

SCOUT INFORMATION

This program is about YOU and your heritage. Have you ever wondered about where your grandparents and their ancestors came from? As Americans, we are all descendants of immigrants. It's fun to delve into your own family history and find out just who your ancestors were, where they lived, what they did for a living, and in particular, their service to America.

This contest is two parts. The first part is to learn who were your ancestors and trace them back through time as far as you can. The second part is to write an essay describing your findings, what they meant to you and how you would relate them to our American history. The contest winners will be chosen on the basis of the submitted essays.

How to get started:

There are many sources of family information and you should seek confirming data wherever you can. Some published family histories (genealogies) have much erroneous information so it never hurts to cross check. A major source of reliable family data comes from the U.S. Census, particularly from the years 1850 through 1930, the last census to be made public information.

First, limit your area of research. Remember that the number of possible ancestors can double every generation. Our suggestion is to search on just one surname, such as your father's or your mother's and trace that one line of your family. This will take you back through the paternal side of the family, father to son.

Second, determine how you are going to collect and store the information. This can range from a simple card index file to a computer program. The cost for computer programs can vary, some are for no charge, such as Personal Ancestral File. It is very important to have a place to put your notes on where and when you obtained each item of the data collected. Next, get as much information from your parents and or your grandparents as to what they know about your ancestors and record this in detail, particularly what were their names, spouses names, approximate birth years and places, where they lived and any family lore. such as service in the military, professions or trade, etc. Old documents, letters, obituaries and news articles can be helpful as well. Take very thorough notes on what they tell you as this will be the starting point of your documentation collection and vital to your search.

We suggest that you now go hunting on the internet. A good place to start is on the latest US Census (1930) assuming that your family can provide data on relatives born before 1930. You can access the U.S. Census from 1850 to 1930 on line at any San Diego Public Library branch. Sign on to the library's home page. Click on the "Biographies and Genealogies" section. Click on "Ancestry.com". Select "US Census" Select the census year wanted. Input the available data you have about the person you are researching, such as their name, city, county and/or state of residence, and birth year. The Ancestry.com program will bring up a number of choices, trying to match the information you input. Select the choice that most nearly matches your information and select "view original image" to see the actual census sheet and scroll down to the person's name and view all the family data recorded by the census taker. The data recorded will vary by the year of the census, but will normally include a listing of all of the family members and their relation to the head of the household, their ages, their occupation and some economic data. If you find your family listing, print out that census sheet and keep it as part of your research. If your first choice data does not match your family, look for another choice that could be a match. Look for alternate surname spelling, as the census takers often used phonetic spelling. If you are having trouble getting to the census data, ask your reference librarian to

help you get started.

You can also access a section in Ancestry.com called “Family Trees”, which will provide you with access to data supplied by fellow researchers. Go there and input your data on a given individual and see what data you can find there. Sometimes you can discover a wealth of information here.

The Ellis Island immigrant records are on line at: <http://www.ellislandrecords.org>

If you have a computer with access to the net, and wish to work from it instead of going to the San Diego Public Library, bring your library card to the Carlsbad Public Library and they will issue you an ID, password and instructions which will provide online access to their Heritage Quest System which has the 1860-1930 US Census data plus some biographic files.

Another way to get going is to put your ancestor’s surname directly on the search engine that you are using such as Yahoo or Google, etc. You can find lots of family organizations and published genealogies that will match that surname, and you will have to find one that matches up with what you know about the family. If you are able to zero in the next generation or two, go back to the Census data for the appropriate census years and get confirmation if you can. Go back in time with the census every ten years, going from son to father, son to father.

There are also genealogical sections in the libraries. One of the best is the Carlsbad Public Library where there are reference librarians to give you additional help.

The Church of the Latter Day Saints (Mormon) maintains a large Family History Library in Mission Valley which is open to the general public at no charge. They also have online access to all the available census data plus an international data base. If your family recently emigrated from another country, this library can be of considerable help. Don’t be afraid to ask for help getting started; there are volunteers with lots of experience.

There are many other sources of information, such as birth certificates, marriage records, death certificates, wills, probate records, real estate transfers, cemetery records, tombstones, court suit records and Bible records. Some of these require fees, and we are NOT advocating your spending money to continue your research. Your essay will be the criteria for winning this contest, not how far you take your search.

At some point, you will hit an impasse, and you run out of data, usually around five or six generations. Don’t panic, email us at sdscout@gmail.com describing the problem you are having and we will put you in contact via e-mail with an experienced genealogist mentor for assistance to see if they can take it any further.

When you have gone as far you can, it’s time to start your essay, which can take a number of directions. Take a few paragraphs to describe your search. If you found interesting information about one or more of your ancestors, write about them. If not, look for local history data at the places where you ancestors lived, such as actual newspaper accounts, county histories, and write about the life that you imagined they lived. One of the purposes of this contest is to produce a personal account of your history that your family will keep and value as part of their heritage.

Essay rules:

The essay contest content will consist of a title sheet, your essay, an information source list and a biography page. All pages must be printed or typed double-spaced on 8 ½" x 10" white paper and stapled..

1. The title sheet will include the title of your essay, your name, your Troop, team or crew, and address. Please do not take time to do fancy graphics or bindings; they will not be considered.
2. The essay portion will have a minimum of 750 words and a maximum of 1000 words. numerical dates, city or state names count as one word, one and two letter words are not counted. Footnotes are not counted.. The content should describe your search, what you found, generation by generation, and your family's relation to any events in our history such as participation in our country's defense or government.
If you are unable to find such an event relative to your ancestors, then do a little historical research on what was happening in the geographical area of you oldest generation during their lifetime and write about that. Old newspaper articles and county histories are excellent sources of material. For privacy reasons, you may use pseudo names for the first two generations (including the student). Real names and data required above the second generation.
3. The information source page(s) gives all of your data sources such as genealogies, web sites, census records, interviews, pertinent documents, letters, news articles, local histories, immigration lists, ship manifests etc.. Your footnotes should refer to these sources. **The recording of your essay information sources is an important part of this contest.** The sources should be specific such that a reader could easily go to the written data or web page being referred to. You are not limited to one page.
4. Your biography is limited to one page and topics to be included are academic awards and achievements, Scout and school activities, community activities and plans for after high school.

JUDGING CRITERIA

1. Clarity of thought and reporting accuracy
2. Organization of your search and data presentation
3. Documentation of your search methods and data.
4. Grammar and spelling.

SUBMISSION

Turn in your entry to your troop leader for submission to the San Diego Boy Scout Council

Headquarters no later than May 15, 2008.