

Tips for Researchers

Researchers come to the H. Fletcher Davidson Library and Archives with a wide variety of questions. Some are very specific, others very general. Sometimes, we can help but other times the researcher comes away empty-handed. We love having visitors, but hate having visitors who come away disappointed. So, some thoughts on how to make the best use of your research time.

- 1) **Have a specific question or set of questions to ask.** It really helps us in the library and will help you if you have a fairly specific question you are trying to answer. Asking us to provide ‘everything we have on the Smith Family’ is rather challenging and often futile, but asking us to help you determine the parents of your ancestor Joe Smith helps narrow it down for us – and for you. (This holds true for pretty much any place you go to do your research.)
- 2) **Do your homework.** I realize part of doing that homework is visiting us, but it really helps us both if you have pulled together everything you know about a particular ancestor or property before you walk in our doors.
 - a. Ancestry.com is the place to go on-line for a wide variety of records. If you do not have a subscription, local libraries often do.
 - b. Don’t forget the Delaware County Genealogy site at dcnyhistory.org. Many volunteers have uploaded a LOT of information related to Delaware County.
 - c. Of course look at your own family sources – letters, family bibles, photographs. These can provide crucial leads.
- 3) **Make sure we’re the best place to go at this particular stage in your research.** There are times when it would be best to go someplace else first.
 - a. If your ancestor left the county early in the 19th century, we likely will not have much information, especially if you do not know where in the county they lived. A visit to the Delaware County Clerk’s office (607-832-5700) should be your first stop on a research visit to the area. By searching deeds and mortgages, you may find what could be your ancestor’s only paper trail, especially if he or she left before 1850. These records will help you pinpoint where your ancestor lived in the county. With that additional information, we might be able to help you when you come to us.
 - b. If you are researching the history of your home or property in the county, it is important that you go to the County Clerk first. By having the chain of ownership for the property as far back as possible, it will help you when you visit us. We don’t have records organized by property, but we might have records related to one of the previous owners.
- 4) **Be sure that DCHA is the right place for what you are seeking.** Remember that there are records we do not have. Birth, marriage and death certificates are at the town or village in which it took place.

If you do determine that DCHA is the place for your research, please call or e-mail us first. The library is open **by appointment only** during regular library hours, Tuesday and Wednesday from 10am to 3pm. To make an appointment please call (607) 746-3849 or at email dcha@delhi.net

Follow the advice above and with any luck you won’t be a disappointed researcher when you cross our threshold.