3-2017

Genealogy Notes from Emily March 2017

Emily Schroeder  
Reader and Information Services, Emily.Schroeder@maine.gov

Maine State Library

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalmaine.com/msl_docs

Recommended Citation

Schroeder, Emily and Maine State Library, "Genealogy Notes from Emily March 2017" (2017). Library Documents. 115.  
http://digitalmaine.com/msl_docs/115

This Text is brought to you for free and open access by the Maine State Library at Maine State Documents. It has been accepted for inclusion in Library Documents by an authorized administrator of Maine State Documents. For more information, please contact statedocs@maine.gov.
“Who’s on First?”
Numbering Schemes for Genealogy

Thought it might be a good time to review the primary numbering systems used in genealogies. Who knows? You may just want to write one of your own! Let’s start with the one that’s hardest to spell and pronounce: ahnentafel. It is German for “table of ancestors”. Starting with 1 in the present time (or the person of interest), you are working your way back. The higher the number, the further back you’re going. In an ahnentafel chart, the person’s father is number 2 and the mother is 3; paternal grandparents are 4 and 5, etc. The females beyond the first person are always an odd number. Parents may be found by doubling the number of the child. So, everyone has a modern, Arabic number. Basic stuff! Now let’s add another type: Henry Numbering.

We start again with the number 1 in the present time (or the person of interest), and birth order. The higher the number, the further back you’re going. In an ahnentafel chart, the person’s father is number 2 and the mother is 3; paternal grandparents are 4 and 5, etc. The females beyond the first person are always an odd number. Parents may be found by doubling the number of the child. So, everyone has a modern, Arabic number. Basic stuff! Now let’s add another type: Henry Numbering.

We start again with the number 1 in the present time (or the person of interest), and birth order. The higher the number, the further back you’re going. In an ahnentafel chart, the person’s father is number 2 and the mother is 3; paternal grandparents are 4 and 5, etc. The females beyond the first person are always an odd number. Parents may be found by doubling the number of the child. So, everyone has a modern, Arabic number. Basic stuff! Now let’s add another type: Henry Numbering.

We start again with the number 1 in the present time (or the person of interest), and birth order. The higher the number, the further back you’re going. In an ahnentafel chart, the person’s father is number 2 and the mother is 3; paternal grandparents are 4 and 5, etc. The females beyond the first person are always an odd number. Parents may be found by doubling the number of the child. So, everyone has a modern, Arabic number. Basic stuff! Now let’s add another type: Henry Numbering.

Another important system is called Register Style, used by the New England Historical and Genealogical Register since 1870. This time the immigrant ancestor is given the number 1. His (or her) children are assigned lower-case roman birth-order numbers. If more information is given on an individual, they also have an Arabic number based on the one last assigned. Some folks like to use a modified version of this which gives an Arabic number to most children. Then adds a plus symbol to the left of any person whose line is carried forward in the document.

You’ll also notice the use of super- script numbers and letters. A number with the person indicates the generation from the first (immigrant) ancestor. A superscript capital letter shows the generations of ascent from the immigrant. Superscript small letters are used to complete a word or name.

Abbreviations are plentiful within any genealogy. Many authors are kind enough to explain them in their works; others assume prior knowledge. The best source I can think of is Kip Sperny’s Abbreviations and Acronyms: A Guide for Family Historians (Ancestry Pub., 2003) It’s in our Genealogy Reference section: 929.103 S751a 2003.


See you in the stacks!