PREPARING FOR A TRIP TO THE WISCONSIN HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Lori B. Bessler
Library Archives
Lori.Bessler@wisconsinhistory.org
608-264-6519

I. Information about WHS collections

A. Library owns published materials from across the United States and Canada.
B. Collection of family and local histories started in the 1850s and always had a large scope.
C. The Archives is the State Archives of Wisconsin so it owns governmental collections deposited with us from various state and local agencies.
D. Map collection in Archives is international in scope.
E. Location is on the UW Madison campus. We have access to a variety of online materials because we are on this campus.

II. 5 Steps to Follow

A. Choose which family lines you will research on the trip. Choose more than 1.
B. Organize what you already have found. Read it all over before you come.
C. Create a research plan. Make a list of “basic” genealogical records to locate. (Vital Records, Censuses, Newspapers)
D. Write out the more problematic records to locate.
   i. Military
   ii. Land
   iii. Immigration (passenger lists and citizenship papers)
   iv. Court, etc.
E. Look at online resources before you come. Print out entries from catalogs.
   i. Online Catalog (Library and Archives in 1 catalog)
   ii. Online Digital Collections (www.wisconsinhistory.org)
   iii. Online Indexes (www.deathindexes.com)
   iv. Ancestry (Library Edition)
   v. FamilySearch.org (digital collections, books, film to order)
   vi. www.findagrave.com
III. What should you bring to Madison on your trip?

A. Pencils and pens.
B. Flash drive, digital camera, scanner
C. You will need to use a credit card to add money to our new copy card.
D. Notebook (not lots of scratch paper).
E. Printouts of family group sheets, pedigree charts and timelines
F. Lists of records to find and questions to ask.
G. Printouts from online catalogs and indexes.
H. Your logins and passwords for sites like FamilySearch.org or Ancestry.com

IV. Online Catalogs (found under Research Your Family History at www.wisconsinhistory.org)

A. Archives
   i. Manuscripts, public records, photos, maps, etc.
   ii. Search by location (town, county, state, in separate searches to find records based on those 3 different authors) and the type of record.
B. Library
   i. Published materials, but exceptions exist
   ii. Use AND between subject words and put " " around phrases.

V. WWW.WISCONSINHISTORY.ORG

A. Research Your Family History (blue button on www.wisconsinhistory.org)
   i. Name index covers many resources (pre-1907 vital records, property records, obituaries, biographical sketches)
   ii. Only indexes some collections. Still need to look through newspapers, etc.
B. Wisconsin Historical Images (from the front page of www.wisconsinhistory.org)
C. Roster of Wisconsin Volunteers (look at Wisconsin in the Civil War)

VI. Strategies to make the most out of your trip to WHS.

A. Interlibrary Loan (newspapers)
B. ARC Network (see Research Your Family History blue button on website)
C. Online digital collections

VII. What is left to find at WHS in Madison?

B. Family and Local Histories (not online if still under copyright)
C. Maps (Sanborn maps, atlases, plat maps) (not available through ARC network)
D. City Directories (check Ancestry and Fold3 websites)
E. Censuses (special schedules not yet on Ancestry) (Agricultural, Mortality, Industrial)
F. Genealogical and Historical materials for all other states and Canada.