**Glossary & Definitions**

Genealogists use a number of terms and records in their work. Learn what these commonly used words mean!

**Ancestor:** A person, typically more remote than a grandparent, whom is a direct blood relative.

**Ancestry:** Family lineage - one's family or ethnic descent.

**Archive:** A place where public records or historical documents are kept.

**Census:** An official recording of information about individuals living within a household. These were compiled every ten years starting in 1790, and give specific information about everyone within a house or dwelling.

**Church and Synagogue Records:** Records kept by religious institutions of parishioners, including marriage certificates, baptisms, confirmations, burials, birth records, Hebrew School attendance, and other materials.

**Descendant:** A person that is descended from a particular ancestor; to be a direct blood relative of a specific ancestor.

**DNA:** The carrier of genetic information that is hereditary and shared across generations of family members.

**Family Group Sheet:** A form designed for the recording of basic birth, marriage, and death information about members of a single family.

**Genealogy:** The study of family ancestries and histories.

**Land Records:** Deeds, mortgages, and other records dealing with the buying and selling of property; they often show ownership, location, and description.

**Maternal:** A relative that is related on the mother’s side of the family.

**Military Records:** Records generated as a result of an individual’s involvement in the armed forces, including draft registration cards, service records, pension records, and bounty land records.

**Naturalization Records:** Records generated through the process of an individual applying for and becoming a citizen of a country.

**Obituary:** A notice of a death, especially found in newspapers, which includes a biography of the person.

**Passenger List:** Records generated in the tracking of individuals arriving or departing a country. Passenger records have changed over time with different questions being asked through varying periods of immigration.

**Paternal:** A relative that is related on the father’s side of the family.

**Primary Records:** Documents and records considered the closest to an event, and most accurate. They are usually created at the time of an event and by someone who was present.

**Probate Records:** Records and documents created during the settling of a person's estate, regardless of whether a person left a will.

**Secondary Records:** Records of a second-hand nature, including published family and oral histories, biographies, and other items generated at a later date by someone who most likely was not present at the event being recorded.

**Vital Records (civil registrations):** These records refer to civil (rather than religious) registrations of births, marriages, and deaths.