

Genealogy Rocks!

Citing Sources for Genealogists

Citing genealogy sources is similar to eating five fruits and vegetables a day. We all know we should, but most of us fall short of the goal. While eating well is crucial to physical health, citing sources is just as crucial to genealogy research.



Carol Stetser

One of the main reasons to cite sources is to check the information for validity. Many of us find great family trees online that answer lots of genealogical questions, only to realize that they are essentially worthless because sources are not given. For example, I found a tree that showed my family as descended from Christopher Martin, who arrived on the Mayflower. I was thrilled, but there were no sources, after some research, I found that Christopher Martin had no surviving children, thus sinking my Mayflower hopes.

Another reason to cite sources is to revisit earlier research. Beginners may think they'll never need to revisit earlier research or they'll remember where they found it. From personal experience, the piece of info that wasn't recorded is the source you'll need, and you won't remember where you found it!

Citing sources isn't that difficult; it's actually similar to what we learned in school when writing research papers. There are several different formats used; but the best reference is Elizabeth Shown Mills' book *Evidence Explained: Citing History Sources from Artifacts to Cyberspace*. It's available at bookstores or local libraries. While eating all those veggies may remain an elusive goal for some of us, citing sources is much easier to swallow.

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❖ *Genealogy author and speaker Carol Stetser is vice president and society researcher for Larimer County Genealogical Society.*