

THE DIGITAL FAMILY HISTORIAN

by Nathalie Schouten



COMPLIMENTARY GUIDE

Family Tree Starter Kit

A calm, evidence-based way to begin your family history

YOUR FAMILY HISTORY

Begin with one person and one question

You do not need a complete family tree before you begin. Strong research starts with one person you can identify and one question you genuinely want to answer.

This kit helps you record what is already known, separate facts from family stories, choose useful records, and preserve a clear trail for the next person who follows your work.

YOUR FAMILY HISTORY

Choose your starting ancestor

Start with someone close enough that records and family knowledge are still available.

Ancestor's full name

Birth or baptism date and place

Marriage date and place

Death or burial date and place

What I already know

YOUR FAMILY HISTORY

Ask one focused research question

A precise question helps you recognise which evidence matters.

The person I am researching

The exact question I want to answer

Why this question matters to me

What would count as a useful answer

YOUR FAMILY HISTORY

Look at home before searching online

The most valuable clue may already be in a drawer, album or family story.

- ☐ Birth, marriage and death certificates
- ☐ Family Bibles, prayer books and memorial cards
- ☐ Photographs with names or dates
- ☐ Letters, diaries and address books
- ☐ Passports, military papers and immigration documents
- ☐ Newspaper clippings and funeral notices
- ☐ Jewellery, medals and objects with inscriptions

YOUR FAMILY HISTORY

Interview a relative

Ask open questions and record who supplied each memory.

Person interviewed and relationship

Where and when the conversation took place

Names, nicknames and relationships mentioned

Places, occupations and migrations

Stories that need documentary verification

YOUR FAMILY HISTORY

Separate evidence from family stories

Family stories are valuable clues, but they become reliable conclusions only when tested against records created close to the events.

DOCUMENTED FACT

The record and its creator can be identified.

FAMILY STORY

A remembered account that may contain clues.

INTERPRETATION

What the combined evidence appears to mean.

A family story I want to investigate

Records that could test it

YOUR FAMILY HISTORY

Create a simple timeline

Place records in date order so gaps and contradictions become visible.

Date and place

Event

Source

What this proves

What remains uncertain

Next timeline entry

YOUR FAMILY HISTORY

Keep a source log

A source log prevents repeated searches and lets another researcher follow your reasoning.

Date searched

Archive, website or collection

Search terms and date range

Record or image reference

Result, including negative searches

Next action

YOUR FAMILY HISTORY

Protect living relatives

Do not publish birth dates, addresses, contact details, medical information or private family circumstances about living people without permission.

Record where each item came from. Keep private files separate from material intended for sharing. Respect archive restrictions and the wishes of relatives who do not want their information included.

- ☐ I have permission to share this information.
- ☐ I have removed unnecessary personal details.
- ☐ I have recorded the source and access restrictions.
- ☐ I know who will receive the finished family history.

YOUR FAMILY HISTORY

Your first seven days

- 1 Choose one ancestor
- 2 Write one focused question
- 3 Gather home documents
- 4 Interview one relative
- 5 Search two targeted record collections
- 6 Update your source log
- 7 Write what is known and what remains uncertain

YOUR FAMILY HISTORY

Continue with confidence

When you are ready to go further, the First Branch Workbook gives you a complete research system for one family branch. If you prefer personal guidance, book a Family History Research Session with Nathalie.

Your story is worth remembering.

Research. Discover. Preserve.

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The Digital Family Historian

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