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Getting started with hints

10 tips to start your family history journey

20 family history resources

5 tips for searching US census records

10 steps to move beyond the census

20 things to do when you are stumped

Free resources at findmypast

Explore our records

Who

First name	Last name
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> name variants	<input type="checkbox"/> name variants

When optional

Born
YYYY
-/+ 2yrs

Where optional

United States & Canada
Enter a location

Search

10 tips to start your family history journey

Follow these tips on how to find family history without having to browse multiple ancestry sites to build your family tree. Our genealogy experts compiled advice to get you started with your family search and answer some of the most asked family history questions.

1. Start your family tree

Your immediate family often holds the key to starting your family history research. Record the memories of your parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, siblings, and cousins as you start exploring your family tree online. Ask each relative about specific individuals and gather details surrounding their lives including nicknames, places they lived, vital information (including birth, marriage, and death dates), occupations, and other important clues. Enjoy a free questionnaire below to get started with your family history.

Download a questionnaire to interview your relatives.

2. Search your home for scrapbooks

Family scrapbooks often yield important clues for family history research. Examine your home for vital records (birth certificates), school records, family bibles, diaries and letters, old photographs, and memorabilia boxes that tell stories about your family.

3. Start with the family history basics

Use your initial research for your first searches and then analyze your results to achieve a personal success strategy. Following the family history golden rules will help you become a more efficient researcher and hopefully lead to greater rewards in your family search. We discuss how the Census records can help you in Step 7.



4. Start your online family tree

Build your online family tree to organize your results. Keeping your research and records organized is important as you continue to find new details related to your family. Enter important information, including names, dates, and places to build a solid foundation as you continue exploring your family history.



Build your family tree with our online family tree builder

5. Start with a family story

When building your family tree, identify a potential story about family that you are interested to begin exploring. Aim to uncover both newspaper archives and records relating to your family's stories in your research.

Stories can include military service (such as exploring World War I military service records), occupational stories (memories of a first paycheck or time spent as a Merchant Marine), educational memories (attending high school or college) or a family legend (being descendant from a prominent individual in American history or confirm stories of a renegade ancestor with detailed criminal records).

6. Join the family history conversation

Join a network of family historians both experienced and new on social networking resources (like findmypast's Facebook and Twitter) to make new connections and gain insight on how to expand your family history resources.

Staying tuned to the findmypast.com blog for latest record updates and podcasts to help expand your family history search. Read genealogy articles and watch youtube videos related to family history to start building your knowledge base of records and methods for tracing your family tree.

7. Search the U.S. census

The U.S. Federal census is the largest resource for family history and is a solid starting place for examining your family tree. Starting with the newly released 1940 US census, trace parents and grandparents through the census, recording their names, ages, birthplaces, immigration details, occupations, and residences as you build out your family tree.



Search the US Census starting in 1790.

8. Search one family story at a time

Focus on one or two families at a time to help organize your research and increase your productivity. Select one or two families that interest you, rather than trying to tackle your entire family tree at once. Spend time gathering information and documenting your family in small pieces as you work towards the larger goal of filling out your family tree.

Learn how to then "connect the dots" by following family members on their journey to America through the U.S. census, passenger lists and naturalization papers.

9. Gather materials from relatives

Your relatives will likely have important resources in their homes that can assist your search. Family bibles, letters, certifications, and other important materials might be only a phone call away. Some family members might have old genealogical information from other relatives who have also worked on the family history that can help jumpstart your search.

10. Find a Family History Society

Connect with other genealogists and family historians through a local genealogical society or family history event in your area. You can also post questions to findmypast's facebook online for others to answer when you need help with your research. Attending local classes about family tree research, family history records, and how to avoid brick walls is an important step to finding answers for beginners and advanced genealogists alike.

Visit the Federation of Genealogical Societies (FGS) Society Hall to find a family history society in your area.



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20 family history resources

1. Census Records

For more than 300 years the world's nations have kept a count of their population on a regular basis. From the United Kingdom to the United States, census records are an essential tool for family history research.



The first United States census performed was in 1790 and with little exception is available for research every ten years thereafter up to the 1940 census (released on April 2, 2012). Census records often include the names of all members of a household, their ages and birthplaces, and other important information.

2. Birth, Marriage and Death Records

Birth, marriage, and death records (otherwise called vital records) are key tools for anyone searching their family tree. The United States keeps its vital records by state (no nationwide index exists). In most cases, vital records were recorded from the 1880s to the present, though there are some exceptions.



Some states, such as Massachusetts began officially recording vital records in 1841, though birth, death, and marriage records exist from the state dating from 1620. Birth, marriage and death records can be accessed through findmypast's online collections:

- US vital records
- The Irish birth, marriage and death records
- Extensive United Kingdom Life Events
- Australia and New Zealand's Life Events records

3. Family History Stories

In many cases terrific and unique sources for family history exist in your own home – or in the homes of relatives family bibles, letters, diaries, and other materials might be stored on bookshelves or in attics and contain priceless information. Obtaining copies of these materials is an important part of your research.

In many families a distant relative might have worked previously on the family tree and might have these (and other) materials close at hand, so make sure you reach out to the extended family for help in your research.

Download a questionnaire to interview your relatives.

4. Newspapers

Newspaper archives offer a glimpse into the day-to-day lives of our ancestors. Notices of births, engagements, marriages, deaths, and obituaries are often included within their pages. Early newspapers

from all over the world captured the pulse of the time and reflected the beliefs of the people. Learn about your ancestor's hobbies, work accomplishments, community involvement, bizarre community tales and how major historical events affected local communities.



See also U.S. and World Newspapers, our collection of British Newspapers, the Australasian Newspapers, Directories, and Social History Records and Irish Newspapers, Directories and Social History Records.

5. Military Records

From the colonial times to the present day our ancestors have often taken up arms to protect themselves, their family, and their nation. Records from World War I, World War II, the Vietnam War, Korean War, US Army Casualty File, and other conflicts offer untold resources for family history.



Search World War I Draft Registration Cards

Enlistment records can include information on birthdates and birthplaces, while also providing a clear physical description of an ancestor. People with UK ancestry will want to search British Army records and Irish Military Service records, which also include detailed information documenting an ancestor's life, including their military service, family, and occupation.

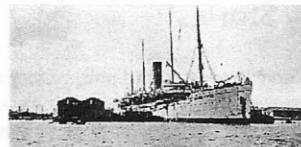
6. Church Records

The religious affiliations of a family offer important clues for researchers. For the most part churches kept their own records, usually by parish or congregation. Confirmation, marriage, and burial registers for many of the world's churches exist and can be used for family history research.

Nations with one recognized state religion often offer a wider range – such as with Australasian or Ireland sources – of church records. Other records found within church registers include minutes, diaries, and other administrative records that provide a unique and personal look at our ancestors.

7. Passenger Lists

Tracing the arrival of an ancestor to the United States is an important project for family historians. While passenger lists were not widely kept during the colonial times, many historians and other researchers have worked to reconstruct these lists. On the contrary, Outbound passenger lists leaving the UK are comprehensive sources to find ancestors from all reaches of the world travel to new homes and new opportunities in the U.S., Canada, UK, Ireland, Australia, New Zealand and beyond.



The majority of immigrants to the U.S. came through the port of New York (New York (Castle Garden and Ellis Island) though thousands others came through other major ports such as Baltimore, Boston, New Orleans, Philadelphia, and San Francisco. View U.S immigration records on findmypast.

8. City Directories

Directories for cities, towns, and counties offer a wealth of information for family historians including addresses, occupations, and other details. Local advertisements for various services including local blacksmiths, auctioneers, doctors, and more provide a glimpse at the lives of our ancestors. City

directories can also sometimes include religious and political affiliations, marital status, and other personal details not found in other sources.

9. Court and Prison Records

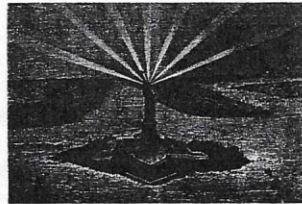
Records from the nation's courts are important resources for family history. Whether your ancestor was a plaintiff, defendant, witness, or juror member court records can play a key role in research. Other key materials found within court records include adoption, guardianship, name changes, and divorce records. Multiple courts (including county, municipal, federal, and state) exist throughout the United States and each provides their own unique set of records to search.



Criminal records for crimes small and large add vivid detail to a family tree. Search Crime, Prisons and Punishment for extensive family history from England and Wales. Also explore findmypast's exclusive Irish Petty Sessions order books, which deals with minor infractions that touched many people's lives dating from 1828 to 1912.

10. Immigration and Naturalization Records

Starting in 1790 the United States allowed immigrants to the country to become naturalized citizens. Though the process has changed over the years, naturalization records still remain a fundamental resource for tracing your family history. While the process was difficult, these records can include detailed information relating to an individual's arrival in the United States, include the date and ship used. Other personal information can include the birthdate and birthplace, the town and country of origin, names of relatives or other acquaintances.



View these Immigration and Travel to the U.S. records on findmypast:

- Irish Famine Immigrants, 1846-1897
- Italians to America, 1855-1900
- Germans to America, 1850-1897
- Russians to America, 1834-1897

11. Photographs and Scrapbooks



Photographs and other memorabilia are important resources for those researching their family history as they provide a personal "look" into the lives of our ancestors. For example, the clothing and furniture in a photograph can yield clues regarding someone's occupation or trade, place of origin, or other details. Albums and other collectible items are often treasured and passed down to family members through the years.

12. Oral Histories

Living relatives are a rich source for family history materials. While their stories can provide names, dates, and relationships – they often provide a unique personal perspective of an individual. Recording and sharing the memories of living relatives is an essential source for anyone pursuing their family history.



Listen to our modern take on oral histories with the findmypast's podcast, which explores family history topics, tricks and stories to dig deeper in your family history search.

13. Workhouse and Union Records

Records which detail the daily activities of an individual can be key to identifying relationships, missing dates and places, and in exploring the lives of our ancestors. These family history records include the records of businesses, union records, poorhouses, and workhouse organizations.

See United Kingdom Education and Work records for information on apprentices, the merchant navy, workhouse and other records that depict your ancestors' daily lives.

14. Tax Records

Taken on a frequent basis, tax records are important for researchers. As some tax lists were taken each year, they are often used as a substitute when census records have been lost or destroyed. Many of our ancestors paid real and personal property taxes, as they were taxed for any land they owned (real property) as well their livestock, equipment, and other items (personal property).

See the Dorset Hemp and Flax Growers and the Land Tax Billingham, Sussex collection.

15. Cemetery Records

Tombstones often include birth and death dates of our ancestors. Therefore cemetery listings are important tools for genealogists. As some tombstones have been lost or destroyed, historical cemetery transcriptions can provide important information not available anywhere else. Other information found in cemetery records includes names of spouses or children, countries of origin, religious affiliations, military service, and other personal details.

Search the Australian record collection Victoria Burials and Memorials.

16. Compiled Genealogies

Starting in the 1850s thousands of family histories have been published containing millions of names, dates, stories, and interest connections. Many of these genealogies focus on a specific surname – or immigrant to the United States – and trace their descendants throughout the United States and the world. While many of these publications require verification against other records (such as vital records) they provide an important starting point for many interested in family history.

17. Wills and Probate Records

Wills provide a goldmine for anyone researching their family history and are often used to link generations together and identify other siblings or children of an ancestor. If an ancestor died without writing a will (intestate) probate courts were charged with identifying and locating their heirs, leaving a trail of information useful to every family historian.

Other wills and probate records include estate inventories, often listing furniture, clothing, books, and other possessions in a household and guardianship records, which document any court-appointed guardians for underage children of the deceased.

18. Land Records

Records which detail the sale and transfer of property hold important clues for genealogists. Land records can often document the relationships between two individuals, or be used to tell individuals with the same name apart from one another. Deeds, often found in local courthouses document the transfer of property between two parties and are an excellent "first step" when looking for land records relating to an ancestor.

Visit findmypast's Australasian Census, Land and Surveys records, which include patents, grant, and bounty land collections.

19. Local Histories

Often covering specific towns or counties, local printed histories offer a vast array of genealogical and historical information. Some publications include sections of family sketches and can include information not readily found in other sources. Other chapters might include details on local churches, cemeteries, military heroes, early settlers, and other relevant facts.

20. Funeral Home Records

While not widely available online, the records of funeral homes and mortuaries often provide unique tidbits for family history researchers. Copies of obituaries, funeral programs, and lists of relatives are often found within these materials. Records are sometimes passed on when a business closes and can be available to examine when researching onsite.

Search the Queensland and Victoria funeral notices on findmypast.com.

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5 tips for searching US census records

Computerized records can often be a blessing and a curse. The availability of digitized images online is a far greater convenience when compared with traveling hundreds or thousands of miles to their point of origin. If, however, a transcription or other error hides your record from view, it can leave you scratching your head trying to figure out what to do next.

When searching census records online, there are some special techniques you can employ to help find even the most stubborn hidden ancestors.

1. Can't find Grandma? Look for someone else!

If you've conducted a thorough search of the census index for a given year, but keep coming up empty, turn to your family group sheets for help. Did your ancestor have a sibling with an unusual or uncommon name? It will likely be much easier for you to find Melvin than Mary. Gender doesn't matter, as long as the ages were close enough so you can reasonably expect to find them living under the same roof. Try using one or more uncommon given names and then scan the results looking for siblings that match the person you're truly after.

Your pedigree charts include only the names of your direct-line ancestors, so you will have to consult family group sheets or other notes to select from the names available.

2. Search without a name

In some instances, you'll be surprised with the combination of errors which might result in your ancestor hiding in plain sight. The name may be transcribed exactly as it appears in the historical record, but the census enumerator may have written the name incorrectly years earlier. If you have strong additional evidence for a person, but still cannot locate them in a particular census, try your search using everything except the name.

In other words, use location, gender, age, relationship, and place of birth to filter out names that don't match so you can view those that do. Searching a particular state, county, and city/township for a 12-year old son born in Virginia already narrows your pool of results.

If you receive a large number of results, add one or both parent's names to help narrow your selection even further. If you receive too few results, remove the parents and add the name of one other person who was likely living as a member of the household. This technique will take some practice and you will have to carefully inspect the results presented, but once you get the idea you'll likely use this method often.

3. Use approximate year of birth

It is often amusing to follow one individual through several census years. Some women appear to have discovered the fountain of youth, aging just five or six years between census decades. The changing census date itself – sometimes April 1st, but also January 1st, June 1st, and other dates – can further complicate matters.

Census officials had to rely upon the informant from each family to provide correct information. Age was recorded in some fashion for each of the first sixteen US census (1790-1940). Rather than specifying an exact year for your ancestor, even when you have strong evidence of their exact year of birth, allow some room for error. If your evidence notes a birth year of 1904, try using 1904, plus or minus 2 years. Expand or narrow your selection as needed based on the number of results found.

4. Establish bookends

As you prepare to search for one or more ancestors using census records, consider the range of possible census years given their dates of birth and death. Using information from headstones, obituaries or other sources, note the birth and death years for your ancestors.

If your great great grandfather was born in 1823 and died at the age of 62, then 1885 would have been his approximate year of death. In this example, the first US census he could have appeared in was 1830

and the last would have been 1880. This gives you six opportunities to find him in the census – first as a child of about 7 years of age in the 1830 census and last in the 1880 census as a 57-year old man, possibly the head of household.

By establishing census bookends, you will prevent wasted effort looking for a person in a census before they were born or after they died.

5. Walk backwards through time

As a general rule, it is often easier to find your ancestors as you step backward through time. This is especially true for census records given the increase in detail collected each decade.

In the example above, you have six census years to search for your great great grandfather. By starting with the 1880 census, you will be able to determine his name, occupation, approximate year of marriage, names for other family members, as well as his place of birth and the place of birth for his father and mother.

Each of these data elements provides you with additional clues to use as filters as you step back to an earlier decade.

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Enter a location

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10 steps to move beyond the census

1. Estimate Birth, Marriage and Death years

Starting in the 1850 census, each census year provides the approximate age and place of birth for each person recorded, allowing you to easily calculate a year of birth.

Dwelling-house and number of habitation	Family number in the order of habitation	The Name of every Person whose usual place of abode on the first day of June, 1850, was in this family.	DESCRIPTION.			Profession, Occupation, or Trade of each Male Person over 15 years of age.	Place of Birth. Naming the State, Territory, or Country.	Whether within the limits of the United States within the year.	Whether deaf and dumb, blind, insane, idiotic, pauper, or convict.		
			Age	Sex	Color (Whites, Blacks, Chins, Indians)						
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
		Marion Waffer	20	M			Ohio				
		Abraham Waffer	25	M		Labourer	Ohio				
50	50	Edward Conn	42	M		Farmer	New Jersey				
		Sarah Conn	31	F			Ohio				
		Anna Grace	11	F			Ohio				
		Lorana J. Conn	3	F			Ohio				

Use the information you find family members in findmypast's U.S. birth, marriage and death records.

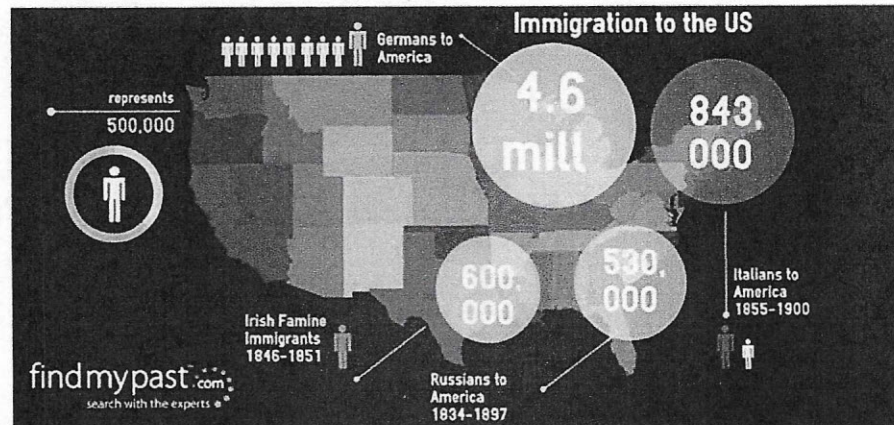
Marriage tip: To estimate a marriage year for a couple, examine the birth date of a couple's oldest child and subtract a few years.

Death year tip: Also if you notice an ancestor who disappeared from the census, be sure to check death records as you can look in the decade following their last appearance for a death record.

2. Trace a family's immigration

Later census years provide the year of immigration, which can be used to narrow your search in findmypast.com's ship passenger lists leaving the UK.

The United States was founded by people who went out to discover new lands, new opportunities and a better way a life. At the turn of the 20th century, almost 2 million European immigrants came to the U.S. Find the following arrival immigration records on findmypast.com:



- Irish famine immigrants
- Germans to America
- Italians to America
- Russians to America

Check for inaccuracies: Because immigration information on the census may be inaccurate, be sure to search records a few years before and after the date recorded on the census.

Pay attention to the date of immigration for all children: Families might not have traveled to the United States at the same time and could be found on different passenger lists.

3. Discover your ancestor's employment records

Use occupation information from the census to search for work records for a . Nurses, doctors, lawyers, farmers, merchants, and many more are all enumerated in the census.

Mon—Moo] THE MEDICAL REGISTER FOR 1913. 1123

Name.	Address.	Date and Place of Registration.	Qualifications.
MONTGOMERY, John Howard	5, Lower crescent, Belfast.	1902, Aug. 28 S.	M.B., Bac. Surg. 1902, Univ. Edin.
MONTGOMERY, Percy James	Ashley lodge, Upper Parkstone, Dorset.	1911, Dec. 22 E.	Lic. Med. Surg. Soc. Apoth. Lond., 1911.
MONTGOMERY, Raymond ...	Oak Leigh,	1911, Jan. 3	M.B., Bac. Surg. 1910, Univ.

The following collections on findmypast.com provide work records that can be searched outside of the census:

- UK work records
- Irish Work records
- Australian and New Zealand work records

4. Check the neighbors to find more relatives

Be sure to look at the families living next to your ancestors, which might be relatives, for example in-laws or siblings, and can lead to important clues for research.

Neighbors tip: Look for patterns in birthplaces, occupations, and other details as you look at those enumerated on the same page as the family you are researching.

5. Learn about Military Service

Some census years provide information on an ancestor's military service, listing service from the Revolutionary War to World War II. The 1840 census is first census to list ages, but only of war veterans.

For example: In the 1840 census, the names and ages of surviving Revolutionary War soldiers who were receiving a pension are listed on the second page, and can lead you to military service and pension records.

7	1	3			
4	2				
1	1		Mabel Morrison	88	1
4	2				

The following military records collections are indexed on findmypast.com:

- United States military records
- Irish military records
- United Kingdom Armed forces and conflict records
- Australian and New Zealand armed forces and conflict records

6. Look for children not listed

Remember that the census is only a single snapshot of a family on a given day and might be incomplete. Starting in the 1900 U.S. census, records list the number of children a mother has and how many are living.

3 of each person whose place of abode on June 1, 1900, was in this family. Enter surname first, then the given name and middle initial, if any. INCLUDE every person living on June 1, 1900. Omit children born since June 1, 1900.	4 Relationship of each person to the head of the family.	5 Color or race.	6 Sex.	7 DATE OF BIRTH.		8 Age at last birthday.	9 Whether single, married, widowed, or divorced.	10 Number of years married.	11 Mother of how many children.	12 Number of these children living.
				Month.	Year.					
James J. Josephine	Head	W	M	Feb	1810	90	Mar		3	0
Maie J. Josin	Wife	W	F	Nov	1874	25	Mar		5	5
Ernie	1st Son	W	M	Mar	1892	7	S			

Tip: Look for gaps between the ages of children, as a child might have died young, moved out of the house, or be living (and working) outside of the family's home when the census enumerator visited.

7. Examine naturalization dates

How to read census abbreviations: Columns marked "Na" indicate the individual was naturalized, while "Al" indicates they had not yet begun the process.

8. Look for land ownership

If someone owned land, be sure to search local land records for information on the sale of the property. Land records can answer questions about relationships, dates of migration, maiden names, and answer other questions on your family tree.

9. Find ancestors in yearly city directories

Most cities in the United States publish a directory of their residents each year, which can provide a year-by-year timeline of a family.

Start with the year of the census and work backwards or forwards as needed. Directories might include information on a family's arrival or departure into an area, address changes, and even significant events in the family such as marriages, divorces, and deaths.

10. Look for State Censuses

Some states (such as Iowa, New York, Massachusetts, and Rhode Island) took a state census to bridge the gap between the federal census years.

For example: In New York state census records occurred every ten years starting around 1825 and continue past 1925 in many areas. These records often provide additional details not included in the federal census records.

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When optional

<input type="text" value="Born"/>
<input type="text" value="YYYY"/>
<input type="text" value="-/+ 2yrs"/>

Where optional

<input type="text" value="United States & Canada"/>
<input type="text" value="Enter a location"/>

20 Things to Do When You Are Stumped

1. Explore Name Variations in Your Findings

Often U.S. ancestry records contain misspellings due to immigration or with birth dates. Name Variations: Tips and Tricks by findmypast expert David M. Lynch explains how to bypass challenges when the family history records you find seem to dead end.



Take time to analyze your findings and give everything another look. Specifically look for any conclusions you might have made that cannot be verified from the records you have found. Avoid making any assumptions and ensure that each name, event, and place can be verified before continuing your research.

2. Browse Record Collections

Although the U.S. Census and birth, marriage and death records are a great way to start looking for your ancestors, they can only take you so far. Here are some often overlooked records collections that will add depth instead of just names and introduce you to family members who may otherwise be left unnoticed.

- U.S. Immigration Records: follow your ancestors first steps into the United States
- World War II Army Enlistment Records: find your ancestor in the more than 8.7 million records of people who enlisted in the United States to serve in WWII
- Crime Prisons and Punishments: explore UK criminal records
- Chelsea Pensioners' discharge documents 1760-1887: offers a wide range of people who served in the British military

Pro tip: If you are unable to find an answer in a specific record, consider browsing through its pages. In some cases names might be misspelled or incorrectly indexed and can only be found by browsing through a collection online. It is also possible that the first or last name you are searching for is different than what was recorded in the records and might only be recognized when browsing the records.

3. Find Family Stories in Newspapers

Findmypast's exclusive collection of nearly 200 titles of British newspapers will open a treasure trove of family history to explore. British Newspapers provide a vivid window into the past – you may be able to find details about your ancestors and discover what life was like on their street, their town and their time period from 1700 to 1950. Use the largest digitization project of British newspapers in history to capture the pulse of your family history.



Our 120 million pages of U.S. and Global newspapers are another resource to find ancestors in the United States and seven other countries, including Denmark, France, Germany, Japan, South Africa, Jamaica and China family history. Learn the details to your ancestors life events.

4. New Records = New Opportunities

Some families are much easier to find than others. Family history is a lifelong pursuit for many as there are always another set of parents or siblings to discover as your family tree continues to branch out. As more records become available online and are discovered across the world it is possible that the answers to your toughest research problems can still be solved.

5. Create a Family Tree

Chart out a chronological timeline of a family helps to organize a family identify missing information. Include significant dates for each family member, such as birth marriage and death records, length of military service, findings in U.S. census records, and other details. You can also add historical events by using our collection of British Newspapers to see how your ancestor's might have been impacted by what was happening in the world around them, and what other records might be available to search.



Build your family tree with our online family tree explorer

6. Search for Siblings in Family Lines

Focusing your search on an ancestor's siblings often yields additional records that benefit your research. For example, a brother or sister might provide the names of their parents in a record while your own direct ancestor did not. Tracing wide instead of deep into family lines can also identify distant cousins, aunts and uncles who might have useful information.

7. Go Social with Other Family Historians

Multiple resources exist for asking other genealogists for ideas and advice when you are stumped. You can look for record updates or easily post a query about any family on the findmypast blog, or join the conversation on findmypast's social networking sites such as Facebook or Twitter. Include information (names, dates, and places) that would be useful in assisting someone answer your question.

Listen every week to findmypast's podcast exploring common issues, new events and tips for search.



8. Don't Let "Brick walls" Break You

Before becoming too frustrated with your brickwall take a short break from your research and focus on another task or family. Being able to put away your research for a few hours, days, or weeks allows you to approach your research with a fresh set of eyes. Many genealogists find that taking a longer break can be beneficial as new record sets may appear online that provides important information that either solves the brickwall or moves the research forward.

9. Consult a Professional Genealogist

Professional genealogists are available to assist you with your research and can often work with you to tackle brickwalls. Many professional researchers work at an hourly rate and often specialize in a specific record type, locality, time period, or subject matter. The Association of Professional Genealogists provides an online directory searchable by specialty to assist you in finding a professional.

Some professionals have achieved credentials from the Board for Certification of Genealogists and the International Commission for the Accreditation of Professional Genealogists, whose online membership directories can also be used to locate a suitable genealogist.

10. Locate the Original Record

In some cases you might be looking at a transcription or abstract made from an original record. While every effort is made to ensure transcriptions are accurate, it is essential to examine a copy of the original record. In some cases you might only have an abstract or abbreviated version of the record and the original record might yield additional information for your research.

Pro Tip: In order to locate the original record, keeping track of your findings is imperative. Citation: the importance of citing your sources by findmypast expert Debbie Mieszala offers basic tips on how to keep track of source citations for use down the road or when transcripts can only take you so far.

11. Attend a Class, Webinar, or Conference

Several opportunities to learn more about researching your family history are available online and in-person. Potential events include individual classes on a specific record or strategy, an online webinar, or a day-long seminar on a variety of genealogical topics. There are also multiple week-long conferences and in-depth institutes across the United States relating to genealogical research that you can attend, including the National Genealogical Society's Annual Conference, the Federation of Genealogical Societies Annual Conference, and the Salt Lake Institute of Genealogy.

Join findmypast at the annual family history conference, Rootstech, in Salt Lake City. Designed for both novice and experienced genealogists, Rootstech is the place to learn about new resources, mingle with fellow enthusiasts and meet the findmypast team.

12. Find a Genealogical Society Near You

Thousands of genealogical societies exist throughout the United States and the world. Societies offer a wealth of resources for those researching family history and might even have local volunteers who can assist you in your research. Visit the Federation of Genealogical Society's online directory to locate a society in your area.

13. Visit a Genealogical Library

A few key libraries for family history research exist in the United States, each with a dedicated staff of professionals and volunteers who can assist you with your research. The world's largest genealogical library, The Family History Library located in Salt Lake City, Utah has a worldwide collection of over 2.4 million rolls of microfilm and thousands of books.

Other prominent libraries for genealogical research include the Genealogy Center at the Allen County Public Library in Fort Wayne, Indiana, the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) Library in Washington, DC, the Midwest Genealogy Center in Independence, Missouri, the Clayton Library Center for Genealogical Research in Houston, Texas, and the New England Historic Genealogical Society's Library in Boston, Massachusetts.

14. Visit a Public Library Near You

Your local library might have access to databases and records that can help you expand your search. In some cases you might be able to access materials remotely (without visiting the library). Contact your local public library and inquire about their family history and genealogical resources.

15. Participate in a DNA Study

The science of DNA analysis can have great benefits for genealogists. Many individuals participate in DNA surname studies which combine genealogical research and DNA results to prove relationships between individuals and potential origins of particular surnames or groups. Several resources for DNA research exist, including the Sorenson Molecular Genealogy Foundation and FamilyTreeDNA.

16. Write a Family Sketch

Begin writing a family sketch, focusing on the family that has you stumped. Include each detail you have uncovered about the family as you write, and look for any patterns or potential contradictions in your data. Documenting each name, date, and relationship as you write helps to ensure your research is accurate and can often identify areas that could be researched further.

17. Search Family History Publications (Expand your knowledge)

The answers you are seeking could easily be available in records you have yet to discover. Learn more about family history at findmypast or through other resources, such as the National Genealogical Society's online courses or the FamilySearch Wiki. You can also subscribe to family history magazines including FamilyTreeMagazine, American Ancestors, Family Chronicle, and others.

18. Subscribe to a Genealogical Journal

Scholarly journals for genealogy and family history can include record abstracts and published family sketches that demonstrate the research process and even solve some of the toughest brickwalls. Even if an article has not been published on your family, these articles provide sources and techniques you can apply to your own research.

Journals published in the United States include *The American Genealogist*, the *National Genealogical Society Quarterly*, *The New York Genealogical and Biographical Record*, and *The New England Historical and Genealogical Register*.

19. Search for Printed Resources

There are thousands of records not yet available online that include important information for family history research. Printed resources include printed genealogies, local histories, record transcriptions and abstracts, and other materials. Search for these materials in libraries and other repositories through WorldCat to locate sources close to your own home.

20. Think Outside the Record Set

Many records for research are available offline at libraries and archives across the United States and the world. Manuscript collections can often be a goldmine for research as they can contain unique personal records, such as letters, diaries, and photographs not found anywhere else. Use resources such as ArchiveFinder and ArchiveGrid (both available at many public and university libraries) to find other collections to continue your research.

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