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**14 WEBSITES  
FOR CANADIAN  
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# Creating Ties that Bind with Family Heirlooms

When is the last time you thought about your family heirlooms? I mean, really given them some serious consideration? These items are all around us. They decorate our family rooms, dining rooms and even our wardrobes. What special item do you own that belonged to a relative or ancestor? Do you recall the story behind it or know the history of it? Well, if you are like me, some things have vivid memories while others are quite vague. Some things, I long to know the history of and there is not one shred of a clue. One thing I do know, however, is that these heirlooms are meaningful. When I look at a piece, hold it in my hand, use it, or wear it, I'm reminded of that special person that gave it to me or whom I inherited it from. It keeps their memory alive and on the surface of my heart.



Now might be the time to start thinking about the fate of your special possessions. What will happen to photographs, antiques, jewelry, or furniture that came from relatives of the past? Or, you may have special treasures you have acquired yourself that you would like to pass on. Making these decisions now could make all the difference in your beloved item being revered, or ending up in a garage sale, thrift shop, or even worse, the trash.

Telling the stories and revealing the history of your heirlooms will be the key in creating lasting meaningful and sentimental value for your family and future generations. If they know the significance of the item, they are more likely to retain it, care for it, and keep it in the family for years to come.

One such way to document your heirlooms is with a service called Heirloom Vault. This free online platform allows you to easily catalog your items in a very simple systematic way. Heirloom Vault has preset categories for very convenient organization. Once entered, your data is stored safely and securely. You have the ability to share your vault with family members, or choose to keep your vault private.



Recalling the memories and documenting history is a very rewarding and fun activity! Additionally, it helps to ensure your stories don't get lost or forgotten. By taking the time now, you can create valuable ties that will bind you to your family now and in the future. Whether you think so or not, your stories are interesting! Your heirlooms are meaningful! You hold the key to stories your loved ones will want to know! And who better to tell the story, than you, while it is fresh in your mind.

Visit Heirloom Vault today and get started preserving your legacy. A labor of love that will prove to be well worthwhile indeed!

**Document the history of your  
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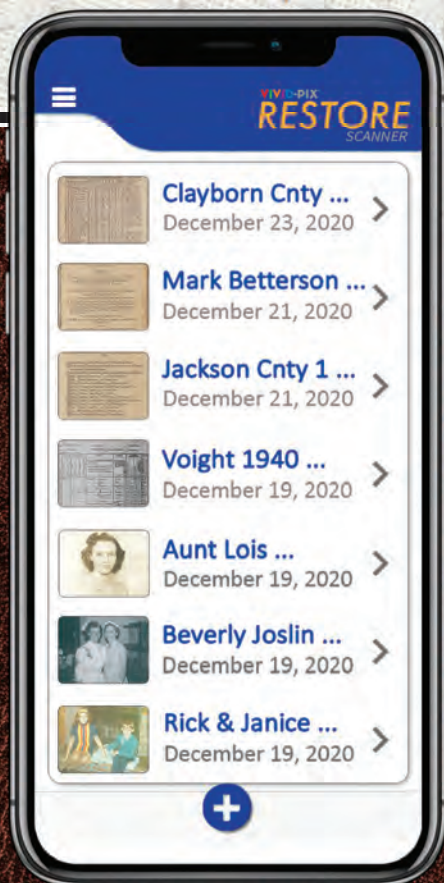


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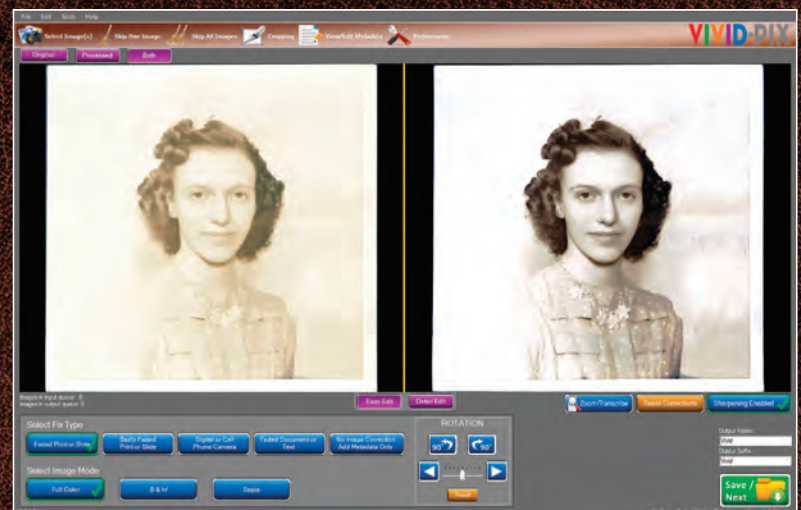
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➤ Look for the green arrow throughout this issue for hints to expanded versions, free downloads and related products at [familytreemagazine.com](http://familytreemagazine.com)!

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COVER PHOTO: DOONAGORE CASTLE  
IN COUNTY CLARE, IRELAND  
LUKAS BISCHOFF/ISTOCK

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## out on a limb



**There it was**, plain as day in a census record: James Carrigan, birthplace: Ireland. Family stories have told me I have Irish heritage, but I'd never traced an ancestor there. Ecstatic, I searched every document I could for James' hometown. But record after record came up empty.

So I did what any sensible researcher would do: I asked for help. At the time, I was working with Claire Santry on *The Family Tree Irish Genealogy Guide*, and explained my problem to her. In short order, she replied with indexed baptism records of a possible match in Dublin.

Faith and begorrah, we might've found it! Claire helped me overcome a brick wall and gave my research new direction, and I was so glad I'd reached out.

Help can come in many ways, and don't be afraid to ask for it. You can look for resources on social media or hire a professional genealogist, to name a couple options. Or you can visit a conference such as RootsTech <www.rootstech.org> to hear about the latest research tools and strategies.

And, of course, we're here to help, too! We fill each issue with tools and advice we hope you'll find useful. This issue contains guides to Canadian research (page 48), saving damaged family photos (page 42) and more. Claire's even written an article on page 18 that will help you find your Irish ancestors, too!

And, since 2017, we've been publishing our popular state research guides issue by issue. Starting on pages 33 and 37, we restart the cycle with updated entries for California and our home state of Ohio.

There's no shame in asking for help. After all, when you do, you'll be in an even better place to pay it forward. ●



## TREE TALK

We asked what genealogy societies you're a part of, and your favorite thing about being a member. Here's how you responded.

### MIDDLE PENINSULA AFRICAN-AMERICAN

Genealogical & Historical Society (MPAAGHS). Membership allows me to connect with others doing research in my home state and, perhaps most importantly, in my home county. Zoom meetings have kept me well-informed and have presented topics that are intriguing and thought-provoking.

*Johnanna Williams via Facebook*

**FAMILY HISTORY ASSOCIATION** of North Queensland in Australia. It is our local one. I never stop being amazed at the information I glean from those older than me about the local area and its people, sources to find those hard-to-find sources, [and] connections with members who know my relatives.

*Marilyn Grogan via Facebook*

I belong to the Genealogical Society of Bergen County, N.J., and the Passaic County Historical Society Genealogy Club (New Jersey), both for their presentations and local history libraries.

*Vicki Spencer Campbell via Facebook*

### MEADE COUNTY GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY—

Meade, Kan. First of all, I've made very good friendships in my group that meets monthly. My society has helped me to learn so much about research and given me the desire to research for and help others (which helps me to learn more). Of the different clubs and activities I've participated in over the past 30 years, it is the one thing I wouldn't give up.

*Janette Friesen via Facebook*

Learn about the benefits of joining the National Genealogical Society (NGS) in our feature on page 28.

### JOIN OUR COMMUNITY!

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# everything's relative



**"PEOPLE LIKE US**, who believe in physics, know that the distinction between past, present, and future is only a stubbornly persistent illusion." ●

**Albert Einstein** reflects on the relativity of time upon the death of his friend Michele Besso in a March 1955 letter to Besso's family. Einstein himself died just one month later.





## WHAT'S NEW

# FamilySearch in 30 Languages

**FAMILYSEARCH** <[www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org)>, the popular free genealogy website, is now available in 30 languages, after adding 20 new languages throughout 2020. Now, family history enthusiasts in more parts of the world can explore their heritage and contribute to the site's collaborative family tree. Some of the latest additions are Fijian, Albanian, Czech, Norwegian and Mongolian <[www.familysearch.org/blog/en/new-languages-familysearch](http://www.familysearch.org/blog/en/new-languages-familysearch)>.

The additions come just in time for RootsTech Connect <[www.rootstech.org](http://www.rootstech.org)>, a 100% virtual conference sponsored by FamilySearch in late February 2021. RootsTech Connect will have programs in multiple languages, and is expected to have a schedule that's optimized for a global audience. As of this writing, more than 160,000 people have registered.



**Sunny Jane Morton**

is a contributing editor for Family Tree Magazine, content manager at Your DNA Guide and industry expert on the giant genealogy websites.

## ANCESTRY.COM ADDS MARRIAGE ANNOUNCEMENTS

Subscription website Ancestry.com <[www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com)> continues to harvest enormous amounts of genealogical data from its sister site Newspapers.com <[www.newspapers.com](http://www.newspapers.com)>. Ancestry.com has extracted more than 200 million names from 50 million US marriage announcements in publications digitized on Newspapers.com. The marriage announcements collection <[www.ancestry.com/search/collections/62116](http://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/62116)> joins massive US and Canadian obituary collections on Ancestry.com, also excerpted from Newspapers.com.

These indexes are created using artificial intelligence, and aren't always completely accurate. But they've collected so many data points that it's often possible to recognize ancestral entries, even if the extract isn't perfect. Pictured below is an announcement for my mother, which I'm able to locate using the new index. Watch for ongoing updates and new collections, including birth notices and indexes for additional countries.





## DAR MAKES IT EASIER

The National Society Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) <[www.dar.org](http://www.dar.org)> is finding more ways to encourage prospective members to research patriot lineage and apply for membership:

- A new Jewish Task Force supports efforts to identify Jewish patriots and encourages descendants to apply.
- The DAR website provides resources for researching African American, Spanish, French and Native American patriots. Learn more under National Society > Genealogy > Minority Research.
- In 2020, the society launched a Legacy status <[blog.dar.org/share-your-dar-legacy](http://blog.dar.org/share-your-dar-legacy)> for relatives using the same ancestor to join DAR. The Legacy designation is given if an applicant connects to her nearest DAR relative within three generations, provided she's using the same eligible ancestor.

## Geni Tops 150 Million Profiles

**IN LATE 2020**, the free website Geni <[www.geni.com](http://www.geni.com)> surpassed 150 million profiles on its World Family Tree. Geni supports a single, shared community family tree model, similar to that used by WikiTree <[www.wikitree.com](http://www.wikitree.com)> and FamilySearch. According to the company's announcement, the site has more than 13 million users, as well as 200 volunteers who have worked on the tree.

Subscription website MyHeritage <[www.myheritage.com](http://www.myheritage.com)> owns Geni and provides the tree-building site with support and access to some of its tools, such as tree-generated birthday calendars and MyHeritage's Consistency Checker (which identifies errors in family trees).



## STORIES OF WWII FALLEN

A nonprofit initiative aims to compile and share the stories of the 400,000-plus US soldiers and sailors who lost their lives during World War II. Stories Behind the Stars <[www.storiesbehindthestars.org](http://www.storiesbehindthestars.org)>, founded by Don Milne, recruits volunteers to research and write biographical sketches of individual fallen servicemen and women. Writers come from several every US states and even other countries—see the website for volunteer information and short training videos.

The project expands on Milne's successful blog series that honored fallen individuals on their 100th birthdays <[ww2fallen100.blogspot.com](http://ww2fallen100.blogspot.com)>. Stories are published as Fold3 memorial pages (search at <[www.fold3.com/wall](http://www.fold3.com/wall)>). ●



# Spring Cleaning



## Spring Cleaning.

The season of spring cleaning approaches. Dreadful and dreaded it is to many a household. Yet with a little care and abundant coolness of temper it can be all done successfully and without a panic or revolution. To see some houses, during the spring cleaning period, one would suppose that either a deluge or a volcanic eruption or an earthquake had been at work. Everything is at sixes and sevens, everybody is uncomfortable, and the agony is prolonged beyond endurance. Such a state of affairs need not be. Let the annual campaign be well planned beforehand. Let the work be done by instalments, say one room at a time. A general overhauling of closets and storerooms as a commencement of the housecleaning will be a wise step. Let all unnecessary articles be disposed of, and if this plan is carried out from the uppermost attic to the extreme corners of the cellar, so much the better. There are houses in which the usual cleaning is done so quietly and systematically, so entirely without excitement or worry, that no one is the worse for it. It might be so in many more households.

## ▲ Family History on Display

"The season of spring cleaning approaches. Dreadful and dreaded it is to many a household. Yet with a little care and abundant coolness of temper, it can be all done successfully and without a panic or revolution," declared the *Herald* of Big Stone City, S.D., on 2 April 1886. In previous centuries, this yearly ritual completely upended households as carpets were taken up and drapes were taken down. By the 1940s, when my grandmother donned the cotton floral housedresses now hanging in my laundry room, technological advancements had dramatically reduced the drama and effort.

### Lisa Louise Cooke

is the founder of the Genealogy Gems website and podcast <[www.lisalouisecooke.com](http://www.lisalouisecooke.com)>, and host of the Family Tree Podcast <[www.familytreemagazine.com/podcasts](http://www.familytreemagazine.com/podcasts)>.





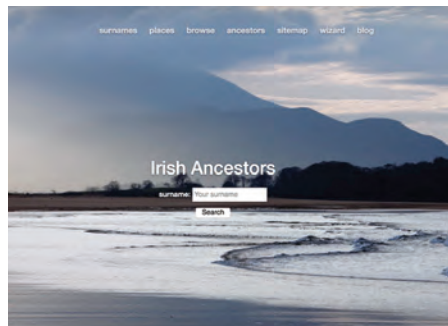
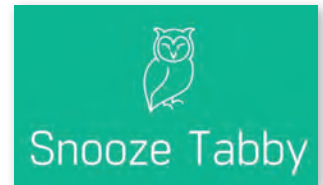


### ▲ Retro Recipe

Each family has at least one side dish that is a must-have at the holiday table. At Easter, I pull the worn recipe card (in my mother's handwriting) for Raspberry Jell-O from her old tin box. Mom's secret was to substitute cold water with an 8-ounce bottle of 7 Up when preparing the Jell-O. Add one small package of frozen raspberries, a sliced banana and a well-drained can of crushed pineapple. Top with sour cream for a fresh, sparkling fruity delight.

### Tech Tool ►

We use multiple web browser tabs to effectively compare a variety of online genealogical discoveries. You might also be tempted to use tabs to hold open pages you're hoping to find time to explore later. However, open tabs can also drain resources and clutter the screen. Use web extensions like Snooze Tabby (for Chrome; logo here) and Snooze Tabs (for Firefox) to clean your screen by temporarily moving tabs out of sight until you need them. Tabs can be retrieved at any time, or you can set them to resurface at your specified time and date.



### ▲ Sites to See

St. Patrick's Day often brings renewed interest in Irish genealogy. And the place to begin that search is at renowned Irish genealogist John Grenham's Irish Ancestors website <[www.johngrenham.com](http://www.johngrenham.com)>. Here you'll find invaluable free resources such as an expansive list of Irish

genealogy links as well as civil and Roman Catholic parish maps. You'll also find an online version of Grenham's *Tracing Your Irish Ancestors* (Genealogical Publishing Co.) and an extensive collection of articles. Don't miss the Wizard tool,

which delivers specific research recommendations based on what you already know about your ancestors. The site also includes fee-based content that you can unlock with 24-hour, monthly, and yearly subscription options. (Learn more about your Irish roots on page 18.)

## Ancestry.com Hot Keys

**Revising Searches**

**R:** Refine Search

**N:** New Search

---

**Results List Navigation**

**J:** Move Down List

**K:** Move Up List

**Enter:** Open Result

---

**Record Filmstrip Navigation**

**P:** Previous Image

**N:** Next Image

**F:** Toggle On & Off

---

**Record Side Panel Navigation**

**D:** Record Details

**R:** Related Records

**S:** Record Source

**I:** Index (Toggle)

*Elevenes with Lisa*

**Episode 17**

[GenealogyGems.com/Elevenes](http://GenealogyGems.com/Elevenes)

### ◀ Research Tip

I'm always looking for a way to save time. Ancestry.com <[www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com)> helps you make quick work of record-browsing with its hot keys. Depending on the results list or record you're viewing, you can use keyboard shortcuts to maneuver faster and perform specific tasks such as moving through multiple images in a record. I demonstrated my favorites on episode 17 of my YouTube show "Elevenes with Lisa" <[www.lisalouisecooke.com/elevenes](http://www.lisalouisecooke.com/elevenes)>. See this handy short list.

Learn more about free records on subscription sites <[www.familytreemagazine.com/websites/free-genealogy-records-paid-websites](http://www.familytreemagazine.com/websites/free-genealogy-records-paid-websites)>.



### ▲ Podcast

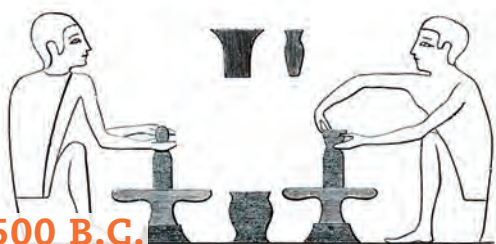
Hear more great genealogy finds from Lisa and other experts in our free monthly podcast <[www.familytreemagazine.com/podcasts](http://www.familytreemagazine.com/podcasts)>. ●



# Wheels of Fortune

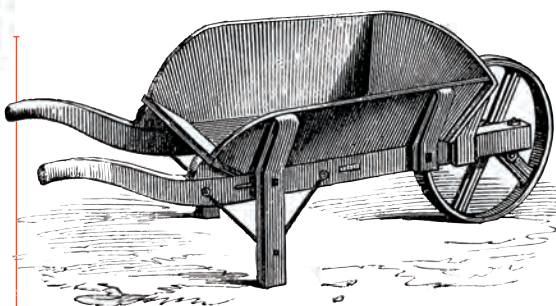
**ASIDE FROM FIRE**, the wheel might be humanity's most famous invention. Cartoonists inevitably draw a "caveman" beside a crude stone wheel. And when you're concerned about doing extra work, you might try to avoid "reinventing the wheel."

But for all its cultural and industrial significance, the wheel is more recent than many other hallmarks of civilization, such as rope, basket weaving, cloth, boats and even the flute. After all, wheels require complex carpentry or masonry, and early civilizations lacked wheels to study and imitate from nature.



**3500 B.C.**

Mesopotamians to create a **potter's wheel**, centuries before the wheel's first documented use for transportation. The oldest surviving wooden wheel, found in Slovenia, dates from about 3150 B.C., by which time several civilizations had wheeled transport. A clay pot from about the same time, unearthed in southern Poland, depicts a wagon with four wheels and two axles—the earliest well-dated picture of a wheeled vehicle.



**500 B.C.**

Greeks invent the **wheelbarrow**. The invention eventually made its way to China, then returned to Europe in medieval times, possibly via the Islamic world.

1750

1800



**2000 B.C.**

The Sintashta in Eurasia introduce the **spoke** on their chariot wheels. Celtic chariots would add iron rims about 1000 B.C. Further improvements on the wheel

for transportation, however, would lag until the 19th century.



**1000**

The **spinning wheel**, invented in

either India or China, drastically increases the speed at which fibers can be drawn into yarn. When the invention made its way to Europe about 1200, it revolutionized not only the manufacture of clothing, but also of sails. Some historians cite the spinning wheel as making possible the later exploration and colonization of the Americas.

**1802**

G.F. Bauer patents the **wire-tension spoke**, a length of wire threaded through the rim of a wheel and secured to the hub at both ends. Unfortunately for the little-remembered Bauer, his breakthrough



pre-dated the development of the modern bicycle, and it would be decades before wire spokes became the standard for bicycle wheels.



**David A. Fryxell**

collected his favorite glimpses into the past in a new book, *MicroHistory* <[www.microhistorybook.com](http://www.microhistorybook.com)>, available at Amazon.

STONEWHEEL 1948; ISTOCK: 3500 B.C., 2000 B.C., 500 B.C., 1000, 1802, 1839, 1850, 1888, 1893, 1908; ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

Pre-Columbian peoples in Mexico crafted small wooden toys that included wheels as early as 1500 B.C. But they never seemed to have developed wheeled vehicles—possibly because the region lacked large domesticated animals that could pull wagons and carts.

**1893**

The wheel attains its grandest form in the **Ferris Wheel** at the Chicago World Columbian Exposition, named after its creator, George Washington Gale Ferris, Jr. Fair organizers wanted a centerpiece that would rival the Eiffel Tower, built for the Paris Exposition four years earlier. The Ferris Wheel spanned 250 feet in diameter and spun as many as 2,160 passengers per ride.



**1948**

**Radial tires** are first used in Europe. Called “radial” because their ply cords—made of nylon, rayon or polyester—radiate at a 90-degree angle to the wheel, the tires are further strengthened by a steel-fabric belt around their circumference. (Earlier designs had plies arranged at less-than-90-degree angles.) Radial tires are more fuel-efficient and, because of their more uniform contact of tread to road surface, offer better driving stability at higher speeds.

1850

1900



**1839**

Charles Goodyear discovers the **vulcanization** process, in which rubber is heated with sulfur to transform it into a pliable material ideal for tires. Rubber had been

discovered in the Amazon rainforest in the 1730s, but it was sticky and impractical for tires. Goodyear’s process improved rubber’s tensile strength and elasticity and made it waterproof. (His name would be adopted by the Goodyear Tire & Rubber Company, founded in 1898 by Frank Seiberling in Akron, Ohio.)

**1888**

John Boyd Dunlop develops the **pneumatic tire**, which uses rubber to enclose air for a smoother ride. Scottish engineer Robert W. Thomson had patented the air-filled tire in 1845, but, like so many in this field, he was

ahead of his time. Dunlop, an Irish veterinarian, initially developed the tire for bicycles.



**1908**

Henry Ford introduces the **Model T**. Originally equipped with wooden wheels made for rolling artillery, the “car that put America on wheels” didn’t get welded-spoke wheels until shortly before it was discontinued in 1927. The Model T’s first tires, based on Dunlop’s pneumatic design, were made of white carbonless rubber. The highly pressurized tires typically needed repairs after 30 or 40 miles across roads laden with horseshoe nails, and had to be replaced after 2,000 miles.



# Preserving Musical Instruments

**1 Be proactive.** "Use it or lose it" is good advice when it comes to keeping heirloom musical instruments in tune and ready for another melody. Careful handling and prompt attention to signs of trouble can prevent problems caused by neglect or improper storage such as mildew or cracked wood, dried glue, and broken strings. Take it in for a "health check" at a local music store. As pieces become loose or fall off the instrument, keep any stray parts in a sealed polyethylene bag together with the instrument for future repair.



**Denise May Levenick**  
aka The Family Curator  
<[www.thefamilycurator.com](http://www.thefamilycurator.com)>  
is the author of *How to Archive Family Keepsakes*  
(Family Tree Books).

CELLO: TRENT LANZ/ISTOCK; CLOTH: SOAP; PIANO, GUITAR, VINTAGE PHOTO: ISTOCK



## 2 Wash your hands

before handling or playing any musical instrument. Body oils and stray dust can leave permanent marks that are impossible to remove. Remove jewelry that might scratch wood or catch on other materials. Avoid eating or drinking while playing, and encourage small children and pets to take care nearby.



## 3 Be mindful of materials.

Most musical instruments are created from many different materials: wood, metal, cloth, ivory, plastic, paper, steel and more. Consider these differences when caring for your heirloom. Wood can be harmed by an extremely damp or dry environment. Likewise, metal can take warm weather, but not humidity.



**4 Clean before storing,** especially for pianos, guitars, banjos and other wood and stringed instruments. Use a clean soft cloth, and avoid modern cleaning solvents, oils and sprays. Violins, violas and other members of the violin family may need extra care depending on the age of the instrument. Consult a skilled violin conservator for advice and maintenance.



**5 Use custom cases,** which are often the best place to store an instrument. Cases offer some degree of buffering against changes in external temperature and humidity, but not enough for long-term storage in an unheated garage, attic or basement. Inspect the exterior of the case for sturdy hinges and catches, and the interior for lining fabric that remains in good condition. Avoid exposed wood, metal, or synthetic padding that might damage the finish of a wooden or brass instrument.

### tip

Encourage other family members to get to know your family's musical heritage. Seeing photos of Grandpa with his banjo or listening to old recordings might spark a musical chord in another family member.



## 6 Store in a smart place.

The best place to keep most instruments is inside your home where the temperature and humidity are typically moderate and regulated. Avoid damp places, light (especially direct sunlight), heat/heating vents, and drafts. Direct light will damage the wooden finish of a fine piano or violin and cause fabric and finishes to fade. Never leave musical instruments exposed to the elements outdoors or inside a car where sun or heat can cause damage.

## 7 Don't move a piano on your own.

Professional movers know how to protect moving parts and minimize potential damage. Upright pianos are heavy. Baby grand and grand pianos are *really* heavy.



## 8 Write down

**memories.** Your family heirloom will be even more meaningful if you write down the history and provenance of the instrument and include a copy on acid-free paper inside the storage case, and another copy with your estate papers. Be sure to include a list of owners with birth and death dates, and any stories you know about the piece. ●







JaKobi Burton (seated front and center) sits with Deborah Abbott and fellow IAAGG members at the Family History Library. His research uncovered his ancestor Henry Webster's church (left) and tombstone (above).

## Going the Distance

**One researcher looks backward (and forward) in time to find living relatives.**

JaKobi Burton of Indianapolis, Ind., grew up attending an annual family reunion of Moredock and Webster descendants in Rockford, Ill.

Attendance favored the Moredocks. "The only Websters I knew were my great-grandfather, Norman, and his brother Leon," says Burton. "I wanted to find some Websters and invite them to the reunion."

Meeting that goal took travel—up his tree, around the country, and even across genetic distance. Fortunately, he's learned a lot of research skills through his local chapter of the Indiana African American Genealogy Group <[www.iaagg.org](http://www.iaagg.org)> and a beloved genealogy mentor, Tonya M. Hull.

Burton was able to research back to *Norman's* great-grandfather, the Reverend Henry Webster. In the mid-1800s, Webster was a minister at the Methodist Episcopal Church in Camden, S.C., which boasted the Campbell

Street Corridor, a thriving African American community. "A local researcher, Ted Tosh, took me to the colored cemetery, where Henry has a beautiful headstone," Burton says.

Tracing Webster's descendants proved trickier: His son alone had 11 children (some with common names), and the missing 1890 federal census would have covered a key part of their timelines.

One of those sons, Jesse, went to Florida. Burton did, too. There he located Jesse's great-granddaughter, Bettye Player. "She's just as interested as I am—her family tree only went back to Jesse," he says. Player's daughter, Denika, had already taken an AncestryDNA test. Burton didn't share DNA with her, but two of his relatives did, including his half-aunt, Laurie Webster.

Finally, he'd found living descendants to invite to the reunion! In 2020, this meant a Thanksgiving Day Zoom call. Bettye and her family joined in. Burton says, "The conversation with her ended up being so seamless, like she's always been part of the family."

Which she has been—but nobody knew it until Burton went the distance to connect them all. ●

**Sunny Jane Morton**

GET ORGANIZED

## Photo Inventory Form

Keep track of important family photographs.

Photo group or collection	Est. number of photos	Subject/description	Location of physical photos	Location of digital photos

In each issue, **Your Turn** offers a form that'll help you preserve your family's unique stories and organize your research. Tear out and use the form or make a photocopy.



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## REVIEWS OF PAST CONFERENCES

"Every subject that was put into this conference is very pertinent, no matter what kind of genealogy is practiced." Grace W.

"The Virtual Conference was wonderful! Live webinars were easy to attend including listening on my phone while out running a few errands. The courses were full of so many helpful tidbits that I can't wait to incorporate into my research plans. Thanks again!!" J.B.

"There were several topics I knew little or nothing about that were fascinating. Looking forward to exploring further. Loved the diversity of the topics." Theresa D.





# branching out

## **“MAY THE ROAD RISE UP TO MEET YOU.**

May the wind be always at your back.  
May the sun shine warm upon your face;  
The rains fall soft upon your fields.  
And until we meet again,  
May God hold you in the palm of His hand.” ●

---

This **traditional Irish blessing** has an unknown origin. And it's famous opening line seems to be a mistranslation from the Irish phrase “*Go n-éirí an bóthar leat*” (“Good luck on your road”; literally: “May you succeed on your road”). Claire Santry, the author behind the Irish Genealogy News blog <[www.irishgenealogynews.com](http://www.irishgenealogynews.com)>, shares a detailed guide to finding your roots on the Emerald Isle on page 18. And if you plan to walk the literal roads of your ancestors, Nicole Evans shares tips for traveling to visit your ancestral homeland on page 56.





# Luck of the Irish

Fortunately, reports of Irish record loss are greatly exaggerated. Check out this guide to researching ancestors from the Emerald Isle.

by CLAIRE SANTRY

**Doonagore  
Castle in County  
Clare, Ireland**

**You may have heard** that all Irish genealogy records burned in a 1922 courthouse fire. But that's mostly just a tale, based on an unfortunate event during Ireland's Civil War. Still, it morphed into received wisdom that researching ancestors from Ireland is a fruitless exercise.

Although it still gets the occasional airing, it's a lot less prevalent these days. Over the years, it's been responsible for many a would-be researcher giving up on learning about

their Irish heritage. But we'll have none of that defeatist attitude here.

Irish researchers face challenges—there's no point pretending otherwise. But that's the case with research in *any* unfamiliar country. Non-native genealogists confront unrecognizable words and geography, different methods of recording information, and long centuries of historical events that have complicated the collection and preservation of records.



CASTLE: LUKAS BISCHOFF/ISTOCK; SHEPHERDS: ALAMY  
STOCK PHOTO; CLOVER: ARINA\_BOGACHYOVA/ISTOCK

I can't promise you an easy ride with Irish research, but at least there are no major language barriers. (Most records were kept in English.) Even the Latin you might encounter in Catholic records requires just a quick lesson to decipher (see <[www.irish-genealogy-toolkit.com/latin-irish-parish-registers.html](http://www.irish-genealogy-toolkit.com/latin-irish-parish-registers.html)>).

It might take some practice to pronounce some tongue-twisting place names—let's hear it for Muckanaghederdauhaulia and Dún Laoghaire—but you'll catch on!



**An Irish shepherd and his sons carry sheep in Northern Ireland, circa 1950s**

Let's walk through the basics of Irish genealogy: the island's history and geography, common Irish research pitfalls, and the best records for tracing your ancestors from the Emerald Isle.

## **HISTORY, HISTORY, HISTORY**

The first step to understanding your Irish ancestors is learning about the social and political issues of the era that led your ancestor to leave all that was familiar and take the often-perilous journey from Ireland to North America. The reasons for migration were different over the centuries, but nearly all of them included a desire to escape poverty or some level of religious persecution.

The best-known exodus occurred during the Great Famine that began in 1845. The choice for the poor was simple: Depart or die. The reduction in population during those years—more than 2 million by many estimates—tells its own tale. Over the next 70 years, nearly as many additional people emigrated. It wasn't until Partition and Independence in the early 1920s that those who remained felt a greater hope of future self-determination.

For the genealogist to put the island's last 150 years into context, you would do well to jump back to Gaelic Ireland and the Anglo-Norman invasion of 1170, then move forward in time.

The key events to explore are:

- the Protestant Reformation (1600s)
- the exile of the last vestiges of the old Gaelic order (known as the Flight of the Earls; 1607)
- the Plantation of Ulster (founded in 1609)
- the Cromwellian Conquest (1649–1653)
- the Battle of the Boyne (1690)
- The Penal Laws (1695–1790s)





**The “Rock of Cashel” (also known as “St. Patrick’s Rock”) in County Tipperary dates from the 12th and 13th centuries**

- the Great Famine (1845–1851)
- the Land War (beginning in 1879)
- Partition (1921) and Independence (effective in 1922)

Irish history sounds daunting, but needn’t be. I highly recommend the well-illustrated *Atlas of Irish History*, edited by Sean Duffy, and Jonathan Bardon’s easy-to-read *A History of Ireland in 250 Episodes* (both published by Gill & Macmillan).

### PITFALLS IN IRISH RESEARCH

Remember that 1922 fire I mentioned earlier? It followed an explosion at Dublin’s Four Courts complex, home of the country’s Public Record Office. Ashes of Ireland’s priceless genealogical heritage rained down over the city. The major casualties were 19th-century Irish census returns, original wills dating to the 16th century, and more than 1,000 Church of Ireland parish registers.



View a step-by-step tutorial for researching Griffith’s Valuation <[www.familytreemagazine.com/heritage/irish/tutorial-tracing-irish-ancestors-in-griffiths-valuation](http://www.familytreemagazine.com/heritage/irish/tutorial-tracing-irish-ancestors-in-griffiths-valuation)>.

Those hit hardest by these losses are researchers descended from Church of Ireland families (never more than 25% of the island’s population) and those whose ancestors were wealthy enough to make wills (again, a relatively small proportion). For the rest of us, the loss of the census returns was the greatest tragedy.

Even if Irish records avoided the PRO fire, they might have fallen victim to other perils: damp, insect infestation, human carelessness, or other damage. And then there were the Penal Laws, which made the keeping of registers potentially dangerous for priests and congregations. Indeed, while there are a few outliers, most surviving parish Roman Catholic registers don’t start until the 1820s. In some parishes, the start date may be as late as the 1860s.

So, yes, scarcity of early records can be an issue for Irish research. It’s hit and miss: an insurmountable problem for some researchers, but not for others. Your ancestors’ location, religion and level of wealth will determine how much luck you have.

Names can be another obstacle, as they often are in genealogy research. Most Irish parents drew from a narrow well when choosing names

for their offspring before the 20th century expanded naming horizons.

Irish surnames can be *terrifyingly* common, too, making your ancestors hard to distinguish in records. For example, you'll need both townland of origin and other information (parents' names, ages and occupations) if you've a Patrick Sullivan from County Kerry or a Joanna Ryan from Tipperary.

Take a look at <[www.johngrenham.com/surnames](http://www.johngrenham.com/surnames)> to find out how localized a surname is in different regions or counties of Ireland. This might even help you narrow your search for a town of origin. For example, if you know

Patrick Sullivan's mother had an unusual maiden name, you could try searching that surname, then *Sullivan* to identify areas where both names are common.

And now for some good news: Nearly all of Ireland's major genealogy collections can be accessed on free sites. In most cases, you don't even need an account—you can just dip in and out at will. What's not to like?

## KNOW YOUR PLACE

In 1921, the island of Ireland was split into two entities: Northern Ireland (six counties in the northern province of Ulster) and Southern

## Irish Church Records

### ROMAN CATHOLIC

By far the largest religious group across Ireland, Roman Catholics were hit hard by Penal Laws following the Reformation and establishment of the Protestant Church of Ireland. The laws made recordkeeping difficult and potentially dangerous for priests and their congregations, so be prepared for patchy coverage of registers. While the earliest registers date back to 1671 (Wexford Town), most start in the 1820s, shortly before Catholic emancipation. In some parishes, no pre-1860 records survive.

The National Library of Ireland published unindexed images of its microfilmed collection at <[registers.nli.ie](http://registers.nli.ie)> (free). They run to 1881, and you'll find free indexes at Ancestry.com and Findmypast.

Another major collection, typically spanning into the 1920s or later, is held at RootsIreland <[www.rootsireland.ie](http://www.rootsireland.ie)>. This covers most of the island. Missing areas—such as south and west Cork, Dublin City, and Kerry—can be found at <[www.irishgenealogy.ie](http://www.irishgenealogy.ie)>.

### CHURCH OF IRELAND

As the Established Church after the Reformation, the Church of Ireland was to keep records of Protestants. While

some early registers survive for urban parishes, the majority date from the late 18th or early 19th centuries.

The Church of Ireland's archive is held by the Representative Church Body (RCB) Library in Dublin, which holds most of the parish registers that were not destroyed in the PRO fire of 1922. It publishes a useful and regularly updated List of Parish Registers, identifying those that were lost and detailing where you can access surviving records online and offline. Download the PDF <[www.ireland.anglican.org/about/rcb-library/list-of-parish-registers](http://www.ireland.anglican.org/about/rcb-library/list-of-parish-registers)>.

The RCB Library plans to launch a free, fully searchable online database of its registers, complete with images. Keep an eye on the Library's news pages at <[www.ireland.anglican.org/about/rcb-library/library-news](http://www.ireland.anglican.org/about/rcb-library/library-news)>.

### PRESBYTERIAN

Settlers from Scotland brought Presbyterianism to Ireland, especially to Counties Antrim and Down, in the early 17th century. Like Catholics, they suffered severe restrictions under the Penal Laws. By 1861, there were 650,000 Presbyterians across the island, forming more than 400 congregations,

and their baptism, marriage and burial records generally date from the 1820s.

RootsIreland holds records for all nine Ulster counties and smaller collections in other provinces. Offline, PRONI has microfilms of nearly all surviving registers, while the Presbyterian Historical Society of Ireland <[www.presbyterianhistoryireland.com](http://www.presbyterianhistoryireland.com)> holds a small and exclusive collection.

### METHODISTS

Until the 1820s, the records of Methodists are usually found in the registers of their local Church of Ireland church. A handful of Methodist-only registers date from 1815, but most start in the 1830s to 1840s. RootsIreland has some transcribed records, and PRONI has a large microfilmed collection. For more details, contact the Methodist Historical Society of Ireland <[www.methodisthistoryireland.org](http://www.methodisthistoryireland.org)>.

### QUAKERS (SOCIETY OF FRIENDS)

Most Quaker records of births, marriages and deaths date from the 1670s. Subject to the 100-75-50 year privacy rule, the collection is accessible to subscribers of Findmypast. Learn more details at <[quakers-in-ireland.ie/historical-library](http://quakers-in-ireland.ie/historical-library)>.



Ireland (the remaining 26 counties). Initially, both remained in the United Kingdom. But a year later, following the Irish War of Independence, the south seceded from the United Kingdom to form the Irish Free State (now the Republic of Ireland), while Northern Ireland chose to remain. A 310-mile border separates the two jurisdictions to this day.

That background is important to keep in mind, as are the various geopolitical entities that created records. Just as in the United States, Irish records were collected at different jurisdictional levels depending on their purpose. As such, US-based researchers can benefit from understanding the land and political divisions of Ireland. Here are the most important, organized from generally largest to generally smallest:

**Provinces:** The island is divided into four geographical provinces: Connacht (west), Leinster (east), Munster (south) and Ulster (north). Few, if any, records were kept at this level, and these regional divisions are mostly cultural. Most of Ulster is part of Northern Ireland, while the other three provinces (plus the Ulster counties of Cavan, Donegal and Monaghan) make up the Republic of Ireland.

**Counties:** Ireland has 32 historical counties. Some important records were collected and archived by county, and modern databases sometimes organize even other online records that way. Though these 32 counties are not necessarily used for administrative purposes in the present (especially in Northern Ireland, where they've been replaced by districts), they

remain important to Irish identity, each with their own stereotypes and intercounty rivalries (especially in sports).

**Baronies:** Obsolete since 1898, the 330-odd baronies marked out boundaries in some old land records, surveys and early censuses.

**Poor Law Unions:** From the late 1830s, Poor law unions (PLUs) were formed from groups of civil parishes as local-government administrations centered on market towns. With the establishment of the General Register Office in 1864, PLUs became Superintendent Registrar Districts, the divisions responsible for documenting civil registration of births, marriages and deaths. (Wikipedia has a good map of PLUs at <[bit.ly/PLU-map](http://bit.ly/PLU-map)>, and *Family Tree Magazine* has its own free downloadable map at <[www.familytreemagazine.com/freebie/free-irish-poor-law-union-map-download](http://www.familytreemagazine.com/freebie/free-irish-poor-law-union-map-download)>.)

**Civil parishes:** Each barony was divided into civil parishes for the purposes of forming local governments. Ireland has roughly 2,500 civil parishes, and their boundaries may have shifted over the years.

**Ecclesiastical parishes:** With some minor alterations, Church of Ireland parishes overlap with civil parishes. Roman Catholic parishes, however, are a different matter, sometimes sharing names with civil/Church of Ireland parishes but containing different land areas to accommodate population changes. In addition, the Catholic Church has carved out many new parishes (especially after the Catholic Emancipation Act of 1829), sometimes resulting in historical registers being split between two entities. Ecclesiastical parishes were also formed into dioceses.

**District Electoral Divisions (DEDs):** As the name suggests, DEDs organize voting by place of residence. They are also used in the collection of census records.

**Townlands:** Originally identified as an area big enough to support an ox, townlands vary in size depending on terrain and quality of soil. Most families (especially in rural areas) lived in the same townland for generations. So if records survive for the local area, knowing the townland (no easy feat, given there are more than 60,000 townlands throughout Ireland) is key to discovering your Irish heritage.

To find the divisional names relevant to your family, *A New Genealogical Atlas of Ireland* by



## Scots-Irish?

If your ancestors come from Ulster province, they might actually be part of a distinct ethnic group: the Scots-Irish, or Ulster Scots. The Scots-Irish descend

from Scottish emigrants who traveled to northern Ireland en masse, often before heading on to the United States or other countries.

Given that history, Scots-Irish genealogists may need to take their research an extra step: first from the United States to northern Ireland, then from Ireland to Scotland.

James M. Beidler shares tips for Scots-Irish research at <[www.familytreemagazine.com/heritage/scots-irish/trace-your-scots-irish-roots](http://www.familytreemagazine.com/heritage/scots-irish/trace-your-scots-irish-roots)>.





1714 map of  
Ireland, indicating  
the four provinces



Irish researchers face challenges—there's no point pretending otherwise. But that's the case with research in *any* unfamiliar country.



**Abandoned church ruin in County Donegal, near Mount Errigal**

Brian Mitchell (Genealogical Publishing Co.) will certainly help. Online, a good starting point is Samuel Lewis's *A Topographical Dictionary of Ireland 1837* (free at <[www.libraryireland.com/topog/index.php](http://www.libraryireland.com/topog/index.php)>, as is <[www.johngrenham.com](http://www.johngrenham.com)> and its interactive maps and wonderful widgets. (At the latter, you can view a handful of pages free each month, or sign up for a short-term subscription for deeper exploration.) More free geographic resources are at <[www.swilson.info](http://www.swilson.info)>, <[www.logainm.ie/en](http://www.logainm.ie/en)> and <[www.townlands.ie](http://www.townlands.ie)>.

**tip**

Temper your expectations. If your Irish American ancestor immigrated in the 20th century, you may be able to trace back six or seven generations. But if he came over in the early 1800s, you may be able to research only one or two generations, at best.

## THE HOLY GRAIL: THE TOWNLAND OF ORIGIN

It's worth repeating: The specific detail you need to progress your research in Irish records is the name of your immigrant ancestor's townland. If you already know it, count your blessings. Unfortunately, after arrival in the United States, this golden nugget was rarely requested by officials.

As many researchers who have successfully tracked the ancestral homestead can confirm, you need to spread the net wide. Your first searches will be US records, especially death certificates, church records (look out for notes in margins), probate records, passenger manifests, arrival records, naturalization papers and military draft forms. Among the best sources are newspaper obituaries, headstone inscriptions and emigrant savings accounts, but be prepared to check any kind of document your ancestor created in his or her new home.

If, having exhausted your ancestor's surviving documentation, you still can't pinpoint the townland, rinse and repeat for each direct descendent and family member, working forwards through later generations. Extend this to early friends and neighbors of the immigrant, too; the Irish often stayed in contact or settled with people they knew before they caught the boat. Look out for witnesses to baptisms and marriages, guarantors to loans, and "referees" confirming good character (who may be extended family members or old pals).

Failing all this, use online forums (such as Boards.ie <[www.boards.ie](http://www.boards.ie)> or RootsChat <[www.rootschat.com](http://www.rootschat.com)>) to promote and broaden the scope of your search and reach the descendents of other family branches. If you're narrowing down on a particular area, you could receive reliable guidance on county-specific forum boards and Facebook groups.

## THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN (RECORDS)

When you have wrung every drop of ancestral information—including townland of origin—out of US records, it's time to cross the pond. Which Irish records you choose to delve into will depend on what you discover as your research progresses. But the seven collections noted below are those that will enable most family historians to build up a good amount of detail over multiple generations.

Fortunately, nearly all of these important collections are online and free to access. Unless otherwise noted, you can even *search* all the surviving records of that collection.

### 1. Censuses

Irish censuses were taken every 10 years from 1821 through 1911. Thanks to a mix of bureaucratic myopia and the 1922 fire, only the 1901 and 1911 returns survive in their entirety. A small collection of census fragments from 1821, 1831, 1841 and 1851 holds fewer than 400,000 names in total. The next census returns to be released will be those from 1926 in the Republic of Ireland and 1937 in Northern Ireland.

Ireland's surviving censuses can be searched for free on The National Archives of Ireland's website <[genealogy.nationalarchives.ie](http://genealogy.nationalarchives.ie)>; see a search tutorial at <[www.familytreemagazine.com/heritage/irish/1901-1911-irish-census-search](http://www.familytreemagazine.com/heritage/irish/1901-1911-irish-census-search)>. Ancestry.com <[www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com)>,

## The Best Irish Genealogy Websites

The megawebsites Ancestry.com <[www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com)>, FamilySearch <[www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org)> and Findmypast <[www.findmypast.com](http://www.findmypast.com)> all boast sizeable collections of Irish records—many of them totally free.

But, as we've suggested throughout this article, several other websites provide access to specifically Irish resources:

### Ancestry Ireland

<[www.ancestryireland.com](http://www.ancestryireland.com)>

### General Register Office of Northern Ireland (GRONI) <[geni.nidirect.gov.uk](http://geni.nidirect.gov.uk)>

### Irish Ancestors by John Grenham

<[www.johngrenham.com](http://www.johngrenham.com)>

### IrishGenealogy

<[www.irishgenealogy.ie/en](http://www.irishgenealogy.ie/en)>

### The National Archives of Ireland: Genealogy <[genealogy.nationalarchives.ie](http://genealogy.nationalarchives.ie)>

### The National Library of Ireland

<[www.nli.ie](http://www.nli.ie)>

### Public Record Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI) <[www.nidirect.gov.uk/proni](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/proni)>

### RootsIreland <[www.rootsireland.ie](http://www.rootsireland.ie)>

I covered all of the above online at <[www.familytreemagazine.com/heritage/irish/11-best-irish-genealogy-websites](http://www.familytreemagazine.com/heritage/irish/11-best-irish-genealogy-websites)> and in the July/August 2015 issue of *Family Tree Magazine*.

Findmypast <[www.findmypast.com](http://www.findmypast.com)> and MyHeritage <[www.myheritage.com](http://www.myheritage.com)> also have census collections.

### 2. Church Records

The availability of Irish church records varies by denomination and time period. Though the majority of Irish were Roman Catholic, notable minority faiths included the Church of Ireland (the Established Church on the island) and Presbyterians. See the Irish Church Records sidebar or my online article <[www.familytreemagazine.com/heritage/irish/irish-church-records-genealogy](http://www.familytreemagazine.com/heritage/irish/irish-church-records-genealogy)> for more.



### 3. Civil Registration

Ireland's civil registration system started in 1845, but only for non-Roman Catholic marriages. Registration of births, deaths and *all* marriages was introduced in 1864 and was organized and collated by Superintendent Registrar Districts. While most marriages were registered, about 10% of births and deaths are estimated to have not been recorded in the first decade after the system launched.

Out of consideration for privacy, publication of records is subject to the 100-75-50 year rule: Births less than 100 years ago, marriages less than 75 years ago, and deaths less than 50 years ago are restricted. Indexes and register images are online at the free IrishGenealogy site <[www.irishgenealogy.ie/en](http://www.irishgenealogy.ie/en)> under Civil Records. (At time of writing, the final installment of available register images—for deaths 1864 to 1870—is still in progress.)

Historical civil registration records of births, marriages and deaths that occurred in districts now in Northern Ireland are available from the General Register Office of Northern Ireland via its online database <[geni.nidirect.gov.uk](http://geni.nidirect.gov.uk)>. The index is free, but you'll need to pay a small fee to view register images for additional information.

### 4. Griffith's Primary Valuation and Ordnance Survey Maps

Between 1848 and 1864, every civil parish in Ireland was assessed for taxable land and property. Named for Richard Griffith (who headed up the survey efforts), "Griffith's" Valuation is a critical record for 19th-century research. Surveyors noted the names of heads of household and landowners, the acreage and value of the land and property, and the tax assessment. These lists are organized by county, barony, poor law union, civil parish and townland.

Each of the entries was assigned a reference number/letter that corresponds to Ordnance Survey maps created in the 1830s. These maps mark out fields, buildings and other land



features, so you may be able to identify the exact location of your ancestral family's home.

The only free online site to search Griffith's Valuation is <[www.askaboutireland.ie/griffith-valuation](http://www.askaboutireland.ie/griffith-valuation)>. It can be a bit sluggish, so you might prefer researching it at Findmypast or Ancestry.com if you have a subscription at either. Bear in mind the maps in each collection are not identical.

### 5. Tithe Applotments

The Tithe Applotment Books (1823 to 1837) are arranged by parish and recorded those who rented or worked agricultural land (except church lands). If your ancestors lived in urban areas or did not work on the land, they won't have been included. However, if your ancestors lived in a rural parish for which no pre-1850 church registers exist, this collection may hold the only documented record of their lives. The National Archives has online versions of the books that are free to search and view at <[titheapplotmentbooks.nationalarchives.ie/search/tab/home.jsp](http://titheapplotmentbooks.nationalarchives.ie/search/tab/home.jsp)>; the books for Northern Ireland are free at PRONI.



Find all of our best Irish genealogy resources at <[www.familytreemagazine.com/irish-heritage](http://www.familytreemagazine.com/irish-heritage)>.





**"Dark Hedges,"  
a row of beech  
trees lining  
Bregagh Road in  
County Antrim**

## 6. Headstones

The transcription of headstone inscriptions, which often reference names, dates and places, is not new or unique to Ireland. But it has become very much a group activity in recent years. Most of the resulting record sets are now online, but they are scattered across the Internet, at both free and subscription sites. For a summary, see my free list at <[www.irish-genealogy-toolkit.com/irish-burial-records.html](http://www.irish-genealogy-toolkit.com/irish-burial-records.html)>.

## 7. Newspaper Obituaries

The day digitization of newspapers became possible was a game changer for family historians around the world. While a newspaper death notice may provide perfunctory information, an obituary or funeral report often provides a wealth of detail, including place of origin and residence. For Irish obits, try the Irish Newspaper Archives <[www.irishnewsarchive.com](http://www.irishnewsarchive.com)>, the British Newspaper Archive <[www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk](http://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk)> (its 200+ Irish titles are also at Findmypast), and, from 1859, the archive of *The Irish Times* newspaper at <[www.irishtimes.com/archive](http://www.irishtimes.com/archive)>.

## FUTURE-GAZING

In terms of major surviving record sets, there are arguably only three big holes in the Irish genealogy menu: the Registry of Deeds collection, which dates back to 1709; the Representative Church Body (RCB) Library's huge archive of Church of Ireland parish registers; and Griffith's Valuation Revision Books for the Republic of Ireland. Digitization, indexing and imaging projects are underway for all three. And while their online launches may still be some time ahead, they are at least in progress. In the meantime, if you should hear that story about the all-destroying Four Courts fire, please dampen the flames. ●

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**Claire Santry** runs Irish Genealogy Toolkit <[www.irish-genealogy-toolkit.com](http://www.irish-genealogy-toolkit.com)>. You can follow her blog <[www.irishgenealogynews.com](http://www.irishgenealogynews.com)> for the latest Irish family history releases and developments. She's also the author of *The Family Tree Irish Genealogy Guide* (Family Tree Books).



# HIGH SOCIETY



Overhead view of the 2018 NGS conference in Grand Rapids, Mich.

**In the summer of 2019**, two genealogy groups announced plans to merge: the Federation of Genealogical Societies (FGS) and the National Genealogical Society (NGS).

NGS has been championing genealogy scholarship and education since it formed in 1903, and FGS launched in 1976 to help societies grow and thrive. Though each group served distinct needs, their communities often overlapped. The organizations sometimes found themselves duplicating

efforts or competing for the same audiences, resources and volunteers.

On 1 October 2020, FGS was officially absorbed into NGS. A “new NGS” emerged with a dual mission: to support both individual genealogical enthusiasts and the societies to which they belong. By joining forces, NGS and FGS aim to serve their members more efficiently and more powerfully. The merger took more than a year of planning, much of it carried out amidst the COVID-19 pandemic.





## Two national genealogy societies have combined forces. The “new NGS” offers five reasons for you to join it and your local societies.

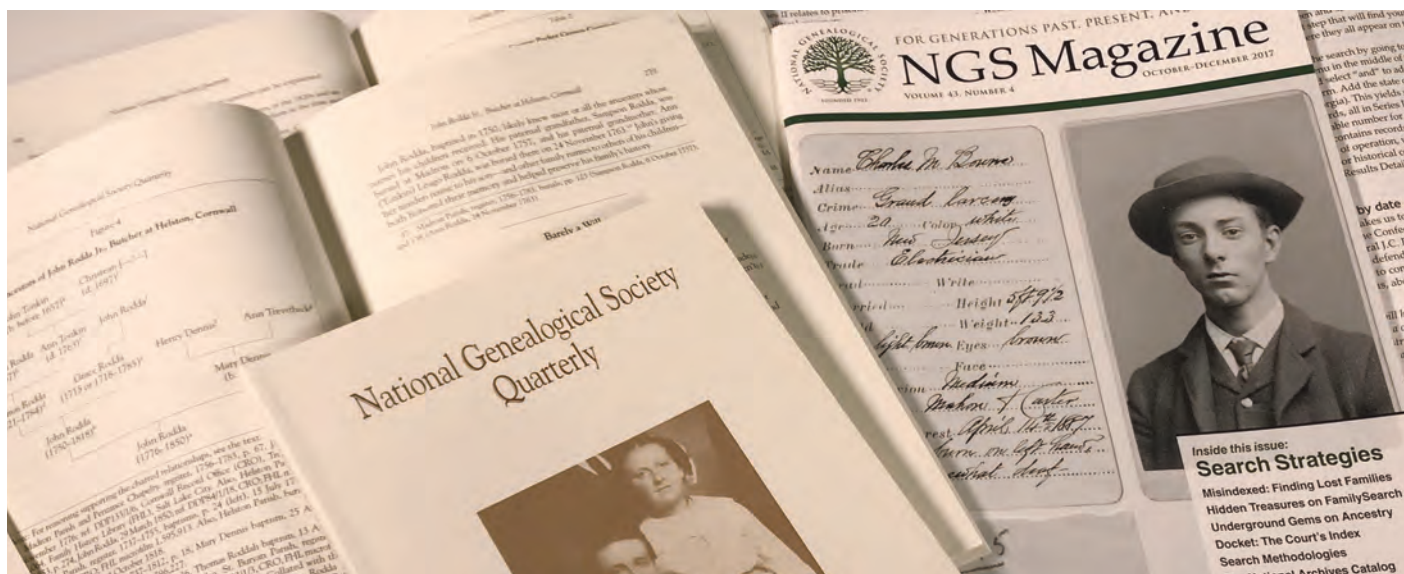
by SUNNY JANE MORTON

I recently caught up with a few members of the NGS leadership team. As of writing, they are still ironing out logistics and future plans. But they have a clear message for genealogists across the United States: Join a society. They say that, just as NGS and FGS are more potent together, so is the entire genealogical community when it unites in numbers large or small. Here are five compelling reasons to seek out societies and join the right one(s) for you.

### 1. BECOME A BETTER RESEARCHER

Most societies, including NGS, make skill-building a top priority. Back in 1903, genealogists weren't known for careful research methodology. The fledgling NGS set out to correct that. Over the succeeding decades, it published the first national journal of genealogy (*National Genealogical Society Quarterly*); co-created the Board for Certification of Genealogists <[www.bgc certification.org](http://www.bgc certification.org)>; and sponsored major teaching and research experiences.





**Above: Issues of *National Genealogical Society Quarterly*, which are available to NGS members; Right: NGS members Bernice Bennet and Patty Reimann at a conference**

“Our classes have been the gold standard for a long time,” says Kathryn Doyle, NGS’ new president. “Today, genealogists come to us with a variety of backgrounds and education. The pathways on our website (for beginners, intermediate and advanced learners) help you navigate to what you need at your level.” She mentions the society’s popular American Genealogical Studies courses and periodicals *NGS Quarterly* (for advanced researchers) and *NGS Magazine* (for genealogists at a variety of levels).

The annual conference is still NGS’ flagship educational experience. That’s how Terry Koch-Bostic, NGS Education and Communications Chair, discovered NGS. “I was working full-time and didn’t have the time to join a local society,” she says. But then she saw a flier for an NGS conference, and decided to attend.

“When I saw the full spectrum of lecture topics, it was game over!” she says. “I’ve seen many people have that experience. Conferences are important to genealogy, even if we have to do them virtually sometimes.” (As of writing, the next NGS conference is scheduled from 19–22 May 2021 <[conference.ngsgenealogy.org](http://conference.ngsgenealogy.org)> in Richmond, Va.)

Locality-based societies usually offer a different kind of learning: frequent, group-based (in-person and/or virtual) events that cater to local communities. Many host monthly speakers. Some host special interest groups on DNA, specific ethnicities, family history software or other topics. Societies centered on specific ethnicities help you celebrate and learn to research African, Jewish, Germanic or other roots.

Specific perks and resources vary by society, so you’ll need to explore those on their websites. Find societies of interest by Googling appropriate terms (think *Hart County Georgia African American*) or search at the NGS website under Societies & Organizations > Find a Society.



## 2. HANG OUT WITH GENEALOGY-FRIENDS

It’s hard to fully appreciate the benefits of joining a society until you experience them. “I was a ‘solo genealogist’ until I met our local society president by chance, and it opened up an entirely new world to me,” says Doyle. “I made like-minded friends who were just as crazy about this as I am and who live near me. They introduced me to new record types and fantastic experiences like research trips.”

Matt Menashes, NGS executive director since 2019, has spent his career running associations. “Group activities are part of the human experience, and that’s what societies provide: chances to learn, collaborate, socialize [and] share common interests,” he says.

One of Menashes’ tasks is to build more meaningful online social experiences for NGS members. “We’re hoping to build a network of special interest communities on our website so our members can have

## As you connect with genealogy communities, you may find yourself agreeing with NGS: There's power in numbers.

group conversations on topics of shared interests, like methodology or a specific family line,” he says. “There will be opportunities for micro-volunteering [pitching in on a small or limited scale].”

Some state, ethnic and local societies have social media accounts, though some are more active than others. Consider finding a society of interest on Facebook. Introduce yourself with the share-something-and-ask-something approach. For example: “I’m posting a cool picture from a Johnson family wedding in Hart County in 1914. Does anyone recognize the church in the background?”

### 3. DISCOVER RECORDS—OR HELP PRESERVE THEM

Society members in places where your ancestors lived often know about local records. And over the years, they may have preserved, catalogued and transcribed unique resources. (Indeed, many honorees on our annual list of the 75 Best State Websites list are run by societies <[www.familytreemagazine.com/best-state-genealogy-websites](http://www.familytreemagazine.com/best-state-genealogy-websites)>.) Societies specific to ethnic heritage often discuss records pertinent to their members, too.

Even if you can’t join in person, membership can increase your access to this collective knowledge. Societies may have newsletters, publications, correspondence or

Attendees at the 2018 NGS conference in Grand Rapids, Mich.



members-only sections on their websites. You may be able to request local record lookups or copies or hire help to find obituaries, photographs, neighborhood maps, school records, church registers and other gems.

On a national scale, NGS (and the former FGS) also help find and care for key record collections. “FGS contributed so much, from early indexing projects to the War of 1812 Preserve the Pensions project,” says Doyle. That latter project <[www.ngsgenealogy.org/preserve-the-pensions](http://www.ngsgenealogy.org/preserve-the-pensions)> raised a record-setting \$3 million between 2010 and 2016. “All of that is [FGS] legacy and part of our mission now,” Doyle says. “Digitization is still ongoing and we’re talking about the next project that will continue under the new NGS.”

As a society member, you will likely be invited to help preserve records through dues or donations. You may encounter opportunities to help digitize documents (if you’re local) or create indexes to them. These efforts may or may not benefit your own research directly, but “paying it forward” makes more records available to everyone over time.

### 4. ADVOCATE FOR GENEALOGY

“One of the questions I hear frequently is whether we as an organization should be engaged in advocacy and public policy,” says Menashes. As someone who has worked in Washington, DC for years, he answers with an emphatic yes.

After all, few groups care more about legislation and policies affecting records preservation and access than do genealogists. But their voices must be raised together—loudly—to have serious impact. “We’re keeping an eye on what the state and federal governments are doing,” he reports. “We’re bringing the interests of thousands of genealogists and hundreds of societies to the attention of national leaders and groups.”

NGS participates in a Research Preservation Access Coalition (RPAC). In 2020, RPAC took swift action to protest unlawful proposed restrictions to

## NGS Membership Benefits

- A quarterly subscription to *NGS Magazine* and the *National Genealogical Society Quarterly* journal, plus access to a digital archive of back-issues
  - The NGS Monthly email newsletter, both as it’s published and as a digital archive
  - Discounted registration for the annual NGS Family History Conference
  - The free online Family History Skills Course
  - Discounts on online genealogy courses, research trips, publications and NGS recorded lectures
  - Genealogy templates, charts and tutorials
  - Full access to a mini-documentary series of interviews with leading genealogy scholars
  - Eligibility to enter the NGS Family History Writing Contest
  - Special offers from NGS partners and affiliates
- Learn more at <[www.ngsgenealogy.org/member-benefits](http://www.ngsgenealogy.org/member-benefits)>.





## The Perks of Being a Society Member: One Reader's Story

*Family Tree Magazine* reader Jeanette Sheliga of Lockport, N.Y. (shown right), has joined several societies over the years. But she's participated most in her local Niagara County Genealogical Society <[www.niagaragenealogy.org](http://www.niagaragenealogy.org)>. "One of the greatest benefits has been finding new friends who share my interests, and learning from them," she says.

As a society leader, she attended FGS conferences and watched video training classes on their website. A class by Cari A. Taplin (shown left, website at <[www.genealogypants.com](http://www.genealogypants.com)>) on society educational plans proved especially helpful. "As a result, our society formed some special interest groups," she reports. "Eventually I met Cari at an FGS conference (and even found out she was my ninth cousin once removed)."

About two years ago, Sheliga joined NGS to take the American Genealogical Studies course series. "I loved it," she says. "It made me a better genealogist." She consults back-issues of their publications online regularly. "I use the citations as examples for how to create my own," she admits. "Like, if I need to cite something I found on Fold3 [<[www.fold3.com](http://www.fold3.com)>], I'll just text-search the PDFs and see how they did it."

With the merger, her biggest hope is that NGS will live up to its commitment to fulfill the needs of societies. She's relieved that the webinar archives and other FGS resources have migrated to the NGS website and are still available. "I do appreciate that they were forward-thinking with this merger, as a way to evolve to meet the changing needs of both individual genealogists and societies," she says.

New York City public records. The group supports ongoing efforts to reduce unreasonable waiting periods for vital records access. On occasion, they invite individual genealogists to sign petitions and give testimony. (For more on how the government impacts genealogy, read <[www.familytreemagazine.com/premium/genealogy-government-records](http://www.familytreemagazine.com/premium/genealogy-government-records)>).

Koch-Bostic also reflects on a related need to advocate for funding for genealogy and history societies. "In a lot of areas of our country, many nonprofits are going out of business," she says. "Given the economy, this is really an urgent time to help support these societies."

## 5. HELP GROW THE GENEALOGY WORLD

The NGS website states that its ultimate goal is to "assist people of all cultures in connecting their families to the past and for the future." Now that NGS represents a



variety of specialty and ethnic organizations, too, an emphasis on "all cultures" is even more relevant.

"As NGS President, Kathryn has established our first diversity, equity and inclusion working group," says Menashes. "We're looking at everything from the

language of genealogy to the opportunities we provide across ethnicities and for other communities. This is the single biggest issue we can face as an organization. How can we make sure we are open and inclusive of people no matter their backgrounds?"

Individual genealogists can—and do—help people they know get started in family history. But *group* efforts will likely contribute most powerfully to full inclusion. Identifying and surmounting barriers to enter genealogy takes time, expertise, effort and sometimes money. Local societies, niche societies and NGS all have roles to play, as do the skill sets and community connections of many individuals. But societies need the robust support of members to do so.

If you find these motivations compelling—education, sociability, record resources, advocacy and the growth of the genealogy community—it may be time to start shopping around for a society that fits you. Follow some on social media and join their conversations. Consider joining one (or more) for a year and investing in membership dues. As you connect with genealogy communities, you may find yourself agreeing with NGS: There's power in numbers. ●

Contributing Editor **Sunny Jane Morton** is a member of NGS and the Ohio Genealogical Society.

## RESEARCH GUIDE

# CALIFORNIA

by NANCY HENDRICKSON



FROM THE MOMENT IN 1542 WHEN JUAN RODRÍGUEZ Cabrillo dropped anchor in San Diego Bay until Mexican independence in 1821, the present state of California was a Spanish possession. Once part of New Spain, California has a Spanish heritage that survives today in many of its place names, and it's among the earliest examples of cultures converging in what would become the west coast of the United States. Read on for the history of the Golden State—and how you can research your ancestors who lived there.

### A COLLISION OF CULTURES

For more than two centuries after first being explored by the Spanish, “Alta” California remained unsettled by Europeans. That changed in 1769, when Fr. Junípero Serra (a Franciscan friar) established the first of 21 missions. The pueblos that sprang up around them, over time, became the cities of Los Angeles, Monterey and San Francisco.

Spain's hold on California began to erode in the 1800s. By 1812, Russia had moved eastward across the Pacific into Alaska, then pushed as far south as California's Bodega Bay. Then, after decades of altercations, Mexico won its independence from Spain in 1821, taking control of Spain's holdings throughout the Southwest. But, after the Mexican-American War that ended in 1848, California (as well as other Mexican territories) became part of the United States.

### CALIFORNIA, HERE I COME

In the same year California became a US territory, gold was discovered at Sutter's Mill. Tens of thousands of gold-seekers poured into Northern California. The area that had once been home to dozens of peaceful Native

American tribes and Spanish rancheros was now filled with immigrants from around the world, all coming to seek their fortunes.

The population explosion must have been mind-boggling to anyone living in California before the Gold Rush. In 1848, the state's white population was only a few thousand individuals. But with “49ers” streaming in, the population soared to 92,000 in 1850, the same year California gained statehood. By 1860, the population was 380,000, with newcomers arriving from countries around the world (Switzerland, Ireland, France, Germany, Scotland, China, Italy, Indonesia, the Philippines and Greece, to name a few)—not to mention the thousands who arrived from other US states. By 1890, more than 1 million people called California home. The cultural diversity that was the foundation California continues today.

The best place to begin your immigration search is at either FamilySearch <[www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org)> or Ancestry.com <[www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com)>, as they both have bordercrossing lists from Mexico dating 1903 to 1957. Other notable collections at FamilySearch include California naturalizations, immigration registers, lists of Chinese laborers, and passenger lists.

While the main ports of entry were San Francisco, Los Angeles and San Diego, your Chinese immigrant ancestors may have gone through inspection or even detention at the Angel Island Immigration station <[www.aiisf.org](http://www.aiisf.org)>, which operated from 1910 to 1940.

The Chinese Arrival Case File Index can be found at Ancestry.com <[www.ancestry.com/search/collections/61228](http://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/61228)>, spanning 1884 to 1940. The cards can contain name, age,

### FAST FACTS

ADDED AS US TERRITORY:  
1850

FIRST FEDERAL CENSUS:  
1850

BIRTH AND DEATH RECORDS BEGIN:  
1800s (counties); 1905 (state)

MARRIAGE RECORDS BEGIN:  
1800s (counties); 1905 (state)

CONTACT FOR VITAL RECORDS:  
California Dept. of  
Public Health



gender, birth date and place, arrival date, ship name, and case number. The original records are held at the National Archives' San Francisco branch.

## CALIFORNIA GIRLS (AND BOYS)

Given California's Spanish and Mexican heritage, early vital records were kept by Catholic parishes. While some counties have vital records going back to 1824, statewide registration of births, marriages and deaths, didn't begin until 1905.

This doesn't mean you can't obtain earlier California records, however. FamilySearch and Ancestry.com both have a wide variety of vital records. Ancestry.com has a "Pioneer and Immigrant File" <[www.ancestry.com/search/collections/2161](http://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/2161)>, with 10,000 records of pioneers who arrived in California prior to 1860. And at FamilySearch, you can search California deaths and burials from as early as 1776 <[www.familysearch.org/search/collection/3518938](http://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/3518938)>.

In addition, the Huntington Library's Early California Population Project maintains a collection of baptism, marriage and burial records from the California missions <[www.huntington.org/ecpp](http://www.huntington.org/ecpp)>.

You can find post-1905 vital record indexes at Archives.com <[www.archives.com](http://www.archives.com)> and VitalSearch.com <[vitalsearch.ca.com](http://vitalsearch.ca.com)>. In addition, the Western States Marriage Index <[abish.byui.edu/specialcollections/westernstates/search.cfm](http://abish.byui.edu/specialcollections/westernstates/search.cfm)> is a good jumping-off place for finding early marriages, with dates ranging by county (the earliest being 1821).

If you want to obtain informational copies of births, deaths or marriages, you can apply online or by mail at the California Department of Public Health <[www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/chsi/pages/vital-records.aspx](http://www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/chsi/pages/vital-records.aspx)>. Counties can sometimes provide records faster than the state; you can find list of county registrars and recorders at <[www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/chsi/pages/county-registrars-and-recorders.aspx](http://www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/chsi/pages/county-registrars-and-recorders.aspx)>.

If you still can't find an ancestor's records, keep two things in mind: An earthquake in 1906 destroyed nearly all of San Francisco's civil records, and it wasn't uncommon for couples to go to Mexico or Nevada for quickie marriages (or divorces).

## KEEPING COUNT

The whole state of California was first enumerated in the 1850 federal US census, the same year as its statehood. However, before statehood, the Spanish took censuses (called *padrones*) that counted Californians in several places, including Los Angeles and San Luis Obispo. You can obtain an online transcript of the 1790 census at <[www.sfgenealogy.com/spanish/cen1790.htm](http://www.sfgenealogy.com/spanish/cen1790.htm)> and an index to Spanish mission censuses of 1796 to 1989 at Ancestry.com ("California Spanish Mission Censuses, 1796-1798") <[www.ancestry.com/search/collections/1097](http://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/1097)>.

You can find federal census records from each decade (except 1890) at FamilySearch, Ancestry.com, MyHeritage <[www.myheritage.com](http://www.myheritage.com)> and Findmypast <[www.findmypast.com](http://www.findmypast.com)>. In addition to population schedules, you may also find the census mortality schedules to be useful, available from 1850 to 1885 at Ancestry.com <[www.ancestry.com/search/collections/8756](http://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/8756)>. Search the Northern California counties in 1850 to get a sense of where gold miners originated, as well as their cause of death. Diphtheria, delirium tremens, fever, pneumonia, and gunshot or knife wounds were common.

Because some of its records are missing from the 1850 federal census, California took its own *state* census in 1852. You can find it at the California State Library (CSL) <[www.library.ca.gov](http://www.library.ca.gov)> as well as at Ancestry.com and FamilySearch.

One of the most valuable of California record sets is the Great Register, which contains county-level voter registration lists dating back to 1866. The Register is a useful substitute for the missing 1890 federal census, as well as for records lost in the 1906 San Francisco earthquake.

The Great Register lists were compiled every two years and include name, age, place of birth, address, occupation, and sometimes a physical description. (Note: Only men are listed until 1911, when women obtained the right to vote.) The California State Library has registers from 1866 to 1944, but they are easier to access at Ancestry.com, FamilySearch, Findmypast or MyHeritage (1866-1910).

## TIMELINE

**1542**

Juan Rodríguez Cabrillo explores San Diego Bay, the first European to do so

**1769**

Spanish priests found the first mission in Alta California

**1821**

Mexico (then including modern California) gains independence from Spain

**1846**

Revolutionaries declare an independent "Bear Flag Republic" in Sonoma

**1848**

The United States takes control of California; James Wilson Marshall finds gold at Sutter's Mill, sparking the Gold Rush



**Golden Gate Bridge,  
San Francisco**

## 1850

California is admitted to the Union as a free state

## 1869

The transcontinental railroad connects Sacramento, Calif., with the American East

## 1906

An earthquake and fire destroy most of San Francisco

## 1907

Imperial County is created, making it the newest (and last) county to be formed in California

## 1910

Angel Island opens; over the next 30 years, more than 1 million immigrants are processed here



## TOOLKIT

## Websites

**California Genealogy** <[www.californiagenealogy.org](http://www.californiagenealogy.org)>

**California GenWeb Project** <[www.cagenweb.org](http://www.cagenweb.org)>

**Calisphere** <[www.calisphere.org](http://www.calisphere.org)>

**Cyndi's List: California** <[www.cyndislist.com/us/ca](http://www.cyndislist.com/us/ca)>

**FamilySearch Research Wiki: California** <[www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/California,\\_United\\_States\\_Genealogy](http://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/California,_United_States_Genealogy)>

**Linkpendium: California** <[www.linkpendium.com/ca-genealogy](http://www.linkpendium.com/ca-genealogy)>

**Online Archive of California** <[www.oac.cdlib.org](http://www.oac.cdlib.org)>

**San Francisco Genealogy** <[www.sfgenealogy.org/sf/sfdata.htm](http://www.sfgenealogy.org/sf/sfdata.htm)>

## Publications

**California Colony: Genealogy, Landgrants, and Notes of Spanish Colonial California** by Doris Shaw Castro (Author House)

**California Place Names, 40th Anniversary Edition: The Origin and Etymology of Current Geographical Names** by Erwin G. Gudde and William Bright (University of California Press)

**California Wagon Train Lists, Volume I** by Louis J. Rasmussen (Janaway Publishing)

**Spanish Mexican Families of Early California** by Marie E. Northrop (Southern California Genealogical Society)

## Archives &amp; Organizations

**California Genealogical Society** <[www.californiaancestors.org](http://www.californiaancestors.org)>

**California Historical Society** <[www.californiahistoricalsociety.org](http://www.californiahistoricalsociety.org)>

**California State Archives** <[www.sos.ca.gov/archives/collections/family-history-resources](http://www.sos.ca.gov/archives/collections/family-history-resources)>

**California State Library** <[www.library.ca.gov/collections/genealogy/toolkit](http://www.library.ca.gov/collections/genealogy/toolkit)>

**National Archives at Riverside** <[www.archives.gov/riverside](http://www.archives.gov/riverside)>

**National Archives at San Francisco** <[www.archives.gov/san-francisco](http://www.archives.gov/san-francisco)>

## LA LA LAND

Up until 1820, Spain issued land grants, which were then taken over by Mexico. Land grant records reside at University of California, Berkeley's Bancroft Library <[lib.berkeley.edu/libraries/bancroft-library](http://lib.berkeley.edu/libraries/bancroft-library)> and the California State Archives <[www.sos.ca.gov/archives/collections/ussg](http://www.sos.ca.gov/archives/collections/ussg)>. The United States agreed to honor the land grants after the Mexican-American War of 1848, but (of the 813 grants claimed) the land commission approved only 553.

Land not included in the grants was considered to be in the public domain and was sold through federal land offices. Records for public land sales can be found at the Bureau of Land Management website <[glorerecords.blm.gov](http://glorerecords.blm.gov)>. There, you'll find a treasure trove of land patents and can even request land entry case files from the National Archives. These records show the original transfer of land from the government to an individual; they do not include subsequent land transfers.

## GOLDEN RESOURCES

Several other resources can help you fill in the blank spots in your California research. Among them is the California Genealogical Society (CGS) <[www.californiaancestors.org](http://www.californiaancestors.org)>. CGS has many San Francisco records, including voter registrations and church, cemetery, and vital records. Some holdings are searchable for free, while others require a membership in the society.

Likewise, the Southern California Genealogical Society (SCGS) <[www.scsgsgenealogy.com](http://www.scsgsgenealogy.com)> has a number of freely searchable collections, including of obituaries, cemetery records and a list of 19th-century Los Angeles High School graduates. Society members can access several additional collections from their home computers.

City-level societies and libraries hold information for each of their respective regions. The San Diego Genealogical Society <[www.casdgs.org](http://www.casdgs.org)>, for example, offers members access to the quarterly journal *Leaves and Saplings*, which has a full-surname index of each volume. And the Los Angeles Public Library <[www.lapl.org/collections-resources/research-guides/genealogy](http://www.lapl.org/collections-resources/research-guides/genealogy)> has an index to its holdings, as well as digitized Los Angeles directories.

If finding historical images (rather than records) is your goal, click over to the University of Southern California's "California Historical Society Collection, 1860–1990" <[digitallibrary.usc.edu/cdm/landingpage/collection/p15799coll65](http://digitallibrary.usc.edu/cdm/landingpage/collection/p15799coll65)>. You'll find more than 25,000 downloadable images in this collection, including 19th-century drawings of some of California's 21 missions.

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Contributing Editor **Nancy Hendrickson** writes about family history from her home in California. She's the author of the *Unofficial Guide to Ancestry.com* (Family Tree Books).

# RESEARCH GUIDE

# OHIO

by SHELLEY BISHOP



WHAT DO THE WRIGHT BROTHERS, DORIS DAY, John Glenn, LeBron James, William McKinley, Neil Armstrong, Gloria Steinem, Thomas Edison, Jack Nicklaus, and Ulysses S. Grant have in common? All hail from Ohio, the seventh most populous US state.

From its beginnings as the first western frontier to a modern hub of commerce and education, Ohio has played a key role in American history. Today, millions of people throughout the world can find Buckeyes in their family trees. If you're one of them, use our guide to discover their records and stories.

## FRONTIER DAYS

Native American villages dotted the river valleys and dense forests between Lake Erie and the Ohio River in Colonial times. The names that the Miami, Shawnee, Delaware, Seneca, Iroquois, Wyandot, Tuscarora and Ottawa tribes gave to many Ohio rivers endure today—the word “Ohio” itself is Iroquois for “great river.” French fur traders and British surveyors found abundant game and fertile land, but frequent conflicts prevented settlement until after the American Revolution.

In 1787, the newly formed US government created the Northwest Territory out of land ceded by Britain after the Revolution. The act set Ohio, along with Indiana, Michigan, Illinois and Wisconsin, on the path to statehood. The Ohio Company of Associates ventured the first permanent US settlement in the territory, Marietta, in 1788.

Revolutionary War bounty land warrants and the chance to buy public land drew pioneers from New England and other eastern states. Ohio's early settlers also included scores of immigrants from Germany, Ireland and Great Britain.

Its population booming, Ohio became the 17th US state in 1803. Officials selected land to build a new capital, Columbus, in 1812, amid the backdrop of the War of 1812.

Migration into Ohio continued to swell with the construction of new transportation routes. By 1825, the Erie Canal delivered families from as far as the Hudson River to the shores of Lake Erie. The Ohio and Erie Canal (1832) expanded that range, and the National Road (1825–1833) allowed more settlers to pass through the area.

Some Ohioans followed the frontier as it moved westward to Indiana, Illinois, Missouri, Iowa and beyond.

## GROWTH AND CHANGE

By 1850, Ohio's population had reached nearly 2 million, and the state was a top producer of wheat, corn and wool. The construction of railroads created new jobs and made exporting products more profitable.

A different type of transportation system developed as abolitionists helped slaves pass from entry points along the Ohio River to safety via the Underground Railroad.

More than 300,000 Ohioans served in Union forces during the Civil War, making the state the third-largest supplier of troops behind New York and Pennsylvania.

After the war, steel, iron, and oil industries developed in Cleveland and the Mahoning Valley. Miners in eastern Ohio worked to meet the demand for coal. Glass, rubber, electric, paper, machinery, and other businesses drove the growth of cities.

Factory jobs attracted thousands of immigrants to the state, particularly from Germany, Poland, Hungary, Russia, Italy and Scandinavia, including many of the Jewish faith. Southern African Americans added to the new arrivals as they migrated north to fill factory jobs.

## FAST FACTS

STATEHOOD:  
1803

FIRST FEDERAL CENSUS:  
1800 (fragments); 1820 (extant)

BIRTH AND DEATH RECORDS BEGIN:  
1867 (counties); 1908 (state)

MARRIAGE RECORDS BEGIN:  
upon county establishment; 1949 (state)

CONTACT FOR VITAL RECORDS:  
Ohio Dept. of Health,  
Bureau of Vital Statistics



Approximately 200,000 Ohioans served in World War I. A generation later, more than 800,000 Ohio men and women served in World War II. The postwar years brought suburban expansion and interstate highways.

Today, technology, education, health care, retail, transportation and service-based businesses have become increasingly important to the state's economy.

## OHIO VITALS

Most of Ohio's 88 counties have birth and death records from 1867 (some, even earlier). But these records are incomplete until 1908, when registration was made mandatory.

Nearly all surviving county registers have now been digitized. FamilySearch has collections of both birth and death registers: "Ohio, County Births, 1841–2003" <[www.familysearch.org/search/collection/1932106](http://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/1932106)> and "Ohio, County Death Records, 1840–2001" at FamilySearch <[www.familysearch.org/search/collection/2128172](http://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/2128172)>.

The Ohio Department of Health began issuing birth and death certificates in 1908. Original birth records are not available online, but Ancestry.com offers an "Ohio, Birth Index, 1908–1998" collection <[www.ancestry.com/search/collections/3146](http://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/3146)> that acts as a finding aid. Death records issued through 1953 can be viewed in "Ohio Deaths, 1908–1953" at FamilySearch <[www.familysearch.org/search/collection/1307272](http://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/1307272)>.

Because Ohio has open records, anyone can buy certified copies of birth and death records from the Bureau of Vital Statistics <[odh.ohio.gov/wps/portal/gov/odh/know-our-programs/vital-statistics](http://odh.ohio.gov/wps/portal/gov/odh/know-our-programs/vital-statistics)>. The form has a field to indicate why you're seeking information—check the box for Genealogy.

Ohio counties created marriage records from the time they were established, starting in the 1790s. Marriage records are still kept at the county level today, though the state also began registering marriages in 1949.

You can view a majority of 19th- and early 20th-century records online in the FamilySearch collection, "Ohio, County Marriages, 1789–2016" <[www.familysearch.org/search/collection/1614804](http://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/1614804)>. Ancestry.com and MyHeritage <[www.myheritage.com](http://www.myheritage.com)> offer indexes

# The wide availability of online resources makes tracing your Ohio ancestors easier and more rewarding than ever.

covering various years. To obtain a copy of a marriage record, contact the county probate court.

Divorce records are also created at the county level, usually by the court of common pleas, although early cases were heard by the Ohio supreme court. Relatively few have been digitized. Ancestry.com and Findmypast offer indexes that help locate recent records. Contact the county's clerk of courts to request a copy.

Access to adoption records is restricted, and no public index exists. Visit <[odh.ohio.gov/wps/portal/gov/odh/know-our-programs/vital-statistics/adoption-file-information](http://odh.ohio.gov/wps/portal/gov/odh/know-our-programs/vital-statistics/adoption-file-information)> to learn more.

## CENSUS MATTERS

Though modern Ohio appears in the federal census as early as 1800, early census records of Ohio are incomplete. The 1800 and 1810 censuses are lost except for returns of Washington County, so the 1820 census is the first (mostly) intact one of Ohio—just two counties are missing.

US census records of Ohio from 1830 to 1940 are essentially complete. For 1890, only the special veterans census and fragments of Hamilton and Clinton county returns survive. Search census records at Ancestry.com, FamilySearch, Findmypast, and MyHeritage.

Ohio did not conduct state censuses. However, look for tax and voter lists, which can serve as substitutes. The FamilySearch Catalog <[www.familysearch.org/search/catalog](http://www.familysearch.org/search/catalog)> has some.

## TIMELINE

### 1650s

The Iroquois Confederacy claims the Ohio country after defeating local tribes

### 1660s

The French claim Ohio as part of New France; French explorers become the first Europeans to visit the region

### 1763

France cedes its land east of the Mississippi to Great Britain; King George III forbids Colonial settlement there

### 1787

The Northwest Ordinance is passed, organizing the US territory north and west of the Ohio River

### 1795

A coalition of Native American tribes formally cedes the Northwest Territory to the United States



Downtown  
Cleveland

## LAND COMPLEXITIES

Ohio was a great land experiment. The state was initially carved up into several districts, each with their own ways of measuring and distributing land. So when researching an early Ohio settler, it's crucial to understand the area he lived in. Download the state auditor's free publication, *The Official Ohio Lands Book* <[www.ohioauditor.gov/publications/ohiolandsbook.pdf](http://www.ohioauditor.gov/publications/ohiolandsbook.pdf)>, to learn more.

Much of the state was measured using the new rectangular survey system, which subdivided land into ranges, townships and sections. Land offices handled the sale of federal land to the public. But in the United States Military District (in central-east Ohio), Revolutionary War veterans could redeem bounty land warrants for a patent.

As settlers registered to buy a tract of land, their entries were recorded in tract books, which you can browse at FamilySearch. Once a tract was fully paid for, the landowner received a patent. Search patents issued for both bounty land warrants and land office sales at the

Bureau of Land Management's General Land Office <[www.glorecords.blm.gov](http://www.glorecords.blm.gov)>. You can order the corresponding land entry case files from the National Archives.

Other large tracts of federal land were sold to groups of investors, who then divided and sold them to individuals. Virginia had its own military district, and Connecticut had claim to the Western Reserve and Firelands regions.

But once a parcel of land was in private hands, the process became much simpler. Deeds authorizing the transfer of land from one owner to another in Ohio have been held by the county recorder's office.

Many older deed records have been digitized, even if they're not yet searchable. Check the FamilySearch Catalog using a place search to find available land records. (Note: County boundaries shifted through the mid-1800s.)

## NATURALIZATION RECORDS

Before 1906, immigrants could complete the naturalization process at virtually any Ohio

### 1800

Connecticut cedes the Western Reserve; the land is incorporated into the Northwest Territory

### 1803

Ohio joins the Union as the 17th state

### 1832

The Ohio and Erie Canal links the Ohio River at Portsmouth with Lake Erie

### 1835

Ohio and the Michigan Territory wage the mostly bloodless Toledo War over a strip of land at their border

### 1896

The last revision is made to Ohio's county boundaries; some borders had shifted throughout the 1800s



## TOOLKIT

## Websites

**Cyndi's List: Ohio** <[www.cyndislist.com/us/oh](http://www.cyndislist.com/us/oh)>

**FamilySearch Research Wiki: Ohio** <[www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Ohio,\\_United\\_States\\_Genealogy](http://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Ohio,_United_States_Genealogy)>

**Linkpendium: Ohio** <[www.linkpendium.com/oh-genealogy](http://www.linkpendium.com/oh-genealogy)>

**OHGenWeb** <[www.ohgenweb.org](http://www.ohgenweb.org)>

**Ohio History Central** <[www.ohiohistorycentral.org](http://www.ohiohistorycentral.org)>

**Ohio Memory** <[www.ohiomemory.org](http://www.ohiomemory.org)>

**Ohio Obituary Index** <[www.rbhayes.org/main/ohio-obituary-index](http://www.rbhayes.org/main/ohio-obituary-index)>

## Publications

***Genealogical Research in Ohio, 2nd Edition*** by Kip Sperry (Genealogical Publishing Co., 2003)

***Ohio Genealogical Research*** by George Schweitzer (self-published, 1994)

***Ohio Guide to Genealogical Sources*** by Carol W. Bell (reprint, Genealogical Publishing Co., 2009)

***Ohio Towns and Townships to 1900: A Location Guide*** by Julie M. Overton, et al. (Ohio Genealogical Society, 2011)

***Ohio Wills and Estates to 1850: An Index*** by Carol W. Bell (reprint, Genealogical Publishing Co., 2012)

## Archives &amp; Organizations

**American Jewish Archives** <[www.americanjewisharchives.org](http://www.americanjewisharchives.org)>

**Cincinnati and Hamilton County Public Library** <[www.cincinnatiilibrary.org/genealogy-history](http://www.cincinnatiilibrary.org/genealogy-history)>

**Cleveland Public Library** <[www.cpl.org/research-learning/genealogy](http://www.cpl.org/research-learning/genealogy)>

**Columbus Metropolitan Library** <[www.columbuslibrary.org/research/local-history-genealogy](http://www.columbuslibrary.org/research/local-history-genealogy)>

**National Archives at Chicago** <[www.archives.gov/chicago](http://www.archives.gov/chicago)>

**Ohio Genealogical Society** <[www.ogs.org](http://www.ogs.org)>

**Ohio History Connection** <[www.ohiohistory.org/learn/archives-library](http://www.ohiohistory.org/learn/archives-library)>

**Western Reserve Historical Society** <[www.wrhs.org/research/library](http://www.wrhs.org/research/library)>

courthouse. The majority of these records have been digitized by FamilySearch in the collection “Ohio, County Naturalization Records, 1800–1977” <[www.familysearch.org/search/collection/1987615](http://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/1987615)>. Ancestry.com, Findmypast and MyHeritage also have Ohio naturalization record collections.

After 1906, changes in the law required naturalizations to be handled by federal courts. Several Ohio cities have divisions of US district courts; those records are held by the Great Lakes Region National Archives facility in Chicago <[www.archives.gov/chicago/finding-aids/naturalization-records.html](http://www.archives.gov/chicago/finding-aids/naturalization-records.html)>. FamilySearch has digitized many district court records created through the mid-1900s.

## PUBLICATIONS

Newspapers proliferated throughout Ohio from the early 1800s on, as both large and small communities relied on them for information. Ohio History Connection (OHC) <[ohiomemory.ohiohistory.org/newspapers](http://ohiomemory.ohiohistory.org/newspapers)> and libraries throughout the state have original and microfilmed newspaper collections. Archival newspapers held by OHC and other facilities are being uploaded to OhioMemory as they're digitized, and Ohio papers may also be found on free or subscription sites.

In addition, many Ohio cities and counties produced annual directories of their residents. Digital images of select directories are available at Ancestry.com, Fold3 <[go.fold3.com/citydirectories](http://go.fold3.com/citydirectories)>, the Internet Archive <[www.archive.org](http://www.archive.org)>, MyHeritage and other sites. You can find a helpful county-by-county listing of Ohio directories, complete with links to online holdings, at <[www.ldsgenealogy.com/OH/City-Directories.htm](http://www.ldsgenealogy.com/OH/City-Directories.htm)>.

## PROBATE RECORDS

Search for pre-1852 Ohio estates in records of the county court of common pleas or chancery court. Post-1852 estates can be found in the probate court. Note that some counties have moved older records to a local archive.

FamilySearch has digitized a number of 19th- and early-20th-century Ohio will books, estate journals, and guardianship journals, and Ancestry.com has an index of wills and probate records that includes images of case papers.

The wide availability of online resources makes tracing your Ohio ancestors easier and more rewarding than ever.

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**Shelley Bishop**, owner of Buckeye Family Trees <[www.buckeyefamilytrees.com](http://www.buckeyefamilytrees.com)>, has a passion for finding and telling the stories of Ohio ancestors.

# familytree

## UNIVERSITY

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Highlights from March and April 2021\*



begins March 1st



begins March 22nd



begins April 5th



begins April 12th

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# Damage Control

These expert tips from the Photo Detective will help you save even damaged family photos for future generations.

by MAUREEN A. TAYLOR

**Time is of the essence**, so make no mistake: *Now* is the time to work with your family photographs. Whether they're pictures you took yourself or treasures you inherited from a family member, the photos that add so much personality to your research are in danger. Light, fading ink, pests and natural disasters all pose serious threats, so it's imperative to preserve your family photos—particularly those already fragile or damaged.

Contrary to popular misconceptions, preserving your photographs doesn't have to be expensive. Supplies aren't nearly as costly or hard to locate as they once were. In fact, you can find them at a variety of locations, including library/museum suppliers and art stores.

You can't stop time from decaying your family photos and documents—but you can slow it down, and prepare for even the worst scenarios. Here's how you can save your photos from disaster, plus answers to some of the most common questions I receive about handling photos that have already been damaged.

## 4 Tips for Preserving Family Photos

With the right tools and know-how, it's easy to begin caring for your pictures. Start by following these basic preservation rules to keep your family archives safe.

### 1. Avoid Temperature and Humidity Extremes

Photos are susceptible to extremes of temperature and humidity. While you can't do anything about the weather *outside* your house, you can somewhat control the *interior* environment.

First, avoid all the “problem” storage areas: basements, attics and garages. Not only are those zones subject to temperature and humidity fluctuations, they're also usually home to critters that love to eat or nest in paper—including your family photos.

Then, take proactive steps to manage the climate of your other interior spaces as best as you can. You can't turn your house into a museum, but a few techniques and tools can get it under control.

For example, try to manage temperature fluctuations by storing your photos in a spot away from drafts—winter cold can harm as much as summer's heat—as well as heating systems. In

addition, use either a de-humidifier to remove excess moisture in a space, or (if your house is too dry, particularly in the winter) a humidifier to moisten the air.

If you're looking for a cheaper way to manage humidity, try a reusable desiccant container. It's a small box with an inert substance that attracts and holds water vapor. When the material is saturated (usually indicated by a dot turning green), bake the container in a ventilated oven to dry it out. While I wouldn't advise putting one in direct contact with photos, you could use it in the same closet(s) you're storing photos in. They're available from museum suppliers such as Gaylord Archival <[www.gaylord.com](http://www.gaylord.com)>.

### 2. Buy the Right Materials

There are more archival-supply outlets than ever before—just check labels on their products for the right terminology. When purchasing storage materials, look for industry-appropriate phrases such as acid- and lignin-free paper or cardboard and non-PVC plastic (preferably polyester or polypropylene). And for photos, you just need good-quality boxes and sleeves that fit those criteria. You can buy them in art-supply stores, museum storage companies, storage stores, and online vendors like Gaylord.

### 3. Scan Once and Store

Scanning your images should become a reflex. Digital files can be easily shared online, backed up on cloud-storage services, or sorted using a program that embeds important metadata like date created.

The Library of Congress <[www.loc.gov](http://www.loc.gov)> suggests scanning, when possible, using the following specifications:

- a minimum of 1200 DPI: This resolution gives you the most detail and flexibility. Downsize copies of files as necessary for online sharing.
- TIFF files: These store the most data.
- 100-percent scale (i.e., the same dimensions as the original photo, instead of reducing the size)

Developing a system that you can follow each time (e.g., scan, then label, *then* file) is important. In addition, image files will be large, so you'll need a backup hard drive and/or an online cloud service such as Forever Storage <[www.forever.com](http://www.forever.com)> or Dropbox <[www.dropbox.com](http://www.dropbox.com)>.



#### 4. Identify and Label

An unidentified photo is one that later family members may consider disposable. If you have a lot of images without names and are intimidated by the idea of working through them, take it slow—one picture at a time.

Write anything you know about a photo or its subject on its back—name, date, occasion—even if you don't know much. Add your own name and the current date so your descendants will always know who labeled the photos. Safe labeling tools include a soft lead pencil for paper-based prints or an approved waterproof, fade-proof, quick-drying pen (*not* a Sharpie) for resin-coated pictures. One option for the latter is Zig Photo Signature Pens, which are widely available in scrapbook-, art- and office-supply stores.

You can even embed all this data into a digital file using programs like MemoryWeb <[www.memoryweb.me](http://www.memoryweb.me)> or Vivid-Pix <[www.vivid-pix.com](http://www.vivid-pix.com)>.

#### Photo Help Q&A

It's a rare collection that doesn't have a few images that require special help. In general, here's what you should do when you find a dam-

aged family photo:

- Photograph or scan it immediately. Many types of deterioration will continue to progress if the photo isn't moved to a stable environment.

- Try to convince your relative of an image's importance if they're trying to dispose of it.

- Find a good storage spot. As we've discussed, not all storage spaces are created equal—or appropriate for storing archival materials long term. A windowless interior closet in a living area of the home is ideal (not an attic, garage or basement).

- Place the item in an acid- and lignin-free folder and a reinforced-corner box.

- Obtain an estimate from a photo-conservation expert for stabilizing the picture. You can find a conservator in your area on the American Institute for Conservation website <[www.culturalheritage.org](http://www.culturalheritage.org)>. (See the sidebar on page 46 for more on when to consult a professional.)

- Separate moldy photos from other items. Remember: Mold is a living organism, and it spreads quite easily. You don't want to end up with more than one problem.

Here are a few specific situations.

#### How Do I Remove a Photo That's Stuck to Glass?

Framed photos stored in humid climates will often become stuck to their glass. Color photographs on resin-coated paper are particularly susceptible to sticking to glass (and each other) in humid situations. If you try to unstick the image, the emulsion will likely remain or tear. The services of a professional conservator are required. Another option is to photograph/scan the picture as it is in the glass, then use photo-editing software to sharpen as necessary.

You'll want to distinguish between pictures trapped in glass from pictures that were *meant* to adhere to glass. In the early 20th century, studios offered images on curved glass. Those photographs aren't meant to be removed from the glass, and trying to do so will actually damage or destroy them. In these cases, the best solution is to photograph the entire photo and frame.

### Photo Triage

Do this first when you find:

- **Moldy photos:** Scan, then separate from the rest.

- **Flaking tints:** Scan, then place in an acid- and lignin-free envelope.

- **Broken images:** Support by resting on a piece of acid- and lignin-free cardstock, then place in an acid- and lignin-free folder.

- **Crayon pictures:** Consider having a conservator stabilize, and be sure to photograph.

- **Images you want to share:** Sign up for a digital photo organizer and start collaborating.



Looking for more preservation tips? Check out our collection at <[www.familytreemagazine.com/category/preservation](http://www.familytreemagazine.com/category/preservation)>.

**You can't stop time from  
decaying your family  
photos and documents—but  
you can slow it down.**



## Saving Different Formats

The four basic rules we've outlined will help you save your pictures so that generations can appreciate them. But not all images are the same. Some are more fragile than others, such as glass ambrotypes that break or tintypes that rust. These special cases require other types of care.

Here are three common image types and what you should consider when figuring out where to store them.

### INSTANT PICTURES

Polaroids are back in style! These small handheld images are common at weddings and gatherings, but the technology—and your concerns as a preservationist—has changed over time:

- The *original* Polaroids date from 1948 and consisted of two layers that you had to wait to develop, then pull apart. Unfortunately, these black-and-white images fade.

- In the 1960s, the Swinger camera became the camera of choice for amateurs. Users took images and applied chemicals to the surface. For these mid-century photos, streaking and a darkening of the original image can happen over time.

- In the 1970s, you instead took the picture with the camera, and the image rolled out short after. Viewers could watch while it developed. Over time, those images cracked between the plastic layers or discolored.

Regardless of what time period your instant images are from, you should look them over periodically. These troublesome photographs tend to fade, crack and become unglued. Make sure you scan them, then use photo-editing software like Vivid-Pix RESTORE to digitally repair any damage.

### SLIDES

How many slides do you have? Those of us with thousands know they can take up a lot of space. Unfortunately,

just storing slides is the easy part; you can purchase special slide-storage boxes from library/museum suppliers.

It's what to do with all the images that's the problem. To manage your collection, weed the number of slides down to storytelling basics. Ask yourself how many images tell the story of that event or vacation, and disregard the rest. After all, your descendants won't want to store all those slides, especially several copies of nearly the same image. Scan slides yourself if you have the time (many flatbed scanners have a setting for slides), or send them out to a company like ScanMyPhotos <[www.scanmyphotos.com](http://www.scanmyphotos.com)> to do it for you.

### CASED IMAGES

Store shiny reflective daguerreotypes, glass ambrotypes or cased tintypes in acid- and lignin-free microfilm boxes for protection. Photo jewelry can be placed here, too. Then, write identifying information on the outside of the box.



### How Do I Remove a Photo from an Album?

Our photo albums tell a story. Turning each page reveals another part of your family history, and someone organized the album with intent and purpose. So, unless the album is a toxic mess of poor-quality paper, glue, and plastic overlays, you should probably leave it and its photos alone. Future family historians will thank you!

Disassembling an album will almost certainly do more harm than good. For example, card photograph albums often have broken covers, but the covers are likely still providing *some* protection for the images within them. And, though you might be tempted to remove photos from a black paper album so you can view any information on their backs, there are rarely details written there. Your ancestors likely used white ink to write *beneath* the pictures instead.

Instead of taking the album apart, photograph each of its pages. Make sure you scan and number/name the photos in such a way



that you'll always know where images sit in the actual albums, such as "upper left page 30." Then use your digital photo organizer to re-create the album in digital form, making it easily shareable.

Storing photo albums is easier than you'd think. All it takes is some unbleached muslin fabric and a box with reinforced corners.

## When to Hire a Conservator

Certain images in our collections document someone or something special, and we can't bear to see them in disrepair. Conservators trained to work with photographs are not inexpensive, but (if you consider that they're saving your pictorial legacy for generations) hiring one is worth the investment.

If you have an image damaged by chemicals, indelicate handling, or aging, consider working with a professionally trained conservator. You can find one through the referral service of the American Institute for Conservation <[www.culturalheritage.org](http://www.culturalheritage.org)>.

Know someone who'd be interested in training to be a conservator? Encourage them to become one—there are not enough to meet the demand! Learn how to do so at <[www.brhoward.com/new-blog/art-conservation-programs-how-to-become-an-art-conservator](http://www.brhoward.com/new-blog/art-conservation-programs-how-to-become-an-art-conservator)>.



### Should I Remove Photos from Magnetic Albums?

Having said that, magnetic photo albums *should* be taken apart. Over time, the acidic pages (which are actually glue strips or dots, not "magnets" of some kind) will deteriorate the images they hold and stain them. And the longer you wait, the more your photos might stick to the page.

First, document the order of the photographs by taking pictures or scanning each page. Then purchase a new album with acid- and lignin-free pages and a non-PVC polyester overlay. Carefully remove all your images from that nasty magnetic one, and re-create the order of the images on new pages.

Getting the pictures off the pages won't be easy. With any luck, the aging glue will release the images without trouble. If not, you can gently slide a piece of dental floss between the image and the page. Just be careful—it's possible to tear a photo even with floss.

And, of course, don't keep buying magnetic photo albums. (No matter how cheap they are on sale!) Stick with the good stuff: acid- and lignin-free models with polyester overlays. They will last and do minimal damage to your photos.



Want to save money when purchasing archival supplies? Buy in bulk with a friend or members of a genealogical society.

As you're collecting photos from relatives, try to also preserve any memories or stories they might associate with them. A mobile app called Storyglory <[web.storyglory.me](http://web.storyglory.me)> is one tool, allowing you to attach voice recordings to photos.

### I have a Blurry and Faded Photograph. Is There a Fix for It?

Blurry, faded and color-shifted images used to be beyond hope unless you learned how to use an expensive photo-editing program—and even that often didn't work. Blurry images were destined for the garbage can. But now that's changed, with a variety of programs now at your disposal.

The Vivid-Pix RESTORE software can provide several different kinds of photo enhancement within seconds of an image being uploaded. You can adjust color and contrast, zoom in to select sections, and even keep track of metadata. If the colors in your picture have faded or shifted, Vivid-Pix RESTORE helps with that, too.

Megawebsite MyHeritage <[www.myheritage.com](http://www.myheritage.com)> now also offers enhancements and colorization as part of its Complete Subscription. Add an image to your account, then select colorization or enhancement (or both) and watch the magic happen. A partnership with Mixtiles <[www.mixtiles.com](http://www.mixtiles.com)>, makes it possible for you to order them suitable for framing too.

### What Can I Do About Rolled Photographs?

Because photographs have a tendency to break, you'll need to be very careful. Start by placing the photographs into a home-humidification chamber, which will relax them and make them easier to lay flat. Denise Levenick, the Family Curator, has a seven-step tutorial on her website about how to safely work with rolled images <[www.thefamilycurator.com/photo-tutorial-how-to-relax-and-rehumidify-old-rolled-photog](http://www.thefamilycurator.com/photo-tutorial-how-to-relax-and-rehumidify-old-rolled-photog)>. ●

**Maureen A. Taylor**, The Photo Detective, is known internationally for photo identification and preservation. She is the host of the popular podcast The Photo Detective.

### Can I Use Kitchen Bags for Storing Images?

It's right to question the use of ordinary plastic bags on archival materials. Whether or not they're safe for photos depends on the type of plastic. Polypropylene is a stable polyester and suitable for images. But if the bag has a scent of strong plastic, then they are usually not fit for long-term storage of pictures.

### What About Storing Different Types of Materials Together?

Family collections usually come to us as photographs, newspapers and paper memorabilia all jumbled together. You likely want to keep it all together, but it's actually best to store them separately.

If you have news clippings about a wedding as well as a picture of the smiling couple, place each item in a separate acid- and lignin-free folder. This way, the acid from the newspaper won't stain the picture. If you don't want to lose how they are linked together, a digital photo organizer can help. Create a digital album/folder for the couple and add the items.

### What Should I Use to Scan a Relative's Photos on the Go?

You'll want to invest in a flatbed scanner that fits in a small suitcase so you can cart it around. Use the scanning tips mentioned earlier in this article and keep track of each image on a simple chart.

Alternatively, some apps can bring the power of a scanner to your smartphone. Google PhotoScan <[www.google.com/photos/scan](http://www.google.com/photos/scan)> is one useful (and free!) option.



## Trace your family history across “the Great White North” with these 14 Canadian genealogy websites.

by RICK CRUME

**Whether your Canadian** ancestors were First Nations peoples, early French settlers, Loyalists seeking refuge after the American Revolutionary War, or more recent immigrants from the Ukraine or elsewhere, records probably exist to tell their stories.

And many of those records are now online. Church records of baptisms, marriages and burials in Quebec go back to the early fur traders. Muster rolls and land petitions document the Loyalist experience. Census and vital records reveal key facts about 19th- and 20th-century Canadians. And large collections of newspapers, journals and books give us a glimpse into the daily lives of all of them.

The following list includes 14 of the best websites for researching your Canadian ancestry, separated into five categories. Websites that require a paid subscription are indicated with \$.

### ARCHIVES

#### 1. Library and Archives Canada

<[www.collectionscanada.gc.ca](http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca)>

Among the largest libraries in the world, Library and Archives Canada functions as the equivalent of the US Library of Congress and the National Archives—combined. To access the site’s collections, click Search the Collection from the main menu, then Ancestors Search from the dropdown.

Collections here include birth, marriage and death records; acts of divorce from 1841 to 1968; census records from 1770 to 1926; immigration and citizenship records from 1828 to 1949; land records from 1763 to 1930; and military records from 1772 to 1969. Some records are linked to digitized images.

A search of the 1906 census of the Northwest Provinces (Alberta, Manitoba and







Moraine Lake in Alberta's  
Banff National Park



Saskatchewan) turns up my ancestors J. A. Grant and “Mrs. J. A. Grant.” Both are age 76 and were born in New Brunswick, living with a son and daughter-in-law in the district of Strathcona, Alberta, post office Lewisville. The census image shows they had one horse, five milch cows, 25 other cattle and two hogs.

## 2. Nova Scotia Archives

<[archives.novascotia.ca](http://archives.novascotia.ca)>

Click on Genealogy, then select Genealogy Guide for information on several kinds of records. Digitized records on this website include land grants from 1765 to 1800 and census, assessment and poll tax records from 1767 to 1838. You can also browse digitized newspapers from 1769 to 2002, but (because you can’t keyword-search them) they’re most useful if you already have a date for an event like a marriage or a death.

From the Archives’ companion website, Nova Scotia Historical Vital Statistics <[www.novascotiagenealogy.com](http://www.novascotiagenealogy.com)>, you can search 1 million names, all linked to digitized records—and all free of charge.

As of this writing, the site has birth records from 1864 to 1877 and 1908 to 1919 (including delayed registrations back to 1830); marriage records from 1763 to 1944; and death records from 1864 to 1877 and 1908 to 1969. You’ll also find death records for the city of Halifax from 1890 to 1908. (More-recent records are held by the Vital Statistics Service.)

## 3. Prince Edward Island Public Archives and Records Office

<[www.princeedwardisland.ca/en/topic/libraries-and-archives](http://www.princeedwardisland.ca/en/topic/libraries-and-archives)>

Under Genealogy and Historic Research, click



**With so many historical records, books and newspapers now online, searching for your Canadian ancestors has never been easier.**

on “Search Public Archives Material Online,” then on “Search PARO Collections Database” to access the site’s records. Here, you’ll find baptisms from 1777 to 1923, marriages from 1827 to 1936, and deaths up to 1968, plus the 1841, 1881, 1891 and 1901 censuses. The collection includes all the key information from the original records, and you can view digitized images of marriage licenses from 1827 to 1888.

When you search by keyword, use a filter to narrow your result by subject (or click Advanced Search to run an initial search for a particular kind of record). “Textual item” will search Supreme Court case files from 1770 to 1959 and petitions from 1780 to 1915.

## Upper and Lower Canada

Some online collections use historical names for two regions of British Canada established in 1791:

- “Upper Canada”: Southern Ontario and the areas of northern Ontario formerly in New France
- “Lower Canada”: Labrador and southern Quebec

In 1841, the two regions united into the Province of Canada, with Upper Canada renamed Canada West and Lower Canada renamed Canada East.



Quebec City in the  
19th century

## FRENCH-SPEAKING CANADA

### 5. Bibliothèque et Archives Nationales Québec (BANQ)

<[www.banq.qc.ca](http://www.banq.qc.ca)>

Click on English on the upper-right and use the Search box to crawl through all the website's collections, including the catalog and digitized census, civil, marriage, death, coroners and land records. For example, you could search on *famille LeClerc*, *LeClerc family*, *genealogie Trudeau* or *Trudeau genealogy* and add a place name to narrow the scope if you get too many matches.

Click on the Search (Recherche) tab, then Genealogy (Généalogie) to search digitized records. Select a collection from the drop-down menu under Généalogie, enter a last name (Nom) and, optionally, a first name (Prénom) and click on Chercher (Search). Or select a collection in the list below the search boxes to use a customized search form. (Note: The drop-down menu doesn't appear if you use the English-language version of this page.)

If you don't know French, BANQ may be hard to navigate and the records may be difficult to interpret. Some pages are available only in French, but you can use Chrome to translate them into English.

### 6. Genealogy of Canada (Généalogie du Québec et d'Amérique Française)

<[www.nosorigines.qc.ca](http://www.nosorigines.qc.ca)>

This free site has a collaborative family tree focusing on French-speaking Canada. You can add information on your own family (along with family pictures) and link it to other users' data. The family tree is mostly accurate, but since it's a crowd-sourced database, you should verify the information with other sources. There are errors, and often the list of a family's children is incomplete.

The site's forum lets you connect with other researchers, and a directory of Quebec parishes (*paroisses*) has links to church records on BANQ and FamilySearch <[www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org)>.

### 4. Provincial Archives of New Brunswick

<[archives.gnb.ca](http://archives.gnb.ca)>

The Archives' Federated Database Search covers about 3.5 million names in more than 35 collections. That makes this site a tremendous resource for someone like me with a lot of New Brunswick ancestry. The records here include indexes to births, marriages, deaths, burials, passenger lists and land records, as well as gravestone transcriptions and digitized marriage and Revolutionary War records.

One collection, "Daniel F. Johnson's New Brunswick Newspaper Vital Statistics," has key details from articles published between 1784 and 1896 and covers a whopping 640,280 names. Another especially useful collection, "Wallace Hale's Early New Brunswick Probate, 1785-1835" (available at <[archives.gnb.ca/Search/MC3706](http://archives.gnb.ca/Search/MC3706)>), contains abstracts of 2,371 probate files.

Among them is my ancestor Andrew Sherwood's will, which was proved in 1824 and left to his wife one-third of his real estate, plus his "riding mare," two cows, six sheep and all household furniture. The record also notes what he bequeathed to each of his 10 children.





**Peggy's Cove in  
Nova Scotia**

## **7. Genealogy Quebec (Généalogie Québec) \$**

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

Created by the Drouin Genealogical Institute, founded in 1899, Genealogy Quebec has tens of millions of historical and genealogical records and images. Their collection includes baptism, marriage and burial records, plus death cards, censuses, tombstones and family genealogies. While they focus mainly on Quebec, coverage extends to New Brunswick and parts of Ontario and the United States.

## **8. Programme de Recherche en Démographie Historique (PRDH, The Research Program in Historical Demography) \$**

[www.prdh-igd.com](http://www.prdh-igd.com)

This remarkable collection includes all baptisms and burials in Quebec's Catholic church registers through 1849, plus all of Quebec's marriages (both Catholic and non-Catholic) from 1621 to 1849.

You can perform a cursory search of the index for free, but will need a subscription to access details in records. Since the data here is based on the Drouin Genealogical Institute's Quebec parish record microfilms, it's highly accurate.

Drawing on all of those records, the creators have also compiled histories and biographies of Quebec's early families. Data is displayed in family group sheet format with links so you can navigate around family trees.

PRDH and Genealogy Quebec complement each other. PRDH has "reconstructed" family histories, while Genealogy Quebec has the original parish registers on which those histories are based. So if you subscribe to both, you can view the compiled family histories *and* the original sources.

## **BOOKS, JOURNALS AND MANUSCRIPTS**

### **9. Canadiana**

[www.canadiana.ca](http://www.canadiana.ca)

This huge collection includes digitized family and local history books, periodicals, manuscripts and government publications.

A Loyalist soldier in the Revolutionary War, my ancestor James Pennington served in a regiment called the Queen's Rangers and later settled in New Brunswick. A search on "*James Pennington*" (use quotation marks to search on a phrase) produces nearly 100 matches. But adding another search term, "*Queen's Rangers*," narrows the results down to just a few.

**tip**

Use Canadian genealogy websites in tandem to get the best results. For example, if a FamilySearch collection has excellent image resolution but is only indexed on Ancestry.com, find your ancestor's record using the Ancestry.com index. Then use the record's time and place to browse record images at FamilySearch.

One of them, an article in an issue of *The New Brunswick Magazine* from 1899, includes a transcript of a letter written from a jail in Reading, Pa., on 27 July 1780. Captured along with some of his troops by Washington's army, Sergeant Morris Haycock pleads for help from the Queen's Rangers quartermaster in New York. Haycock writes, "I with Jerry Ownings[,] John Stephens and James Pennington are here Prisoners of War greatly distressed for want of Necessaries..."

James Pennington had a son, Rev. William E. Pennington, who was a Freewill Baptist minister in New Brunswick. A search on his name as a phrase turns up just a few matches, including a book published in 1902, *History of the Baptists of the Maritime Provinces*. In addition to a lot of background information on the Baptists of New Brunswick, it has a detailed biography of William E. Pennington. It says that he was born in Queensbury, New Brunswick, in 1804 and ordained in 1832, and that he "organized a score of churches, and baptized more than a thousand converts."

In addition to names, search on topics related to your ancestors to find materials that might put their lives in historical context. A search on "*Queen's Rangers*" produces thousands of matches, one of which is a book by John Graves Simcoe, the commander of the Queen's Rangers. *A Journal of the Operations of the Queen's Rangers* gives a detailed chronology of the regiment's movements and the battles it fought in during the Revolutionary War.

These military histories can help answer persistent genealogy questions. A common problem with Loyalist genealogy, for example, is figuring out where the Loyalist lived before the war. Indeed, the earliest reference to James Pennington in muster rolls says that he was taken prisoner on 18 July 1778, but the record doesn't say where. But Simcoe's account says the regiment was located in Burlington and Monmouth Counties, N.J., in late June 1778, and at Kingsbridge, N.Y., on 15 July 1778. Maybe James Pennington enlisted at one of those places.

## LOYALISTS

### 10. The On-Line Institute for Advanced Loyalist Studies

<[www.royalprovincial.com](http://www.royalprovincial.com)>

The creation of Revolutionary War re-enactors Todd W. Braisted and John Korchok, this site has extensive resources for researching Loyalist ancestors. The Loyalists were those who served in a military capacity for the British during the American Revolutionary War.

The site includes transcriptions of muster rolls, land petitions and other records. Click on Search Our Site to investigate a name or topic. The site recommends you search on just a last name because given names in the records are often abbreviated or omitted.

A search on *Pennington Penington*, selecting "Match ANY word" to look for both spellings of the name, turns up just two matches. One, a muster roll of Captain Kerr's Company in the Queen's American Rangers, says that James Pennington was taken prisoner on 20 July 1779. So he seems to have spent considerable time as a prisoner of war!

Click on Military for a list of regiments, regimental histories and other records, as well as information on Black Loyalists and Loyalist uniforms and clothing. Click on Genealogy for hints on researching Loyalist ancestors.

## THE BIG FOUR GENEALOGY WEBSITES

### 11. Ancestry.com \$

<[www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com)>

You can search all of Ancestry.com's indexed record collections at once, but it's worthwhile to focus on those most relevant to your family history. From the main menu, click Search > All Collections, then Canada under Explore by Location. You'll find links for specific provinces, as well as a link for all of Canada. You can also search Canadian collections in the Card Catalog (Search > Catalog, then add a filter for Canada).



The collections here include decennial censuses from 1851 to 1921, plus special censuses of Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta (1906 and 1916) and Newfoundland (1921, 1935 and 1945). And “The Canadian Passenger Lists, 1865–1935,” <[www.ancestry.com/search/collections/1263](http://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/1263)> collection has digitized records of 2.2 million people arriving in Canadian ports.

Among the site’s vital records are digitized birth, marriage and death records for New Brunswick, Newfoundland, Ontario, Prince Edward Island, Alberta and Nova Scotia. Ancestry.com also imported more than 30 million indexed obituaries from Canadian newspapers, courtesy of its sister site Newspapers.com.

Those researching *Québécois* ancestors have extra reason to celebrate. The mostly-French “Quebec, Canada, Vital and Church Records (Drouin Collection), 1621–1968” <[www.ancestry.com/search/collections/1091](http://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/1091)> includes more than 16 million records, mostly from Catholic church registers but from other denominations, too. “Quebec, Canada, Notarial Records, 1637–1935” <[www.ancestry.com/search/collections/61062](http://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/61062)> also has more than 16 million records, including marriage contracts and wills.

## 12. FamilySearch

<[www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org)>

Select Records from the Search tab and click on Canada on the global map. Then select Canada from the popup. That takes you to the Canada search page, which has various research tools.

On the left are links to video courses covering Canadian census records, Quebec research and other topics. Below that, a link takes you to the article on Canada Genealogy in the Research Wiki <[www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Canada\\_Genealogy](http://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Canada_Genealogy)>. The free Research Wiki has links to articles on church, military, probate and other records, plus guides to research in the individual provinces.

On the right of the Canada search page, you’ll find a form to search all the site’s indexed historical records at once. Keep scrolling, and you’ll

find you can filter by record collection: census, church and vital records, etc.

Further down are the image-only historical records, including New Brunswick death certificates and British Columbia land grants. Yes, it may take a while to browse unindexed records, but you could make important discoveries in them. Likewise, the Catalog Material in the third section lists more resources, some of which have yet to be put online.

## 13. Findmypast \$

<[www.findmypast.com](http://www.findmypast.com)>

From the home page, you can limit your search by selecting Canada from the options in the Where box. Or you can browse through Canadian record collections by clicking Search at the top of the page, then All Record Sets. In the Filter By box, select Canada from the drop-down options. The collections are arranged by size, but you can sort them by a category, subcategory or name by clicking the respective heading.

Key Canadian record collections on Findmypast include census records from 1851 to 1911 and indexes to vital records and gravestones. You can also browse some unindexed records (marked with “Browse” in the title), such as Manitoba probate records and British Columbia estate files.

## 14. MyHeritage \$

<[www.myheritage.com](http://www.myheritage.com)>

To browse through the Canadian record collection titles, select Collection Catalog from the Research tab and Canada under Refine by Location. The collections are sorted by size, but you can sort them alphabetically or by the date they were last updated. Major collections include census records from 1851 to 1921, Quebec marriage records with images from 1926 to 1997, and vital records indexes for New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Ontario.

The site also has a large collection of historical newspapers. To search them, select Newspapers from the Research tab. Then, on the right, click on “Canada Newspapers, 1752–2007” for English-language newspapers or on “Canada, French Newspapers 1807–2007.”

Searching on the name of my ancestor William E. Pennington in the former, I get a match on an ad in the *Ottawa Daily Citizen* of 23 January 1886. A testimonial quotes Rev. Pennington in a product testimonial (“Ayer’s Sarsaparilla has

➤ If your ancestors passed through Canada on their way to the United States (but weren’t necessarily Canadian themselves), check out Sunny Morton’s article <[www.familytreemagazine.com/records/immigration/tracing-ancestors-via-canada-mexico](http://www.familytreemagazine.com/records/immigration/tracing-ancestors-via-canada-mexico)>.



19th-century harbor  
in Montreal

made a new man of me”) and notes it cured him of his “General Debility.” Coming from a man of the cloth, that should be a persuasive recommendation! (Never mind that Pennington had been dead for almost two years by the time that paper was published...)

## CONCLUSION

With so many historical records, books and newspapers now online, searching for your Canadian ancestors has never been easier. The big genealogy websites have plenty to offer, but don’t overlook the unique online offerings of archives, organizations and individuals. Take advantage of all the sites described here that might be relevant to your family history research. ●

**Rick Crume**, a contributing editor for *Family Tree Magazine*, has a website at <[www.onelibrary.com](http://www.onelibrary.com)>. He thanks David Gaboury for help with this article.

## Key Canadian Records

In the September 2016 issue of *Family Tree Magazine*, Kathryn Lake Hogan shared the best records and resources for Canadian genealogy research. Here are three highlights:

1. **Censuses:** Canada took a national census every 10 years starting in 1851, and individual provinces took their own enumerations as early as 1666.
2. **Passenger lists and border-entry records:** Your ancestors may have crossed the Canadian-US border for a variety of reasons: work, vacation or immigration. The government began keeping formal passenger lists and border-entry records in 1865.
3. **Civil registration:** Births, marriages and deaths were recorded at the provincial level. Start dates vary: the 1860s in some provinces, but the 1920s in others.

You can read the full list at <[www.familytreemagazine.com/heritage/canadian/11-resources-for-canadian-genealogy](http://www.familytreemagazine.com/heritage/canadian/11-resources-for-canadian-genealogy)>.



# Home

# Sweet

**Plan a trip to the old country that's both fun and informational with these seven steps for successful heritage travel.**

by NICOLE EVANS





# et Homeland



Oia (Ia) village  
on Santorini  
island, Greece





A trip back to an ancestor's homeland can be life-changing. There's a thrill that comes from walking your ancestor's street, standing in their church, or seeing their childhood home. Experiences such as these can't help but spark emotion, make you feel connected with your ancestors, and even re-affirm who *you* are.

One day in early 2018, my husband excitedly asked if I wanted to join some extended family touring Italy in a few months. I was skeptical, but he won me over by throwing in my number one bucket-list item—a family history trip to Greece.

For as long as I can remember, I've been fascinated by my Greek heritage. My half-Greek grandfather died a week before I was born. I never met him (or his Greek immigrant father), but I became obsessed with my Greek heritage and one day visiting the country.

If you're like me, you've dreamed up the heritage trip of a lifetime, traversing from one ancestral village to the next. So what's been stopping you? (Besides the COVID-19 pandemic, of course.)

One roadblock: Some people try to plan family history trips with *only* genealogy in mind. That's likely not realistic, especially if a spouse or some friends will be joining you. But creating a trip that mixes family research and family fun? That's a no-brainer that your travel partners will love.

Having a successful trip require careful preparation, especially if you need to make plans last-minute. Here are a few tips for making the most out of your heritage travel experience—including your limited research time.

## 1. KNOW YOUR PURPOSE

Is it taking in the sights? Gathering pictures for your records? Connecting with relatives who might still live in the area? Obtaining records from a local archive, religious institution or office? Whatever your "why" is, know it. Once you do, you can prioritize and plan accordingly.

My goal in Greece was to visit the churches my ancestors worshiped and (if possible) browse through church records. I also wanted to try to

connect with any living relatives in the area, and (more generally) absorb the culture of their villages and see how they lived.

With my purpose fully recognized, I determined my first priority was to attend the local Greek Orthodox Church in my great-grandfather's hometown so we could learn about the village and its customs. We also decided to hire a local genealogist (see No. 2) to hopefully make some introductions.

## 2. MAKE A PLAN

This is critical, even if you don't have much time to prepare. As we'll discuss, you never know what you'll find on a research trip—but careful planning puts you in the best position to accomplish your goals.

Our planning resulted in more than we could have hoped for, all thanks to our local guide. We hired a genealogist specializing in the area to help us navigate and make key introductions. Local genealogists can serve as guides and translators, helping you understand local customs, culture and access laws. Their focus on logistics will help you focus your time and energy on family history, making them well worth the expense.

Gregory Kontos, our local genealogist and founder of Greek Ancestry <[www.greekancestry.net](http://www.greekancestry.net)>, was able to introduce us to the local *papas* (supervising priest) after we attended a service in my ancestor's hometown.

The *papas* told us so many stories about the town's history. For example, he talked about how my great-grandfather sent money to the church to pay for new pews after he emigrated to the United States in 1914. Those beautiful, wooden pews were still in the church when we visited. Even now, the *papas* and congregation were grateful for that assistance and welcomed us with open arms.

And because Gregory advised us to change our itinerary so our visit was on a Sunday, we were able to network with the community. We were invited to an after-service lunch with the congregation, and the *papas* graciously pulled out





tip

It's never been easier to create videos or slideshows. Several apps allow you to edit recordings right from your mobile device, or you can save Powerpoint presentations that include images and videos as MP4 files.

Street view in Katarraktis-Leposi, Greece



**With the right mix of fun and family history, you'll be amazed at how the sights, culture, history and food make your ancestral connections come alive.**

his church records going back 80 years. Although they didn't contain any of my direct ancestors, it was amazing to see the history of the place my great-grandfather called home.

You may even find the town's history and lore carries on to the present day. The *papas* told us how, according to tradition, the apostle Luke visited their village. Their church (originally built in the 13th century) was named in his honor—as was my immigrant great-grandfather, Loukas. That legacy inspired us to name our own son Lukas (who said it was “pretty cool” when he learned where his name came from).

Planning to have a local guide will also open you to new and unexpected connections. In another ancestral village, we stopped to chat with Gregory at a local tavern. While he was showing us old pictures of who we thought was my great-grandfather, the tavernkeeper stopped over and recognized a young boy in the photo. He returned with a grown man that looked remarkably like my great-grandfather.

As it turned out, the man and I are distant cousins—and he still owns my great-great-grandmother's childhood home. By coincidence, he was hosting several extended family members that weekend, leading to an impromptu family reunion with all of us, full of Greek shepherd's pie, olive trees and a beautiful cliffside view.

Those magical moments of hearing family stories and being reunited with living cousins wouldn't have happened without a good plan and the help and research of a local genealogist.

### 3. RESEARCH BEFOREHAND

Do as much family history research as you can before the trip, so your time in the old country can be spent networking with living relatives and having memorable experiences (not confirming details you could have found at home). You'll also want to make sure the repositories and landmarks you want to visit will be open during your trip, and study any restrictions they might have.

Critically, you want to confirm the name of the town your ancestor came from. If possible, also learn:

- what profession your ancestor had
- what church they attended
- other places they lived or visited

Put all these locations on a map, and learn about what life might have looked like for someone with



their occupation. All of those details can serve as leads and potential stops on your trip.

Before you visit, make sure you get in touch with any known living relatives—especially elderly kin who have firsthand knowledge of the homeland. They might have contact information for cousins in the Old World.

For example, I learned from my great-uncle about a living relative in Athens and how to contact her through Facebook <[www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com)>. I reached out, and she happily agreed to have lunch with us during our visit. I learned some fun things that day: that my mom has a Greek doppelgänger (the similarities were uncanny!), and that one of our ancestors was a horse thief who fellow villagers always hid from the law.

Scouting out those living relatives can enhance your experience, so work ahead and set up meeting times. Family tree-building programs and social media platforms are great resources.

### 4. SEPARATE TOURIST AND RESEARCH DAYS

Divide time up between relaxing and work. (Your travel partners will thank you!) Be realistic, and



### tip

Monitor COVID-19 conditions in the area you plan to travel to, and follow guidelines recommend by health and government authorities when making plans. Even if the pandemic prevents you from traveling this year, take some time to plot out your dream trip all the same. Once the virus lifts, you'll be ready to get moving!

A cemetery in  
Katarraktis-  
Leposi, Greece

# How to Virtually Travel By Lisa Lisson

Physically traveling to an ancestral homeland or a city where ancestors lived is not always possible. Regardless of the reason one cannot travel (physical limitations, monetary limitations or a pandemic), technology allows genealogy researchers to “travel” the world and still connect with their ancestral roots. Experiencing an ancestor’s life sometimes requires a little “out-of-the-box” or creative thinking.

I share tips for virtually “traveling” from the comfort of your home in an article on FamilyTreeMagazine.com <[www.familytreemagazine.com/travel/travel-from-home](http://www.familytreemagazine.com/travel/travel-from-home)>. Here’s a quick peek:

## 1. Find places with Google Street

**View:** Street View from Google Maps <[maps.google.com](http://maps.google.com)> allows to be virtu-

ally transported to an address. You can turn left or right and even zoom in on a particular feature. The tool has its limitations, but being able to view an area—even one significantly different than it was historically—from multiple viewpoints can be a great advantage.

**2. Take virtual tours:** Landmarks and tour companies have found ways of bringing their experiences online. In fact, you can find virtual tours of cities, towns, museums and historic sites across the globe on YouTube <[www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com)> (which is easy to navigate). An internet search for *[location] + virtual tour* is a good place to start. You can also consult national visitor and tourism bureaus to view their offerings or recommendations.

**3. Cook family recipes:** Don’t overlook the power of food and its ability to enhance your virtual travel! A family’s culinary heritage is deeply rooted in its identity. Tasting and even cooking with the same flavors and foods of your ancestors is an excellent way to connect with past generations. Even if your family didn’t pass down any culinary traditions, look for dishes at sites such as Heritage Recipes <[www.heritagerecipes.com](http://www.heritagerecipes.com)> for inspiration, or find heritage cookbooks through booksellers, Google Books <[books.google.com](http://books.google.com)> or the Internet Archive <[www.archive.org](http://www.archive.org)>. You can also visit specialty markets to find traditional ingredients.



give ample time to your priorities while not overlapping them with “down” time. Keep travel time in mind as you plan, and don’t schedule activities too closely together. You don’t want to miss out on a living relative connection just to make a 1 pm castle tour!

We spent two days dedicated to the traditional Greek tourist spots, and another two days for my heritage journey. This satisfied my husband’s vacation goals while also helping me take in the history and culture of my ancestors. And when it came time to meet with my living relative in Athens on one of those research days, we scheduled the entire rest of the afternoon for that meeting, in case it went longer than planned.

Accept that this means you might not get to do all the things you planned. Talking with people and creating meaningful relationships takes time, and might make you miss out on something else. Likewise, unexpected travel delays or hours whittled away paging through old church records can easily eat away at your time, leaving some things unexplored.

## 5. EXPECT DISAPPOINTMENTS, AND BE FLEXIBLE

Maybe you can’t find that record after all, or maybe a cousin isn’t interested in connecting with you. Instead of sulking, move on to the next event. By holding on to what you *hoped* to achieve, you may miss out on things you can still do.

My dream of touring the inside of my great-grandfather’s childhood home wasn’t realized on that trip. The yard and home had a predominant displayed “beware of dog” sign, presumably meant to keep strangers away. (Even the church members encouraged us not to try, as the homeowners were known to not be friendly.) And all the living relatives in my great-grandfather’s village had since moved away, leaving us unable to form living familial connections there.

But I didn’t let those setbacks get me down. Instead, I focused on the unexpected positives from my trip. While standing in the dimly lit church, the *papas* told of the original medieval icons still displayed on the walls. The gold dust



If you want to keep your genealogy travel stateside, check out these five US destinations <[www.familytreemagazine.com/libraries-archives/5-top-genealogy-destinations](http://www.familytreemagazine.com/libraries-archives/5-top-genealogy-destinations)>.



Nicole Evans stands in front of her great-great-grandmother's childhood home in Katarraktis-Leposi, Greece

used in them sparkled across the room. We were given framed St. Luke portraits (copies of the wall icons) as gifts. No Wikipedia article could have told me about the beautiful history of that tiny church building in Kamenitsa, Greece—the same church my ancestors worshiped in.

Sometimes, you’ll find workarounds. I couldn’t find a single church record or gravesite for my great-grandfather and his family on my trip. However, the *papas* told us older records were sent years ago to the main church in a nearby city. I might not have had time to search for them myself, but my local researcher could at a later time.

## 6. TAKE LOTS OF PHOTOS, VIDEOS AND NOTES

While you of course want to be “in the moment,” it’s easy for memories to fade without reminders. Give yourself time to take in the sights and experiences, but also document your journey. Even quickly scribbled notes can prove immensely helpful later, once you’ve had time to process everything. There can never be too many notes, pictures or videos—your trip is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.





### tip

Finding a local researcher might not be as daunting as you think. A simple Google search with the place name and the word *genealogist* might do the trick. You can find directories of professional genealogy associations at Cyndi's List <[www.cyndislist.com](http://www.cyndislist.com)> or the Association of Professional Genealogists <[www.apgen.org](http://www.apgen.org)>. Local repositories may also be able to provide a referral.

I panicked when, during that first meeting with my relative in Athens, I didn't have any note-taking materials. I *needed* to record the stories and family relationships my relative was sharing with me. Fortunately, the restaurant's paper tablecloth and a loaned pencil were sufficient, and I snagged a quick snapshot of the tablecloth as I left.

And when that tavernkeeper made the family connection, I didn't have time to take notes. Fortunately, my husband hit the record button on our digital camera and captured the whole thing.

You don't want to rely on luck like I did! Pack recording materials (writing utensils, paper, a laptop, smartphone, camera, video recorder, chargers, etc.) and keep them on you at all times.

## 7. DOCUMENT YOUR TRIP

You'll cherish this trip for years to come, and even your descendants will appreciate the information you gathered there. So don't put off preserving memories from your trip.

Create a scrapbook, slideshow, video, blog or even social media posts about your journey. Add the photos, stories and newfound informa-

tion to online family trees such as Ancestry.com <[www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com)> and FamilySearch <[www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org)> (which has a dedicated Memories tool for such pieces of data). Also don't forget to share it with your own family— after all, this is *their* family, too.

Numerous services allow you to create inexpensive scrapbooks. Shutterfly <[www.shutterfly.com](http://www.shutterfly.com)>, Blurb <[www.blurb.com](http://www.blurb.com)>, or even Costco <[www.costco.com](http://www.costco.com)> or Walmart <[www.walmart.com](http://www.walmart.com)> are a few options. Most give the option to use one of their predesigned book templates or you can design your own. To cut costs, design the entire scrapbook, then wait for a good deal (like Shutterfly's 50%-off coupons) before ordering.

Your goal of traveling to your ancestor's homeland is achievable. With the right mix of fun and family history, you'll be amazed at how the sights, culture, history and food make your ancestral connections come alive. ●

---

**Nicole Evans** is an online BYU-Idaho Family History and Genealogy student and aspiring professional genealogist. When she isn't working on family history, you can often find her at a beach or with her nose in a good book.





**MEASURE TWICE, CUT ONCE**—that's the old carpenter's saying. And there's value in double-checking your genealogy research from time to time, too. Revisit your assumptions and determine if they're built upon solid facts and sources. In addition, new records are always being added to online databases, and you may need to update your research in light of new findings. Rick Crume wrote about strategies for "rewinding" your research in our May/June 2019 issue <[www.familytreemagazine.com/premium/rewinding-your-research](http://www.familytreemagazine.com/premium/rewinding-your-research)>. And DNA expert Diahan Southard weighs in on whether or not you should retake a DNA test on page 71. ●

# Cheaper by the Dozen

Who is the family of 12 in this photo, found in an abandoned home?



**1** Sue Kuruzovich found this photo (among others) in her grandmother's abandoned home. Let's start by counting the children: eight girls, plus two younger children in front who could be either boys or girls. That large family might match up to a known one in her tree, though it's possible not all of them are from the same set of parents. Perhaps a couple of them are grandchildren or cousins, or they were from different marriages.

**2** There are clusters of similarly dressed children—the two girls with sailor-collared bodices on the right are close in age, as are the two girls on the left in matching white dresses. Their clothes could indicate they're two sets of twins.

**3** The older girl on the left in the back wears a pouched shirt with a belt and a straight skirt, typical for circa 1903. The children's ages likely range from about a year to late-teens/early-twenties, giving them birth years from circa 1902 to circa 1883.

**4** If she can't place the family based on time period and number of children, Sue can look for resemblances in other images. The man has a long face and a droopy mouth, traits that would also appear in a more recent photo. It's quite possible that these children lived well into the 20th century, so there might be more photos of them.

**5** Photos are often gifts from one family to another, so (despite being found in Sue's grandmother's home) the photo doesn't necessarily show Sue's relatives. She'll need to consider a wider group of kin or friends. ●



**Maureen A. Taylor**  
is the author of  
*Family Photo Detective*  
(Family Tree Books).



**Q** How can I learn more about the life of an ancestor who was an indentured servant in Colonial Maryland in 1775?

**A** You can start by reading an excellent article by Margaret Kellow in the journal *Social History*, which explores indentured servitude in Colonial Maryland <[hssh.journals.yorku.ca/index.php/hssh/article/view/38469](http://hssh.journals.yorku.ca/index.php/hssh/article/view/38469)>.

You'll discover that your ancestor, indentured as late as 1775, was relatively unusual. By then, the growth of African slavery had outpaced that of English servants, whose primary work remained agricultural. And, by 1775, 50% of Maryland householders were not landowners; as tenant farmers, they lacked the means to afford servants.

Based on advertisements for runaway servants, most labored in rural areas. One observer described the plight of servants as being "worse than Egyptian bondage." A good example of a Maryland plantation is the Hampton National Historic Site, which has a page about the life of indentured servants there <[www.nps.gov/hamp/learn/historyculture/indentured-servants.htm](http://www.nps.gov/hamp/learn/historyculture/indentured-servants.htm)>.

You can read about records for tracing indentured servants and consult a database of names at <[www.pricegen.com/genealogy-learning-center/overseas-origins](http://www.pricegen.com/genealogy-learning-center/overseas-origins)>. Freed servants in Maryland received 50-acre "freedom dues," records of which may be found in deeds.

Land patents rewarding those who transported immigrants may also contain information on indentures. You can search "Settlers of

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Maryland, 1679–1783,” at Ancestry.com <[www.ancestry.com/search/collections/49058](http://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/49058)>. The Archives of Maryland has online land records at <[msa.maryland.gov/megafile/msa/speccol/sc2900/sc2908/html/land.html](http://msa.maryland.gov/megafile/msa/speccol/sc2900/sc2908/html/land.html)>.

Since servants were considered property for the length of their indenture, they may be listed in probate inventories. Browse these at FamilySearch <[www.familysearch.org/search/collection/1803986](http://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/1803986)> or search (up to 1777) a collection at Ancestry <[www.ancestry.com/search/collections/9068](http://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/9068)>. The state archives has its own index to Colonial probate records <[msa.maryland.gov/megafile/msa/stagsere/se1/se4/000000/html/index.html](http://msa.maryland.gov/megafile/msa/stagsere/se1/se4/000000/html/index.html)>.

### **Q How did our ancestors deal with the restrictions of the 1918 “Spanish flu” pandemic?**

**A** Much as in the COVID-19 pandemic 100 years later, government restrictions affected daily life in major ways. Bars, saloons, restaurants, theaters and schools were ordered closed. By the fall of 1918, seven cities across the country had mandated mask-wearing. Newspapers printed instructions for homemade masks, which had to be four layers thick.

Some got creative to make the most of masking. *The Daily Californian* in October 1918 reported, “A smartly-dressed shopper was seen on Chester Avenue today equipped with a gauze mask, only it was not made of gauze, and the germ arrester was tastefully decorated with bows drawn taut and attached back of her pink ears with ribbons.”

Though, also like the COVID-19 pandemic, not everyone embraced quarantines and mask-wearing. Penalties for violators ranged from \$5 to \$10 or 10 days in jail; on Nov. 9 alone, San Francisco officials arrested a thousand mask scofflaws.

According to Dr. Howard Markel, author of *Quarantine!* (John Hopkins University Press), organized resistance to mask-wearing was rare, but an “Anti-Mask League” did form to protest the mandates. Masks were derided as “muzzles” and “dirt traps” and said to give wearers pig-like snouts. In Los Angeles, celebrities and members of high society shunned masks because it was “horrid” to go unrecognized.

Suffragists also resisted wearing masks, seeing them as symbolic gags when they were demanding that their voices be heard. Instead they adopted social distancing: At the 1918 annual convention of the Illinois Equal Suffrage Association, chairs were set four feet apart, doors were closed to the public, and attendance was limited to 100 delegates.

Other public-health measures included streetcar signs in Philadelphia warning, “Spit Spreads Death,” and no-spitting ordinances in New York City. New Yorkers were urged not to kiss “except through a handkerchief.” ●



**David A. Fryxell** is the founding editor of Family Tree Magazine. He now writes and researches his family tree in Tucson.



Have a question you'd like David to answer? Email [FamilyTree@Yankeepub.com](mailto:FamilyTree@Yankeepub.com) with **Now What** in the subject line, and your question may be selected for a future issue.



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# Navigating USGenWeb Sites

**The USGenWeb Project** <www.usgenweb.org> has been a valuable online genealogy community for nearly 25 years. USGenWeb is a website of national scope and a portal to websites for all 50 states, which in turn are gateways to county-level websites. All of these sites are run by volunteers who have interest in those places and are dedicated to putting as much free local genealogy research and resources online as possible. Today, USGenWeb sites number in the thousands, all interconnected and free to use. Here's a quick tour of the site. Before long, you'll get a sense for why it's been one of *Family Tree Magazine's* Best 101 Websites many times over the years.

Sunny Jane Morton



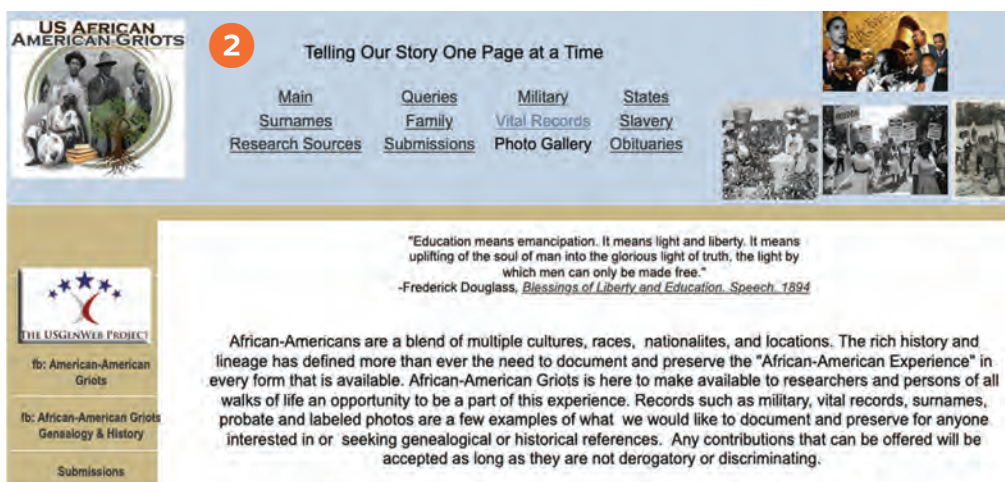
**1** Start your visit to the USGenWeb network at the home page. Under the Research menu, you'll see several different interesting topics that you could choose to explore. As you'll find, there are lots of "rabbit holes" to go down. Your challenge will be keeping track of where you are, and you may have to back your way out again after navigating to a particular place.

**tip**

Not all of USGenWeb's sites are active or have robust content, and their searchability and navigation can be dated. But these sites *do* have 25 years' accumulation of contributions and experts, so search around for whatever you can find.

**2** You can jump directly to state websites by clicking the map or selecting a name from the drop-down. Or you can look at projects with a more national scale under About Us > Special Projects. Pictured here is the African American GRIOTS project, which links to a variety of materials for those researching African roots. (We'll discuss two other options, the Archives and Tombstone Projects, later.)

**3** The main utility of USGenWeb is going to be these state-level websites. Because so much of our genealogy research in the United States is place-based and regional, this is a great way to organize information. We've clicked on Ohio here. Each state website will look different because they're all made by different volunteers, and they've been constructed at



See this full tutorial and watch a video walkthrough of USGenWeb at <www.familytreemagazine.com/websites/usgenweb-search-secrets>.



different times over the years. So you're going to find a variety of layouts, graphics, navigation and (crucially) published records and resources. Keep scrolling down the OHGenWeb page to find basic genealogical and historical information about the Buckeye State.

From the main menu, you can find a host of resources at the state and county level. From County Resources > Vital Records, I can access a nice table of when vital records began in each Ohio county. And the Queries tab links to Ancestry.com <www.ancestry.com> message boards for the state, where you can keyword-search for a topic of interest.

In the right column, you'll see a heading for Special Projects. These are national in scope, but the links here will take you to the state's subpage. The Tombstone Transcription Project for Ohio (for example) is organized by county, though each state's entry will have different

features and be organized in a different way. Click the link from the OHGenWeb page, then select a county to access a simple index of burials by cemetery. The records here aren't easily searchable or image-friendly as they would be on BillionGraves <www.billiongraves.com> or Find a Grave <www.findagrave.com>. But they may be valuable when you consider the tombstones may now be illegible or destroyed.

4 Another option under the Special Projects section is USGenWeb Archives, where you'll find several interesting categories of materials. Click a county to view the collection's holdings. You may find broken links or empty pages, but you may also strike gold. The entry for Hamilton County, for example, includes an extensive Maps project. ●



# Historical Map Websites



## 1 David Rumsey Map Collection

<[www.davidrumsey.com](http://www.davidrumsey.com)>

More than 100,000 items are now online at this popular website. Maps charting the growth of the United States are a particular strength. High-resolution images make it easier to read even fine markings; helpful tools allow users to view, analyze and compare items. The site's Georeferencer tool allows you to overlay historical maps on modern maps or other old maps.

## 2 Historic Map Works

<[www.historicmapworks.com](http://www.historicmapworks.com)>

More than 1.5 million digitized maps and illustrations, primarily for the United States, are searchable here. Free users can access high-resolution images on the site; see available overlaid versions via Google Maps; and even search for ancestors' names in property maps and directories. Subscribers may access a Premium Viewer that has additional features.



## 3 Library of Congress

<[www.loc.gov/maps](http://www.loc.gov/maps)>

Access more than 55,000 digitized maps for free in the Library of Congress catalog. About 90% of the online maps pertain to the 19th and 20th centuries. Look among these for an enormous collection of Sanborn fire insurance maps, Civil War maps, county landownership maps, and others that can help you understand the landscape of your ancestors' lives.

## 4 Perry-Castañeda Library Map Collection

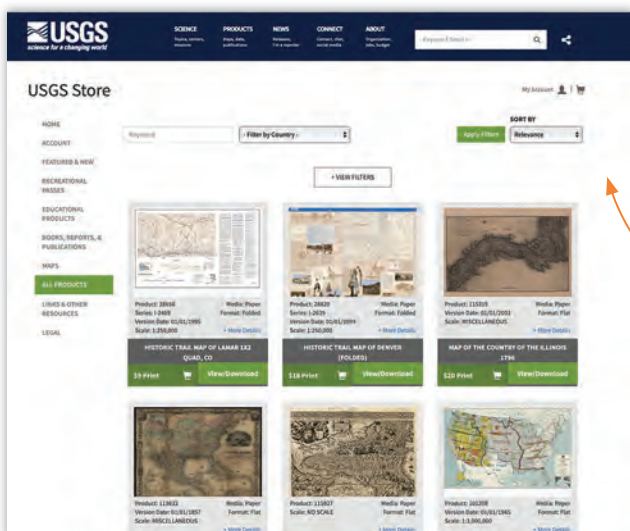
<[legacy.lib.utexas.edu/maps](http://legacy.lib.utexas.edu/maps)>

The University of Texas at Austin hosts this valuable collection of 70,000 digitized maps from the Perry-Castañeda Library (which holds more than 250,000 physical maps). Browse among historical, thematic, topographical and other types of maps from across history, the United States and the globe.

## 5 USGS Maps

<[www.usgs.gov](http://www.usgs.gov)>

Under Products > Maps, you'll find options for viewing a variety of maps in the collections of the U.S. Geological Survey. Buy or download current maps, topographic maps dating back to the 1880s, and aerial and satellite images. Scroll down on the Maps page for the Geographic Names Information System (GNIS) database, which you can search for place names that may not appear on modern maps.



# Retaking a Test



## Q Do I need to retake my DNA test?

**A** My dad was always an early adopter of technology. I was the first of my friends to have satellite TV, the first to move from Beta to VHS, and the first to own a Nintendo. But this “first-to-the-plate” mentality can have some drawbacks, as something newer and better always seems to come along.

This, in some ways, has been true for genetic genealogy. When autosomal DNA testing first hit the direct-to-consumer market in 2007, the DNA markers tested were from an off-the-shelf, one-size-fits-all kind of DNA test. The markers weren't developed to investigate genetic ancestry, but for completely different purposes.

Once the DNA tests started rolling in, companies invested serious R&D in order to figure out which of the DNA markers currently being tested should stay on the “chip” (the program upon which the test is based), and which new ones should be added. By now, most of the companies have customized the product to better meet their goals: telling test takers where we come from and who we are related to. And each of the companies does so a bit differently.

But what happens to your test results when the company changes their chip, as both AncestryDNA <[www.ancestry.com/dna](http://www.ancestry.com/dna)> and 23andMe <[www.23andme.com](http://www.23andme.com)> have done? For the most part (thanks to smart people and algorithms), you don't have to do anything. Your data can still be compared with tests on the newer versions of the chip, and you'll get new DNA relatives and updates to your ethnicity report, free of charge.

How is that possible? The companies use a process called imputation, in which, based on the vast amounts of genomic information from throughout the world, they take your current data and predict what your values would be at the places they *didn't* test.

For a more concrete explanation: Think of those games circling the internet where you're challenged to read sentences that have a bunch of missing letters. Most people can most of the time, because the human brain is very good at imputing data—filling in the missing pieces based on previous knowledge. DNA testing companies do the same thing when they upgrade their chip, or when they're processing data you've asked them to transfer between sites.

This has been true for AncestryDNA's only chip upgrade, as well as for 23andMe's first four upgrades. However, 23andMe is asking its customers to pay to upgrade to version 5 (V5) if they want to continue receiving updates. Most of the affected features are health- or trait-based. But 23andMe claims V5, which costs \$99 to upgrade to from the V4 chip, will also offer the most recent updates to Ancestry Composition. (In my opinion, it's unclear if you *need* the upgrade to access the latter.)

So should you retest? At first blush, my answer is “No.”

*But*—even though I trust the science of imputation as far as I have been able to study it—I can't help but have questions about their methodology. So I'm going to make my *official* answer “No—but it can't hurt!” ●

**Diahan Southard**



# the rest is **history**



**The Sun's rays** seemed to be destitute of heat throughout the summer; all nature was clad in a sable hue.

An 1852 article in the *Albany Almanac* looks back at **1816, the Year Without a Summer**. That year, temperatures across the Northern Hemisphere plummeted, leading to unseasonably cold weather, crop failures and food shortages. Ash, dust and sulfur dioxide from the eruption of Mount Tambora in Indonesia (which reached its climax on 10 April 1815) lowered global temperatures and disrupted weather patterns around the world for years. According to legend, the first edition of 1816's *The Old Farmer's Almanac* predicted "rain, hail and snow" for New England in July. Amid public outcry, the publisher recalled copies of the almanac to correct the "error"—only to be proven right.



Learn more about "Eighteen Hundred and Froze to Death" and other historical weather events <[www.familytreemagazine.com/history/the-weather-report](http://www.familytreemagazine.com/history/the-weather-report)>.

# 7 Tips to Find Your Birth Family



**1 LOOK FOR PAPER RECORDS FIRST.** Scour records and letters in your adoptive family's home for mentions of when or where you were born and adopted. Consult adoption agencies and registries to see what information they may have about your biological parents. Learn state laws governing adoptees' access to birth records, and request any available birth information from the state. This may give you the name of your birth parents. Finally, register your search on Adopted.com <[www.adopted.com](http://www.adopted.com)>. (Your state may have its own registry.)

**2 TEST YOUR DNA.** Genetic genealogy has opened up new possibilities for those of unknown parentage. Autosomal DNA tests can show you basic information about your ethnic origins, and other test takers with whom you share an ancestor (your "DNA matches"). If you find a relatively close match, such as second cousins or closer, consult that person's family tree (or contact him or her directly) to identify your potential shared ancestors. Then research the couple's descendants for people in the right place and time to be your parents.

**3 UNDERSTAND THE BASICS OF DNA.** Study the biology behind DNA testing for a realistic understanding of what genetic tests can tell you about your birth family. Knowing DNA inheritance patterns also will help you determine how you're related to genetic matches.

**4 UPLOAD YOUR DNA TO MULTIPLE TESTING COMPANIES.** By putting your DNA data in multiple databases, you're opening yourself up to more possible matches. You might test with Ancestry DNA <[www.ancestry.com/dna](http://www.ancestry.com/dna)> and/or 23andMe <[www.23andme.com](http://www.23andme.com)>, then upload your results to

MyHeritage DNA <[www.myheritage.com/dna](http://www.myheritage.com/dna)>, Family Tree DNA <[www.familytreedna.com](http://www.familytreedna.com)> and Living DNA <[www.livingdna.com](http://www.livingdna.com)>. Third-party services like GEDmatch <[www.gedmatch.com](http://www.gedmatch.com)> let you compare your results with those who've uploaded from other sites, and offer additional analysis tools.

**5 SEARCH ONLINE FAMILY TREES.** Thanks to sites like Ancestry.com <[www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com)>, more and more genealogists are uploading their genealogy information into online family trees. Compare others' trees against your own birth family research. Online trees aren't independently verified, so you should always fact-check them and look for sources—but they can still provide useful clues.

**6 CREATE A STRATEGY FOR CONTACTING POTENTIAL RELATIVES.** Adoption research can reveal affairs, sexual assault and other unexpected, disturbing or even traumatic events. Before contacting a potential birth relative, take care to prepare yourself for reactions ranging from joy to denial to hostility. Then reach out with a general question, such as "It looks like we match at a second-cousin level. I don't know much about my great-grandparents. What are your great-grandparents' names?" As you and the match become more comfortable, disclose more details about your search.

**7 RECORD YOUR MATCH'S FAMILY TREE BEFORE MAKING CONTACT.** Experienced adoption researchers advise taking screenshots of a key DNA match's profile, family tree and any shared matches before contacting that person. If the match isn't interested in aiding your research, he or she may remove information from the site or block you from seeing it.



# HOW ARE YOU RELATED TO DNA MATCHES?

Autosomal DNA testing companies look at the amount of DNA you and a match share, measured in centimorgans (cM), to give you an estimate of your relationship. This chart expands on those estimates to help you more closely determine how you and a match are related.

Your DNA testing service provides the amount of shared cM between you and a match. In the "Average Percentage" column below, find the number nearest to your shared cM. The Relationship column shows the likely relationship(s). Other relationships are possible, though, as shown in the "Range" column. For example, if you share 900 cM with someone, possible relationships include first cousins, half-aunt/uncle and half-niece/nephew, great-grandparent/great-grandchild, and great-aunt/uncle and great-niece/nephew.

The closer the relationship, the more useful the match will be in your genealogy search. For example, second cousins share great-grandparents. If you have a second-cousin match, find the person's great-grandparents in his family tree. Then research that couple's descendants—one of them may be your birth parent.

A given relationship, such as first cousins, can share varying amounts of DNA because of the recombination, or "shuffling," that occurs at conception. You usually share about 850 cM with a first cousin, but that number could be as low as 396 or as high as 1,397 cM.

Average shared cM*	Average percentage of shared DNA**	Relationship	Range of shared cM***
3,400	50%	Parent/child	2,376–3,720
2,600	50%	Full sibling	1,613–3,488
1,700	25%	Half sibling	1,160–2,436
		Aunt/uncle/niece/nephew	1,201–2,282
		Double first cousin	2,209–3,384
		Grandparent/grandchild	984–2,462
850	12.5%	First cousin	396–1,397
		Half-aunt/half-uncle/half-niece/half-nephew	492–1,315
		Great-grandparent/great-grandchild	485–1,486
		Great-aunt/great-uncle/great-niece/great-nephew	330–1,467
425	6.25%	First cousin once removed	102–980
		Half-first cousin	156–979
		Half-great-aunt/half-great-uncle/half-great-niece/half-great-nephew	184–668
212.5	3.125%	Second cousin	41–592
		First cousin twice removed	33–71
		Half-first cousin once removed	62–469
106.25	1.56%	Second cousin once removed	14–353
		Half-second cousin	10–325
		First cousin three times removed	25–238
		Half-first cousin twice removed	16–269
53.13	0.78%	Third cousin	0–234
		Second cousin twice removed	0–244
26.56	0.391%	Third cousin once removed	0–192

\*AncestryDNA, MyHeritage DNA, Living DNA and Family Tree DNA provide shared DNA in centimorgans (cM).

\*\*23andMe and MyHeritage DNA provide shared DNA as a percentage.

\*\*\*According to the Shared cM Project, a study of cMs shared by known relatives. For more information, see <[www.dnainter.com/tools/sharedcmv4](http://www.dnainter.com/tools/sharedcmv4)>.

# TYPES OF DNA TESTS

## Autosomal DNA

### What it tests

22 non-sex chromosome pairs (called autosomes)

### What it can do

- Locate genetic matches
- Help determine biological relationships
- Estimate your ethnicity
- Assist with DNA triangulation

### Testing companies

- 23andMe
- AncestryDNA
- Family Tree DNA
- LivingDNA
- MyHeritage DNA

### Key points

- **Autosomal DNA tests inform you about all your ancestors** within about the past five or six generations, male and female. This makes autosomal DNA useful for adoptees.
- **It's the most popular type of DNA test.** AncestryDNA alone has 15 million DNA profiles in its database. The bigger the database, the more likely you are to find a match.
- **This test provides you with a list of matches**—people with whom you share an ancestor. Use your match list when searching for your birth family.

## X-DNA

### What it tests

Genes on the X chromosome

### What it can do

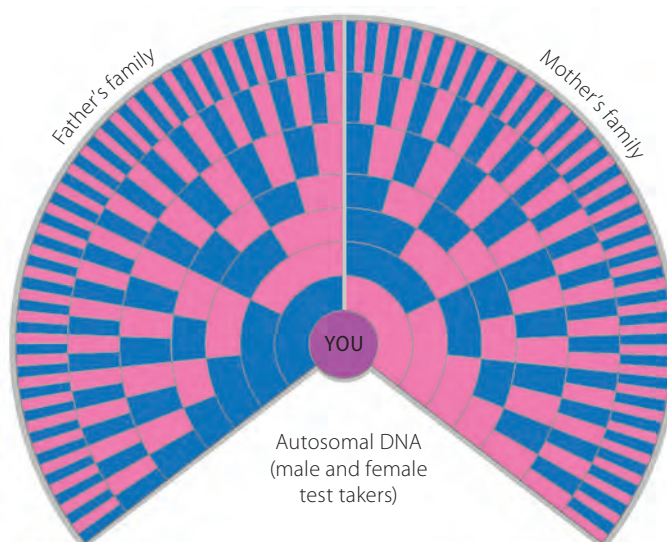
Help determine how you're related to a match

### Testing companies

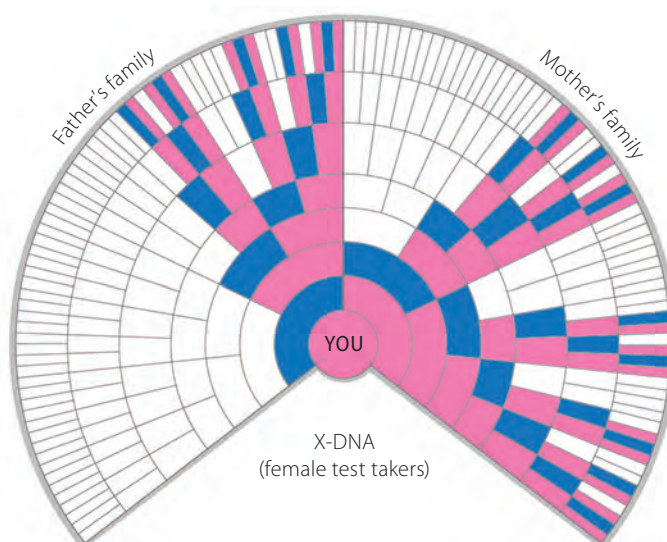
Those offering autosomal DNA testing

### Key points

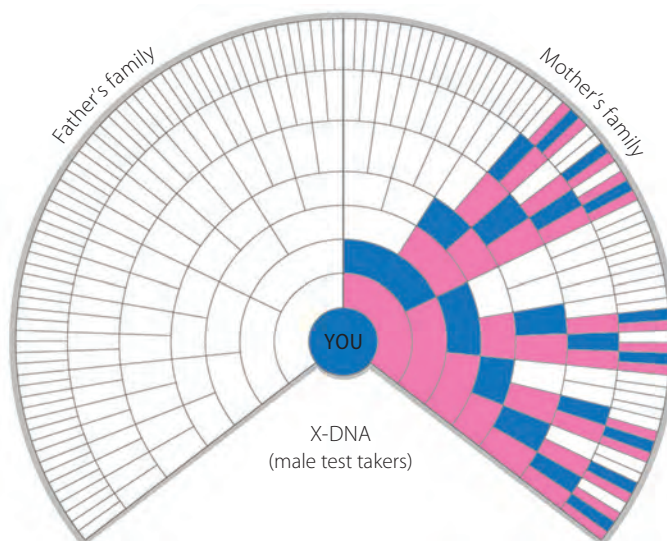
- **X-DNA data is part of autosomal DNA testing**, not a separate test. Only Family Tree DNA reports when you match someone on the X chromosome.
- **To find X matches using results from other testing companies**, upload your autosomal test results to the DNA analysis site GEDmatch <[www.gedmatch.com](http://www.gedmatch.com)>.
- **X-DNA has a complex inheritance pattern**, which you can use to narrow down your relationship to someone you match on the X chromosome. Women receive two X chromosomes, one from each parent. Men have only one X chromosome, received from the mother. The charts at right show potential ancestral contributors of X-DNA for a female test taker (top) and a male test taker (bottom).



Autosomal DNA can reveal information about any of your ancestors, regardless of your (or their) gender.



X-DNA inheritance is different for women (above) and men (below).





# Mitochondrial DNA

## What it tests

Genetic material in the cell's mitochondria

## What it can do

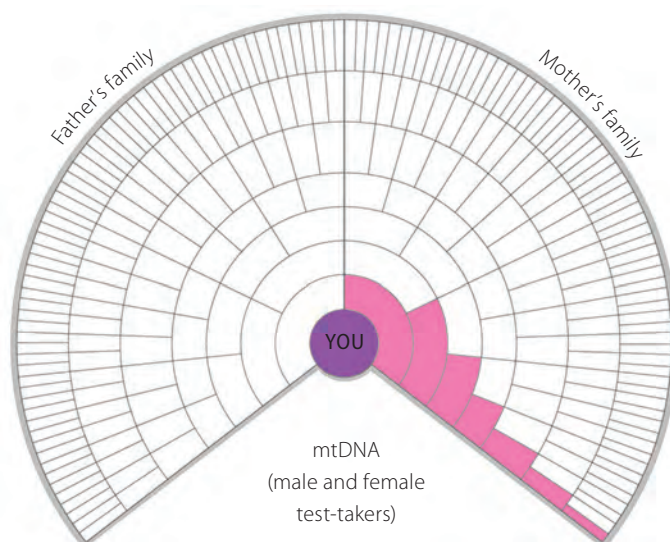
- Determine whether two individuals share a common maternal ancestor (but not who the ancestor is)
- Identify the mtDNA haplogroup (a broad genetic population group)

## Testing company

Family Tree DNA

## Key points

- **mtDNA is passed from a mother to her children**, both male and female. As a result, it informs you about your maternal line: mother, mother's mother, mother's mother's mother, etc.
- **It reveals ancient ancestry.** mtDNA mutates rarely, meaning that the ancestor you share with your mtDNA match may have lived thousands of years ago. For this reason, mtDNA isn't usually helpful when searching for unknown parents.



mtDNA testing provides genetic information about the maternal line, regardless of the test taker's gender.

# Y-DNA

## What it tests

Genes on the Y chromosome

## What it can do

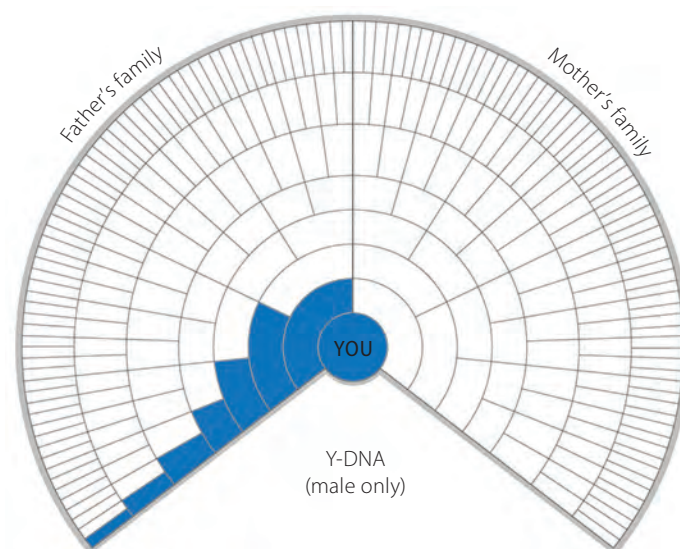
- Determine whether two men share a common paternal ancestor
- Identify the Y-DNA haplogroup

## Testing company

Family Tree DNA offers a range of Y-DNA tests to examine different numbers of markers. Y-67, for example, tests 67 locations on the Y-DNA chromosome. The more markers, the more informative the test.

## Key points

- **Y-DNA is passed from father to son** (just as surnames are in many cultures). As a result, Y-DNA can help you learn about your paternal line: father, father's father, father's father's father, etc.
- **Only males have Y chromosomes.** Women who want to learn about paternal ancestry through Y-DNA testing must test a known male relative born with the surname of interest (brother, father, father's brother, etc.).
- **Note matches' surnames.** For each Y-DNA match, you'll get an estimate of how long ago the shared ancestor lived. Testers seeking their birth fathers should pay attention to frequently occurring surnames in matches' family trees.



Men can use Y-DNA testing to learn about their paternal line.

# ADOPTION REGISTRIES AND RESOURCES BY STATE

Adoption registries are among the most useful resources for discovering your biological family members. Some are operated by private agencies, while others are run by volunteers.

Still others are operated by state governments. Depending on the state, you could receive medical or psychological information about your birth parents.

The links on the pages that follow are to state resources, either adoption registries or pages dedicated to those seeking adoption records. The links are subject to change, but you can generally reach out to your state's health department for more information or to inquire about birth or adoption records.

## Alabama

<[www.alabamapublichealth.gov/vitalrecords/adoption-information.html](http://www.alabamapublichealth.gov/vitalrecords/adoption-information.html)>

## Alaska

<[dhss.alaska.gov/dph/vitalstats/pages/default.aspx](http://dhss.alaska.gov/dph/vitalstats/pages/default.aspx)>

## Arizona

<[www.azdhs.gov/licensing/vital-records/index.php#adoption-home](http://www.azdhs.gov/licensing/vital-records/index.php#adoption-home)>

## Arkansas

<[www.healthy.arkansas.gov/programs-services/topics/adoption-file-requests](http://www.healthy.arkansas.gov/programs-services/topics/adoption-file-requests)>

## California

<[www.cdss.ca.gov/adoptivee-information](http://www.cdss.ca.gov/adoptivee-information)>

## Colorado

<[cdphe.colorado.gov/adoption](http://cdphe.colorado.gov/adoption)>

## Connecticut

<[portal.ct.gov/dph/vital-records/adoptions-and-foreign-births](http://portal.ct.gov/dph/vital-records/adoptions-and-foreign-births)>

## Delaware

<[www.dhss.delaware.gov/dph/ss/files/adopted.pdf](http://www.dhss.delaware.gov/dph/ss/files/adopted.pdf)>

## Florida

<[www.adoptflorida.org/reunionregistry.shtml](http://www.adoptflorida.org/reunionregistry.shtml)>

## Georgia

<[www.ga-adoptionreunion.com](http://www.ga-adoptionreunion.com)>

## Hawaii

<[www.courts.state.hi.us/docs/1FP/1FP767.pdf](http://www.courts.state.hi.us/docs/1FP/1FP767.pdf)>  
<[www.courts.state.hi.us/docs/1FP/1FP770.pdf](http://www.courts.state.hi.us/docs/1FP/1FP770.pdf)>

## Idaho

<[healthandwelfare.idaho.gov/services-programs/birth-marriage-death-records/registries](http://healthandwelfare.idaho.gov/services-programs/birth-marriage-death-records/registries)>

## Illinois

<[www.dph.illinois.gov/topics-services/birth-death-other-records/adoption](http://www.dph.illinois.gov/topics-services/birth-death-other-records/adoption)>

If you know what agency facilitated your (or your ancestor's) adoption, reach out to the organization or its successor to see if it has its own set of records. Even an index can give you valuable information if the full original record isn't available.

## Indiana

<[www.in.gov/isdh/20371.htm](http://www.in.gov/isdh/20371.htm)>

## Iowa

<[dhs.iowa.gov/adoption-records](http://dhs.iowa.gov/adoption-records)>

## Kansas

<[www.dcf.ks.gov/services/pps/pages/adoption-records-and-search.aspx](http://www.dcf.ks.gov/services/pps/pages/adoption-records-and-search.aspx)>

## Kentucky

<[www.kyadoptions.com/adoptees.html](http://www.kyadoptions.com/adoptees.html)>

## Louisiana

<[www.dcf.louisiana.gov/page/116](http://www.dcf.louisiana.gov/page/116)>

## Maine

<[www.maine.gov/dhhs/ocfs/cw/adoption/reunionregistry.htm](http://www.maine.gov/dhhs/ocfs/cw/adoption/reunionregistry.htm)>

## Maryland

<[dhr.maryland.gov/adoption/search-contract-and-reunion](http://dhr.maryland.gov/adoption/search-contract-and-reunion)>

## Massachusetts

<[www.mass.gov/how-to/apply-for-a-pre-adoption-birth-record](http://www.mass.gov/how-to/apply-for-a-pre-adoption-birth-record)>

## Michigan

<[www.michigan.gov/mdhhs/0,5885,7-339-73971\\_7116\\_7125---,00.html](http://www.michigan.gov/mdhhs/0,5885,7-339-73971_7116_7125---,00.html)>

## Minnesota

<[www.health.state.mn.us/people/vitalrecords/adoption.html](http://www.health.state.mn.us/people/vitalrecords/adoption.html)>

## Mississippi

<[www.adopteerightslaw.com/mississippi-obc](http://www.adopteerightslaw.com/mississippi-obc)>

## Missouri

<[dss.mo.gov/cd/adoption/adoption-information-registry.htm](http://dss.mo.gov/cd/adoption/adoption-information-registry.htm)>

## Montana

<[dphhs.mt.gov/vitalrecords/contacts](http://dphhs.mt.gov/vitalrecords/contacts)>

## Nebraska

<[supremecourt.nebraska.gov/sites/default/files/CC-17-7.pdf](http://supremecourt.nebraska.gov/sites/default/files/CC-17-7.pdf)>



## LEVELS OF INFORMATION

Some state organizations may only be able to give you “nonidentifying” information related to an adoption case, designed to balance each party’s privacy with a right to know the details of birth and/or adoption. Though laws vary, an adult (age 18 or over) adoptee can generally access nonidentifying information from the state upon written request, but identifying information often requires both parties’ consent. Here’s a rundown of each:

### Nonidentifying Information

Details about a case that do not include the parties’ names, such as:

- Date and place of the adoptee’s birth
- Notes about the adoptee’s general health and history
- Ages of the birth parents
- Descriptions of birth parents: race, ethnicity, physical characteristics, medical history, level of education
- Reason for the adoption

### Identifying Information

Details that could lead to a positive identification of the adoptee, the birth parents, or other the relatives, such as:

- Names
- Addresses, past or present
- Employment records

### Nevada

<[dcfs.nv.gov/Programs/CWS/Adoption/Guide/NVAdoptionReunion](https://dcfs.nv.gov/Programs/CWS/Adoption/Guide/NVAdoptionReunion)>

### New Hampshire

<[www.dhhs.nh.gov/dcyf/adoption/adoptees.htm](https://www.dhhs.nh.gov/dcyf/adoption/adoptees.htm)>

### New Jersey

<[www.nj.gov/health/vital/adoption](https://www.nj.gov/health/vital/adoption)>

### New Mexico

<[www.nmadoptionsearch.com/procedure](https://www.nmadoptionsearch.com/procedure)>

### New York

<[www.health.ny.gov/vital\\_records/adoption.htm](https://www.health.ny.gov/vital_records/adoption.htm)>

### North Carolina

<[www.ncdhhs.gov/divisions/social-services/child-welfare-services/adoption-and-foster-care/frequently-asked-questions](https://www.ncdhhs.gov/divisions/social-services/child-welfare-services/adoption-and-foster-care/frequently-asked-questions)>

### North Dakota

<[www.nd.gov/dhs/services/childfamily/adoption/disclosure.html](https://www.nd.gov/dhs/services/childfamily/adoption/disclosure.html)>

### Ohio

<[odh.ohio.gov/wps/portal/gov/odh/know-our-programs/vital-statistics/Adoption-File-Information](https://odh.ohio.gov/wps/portal/gov/odh/know-our-programs/vital-statistics/Adoption-File-Information)>

### Oklahoma

<[www.ok.gov/health2/documents/VR\\_openadoptionrd.pdf](https://www.ok.gov/health2/documents/VR_openadoptionrd.pdf)>

### Oregon

<[www.oregon.gov/dhs/children/adoption/Pages/registry.aspx](https://www.oregon.gov/dhs/children/adoption/Pages/registry.aspx)>

### Pennsylvania

<[www.adoptpakids.org/Documents/PAIRBrochure.pdf](https://www.adoptpakids.org/Documents/PAIRBrochure.pdf)>  
<[www.health.pa.gov/topics/certificates/Pages/Adoptions.aspx](https://www.health.pa.gov/topics/certificates/Pages/Adoptions.aspx)>

### Rhode Island

<[www.health.ri.gov/records/for/adultadoptees](https://www.health.ri.gov/records/for/adultadoptees)>

### South Carolina

<[www.southcarolinaadoptions.com](https://www.southcarolinaadoptions.com)>

### South Dakota

<[dss.sd.gov/childprotection/adoption/registry.aspx](https://dss.sd.gov/childprotection/adoption/registry.aspx)>

### Tennessee

<[sos.tn.gov/products/tsla/how-do-i-find-adoption-records](https://sos.tn.gov/products/tsla/how-do-i-find-adoption-records)>

### Texas

<[www.dshtexas.gov/vs/reqproc/adoptionregistry.shtm](https://www.dshtexas.gov/vs/reqproc/adoptionregistry.shtm)>  
<[www.dfps.state.tx.us/Child\\_Protection/Adoption/Adoption\\_Registry/default.asp](https://www.dfps.state.tx.us/Child_Protection/Adoption/Adoption_Registry/default.asp)>

### Utah

<[adoptionregistry.utah.gov](https://adoptionregistry.utah.gov)>

### Vermont

<[dcf.vermont.gov/vt-adoption-registry](https://dcf.vermont.gov/vt-adoption-registry)>

### Virginia

<[www.dss.virginia.gov/files/division/dfs/ap/intro\\_page/guidance\\_procedures/records.pdf](https://www.dss.virginia.gov/files/division/dfs/ap/intro_page/guidance_procedures/records.pdf)>

### Washington (state)

<[www.doh.wa.gov/LicensesPermitsandCertificates/VitalRecords/Adoptions](https://www.doh.wa.gov/LicensesPermitsandCertificates/VitalRecords/Adoptions)>

### Washington, DC

<[www.dcd.uscourts.gov/adoption-petitions](https://www.dcd.uscourts.gov/adoption-petitions)>

### West Virginia

<[www.wvdhhr.org/bcf/policy/adoption/Adoption\\_Policy.pdf](https://www.wvdhhr.org/bcf/policy/adoption/Adoption_Policy.pdf)> (sections 13.1 to 13.4)

### Wisconsin

<[dcf.wisconsin.gov/adoption/search](https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/adoption/search)>

### Wyoming

<[health.wyo.gov/admin/vitalstatistics/adoptions](https://health.wyo.gov/admin/vitalstatistics/adoptions)>

# REQUESTING BIRTH CERTIFICATES

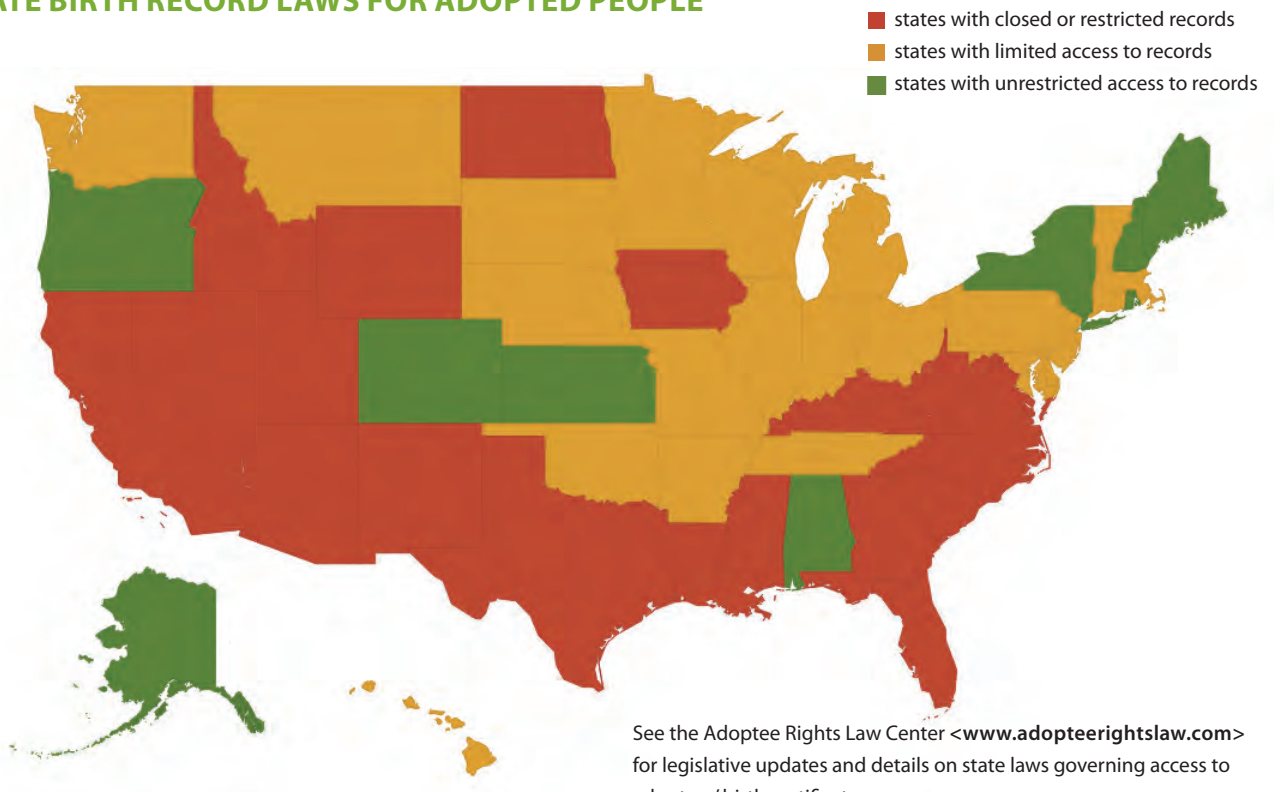
Aside from DNA and home sources, the most reliable set of records available to adoptees are birth certificates created by state governments. While not always 100-percent complete or accurate, birth certificates provide details critical when searching for birth families: the child's original name, name of the mother (and sometimes the father), and place and date of birth.

Unfortunately, each state has its own laws about what records are available to the public, who is eligible to request them, and how one can submit a successful record request.

Some states have open records, meaning anyone can request them. But in other states, only documented family members can request certificates. You may even need a court order to obtain them in some states. To make matters more confusing, legislators can change these laws over time to be either more or less restrictive.

For the latest state-by-state info on adult adoptees' legal access to their birth records, see the American Adoption Congress at [www.americanadoptioncongress.org/state.php](http://www.americanadoptioncongress.org/state.php).

## STATE BIRTH RECORD LAWS FOR ADOPTED PEOPLE



See the Adoptee Rights Law Center <[www.adopteerightslaw.com](http://www.adopteerightslaw.com)> for legislative updates and details on state laws governing access to adoptees' birth certificates.

## HANDLING VITAL RECORD BRICK WALLS

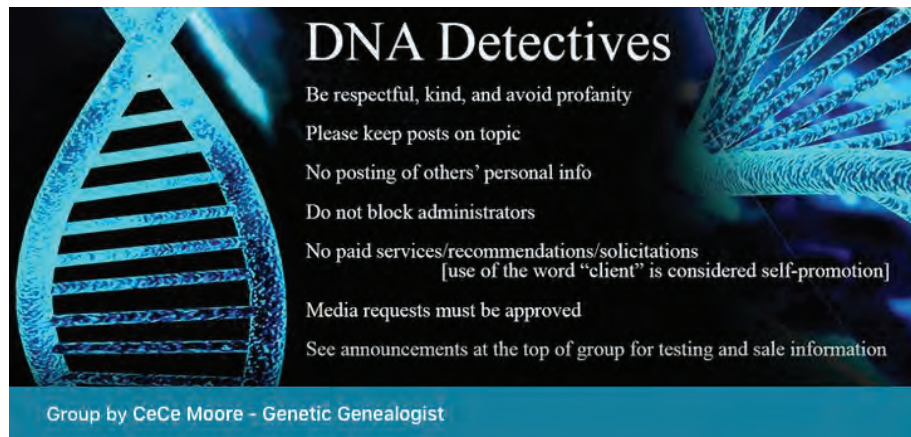
If stringent state laws or record-loss events are keeping you from accessing an original birth certificate, try these workarounds:

- **Carefully study the law.** Look for loopholes. Perhaps a particular family member or professional (such as an attorney) can write for records on your behalf. Or maybe you can access an “uncertified” copy of a record that still contains the basic information you seek.
- **Look for church records.** Your ancestor’s congregation may have kept records of birth or a milestone such as baptism, and these documents can contain the same information as would a legal birth certificate. In fact, religious records pre-date those kept by the government in many parts of the United States, and generally aren’t subject to the same privacy rules.
- **Find other record substitutes.** Likewise, non-vital records (such as censuses, city directories, newspaper announcements and obituaries) can sometimes contain vital information or ancestral names—particularly if you’re researching historical adoptions. Relatives’ tombstones and memorial entries at sites like Find a Grave <[www.findagrave.com](http://www.findagrave.com)> can also provide unexpected details about family members.
- **Search social media and third-party websites.** Coupled with online family trees, these tools can help you find information about living people—including those you suspect to be birth relatives.



# DNA Detectives: Search Angels Among Us

Overwhelmed by the task of finding your birth family? Consider consulting the DNA Detectives <[www.facebook.com/groups/DNADetectives](http://www.facebook.com/groups/DNADetectives)>, a Facebook group of volunteers who specialize in helping adoptees and others of unknown parentage. These “search angels” can help you interpret your DNA results and identify potential relatives. The group’s founder, genetic genealogist CeCe Moore, is perhaps best known for her DNA consulting work on the PBS series “Finding Your Roots with Henry Louis Gates, Jr.” Learn more about Moore at <[www.thednadetectives.com](http://www.thednadetectives.com)>.

A banner for the DNA Detectives Facebook group. On the left is a glowing blue DNA double helix. On the right, the text 'DNA Detectives' is written in a large, white, serif font. Below it, a list of group rules is displayed in a smaller white font. At the bottom, a dark blue bar contains the text 'Group by CeCe Moore - Genetic Genealogist' in white.

**DNA Detectives**

- Be respectful, kind, and avoid profanity
- Please keep posts on topic
- No posting of others' personal info
- Do not block administrators
- No paid services/recommendations/solicitations  
[use of the word "client" is considered self-promotion]
- Media requests must be approved
- See announcements at the top of group for testing and sale information

Group by CeCe Moore - Genetic Genealogist

## RESOURCES

### Websites

#### **Adopted.com**

<[www.adopted.com](http://www.adopted.com)>

#### **Adopted Reunion Registry**

<[registry.adoption.com](http://registry.adoption.com)>

#### **Adoptee Rights Law Center**

<[www.adopteerightslaw.com](http://www.adopteerightslaw.com)>

#### **Adoption.com**

<[www.adoption.com](http://www.adoption.com)>

#### **The ALMA Society**

<[www.almasociety.org](http://www.almasociety.org)>

#### **The American Adoption Congress**

<[www.americanadoptioncongress.org](http://www.americanadoptioncongress.org)>

#### **DNA Detectives Facebook group**

<[www.facebook.com/groups/DNADetectives](http://www.facebook.com/groups/DNADetectives)>

#### **DNAAdoption.com**

<[www.dnaadoption.com](http://www.dnaadoption.com)>

#### **FindMe.org**

<[www.findme.org](http://www.findme.org)>

#### **G's Adoption Registry**

<[www.gsadoptionregistry.com](http://www.gsadoptionregistry.com)>

#### **International Soundex Reunion Registry**

<[www.isrr.org](http://www.isrr.org)>

#### **QuickBase Adoption Database**

<[adoptiondatabase.quickbase.com/db/bbqm94vvd](http://adoptiondatabase.quickbase.com/db/bbqm94vvd)>

#### **Reunion Registry**

<[www.reunionregistry.org](http://www.reunionregistry.org)>

#### **Search Squad Facebook group**

<[www.facebook.com/groups/searchhelpers](http://www.facebook.com/groups/searchhelpers)>

### Books

***The Adoptee's Guide to DNA Testing*** by Tamar Weinberg (Family Tree Books)

***Adoption in America: Historical Perspectives*** edited by E. Wayne Carp (University of Michigan Press)

***The Family Tree Guide to DNA Testing and Genetic Genealogy*** by Blaine T. Bettinger (Family Tree Books)

***Finding Family: My Search for Roots and the Secrets in My DNA*** by Richard Hill (Familius)

***The Ultimate Search Book: U.S. Adoption, Genealogy & Other Search Secrets*** by Lori Carangelo (Genealogical Publishing Company)

### DNA Testing Companies and Analysis Sites

#### **23andMe**

<[www.23andme.com](http://www.23andme.com)>

#### **AncestryDNA**

<[www.ancestry.com/dna](http://www.ancestry.com/dna)>

#### **DNAGedcom**

<[www.dnagedcom.com](http://www.dnagedcom.com)>

#### **Family Tree DNA**

<[www.familytreedna.com](http://www.familytreedna.com)>

#### **GEDmatch**

<[www.gedmatch.com](http://www.gedmatch.com)>

#### **LivingDNA**

<[www.livingdna.com](http://www.livingdna.com)>

#### **MyHeritage DNA**

<[www.myheritage.com/dna](http://www.myheritage.com/dna)>