

Your Family, Your History

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PART 1: RESEARCH IN THE UNITED STATES

1. Start with yourself and work backwards in time.
2. Gather your tools.
3. Create a pedigree chart, starting with yourself, your parents, and your grandparents. Fill in what you know and add to it as you gather more information.
4. Create a family group sheet for every married couple on your pedigree chart. Fill in what you know and add to it as you gather more information.
5. Gather your treasures. Ask about items your relatives might have. Look for old passports, letters and envelopes with return addresses, naturalization papers, anything written in Japanese.
6. Talk to the oldest living relatives. Take notes or record the interview. Bring artifacts and treasures with you to help spur their memory. Ask if they have any memorabilia. Be prepared to photograph or scan any items.
7. Keep track of the information you are collecting either in a research log, notebook, or computer program.
8. Collect vital records. These are the birth, marriage, and death records of each person on your pedigree chart. If you are able, start collecting data on the individuals in your family group sheets, too.
9. Look for census records. The federal government started keeping track of the population in 1790, but very few *nikkei* are in the census before 1880. Start with 1940, and then go back until you arrive at your immigrant ancestor. Census records can have important clues for finding additional records. Be sure to look for year of immigration, citizenship status. Remember to follow clusters of families.
10. Other important resources include immigration and passenger records, land records, newspapers, Social Security applications, military records (including WWI draft registration cards and MIS database), and cemeteries.
11. Internment and Incarceration records are rich with biographical information. In terms of individuals, only WRA Internee Data Files and U.S. Final Accountability Rosters are available online. The actual case files must be ordered from the National Archives. If your family was in a WRA camp, you should order a file for each person. If your ancestor was in a Department of Justice camp, an Enemy Alien case file may exist. Names can be searched online through National Archives. There will also be a separate file for each family member who received reparations.
12. Assembly Center Records can be viewed on microfilm at the National Archives in College Park, MD, and in San Bruno, CA. Some films are missing.

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13. Assembly Center Newspapers and WRA Camp Newspapers can be found on Ancestry.com, Densho.org, and the Library of Congress. Both sets are available through the National Archives. Camp newspapers have also been added to the subscription site GenealogyBank.com.
14. Not all Picture Brides have case files. Those files that do exist are from California and Hawai'i. They are located at the National Archives in San Bruno and are indexed on Ancestry.com as "California, Chinese Arrival Case Files Index, 1884-1940."
15. If your immigrant ancestor was living in the U.S. in August 1940, he or she likely has an AR-2 (Alien Registration form), which can be ordered through USCIS. If he or she was living in the US in 1944, there may be an A-File, or a C-File for those who later became naturalized citizens. The earliest files have been released to the National Archives. Check archives.gov and search for your immigrant by name. If located, place the order for the A-file by email. If you cannot locate your ancestors by name, place an online index search with the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services.

PART 2: RESEARCH IN JAPAN

1. Review all your clues. Look for the name of the village or city where your immigrant ancestor originated.
2. You should know how to write your family name in *kanji*.
3. You are entitled by law to receive a copy of your family *koseki*, if you can prove your direct lineage to the person listed on the document. Use all of the information you have already gathered to prove your relationship to your immigrant ancestor.
4. Find the municipal office which corresponds to your ancestral village either online or in the *Zenkoku Shichosan Yoran*. Many rural communities have merged or changed names. Most city offices have the information online. Google translate is helpful.
5. Place an order for your *koseki tohon* through the city office. Each office has its own form, but the process is similar throughout the country. You can also hire a researcher to do this for you or contact the Family History Center in Tokyo for assistance.
6. Translating old *kanji* can be tricky. There are many translation services available and hiring a professional translator is recommended.
7. Once you have the first *koseki* translated, you may have enough information to order more, such as those of the maternal lines.
8. *Kakochō* are Buddhist death records, which are often held at the family home and/or temple. These records usually have posthumous names along with the date of death or burial; sometimes given names are included, especially with newer documents.
9. Don't let the language stop you! Take a journey, either through research or in person.



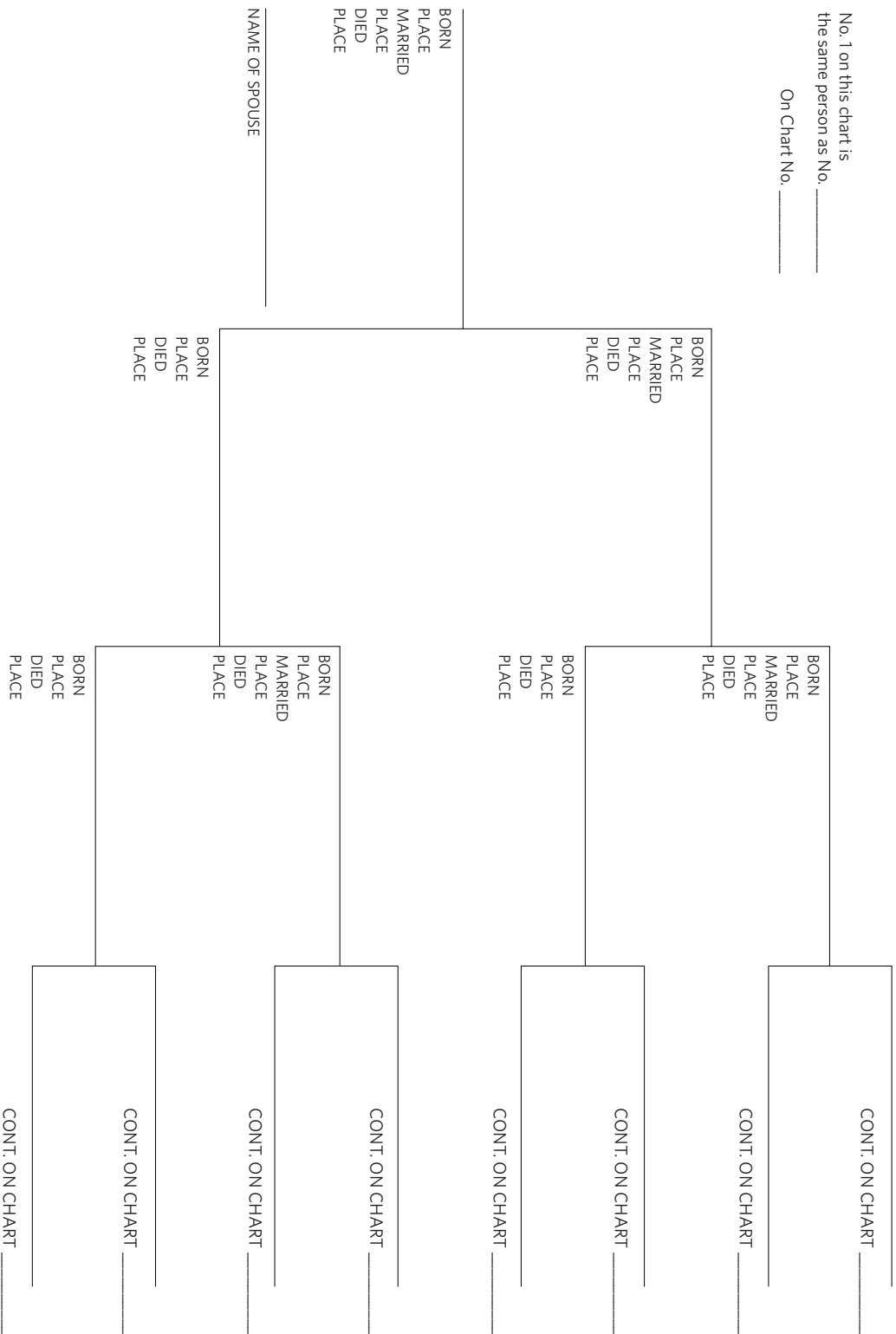
Ancestral Chart



Chart No. _____

No. 1 on this chart is
the same person as No. _____

On Chart No. _____



Form # FT20

<http://www.ancestry.com/save/charts/anchar.htm>

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