

# Resources at BHC

## Remember we are always here for you

- **Genealogy Consultations**

Volunteers from the Genealogical Society of Bergen County are available to help you on a regular schedule and by appointment: NJGSBC.org/expert-consultations or 201-670-5600 x 135, HeritageCenter@RidgewoodLibrary.org

- **Computer Classes**

Computer Classes in genealogy are offered at the Library, in the Habernickel Technology Training Center. See our latest schedule at RidgewoodLibrary.org

- **Multimedia Lectures**

Programs of the Genealogical Society of Bergen County are held on the 4th Monday of most months, at 7pm, in the Belcher Auditorium at the Library. To view the latest program go to RidgewoodLibrary.org/LocalHistory or NJGSBC.org

- **Free Research Websites**

- Familysearch.org
- UsGenweb.org
- Ellis Island.org
- Cyndislist.com
- Local History & Genealogy:  
Heritage Catalog: Ridgewood.PastPerfectOnline.com

- **BHC Hours**

We are open when the Library is open\*:

|                   |           |
|-------------------|-----------|
| Monday - Thursday | 9am - 9pm |
| Friday            | 9am - 6pm |
| Saturday          | 9am - 5pm |
| Sunday            | 1pm - 5pm |

\*Please check Library website for Holiday Closings.

- **Local History Librarian**

**Any questions?** Sarah Kiefer, our in-house Local History Librarian is here to help: 201-670-5600 ext 135 or SKiefer@RidgewoodLibrary.org

# Our Heritage



David Bolger is internationally respected for his success in business and for his legendary philanthropic giving.

Mr. Bolger's generosity has improved historic Ridgewood buildings, parks and organizations, and his support of the Ridgewood Public Library has truly enhanced our community's educational and cultural services.

The Library will always benefit from Mr. Bolger's majestic restoration of the original Pease Memorial Library, which gave this Ridgewood landmark new purpose and won top Historic Preservation honors. Mr. Bolger's leadership gifts led to the creation of our new Heritage Center. Today we enjoy a new barrier-free Main Entrance, the Library Colonnade, beautiful spring gardens, new seating and lighting and video security, all thanks to David Bolger's vision, kindness and generosity.



Ridgewood Public Library  
**BOLGER**  
Heritage Center

## Getting Started



[RidgewoodLibrary.org/LocalHistory](http://RidgewoodLibrary.org/LocalHistory)

201-670-5600 ext 135

HeritageCenter@RidgewoodLibrary.org  
125 North Maple Avenue, Ridgewood, NJ 07450

A Guide to Getting Started on Genealogical Research

# Your Genealogical Research

## Getting Started

### BEGIN WITH WHAT YOU KNOW

Work from the known to the unknown, one small step at a time. Work backwards from the present gathering facts as you go. Never skip a generation. Remember that names, dates & places are the building blocks of compiling a family history.

### CONDUCT INTERVIEWS

What do you know about your parents and grandparents? Interview your relatives. Write or talk to your family members. Ask them about:

- Family names
- When they immigrated?
- What town they came from/lived in?
- What were their dates/places of birth, marriage, and death?

Ask older family members specific questions about your ancestors.

- What was your grandmother's maiden name?
- Where did she live as a child?
- What were her parents' names?
- When did they come to New Jersey?
- Where did they go to church?
- When and where did they get married?

Any clue, no matter how small, may help your search.

### TIPS ON CONDUCTING INTERVIEWS

- Think of the interview as not only an opportunity to gain knowledge on your genealogy, but also as a chance to spend time with family members.
- Make sure to ask to see photographs and memorabilia. Photographs are a great way to open up conversations, spark memories, and provide a visual of your ancestors. Ask for permission to make copies and/or scan any documents.
- Create a list of questions, but be prepared to take the conversation in a different direction. The question list can be used as a guideline, not a rigid framework.
- Ask permission to record the interview – and make sure to test the equipment prior to your meeting. Assure the interviewee that this is for informational purposes only, and it will be shared only with the family, if anyone. If the person is uncomfortable with recording the interview, then respect his/her request, but make sure to bring pen and paper.

## Researching

### CHECK FAMILY RECORDS

Some records may already be in the homes of your family:

- Family records/birth information
- Bible with names & births recorded
- Funeral cards & obituaries; Family Letters
- Photographs, Stories & Traditions
- Employment information
- School yearbooks; Fraternal Societies
- Wills & Deeds
- Certificates, Awards, Discharges, Etc.
- Books of Remembrance, Scrapbooks, Diaries, Church records, Birth Marriage & Death Records, Baptism Records, Confirmation/Communion Records

### READ, READ, READ

Learn the history and geography of the area where your ancestors lived. Remember that old country boundaries may have changed so be sure to consult a good atlas and local histories. You can consult the section "Geography: Gazetteers, Maps and Atlases" (910-917) in the Bolger Heritage Center for these research materials. If you're just getting started researching your family history, you should definitely begin reading a genealogy "how to" book. See reference books in the Heritage Center (929), which include general guides; geographical resources; and family materials. Books which may be borrowed are in the Heritage Center Circulation collection, which is located right outside the Bolger Heritage Center.

### GENEALOGY SOCIETIES

By joining local genealogy societies, you are opening yourself up to a variety of resources. These societies connect you with others who share your interest in ancestry, which will help educate you on the latest products, news and educational opportunities. By being a member of genealogy societies, you gain access to their genealogy materials and their knowledge base, allowing you to learn different software programs; gain insight on the ins and outs of researching effectively; and discover answers to brick wall questions.

You can locate your local societies and groups by going on Cyndi's List ([cyndislist.com/societies](http://cyndislist.com/societies)) which has over 3,000 indexed alphabetically by name of the society.

## Methodologies

### ORGANIZE

Place the information in a system that is comfortable for you: notebooks, genealogy charts, or computer programs. Research logs are an effective way to maintain and track your research. Information to record in your log include:

- Date of research (all 4 digits of the year)
- Repository (archive, library, cemetery, vital record office)
- Call number (manuscript number, library call number, or microfilm number)
- Description of source
- Comments, notes, or results
- Miscellaneous facts: time period, jurisdiction, surnames, condition of source, ISBN

### BASIC METHODOLOGIES

Write down what you find and where you found it. Which collection of records did you research? Which online databases did you use? Which books did you look at? What volume and page number? Which microfilm reel? Employ standard citation formation. The citation should reflect the type of document, such as a book; oral history; census record, etc.

Always record the sources you've searched and when you searched them, even if the results are negative. Organize this research log by family, then geographic area.

Search every possible surname spelling, including phonetic and typographic errors. Remember, the spelling of many family names was not standardized until the 19th century, if then.

Use all record types: Vital Records, Censuses, City Directories, Naturalization Records, Passenger Lists, Cemetery Records, Wills, Land Records, etc.

### USE OUR LIBRARY RESOURCES

Consult the Heritage Center and our Genealogy Consultants from the Genealogical Society of Bergen County to help find your ancestors. At the Library you have access to Ancestry Library Edition, Newspaper Archives, New York Times Historical and American Ancestors. The Heritage Center is dedicated to provide you with the tools needed to research your ancestry, and we encourage you to stop by with any questions.

Genealogy is like a puzzle – one gathers bits of information piece by piece. Be prepared to work patiently in stages and return to records upon the discovery of further clues.