

Genealogy Research Databases and Websites

You will still need to do some “boots on the ground” research, but there is a tremendous amount of material for you to explore for free online.

If you've not done so already, create a digital library of links to these genealogy databases using your Bookmarks in your web browser. Create a Genealogy Resources folder where these links 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 to Ancestry or MyHeritage. Your local library should have library editions to sites such as Ancestry that you can use for free.

Family Search - <https://www.familysearch.org/en/united-states/>

- Set up your username and password. Log in.
- Select **Search** in the tool bar, and from the dropdown menu, select **Research Wiki**.
- On 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 FHL holdings, and locate and visit a local Family History Library in your area. Call before you visit and ask when their library is staffed.

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 genealogy websites.

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

Founded in 1993. Old school research. In 2008, it was taken over by Ancestry.com. The old Message Boards, surname boards in particular, can provide some valuable research clues, but be prepared to do some digging. 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.

DAR – <https://www.dar.org> Visit The Daughters of the American Revolution website genealogy section. (If you are a NWIGS member, Regent Peg McGriff recently 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, films, maps, personal narratives, photos, prints, and drawings.

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>

Located in Fort Wayne, Indiana. The second largest repository of genealogical records and resources in the US next to Salt Lake City. Their catalog of holdings is searchable on their website. Searching their catalog from home, then printing out a list of resources you want to pull during your visit will save you valuable research time. 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!

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 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 information on 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, finding 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, and it may 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, find the distance between places, and see geographical areas via topographical or satellite images. When trying to connect one family to another, it's helpful to know the distance between where the two families lived.

Digitized Books and Newspapers Free Online

Hathi Trust – (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. 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 repository of old newspapers published in the United States and Canada, Fulton History has historical photos and newspapers from 1795 to 2007, with new data added weekly.

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 websites that you can access in-person for free. Library catalogs and resources are typically searchable online.

Free Trials At MyHeritage and Ancestry.com

Each has a 14-day trial period, although you will be required to enter a credit card number and then cancel before the end of the 14-day period. Both offer promotions around Mother's Day, Father's Day, and Christmas.

Both sites offer DNA testing and tools, although those tools do vary.

At **Ancestry**, the catalog is free to search, and a number of free records are available. Both international and records from the United States are available. Records such as census records, immigration records, military records, prison records, wills, biographies, and even some Jewish records from eastern Europe are available.

At **MyHeritage**, their records and catalog are free to search. Their records are more focused 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, is free to search, but 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.