

# 6. Free Genealogy Resources on the Web

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There are many free genealogy resources available on the web. Be cautious of online pedigree linked databases because they come from submitted sources and may not be true. Original records should always be sought for verification.

## General Search Strategies

- Have a specific goal or problem to solve
- Obtain copies of all records for the person and his/her extended family
- Browse by categories or search for specific collections
- Use filters to refine
- Create a timeline
- Check for alternate spellings
- Expand your search area
- Use cluster research for record of friends, associates and neighbors
- Contact your relatives to collaborate research
- Take a DNA test

## Some tips

- Search for records for a whole family
- Check when record collections start – you might not find a record because it wasn't kept at that time
- Boundaries change over time – know when you are searching and where, records are filed by where they were recorded at that time
- Not all records are on FamilySearch and Ancestry.com – sometimes you have to search locally by contacting courts or hiring someone to get the records you need
- If you have an idea where someone is buried but no proof, call the cemetery and ask if they can check to see if your person is buried there. Most will check free of charge and some will send you copies of the records for free or minimal cost
- Track census records for each person on the family group records - elderly parents often live with children, especially if widowed

## FamilySearch

Web address: [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org)

FamilySearch is a great site to use and has a wealth of information. If you ever get lost click on the family search logo in the top left corner and it will return you to the home page. My favorite resources to use here include:

- Historical Records
  - Click on SEARCH tab at the top. Click on “BROWSE ALL PUBLISHED COLLECTIONS” <https://www.familysearch.org/search>
  - Scrolling down to view the collections or click the state link on the left.
  - Select the database you want and then type in the name of the person you want to find.
  - Don't enter too many details or you won't get many search results. If your person does not come up, try nicknames or abbreviations etc. by using the filters on the side.
  - If it has BROWSE IMAGES instead of a number, then you need to search page by page to find who you want. Many of these collections have an index at the beginning of the records to aid you in your search.
  - These are constantly being added to, so check back often to see what's new.

- Catalog
  - Under the SEARCH tab—then click CATALOG
  - <https://www.familysearch.org/search/catalog>
  - For localities select from the drop-down menu, PLACE NAMES and then type in the location you want. Remember that in the US most records are filed on the county level not the city or church level as in other countries.
  - The catalog provides you with resources that are available on microfilm or digital. Click on the collection you want and see if there is a camera icon next to the collection to view it digitally.
  
- Wiki
  - Click on SEARCH—then click WIKI
  - [https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Main\\_Page](https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Main_Page)
  - This provides help and links to databases worldwide for whatever topic or country you are researching
  - There are language guides, maps, and many other resources here
  - Type in the locality or topic you want and then start exploring
  - For example if you want more information on how to do German research, type in Germany. <https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Germany> You can click on the topics on the right side of the page or the localities as you scroll down.

## Google Translate

Web address: <https://translate.google.com>

This website provides free translation from many different languages. You can copy and paste or type in text into the search box and select the language you want it translated into or you can paste websites into the text box and have whole pages translated into another language. For those who have smart phones, you can download the Google Translate App and use it to translate text using the camera on your phone. Hover your phone over the printed text from a different language and see it translate the words immediately.

## US GenWeb

Web address: [www.usgenweb.org](http://www.usgenweb.org)

A free site arranged by the states within the USA. Click on the state you want then find the county list and click on the county. This site was created as a centralized place where people can **submit** their family data, post indexes to records for the specific county, provide history and maps on the area and many other things specific to that county. Information therein varies from county to county. Some sites include records such as biographies, histories, maps, census records, vital records, links to other researchers, message boards, etc. Some have tombstone images or indexes. Researchers are always encouraged to submit info and scans of original documents to these sites. Most have links or addresses to the genealogical, historical, and other major repositories for the area.

## Find-A-Grave

Web address: <http://www.findagrave.com> (search by name)

Web address: <http://www.findagrave.com/cemetery> (search by cemetery name)

Find-A-Grave is a site to find memorial for people buried. Most entries are for cemeteries or individuals in the United States, although there are memorials for people who were cremated or whose bodies are not interred for whatever reason. The entries can be searched by the individual's name or by cemetery. Some people's given names are just initials so be creative in searching for them. Memorials can be transferred to you if you request it, and you are a closer relation than the person maintaining the memorial. Parents and spouses can also be linked by using the edit tab. Sometimes you will find obituaries, death certificates and photos of those in the database.

## Billion Graves

Web address: <http://billiongraves.com>

This is another free cemetery website that has tombstone images of deceased individuals. It has different entries than Find-A-Grave and contains GPS coordinates for those buried. It's really helpful to see who is buried near the person you want and to visually see where in the cemetery your person's stone is located.

## Historical Maps

Web address: <http://publications.newberry.org/ahcbp>

This website from the Newberry Library in Chicago has free historical maps that can be used to help you understand what the county boundaries looked like for a specific date versus the current county boundaries.

Web address: <http://mapofus.org>

The site can be used to find maps for locations in the United States. Click on the state you want and then scroll down to the interactive map. Choose the date to see what the map looked like at that time. You can also choose to see maps for the specific census years. For more historic maps scroll down to the links at the bottom of the state page to be redirected to the applicable websites.

## Newspapers

Web address: <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov>

Contains free historical newspapers for many states and counties. Also useful to find what newspapers exist for a specific locality to help you track down the original copy or microfilm.

## Census Records, Military & Books

Web address: <http://archive.org>

Contains many free resources from the government such as census, military and historical books, journals and records. Use the browse feature under the TEXT tab to find the topic needed. Select the topic. On the left under the box titled "View the Book" select PDF to download it to your computer.

## Other Resources

### State Archives

State Archives contain a wealth of information. They may contain records such as vital records, state census records, photo collections, naturalizations, newspapers, etc. Each state's collection differs. You'll need to check their catalog to see what records they have preserved.

### Genealogical or Historical Societies

Sometimes these are separate entities while other times they are combined. Make sure to check for both at the local and state level. The information they have will not be the same and you want to check each to make sure you find everything for your person. Historical societies often have newspapers, photos, and other historical collections for the locality while genealogical societies have more about families and records related to finding them such as abstracts and indexes. Both organizations know where the records are kept in their locality and are useful to find out more. To find which society exists in your location go to [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org) and click on SEARCH then choose WIKI. Type in your location (Country or State), then choose the subcategory (County). Scroll down until you get to the section about genealogical and histories societies and libraries. You should find the name of the organization as well as their contact information and, if applicable, their website and email address.