

Citing Sources

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For most documents, such as censuses, land records, passenger lists, vital records, and so forth, unfortunately, there is no consensus in our field for “properly” citing sources. Various authors and editors cite a census, for example, just a bit differently.

Here’s how Elizabeth Shown Mills in *Evidence! Citation and Analysis for the Family Historian* (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co., 1997), page 73, recommends you should cite a microfilmed federal census in an end note:

Mortimer Edwards household, 1880 U.S. census, Winona County, Minnesota, population schedule, town of Winona, enumeration district [ED] 289, supervisor’s district [SD] 1, sheet 19, dwelling 172, family 182, National Archives micropublication T9, roll 637.

Using that same reference, here’s how Emily Anne Croom in *The Sleuth Book for Genealogists* (Cincinnati: Betterway Books, 2000), page 235, suggests you should cite a microfilmed federal census film in an end note:

Mortimer Edwards household, U.S. Census of 1880, Winona County, Minnesota, e.d. 289, sheet 19, dwelling 172, family 182, National Archives microfilm T9, roll 637.

Here’s how I would cite that same microfilmed federal census in an end note, if it’s not clear from the text who the head of household was:

1880 federal census, Mortimer Edwards household, Minnesota, Winona Co., ED 289, sheet 19, #172-182.

If the head of household’s name was misspelled on the census, then I put the name in quotes: “Mort Edward” household.

Now look at how some of the scholarly genealogical journals cite censuses. Again, I’ll use that same census reference, but write it based on the style the journals use.

From the *New England Historical and Genealogical Register*:

1880 U.S. Census, Winona County, Minnesota, roll 637, ED 289, sheet 19, line 15, dwelling 172, family 182.

From *The American Genealogist*:

1880 Federal Census, Winona Co., Minn., E.D. 289, sheet 19, line 15, #172/182.

And, finally, from the *National Genealogical Society Quarterly*:

1880 U.S. Census, Winona County, Minnesota, population schedule, town of Winona, sheet 19 (taken 14-15 June), dwelling 172, family 182, National Archives microfilm T9, roll 637.

Notice that each citation has slight variations. Is one right and the others wrong? No. They are merely different format styles, and you'll find many other styles besides these if you look carefully at published genealogies and other journals. While genealogists may not agree 100 percent on the style for citing a source, they do agree that the critical point is that each citation contains all of the information needed to find that source.

But this is just one important aspect to citing sources. The other is consistency in style for each record type you cite. If you choose to follow the Mills format for citing censuses, for example, then follow it for all of your census citations. Or if you choose to follow Croom's or my style for citing censuses, then do so for all of your census citations.

So here's the simplified Carmack Rule for Citing Sources: A citation must have complete identifying information, and each record type should be cited consistently. Or as my colleague Robert Charles Anderson, FASG, says even more succinctly, "Be clear and consistent."

Below are some examples on how to cite sources:

BOOKS

As an end note or footnote:

- ♦ Indent first line of citation; all other lines are flush left.
- ♦ Author's name as spoken, *Title*, (place of publication: name of publisher, year of publication.)

¹Sharon DeBartolo Carmack, *Organizing Your Family History Search* (Cincinnati: Betterway Books, 1999), 43-51.

In a bibliography:

- ♦ First line of citation is flush left; all other lines are indented.
- ♦ Author's last name, then first name. *Title*. Place of Publication: name of publisher, date of publication.

Book, one author:

Carmack, Sharon DeBartolo. *Organizing Your Family History Search*. Cincinnati: Betterway Books, 1999.

Book, two authors:

Milner, Paul and Linda Jonas. *A Genealogist's Guide to Discovering Your English Ancestors*. Cincinnati: Betterway Books, 2000.

Book, three authors:

Shammas, Carole, Marylyn Salmon, and Michel Dahlin. *Inheritance in America: From Colonial Times to the Present*. Reprint. Galveston, Tex.: Frontier Press, 1997.

ARTICLES

As an end note or footnote:

- ♦ Indent first line of citation; all other lines are flush left.
- ♦ Author's name as spoken, "Article Title," *Name of Journal* volume number (date): page numbers.

¹Sharon DeBartolo Carmack, "Dear Diary," *Family Tree Magazine* 1 (June 2000): 24-28.

In a bibliography:

- ♦ First line of citation is flush left; all other lines are indented.
- ♦ Author's last name, first name. "Article Title," *Name of Journal* volume number (date): page numbers.

Carmack, Sharon DeBartolo. "Dear Diary." *Family Tree Magazine* 1 (June 2000): 24-28.

Article on the Internet

Carmack, Sharon DeBartolo. "The Secret to Writing a Compelling Family History,"
<<http://www.genealogy.com>>, posted September 1999.

UNPUBLISHED RECORDS

Authors should fully cite all sources and must be consistent in their citation style. Betterway Genealogy Books recommends Appendix B: Guide to Documentation in Emily Croom's *The Sleuth Book for Genealogists* (Cincinnati: Betterway Books, 2000), when there is a question on citing unpublished or original records, such as censuses, deeds, wills, passenger lists, etc.

For citing home sources, such as photographs, artifacts, letters, diaries, and oral history interviews, see Katherine Scott Sturdevant, *Bringing Your Family History to Life through Social History* (Cincinnati: Betterway Books, 2000).