



Reverse Genealogy: Finding Cousins and Chasing the Living

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So, you've done a great job finding your ancestors, but you're not sure where to start to try to locate their living descendants. In this session, we'll cover tips and tricks you can use to safely and respectfully unearth the identities of your living cousins.

Laying the Foundation

A researcher usually begins searching for living relatives to:

- locate biological family
- identify a cousin who is the biological parent of an adopted DNA match/cousin
- find or return documents, photos, and ephemera related to ancestors
- discover others who may also be elders in the family
- atonement for past events
- form and solidify family connections

Taking Inventory

Have I done my due diligence when it comes to researching my own origins?

- How well sourced and analyzed is my family history project?
- Have I used DNA to support my traditional genealogy research?
- Can I accept that my research – or that the research left to me – may be wrong?

What are my motivations for trying to find living family members?

- The “Right to Know” versus The “Do No Harm” creed

What is my plan if challenges arise?

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My Go-To's For Finding Living Relatives

Genetic Genealogy

- Autosomal DNA Testing: AncestryDNA, 23andMe, MyHeritage, FamilyTree DNA, Living DNA
- Gender Based Testing: Y-DNA, mtDNA

Traditional Genealogy

- 1940 US Census
- Vital Records (birth, marriage, death indexes or certificates)

Newspapers and Periodicals

- News coverage
- Obituaries
- Newspapers.com Public Clippings

Death Related

- Mortuary/Funeral Home websites
- Legacy.com

Public Records Sites

- *County Government*
- *Public records aggregators*
- *Google*



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My Go-To's For Finding Living Relatives (Continued)

Online Family Trees

- Ancestry - Public and Private, Searchable Family Trees
- FamilySearch Family Tree
- Family genealogy website

Social Media

- Facebook
- Instagram

Best Practices for Making Contact

- Be genuine and upfront about your reasons for contacting people
- Be clear on your motivations
- A word about unsolicited messages on Facebook