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# Internet GENEALOGY

January 2008

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Cindy Thomson takes us on an in-depth tour of Cyndi's List, one of the cornerstones of online genealogy

- **JUMPING OVER HURDLES IN WESTERN EUROPEAN RESEARCH**

Leslie Albrecht Huber shows you how to overcome research obstacles overseas

- **PASSENGER RECORDS AND NATURALIZATION RECORDS**

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- **LIBRARY OF CONGRESS**

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## ANCESTRY SOLD

JUST AS THIS ISSUE of *Internet Genealogy* was going to press, it was announced that Ancestry.com and The Generations Network (its parent company) had been bought out.

As our regular readers know, Ancestry is one of the biggest players in the genealogy and family history market, with a large online presence. Ancestry is also a publisher of software (Family Tree Maker) and its own magazine (*Ancestry*).

Spectrum Equity Investors, <http://www.spectrumequity.com/>, paid \$300 million for a majority interest in the company. Spectrum is a private equity firm based in Menlo Park and Boston and has been a shareholder in The Generations Network since 2003.

According to a press release dated October 17, this buy out was done to support and accelerate the company's strategic direction and growth plan.

Founded in 1983, The Generations Network's portfolio of sites and products includes Ancestry.com and seven international Ancestry sites, such as Ancestry.ca and Ancestry.co.uk. The company also runs MyFamily.com, RootsWeb.com, Genealogy.com, in addition to Family Tree Maker software and

*Ancestry Magazine*. According to the press release, the company's current management team will continue to lead the company.

In the press release, Vic Parker, Managing Partner of Spectrum Equity Investors stated that the family history and family networking markets are "growing and rapidly evolving" and many *Internet Genealogy* readers would agree that genealogy research has changed dramatically from what it was just a decade ago and will continue to change as more and more information becomes available.

Also according to the press release of 17 October 2007, The Generations Network properties have more than 900,000 paying subscribers and receive 8.2 million worldwide unique visitors per month.

As of press time, no additional terms of the transaction had been disclosed.



*Ancestry.com's homepage.*

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# Internet GENEALOGY

DECEMBER/JANUARY 2008

VOLUME 2, NUMBER 5

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Published by Moorshead Magazines Ltd.  
505 Consumers Road, Suite 500,  
Toronto, ON, M2J 4V8 Canada  
(416) 491-3699 Fax (416) 491-3996  
**Moorshead Magazines also publishes**  
*Family Chronicle* and *History Magazine*.

POSTAL INFORMATION — CANADA  
Publications Mail Agreement No. 40062922  
Return undeliverable Canadian addresses to:  
*Internet Genealogy*, Circulation Dept.,  
505 Consumers Road, Suite 500,  
Toronto, Ontario, M2J 4V8 Canada.  
E-mail: [general@internet-genealogy.com](mailto:general@internet-genealogy.com)

POSTAL INFORMATION — UNITED STATES  
Postmaster send address corrections to:  
*Internet Genealogy*, PO Box 194, Niagara Falls, NY  
14304.  
E-mail: [general@internet-genealogy.com](mailto:general@internet-genealogy.com)

ISSN 1718-0414

© 2007 Moorshead Magazines Ltd.

### SUBSCRIPTIONS

*Internet Genealogy* is published six times a year  
(Apr/May, Jun/Jul, Aug/Sep, Oct/Nov, Dec/Jan,  
Feb/Mar).

#### Subscription rate for US (US funds):

1 year (6 issues) \$28,  
2 years (12 issues) \$45, 3 years (18 issues) \$64.

#### Subscription rate for Canada (Cdn funds):

1 year (6 issues) \$32,  
2 years (12 issues) \$52, 3 years (18 issues) \$67.  
Please add GST/HST (GST# 139340186 RT).  
Quebec residents add 7.5% QST.

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Toll-Free Subscription Line:

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Printed in Canada

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# Net Notes

## BAGNÓWKA: ONLINE IMAGES OF POLAND AND EASTERN EUROPE

<http://www.bagnowka.com>

BAGNÓWKA IS a website developed by a travel agency that believes tourism should include a study of both history and culture. For Poland and other areas of Eastern Europe, history is forever marked by WWII.

Bagnówka's site does not merely advertise its own tours, but provides a repository for an amazing collection of photographs that gives genealogists a glimpse of the past.

The site's "A-Z Gallery" shows photographs of the country prior to 1945. Visitors can participate by adding images of their own. In the future, the site plans to add current images of the same locations. The alphabetical index lists the towns with photos and indicates the number available. A large city like Warszawa has photos of churches, palaces and parks, statues, streets, bridges, and buildings just to name a few.

Map lovers will enjoy the "Old Maps Gallery", which shows images of maps prior to 1945. According to the site, these maps will allow researchers to see the layout of towns which may no longer exist since many were destroyed in WWII.

The "Cemeteries" section offers photos from hundreds of cemeteries. There are three collections: Jewish, Christian and Muslim. The site explains that old cemeteries are places of great cultural value and many of the old tombstones that have been photographed are truly works of art. Even if they are not the graves of your own ancestors, their beauty offers a glimpse into the cultural life of the country. The site has thousands of photographs for this section. Some photos available include satellite views of cemeteries, cemetery buildings or individual headstones. The headstones sometimes include a photo of the deceased. Under Jewish cemeteries, there are more than 1,000 photographs for the

pre-1945 period and more than 9,400 from 1945 to today. Under Christian cemeteries, there are 121 photographs dated pre-1945 and more than 9,200 from

1945 to today. There are 144 photos in the Muslim cemeteries category. In addition, there is a special "color restoration" section of Jewish tombstones that have been colorfully painted and decorated.

The most robust section of the website is "World War II 1939-1945". In this section, the photographs were taken by German Wehrmacht soldiers. The site is not clear on how these photos were obtained, but they offer a unique view of that period of history. There are more than 3,300 photos in the following categories: September 1939, Warszawa and other towns, Holocaust, War Prisoners, Life in war time, War cemeteries, Horses, Damage, Expulsion, Russia, War victims, Children of the war, Collaboration, and Communism. It is truly a fascinating look at the time period.

Smaller sections on the site include photos of Minorities and Wooden Architecture. The site's search feature allows searches by both town name and surname. Because users can add photographs from their own collections, the site has the potential to grow considerably.

In closing, it is interesting to note the name of the project, Bagnówka. Bagnówka is a district in Białystok that contains the largest Jewish cemetery in northeast Poland, which is located next to a Catholic cemetery, which is in turn located next to an Orthodox cemetery. The three cemeteries existing in peace next to each other is symbolic of what the site hopes to accom-

plish — a peaceful partnership of many different people offering insight into their culture and history.

— DONNA J. POINTKOUSKI



*Top: The Bagnówka website.*

*Middle: A colorized image of a Jewish gravestone from Sokolów Podl in present-day Poland from the Bagnówka website.*

*Bottom: A Jewish gravestone with painted letters in Wysokie Mazowieckie in present-day Poland also from the Bagnówka website.*

## FREE PUBLIC RECORDS DIRECTORY

<http://publicrecords.onlinesearches.com/>

MORE AND MORE municipalities, counties and states are making data accessible via the Internet. To learn what is available for where you are researching, visit the Free Public Records Directory website. You will find links to criminal records, civil court records, marriage records, divorce records, real and personal property records, recorded documents, jail and inmate records, sex offender records, wanted person records and other free public records.

Note that state laws vary greatly in terms of what kind of information can be made public and that the degree to which municipalities and counties are making data available online varies dramatically. Also, many of the efforts to post information online were not started till the late 1990s (or that is the data that is available). Sometimes information goes back to the 1980s and even much further. Some entities are adding older data as time and finances permit.

To start, you type in your zip code or city and state of interest, then you're typically directed to a county level list (since many records are kept at this level). You also have the option to click on a particular state and find state level records before looking at county level records. For each type of record listed, you will find the following:

- Free public records database or lists
- Contact information for public records holder
- Paid access to public records

I checked out Las Vegas ,Nevada and learned that Las Vegas is in Clark County. For Clark County, there is information on: Assessor Records, Recorder/Registrar of Deeds, Census Information Summary, District Courts, Jail and Inmate Records, a link to the Clark County website and more. Clicking on Recorder/Registrar of Deeds brings up the Clark County Recorder web page and we learn that you can search on deeds going back to 1950! Each record type will have free, info or paid indicating that there

is some access to records online or that information about record availability and access procedures is available or that there is a fee-based access service.

What about a less populated and less famous locale? I also checked out Newtown, Connecticut, which I knew was in Fairfield County. Though you are directed to the Fairfield County page, it is clear that Assessor records are handled by each municipality since one finds: Brookfield, CT Assessor Database, Danbury, CT Assessor Database, Fairfield, CT Assessor Database, et al. Otherwise, there is only

Census Information Summary available. So, Connecticut has not yet made available, via the Internet, many of its local records.

And, let's also check out a city — Philadelphia. Philadelphia is in Philadelphia County and there are many, many records available online. There are Assessor Records, Recorder/Registrar of Deeds records, Recorders Grantor/Grantee Index (a fee service for records from 1976 to the present, and a historical index that has deeds back to 1619!). You can look at the deed indices, organized by century and year and then alphabetically by individual. Many types of court records are available along with police department records

and much more.

The biggest challenge we face when searching through online county records is that most of these databases dare you to figure out what time period is covered. You typically find this out by just doing a search and seeing the oldest record that is displayed. Some of the websites will have FAQs or other information pages to assist you in your search.

As you can see, what is available varies dramatically and you'll definitely want to check out the community you are researching. Like Philadelphia, you might find that some wonderful information is available online! — **DIANE L. RICHARD**



*The Free Public Records Directory website.*

### INTERNET GENEALOGY FEEDBACK

The editors of *Internet Genealogy* love to hear from you, the reader. When we attend or exhibit at conventions, we have dozens of people who come up to us to comment on the magazine.

Almost all the comments are kind; these are nice to hear, but the most useful feedback is critical comments, remarks about specific articles and ideas for future issues.

We don't want you to wait until you see us in person. Let us know how we are doing; we really do read all your comments!

Send your e-mails to [feedback@internet-genealogy.com](mailto:feedback@internet-genealogy.com).

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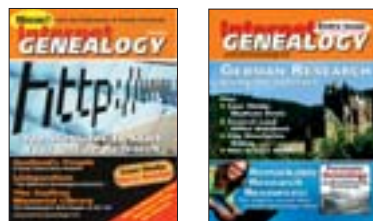


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# The Hidden Web: Beneath the Surface

**GEORGE G. MORGAN  
UNCOVERS ONLINE  
GENEALOGY  
INFORMATION YOU  
DIDN'T EVEN KNOW  
EXISTED (AND SHOWS  
YOU HOW TO FIND IT!)**



THE LAST 15 YEARS have seen an explosion of information being placed on the Internet, especially for genealogy. Although the indexes, record transcriptions and digitized images make our work easier in many ways, it is still necessary to combine Internet-based research resources with 'traditional' research. In other words, it is still essential to use both print and Internet resources as pointers to original records so that we can examine and analyze them. Unless you have personally examined and verified data included in original records, you cannot be certain that what you found on the Internet is accurate. That is one of the dark sides of the web.

**LOCATE THE HIDDEN AND OBSCURE**  
Let's begin with a very obscure area of the Internet: hidden websites. Why are they hidden? There are thousands of websites that are not listed in genealogy-related indexes. These include databases, government sites, historical timelines, family and local histories and many, many more resources. Databases' content is almost never indexed by search engines. That data is only accessible when you visit the main webpage of the database, and then enter search

queries. Only at that time is the content retrieved and presented to you in a search results list for that specific database. You won't often find any of these resources in Cyndi's List, [www.cyndislist.com](http://www.cyndislist.com), or in other compiled lists of genealogical databases; you must

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**There are literally thousands of websites that are not listed in genealogy-related indexes.**

---

be prepared to search for them. Let me provide three examples for your experimentation.

#### *Example One*

There are many extraordinary websites containing digitized historical map images. Two of my favorites are the Perry-Castañeda Library Map Collection at the University of Texas at Austin, [www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/](http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/) and the David Rumsey Historical Map Collection, [www.davidrumsey.com](http://www.davidrumsey.com). Neither of these, however, will give you access to all you might want to examine for a given geographical location. It is a good

practice to look for multiple historical map sites so that you locate as many options as possible.

It is a simple process to use your favorite search engine to locate more resources specific to the area you are researching. For the search I structured to locate historical maps of Michigan, I enclosed "historical map" in quotes to make it an exact phrase of contiguous words. I also omitted the "s" that would have pluralized 'map'. By using the singular rather than the plural, I expanded my search results probabilities to include websites that include both "map" and "maps" in the results.

Among the 45,800 search results with which I was presented were the two mapping collections mentioned above. And yet, there were scores of other sites that provided equally excellent resources, just three of which are listed here.

- University of Michigan Map Library, which includes huge numbers of links to other sites, [www.lib.umich.edu/maplib/historical.htm](http://www.lib.umich.edu/maplib/historical.htm)
- University of Alabama, [http://alabamamaps.ua.edu/historicalmaps/us\\_states/michigan/index.html](http://alabamamaps.ua.edu/historicalmaps/us_states/michigan/index.html)
- MI Historical County Lines, <http://jrshelby.com/hcl/mi.htm>

## Hidden Web

### Example Two

How many databases have you missed? Often the entrance to a valuable database is only marked with the word "database" on the webpage. Let's say that you may have had ancestors in colonial South Carolina. Certainly the major commercial database sites may contain data that provide clues and data. However, there is more out there than you think.

The image here shows the search I structured. You will note that I first indicated "genealogy" so as to narrow the search to web-



sites containing that word. I next specified "database" in order to locate websites with that word on the webpage. Finally, I included "South Carolina" in quotation marks, to force an exact search for those two words as contiguous.

There were thousands of search results returned. Among them, however, is GeneaSearch, [www.geneasearch.com/states/southcarolina.htm](http://www.geneasearch.com/states/southcarolina.htm), a site containing free South Carolina resources, databases, military rosters and links to both free and paid resources.

### Example Three

Placing your ancestors into geographical, historical, political and social context is essential to locating records for them and for understanding their actions. Genealogists must, therefore, become students of these disciplines. However, ready reference materials in either print format or on the Internet can provide a thumbnail compendium for you. One of my favorite resources to use is an historical timeline to help put my ancestor into histori-

cal perspective.

Let's say that I have an ancestor who lived in New Mexico from 1906 to 1915 and I want to learn more about history there at that time. I can approach my search for information in two ways. First, I may want to structure a search to locate an historical timeline as follows: "*new mexico*" *timeline*

Second, I may want to locate mostly historical text. In that case, my search would look like the following: "*new mexico*" *history*

I may even want to supplement my research with searches

for historical maps and databases of New Mexico, as discussed before. In any case, I can use my search engine and structured searches to locate resources not necessarily found among the lists

with a hopeful heart, hoping to find "good" people, and assets to the communities in which they lived. It is perhaps inevitable that most of us will find some sort of miscreant, ne'er-do-well, horse thief, or worse, when we shake our family tree's branches. While many of us find that this adds interest and more meat to our genealogy studies, other people may well be aghast. They may choose either to ignore the dubious relative or develop a sugar-coated tale to help cover or soften the facts. One friend has a female relative who worked in a "gentleman's club" in Chicago at the beginning of the 20th century, and she prefers not to refer to her great-aunt as a prostitute. Rather, because the great-aunt made a great deal of money and saved the family from destitution during the Great Depression, the woman is more kindly referred to as "the family entrepreneur".

Those of us who have black sheep among our relatives might be interested in further pursuing the details. BlackSheepAncestors.com, [www.blacksheepancestors.com](http://www.blacksheepancestors.com), is an interesting site that provides links to both free and paid sites, including criminal records, jail and prison records, insane asylum documents, court records, pirate and buccaneer records and more for the US, Canada and the UK.

Unfortunately, there are those who are involved in genealogy whose primary goal is to locate descendants of persons who perpetrated some wrong against their ancestors. This is perhaps the darkest side of genealogical research on the web. Maintaining ancestral grudges is a very convoluted, petty reason for engaging in genealogy. Unfortunately, though, I am aware of persons having been



*The GeneaSearch site; There are literally hundreds of other database websites hiding on the Internet, just waiting for you to locate their entrance page using a search engine and a structured search.*

of Internet-based genealogical resources.

### CONFRONT YOUR DARK HORSE AND BLACK SHEEP ANCESTORS

Most genealogists I have known began their family history odyssey

removed and banned from message boards and mailing lists for abusive conduct against other researchers relating to “genealogical revenge”. This can certainly be frightening to the person on the receiving end, but what is the person supposed to do? Should they withdraw from participation in these collaborative resources and cower in fear of the offending party? I would say, “No!”

Remember that you can always report abusive language and actions to the administrative personnel who manage any Internet resource. There is no need to endure any untoward behavior.

We carry a family name that has been passed down to us over successive generations. The legacy of that name and the actions of our ancestors is part of our heritage, regardless of whether it is good or bad. We do carry the legacy of the misdeeds of our ancestors, to a certain extent. We are not, however, culpable for compensating others for our ancestors’ sins. All you can perhaps do is apologize to the descendants against whose ancestor some wrong was committed. However, you can simply try to do the right thing next, and move on in the correct direction.

**CORRECT THE INCORRECT**

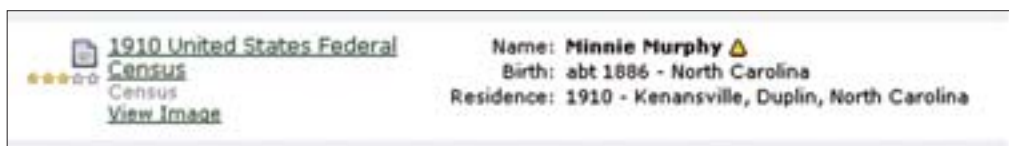
A common complaint I hear from researchers concerns the dissemination of incorrect information. Transcription errors, incorrect facts and even data linked to a wrong ancestor can be published. Once on the Internet, the erroneous information takes on a life of its own, and often is propagated ad infinitum.

Some online sites, such as Ancestry.com, permit anyone who is a registered user (and not necessarily a subscriber) to post a correction to a name. Such a correc-



*The BlackSheepAncestors.com website.*

tion is indicated in the search results by a yellow triangle, as shown in the image below. By pausing your rolling mouse over the triangle, the alternate name entered by someone else is displayed. This would be a clue to be pursued.



*Ancestry.com alternate name posting.*

When you encounter a name, date, location or other problem, consult all available message boards for more information. These include those at Ancestry.com, <http://boards.ancestry.com>, GenForum, <http://genforum.genealogy.com>, YourFamily, [www.yourfamily.com/genealogy.html](http://www.yourfamily.com/genealogy.html), Family Tree, [www.genealogicaljourneys.com](http://www.genealogicaljourneys.com), and the query boards at the respective locales in the USGenWeb, [www.usgenweb.org](http://www.usgenweb.org), and WorldGenWeb, [www.worldgenweb.org](http://www.worldgenweb.org) projects sites. If it is you who have identified the problem, and it you have credible sources to confirm your information, don't be afraid to post a friendly message. Indicate what information you believe is incorrect and the evidence you have discovered. Offer, then, to share the information with other interested researchers who may contact you

privately. By posting the same message at multiple message board sites, you are helping to stop the propagation of erroneous information.

**TURN ON THE LIGHT**

There is always more to learn about the Internet and about how to use its power. Books about using the Internet for genealogical research are readily available and contain excellent advice for all levels of experience with each of the online tools. You can also refer to online tutorials for the major commercial genealogy sites. Don't overlook possible workshops at your local public library, and contact your local genealogical society to ask for programs that address Internet research.

There's no need to wander and grope in the dark when there

are so many resources out there to help make using the Internet — even the hidden side of the web — so much easier.



*George G. Morgan is an internationally recognized writer and speaker. He is the prolific author of five books, including The Official Guide to Ancestry.com and How to Do Everything with Your Genealogy, and hundreds of online and magazine articles.*



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# Do You Need a Genealogy Agent?

DO ANY OF THE following scenarios apply to you?

- You've just started to search for your ancestors on the Internet, but don't know which direction to take?
- You know how to navigate the Internet and are currently checking most or all of the family history websites available and find yourself getting the same "hits" or results over and over again, finding little or nothing new?
- You've hit a major brickwall in one of your family lines and are out of ideas on where to search next?

If so, there is a new website out there that might be able to help.

GenealogyAgent.com, [www.genealogyagent.com](http://www.genealogyagent.com), will help search genealogy sites for you for ancestors who might be proving a bit difficult to find. The site, created by Doug Barry, has been in beta testing since the summer of 2007. After you register (which is free), you can enter details about your ancestor, including nicknames, birth and death year (or range if you don't know the exact date), place of death, spouse's name and more.

GenealogyAgent will then monitor several genealogy sites using different combinations of the information you've given, and send you e-mail reports when new data is found. Monitoring two ancestors for one

year is free; while monitoring additional ancestors costs \$14.60 US (per ancestor) per year.

## GETTING STARTED

You can learn more about the site before you register, by taking the

GenealogyAgents follow their assignment and then send you an "ancestor e-mail" (see the website for an example) indicating whether or not they found any changes based on the detailed information about your ancestor.

According to

Barry, the basic premise for so many search combinations is to tease out possible matches for your ancestor by searching on the reasonable combinations of birth location, death location, parents, siblings, spouses and children. As a result, the number of searches multiply quite quickly. You can view an example of the search com-



The GenealogyAgent home page explains how they are able to do multiple genealogy website searches on your behalf.

self-guided site tour. I highly recommend doing this before you begin. The tour is very thorough and shows an example of how to set up one ancestor search so the site's GenealogyAgents "will examine five regular websites and conduct 92 genealogy search combinations each month to see if anything has changed for that particular ancestor."

## HOW THE SITE WORKS

"GenealogyAgents don't just check to see if any old thing has changed on a website or for a given genealogy site search," says Barry. "They are smarter than that." The "Agents" use the details you provide about your ancestor to see if those details have changed on a website or for a genealogy site search. The

binations on the website.

## TEST DRIVE

I decided to take the site for a test drive. I followed the instructions and entered my paternal grandfather, John Alzo. I entered the surname (you can only enter one variation) and first name (no initials or middle names are permitted) and then entered some nicknames such as Jan and Janos. (These entries aren't really nicknames, but variations on the first name.) Then I continued to enter the data for him. The whole process took about 15 minutes, so it was fairly quick. Once you enter the data on an ancestor and have saved it, you can go back and edit the fields as you need to. You can also change your mind and have the

GenealogyAgents monitor the Internet for a different ancestor and remove the information on you ancestors by following the instructions on the site. If you have multiple spellings of a surname (Alzo, Alsio in my case), the ability to enter only one spelling of the surname per entry may seem a bit limited. To have a variation searched, Barry suggests adding the name as a new ancestor (this counts as another search). At any one point in time, you can monitor only one ancestor with that particular monitor.

Nevertheless, you can change to a different ancestor at any time during that year using that same monitor. Perhaps you'll find what you are looking for and then want to monitor for another ancestor. There is no limit to the number of changes you can make. "Although, I don't know how productive it would be to change the monitored ancestor too often," says Barry.

The site works with PayPal, so you can pay securely via your credit card. Better yet, the annual payment does not automatically renew. You will receive a notice near the end of the year giving you the option to have monitoring continue for an additional year.

#### HOW IS THE SITE DIFFERENT?

You'll notice a few key things about this site, namely the types of data that are and are not included in the search combinations. For example, census data is not included. According to Barry, the census data only changes every 10 years, so it does not make sense to have the GenealogyAgents check the same data over and over again. The same goes for immigration data or some of the other "static" information you find on other genealogy sites. The site will also not monitor those sites where it can't improve on the existing service: for example, it does not include Ancestry.com's obituaries because Ancestry has its own ObituaryHunter that will notify you of any new obituaries if you opt to use this service.

GenealogyAgent also has a more efficient way of searching message boards based on the data you provide. The site has an excellent Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) section.

There are also some additional features on the site, such as "Surname Search", which lets you see the websites GenealogyAgent users have suggested to search for specific surnames, "Network Sites" which lists categories of websites currently available on the Genealogy-Agent Network and a "For Webmasters" page, which provides information about adding any websites you may run for inclusion in the GenealogyAgent network. You can link to each of these features from the main page of GenealogyAgent.

#### MORE TOOLS TO HELP WITH BRICKWALLS

In reality, GenealogyAgent will not immediately solve all of your brickwall problems. However, there are some links to some additional free genealogy sites, which may just give you some new insights or search tips. These include:

##### Family Tree Searcher

[www.familytreesearcher.com](http://www.familytreesearcher.com)

This site grew out of Barry's efforts to trace his family and makes it easier to find family trees on the Internet. Use the site to search through eight online family tree databases. The free service creates the best searches based on your ancestry and includes helpful hints. It is useful for new researchers, but even more experienced researchers may find the ability to save up to 10 ancestors for repeated searching a plus. This helps you to go back to websites to see if a new family tree is available without having to re-enter ancestor information. Take the "Active Searches Tour" (click on the link on the site) to see how to enter your ancestor's information.

#### Genealogy Search Advice

[www.genealogy-search-advice.com](http://www.genealogy-search-advice.com)

Use this link to see if there are any resources on the Internet that you may have missed in the search for your ancestors.

#### Genealogy Fast Track

[www.genealogy-fast-track.com](http://www.genealogy-fast-track.com)

If you are new to genealogy, or just want a refresher to see if you may be missing something in your quest for your ancestors, this site has a series of easy-to-use decision charts to help you jumpstart your research.

#### WAITING FOR RESULTS

Now that I have added my ancestors' names to GenealogyAgent.com, I look forward to receiving my first e-mail to see whether any new results were found. Those concerned about privacy need not worry as no personal information is kept or sold, and Barry does not store any data on his site. Because of this, GenealogyAgent does not know if the searches bear any fruit to its users. Therefore, Barry would like users to let him know of any success stories by e-mailing him using the contact link on the site.

GenealogyAgent may not provide all the answers to help you solve your family history mysteries, but it is yet another useful tool genealogists can employ, or another pair of "online eyes" — if you will — to look for those elusive ancestors.

IG



*Lisa A. Alzo is an author, instructor, lecturer and researcher. Lisa is the author of six books,*

*including the recently published **Sports Memories of Western Pennsylvania** and an instructor for GenClass, [www.genclass.com](http://www.genclass.com). Lisa can be reached at [www.lisaalzo.com](http://www.lisaalzo.com).*

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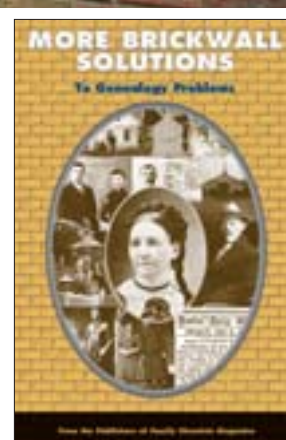
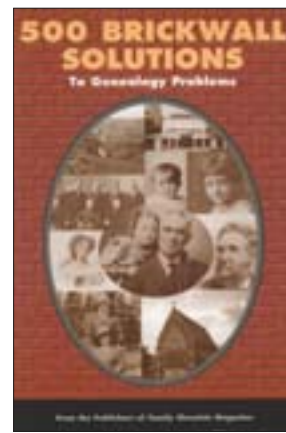


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# There's Something About Mary

AS GENEALOGISTS, WE are naturally curious about our ancestors. We're driven to piece together the details of those who have gone before us. We invest our time and our money in the journey, and along the way, we discover that some ancestors are easier to research than others. Then it happens. At one time or another, every genealogist experiences the "pull". It's that one individual in the family tree you can't get out of your head. He or she seems to inspire you to embark on a quest to research and tell his or her life story. Sometimes you find more than one ancestor doing the tugging. I've experienced the pull several times.

First, it happened with my maternal grandmother, Verona Straka Figlar, who served as the inspiration for my book, *Three Slovak Women*. Then, it was my maternal grandfather's brother, Sam Figlar, whom I wrote about in a previous case study for the October/November 2006 issue of *Internet Genealogy*.

But it was an ancestor on my paternal side of the family — my grandmother's sister, Mary Fencsak Ceyba — who seemed to tug the hardest. Readers of *Family Chronicle* may recall her from my article, "20th-Century Desperate Housewives" (September/October 2006). Mary was the central character in this article about the lives of six women in Duquesne, Pennsylvania. While I told of the trials and tribulations surrounding Mary's life in this other article, I did not detail the research process.

Finding information about the females in your family tree is traditionally a more difficult task than uncovering details about their male counterparts. There are many reasons why this is the case, but one of the main ones is that most historical records have been created for, and are about, men.

Previous case studies published in *Internet Genealogy* have covered sleuthing for male ances-

tors. I thought it was time for a woman to have her turn. Using mainly online resources, here's how I pieced together my great-aunt Mary's story.

## THE INSPIRATION

I first learned about Mary from a 250-word family narrative compiled by my father's sister, Anna Alzo, a Roman Catholic nun, who prepared a one-page, typewritten document in the 1970s. My aunt heard the story from her first-cousin, Mary Hatala. She then prepared a typewritten account using



*Mary Fencsak Ceyba, mother of six. She died in 1929, at the age of 38, from tuberculosis.*

carbon paper and distributed it to her siblings. This was before genealogy became a popular hobby and oral history one of its most touted components. Edited excerpts from the narrative are shown here:

*"Our Family Background: As told to me by Mary Hatala Illa (Helen), our grandmother married Michael Finch, a bootmaker, in Liverpool, England. Mr. Finch was a widower with two children: John and Anna. Mrs. Mary Ceyba was born to them in Liverpool, England. Then they came to Freeland, PA, near Scranton where Anna Bavolar was*

*born. Then they returned to Europe and Elizabeth and Mike were born in Czechoslovakia in Poša. When [grandfather] (Mihaly) died, [aunt] (Mary) Ceyba came to America and was hired out for room and board and one change of clothes per year."*

While this account was second-hand, at least it provided me with a place to start. With the story in front of me, I set out on my quest. I wrote down the key details from the narrative:

*Mary's Maiden Name: Fenchak  
Married Name: Ceyba (Mrs.)  
Birthplace: Liverpool, England?  
Other locations: Poša, Freeland  
Parents' Names: Mihaly/Michael (Finch) Fenchak and Illa (Helen)  
Events: Family deaths, Immigration, WWI.*

## ASKING QUESTIONS

As with any genealogical project, one of the first steps is to consult family sources and interview any living relatives. At the time I began my quest for Mary, my father was still alive, so I showed him the typed narrative and asked if he could tell me anything about Mary or her parents. Now, I have written about my father's take on genealogy in other articles. His typical response was: "What do I care about those people, they're dead. I didn't know them." Dad couldn't help me at all, but in his defense, he did not remember his Aunt Mary. As I would later discover, she died when my father was just four years old, which supports his claim that he "didn't know her". Nevertheless, I had hit a major brickwall right from the start. Thankfully, I found a way to break through this obstacle.

## TURNING TO THE INTERNET

I immediately decided to do some sleuthing in US records starting with the Internet and Ancestry.com. I found the John Ceyba family as "Chyba" in the



## Case Study: Mary Fencak Ceyba

example, the name "Jovo" could have been the guessed transcription of Mary's mother's first name, "Ilona" (Helen), the estimated birth years are all a bit off according to data obtained from other sources. Also, the indexed record lists Mary's age as "9 years" instead of "9 months" as it is actually recorded on the manifest. These questions aside, I felt confident this was the correct family.

I spent some time searching for Mary's second immigration record. I had a clue to a year (1908) from the 1920 census. I started with the Ellis Island Database because other members of the Fencak/Fenchak family arrived at the Port of New York, so I assumed this would be the case with Mary. It wasn't. Knowing that many early immigrants from Austria-Hungary also came through the Port of Baltimore, I decided to search for Mary in the Baltimore records. At the time of my initial search, the Baltimore records available on Ancestry.com were a relatively new feature. In order to streamline my search, I used Steve Morse's form for "Searching the Baltimore Passenger Lists in One Step" from his website, <http://stevemorse.org/>. The form covers the years 1820 to 1948 and interfaces with Ancestry.com's Immigration Collection (a subscription to Ancestry.com is required to do the search). I chose the "Sounds Like" option for "Last Name" and typed in "Fencak" (a common spelling of this surname). I selected the "starts with" option for First Name and typed in the first three letters, this would cover the variations of Maria and Mary. I could have selected other criteria to narrow the search, but with only 53 results to sift through, it wasn't necessary. After a couple of false leads, I located the following record:

*Maria Fenisak*  
*Arrival Date: Feb 1909*  
*Age: 18 years, 0 months*  
*Estimated Birth Year: 1891*  
*Gender: Female*

*Race: Slovak*  
*Port of Departure: Bremen, Germany*  
*Ship Name: Rhein*  
*Port of Arrival: Baltimore, Maryland*  
*Friend's Name: Jabel Kirsner*  
*Last Residence: Hungary*  
I later learned through civil records research in Slovakia, that Mary's arrival date was seven years after her father's death.

### SEARCHING SIDEWAYS: THE SISTERS

Going back to the family narrative, I was able to pull out a few more



*Mary Ceyba played matchmaker for her two sisters. Top, Elizabeth Fencak married John Alzo, and, above, Anna Fencak married George Bavolar.*

details. One of the most interesting parts of Mary's story was how she played matchmaker for her two sisters, Anna and Elizabeth (my grandmother):

*"[Aunt] Bavolar was matched for marriage by [aunt] Ceyba. [Aunt] Bavolar went to Europe with Mary because Grandma was sick. [Aunt]*

*stayed because World War I broke out and they wouldn't return to America. [Aunt] Ceyba sent for Elizabeth (my mother) to come to America. She came, had a job working for a Jewish family but visited [aunt] Ceyba often. Dad came over to America and was a boarder at [the Ceybas' home]. This is where Mom and Dad met and then married."*

Doing collateral research, I

was able to locate information on three of Mary's five siblings who settled in the US: John, Anna and Elizabeth. Mary's brother Mike moved to Argentina, and her older sister, also named Anna (she was Mary's father's child from his first wife), married Ján Ragan, and stayed in Slovakia. (I know that the issue of two sisters named "Anna" is a bit confusing,

but Slovaks were not very innovative when it came to naming their children.)

Again, using the Internet, I was able to track Mary's siblings using the census, immigration records, the Social Security Death index, obituaries and other records. Most of what I found coincided with the details in the family narrative. In particular, two passenger lists for Anna Bavolar. One in 1911 going to her brother-in-law John's house in Duquesne, Pennsylvania (proving the matchmaker story), and the second showing her returning to the US in 1920, after spending several years in Europe caring for her mother who died in 1917.

The passenger list I found for my grandmother Elizabeth in 1914 indicates that she was going to her brother-in-law's house, George Bavolar, again confirming the story about her living with the Bavolar family before she met my

grandfather, János Alsio (John Alzo), who was a boarder at the Ceybas' house.

### BIRTHPLACE MYSTERY STILL UNSOLVED

I made good progress in the hunt, but I was still perplexed about Mary's place of birth. While the Internet was instrumental in helping me find Mary in the census and her immigration records, I knew that I would have to follow a more traditional research route in order to track down her birth information.

I first went in search of her marriage record in Pittsburgh and struck gold! The application for marriage between John Csepba and Mary Fenchak filed on 18 May 1909 lists John's birth date as 5 April 1887 in "Hungara" and Mary's birthdate and place as 21 March 1888 in "Hungaria". They were married by a Justice of the Peace.

Following this new information, I used the Family History Library Catalog online, <http://www.familysearch.org>, to locate information on microfilms for Poša, Slovakia and was able to order the films from my local Family History Center. In the church records on the film, I found a baptismal entry for "Maria Fenscak" in March 1888. This discovery confirmed that a Liverpool birth was a false lead and that Mary was actually an infant during the trip (as shown in the 1891 immigration record).

I also found another interesting piece of information in this record: Mary's birth mother is recorded as Anna Mali not Ilona Lesko. Some further digging in these church records uncovered that Mihaly's first wife, Anna, died in 1888 not long after Mary was born (noted in a death record). A marriage to Ilona Lesko was also recorded after Mihaly's first wife's death (this quick remarriage after the death of a spouse was not an uncommon practice in Slovak families at the time). This confirmed one part of the family story that Mary's father

was a widower; but subsequently challenged that Ilona was Mary's birth mother. For reasons unknown, this fact was never passed down in the family stories. Either nobody on this side of the ocean actually knew this for sure, or they chose to keep it quiet.

### KEEPING TRACK

In order to help place Mary's life in historical context, I decided to create a timeline. I used the software program Genelines to assist with the task. With Genelines, I was able to enter data in individual, family, health and historical events screens. I referred to the timeline when writing Mary's profile and when doing the 20th-Century Desperate Housewives article.



*Above: The Ceyba and Alzo families reunited in 2004, Front Row: John Alzo (left) and his first-cousin, George Ceyba. Back Row: George's daughter, Lorraine Dumblosky (left) and wife, Julie. Top: Manifest page showing "Maria Fenisak" on board the S.S. Rhein sailing from Bremen to Baltimore in January 1909.*

### FINAL OBSERVATIONS

My search for Mary has a bitter-sweet ending. Thanks to the Internet, I was able to track down many of the key details fairly quickly. Unfortunately, I was just a bit too late. Mary's son George passed away in 2004, so he did not see the fruits of my labor. But, you see, Mary is still playing the role of matchmaker. Perhaps not in the traditional sense, but she has connected me with a new

cousin, George's daughter, who is grateful for all my detective work. She wrote to me:

*"Wow! Would my dad have loved to have seen how you put that story into a story. Honestly, I'm speechless. Thank you. I do feel that it's a gift and I thank you for that."*

The path to Mary was certainly cluttered with brickwalls, false leads and disappointing results. Yet, the pull was strong enough to help me persist, and I learned along the way that even those ancestors who seem the most out of reach can be found.



Yes, I had met my match in Mary. But, she was a worthy opponent.

This case study is based on an article originally published in the *Desperate Genealogist's Handbook* available at [www.deadfred.com](http://www.deadfred.com). Parts of this article have been reprinted with permission.

IG



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*of Western Pennsylvania (Arcadia Publishing), and an instructor for GenClass, [www.genclass.com](http://www.genclass.com), and can be reached at [www.lisaalzo.com](http://www.lisaalzo.com).*

# Old Soldiers Homes

**Old Soldiers Homes are an often-overlooked resource, possibly because it's not always clear where or how to request information.**

JIM DOW LAID Reuben Poindexter to rest, figuratively speaking, in 1989. He'd tracked Poindexter from his birth in 1846 to his last known residence on homesteaded land in the North Dakota Territory, but the trail ended there in 1882. Dow even researched all of Poindexter's siblings, looking for a clue as to his fate, to no avail.

Fast forward 18 years. While searching a military gravesite locator website, Nationwide Gravesite Locator at <http://gravelocator.cem.va.gov>, for another Poindexter descendant, Dow entered Reuben Poindexter's name "just for kicks", since he had no reason to think that Poindexter, a physician, had ever served in the military. Much to Dow's surprise, he got a hit. A Reuben Poindexter is buried at the Old Soldier's Home in Dayton, Ohio.

Surfing the Internet lead Dow to [www.carolynjburns.com/soldiers](http://www.carolynjburns.com/soldiers), a site operated by Carolyn J. Burns, the Dayton Veterans Affairs Medical Center's genealogist, that provides access to searchable online burial records and a partial list of former patients. Dow e-mailed Burns and within a day learned



*Left; Major Gen. Romeyn B. Ayres, officer of the Federal Army.  
Right; Brig. Gen. Joseph R. Anderson, officer of the Confederate Army.*



that Poindexter had entered the Home in 1883, based on his service as a musician with the 2nd Regiment of the Illinois Volunteers in the Mexican War. He died there in 1891. Dow was now armed with enough facts to order Poindexter's pension records from the National Archives, which confirmed that he was the Reuben Poindexter from Maine that Dow had long sought.



*Westover Landing, Va. Col. James H. Childs (standing) with other officers of the 4th Pennsylvania Cavalry, August 1862.*

How Poindexter wound up in Ohio from the Dakota Territory is a mystery to be solved at another time. What his odyssey proves, though, is that Old Soldiers Homes are an often-overlooked resource, possibly because it's not always clear where or how to request information. A little history may help to clear up things.

Prior to 1865, only two homes for disabled veterans existed: The United States Naval Home in Philadelphia and the National Soldiers Home in Washington, D.C. for careerists of the Mexican War. Volunteers were not eligible for care at either facility, according to Darlene Richardson, a historian with the Veterans Health Administration Office in Washington, D.C.

To rectify this, the National Asylum for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers and Sailors of the Civil War was established in 1865. Renamed the National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers in 1873, it served only *Union* soldiers.

Eventually 11 national homes were opened in this order: Togus, Maine; Milwaukee, Wisconsin; Dayton, Ohio; Hampton, Virginia; Leavenworth, Kansas; Los Angeles, California; Marion, Indiana; Danville, Illinois; Mountain Home (Johnson City), Tennessee; Hot Springs, South Dakota; and Bath, New York. All became part of the Veterans Administration (VA) in 1930, according to Richardson.

Meanwhile, many individual states

built their own facilities after the Civil War, either through private funds, state funds or a combination of both. By 1922, at least 42 state-operated facilities existed. These included homes for Confederate soldiers in Arkansas, Georgia, Kentucky, Maryland, Missouri, South Carolina, Texas and Virginia.

Records are kept at the individual state archives for state-owned homes and at the National Archives in Washington, D.C. for the federal facilities. (Homes for Confederate soldiers were all state facilities.)

"As one of the antecedents of the modern VA, the records of the national soldiers homes will be contained with Record Group 15 (records of the VA) at the downtown Washington location," said Richardson.

Before entering the abyss of state and national archives, first try to get basic information directly from the facility, if it still exists. Sometimes creative keyword searches get the best hits.

Entering "Dayton VA Medical Center" in the search box, for example, takes you to [www.dayton.va.gov](http://www.dayton.va.gov), which offers no genealogical information and does not link to the previously mentioned Burn's site.

Dow discovered Burn's site by putting "old soldiers home + Dayton" in the search box.

The state-operated Ohio Veterans Home in Sandusky offers a searchable cemetery database, but it's hard to find. Once you're on the home page at [www.ohioveteranshome.gov](http://www.ohioveteranshome.gov), click on Sandusky, then OVH in the menu on the left. You'll find a photo of the headstone under details.

When I located a likely prospect in the Sandusky database, I wanted to verify that he was actually part of my family. There is no contact for genealogy

services, so I e-mailed the facility's communications director and asked for help. Jan Skaar, an employee in the medical records department, found enough information on microfiche to confirm that he was kin.

Among other things, I learned which regiment he had served in, his birth date and the person he named as next of kin on his application for admittance to the Home.



Top: Civil War soldiers. Above: An Alexandria, Va. Soldiers' Cemetery c.1860-65 hints at the devastation of the US Civil War.

Since he is buried in the Home cemetery, I was able to download a photo of his tombstone.

Many sites provide information and searchable databases relating to veterans. At <http://interment.net/>, you'll find federal and state veterans cemeteries plus thousands of transcriptions of cemetery records and tombstone inscriptions. Cemeteries in the US, Canada, the UK, Ireland, Australia, New Zealand and other countries are included.

The Civil War Soldiers and Sailors System, at [www.itd.nps.gov/cwss/index.html](http://www.itd.nps.gov/cwss/index.html), is operated by

the National Park Service. Its searchable database includes some regiments, cemeteries, battles and prisoner of war camps.

A variety of searchable mili-

tary databases, spanning from the Revolutionary War through the Vietnam War is located at <http://home.att.net/~wee-monster/military.html>. This site also includes individual state databases.

So check out which of your ancestors may have checked in to an Old Soldiers Home. You may be surprised at what you find waiting there for you.



**Donna Murray, a former newspaper reporter, is an experienced genealogy researcher, lecturer and freelance writer.**

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- *Property Transactions*
- *Small Town Papers Newspaper Archive*

- *Military Records*
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# Unearthing Those Hidden Gems on Ancestry.com

**LISA A. ALZO DIGS UP A FEW HIDDEN SURPRISES YOU MIGHT NOT HAVE KNOWN ABOUT ANCESTRY**



IF YOU'VE BEEN researching your roots for 10 years or more, then you're most likely familiar with Ancestry.com, [www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com). Perhaps you've been able to trace your family in one or more of the US censuses, found your grandmother in the immigration collection or discovered great-grandpa's WWI draft registration card.

For those of you new to genealogy, or those traditionalists only now venturing into the world of online research, Ancestry.com is a paid subscription service that is part of The Generations Network, Inc. Its other products/services include: MyFamily.com, RootsWeb.com, Genealogy.com and Family Tree Maker.

Ancestry.com was launched in 1997 and according to data listed on the site, currently has about 24,000 searchable databases.

For membership details, visit [www.ancestry.com/subscribe/signup.aspx?SourceId=&TargetId=](http://www.ancestry.com/subscribe/signup.aspx?SourceId=&TargetId=) for a comparison chart of options and pricing.

Ancestry.com offers a 14-day free trial. Since you will be asked for a credit card number, you will have to call Ancestry if you are not interested in continuing with

a subscription after the 14 days.

Your local library may carry Ancestry Library edition, which you can access for free as part of your library membership. College and university libraries may also offer access to Ancestry to faculty, students and staff. But keep in mind that this version does not include the Family and Local Histories Collection, One World Tree, Biography and Genealogy Master Index, Passenger and Immigration Lists Index, Freedman's Bank Records or PERSI, and may not include the Historical Newspapers collection (or provide very few titles in it).

Free access to Ancestry.com at Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints Family History Centers ceased as of 1 April 2007. This action has drawn extensive commentary in the genealogical community. Please see the "Paying Our Way" editorial in the June/July 2007 issue of *Internet Genealogy* for details.

Whether you are a faithful user of Ancestry.com, or exploring its collections for the first time, this article will provide a glimpse into some of the hidden gems available on the site.

## THE POPULAR

For most regular subscribers, perhaps Ancestry's biggest draws are:

**US Census Records Collection** — The site is home to the only complete online US federal census collection, 1790-1930, every name index (with only some available for 1890, since most of the original 1890 population schedules were destroyed in a fire at the Commerce Department in 1921). In addition, the collection contains many censuses for individual American states.

**Immigration Collection** — The Immigration Collection is a large collection of databases available by subscription (US Deluxe and World Deluxe memberships; or if you have a Pay-Per-View account) including passenger lists (with an image of the list and sometimes an image of the ship), naturalization records and more. The featured databases are: Passenger and Immigration Lists Index (PILI) — containing more than four million names spanning the period 1538-1940 and covering all US and Canadian ports, and New York Passenger Lists — an index to the

## Ancestry.com

passenger lists of ships arriving from foreign ports at the port of New York from 1851 to 1891.

**Hamburg Passenger Lists, 1850-1934** — This database contains handwritten indexes to the passenger lists of ships departing from Hamburg, Germany. The database includes images digitized from microfilm in partnership with the Hamburg State Archive (formerly available via the LinktoYourRoots project). There are two databases to browse/search: Hamburg Passenger Lists, Handwritten Indexes, 1855-1934 (in German) and Hamburg Passenger Lists, 1850-1934 (in German). Only the years 1890 to 1913 have been indexed so far. However, all of the images for 1850 to 1934 are available. If you do not find your ancestor in a search by name, try browsing the images by year.

### Military Records Collection

— Ancestry.com recently announced the largest collection of US military records available and searchable online, featuring more than 90 million names that span more than four centuries of American history from the 1600s through to the Vietnam War.

Users will also find *The Stars and Stripes* newspapers from WWI and WWII, commemorative military yearbooks, and “the only complete collection of WWI draft registration cards”, as well as WWI draft cards, which include men born between 1873 and 1900.

### Social Security Death Index (SSDI)

— The Social Security Administration Death Master File contains information on millions of deceased individuals with United States social security numbers whose deaths were reported to the Social Security Administration. Birth years for the individuals listed range from 1875 to last year. Information in these records

includes name, birth date, death date, and last known residence. The SSDI is also searchable online for free at RootsWeb, [www.rootsweb.com](http://www.rootsweb.com); FamilySearch, [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org); FamilyTree Legends, [www.familytreelegends.com/records/ssdi](http://www.familytreelegends.com/records/ssdi); and the New England Historic Genealogical Society, [www.newenglandancestors.org/research/Database/ss/default.asp](http://www.newenglandancestors.org/research/Database/ss/default.asp); as well as via subscription through GenealogyBank, [www.genealogybank.com](http://www.genealogybank.com). Researchers should always check all versions of the SSDI available, as each site varies as to how frequently its entries are updated.



*With more than 16 million pages, Ancestry.com's newspaper collection is a boon to genealogists looking for high-resolution proof of their ancestors' existence.*

### The United Kingdom and Ireland Records Collection

— This collection boasts more than 200 million names from England, Ireland, Scotland, Wales, Isle of Man, and the Channel Islands. This collection includes the 1861, 1871, 1881, 1891 and 1901 census records along with civil and ecclesiastical records. Records date from 1386 to 2002. For additional information, visit [www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk).

### The Canadian Collection

— Those with Canadian ancestors should check out the various databases for census, immigration, military and other records, directories, newspapers and more. For additional information, visit [www.ancestry.ca](http://www.ancestry.ca).

## HISTORICAL HELPERS

**Newspapers** — Ancestry's historical newspaper collection contains information from more than 16 million pages from more than 1,000 different newspapers across the US, UK and Canada dating back to the 1700s, including obituaries (see next item).

**Obituary Collection** — This database is a compilation of nine million obituaries published in US newspapers, collected from various online sources. The collection contains mostly recent obituaries. Source information is provided along with links to the full obituary text. Want to simplify your search? Create a 24-7 “Obituary Hunter” by clicking the link provided once you are in the obituary collection. Enter a name for the Obituary Hunter and either a last name or location. When finished, click the “Save” button at the bottom of the page. Ancestry will notify you by e-mail of any new obituaries that match your search terms.

### Family and Local Histories

— This collection contains journals, memoirs and other first-hand historical narratives

including: Daughters of the American Revolution Series, The Biography and Genealogy Master, American Genealogical-Biographical Index (AGBI), Slave Narratives, Historical Encyclopedias, Genealogical Society Quarterly Publications and the recently added Dawes Commission Index 1898-1914.

**Yearbooks** — This database is a collection of middle school, junior high and high school yearbooks from across the US, searchable by first name, last name, state and city. You can also enter additional keywords, school and yearbook year to help narrow the search.

**Old Postcards** — If you're looking for images of the places where your ancestors lived, you may find

some in this database of approximately 50,000 historical postcards dating from about 1893 to 1963. The majority of the postcards are of US localities, but you may also find some images from abroad. Type a place name and in each search result you will see: Place information (city/town, county, state/province, country); Caption; Postcard era (year range from which the postcard may be dated).

**US Map Collection** — The map collection contains a variety of historical maps to aid your research, including:

- US state, territory, county and city boundaries
- US migration and transportation routes
- Distribution of various churches in the US
- Indian reservation locations
- Ethnic populations in the United States
- Battles from the American Revolution and Civil War

The collection is explained in detail under the "Search", "Reference" section of the site under "Map Collection". When you are on the "Search" page, look at the box on the right, "Browse Records" and scroll down to "Photos & Maps" → "US Maps Collection".

To do a quick search, click on the "Search" tab at the top of the page and then the "Photos & Maps" tab. For example, by selecting, "United States" from the drop-down menu and "Wilkes-Barre" in the keyword box, I obtained one result in the US Map Collection, 1513-1990 — a panoramic map of the area in 1889. Results such as photos, historical postcards, panoramic images and other collections are also displayed.

#### NEW AND NOTEWORTHY

Note: You must have a subscription for complete access to the following:

**WWII United News Newsreels 1942-45** — Included in the Military Records collection, this database contains all 267 issues of the "United News" newsreels — counter-propaganda films produced by the Office of War Information and shown in US theaters and abroad during WWII. Newsreels were also dropped behind enemy lines in a German-language version. Much of the footage was taken by military combat photographers. These newsreels provide a glimpse into history. Watch video of US Marines raising the flag over Iwo Jima, or footage of D-Day. Use the link on the main page of Ancestry



*Aerial view of Pittsburgh, from the Library of Congress Photographic Collection 1840-2000, new on Ancestry.com.*

and then you can view all the newsreels for a given year, by clicking on links for each year in the box highlighted in yellow, or you can search by keyword for a specific year or all years.

**Border Crossings Canada to US 1895-1956** — In this collection, you will find an index of aliens and citizens crossing into the US from Canada via various ports of entry along the US-Canada border between 1895 and 1956. The indexed names are linked to actual images of the manifests, copied from National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) microfilm.

**US/Mexico Border Crossings Collection 1903-57** — View more than 3.5 million border crossing records from Mexico to the US, and features 24 land ports of entry from California to Texas.

**Library of Congress Photo Collection, 1840-2000** — This database contains a collection of approximately 340,000 public domain photographs and prints covering the years 1840-2000. The pictures have been collected from a variety of sources and places but today are held by the US Library of Congress' Prints and Photographs Division. The collection includes some photos from

around the world, but mostly the US. You can search for a photo or print by year or place, and/or by using keywords or names that may be found in the title or notes sections of the pictures. A quick search performed on my hometown of "Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania" yielded 843 results. While you can search the LoC Print Catalog for free at <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/pp/pphome.html>, Ancestry has simplified the search capabilities on their site to include fields for Country, State and

Year (these were not included in the original metadata that came with these images from the LoC).

#### FUN STUFF

**Personal Member Trees** — The Personal Member Trees are located in the upper portion of the "My Ancestry" page, under "My Family History Sites". You may either create a new tree by entering names, or you may upload an existing file to your new tree. You need to log into your account to create your first tree, then click the "My Ancestry" tab. In the "Start Your Family Tree" section, select the "Create a New Tree" option. Click "Start Your Tree".

## Ancestry.com

Enter the name with which you would like to start. (It's generally recommended that you do not start with living individuals; however, there is an option "I am starting with myself" if you want). Enter as many details as you know, then click "Next". (If you don't know details, you can always skip and come back to the entry at a later date). Finally, enter a name for your family tree in the "Tree Name" field and if you would like to allow other Ancestry members to view your tree, place a check next to "Allow others to see my tree". If you prefer, you may also upload a GEDCOM. Simply click the "My Ancestry" tab, and in the "My Trees" section, click "Upload a Tree" (GEDCOM) to view the "Upload a Family Tree" page, then click the "Browse" button next to "Choose File". Locate the saved GEDCOM file on your computer, then click "Open". Name your tree, accept the Submission Agreement and click "Upload".

**Ancestry Press** — This is a new self-publishing tool that integrates with your family tree. The Ancestry Press is in beta, which means it is a working feature that is being tested while they work out technical issues. It is fairly simple to use. With just a few clicks, you can create nicely formatted pages, charts and reports with the information from your family tree — using the photos, records, names, dates, places, etc. (Think online scrapbooking for family history!)

**Audio Storytelling Service** — This service (also in beta) allows members to share stories in their own words and voices to allow these memories to be preserved for future generations and is free for any registered user of Ancestry who has created a Family Tree. Go into your Family Tree and follow the instructions for adding audio. You must provide a telephone

number so Ancestry's automated service can call you to record the audio over the telephone directly to their system. You can also use the two-way calling if you want to record a family member's story. There is no upload feature for adding already created audio files. However, I played an MP3 file recording of my father through my computer's speakers into the phone receiver and it recorded just fine. Each story has an approximate recording time limit of 10 minutes, and you can add as many as you would like. You can also choose to share the stories with designated recipients.



*Ancestry.com's Learning Center has lots of interesting features. The Family Facts archive, shown above, can tell you everything from the lifespan of your ancestors to the meaning of your name.*

### THE FREEBIES

Although most of the content on Ancestry.com is only available to researchers for a subscription fee, there are some "free" services and databases on the site.

There used to be a website called Free on Ancestry, [www.freeonancestry.com](http://www.freeonancestry.com), that was created to show you how to find the free content on Ancestry (see the June/July 2007 issue of *Internet Genealogy*). However, the site was recently taken down at the request of The Generations Network.

As a result, you will have to do a bit of digging to find the free content available on Ancestry.com. You can browse all databases, but this is time-consuming. For quicker reference, go to the "Card Catalog" and in the keywords box type "free" — you will then be

provided with a list of free databases.

Some additional useful tools/resources available for free on Ancestry.com include:

**The Learning Center** — On Ancestry's main page, there is a tab called "The Learning Center". Click on this tab to access a collection of family history how-to and genealogy learning materials. For example, the Ancestry Library allows you to browse or search the archives of *Ancestry Magazine*, *Ancestry Daily News*, *Genealogical Computing* and popular Ancestry.com online columnists.

Topics are organized into categories: Census Records, Birth, Marriage & Death, Family Trees, Immigration Records, Military Records, Directories & Member Lists, Family & Local Histories, Newspapers & Periodicals, Court, Land & Probate, Reference & Finding Aid, and African-American Records.

For example, you can learn more about how to use the new Audio Storytelling service noted above from an April 2007 article

"Adding a Voice To Your Family Tree" from the *Ancestry Daily News* Archive at [www.ancestry.com/learn/library/article.aspx?article=11708](http://www.ancestry.com/learn/library/article.aspx?article=11708).

You can also sign up to receive, via e-mail, the *Ancestry Weekly Journal* to get free family history tips and updates right in your inbox each week. Click the "Free Sign-Up" box under the "Weekly Journal" heading.

**24/7 Family History Circle** — <http://blogs.ancestry.com/circle>

This is the blog hosted by Ancestry.com. The Ancestry Weekly Journal is posted weekly on this blog, along with some unique content from regular and guest columnists. Readers are also invited to share comments and tips.

**Charts and Forms** — Ancestry offers a variety of free, downloadable, genealogical forms and documents to help you with your research. To access these charts/forms, in the Learning Center click on the “Reference and Finding Aids” link in the box on the right-hand side of the page. Next, scroll down to the “Learn About” box and click on the “Print and download free forms” link. You will then be able to download and print a blank Ancestral chart, family group sheet, research calendar and source summary. You can use this link, [www.ancestry.com/learn/ContentCenters/contentCenter.aspx?page=reference&sp=forms](http://www.ancestry.com/learn/ContentCenters/contentCenter.aspx?page=reference&sp=forms), to go directly to the page.

Remember to bookmark or add to your favorites list in your browser so you can easily return to this page whenever you need to, without having to click through all the links again. Other forms are available through the “More Learning Centers” drop-down menu on the “Reference & Finding Aids” page. For example, if you choose “Census” you can learn more specifics about census records, and, by scrolling to the bottom of the page, you will see a link to click to print and download free forms to help you organize your census search. (Hint: Once you click the link and get to the free downloadable forms page, click on “Research Extract” to get to the page with forms for the various censuses.)

**Message Boards** — Here you will find some 17 million posts on more than 161,000 boards. Search by names or keywords, or browse by surnames or localities. You can post to the boards for free but you must register first. There is no charge to read postings. You can sign up for “My alerts” to receive notifications of new postings on boards you are interested in. To subscribe to mailing lists, see the “Board FAQ” link at the bottom of the message boards’ main page.

**Family Facts** — The Family Facts feature offers historical information, everything from the lifespan

of your ancestors to what your surname means. Find this section in the “Browse Box” on the main search page. There is a link on the “Family Facts” screen. Then, simply type a surname into the box and select a fact from the drop-down menu (e.g., Name Meanings, Place of Origin, etc.) and click “Go” to see the results. I tried this for a couple of surnames in my family tree. There were no results available for Alzo but when I typed in “Straka”, there were two possible meanings listed under Czech and Slovak: 1] Nickname from straka “magpie”, probably for a thievish or insolent person. 2] Possibly also from Greek Strakas: Nickname for a dandy, from Greek *straka*, meaning literally “crack of the whip”, used metaphorically to denote someone concerned with his appearance.

There were also several places of origin listed, including Austria and Hungary.

#### KEEP CHECKING BACK

The above listing is just a brief summary of a few of the interesting records and databases available at Ancestry.com. Just as with any online research site, users should keep checking back frequently to see a list of updates or newly added databases. To stay up-to-date, each time you log on, be sure to scan the “What’s New on Ancestry.com” box under the “Home” tab, where there will be a list of newly added items. Be sure to also click the “what else is new” link to jump to a new screen, where you will see “Today’s feature”, “Ancestry.com Enhancements” and details about other record additions. Also, if you have favorite databases on the site you keep returning to often, bookmark them by adding to your web browser’s favorites. For example, if you’re searching for several ancestors in the Baltimore Passenger Lists, 1820-1948, or updating your created family tree quite often, then simply display the appropriate search or entry page, then select “Add to Favorites” from the “Favorites” menu in Internet Explorer. If you

use Firefox, go to “Bookmarks” tab on the top of the page and pull down to select “Bookmark this Page (or use Ctrl+D on your keyboard) and click “OK”. If you log out of your account, you will need to log back in.

Want an easy way to keep track of all your searches for records and images? Ancestry.com lets you save them to your “Shoebox”. This option is part of the “My Ancestry” section and gives you one-click access to any relevant material you want save and view again. If you want to print a document, save it to your computer, e-mail it to a friend or submit comments or corrections, you can do this all for free in the “Record Image Viewer” available under the “Page Tools” in “My Ancestry”.

In summary, Ancestry.com provides genealogists and family historians with around-the-clock access to many valuable resources. However, just as with any genealogical product or service, users should weigh the data available against cost and draw their own conclusions about whether or not they want to pay for a full subscription.

*Editor’s Note: There is no affiliation between Internet Genealogy Magazine and Ancestry.com.*



Lisa A. Alzo is an author, instructor, lecturer and researcher. Lisa is the author of six books, including the newly released *Sports Memories of Western Pennsylvania* (Arcadia Publishing), and an instructor for GenClass, [www.genclass.com](http://www.genclass.com), and can be reached at [www.lisaalzo.com](http://www.lisaalzo.com).

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## Tip # 86. Record Your Failures

A common mistake by new (and not-so-new) genealogists is to only make notes about successful "finds". Resist this urge. Take notes about every book, record and database you search, recording when you did the search, what you were looking for (what names, dates, information), and what you did and didn't find. This way, you'll save yourself from having to reread the same books, and re-search the same records and databases, every time you come back to your genealogy after a break. You'll also know when you should go back to them (i.e. when you have new names to check, or new information that changes your perspective on what you're looking for).



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# Lineage, First Family and Pioneer Societies

## On the Web

**DIANE L. RICHARD GOES  
ONLINE IN HER SEARCH FOR  
LINEAGE, FIRST FAMILY AND  
PIONEER SOCIETIES**



MANY OF YOU QUALIFY to become members of a Lineage, First Family or Pioneer Society. Most of these societies do have a website and it is important that you visit the appropriate website to learn the eligibility requirements and what documentation must be submitted with your application. The requirements for each are unique and exacting and many are “invitation only” societies.

Here are a sampling of some of the famous — and not-so-famous — societies that you may feel you are eligible to join. An overview is given of what membership information is available online for each (they are not listed in any particular order).

### **LINEAGE SOCIETIES**

These are societies where membership eligibility is based on your ability to document and substantiate your ancestral connection to a type of individual stipulated by the society. In this first group, the focus is societies based on your ancestors’ activity.

A more comprehensive list of

these societies can be found at a website mentioned at the end of the article.

### **The Mayflower Society**

<http://www.themayflowersociety.com/>

1. A list of the Mayflower Pilgrims from whom one must be descended.
2. A “Preliminary Review Form” that you fill out and submit online (there is no charge for this). This is reviewed and you will receive a report on the findings with complete instructions on how to proceed.

### **The National Society, Colonial Dames XVII Century**

<http://www.colonialdames17c.net>

#### **Invitation Only**

1. An Eligibility page with the explanation that “Any woman of good moral character, 18 years of age or over, is eligible for membership, provided she has been invited by the Society and is the lineal descendant of an ancestor who lived and served prior to 1701 in one of the Original Colonies in the geographical area of the present United States of America.”

2. There is no online application form.

### **Canadian Society of Mayflower Descendants**

<http://www.rootsweb.com/~canms/canada.html>

1. Some general information is provided about membership and since the Mayflower Society is the parent organization, check the details on that website.
2. No online application. One can be requested via e-mail.

### **Jamestowne Society**

<http://www.jamestowne.org>

#### **Invitation Only**

1. “Membership is by invitation and in accordance with Jamestowne Society by-laws. You can start the membership process by contacting a local Jamestowne Society Company. A prospective member must demonstrate descent to our registrar-genealogist from one qualifying Jamestowne Ancestor.” The website does include a list of the local Companies and a list of “Qualifying Ancestors” is also provided.

## Lineage, First Family and Pioneer Societies

2. You may download the "Membership Application Software".

### FIRST FAMILY AND PIONEER SOCIETIES

These are societies to honor the first families and pioneers of a particular state. You will also find similar organizations for select counties. Like the Lineage Societies already discussed, you will need to provide proof that you meet the eligibility requirements — meaning that your ancestor lived in a certain locale before a certain date.

If you don't see a society that pertains to your state, search on "your state's name" and "First Family" (or "Pioneer") and see what you find. Otherwise, at the end of the article, I reference a great website that lists Hereditary Societies websites.

### The Order of the First Families of Maryland

<http://www.rootsweb.com/~mdoffmnd>

1. The requirement that "Invitation to membership in The Order of the First Families of Maryland is extended by the Governing Council to individuals 18 years of age or older, of good moral character and respectable standing in society, who are acceptable to The Order and have a verifiable, lineal descent from either... (1) Sir George Calvert, The First Lord Baltimore, who was granted the Palatinate of Maryland by King Charles I of England, or (2) an ancestor who aided in the establishment of the Palatinate of Maryland or who was an office holder, real property owner or resident in Maryland prior to December 31, 1734." A list of qualifying ancestors is provided.
2. An application form is online.

### Dutch Settlers Society of Albany (NY)

<http://timesunion.com/communities/dutchsettlers>

1. You are eligible for membership if you are "descended from a person residing in Fort Orange, the Colony of Rensselaerswyck, or the Village of Beverwyck before 1665, and/or in other areas subject to

the jurisdiction of the Court of Rensselaerswyck prior to the establishment of their own courts."

2. Application form and guides are online.

### Daughters of the Republic of Texas

<http://www.drto.org/drtinc/index.asp>

1. Eligibility for membership "is a lineal descendant of a man or woman who rendered loyal service for Texas prior to the consummation of the Annexation Agreement of the Republic of



*Daughters of the Republic of Texas badge.*

Texas with the United States of America on the nineteenth day of February, eighteen hundred forty-six (19 February 1846)." The website also stipulates what is meant by "loyal service".

2. No online application form.

### OTHER LINEAGE SOCIETIES

Similar to the above Lineage and First Family and Pioneer Societies, you must meet the eligibility requirements. These are a little different in that the requirements go beyond an individual descending from an ancestor who lived in a certain place at a certain time. There is an additional element such as participation in an armed conflict (war), ancestral trade or a particular political or religious affiliation.

Don't forget to check out the website mentioned at the end of the article, which has a more com-

prehensive list of similar type societies.

### Daughters of the American Revolution

<http://dar.org>

1. An Eligibility page states details with the main requirement being that the applicant is "Any woman... who... can prove lineal, blood line descent from an ancestor who aided in achieving American independence."
2. You can submit a "Prospective Member Information Request Form" online to start the application process.

### Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War

<http://www.suvocw.org>

1. Eligibility information for members, junior members and associates, including the stipulation that the applicant "is directly descended from a Soldier, Sailor, Marine or member of the Revenue Cutter Service (or directly descended from a brother, sister, half-brother, or half-sister of such Soldier, etc.) who was regularly mustered and served honorably in, was honorably discharged from, or died in the service of, the Army, Navy, Marine Corps or Revenue Cutter Service of the United States of America or in such state regiments called to active service and was subject to the orders of United States general officers, between April 12, 1861 and April 9, 1865"
2. An application form with a documented genealogy describing your relationship to the veteran and proof of his service.

### National Huguenot Society

<http://www.huguenot.netnation.com/general>

1. Membership must be made through a local branch of the society and then one is automatically a member of the national society. To become a member, an individual must meet four qualifications: i. be at least eighteen years of age, ii. adhere to the Huguenot principles of faith and of liberty, iii. be a member of the Protestant faith, and iv. be lineally descended in the male or female line from either "a. a Huguenot... subsequent to 10

December 1520 and prior to the promulgation on 28 November 1787 of the Edict of Toleration, emigrated from France to North America or some other country, or, b. a Huguenot who, in spite of religious persecution, remained in France. "France", as used here, refers to any territory lying within the Kingdom of France on the date of the promulgation of the Edict of Toleration.

2. Membership forms are available online.

### United Empire Loyalists' Association of Canada

<http://www.uelac.org/>

1. To be a descendant of a Loyalist, your ancestor was "a. Either male or female, as of 19 April 1775, a resident of the American colonies, and joined the Royal Standard prior to the Treaty of Separation of 1783, or otherwise demonstrated loyalty to the Crown, and settled in territory remaining under the rule of the Crown, b. or a soldier who served in an American Loyalist Regiment and was disbanded in Canada, c. or a member of the Six Nations of either the Grand River or the Bay of Quinte Reserve who is descended from one whose migration was similar to that of other Loyalists."

2. No online forms available, but you join a local branch and then work with them to confirm your Loyalist ancestry.



*United Empire Loyalists' Association of Canada badge.*

### Sons of Confederate Veterans

<http://www.scv.org>

1. Eligibility information for members: "Membership in the Sons of Confederate Veterans is open to all male descendants of any veteran who served honorably in the Confederate armed forces. Membership can be obtained through either lineal or collateral family lines and kinship to a veteran must be documented genealogically."

2. Application form is online.

### Guild of Colonial Artisans and Tradesman 1607-1783

<http://www.aeverymiller.com/>

Invitation only.

1. Membership eligibility includes those who are "lineally descended from an artisan or tradesman who lived in the American Colonies from the founding of

[www.internet-genealogy.com](http://www.internet-genealogy.com)

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## Lineage, First Family and Pioneer Societies

Jamestowne, 13 May 1607, to the Treaty of Paris, 03 September 1783. Artisans and tradesmen are defined as those who were accomplished in the field of art and those who crafted or traded items and/or were part of select Royal Guilds previously established in the Old World who continued their practices in the American Colonies."

2. Though this is an invitation-only organization, you may submit a "Proposal Inquiry Form" which is available online.

### Flagon and Trencher

<http://www.flagonandtrencher.org>

1. Membership eligibility is "limited to those who can prove direct descent from a person conducting a tavern, inn, ordinary, or other type of hostelry prior to 4 July 1776 (within the area which became the first 13 states)... In colonial times, taverns, ordinaries, pubs and other hostelries were usually kept in a person's home and no other building existed for this purpose. Therefore, the major-

ity of the 'taverns' as we think of them in that time probably did not have names... The key to establishing membership is proving that your ancestor was licensed by the local authority to conduct the business of keeping an ordinary, hostelry, inn or hotel or licensed to sell spirituous liquors."

2. No online application form.

These are just a sample of societies for which you (via your ancestor) may qualify for membership. If you seek more information about Lineage, First Family or Pioneer Societies or want to learn more about both the societies' membership requirements and their activities, visit their respective websites.

For a fairly comprehensive listing of lineage societies with an online presence, go to [http://www.hereditary.us/list\\_date.htm](http://www.hereditary.us/list_date.htm).

Online you will also find a listing of societies from the *Hereditary Society Blue Book*, [http://members.tripod.com/~Historic\\_Trust/society.htm](http://members.tripod.com/~Historic_Trust/society.htm). Several societies

listed that don't show a hyperlink actually do have a website. For a society that interests you, just search on the society's name using your favorite search engine.

Remember that all of these societies require you to carefully document your ancestry back to the person in your family who fits the particular criteria for membership in the society; online resources can help you make sure that you have a clear understanding of each society's unique requirements.



*Diane L. Richard has been doing genealogy research for almost 20 years. Diane resides in North Carolina where many of the state archives are researching documentation for Lineage Society applications. Diane can be found online at [www.mosaicrpm.com/Genealogy](http://www.mosaicrpm.com/Genealogy)*

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# In Praise of Genealogy 2.0

WEB 2.0, THE SO-CALLED new web built by the collaborative efforts of Internet users themselves, is now being further refined as a concept by the various groups who are making use of its strengths. Library 2.0 is now discussed seriously by librarians, by using Web 2.0 technologies, such as blogs, wikis and social networks, as a way of changing how libraries provide access to their collections and support their users. In the same way, Genealogy 2.0 is beginning to emerge as a term, especially in relationship to social networking genealogy sites.

This article will discuss some of the sites that can be categorized as being part of Genealogy 2.0, but it is important to remember that all of them are new and most are self-described as beta. Even the best examples are just getting into their stride and only time (and the efforts of enthusiastic family historians) will tell how truly successful each will be.

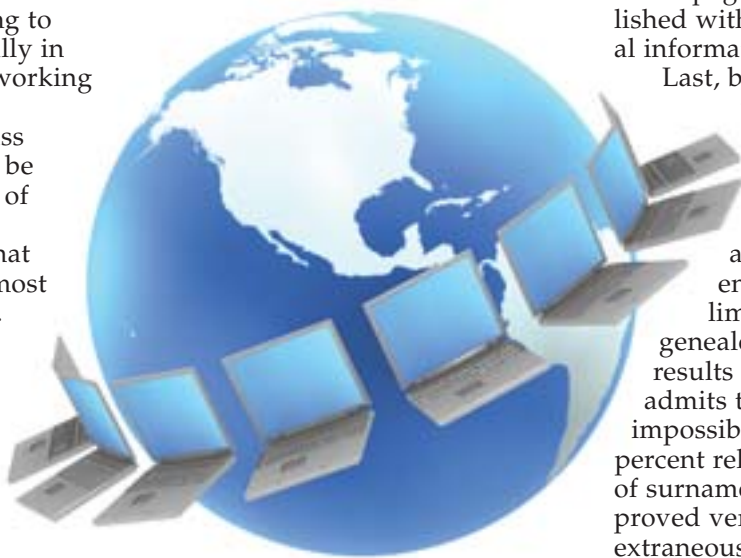
## WERELATE

One of the most interesting of the collaborative sites, WeRelate, <http://www.werelate.org/>, uses wiki technology to bring genealogists together. WeRelate is a free service sponsored by the Foundation for On-Line Genealogy, Inc., a non-profit Utah corporation dedicated to making family history research easier, faster and more rewarding, in partnership with the Allen County Public Library. The wiki's purpose is to help related genealogists work together on the same web pages and to make it easier to collaborate when doing family research and to share the results.

The first step to using WeRelate is to create an account. Once you are a member, you can create a personal profile, upload

GEDCOM files and other family information, create various kinds of web pages, join networks, read and contribute to the various types of wiki pages, create a watchlist for names and places of interest and much more.

However, as wikis are new to most people and a little bit of effort is required to fully understand how everything works at WeRelate, the very first step should be to take the short,



informative video tour of the site.

Then you will probably want to move onto a search of the "Namespace" area to see if others are already researching your family names. Although there were 500,000 personal pages at WeRelate as of July 2007, most of the members at this point have interests in the US. This will change as more people contribute.

To become fully involved with the site, you can move to the Family Tree area and upload GEDCOM files and images, create person and/or family pages, as well as exploring, searching and editing the various types of wiki pages. These pages include articles on genealogy and information on places, surnames, genealogical sources, and people

and families. WeRelate is especially interested in having people help with entries for geographical areas. Once you edit the wiki page for a place associated with your family, this geographic page can be linked to your tree.

One of the features I most like about WeRelate is that by uploading a GEDCOM file, the site automatically creates a web page for each person in the family and a family page for each family. These pages can then be embellished with images and additional information.

Last, but certainly not least, you should investigate WeRelate's genealogy web search. This experimental search engine is trying, as a number of search engines have before, to limit a web search to genealogically relevant results only. The site itself admits that this is virtually impossible to achieve with 100 percent reliability, but the results of surname searches I carried out proved very successful, with no extraneous websites included.

Using wikis, however, means that you will have to accept that others are potentially going to be changing and editing what you have submitted. As we typically work alone as family historians, building our own databases, this may be difficult for many to accept. But the advantage is the possibility that others who have additional or corrected information may add to what you have done.

## GENI.COM

Another site that allows the collaborative building of family trees is Geni.com, <http://www.geni.com/>. This site works on the simple system of having individuals build a family tree online and then invite relatives to make their own contributions to the tree. When the trees being built begin

## Genealogy 2.0

to overlap with those being built by other members of the site, Geni.com will offer the option to combine them.

Visitors to the site can see only their own family tree, but a search feature allows users to find others researching the same surnames. Contact can then be made by e-mail. Since the site began in January 2007, more than five million profiles have been added to Geni.com.

In addition to adding family tree information, you can build a profile, add images, and send and receive e-mail messages. One interesting feature is the ability to map yourself and all your ancestors, by both current location/burial location and birthplace, on a map of the world, which then becomes one of the ways to view your family tree.

### FAMILYLINK.COM

WorldVitalRecords.com, the relatively new, rapidly growing source of online genealogical databases, has launched a social networking site for family history, FamilyLink.com, <http://www.familylink.com/>.

Designed along the same lines as the popular Facebook and MySpace websites, FamilyLink hopes to build a community of like-minded people who will be able to search by place to see active genealogists who live there or who are doing research related to that geographic area. By the time this article appears, it will be possible to upload a family tree and use this as another basis for finding others sharing common interests.

Just as in Facebook, at FamilyLink.com you can build a profile, this time a genealogical one, including such information as the family tree programs you use, the societies you belong to, and a list of the surnames you are searching. You can then add

as “Connections” other members of FamilyLink.com you find who share these interests.

### FAMILLION

FAMILLION, <http://www.famillion.com/>, is a site based in Israel and another example of a collaborative family tree building site that incorporates other social networking features. The creator of the site has designed his own tree merging technology — as family



trees start to overlap, FAMILLION “links similar branches together allowing members to track their ancestry and see their distant relations living throughout the world.”

As of writing this article, however, you can only submit material about yourself and your immediate family, as the ability to upload GEDCOM files has not yet been activated. I discovered, however, that if you e-mail the site, they will offer to upload a file for you.

If you do make connections, you are able to share photos, stories, events and chat together.

### OTHER SITES TO VISIT

In addition to the sites that have already developed quite a high profile, there are one or two others that operate using the same Web 2.0 technologies.

Kincafe.com, <http://www.kincafe.com/>, exists more to keep existing families together and to allow them a safe environment to

network, but it also allows for the collaborative building of family trees and the sharing of photos and stories.

Famiva.com, <http://www.famiva.com/>, is very similar, as is Zooof, <http://www.zooof.com/>, a family network based in the Netherlands. All of these sites are free.

Finally, in beta, but timed to be released in the fall of 2007, is Family Pursuit, <http://www.familypursuit.com/>, described as genealogy management software allowing family members to work together in “a rich collaborative genealogy environment.”

### KEEPING UP TO DATE

If you would like to keep up with new Web 2.0 sites for genealogy as they appear, a good place to do this is Kimberly Powell’s About.com site for genealogy, which has a page set aside for social networking sites at

[http://genealogy.about.com/od/social\\_networking/](http://genealogy.about.com/od/social_networking/).

The success of these new Genealogy 2.0 sites depends on you and me and all the other genealogists working away on their family history, frequently in isolation. I have added my information to a selection of the sites above, and am in a small way helping them to grow. How about you?



*Marian Press is a librarian at the University of Toronto. She teaches courses on the Internet and genealogy for the National Genealogical Institute and the Toronto Branch of the Ontario Genealogical Society.*

# American Indian Ancestry: An Introduction

PAT WOHLER LOOKS AT THE RESOURCES AVAILABLE TO HELP TRACE NATIVE AMERICAN ANCESTRY

TRACING YOUR NATIVE ancestry in Canada and the United States is not for the faint of heart. Early records appear in the journals, reports and correspondence of explorers, fur traders and missionaries but they are selective, sparse and unorganized.

Serious recording only began around 1755, when the Imperial Indian Department was set up, and their interest was more focused on the military potential of the various bands and tribes than on social issues.

Ethnologists, especially the early ones, are the best source for pre-contact information they recorded from their informants.

As contact increased, so did the appearance of records. Treaties, petitions to governments and judicial records help to identify individuals and place them in time and geography. Church and school records focused on individuals and so did business records of some of the fur trading companies and policing reports.

The Native Americans, who are generally called Indians in the United States and First Nations in Canada, eventually came under the jurisdiction of their respective national governments. The Department of Indian Affairs in Ottawa and the Bureau of Indian Affairs in Washington began amassing an incredible amount of documentation which is now in the National Archives of both countries. The Indians in these countries are better documented by the government than any other ethnic group.

The Internet does not provide access to all the resources you require, but it can play a signifi-



**Deputation of Indians of the Mississippi Tribes to the Governor General of British North America, Sir George Prevost, 1814 by Rudolph von Steiger, Library and Archives Canada, No. 1989-264-1.**

cant role in your research. There are a lot of databases online and it can also help you to locate the specific resources you need. Furthermore, this is an active area of research and more resources are being added as you read. A lot of websites are just waiting to help you.

The basic research strategy is the same that you would follow for any ethnic group. Start with the present and work backwards building on the information you find at each step. One of the first objectives is to place your native ancestor in a geographical/tribal context so that you will know which records to seek. The following sites can help you do this:

<http://www.dickshovel.com/www.html#SEARCH>

If you would like some basic information on a specific tribe, this is a good place to start. It has an extensive summary of the histories, cultures, languages, reli-

gions and locations of many tribes in both the US and Canada. When you visit this page, select "H" and scroll down to the list of the tribes. I have used several of them and found them very helpful.

[www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org)  
The best place to start your Internet research is at the Family History Library's website. On their homepage, select "Search", then "Research Helps", then "Sorted by Document Type" and finally, "Research Outlines". Scroll down the list to "Indians of the United States and Canada".

This Research Outline is 60 pages long and you can download it to your computer or print it. (I printed it because I find it easier to read hard copy. Research suggests that it takes 25 percent longer to read from a monitor than from hard copy.) This is an excellent



*Totem pole in Stanley Park, Vancouver, British Columbia.*

## American Indian Ancestry

handbook for your research and is encyclopedic in its coverage.

On page 52 of the printout, they provide directions for search-

also has links to digital images of over 126,000 of them.

Some of the giants in their collection are the Dawes Rolls, which

NARA, but the FHL has a copy and you can borrow it from them.

Correct search terminology is critical with the ARC database so it is best to get some background first. On its home page, scroll down and select "Search Hints", then "American People and Family History", then "Native American Indians". You will receive descriptions of the 28 available databases and, most importantly, suggested search terms for each of them.

If you search for a person, you may get a list of hits. You can select the title of a hit for details of it. If an electronic copy is available, there will be a link to it.

This is an amazing resource and more digitized material is being added every two weeks, so visit it often.

[www.collectionscanada.ca/index-e.html](http://www.collectionscanada.ca/index-e.html)

This website for Library and Archives Canada (LAC) allows you to search their entire collections using key words. It is a good idea to try several different key words. I got 657 hits for "First Nations" and 16,299 hits for "Indians".

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"Brooke Reports 'wild scene' and Chaotic Conditions, 12/20/1890",  
ARC Identifier: 285042.

ing their library catalog for documents on native Americans. While many of their holdings duplicate what is available in other institutions, they may be more easily available from the FHL through your local Family History Center.

If you return to the "Search" tab and select "Web Sites", then "Browse Categories" and select "Cultural and Religious Groups", you will get a list of countries. Select "United States" and you will see a list of 12 websites with notes and a link to them. Most of them deal with the Cherokee, but there are a few others.

Their online indexes to the 1880 American and 1881 Canadian censuses include "Indian" as a racial category. They are accessible from the menu at the left of the "Search" page.

[www.archives.gov/research\\_room/larc](http://www.archives.gov/research_room/larc)

The National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) in the US has an enormous collection of American Indian records. This site, which takes you to their Archival Search Catalogue (ARC), not only lists the holdings, but

list applicants whom the Dawes Commission allowed on the tribal rolls of the Five Civilized Tribes (Cherokee, Chickasaw, Choctaw, Creek and Seminole) from 1898 to 1914 and the Guion and Wallace Rolls, which list Cherokee who applied for government compensation. The Kern Clifton Roll is an 1867 census of the Cherokee nation. Much of this is available online.

The Durant Roll is a 1908 census of the Chippewa/Ottawa tribes of Michigan. The microfilm reel includes Horace Durant's field notes which he wrote in the margins. This is not available online at

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*Napoleon Laurion*

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hotlink to its archival description and the notation "item linked" indicates that the description contains an illustration. Clicking on the illustration will enlarge it.

From that web page, you can select "Canadian Genealogy Centre", then "Databases", and you will be taken to a list of 34 databases that are available online.

The 1851 census has not survived completely intact, but it does include Indians, although they are not identified as such. Schedule "A" of the census lists the people. All the subsequent censuses included racial origins.

These census databases are linked to digitized pages and so are searchable only by census district and subdistrict.

A very useful database is Metis Scrip Records. The Canadian Government set aside 1,400,000 acres of land in western Canada to compensate the Metis for land lost as a result of the Northwest Rebellion in 1885. Metis heads of family submitted applications and received a scrip for acreage or the money to buy the land.

The database is easy to search. Simply enter the name as the key word and you will get a list of all the applications in which that name is mentioned.

The applications are of particular interest because they include the name of the applicant, their parents, spouse, children, date and place of birth, and marriage and parents of spouse. With this data, you know what other records, like parish registers or census subdistricts you might want to search.

From scrip applications alone, I was able to build a family chart of four generations with a lot of the vital dates included.

<http://www.automatedgenealogy.com/index.html>

Automated Genealogy has indexed or is in the process of transcribing and indexing the Canadian censuses of 1851, 1901, 1906 (Western Canada) and 1911. They are searchable by name.

<http://www.accessgenealogy.com/native/>

Access Genealogy is the poor man's Ancestry.com and should be bookmarked by every researcher. The breadth and depth of its coverage of free sites is truly amazing.

Their Native American Genealogy site is a portal to a wide range of information on Indians of the United States. Of particular interest are the various

site is awesome. Some of the censuses are searchable by name and others are browsable. I generally prefer browsing because of variant spellings of Indian names.

GENERAL INDEX					
NUMBER	NAME	STATE	NUMBER	NAME	STATE
38349	Aaron, Oleo Patrick	Tex.	12698	Acorn, Charley	I. T.
33424	" Yed	Ga.	4633	" Dick	I. T.
33367	" James H.	Ga.	4625	" Ezekiel	I. T.
25671	" Sarah C.	GA.	35537	" Johanna	I. T.
30721	" Tennie R.	I. T.	4591	" John	I. T.
17787	" Thomas H.	GA.	12390	" Katie	Ark.
42996	AARONS, Alma	Ala.	4580	" Lian	I. T.
33422	" Charles	GA.	4529	" Nannie	I. T.
33423	" Ella	GA.	37502	Aston, Green B.	Co.
33369	" Elsie	GA.	30037	Adaholt, Peter	GA.
33368	" Geo. L.	GA.	22942	Adair, Albert	I. T.

*"Index to Applications Submitted for the Eastern Cherokee Roll of 1909 (Guion Roll), 1909—1910", ARC Identifier: 300330.*

Indian Rolls, which are viewed by many as one of the most useful resources for researching your Indian ancestors. However, you must first know where your ancestors resided for the rolls to be of value.

Their database of treaties is a complete listing of all the treaties made between 1778 and 1883, and is a source of Indian names, military names and people who lived in the area of the treaty.

The Land Patents database is a listing, by state and tribe of land patents for the states of Alabama, Arizona, California, Colorado, Idaho, Kansas, Louisiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Oregon, South Dakota, Washington, Wisconsin and Wyoming. You can search by name or browse through any of the 100 Patent lists.

Indian census records are different from the rolls, and the database of links to Indian censuses on this

Another great tool is the database of links to Indian cemeteries across the United States and a number in Brant County, Ontario, Canada. Most of these are browsable or searchable using the "Find on this page" edit feature on the browser.



*Little Big Mouth, a medicine man, seated in front of his lodge near Fort Sill, Oklahoma. Photographed by William S. Soule, 1869-70.*

Image courtesy of NARA.

## American Indian Ancestry

I checked well over a hundred sites and the only one I found that had anything genealogical was the Fort Folly First Nation, a Mi'kmaq tribe in Dorchester, New Brunswick. Their site is at <http://www.fortfolly.nb.ca/firstpg6.html> and it has the genealogy of the chief online.

A fellow researcher recently pointed me to the website of the Bonnechere Algonquin First Nation at <http://www.bafn.ca>. The menu at the left of the home page includes "Family History", which is an excellent introduction to genealogical research and in the same menu there is a Schedule A.

This innocuous title refers to a 26-page document that is a consolidated index to censuses for the Golden Lake Reserve. A quick count showed 17 separate censuses covered between 1791 and 1882. Some of these censuses are only a few years apart, so tracing an individual is made a lot easier. It is a gem of a research database and anyone researching this area owes a big *miigwech* (thank you!) to the compilers.

<http://www.rootsweb.com/~usgnar/>

This page is a part of the US GenWeb project and is a list of links to online Native American Resources. The principal focus is on the five civilized tribes and it has a lot on them.

Some of these are the same links that we find on other sites, but it is always good to have a backup route in case the link from one site is broken.

<http://www.rootsweb.com/~itgenweb/>  
The Indian and Oklahoma Territory GenWeb site has links to a number of websites of specific tribes in that region. Happily, they do go beyond the five civilized tribes

### COUNTY WEBSITES

It is hard to imagine that there are any sites left to find but there are a lot of local resources nestled into the county GenWeb pages

and the websites of local historical and genealogical societies.

The best way to find these is to go to the US GenWeb site at <http://www.usgenweb.org/> and select the state and county of your choice. In Canada, you can go to <http://www.rootsweb.com/~canwgv/> and select the province and county or district



**Three Huron Chiefs; Tsioui Michel (Teachendale), Coska Stanislas (Aharathana), Romain André (Tsouhahissen) by Edward Chatfield. Library and Archives Canada, No. 1990-497-2.**

that you want. Usually this site will also have links to local genealogical and historical societies.

If there are or were Indians in the society's area, there will usually be information and perhaps research aids about them.

The Saskatchewan provincial page, for example, has an "Ethnic" section that includes "Aboriginal". Here you will find 22 links to different kinds of information.

### USING GOOGLE

A better strategy especially for Canadian First Nations, is to do an advanced Google search that includes the words "genealogy" and the name of the tribe in quotation marks. I started with the

Ojibwa. The first hit in a list of thousands was <http://www.ojibwe.info>.

It is a very helpful site for Ojibwa bands in both Canada and the US, with databases and links to other Ojibwa databases.

The second hit in the list was a US GenWeb project, at <http://www.rootsweb.com/~minatam> on the People of the Three Fires (the Ojibwa in Michigan which includes the Ojibwa, Chippewa and Potawatomi). The site includes Biographies, Family Histories, Cemeteries, Church Records, Marriage records and much more.

A similar search for Mi'kmaqs turned up sites with genealogical data and, as a real bonus, "Micmac" census indexes for 1871, 1881 and 1891. The census material is at [http://www.acadian.org/Micmac\\_Census.html](http://www.acadian.org/Micmac_Census.html).

There is a Cree genealogy database at <http://www.cree.ie/lines/gen.htm>. It now stores information on all known Cree individuals (more than 6,000 people) who have a relationship to one of the 20 or so main Cree lines.

So much material came to light with this strategy on each tribe that I searched that it was almost overwhelming. The advanced search facility in Google can save hours of frustrating search. So "let Google do the walking"!

Good luck on your Native American quest.



**Pat Wohler is a certified genealogist and writes a weekly column on family history in nine local newspapers. He hunts his Irish,**

**English, and German ancestors from his home in the Ottawa Valley of Ontario.**

# E-mails and Old Newspapers: A Story of a Diabolical Deed

NEWSPAPERS CAN BE a great source of information about our ancestors and not just for vital statistics. A few months ago, a distant cousin sent me an e-mail containing three articles from the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, dated March of 1905 and 1906. All three were about the murders of two children in Howellville, Pennsylvania and the capture of the killer. One of the witnesses mentioned was a man named Angelo Garzia. "Isn't that your ancestor?" the cousin asked. It certainly was, and what a story!

In 1905, Howellville had a large Italian immigrant population, most of whom lived in stone buildings connected to each other in the center of town. The Italian men were employed by the four or five stone quarries in the surrounding area. The women kept house and raised the children. This was the home of my great-grandfather, Angelo Garzia, his wife Maria and their six children. In addition to working in the stone quarry, Angelo sold beer to the quarry workers. The beer business was run from the house.

According to the articles from the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, on 14 March 1905, a card game at Angelo Garzia's house broke up for supper at about seven PM. Attending the game was Ricardo Forte. The game was to resume an hour later at another house a few doors up the street. Forte arrived a few minutes late for the second game, out

of breath. The front of his clothes were dirty and there was a clumsy bandage tied around one wrist. He seemed irritated that the game had started without him. At about this time, a foreman for one of the stone quarries was passing an abandoned blacksmith shop. Hearing moans from inside, he investigated and found two children. A little girl was dead, a boy

went home.

The next day, Forte was arrested at Downingtown as he attempted to board a train for Lancaster. He was put in the West Chester jail until an inquest could be held.

Forte was charged with assault on the boy, only because authorities were worried a charge of murder might result in mob violence.

My grandmother would have been about seven years old when this happened. She had told me many stories about growing up in Howellville, but she never mentioned this! I had to know more.

I decided to start with microfilm copies of the *Philadelphia Inquirer* and any other Philadelphia newspapers from that time period. This required a trip to the Central Branch of the Philadelphia Library, [www.library.phila.gov](http://www.library.phila.gov).

I asked an assistant for the microfilm rolls for March 1905 and January 1906 from the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, as these were the articles that had been e-mailed to me. There were articles from March 15 through 20 March 1905 concerning the murders. Some of the articles included photos of Forte, his wife, the family of the murdered children, their home and the blacksmith shop.

Unfortunately, some of the



An article about the murders from the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, dated 18 March 1905.

dying. The foreman burst into the card game to tell the group of his grisly discovery. The men raced to the blacksmith shop, except for Forte, who casually strolled across the road, peeked into the shop and

## A Diabolical Deed

photos were very grainy. The articles from this period told of the crime and the inquest. The dead children were identified as four-year-old Maria De Lucca and her 10-year-old brother, Dominick.

The children's seven-year-old brother, Joey positively identified Forte as being the last person seen with his brother and sister.

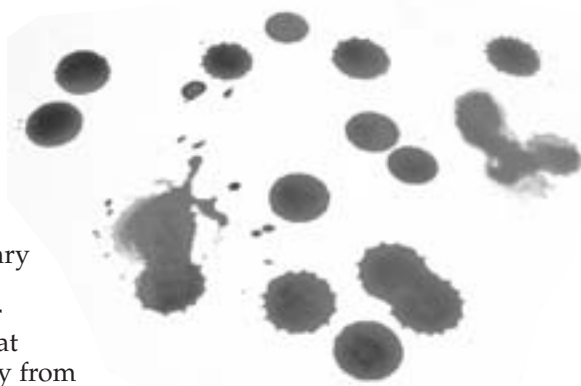
He knew this because he saw Forte lead his sister away, toward the blacksmith shop. While they were still in sight, Dominick appeared, asking where Maria was. Joey pointed to Forte and Maria walking away and Dominick followed them. That was the last time Joey saw his sister and brother alive. Forte was known to the De Lucca children because he had been inside their home. The articles from January 1906 covered the trial, but offered little extra detail. The trial lasted from January 28 through 2 February 1906.

I then asked about other Philadelphia newspapers that might have covered the story from that time period and was told to try the *Philadelphia Public Ledger*. The microfilm rolls from that newspaper for the same period provided a few more previously unknown details, such as the position of the bodies and causes of death, along with the verdict and sentence. That paper also provided an interesting story about my great-grandfather. The March 19th issue of the *Philadelphia Public Ledger* reported my great-grandfather, Angelo Garzia, had received a threatening letter written in Italian on wrapping paper, warning him against aiding the police in the Forte case. The story said the letter had been shoved under the door on Saturday, March 18, and said: "The police know too much. If you want to stay in Howellville keep your tongue quiet. Why do you try to help the police? This will be our last warning to you". It was signed "XXX".

This was all very interesting, but what about the trial? I needed a Chester County newspaper. The

only one I knew about that was in existence at the time of the murders was *The Daily Local News*. Unfortunately, the library only had Philadelphia newspapers. I would have to arrange to get the microfilm through inter-library loan from the State Library of Pennsylvania, [www.statelibrary.state.pa.us](http://www.statelibrary.state.pa.us), and have it sent to my local library.

When the microfilm arrived, I was able to read a full account of the trial. The first day's account was about the jury selection. The second day began with the charges of double murder against Forte and the details of that fateful



evening. The article recalled Forte's arrest the next day. A real surprise was the mention of my grandmother's sister, Annie, 10 and brother, Sante, 11, as witnesses. Sante was playing outside his home when "Ricky" (Forte) asked Maria to "go along". She refused at first, then changed her mind. That was the last Sante saw of them. He saw others looking and told his mother first of seeing the two together. Annie testified next. She was at home on March 14 when her mother sent her to the Denardo house where the second card game was being played. She was sent to get a key from her father, Angelo Garzia. While she was there, "Ricky" came in and was asked why he was so dirty. Forte allegedly told Mrs. Denardo he fell and cut himself. Dr. Joseph Scattergood testified that he examined Forte after his arrest. There was a deep cut on Forte's wrist that matched the shape of a piece of glass containing blood and hair that had been found in the black-

smith shop. Angelo Garzia testified as to the card game at his house and Forte's appearance at the second game. There was additional testimony from the county surveyor as to the distance from the De Lucca and Garzia homes to the blacksmith shop. Forte's wife testified as to the time her husband came home that night. He told police he went home to supper at seven PM when the first card game broke up. His wife testified that he did not eat supper and did not come home until about nine PM.

On 2 February 1906, the jury found Ricardo Forte guilty of murder in the first degree. He was later sentenced to hang on 6 September 1906 at the Chester County Prison.

The County Surveyor's testimony had included drawings showing the position of the De Lucca and Garzia homes, as well as the blacksmith shop. I wanted to see those drawings, so I contacted the Chester County Archives, [ccarchives@chesco.org](mailto:ccarchives@chesco.org).

The drawings had not survived, but the indictment papers and docket listings had. For \$10 US, I was able to get copies of these.

The indictment papers listed the charges, jury panel, witnesses, verdict and sentence.

One interesting note was that Forte's wife stopped coming to visit him two weeks prior to the execution. She also did not claim the body after he was hanged. In researching this case, I also learned that a distant relation, Luigi Tavani was the court interpreter. He had also helped to apprehend Forte at the train station.

Oh, and about that article saying Angelo Garzia had been threatened? *The Daily Local News* quoted Angelo as saying that was a wedding invitation and he had no enemies. The paper speculated that a reporter for the *Philadelphia Public Ledger* just wanted a story for the Saturday edition and made up the threatening note!

# Wills and Administrations in Britain and Ireland

Last Will & Testament

ALAN STEWART EXPLAINS THE IMPORTANCE OF WILLS TO GENEALOGICAL RESEARCH

WILLS ARE OFTEN overlooked as a genealogical tool. Besides providing some useful background information on your ancestors' lives and possessions, wills can be helpful in resolving relationships and breaking through brickwalls.

Many people imagine that, because their forebears weren't rich, they won't have left wills. Although it's certainly true that your ancestor is more likely to have made a will if they had a large fortune to bequeath, this doesn't mean that you won't find a will left by someone who describes themselves as a "laborer".

If your ancestors came from Britain or Ireland, then you may well find digitized copies, transcriptions or abstracts of their wills on a number of websites. In addition, there are many websites with indexes to wills and administrations (where the person died without making a will). Having found the reference number of the document, you can then order a copy of it for delivery by mail.

## ENGLAND AND WALES

Up to 1858, English and Welsh wills were proved (i.e., confirmed) in church courts. The Church of England was divided into two provinces: Canterbury (covering the south of England, virtually all of Wales, and the Channel Islands) and York (the north of England and the Isle of Man). Each province was in the spiritual care of an archbishop, with the Archbishop of Canterbury (based in London) being the senior of the two. The

highest-level church courts were the "Prerogative" Courts of Canterbury and York (abbreviated to PCC and PCY respectively).

The provinces consisted of a number of dioceses, each under a bishop's court. Most of the dioceses were divided into one or more areas under an archdeacon, and most archdeacons had a court (although there were none in Wales). An archdeaconry was, in turn, divided into deaneries (consisting of groups of parishes, each parish having its own church). These were not supposed to have courts, but occasionally acted on behalf of an archdeacon's or bishop's court. A "consistory" court was a bishop's court for the whole diocese: a "commissary" court was his court in a single archdeaconry.

Approximately 200 townships within parishes, individual parishes or scattered groups of parishes (sometimes in more than one county) were outside the jurisdiction of the archdeacons' and bishops' courts, and the wills of those who died in them were proved in their "peculiar" courts.

Otherwise, a will should have been proved:

- In the local archdeaconry court (if the deceased had property only in that archdeaconry);
- In the bishop's consistory court (if they had property in more than one archdeaconry in the same diocese);
- In the archbishop's prerogative court (if they had property in more than one diocese in the same province);

- In the PCC (if the deceased had property in more than one province; in Scotland, Ireland or overseas; died outside England or Wales; or the testator chose to do so);

although you may find exceptions to these general rules.

In 1858, responsibility for granting probate (proving the will) passed to a new civil registry. This had first been tried during Britain's brief period as a republic — the Commonwealth — from 1651, when a Court for Proving of Wills and Granting of Administrations was set up to deal with all wills and administrations in England and Wales. This court took the place of the PCC, and its records were merged with the PCC's after the restoration of the monarchy in 1660.

The PCC probate records are held in Kew, Greater London by The National Archives (TNA), <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk>, and those of the PCY at the Borthwick Institute <http://www.york.ac.uk/inst/bilhr>, which is part of the University of York. You'll find the probate records of the lower courts at one of the various county and diocesan record offices, although not always at the one you would expect.

As the boundaries of dioceses were not the same as those of counties, the church court records are not necessarily in the record office of the geographical county in which the testator died. Pre-1858 probate records for Derbyshire, for example, are at Lichfield Record Office in Staffordshire.

## Wills and Administrations

Welsh wills and administrations are held at the National Library of Wales (NLW), <http://www.llgc.org.uk>, in Aberystwyth, on the west coast of Wales. The NLW has a computerized probate index, but unfortunately this is not yet online.

Post-1858 English and Welsh civil wills and administrations are held by the Probate service, <http://www.hmccourts-service.gov.uk/cms/1183.htm>, from which you can order a copy. From 1858 to 1870, wills and administrations are indexed separately. The NLW also has copies of civil wills from 1858 to 1941 covering all historic Welsh counties except Montgomeryshire.

### ENGLISH AND WELSH WILLS ONLINE

**Prerogative Court of Canterbury**  
<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/documentsonline>

Digitized images at this pay-per-view website of more than one million wills proved at the PCC from 1384 to 1858 (but not of administrations granted 1559-1858). Documents Online also provides access to nearly 70,000 records from the death duty registers of 1796 to 1811. This can help you find in which lower court a will was proved. Searching the index is free of charge, and a copy of a document costs about \$7 US.

As the wills of British subjects abroad were proved in the PCC, it's no surprise that there are more than 1,400 wills of North Americans in the database at <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/documentsonline>.

**Bank of England, PCC, London and PCY**

<http://www.britishorigins.com>  
This subscription site has:

- Indexes of more than 60,000 Bank of England (BoE) extracts of wills (1717-1845) of those who died with investments in public funds, as well as abstracts of orders made for stockholders who went bankrupt or were declared lunatic.\*
- Incomplete index of over 200,000 PCC wills (1750-1800).\*
- Index of more than 5,000 wills proved at the Archdeaconry Court of London (1700-1807).
- Index of 3,000 depositions made

to the Consistory Court of London (1703-13), the main court dealing with separation and matrimonial disputes.

- Indexes of over 10,000 wills proved in the Prerogative & Exchequer Courts of York from 1267 to 1500, and 16,000 from 1853 to 1858. (Wills proved in those courts after 1500 are currently being indexed, beginning at 1858 and working backwards).\*



Image courtesy of The Archive CD Books Project <http://www.net-neep.co.uk/>

#### Example of part of a will proved in the Consistory Court of Gloucester in 1847

*"In the name of God amen. I, James Sanford of the parish of Huntley in the County of Gloucester, blacksmith... give, devise and bequeath all and every my said cottage, tenement or dwelling house, orchards, gardens and outbuildings, and all other my personal estate of what nature soever the same shall be unto my said sons and daughters, that is to say James Sanford, Mary Ann Longney, Harriet Bright, William Sanford, Eliza Sanford and Henry Sanford... but my son James being dead, my desire is that the share that would have come to him... if he had been alive, to be put out to interest in trust, and his widow to have the interest till the youngest child is sixteen, and then... the children of my late son James Sanford, shall divide the proportion assigned ... amongst themselves share and share alike, that is to say Elizabeth, John, James, William, Henry, Sarah, Richard and Harriet Sanford."*

- Index of more than 25,000 wills proved in the 54 "peculiar" courts of Prerogative Court of York from 1383 to 1883.\*
- Inheritance Disputes Index (1574-1714) to more than 26,000 lawsuits in the English Court of Chancery concerned with the inheritance of money or real estate.

\* Hard copies can be ordered online at extra cost for delivery by post.

#### Buckinghamshire

<http://apps.buckscc.gov.uk/eforms/wills/search.aspx>

- Free index of 35,000 wills proved (and some administrations granted) in Buckinghamshire from 1483 to 1858.

#### Cheshire

<http://www.cheshire.gov.uk/Recordoffice/Wills>

- Free index of 130,000 wills and administrations proved in Chester from 1492 to 1940.

#### Derbyshire

[http://www.derbyshire.gov.uk/leisure/record\\_office/our\\_collection/derbyshirewills](http://www.derbyshire.gov.uk/leisure/record_office/our_collection/derbyshirewills)

- Free indexes of wills proved from 1858 to 1928 and administrations granted from 1858 to 1875 in civil registry in Derby.  
<http://www.wirksworth.org.uk/WILLS.htm>
- Free index of 35,000 Derbyshire wills from 1525 to 1928 and 1,800 administrations from 1858 to 1873.

#### Essex

<http://seax.essexcc.gov.uk/login.asp>

- Many Essex wills (and some for southeast Hertfordshire) from 1399 to 1858 are included in the Essex Record Office's free catalog. Free digitized images are available for some of the wills.

You can view copies of many probate records, indexes and finding aids at the LDS Church's Family History Library (FHL) in Salt Lake City, Utah and at more than 3,400 Family History Centers around the world. Search the FHL Catalog at the Family Search website, <http://www.familysearch.org>, to find out what's available.

#### Gloucestershire

<http://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/index.cfm?ArticleID=1335>

- Free index of all wills proved in Gloucester from 1541 to 1858.

<http://www.bristol.gov.uk/ccm/content/Leisure-Culture/records-and-archives/bristol-wills-index-1793-1858.en>

- Free downloadable index of wills proved in Bristol between 1793 and 1858.

### Herefordshire (part of)

<http://www.lhsarchive.org.uk>

- Free abstracts including more than 1,000 wills from 1660 to 1854 for the former hundred of Ewyas Lacy in western Herefordshire.

### Kent

<http://www.kentarchaeology.org.uk/Research/Libr/Wills/WillsIntro.htm>

- Free index (and some transcripts) of more than 2,000 Kentish wills proved in Rochester from 1440 to 1561.

### London (part of)

<http://www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/corporation/wills>

- A pay-per-view site with 10,000 digitized images of wills proved and administrations granted in the Archdeaconry Court of Middlesex, mainly covering the periods 1608 to 1611 and 1662 to 1780. Searching the index is free of charge, and a copy of document costs around \$8 us.
- Also a free index of 31,000 wills proved and administrations granted by the Consistory Court of London from 1513 to 1520, 1540 to 1641 and 1671 to 1858.

### Wiltshire

<http://history.wiltshire.gov.uk/heritage>

- Around 105,000 wills proved and administrations granted in Salisbury from 1540 to 1858 are included in Wiltshire and Swindon Archives' free online catalog (covering the whole of Wiltshire and Berkshire, as well as parts of Dorset, and Uffculme in Devon). Free digitized images are available for about a quarter of the wills.

### Archdeaconry of Richmond (Western Deaneries)

<http://www.uclan.ac.uk/facs/class/humanities/family/Probate/WillIntro.htm>

- Index of over 36,000 wills (1748-1858) for the Western Deaneries of the Archdeaconry of Richmond are available online to members of the Institute of Local and Family History at the University of Central

Lancashire. Alphabetical lists of the surnames and place-names in the index are searchable, free of charge.

### Family History Online

<http://www.familyhistoryonline.net>

- Federation of Family History Societies' pay-per-view website includes probate indexes for Northamptonshire and Rutland (87,000 entries), Shropshire and Montgomeryshire (31,000), Staffordshire (1,000) and Suffolk (nearly 12,000).



*The General Register House of the National Archives of Scotland in Edinburgh.*

### GENUKI (UK and Ireland Genealogy)

<http://www.genuki.org.uk>

- The free GENUKI "genealogical reference library" website has pages of will abstracts for Berkshire, Cumberland, Derbyshire, Gloucestershire, Herefordshire, London and Wiltshire. In addition, there are links to other sites with probate information for those counties, as well as Cornwall, County Durham, Northumberland, Oxfordshire, Somerset (via Cornwall), Staffordshire, Surrey and Sussex.

The UK's National Archives has information on English and Welsh wills at <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/catalogue/research/guidesindex.asp#w>. Information on

wills in London Metropolitan Archives (and elsewhere) is available at <http://213.86.34.248/NR/rdonlyres/32A4B4D6-1678-4C5E-B3D4-EA16F328D8EF/0/info606.pdf>, and in the Guildhall Library (in London) at <http://www.history.ac.uk/gh/probate.htm>.

The National Library of Wales has information at <http://www.llgc.org.uk/index.php?id=487>, the National Archives of Scotland at <http://www.nas.gov.uk/guides/wills.asp>, the National Archives of Ireland at <http://www.nationalarchives.ie/genealogy/testamentary.html>, and the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland at <http://www.proni.gov.uk/records/wills.htm>.

### SCOTLAND

The National Archives of Scotland (NAS) has Scottish wills and inventories from 1514 up to 10 years ago. What the NAS holds are "testaments" written by clerks of the Scottish courts, which confirm or appoint executors, and are of two types:

- Testament testamantar (including a will);
- Testament dative (with no will).

A testament testamantar is the equivalent of a grant of probate in England and Wales, while a testament dative is similar to the English "letters of administration".

In the late 16th and 17th centuries, it was the commissary courts in Scotland that dealt with testaments. A commissary court had jurisdiction over an area known as a commissariat, whose boundaries were similar to those of the medieval Scottish dioceses, and differed from those of counties.

Responsibility for confirming testaments passed in 1824 to the existing sheriff courts, although some of the commissary courts continued in existence for several years. Some of the testaments dealt with by the Edinburgh Commissary and Sheriff Courts relate to Scots who died elsewhere in Scotland, as well as those who died abroad.

### SCOTTISH WILLS ONLINE

You can search the index of more than 600,000 testaments from 1514 to 1901 free of charge at <http://www>.

## Wills and Administrations

[scotlandspeople.gov.uk](http://scotlandspeople.gov.uk), and download a digitized copy of a testament for around \$10 US, irrespective of its length.

The National Archives of Scotland (NAS) <http://www.nas.gov.uk/guides/soldiersWills.asp> has indexed 31,000 soldiers' and air-men's brief wills from 1857 to 1964 (but mainly from the First and Second World Wars) in its free online catalog.

### IRELAND

Irish wills were proved in church courts until 1858, when responsibility passed to new civil probate registries. The pre-1858 wills were transferred to the Public Record Office of Ireland (PROI) in Dublin, but most were destroyed in a major fire in 1922.

The National Archives of Ireland (NAI, the successor to the PROI) holds a consolidated index of wills proved from 1858 to 1877, and calendars of wills proved after 1877 (excluding Northern Ireland after 1918). The Public Record Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI)

holds all probated wills for Northern Ireland from 1900 to 1994.

### IRISH WILLS ONLINE

The NAI has made an index of wills and administrations from 1484 to 1858 available through the Irish Origins subscription website, <http://www.irishorigins.com>. The index is of transcripts, abstracts, extracts, copies and some original records.

The Ulster Historical Foundation's subscription site, [www.ancestryireland.com](http://www.ancestryireland.com), includes an index of calendars of 220,000 Irish civil wills 1858 to 1900 for all Ireland, as well as 13,000 abstracts, extracts and duplicates of pre-1858 wills, and various other pre-1858 local indexes.

Celtic Cousins, <http://www.celticcousins.net/ireland>, is a free site with links to a few will abstracts mainly for the western counties of Clare, Galway, Limerick, Mayo and Roscommon. You can find a free index of Donegal wills from 1684 to 1858 at <http://www.ulsterancestry.com/ua-free-DonnegalWillIndex.html>,

and view images of Phillimore's index of Cork wills (published in 1910) free of charge at <http://www.ginnisw.com/Indexes%20to%20Irish%20Wills/Thumb/Thumbs1.htm>.

### JERSEY

The wills and testaments of Jersey (one of the Channel Islands between England and France) from 1660 to 1960 are indexed in the free Jersey Archive catalog <http://jerseyheritagetrust.jeron.je/archive.html>. In many cases, there are details of bequests.



*Alan Stewart is a member of the Scotland's People User Group and the author of Gathering the Clans: Tracing Scottish Ancestry*

*on the Internet (Phillimore), available in North America from the David Brown Book Company ([www.oxbowbooks.com/bookinfo.cfm/ID/59223](http://www.oxbowbooks.com/bookinfo.cfm/ID/59223)).*

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# National Genealogical Society

MOST PEOPLE ASSOCIATE the National Genealogical Society (NGS) with its journal, its annual "Conference in the States and Family History Fair", its courses, its publications and other programs; all of which are excellent.

However, did you know that the NGS website, <http://www.ngsgenealogy.org>, also has data and resources available? In fact, in March 2007, it was reported that the NGS website has more than one million ancestral names available online, in one collection.

## MEMBER ANCESTRY CHARTS

Just a year since the first Member Ancestry Chart (MAC) became available to members on its website, the NGS uploaded the mil-

The index is searchable. Images of the Bible pages are being scanned in PDF format.

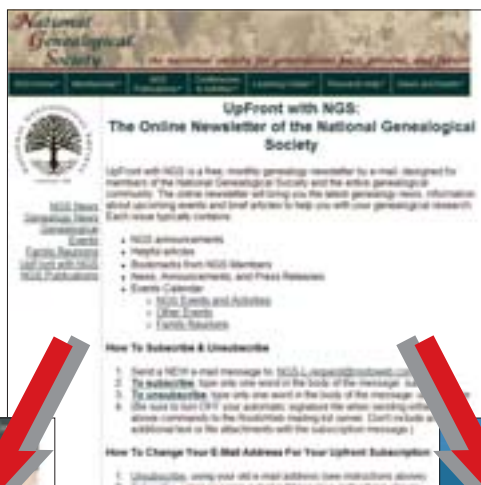
## NATIONAL INTELLIGENCER

This database, Abstracts from The National Intelligencer (Washing-

you with your genealogical research.

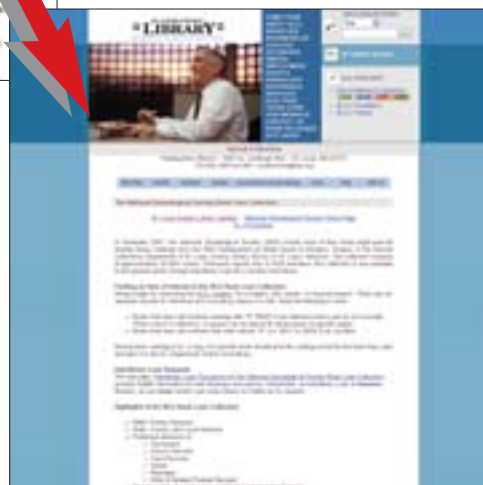
- Book Loan Collection, [https://www.ngsgenealogy.org/book\\_loan.cfm](https://www.ngsgenealogy.org/book_loan.cfm)

The NGS book collection is located at the St. Louis County Library (SLCL) in St. Louis, Missouri. The collection consists of more than 20,000 books and new titles are being added daily. Almost every book in the NGS Special Collection at St. Louis is available for interlibrary loan to everyone. Check the St. Louis County Library (SLCL) NGS Special Collection Online Library Catalog, <http://webpac.slcl.org/>, to search for books of interest. The St. Louis County library has an introduction to the collec-



From the National Genealogical Society's website you can access data and resources online.

ton, DC), 1800-1850, is a very special, fully indexed abstract database of marriage and death notices from this early newspaper. When you search for a surname, it will search for certain obvious variants and then the forenames are presented in alphabetical fashion and associated with a PDF file (or



multiple files depending on how many entries are found).

## FREE RESOURCES

Though the above are only accessible to NGS members, there are some free, invaluable resources available to all.

- Upfront Newsletter, <http://www.ngsgenealogy.org/upfront.cfm>

This monthly genealogy newsletter by e-mail is designed for members of the NGS and the entire genealogical community. The online newsletter will bring you the latest genealogy news, information about upcoming events and brief articles to help

lionth ancestral name from its MAC collection. All the names are searchable, including separate entries for women's maiden and married surnames. This happened because a group of more than 100 dedicated NGS volunteers input this data.

Did you know that NGS members also have access to a Family Bible Records Collection and abstracts of the *National Intelligencer*?

## FAMILY BIBLE RECORDS

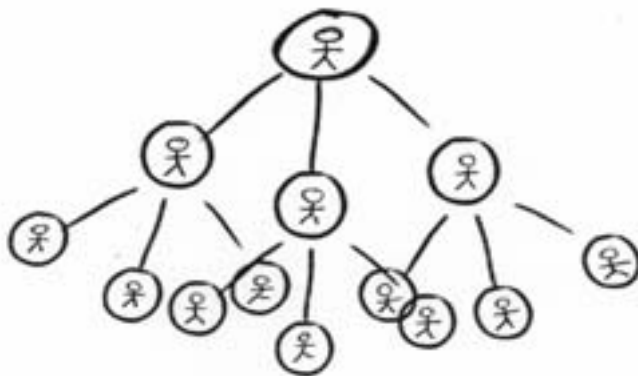
The NGS Bible Record collection is being indexed and digitized. A large percentage of the Bibles, but not all, have an every name index.

tion as well as an overview of the relevant interlibrary loan procedures on its website, <http://www.slcl.org/branches/hq/sc/ngs/ngscol-main.htm>.

And, in the future, it's anticipated that the Family Papers Collection (other scanned family documents, photos and more) will come online.

So, remember that the NGS is not just about conferences and its journal; its website has source data and a free newsletter and the society maintains an interlibrary loan service available to anyone.

# Paying It Forward In Genealogy



BACK IN 2000, the movie *Pay It Forward* starring Haley Joel Osment caught the public's attention to the concept of paying good deeds forward. To summarize the plot: A schoolboy's homework assignment is to think of some way to change the world and put the plan into action. With this young boy, the concept of "paying it forward" was born. People latched onto the idea of doing good deeds without expecting reciprocation.

This wonderful concept spread like wildfire though the genealogy world. Individuals and genealogical societies alike offered all kinds of help. Websites were established to offer national and international genealogical assistance.

Janice Nickerson, in the free extra issue of *Internet Genealogy*, available at [http://internet-genealogy.com/IG\\_FreeExtraIssue.htm](http://internet-genealogy.com/IG_FreeExtraIssue.htm), (posted online in 2006), wrote a great article titled "Giving Back: Join an Online Transcription Project". Her words summed up the idea of paying it forward quite nicely: "Have you ever thought about how all that wonderful information made its way onto the Internet? Someone, or more likely a team of someones, went to a lot of work to get it there. If you've got a little spare time and a love for family history, why not join a team of transcribers and make a valuable contribution to the world-wide genealogy community?" Her article went on to list several places where you could volunteer your time.

When you begin to pay it for-

ward yourself, remember that you can participate or volunteer, in two main ways:

- You can volunteer in locality-general or locality-specific ways
- You can volunteer your own documented information.

The popular genealogy web-



*Digitizing or indexing records at a library is a great way to volunteer your time.*

site, Random Acts of Genealogical Kindness (RAOGK), <http://www.raogk.org/>, was launched by Bridgett and "Doc" Schneider. The driving force behind the site (You: The volunteer) increased by 1,000 percent in people-power after *Pay It Forward* premiered. "Our volunteers have agreed to do free genealogy research tasks (that might) include anything from traveling old country trails seeking forgotten cemeteries for photos, to researching public records held in county offices. All they ask in

return is reimbursement for their expenses, never their time."

The website USGenWeb, <http://www.usgenweb.org/>, offers a long list of volunteer opportunities in both national and local projects. Their volunteer information page lists everything you need to know to make a difference. The list of needed projects is long and varied, offering something for everyone's tastes and talents.

Everybody knows about FamilySearch.org, <http://www.familysearch.org/>, the website for the Family History Library in Salt Lake City and the Genealogical Society of Utah. A new volunteer program introduced in 2006 is FamilySearch indexing. This is a project that anyone who has a computer and Internet access can volunteer for by contributing their time. As of June 2007, most of the projects offered were from the 1900 US federal census, but with all the digitizing happening in the Granite Mountain Records Vault, there will be millions of projects to choose from in the future.

In addition to the opportunities I've already mentioned, here are some more opportunities for you to pay it forward:

- Genie Angels, <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Genie-Angels/> — "a central place to locate an 'angel' in your area".
- GENUKI, <http://www.genuki.org.uk/> — "this enormous collection of genealogical information pages for England, Ireland, Scotland, Wales, the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man needs your help!"
- IIGSTM Translation Team,

<http://www.iigs.org/translators/index.htm> — “looking for people with language skills who can help translate web pages into non-English languages.”

- Immigrant Ships Transcribers Guild, <http://www.immigrantships.net/> — transcribing passenger lists.
- Genealogy Look Up Forum, <http://www.rootsweb.com/~genealogylookup/index.html> — do research look ups that are available to you
- Find-A-Grave, <http://www.findagrave.com/> — submit new listings, updates, corrections and photographs
- USGenWeb, <http://www.usgenweb.org/projects/index.shtml> — add your data to the numerous “specialized” projects
- USGenNet, <http://www.usgenet.org/> — an umbrella site for many different projects.
- FamilyLink, <http://www.familylink.com> — a social networking website for genealogists.

The “Lookups & Free Searches by Volunteers” at the Cyndi’s List website, <http://www.cyndislist.com/lookups.htm>, has a multi-page list of volunteer opportunities. “General Resource Sites” leads the list, followed by many pages of “Locality Specific” opportunities. This last part could include somebody’s own personal, locality-specific databases which they have offered to share.

How about volunteering at a library or historical organization? The website for the Lake County (Indiana) Public Library, <http://www.lakeco.lib.in.us/>, posts information for the volunteers they so desperately seek. You could help this library by adopting a shelf of books, helping with the annual book sale or assist as a data entry volunteer. And I’ll bet your local library would welcome this sort of help from you.

State libraries can always use help. The Indiana State Library website, <http://www.statelib.lib.in.us/>, has five pages of volunteer

specifics for the help they need — from assisting with research to guiding tours. We genealogists should be running to these libraries and offering to volunteer because this help results in records becoming available for everybody to use.

Regional branches of the National Archives are always seeking volunteers. These facilities need help in dozens of different ways, from helping in the research room, to scanning or indexing records.

The “Current Volunteer Opportunities” page, <https://www.freedomcenterhiring.org/>, at the website for the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center in



Help by sharing your data with other genealogists.

Cincinnati, Ohio, declares “Become a Freedom Conductor today!”. Freedom Conductors “provide the support crucial for success”, both behind the scenes and in the spotlight. Private research facilities need volunteers, too.

At my local level (which may parallel your own opportunities), my genealogical society begs for volunteers to enter data from a huge card file of clipped obituaries. The Eastern Washington branch of the Washington State Archives is looking for volunteers to scan, and then index, the early marriage records for all Washington counties. My local historical society needs help indexing nearly one million photographic images of early Spokane. The list goes on and on, and may reflect the list of needs in your area.

Besides helping with the proj-

ects of others, you might consider paying it forward by offering to share your own documented resources. You could:

- Submit your information to the USGenWeb archives
- Share your GEDCOM, perhaps via Pedigree Resource File at FamilySearch.org
- Share your documented information on all pertinent message boards and mailing lists — locality specific, surname specific and perhaps ethnicity specific
- Share your information on general boards, such as GenForum.

The granddaddy of all websites that lists volunteer opportunities for us to pay it forward is RootsWeb.com.

RootsWeb lists opportunities by category:

- Share Your Research
- Communicate With Others
- Volunteer

To me, these three things all go together. We *share our records* by posting our information online. We *communicate with others* by being quick to answer queries asking for help or information. And we *volunteer* by offering our time.

Nobody would ask you to give your life to paying it forward as one character had to do in *Pay It Forward*. But as genealogists, we certainly can give something of ourselves to the concept of paying it forward in genealogy by volunteering.



**Donna Potter Phillips** is a past president of the Eastern Washington Genealogical Society and writes a weekly newspaper

genealogy column. She has also written for numerous genealogical magazines and given presentations all over the Pacific Northwest.

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# WorldVitalRecords



## DIANE L. RICHARD TAKES THE PULSE OF WORLDVITALRECORDS AFTER ITS FIRST YEAR

A YEAR AGO, WorldVitalRecords, [www.worldvitalrecords.com](http://www.worldvitalrecords.com), was a fairly new player in the world of online subscription database services. WorldVitalRecords (WVR) is the brainchild of Paul Allen, a co-founder of MyFamily.com, who left the company in 2002. Allen aims for his new company to become the number two player in the genealogy industry, behind MyFamily.com. Let's see how WVR is coming along!

The website contains a mix of free and subscription content. If you have been following the press releases from and about WVR, you know that there has been a continuous stream of new content added; some via new partnerships formed.

To quickly get a snapshot of what WVR contains for free and paid content (an annual subscription is \$49.95 US), check out these two pages: <http://www.worldvitalrecords.com/contentlisting.aspx> and <http://www.worldvitalrecords.com/genealogy-databases.aspx>. The first is an alphabetical list of databases and the latter is a list organized by type (there is also an option to see what is available for a particular location). The "types" include: Census, Birth, Marriage and Death, Military, Immigration, Family Trees, Directories, Court, Land and

Probate, Reference and Finding Aids, Quintin Database, NewspaperARCHIVE, SmallTownPapers Collection, International Parish Register Collection, International Marriages and World Gazetteer Collection.

Not all of the content on WVR is unique, but the amount of unique content seems to be increasing. Its goal is to provide a type of "one-stop shopping" platform for genealogists, where its portal allows you access to a

ing the past year include:

### EVERTON PUBLISHERS

<http://www.everton.com/b/index.html>

200 issues of the *Genealogical Helper Magazine* (1946-2006) and an index of more than 3.6 million names from Everton's pedigree files and family group sheets and access to the historic Everton Library. This information is not available online anywhere else.

### SMALLTOWNPAPERS COLLECTION

<http://www.smalltownpapers.com/>  
Access to a completely searchable digital archive that features

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WVR has come a long way since its debut. It contains a much richer and expanded collection of databases both through its strategic partnerships and digitizing/indexing initiatives.

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multitude of databases without the inconvenience of visiting a myriad of different websites. It contains an eclectic mix of data and resources, which means that the "nothing ventured, nothing gained" tact is the approach to take. You cannot count on there being a unique resource for a certain locale and there are some pretty obscure resources that are gold mines of information!

### NEW ADDITIONS

Some of the new additions dur-

smalltown newspapers back to 1846. Currently offers nearly one million pages and adding more than 100,000 pages each month! This information is not available online anywhere else.

### QUINTIN PUBLICATIONS CDROM LIBRARY

<http://www.quintinpublications.com>  
Access to more than 10,000 exclusive books and articles, which will go through an OCR (optical character reading) and indexing process, and be made available to members. These are valuable and

## WorldVitalRecords

hard-to-find materials from many different sources.

### NEWSPAPERARCHIVE COLLECTION

<http://www.newspaperarchive.com/>  
Includes select newspapers from 1759 to 1923. These newspapers were specially selected because they are rich in records, such as birth announcements, marriage announcements, death certificate listings and obituaries. WVR is continually adding to this valuable collection.

### STATUE OF LIBERTY-ELLIS ISLAND FOUNDATION

<http://www.ellisland.org/>  
This is a partnership whereby the historic passenger arrival records for the Port of New York and Ellis Island will be freely available through WVR and its new FamilyLink feature.

### ALLCENSUS

[www.allcensus.com](http://www.allcensus.com)

Allcensus has partnered to bring the Federal US censuses from 1790-1930 online at WVR and contains more than 800,000 browsable images and 32 million names from select counties in every state, except Alaska.

### FIND A GRAVE

<http://www.findagrave.com/>

A search engine connected to Find A Grave gives you access to at least 16 million entries!

Additionally, patrons at more than 4,500 Family History Centers throughout the world will have access to WVR.

Individuals who purchase a subscription to the Godfrey Memorial Library, <http://www.godfrey.org>, (or who are current members) can upgrade their membership to include a WVR subscription for an additional \$45 US. A subscription to Godfrey Memorial Library includes a variety of genealogical material, reference books and indexes, including the 19th Century Newspaper Collection,

London Times Archives 1795-1995, American National Biography Online, Oxford Dictionary of National Biography Online, and the Columbia World Gazetteer. Additionally, WVR subscribers benefit from this partnership by having the option to upgrade to

in more diverse publications than I expected, since I was searching on 18th- and 19th-century families. Here is a sampling of a few of the identified resources:

- An Abstract of North Carolina Wills, 1760-1800
- Spring Hope Enterprise (Spring Hope, North Carolina)
- Marriage Notices from the *Charlotte Journal*, Charlotte, North Carolina, 3 July 1835 to 7 December 1851
- North and South Carolina Marriage Records, From the Earliest Colonial Days to the Civil War
- Marriage and Death Notices in *Raleigh Register* and *North Carolina State Gazette*, 1846 to 1855

As you can see, these are some pretty valuable resources and ones that I had utilized previously in print form!

For any search, besides getting "hits" on the WVR website, you will also get "book

results" powered by Google. This will identify for you books listed on the Google book site, <http://books.google.com/> that have the chosen search terms. I found this a wonderful way to quickly get a sense of what other relevant resources may apply to those I was researching.

From the search results, when you find an item that you would like to "see", you just click on "more details" and you will be taken to the relevant digital image. At the top of the viewing window, you will find some basic controls to modify the image size and generate a printer-friendly version. If you desire more options on how to manipulate the image, you can choose "enhanced viewer". I found both viewers straightforward to use and that the image quality was just fine for everything that I looked at.

There are actually three types of searches that you can perform:



The WorldVitalRecords website.

the Godfrey Library Scholar Online Portal for only \$30 US (a \$35 value). Another part of the agreement allows WVR to scan and index books, articles and church records from the Godfrey Memorial Library. The indexes will be housed on both sites.



When viewing a document, this is the viewer controls area.

### USING WORLDVITALRECORDS

Now that you know what WVR is about, let's now take it through its paces!

My first test was to put in various names from North Carolina research. I was pleasantly surprised to find that there were actually more entries found

- Exact searches will return results that match the exact spellings that you entered into the Family Name box.
- Soundex searches will return search results that match the Soundex variations for the name that you entered into the Family Name box. Soundex is a "phonetic algorithm" that identifies words that sound alike but are spelled differently such as "Smyth" and "Smith" or "Brown" and "Braun".
- Double Metaphone searches will return search results that match the Double Metaphone spellings for the name that you entered into the Family Name box. It is superior to Soundex because it understands the basic rules of spelling for English, Slavic, Germanic, Celtic, Greek, French, Italian, Spanish and Chinese. "Double Metaphone" tends to return more accurate and slightly fewer name variation search results.

To give you a sense of how these perform, my second test was to enter in the name John Rench and a location of North Carolina. For the Exact Search, I received one match and when I entered in the Soundex and Double Metaphone searches, I received more than 5,000 hits for the former and probably about 1,000 hits for the latter — definitely fewer matches found using the Double Metaphone method. The biggest thing I noticed is that once I moved off "Exact Search", the results were not limited to North Carolina — most of the entries came from across the US and the world. This means that you definitely need to play around with the search engines as you look for your ancestors. Though an Exact Search is more limiting, it might be less overwhelming for a novice genealogist!

For my third test, I did a lot of searches on a variety of surnames that I have researched — everything from Grasmick and Herrle to Bevan to Acey to Glenn, and I even did Jones! For any name I tried, except Niittula,

matches were found. Many of these were the obvious ones in the SSDI, Find A Grave, select military records, etc. and some were unfamiliar finds in more obscure documents. I can't say that I found anything that directly impacts the research I have done and these were all families that have been well researched already.

Since many surnames are also occupations, landmarks or can be used in a context other than a surname, you will find many search results that are not ancestral in nature! For example, a search on the surname Paradise brings up many entries talking about a place that is a paradise versus a family named as such.

#### KEEP CURRENT

You will find the Press Room and weekly Newsletter as great ways to keep abreast of the new data and services as they are added. The newsletter contains a lot of interesting information about the project and its happenings, including new databases and upcoming data sets on WVR, and you can have it delivered to your e-mail mailbox or read it online. Better yet, each edition lists the newly added databases and when a new database is added, access to it is free for 10 days!

#### INTERNATIONAL GENEALOGY COMMUNITY PAGES

Another feature is the recently started International Genealogy Community pages. The first phase is country specific search engines which use the power of Google, <http://www.google.com>, to search the top genealogy and family history websites for each country.

In the future, these pages will include experts in genealogy, family history and specialists in historical documents for every country in the world. These international sections will also include podcasts, blogs, discussion boards and user generated content. Training and information will be available in a variety of languages. A newsletter will also be generated from each country.

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## WorldVitalRecords

When I revisit this page in another year, hopefully I will find some assistance for all those emigrant ancestors I have.

### FAMILYLINK

Related to WVR is [www.familylink.com](http://www.familylink.com). This is a new family tree viewer where you can build your own trees (either one-by-one or upload a GEDCOM file), add to the trees of others, as well as having people add to your tree.

Essentially this means that once you upload your tree, you can:

- Find other genealogists who are researching the same places you are, or even individuals who live in that place.
- Find other genealogists who have interest in or are researching the same surname.
- Receive help from genealogists locally and around the world when you hit a brickwall.

There is also a partnership between FamilyLink and Random Acts of Genealogical Kindness (RAOGK), <http://www.raogk.com/>, a global volunteer organization in which volunteers perform various genealogy-related tasks for researchers who live far away. As part of the partnership, RAOGK will introduce more than 4,000 of

its volunteers to FamilyLink.com, a new free, social genealogy network that is operated by WVR.

### CONCLUSION

A year ago I wrote that "WVR has a few interesting features but we get the impression that it has been rushed to the market, possibly because they are aware of so many other launches due at this time. It seems very much like a work in progress and \$49 for one year is a lot to pay for what is currently available. Their pedigree and potential resources could make them an important player down the line but they have a long way to go."

Now, a year later I can safely say that WVR has come a long way since its debut. It contains a much richer and expanded collection of databases both through its strategic partnerships and digitizing/indexing initiatives. And, although some of the databases may contain content available elsewhere, this frees one from needing to individually visit the various websites; hence, the convenience and appeal of being better able to access diverse collections through one web portal.

It is still a little fragmented and spread a bit thin across a

broad spectrum of data collections, but this is not nearly the factor it was a year ago. WVR has certainly grown up a bit this past year. For the cost of a subscription, what it now offers subscribers is comparable to other similarly priced collections. However, with the difference and at its current pace of growth, WVR just might have the makings to become an important player in the world of Internet genealogy.

IG



*Diane L. Richard has been doing genealogy research for 20 years. She is always looking for new*

*resources to further her personal research and that of her clients. She currently does professional research in NC and she can be found online at [www.mosaicrpm.com/Genealogy](http://www.mosaicrpm.com/Genealogy).*

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### ILLINOIS DEATH CERTIFICATES

- 1916-1947, - **The Illinois State Genealogical Society (ISGS)** has established this project to assist members and researchers who do not have easy access to the Illinois State Archives to obtain death certificate copies. Cost per certificate is \$6.00 for ISGS members, \$10.00 for non-members. For non-certified copies of 1916-1947 death certificates go the ISGS web site at <http://www.rootsweb.com/~ilsgs/index.html>, click on the link for death certificates

<http://www.rootsweb.com/~ilsgs/projects/deathcerts.html> and follow the ordering directions.

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# A Different Type of Family Reunion

ONLY JUST IN THE past few months, have I been able to use the Internet, specifically the free language-translation services and dictionaries you can find online, to return a piece of ancestral history to a family in Germany.

I was still in high school when I stumbled across a small, gray volume at a library book sale. It was written in German, the title in dark, angular script: *Thus Spoke Zarathustra by Friedrich Nietzsche — War Edition*. Inside, the name Philipp Muessig had been written in pencil, and below that Freudenberg am Main, the name of a town. On the next page was a date — 1917 — and three poems wishing Philipp good luck. The fact that I found a WWI German book in the basement of an Ohio library told me that luck probably hadn't been with Mr. Muessig. But I was studying German at the time, so I took the book home with me to try to read.

Over the next two decades, I'd pull the book down from the shelf from time to time, flip through the pages, and wonder what had become of Mr. Muessig. However, it would always end up back on the shelf, with vague thoughts of tracking down the man's descendants someday.

Then in the summer of 2007, I took the book down once again and went online to see what I could find, not expecting any success. I'd tried a half-dozen times before to find either Philipp or Freudenberg am Main on the Internet, and had never had any luck.

This time though, Google listed the municipal web page of the town of Freudenberg am Main among its search results. My German was 20 years out of date, and half-forgotten, so I used Google's built-in translation function to help me read the web pages. I clicked through several links, hoping to find information on a local historical society or

someone that could help me locate the Muessig family. I never did find the historical society, but on the third or fourth page I read, I found a list of municipal employees and their contact information. Among the names was a Mrs. Gabi Muessig, which the translated web page said worked in the tourism department.

The coincidence of the same



Above: The book once owned by Philipp Muessig. Right: Philipp Muessig as a young man.



last name in the same town was too much to resist, and I wrote a short e-mail, telling her about the book, and asking if she was related to Philipp. With the help of the online language tools at Google and the dim echoes of my high school classes, I was able to massage my e-mail into some semblance of grammatical German.

To my surprise, Dieter Muessig, Gabi's husband, e-mailed me back the next day. He'd also used a translation program to change his German into understandable English. Philipp was his grandfather.

Dieter and I exchanged several e-mails, and I learned the rest of Philipp's story. He'd been a sailor

during the First World War, and was a POW in England. He returned home after the war, living the rest of his life peacefully in Freudenberg am Main.

As for how the book came to the US, Dieter wrote that his grandfather's sister had immigrated to the US in the 1920s. When Philipp died in 1928, his sister attended the funeral in Germany, and may have taken the book back with her as a memento.

All our e-mails were filtered through Internet translation programs and I often double-checked words through other online dictionaries. Without these tools as a bridge, I doubt Dieter and I could have communicated effectively, if at all.

The result of our e-mails was that on 10 August 2007, I carefully packed the book and mailed it to Freudenberg am Main. Dieter told me just before I sent the book that his two teenage sons were "excited to see the book that belonged to their great-grandfather... how it looks, and what it contains." I was just

as excited as the Muessigs.

The book arrived safe and sound two weeks later. Dieter has written me several times since then to tell me that the book has brought his family a new understanding and perspective on their ancestors.

So if you have old letters or papers in a foreign language that are just lying around, you may want to try an Internet translation program to see what information it contains. You may just end up enriching your own — or somebody else's — family history.

# More Than One Way to Lose a Document

ALL OF US WHO immerse ourselves in family history have stories of lost records, letters, photographs and other treasures. Many of us share great regret because of the loss by fire of the US 1890 census. On a more personal level, most family researchers have learned of at least one house or courthouse fire that forever took away invaluable knowledge of some of their ancestors. And, records can disappear for all sorts of odd reasons.

If one of your ancestors was Henry VII of England (r. 1485-1509), wouldn't you like a peek at his personal notebook? The king constantly jotted secret notes in the book, so that he would not forget a slight or a mistake committed by anyone. But, that book is long gone. One day, Henry's pet monkey got ahold of the notebook and tore it to shreds. It caused great merriment — and relief — to his courtiers.

The relentless drive for storage space, as well as utter ignorance, has possibly destroyed more records than war, disasters, or royal pet monkeys. British antiquarians in the 19th century were horrified to realize that old family manuscript collections and Church of England parish registers were being tossed out, or sold as waste paper. Centuries-old parchments were bought for almost nothing by food sellers to wrap cheese, butter and groceries; or by bakers to line pie pans. (You have to wonder which was more endangered: the written history of England, or the health of those folks whose food came wrapped

in ancient animal hides!)

Chucking out the old to make room for the new can have dire consequences. The English exchequer's tally sticks were medieval financial and tax accounts that were kept by the means of making coded cuts on notched sticks.



*Henry VII recorded the slights and mistakes of his couriers in a little book. However, one day, his pet monkey destroyed the book — to the merriment and relief of his courtiers.*

By 1834, some of these were six or seven centuries old. Someone at the Parliament buildings cast an unsentimental eye at them and decided that they'd been kept long enough. Thousands of tally sticks were hurled into the furnace that heated the House of Lords — so many, in fact, that the furnace overheated and caught the paneling on fire the night of

16 October 1834. The tally sticks went, but they took a lot of other records with them. The Houses of Parliament were engulfed in a spectacular blaze that required their complete reconstruction, which took until 1870.

Modern materials are no safer from loss than medieval tally sticks. It seems that half of all movies made in the US before 1950, and 90 percent of those from the silent era (pre-1929) are lost. Many great moments of vintage television are lost as well. Early videotape was very expensive — too costly, it seems, to use as storage for TV shows that had already been broadcast. British and US TV networks once had a policy of “wiping” or re-using their videotapes. Performances by the Beatles and Jimi Hendrix, early World Series games, live dramas and classic early sitcoms were taped over for shows that were themselves later forgotten and taped over.

These days, much of modern family life is recorded on video and computer disc. Perhaps for genealogists of the future, their “brickwalls” will have been caused not by Civil War courthouse fires, but computer failures and faulty surge protectors. (“All those pictures were on Great-uncle Jason's computer, which crashed back in 1998!”)

So remember, make and share duplicate copies of your family papers, and back up all your computer files. Most of all, keep everything away from your pet monkey!

What's in the current issue of

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**NEW YEAR'S EVE 1907:**  
David Goss tells how the coming of the New Year was celebrated in North America 100 years ago.



**CHIMES OF FREEDOM:**  
David A. Norris looks at the facts and folklore behind an American icon, the Liberty Bell.



**MADEIRA:**  
James Held raises his glass and toasts the storied history of this popular wine that inspired rogues, revolutionaries and royalty.



**HAIRWORK JEWELRY:**  
Worn by many in the past, often as a form of mourning, hairwork jewelry is mostly forgotten today. Laura Tylene Levesque looks at this token of love.

*The features mentioned here are in preparation and are planned for the current issue. However, circumstances may affect the final content.*

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