ANCESTRY.COM AND LIBRARY EDITION
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I.   Ancestry.com as a tool, not a home base.
   a. It is a place to find records/people and share your verified research.
   b. It is not a home base.
      i. Do not use it as a place to store all of your research. You are storing all of your research on your home computer (with back up on an external hard drive and acid free boxes/folders for originals). Use a family tree software program as your master file of your trees. See reviews at www.cyndislist.com. Also check out the Genealogy Do-Over at www.geneabloggers.com.
      ii. Remain in control of your research. Share as much as you like but don't let the technological advances blur the focus on research.
      iii. Go into websites with a plan. Understand what they have to offer (collections and services) before you start using the site. Don't just jump in and enter names in search boxes and accept their links they "believe" are correct.
         1. Question the content of the website.
         2. When was it updated last?
         3. Research tips, help pages for their website? Wildcard symbols change from site to site. Now many sites have videos on their help pages!
         4. Find collection descriptions.
            a. Where did the site get their documents?
            b. What is included and what is not?
               i. Locations included?
               ii. Dates included?
      iv. Analyze the information before you accept it. Is the family relationship defined by documents or not sourced at all? How valid is it?
         1. What are you actually viewing?
            a. Primary vs. Secondary Source?
            b. Database vs. Digital Collection?
            c. Abstract/Transcription (partial) vs. File/Document? (full)
            d. Why does it matter? Provides validity so you can search further without going down dead end roads or recreating the wheel.

2. Research Standards
   a. Cite all sources!
   b. Make copies (digital and print) of everything. Back up digital files once a month. External hard drive, flash drives. (Sort by record type or surname?)

II. Are you organized?
   a. Start with home records and resources. Ask family members! Revisit these sources!
   b. Sort the information you have gathered.
      i. Pedigree Charts (shows more than 1 generation).
      ii. Family Group Sheets (shows details on each individual family).
      iii. Timelines (shows connections between families and their stories that may intertwine). www.ourtimelines.com
   c. Focus on 1 family at a time when you are looking for records. Make lists to keep on track while researching at institutions or on websites, when you have to make use of short research time. Use a research log, see examples on Ancestry.com.
   d. Start at the end of the life of a person. These records provide the clues to find the earlier paper trail of that person. Especially important with brickwall cases.
   e. Ancestral (Grandfather, Great Grandfather) vs. Collateral? (Aunts, Uncles, Cousins), some of these lines hold the information for your line.
   f. Review and list the information you will need to find.
   g. Make a list of the types of records that will provide that information. Close your eyes and put yourself in that era and area. If you don't come up with ideas, read about the era/area and ask Librarians and Archivists.

III. Ancestry.com vs. Ancestry Library Edition
   a. Ancestry.com (over 32,500 databases and digital collections)
      i. Free Learning Center! Free blog! Free forms! Site Map.
      ii. Interactive Family Trees (enter data directly, various privacy options)
         1. Free account allows you to enter your data but not view records on Ancestry. Go to Site Map, Trees and then Family Trees tab and select Start Your Tree. Download a GEDCOM file from your family tree software program. Add your own documents/photos onto the free account. Use their timeline for free! You can delete your tree at any time but remember that you have shared documents and information that will remain "out there". Choose a few lines, a few generations and a few generations back in time. It's a fishing trip! Try to find other family members who are searching on Ancestry. You'll want to do this with other family tree sites to get more "fish".
         2. Defining relationships. Not clearly noted on Ancestry tree. You have to go into a person's profile to find out they are a partner, not a spouse. It only displays as Spouse, not partner or other.
         3. See who has pulled documents from your tree and then contact them for more information on their connection to your tree. Keep your Message box organized. Create files by surnames and name of researcher.
         4. U.S. and World Edition subscriptions allow you to search Ancestry for documents.
         5. Have family tree information at your fingertips while on the road.
         6. Private setting-keep information for your own use or by invite only.

7. Public setting-may get more responses by other researchers, easier to find you.
8. Watch out for other people's trees. When you pull up a leaf that has leads on it to your family tree, don't just automatically accept other people's trees. Read through their tree and watch for their documentation. Select the name of the tree in the hints list.
9. Read descriptions of collections that are coming up under the leaves. Many are probably secondary resources.
10. Create more than 1 tree. Take chunks from your huge tree and isolate these into separate trees. Easier to locate. Create trees for uncomfirmed lines and make them private.
11. Always back up your trees (export to your home computer, family tree software, flash drives or external hard drives or in the cloud/websites). www.dropbox.com
12. Subscribe a month at a time. Your tree will hold onto its information after you unsubscribe. It just turns into a free subscription. It won't hold images that you found on Ancestry during the subscription unless you download the images from the leaf results and then uploaded them to the Ancestry account.
   iii. Historical Newspaper and Obituary Collections
   iv. Family and Local History Collection
   v. Gale's City Directories (also on film at WHS Library) (some also on www.fold3.com) (more showing up in Library Edition)
   vi. Message Boards (in read-only format on Library Edition)
   vii. You can make corrections to index entries (can't do easily in Library Ed.)
b. Ancestry Library Edition (10,000+ databases and digital collections)
   i. Available at many public libraries.
   ii. Free learning center! Free blog! Free forms!
   iii. New Collections tab.
   iv. Not all family trees will show up in the Library Edition.
   v. Some World Edition resources for free.
   vi. Great for large collections that encompass large areas or eras. Census, passenger lists, vital records, military, land.
   vii. Try this before personal subscription. Learn the basics before investing.
   viii. Save images from the Library Edition and put in your free Ancestry tree.
IV. Search strategies (choose advanced search options every time, aka Show More Options)
   a. Read descriptions of collections to make sure they will include your search criteria! Also it may explain how to find the original records!
   b. Match All Terms (MAT) Search box checked or not checked.
      i. Unchecked pulls more possible hits and rates them. Also it tends to pull up names that connect to aliases and name spellings.
      ii. MAT box checked pulls less hits but more chance they apply to the family.
   c. Global vs. Direct Database (do both!)
      i. Global will search multiple databases. Don't do this search only.
      ii. Direct is good if you know which database you want to focus on. Search screens change with various databases. Content in the search will be different with different record types. More search options by direct.

d. General ideas about searching
    i. Try various combinations with different boxes in advanced search.
        1. Never fill in every box in 1 search.
        2. Try broad and go narrow. Surname and state for example.
        3. With names, first name could be initials instead of full name, or nicknames may be used.
        4. Search by child's name.
        5. Search by wife's name.
        6. Search by location and birth place. No names of people.
        7. Search by location. Only state. Then add more detail.
        8. Be creative. When in doubt, leave it out.
        9. Keep trying the database over time. More information may be added. Search options also change sometimes in databases.
    ii. Question your existing information about the family.
        1. Are you sure of the location? What documents back up the information about locations? Use your timeline!
        2. Names are spelled various ways by various people! Some of these people are outside the family. Keep a list. Say the name out loud and see how you would spell it phonetically.
        3. Problems with census takers and indexers. Names could be reversed, index says last name when it is actually the first name. Some letters read completely incorrectly. Messes up soundex code.
e. Wildcards and Soundex
    i. Wildcards (manipulate with 2 symbols)
        1. A few letters with * will pull up any words that start or end with those letters.
        2. A few letters with an ? and the finish of the word will pull up those with differences in the spelling where the ? shows up.
    ii. Soundex only pulls up names that have changes in vowels and silent letter types. If a consonant changes in the first 3 consonants in the word, it will change the coding system used by the Soundex code.

V. What will you probably NOT FIND ON ANCESTRY?
a. Birth, Marriage and Death Records for most states.
b. Probate files. (Keep an eye on www.familysearch.org.)
c. Civil Court Case Files. (Adoptions and Divorces could be in this set.)
d. Family and Local History Books still under copyright.
e. Photo collections.
f. With every collection, consider the other institutions that may hold that type of record.
    i. Maps (local and regional historical/genealogical archives/libraries)
    ii. Photos (ditto)
    iii. Legal documents (county clerk of court, state archives)
    iv. Current documents (local and regional…)

VI. Keeping up with it all
   a. Use a free email account at sites like www.yahoo.com to use just for online newsletters (avoid junk mail and focus on this news of services and collections)
      - www.familytreemagazine.com
      - http://genealogy.about.com
      - www.genealogyintime.com
      - Send an email to news@familysearch.org
   b. Check out blogs for articles on genealogical topics.
      - www.genealogyblog.com
      - http://blog.eogn.com (Dick Eastman)
      - Ancestry.com blog