



# -Searching for Your Ancestors-

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## Discover a Place—Leave a Legacy

Genealogy is the study of family history. Tracing your own family's history is a journey of discovery that can be as exciting as hunting for treasure and as satisfying as solving a puzzle. Clues in the information you already have will help lead you step-by-step to new facts and revelations on each generation. The search is fun and fascinating. The results will help you understand the past and leave an extraordinary gift for future generations.

### How to begin

Start with yourself. The best process is working from the present to the past—from the known to the unknown. Recording information on a pedigree or ancestor chart will help you organize what you already know. This chart gives you a “map” of your family—the dates and places of important events, and the relationships of direct ancestors.

### Explore home sources

After you have filled in the ancestor chart as completely as you can, look for home sources that may give additional information. Newspaper obituaries, memorial cards from funerals, or documents such as birth, marriage, and death certificates can all provide more names, places and specific dates—important clues for the next steps in your research. Remember to record the additional details that might be found in yearbooks, military papers or old letters. These are important clues and will make your history more interesting.

### Interview family members

A very good way to complete parts of your pedigree chart as well as gather great stories about your family is to interview family members. Relatives often recall people, places, and events that you never knew or about which

you were uncertain. Some may be able to provide more exact dates for you as well as pictures and other heirlooms. Remember to ask open-ended questions—those that can't be answered with a simple yes or no. Often a picture or family treasure taken to an interview will help sharpen memories and enhance responses.

### Use library sources

Visit your local library—in person or on the Internet. In Fort Wayne, Indiana the Allen County Public Library has one of the largest collections of genealogical research materials in the United States. Useful sources include records from across the United States, Canada, the British Isles, and Europe. You can find numerous indexes and transcriptions of area records, and copies of censuses, family histories, cemetery inscriptions, ship passenger lists, and military sources just to name a few.

Librarians specializing in history and genealogy are always available to help you in Fort Wayne and at other libraries. When planning to visit a library virtually or in person, the better prepared you are, the more success you will have. Bringing a pedigree or ancestor chart, with as much data recorded on it as possible, helps librarians and specialists better assist you.

### Beginning Your Search

- ▶ Start with yourself
- ▶ Record data on a pedigree chart
- ▶ Explore home sources
- ▶ Interview family members
- ▶ Read a good “how-to” book
- ▶ Consult census & vital records as well as family histories
- ▶ Explore useful sites on the Internet



# Searching for Your Ancestors...Online

## www.acpl.info

### Using the Internet

The Internet is one of the greatest tools available to genealogists for finding data and networking with others doing the same research. From indexes to research guides, from collections of digitized documents to complete online libraries, there is a tremendous amount of data on the web for genealogists to explore.

One of the best ways to become familiar with what is available is to visit some of the larger sites, use subject-based or directory sites, and experiment with popular search engines like Google, Yahoo, and MetaCrawler.

### Large Genealogy Sites

**www.Ancestry.com** offers the largest collection of databases of any genealogy site on the Internet with over two billion names searchable in its data files. Indexes, abstracts, and digitized documents can be found on this site. Most all census indexes and images are available. While a subscription site, a number of data files are available here without cost.

**www.HeritageQuestOnline.com** offers researchers over 26,000 full-text family and local histories online as well as many census records. While available only through libraries, it is important to check for its periodical index [PERSI] and scanned books.

**www.FamilySearch.org** has a large name database that includes indexes to many records worldwide as well as transcriptions from 1880s census records for the United States, Canada, and England. Other online files include the Ancestral File, the International Genealogical Index, the Pedigree Resource File, and a Vital Records Index. The Family History Library Catalog lists microfilm sources that can be borrowed from that library. Often overlooked are the excellent Research Guidance and Research Helps sections of this website.

**www.USGenWeb.org** represents a nation-wide effort by volunteers to index, transcribe, abstract and digitize genealogy and local history information from around the country. Arranged by state, and within each state by county (or parish in the case of Louisiana), this site can provide indexes to and images of cemetery records, school records, tax and census records, and family histories, as well as links to other resources.

### Subject and Directory Sites

**www.CyndisList.com** is one of the better-known sites for genealogists. This quick loading, easily searched site provides access to more than 240,000 genealogy links. The site can be searched by topic, record type, ethnic group, and geographic location.

**www.GenealogyPortal.com** is designed to help genealogists find information not easily available through traditional genealogical link sites. There are eight separate search engines in five categories: ancestors or families, census or vital records, local histories/collections, research help, and genealogical products/services.

**www.GenHomePage.com** provides links to several thousand genealogy sites. The first sixteen general links lead to more specific links.

### Other Useful Sites

**www.RootsWeb.com** is the oldest and largest free genealogy site with links to getting started pages, search engines and databases, mailing lists and message boards, tools and resources such as Roots-L Library and a soundex converter, as well as hosted volunteer projects. It is a great site to explore for links to other useful data.

**www.loc.gov/global/library/statelib.html** takes you to a Library of Congress website with a link to all the state libraries in the country. State libraries are excellent sources



of online data and are great repositories of published data including newspapers. The websites of state libraries often contain links to the public libraries in their respective states.

**www.coshrc.org/arc/states.html** links you to a list of all fifty state archives websites. State archives are rich repositories of data—both online and in textual form at their facilities. You can find databases of military records, special enumerations, land records, and some institutional records

**www.usgennet.org/socadmin** links you to state and local genealogical and historical societies. Information gleaned from visiting genealogical and historical society websites can range from research aids and catalogs of holdings to searchable data files and digitized images of county and state records.

### Search Engines...

Google is one of the most popular and useful search engines for genealogists. In using Google or any other search engine, it is a good idea to explore the advanced features that can assist with Boolean searching. Also, take time to explore other specialized search engines that can provide different but useful results. Some search engines offer phrase searching, exact word matches, and other special tools. Be sure to check the help screens for efficient searching.

Whether researching online or in printed materials, always be sure to record and evaluate the source of any information you use.