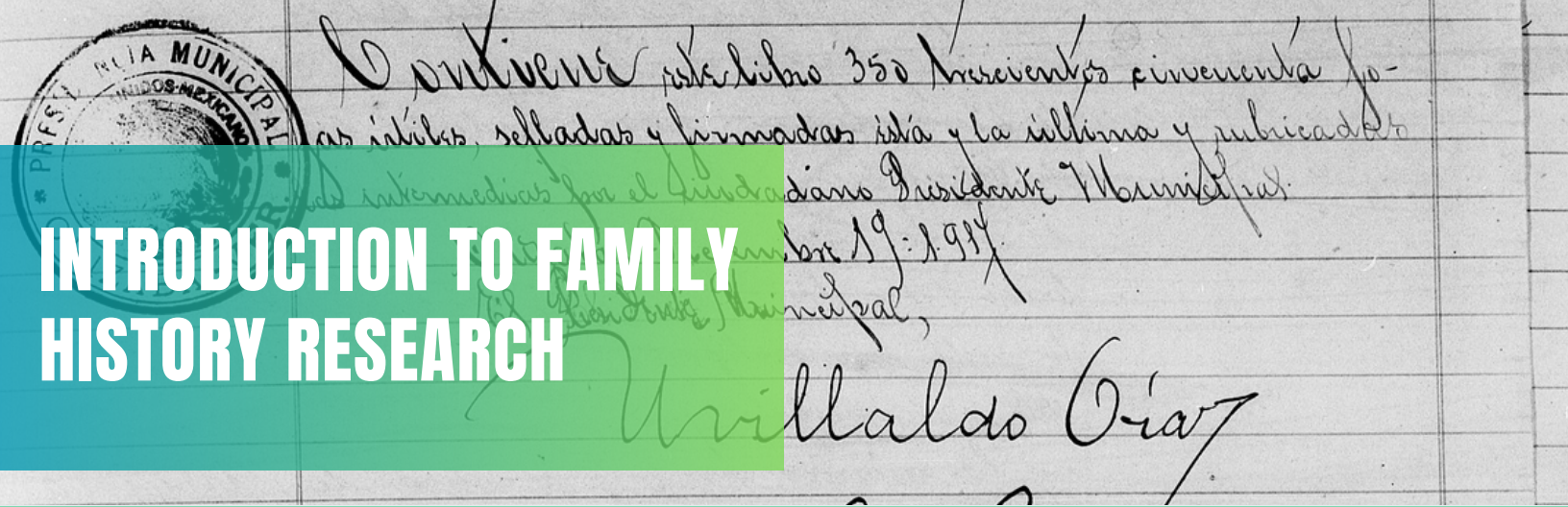




INTRODUCTION TO FAMILY HISTORY RESEARCH

Family history is the study and recording of family names, stories, and connections across generations. It helps us understand how our ancestors lived, moved, and adapted to the world around them. Even if your family history feels short or fragmented, every detail contributes to a larger picture.

Through family history, you can:

- Strengthen identity and belonging
- Preserve stories for future generations
- Reveal medical, cultural, or social histories that still shape our lives today

Just like a puzzle, the key to meaningful family history research is patience and curiosity.

1 What is it?

Family history is the study of relatives, their stories, and how their lives connect over time. It combines personal memory with historical research to create a fuller picture of who we are and where we came from.

2 How does it work?

Start with yourself, then work backward:

- Record your full name, birth date, and birthplace.
- Add parents, grandparents, and siblings.
- Gather what you can—birth certificates, obituaries, photo albums, family Bibles, military records, or oral stories.

Core principles:

- Work from the known to the unknown.
- Write down your sources, even if it's "Aunt Linda said this in 2024."
- Expect spelling changes, nicknames, and small errors in records.
- Progress comes step by step—not all at once.

3 What will you need?

You'll need time, curiosity, and a few good tools. Reliable records are your foundation—each one adds another piece to your family's story.

4 Where can you start?

Free resources:

- **FamilySearch.org**: world's largest free database of genealogical records
- **RootsTech Family History Conference**: online attendance is free, but there is a fee to attend in person
- **Family History Centers**: local research help and resources
- U.S. National Archives: census, immigration, and military records
- **Find a Grave**: cemetery and headstone records
- State archives, county courthouses, and local historical societies
- Public libraries (they may provide free access to Ancestry, HeritageQuest, or newspapers)

Low-cost options:

- Ancestry.com, Newspapers.com, MyHeritage — paid, but with free trials or library access
- **Goldie May**: research organization tool (some free features)
- Google Books and WorldCat: books and archives from libraries worldwide