

Genealogy Research Databases

Northwest Indiana Genealogical Society
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You will still need to do some “boots on the ground” old school research, but there is a tremendous amount of material for you to explore for free online. This presentation gives priority to the most popular databases.

If you've not done so already, create a digital library of links to genealogy databases using your web browser Bookmarks. It's helpful to have these genealogy websites in a Genealogy Resources folder where they are a few clicks away. Should you need help in setting up your folder, go to Computer Hope at: <https://www.computerhope.com/issues/ch002307.htm> There are step by step instructions for each web browser.

Free Websites

I recommend exhausting the free websites first before taking out a paid membership.

Family Search - <https://www.familysearch.org/en/united-states/> (I encourage you to use this database first at your local library. While free records can be accessed, a number of links are to Ancestry, where you will need to use the library edition for free access).

- Set up your username and password. Log in.
- Select **Search** in the tool bar, and from the dropdown menu, select **Research Wiki**.
- To the left, select **Online Genealogy Records**.

Records from the United States and from countries globally are available. Here, you can print or save records, find online genealogies submitted by other researchers, search for Family History Library(FHL) holdings, and locate and visit a local FHL in your area. Call ahead and check their hours before visiting. Recently, Family Search turned over their Family Tree portion to MyHeritage.

Cyndi's List - <https://www.cyndislist.com> Select **Categories**. There are hot links here for a large number of **additional genealogy websites and databases**.

Rootsweb - <https://home.rootsweb.com>

Founded in 1993. Old school research. In 2008, it was taken over by Ancestry.com. When you've exhausted your source information, the old message boards, surname boards in particular, can provide some valuable research clues that will need to be proven or disproven. You will have to follow various message threads and conversations.

USGenWeb - usgenweb.org

Again, old school research. A network of websites maintained by volunteers. It was established in 1996 by a group of genealogists who wanted to keep genealogy resources free. Search by state and then county.

Free Trials at Ancestry, MyHeritage and Fold 3

Ancestry and MyHeritage each have free searchable collections. Each requires you to set up an account and file your credit card with them. Set a reminder to cancel on the 13th day to avoid being charged. Also, watch for promotions. Both offer DNA testing and tools. Both offer promotions around Mother's Day, Father's Day, and Christmas.

- **At Ancestry**, both international and records from the United States are available. Census records, immigration records, military records, prison records, wills, biographies, and some Jewish records from eastern Europe are available.
- **At MyHeritage**, their records focus more on the United States. Search birth marriage and death records, schools and universities, census records, maps, directories, guides and references, histories memories and biographies, and more.

Fold3- A part of Ancestry. Search is free, but it requires a subscription to access records. There is a 7-day free trial. They do, however, host free access during Memorial Day and Veteran's Day.

Other Free Websites

DAR – <https://www.dar.org> Visit The Daughters of the American Revolution website genealogy section. (If you are a NWIGS member, Peg McGriff, DAR Regent, gave a presentation on what is available on their website. To view this presentation again, go to NWIGS.com).

National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) – <https://www.archives.gov/> Federal records, including military, census, immigration, land, and naturalization records.

Library of Congress – <https://www.loc.gov> Digital images of newspapers, books, photos, prints, films, maps, and personal narratives.

Chronicling America – <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/> (Library of Congress) Search images of US newspapers from 1792-1963.

Allen County Public Library – <https://www.acpl.lib.in.us> Fort Wayne, Indiana. The second largest repository of genealogical records and resources in the US next to Salt Lake City. Their catalog of holdings and resources is searchable on their website. [TIP: Save time on your visit by searching their catalog online, then print out a list of those resources you want to pull during your visit]. Also, check out their PERSI periodical index, and their YouTube channel where you will find past educational presentations.

Find A Grave – <https://www.findagrave.com> Over 170 million burial and cemetery records have been submitted by volunteers. Often, the person who created the memorial will post additional information and clues about that ancestor. With that said, errors are made. Do your own research! By request, volunteers will scout out missing graves and headstones in neglected cemeteries.

Ellis Island – <https://www.statueofliberty.org/discover/passenger-ship-search/> Through this website, you can explore the history of Ellis Island, get tips on genealogy research, and search the 65 million Ellis Island database entries for your immigrant ancestors.

Castle Garden – <https://www.ggarchives.com/Immigration/CastleGarden/index.html> 11 million immigrants came to New York from 1820-1892. Records can be searched online.

Free BMD – <https://www.freebmd.org.uk> Birth, marriage and death records for ancestors from England or Wales.

Reclaim the Records – <https://www.reclaimtherecords.org> Created by a group of historians, genealogists, researchers, and advocates. They publish records held but have been wrongly restricted by the government, archives or libraries.

JewishGen – <https://www.jewishgen.org/index.asp> This website hosts more than 20 million world-wide records dedicated to Jewish research.

AfriGeneas – <https://afrigeneas.org> This site is dedicated to African American research.

DeadFred – <https://deadfred.com/> A searchable photo archive with a forum where you can post photographs to share with others.

New York Public Library – <https://www.nypl.org/> Digitized photos, atlases, guidebooks, and genealogical records.

Freedman's Bureau – <https://nmaahc.si.edu/explore/freedmens-bureau> Digitized post-Civil War records, including topics such as slavery, Reconstruction, and citizenship.

GenomeLink – <https://genomelink.io> Once you upload your raw DNA, this site offers free access to basic reports about genetic traits and wellness.

Maps

Maps are an important tool in your genealogy research. Make friends with them! Explore online where your ancestors lived. When trying to determine if two families are related, determining the distance between where the two families lived can be valuable. Relatives often lived in the next town or adjacent county. County boundaries often changed, causing a change in county name. It might appear from the record that your ancestor relocated.

- **David Rumsey's Historical Map Collection** – <https://www.davidrumsey.com> A large collection of maps and images are viewable online. These historical maps demonstrate how state and county boundaries as well as place names changed over time.
- **Sanborn Maps** – (Library of Congress). <https://www.loc.gov/collections/sanborn-maps/about-this-collection/> A collection of fire insurance maps published by the Sanborn Map Company. They often show how cities changed over time.
- **Google Maps** – <https://maps.google.com> Search place names, geographical names, find the distance between places, and see geographical areas all over the world via topographical or satellite images.

Digitized Books and Newspapers Free Online

Hathi Trust – (Pronounced “haw tee”) Hathitrust.org

Google Books – books.google.com

Internet Archive – <https://archive.org> A non-profit archive of digitized books and resources.

Smithsonian Library - [/library.si.edu/books-online](http://library.si.edu/books-online). This library links to Internet Archive.

Fulton History – (NY Public Library) <https://www.nypl.org/research/collections/articles-databases/fulton-search-historical-newspapers> A searchable database of old newspapers published in the United States and Canada from 1795 to 2007.

Available At Your Local Library

I encourage you to visit the genealogy department of your local library. There are library versions of Ancestry, Fold 3, and other online databases that you can access in-person for free. Library catalogs and resources are searchable online.