revision

S

SASE - Abbreviation for “self-addressed, stamped envelope”

SC - Abbreviation for “soldier’s certificate”

secondary information - Second-hand or hearsay information; the details are provided by a person without first-hand (primary) knowledge

second cousin - Person with whom one has in common great-grandparents and his/her ancestors

“short form” - Certified transcription of a vital record

sibling - Brother or sister

slave census schedule - Federal census form for enumeration of slaves in 1850 and 1860

Social Security Death Index - Database of information about persons who were receiving benefits at the time of their deaths and whose deaths were reported to the Social Security Administration

soldier’s certificate - Numbered certificate awarded to a veteran who qualified for a federal pension based on military service; number used to access a pension application file

Soundex - Partially phonetic indexing system in which names are arranged alphabetically by the first letter of the surname, thereunder by a numerical code representing the remaining letters of the surname, thereunder alphabetically by first name or initials of the head of household, and thereunder alphabetically by state of birth of the head of household

source - An artifact, book, document, person, website, etc.; a source is something we can touch or see, and it contains information

source citation - Reference to a source of information

state archives - Repository of historical documents maintained by a state government

state historical society - Organization interested in preserving the history of a state

state vital records office - Agency of a state government in which birth and death (and sometimes marriage) records are filed

surety - Guarantor; one legally liable for the debt, default, or failure of another

surname - Person's last name or family name

T

third cousin - Person with whom one has in common great-great-grandparents and his/her ancestors

tombstone inscription - Words on a grave marker

township - Civil subdivision of a county

transcribe - Copy a document or record word for word

transcription - Word-for-word copy, usually of an entire document or record

Twp. - Abbreviation for "Township"

U

ult. - Abbreviation for "ultimo"

ultimo - Latin word meaning "month preceding the current month"

USCIS - Abbreviation for United States Citizenship and Immigration Service, the successor agency of the INS

V

vital record - Written account of a birth, death, or marriage

W

WC - Abbreviation for “widow’s certificate”

widow’s certificate - Numbered certificate awarded to a widow who qualified for a federal pension based on her husband’s military service; number used to access a pension application file

will - Legally executed document by which a person provides for the disposition of his or her property after death

will book - Book maintained by a court into which wills and other probate records are copied