

DNA & YOUR FAMILY TREE: 6 EXPERT TIPS

family tree magazine

WWW.FAMILYTREAMAGAZINE.COM

101

BEST FREE

WEBSITES

for Tracing Your Roots

WHICH JOHN SMITH?

How to Pick Out Your Ancestor From a Crowd

USGENWEB.ORG

Step-By-Step Secrets

PLUS

- + 4 Google Search Tricks
- + Preserve Your Digital Photos
- + Explore Your Roots in Finland

fw media US \$5.99



0 71486 02003 5 09

Display until September 6, 2010

SEPTEMBER 2010

Fancy Free

BY DAVID A. FRYXELL

From state vital records and censuses to historical books and immigration data, this year's 101 Best Websites list features tools that can bust your brick walls—but not your budget.



IN A BUMPY economy, is there any more welcome word than *free*? When we took a break from checking our credit-card balances and 401(k) accounts to consider this year's 101 Best Websites, the theme was as obvious as the lint in our wallets: the best free genealogy sites. Fortunately, when it comes to online genealogy, the old sayings "There's no such thing as a free lunch" and "You get what you pay for" go right out the window. You can learn plenty about your family history without ever entering a credit-card number.

Defining "free" isn't as simple as it sounds, however. Obviously, expensive subscription sites are out, but what about sites that offer a premium service for a fee? Or sites that offer free data but require payment for a paper copy of a record? After some debate among the editors, we decided that a site qualifies as "free" if the primary function or content is free, so that you can go there and do what you intend to do without having to pull out your wallet. We also wanted to honor some lesser-known sites whose hardworking webmasters contribute to the greater genealogical good. Their sites may be free, but we can repay them with a virtual round of applause.

So welcome to the 2010 edition of *Family Tree Magazine's* 101 Best Websites. For a change, there's no need for our usual explanation that a \$ symbol means a site requires payment. We'll give that button on our keyboards a rest this year, as we demonstrate that sometimes the best things in life really *are* free.

ree



AL PARRISH

The Big Picture

BYU Family History Archives

<www.lib.byu.edu/fhc>

This Brigham Young University (BYU) site has really taken off, with more than 60,000 items at last count. You can search or browse family histories, county and local histories, how-to books on genealogy, genealogy periodicals, medieval books and gazetteers. It's all courtesy of the collections of the Family History Library, Allen County Public Library, Clayton Library Center for Genealogical Research, the Midwest Genealogy Center, BYU libraries and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints' Church History Library.

Cyndi's List

<cyndislist.com>

If you're looking for links to the ever-growing universe of genealogy websites, Cyndi has been the source to turn to since 1996. She's got more than 275,000 to date, helpfully broken down into more than 180 categories.

FamilySearch

<www.familysearch.org>

All your longtime favorites are still here—the Family History Library catalog, censuses, the International Genealogical Index, pedigree files, Vital Records Index and research guides. But the real action is at the ever-growing Record Search Pilot Site <pilot.familysearch.org> and beta search site <fsbeta.familysearch.org>, where millions of new records from across the globe are coming online monthly. US records include state censuses and vital records, along with federal enumerations for 1850, 1860, 1870, 1880, 1900 and 1920 (all but 1880 and 1920 now with images).

Random Acts of Genealogical Kindness

<www.raogk.org>

Not only is the site free, but so are the services of its more than 4,000 volunteers. With genealogical fairy godmothers (and -fathers) in every US state and many international locations, this is the place to get that elusive courthouse record looked up or tombstone photo taken.

RootsWeb

<rootsweb.ancestry.com>

The hundreds of gigabytes of data on this pioneering site are byproducts of millions of online genealogists sharing research and records. In addition to the 575 million individuals in the WorldConnect family tree database, RootsWeb hosts record transcriptions large and small, 1.2 million surname entries and 161,000 message boards. It's also the best place to sign up for any of nearly 30,000 genealogy e-mail lists.



USGenWeb

<www.usgenweb.org>

Among the granddaddies of all-volunteer sites, this 50-state umbrella site remains essential for its state and county pages full of historical information, research how-tos, and records indexes and transcriptions. But don't overlook such endeavors as the Archives Project, African American Griots Project, Genealogical Events Project, Web Kidz Project, Lineage Project and Tombstone Transcription Project. (Check out our USGenWeb guide on page 33.)

WeRelate

<www.werelate.org>

Still in beta, this wiki for genealogy (sponsored by the Foundation for On-Line Genealogy in partnership with the Allen County Public Library) is home to pages for more than 2 million people and families. Its powerful search can drill down in whatever "namespace" you select, such as nearly 104,000 surnames or more than 989,000 places. As a wiki, it lets you add to and edit its pages.

WorldGenWeb

<www.worldgenweb.org>

Dating to 1996, this volunteer effort spans the globe—much as USGenWeb goes coast to coast across America—with more than 400 national, regional and other specialty sites offering research tips, links and more.



Read all about your relatives in Google's News Archive and Newspaper Abstracts.

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS PRINTS AND PHOTOGRAPHS DIVISION LC-DIG-NCLC-03765

Records Resources

Access Genealogy

<www.accessgenealogy.com>

In a decade online, this two-webmaster site has blossomed from a simple set of 50 state pages into more than 250,000 pages and millions of records. American Indian records remain its strong suit—including more than two dozen databases of tribal rolls—and it's worth a look for such varied additions as victims of the Johnstown Flood of 1889, pre-1799 Virginia wills, WWI honorees from Oregon, and 379,533 Southern California naturalizations from 1887 to 1940.

Daughters of the American Revolution

<www.dar.org>

The recent addition of the DAR Genealogical Research System (several interconnected databases that let you tap the DAR's background files on members' patriot ancestors) has thrust this former 101 honoree back onto the list. In addition to searching ancestors and members, you can find kin in a descendants database of more than 7 million individuals. An index of the Genealogical Research Committee books in the DAR Library covers another 20 million names, or you can search the entire DAR library catalog.

DistantCousin.com

<www.distantcousin.com>

Boasting more than 6 million records from more than 1,500 sources, this site is strongest on often overlooked resources such as city directories and school alumni lists. But it's also worth a check for vital records, military records, obituaries and stubborn surnames.

Find a Grave

<www.findagrave.com>

If your dearly departed ancestor isn't represented in Find a Grave yet, just wait. It won't be long, with 43 million grave records and counting. Or browse by cemetery, to find an elusive ancestor by his or her "neighbors."

Google News Archive Search

<news.google.com/archivesearch>

Plug in search terms, just as in the regular Google search, and this wicked-fast engine returns results from newspapers of all sorts, while also generating a nifty timeline. Not all the sites searched are free themselves, but results indicate the price, if any, so you can view free articles and abstracts first.

Interment.net

<www.interment.net>

Covering cemeteries not just in the United States but also in Australia, Canada, Germany, Ireland, the United Kingdom and New Zealand, this site also boasts a daily RSS feed on newly added transcriptions plus a weekly blog.

Newspaper Abstracts

<www.newspaperabstracts.com>

Before you pay for sites that put old newspapers online, check the more than 69,000 pages of abstracts and extracts from historical newspapers available here. Growing by more than a thousand pages a month, Newspaper Abstracts concentrates on the "good stuff," genealogically speaking, such as obituaries, births, marriages, deaths, court notices, land sales and tax notices.

Uncle Sam's Best Sites

American Battle Monuments Commission

<www.abmc.gov>

Online videos about the Normandy Campaign and other historic battles now augment the commission's databases of WWI, WWII, Korean War and other burials in 24 overseas cemeteries, Tablets of the Missing, and 25 memorials, monuments and markers. Searches mine the records of more than 219,000 American servicemen and -women.

Bureau of Land Management General Land Office Records

<www.glorerecords.blm.gov>

Already home to more than 3 million federal land title records spanning 1820 to 1908, this site keeps getting better: Among the latest additions are Colorado, Idaho, Montana, South Dakota and North Dakota Master Title Plats (MTPs), field notes from original surveyors, images of land warrants issued as a reward for military service, and images related to survey plats and field notes as old as 1810.

Civil War Soldiers and Sailors System

<www.itd.nps.gov/cwss>

New features—just in time for the sesquicentennial of the war—include background on the social, economic, political and military aspects of the Civil War. But the core of this site remains the database of 6.3 million names of soldiers from both sides, representing 44 states and territories. Names are linked to regimental histories and, in turn, capsule histories of battles.

Library of Congress

<loc.gov>

Long a favorite for its American Memory collection, digital images and National Union Catalog of Manuscript Collections (NUCMC), this site also is now a must for its Chroni-ling America newspaper collection <chroniclingamerica.loc.gov>. The digitizing program recently added its millionth page from America's past, with millions more dating back to 1836 to come.

National Archives and Records Administration

<archives.gov>

You know to visit virtually before planning an in-person trip to the National Archives or one of its regional branches around the country. But don't overlook the two troves of records on the archives' website: Access to Archival Databases (AAD), with more than 85 million records, including passengers on US-bound immigrant ships and WWII enlistment files, and the Archival Research Catalog (ARC), an index of 6.3 million records linked to 153,000 digital files.

Nationwide Gravesite Locator

<gravelocator.cem.va.gov>

If a military ancestor was buried stateside rather than overseas, use this Department of Veterans Affairs site. It searches for burial locations of veterans and their family members in VA national cemeteries, state veterans' cemeteries and various other military and Department of Interior cemeteries, as well as for veterans buried in private cemeteries when the grave is marked with a government grave marker.

US Geological Survey

<www.usgs.gov/pubprod>

Among the many free geographic tools here, the National Map has a new website <nationalmap.gov>, and the National Atlas <nationalatlas.gov> has 57 new printable maps. Search for ancestral places in the Geographic Names Information System (GNIS), then plot them on the map.

East of the Rockies

Cincinnati Virtual Library

<virtuallibrary.cincinnati.org>

Right in *Family Tree Magazine's* backyard, this online outpost of the Public Library of Cincinnati and Hamilton County offers downloadable books of all sorts. Most notable for genealogists is the extensive collection of Cincinnati city directories, all at your electronic fingertips.

Cook County Genealogy Online

<www.cookcountygenealogy.com>

Find your Chicago-area ancestors in this slick site from the Cook County, Ill., clerk's office. Searchable databases cover more than 8 million birth, marriage and death records.

Digital Library of Georgia

<dlg.galileo.usg.edu>

This peachy gateway to more than 110 collections from 160 institutions and agencies gives you one-click access to a million digital files, including images; Colonial wills; Confederate enlistment records, muster rolls and pension applications; and seven historic newspapers.

MORE ONLINE

Free Web Content

- 50 Best Databases
<familytreemagazine.com/article/50-best-databases>
- Genealogy Insider blog
<blog.familytreemagazine.com/insider>

For Plus Members

- 89 family history freebies
<familytreemagazine.com/article/no-purchase-necessary>
- 10 websites worth your money
<familytreemagazine.com/article/10-great-little-subscription-web-sites>

ShopFamilyTree.com

- Googling Your Genealogy: 7 Essential Strategies webinar
<shopfamilytree.com/product/googling-your-genealogy-7-essential-strategies>
- Trace Your Roots Online CD
<shopfamilytree.com/product/national-archives-web-guide-digital-download>

IowaGenWeb

<www.iagenweb.org>

Though technically part of the USGenWeb network, this state site deserves an individual mention for its spiffy design, well-organized county information and especially, its special projects. These include a family group sheet collection, gravestone photos, history book transcriptions, articles from old newspapers, state censuses and WPA graves registrations.

Massachusetts Archives

<www.sec.state.ma.us/arc>

A triple threat, this site's Massachusetts Archives database, spanning 1629 to 1799, is just the beginning. The vital records database spans 1841 to 1915. And the in-progress project to index more than 1 million arrivals through the port of Boston (1848 to 1891) is worth checking back on even if your ancestors didn't stay in the Bay State.

Minnesota Historical Society

<www.mnhs.org/genealogy>

Along with indexes to birth and death records, this site's state census records and rich photo resources also get gold stars. In the works: a project to digitize Swedish-language newspapers published in the United States.

Missouri Digital Heritage

<www.sos.mo.gov/mdh>

The Missouri State Archives site <www.sos.mo.gov/archives/resources/resources.asp> has long been one of our favorites, so we're delighted to see its superior online collections under this umbrella of all things Missouri. Whether you're seeking military records, naturalization documents, photographs or land patents, this is the place to start if you have Missouri kin.

OK/IT GenWeb

<www.okgenweb.org/-itgenweb>

Also under the USGenWeb umbrella, this site stands out in part because it's no ordinary state page: It's dedicated to the "twin territories," Oklahoma and Indian Territory, and exists in addition to a strictly Oklahoma site. As a result, it's of interest to researchers with any number of American Indian heritages. Packed with links to related tribes, the site also is home to special projects, including migrations, "removals," timelines, trails and roads, the 1900 census and 1903 postal routes.

Seeking Michigan

<www.seekingmichigan.org>

You'll be drawn here by the nearly 1 million digitized Michigan death certificates (1897 to 1920). But don't overlook the collections of Civil War photographs and records, WPA property inventories, oral histories, maps and more.

Wisconsin Historical Society

<www.wisconsinhistory.org/genealogy>

Search the Wisconsin Genealogy Index for more than 150,000 Wisconsin obituaries and biographical sketches, 1 million births, 400,000 deaths and 1 million marriages. You also can milk this site for Dairy State images, Civil War records and history articles.

Western Research Roundup

Arizona Genealogy Birth and Death Certificates

<genealogy.az.gov>

Hard to beat if you have Arizona ancestors, this site serves up birth records (1855 to 1933) and death records (1844 to 1958) linked to PDFs of the originals.

Colorado Historic Newspaper Collection

<www.coloradohistoricnewspapers.org>

This ambitious collaboration between the Colorado State Library and the Colorado Historical Society is like a paper-boy from the past, delivering more than 500,000 pages from 163 newspapers published in Colorado from 1859 to 1923.

Colorado Plateau Digital Archives

<www.nau.edu/~cline/speccoll>

This Northern Arizona University site covers the whole Southwest with digitized photographs, oral history interviews, films, diaries, letters and maps.

Denver Public Library Western History and Genealogy

<history.denverlibrary.org>

Showcasing the library's extensive Western Americana collection, this site features 120,000 digitized images. Most date from the 19th century, depicting American Indians, pioneer life, mining, Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show, Colorado cities and towns, railroads and more.

Mountain Men and the Fur Trade

<www.mtmen.org>

Got an ancestor who worked in the Rockies in the first part of the 19th century? Explore this virtual museum, digital library and gallery of digitized books, letters, diaries and other historical material about "mountain men."

Nevada Census Database

<www.nvshpo.org>

Click on the Nevada Census Database icon on the right for this pioneering project that put Nevada federal census records, 1860 to 1880 and 1900 to 1920—310,000 entries total—online for our favorite price.

SFGenealogy

<www.sfgenealogy.com>

This site for researching ancestors in the San Francisco Bay area has launched an ambitious project that has volunteers indexing 45,000-plus digitized mortuary records (search this index directly at <www.sfgenealogy.com/php/sfmrsearch/sfmrindex.php>). The site is worth a look, too, if your ancestor attended school in the Bay Area, for its growing collection of alumni records.

University of Washington Libraries Digital Collections

<content.lib.washington.edu>

This searchable archive includes photos, maps, newspapers and other artifacts from the entire Pacific Northwest, including Alaska and Western Canada. Subjects range from the Alaska gold rush to Industrial Workers of the World (“Wobblies”) to Civil War letters.

Washington State Digital Archives

<www.digitalarchives.wa.gov>

Leading the way in digitizing its past, Washington State now has more than 85 million records online, with more than 26 million of them searchable. You’ll find vital records, censuses, land records, military records, naturalization documents and more.

Western States Historical Marriage Records Index

<abish.byui.edu/specialcollections/westernstates/search.cfm>

The goal for this index is to put historical marriage data from 12 Western states at the fingertips of genealogy researchers. While not there yet, the site now has nearly 700,000 nuptials, including most pre-1900 marriages for Arizona, Idaho and Nevada, and many counties of those states extend into the 1930s or later. A significant number of marriages from California, western Colorado, Montana, Oregon, Utah, eastern Washington and Wyoming also are included, with 18th-century New Mexico marriages in the works.

O, Canada!

Archives of Manitoba

<www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives>

In addition to Manitoba probate records, this site is a must for anyone with ancestors in the fur trade, as it includes the archives of the Hudson Bay Company. Don’t miss the biographical sheets on the company’s employees, which outline employment history and may include the person’s parish of origin or place of birth, family information and references to related documents, including photographs or drawings.

Automated Genealogy

<www.automatedgenealogy.com>

In addition to volunteer transcriptions of the 1901, 1906 (Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba) and 1911 Canadian censuses, several linking projects here attempt to connect individuals among these and other resources. The 1851-1852 census also is in progress.

The Canadian County Atlas Digital Project

<digital.library.mcgill.ca/countyatlas>

These 40 atlases from 1874 to 1881 show property owners throughout Ontario, with a searchable database of names.

Canadian Genealogy Centre

<www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/genealogy/index-e.html>

Recent additions at this site from Library and Archives Canada include the 1891 census and an index of more than 200,000 naturalizations from 1915 to 1932. A powerful combined Ancestors Search combs everything from divorce records to land petitions to WWI courts-martial. You’ll also find plenty of necessary information for finding historical records on your Canadian clan.

Images Canada

<imagescanada.ca/index-e.html>

Search more than 65,000 images from cultural institutions across Canada, browse photo essays (“Railways in Canada,” “Celebrating Dominion Day 1867-1917”) or follow “image trails” on topics ranging from the Inuit to winter sports.

Nova Scotia Historical Vital Statistics

<www.novascotiagenealogy.com>

Nearly a million searchable birth, marriage and death records put your Nova Scotia roots only a click away. Coverage is generally from 1864 to 1908 or 1933, along with 12,043 earlier marriage bonds from 1763 to 1864. Each index entry is linked to a digitized original record.

Our Roots

<www.ourroots.ca>

A “library, archive, museum and school all in one,” this collection of digitized local histories from across Canada boasts a powerful search capability that will let you zoom in on your ancestors whether they mined gold in the Klondike or manned forts in New Brunswick.



TIP: For tips on searching historical records and pedigree databases on the free FamilySearch and FamilySearch Record Search Pilot Site, see the January 2010 *Family Tree Magazine*.

That's My Family

<www.thatsmyfamily.info>

A sort of Google for Canadian genealogy resources, this search engine is maintained by the *Bibliothèque et Archives Nationales du Québec* (Library and National Archives of Quebec). It covers databases hosted by federal, provincial and territorial archives and libraries, plus other partners.

African-American Roots

AfriGeneas

<www.afriGeneas.com>

Connect with fellow researchers in this site's forums, chats and mailing lists, or check its slave records collection, surnames database, death and marriage records databases and census schedules.

AfriQuest

<afriquest.com>

DIY genealogy comes to African-American research in this handsome home for user-submitted finds and story sharing.

Afro-Louisiana History and Genealogy 1719-1820

<www.ibiblio.org/laslave>

This database, which covers 100,000 Louisiana slaves, is the fruit of 15 years of research by Gwendolyn Hall, professor emerita of history at Rutgers University.

Digital Library on American Slavery

<library.uncg.edu/slavery>

This new resource from the library of the University of North Carolina at Greensboro searches information culled from thousands of slavery-related county court and legislative petitions, wills, estate inventories and civil suits, filed in 15 states and the District of Columbia from 1775 to 1867. More than 150,000 individuals are named in the documents, including 80,000 slaves and 8,000 free people of color.

Documenting the American South

<docsouth.unc.edu>

Although not exclusively focused on African-American heritage, these digitized collections from the University of North Carolina are a rich resource for researchers with African-American roots. Collections include the Church in the Southern Black Community and North American Slave Narratives.

LowCountry Africana

<www.lowcountryafricana.net>

Find ancestors and history among the historically rice-growing areas of South Carolina, Georgia and northeastern Florida, home to the rich Gullah/Geechee culture, in this site sponsored by the Magnolia Plantation Foundation of Charleston, SC.

USF Africana Heritage Project

<www.africanaheritage.com>

A powerful search engine at this University of South Florida Africana Studies Department website makes it simple to search Bible records, WPA slave narratives, plantation journals, wills and probates, church records and other records of "slaves, freedpersons and their descendants." You'll also find a virtual library and reading room with historical and how-to articles.

History Lessons

Early American Roads and Trails

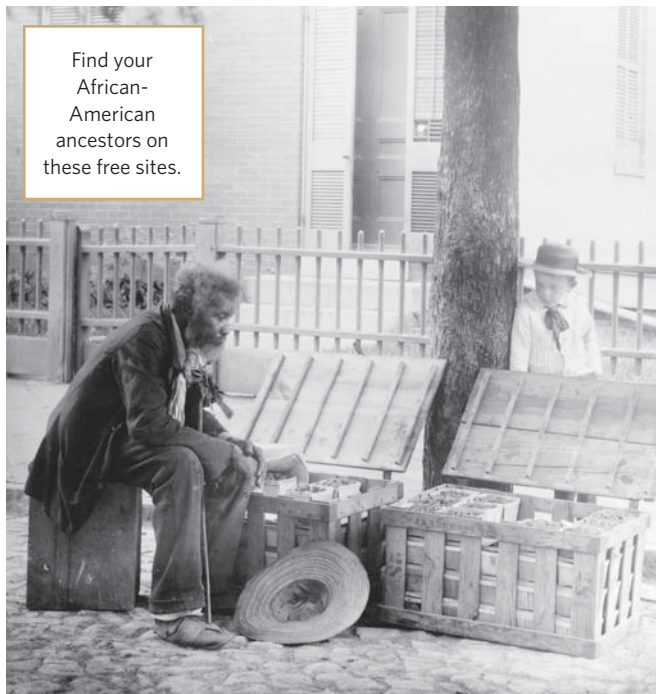
<freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~gentutor/trails.html>

Find maps and history to trace your ancestors along the trails that helped settle America.

eHistory

<ehistory.osu.edu>

Member accounts are back at this site, now under the auspices of The Ohio State University, allowing you to contribute to what's already an impressive collection. The highlight here, however, remains the complete online edition of the Official Records ("OR") of the Civil War.



Find your African-American ancestors on these free sites.



TIP: For more family history freebies, check out Kindred Trails' list of Free Genealogy Stuff at www.kindredtrails.com/free_genealogy_stuff.html.

Feeding America: The Historic American Cookbook Project

digital.lib.msu.edu/projects/cookbooks

Our ancestors had to eat, after all, and this online collection of 76 of the most important American cookbooks from the late 18th to early 20th century shows how they did it. The site includes cookbook pages plus searchable full-text transcriptions, along with a glossary of cookery terms and multidimensional images of antique cooking implements from the collections of the Michigan State University Museum.

Making of America

www.hti.umich.edu/m/moagrp

library5.library.cornell.edu/moa

This two-part digital library of the 19th century includes some 10,000 books and 50,000 journal articles (on the Michigan site) and 100,000 articles from period journals and periodicals (on the Cornell site, which got a complete makeover in 2009).

New York Public Library

www.nypl.org/ebooks

Feast your eyes on more than 700,000 images digitized from the library's vast collections, including illuminated manuscripts, historical maps, vintage posters, rare prints and old photographs. And now the library is working with Google to offer a portion of its collection online; you can browse these pre-1923 titles right in the library's online catalog.

Perry-Castañeda Map Collection

www.lib.utexas.edu/maps

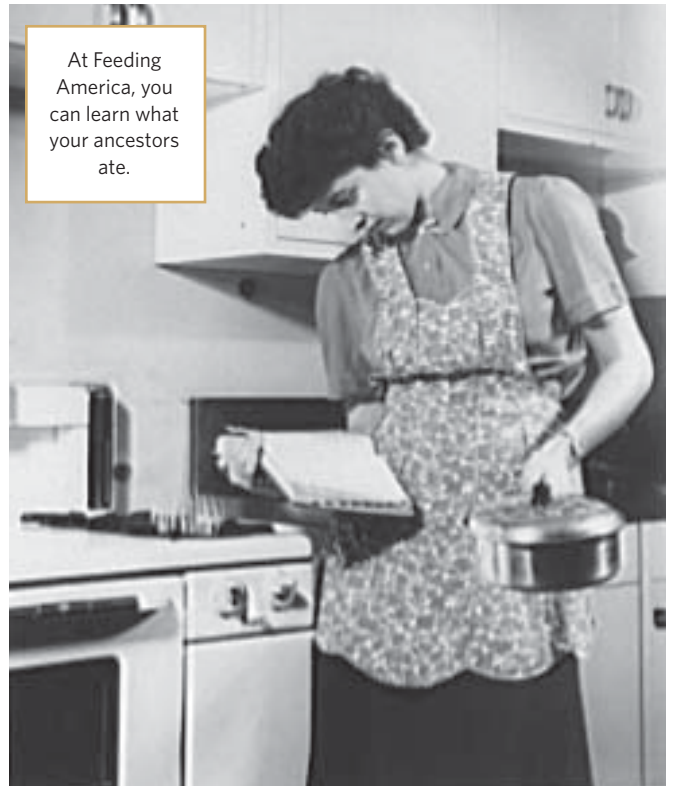
Although this extensive collection from the library of the University of Texas at Austin includes current maps, genealogists love it for the wealth of historical maps covering locales across the United States and around the globe. From battlefield maps to highway maps and old atlases to travel guides, if you can't find your ancestral place here, it might not have existed.

A Nation of Immigrants

Castle Garden

www.castlegarden.org

New York City's Castle Garden, today known as Castle Clinton National Monument, was America's first official immigration center. At this site, an educational project of The Battery Conservancy, you can search a database of 11 million immigrants from 1820 through 1892, the year Ellis Island opened.



At Feeding America, you can learn what your ancestors ate.

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS PRINTS AND PHOTOGRAPHS DIVISION, LC-USE6-D-006933

Cook County Clerk of the Circuit Court

www.cookcountyclerkofcourt.org/nr

This Chicago-area site contains 150,000 and counting of the more than 400,000 "first papers" filed by immigrants wishing to become US citizens at the Circuit Court of Cook County between 1906 and 1929. You can search on a person's name or part of a name, birth date, birthplace, occupation or other parameters.

Ellis Island

www.ellisland.org

Although filled with fundraising gimmicks and requiring registration to view results, this site remains free in its core mission: access to 22 million records of passenger arrivals through the port of New York (1892 to 1924). You also now can browse or search by ship.

Immigrant Ships Transcribers Guild

www.immigrantships.net

Can't find your kin at Ellis Island or Castle Garden? Your next stop should be this volunteer-transcribed collection of more than 11,000 passenger manifests, plus other special projects.

One-Step Web Pages

<stevemorse.org>

Although Steve Morse has come up with clever ways to search everything from census files to birthdays, about half his “one-step” searches simplify your quest for immigration answers. In addition to multiple ways to search Ellis Island and Castle Garden records, this site tackles other popular entry ports such as Baltimore, Galveston and San Francisco. (Note that you still need a subscription to access records that are on Ancestry.com.)

TheShipsList

<www.theshipslist.com>

Since 1999, this site has been serving up passenger lists, now numbering some 3,000 pages and growing every month. It’s also a good source to learn more about the ship your ancestors arrived on; it might even include a picture.

Great Britain & Expectations

Access to Archives

<www.a2a.org.uk>

If you have English ancestors, chances are that records about them survive someplace. “A2A” tells you where—indexing 10.3 million records from 418 repositories.

County Tyrone

<freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~cotyroneireland>

Readers called our attention to this standout volunteer site, packed with primary and secondary source records, photos and parish maps. Also linked to the County Tyrone mailing list, it’s the next best thing to traveling to Ireland (not that the trip would be such a bad thing).

FreeBMD

<freebmd.rootsweb.com>

The name says it all: This site is the epitome of free vital records when it comes to English and Welsh research. At last count, volunteers have transcribed more than 182 million distinct civil registration records of births, marriages and deaths from 1837 to 1983. Partner projects are similarly tackling censuses <www.freecen.org.uk> and parish records <www.freereg.org.uk>.

GENUKI

<www.genuki.org.uk>

Everything you need to know about GENealogy in the UK and Ireland can be found under this umbrella (or “brolly”): church history, heraldry, land records, manors, occupations, poorhouses, tax records and even tips to decipher your British ancestors’ handwriting.

Historical Directories

<www.historicaldirectories.org/hd/index.asp>

This recently relaunched site from the University of Leicester is a digital library of local and trade directories for England and Wales from 1750 to 1919. You can find the directory you want by location, decade or keyword.

Ireland’s History in Maps

<rootsweb.ancestry.com/~irlkik/ihm/iremaps.htm>

History meets geography meets genealogy in this site, which starts with “Ice Ages and Arrival of Humans.” You also can hunt for surnames by county, barony or castle.

National Archives of Ireland

<www.census.nationalarchives.ie>

All 32 counties of the 1911 Irish census are available here for search or browsing; you can choose to view a transcription or a PDF of the original page. But that’s just for starters: The site is being redeveloped to include full transcriptions of all of the data on the household forms for 1911, including religion, occupation, relationship to head of family, literacy status, county or country of origin, Irish language proficiency, specified illnesses and child survival information. The 1901 census, with all data transcribed, is underway and may be launched by the time you read this.

Ordnance Survey: Get-a-map

<www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk/oswebsite/getamap>

Fancy a free map (up to 1:25,000 scale) of your ancestor’s old stomping ground? This easy-to-use site serves up gratis, printable maps of anywhere in the UK based on place name, full postcode or National Grid reference.

Scots Origins

<www.scotsorigins.com>

Though the rest of the Origins Network, covering Ireland and England, requires a subscription, this smaller Scottish site is free. It includes a handy search of the International Genealogical Index (IGI) marriage, birth and christening records; a search for county and district matches for any place name (per the 1881 census); expert articles; and a discussion forum.

European Ops

Avotaynu

<www.avotaynu.com>

Check out the “five-minute guide to Jewish genealogical research,” then search the Consolidated Jewish Surname Index of nearly 700,000 surnames in 42 different databases containing more than 7.3 million records. Most are from Eastern Europe, but even Scandinavia and the United Kingdom are covered.



TIP: If you find an ancestor's name in a free online index, examine the site to find out the source of the information. Then request a copy of the original record from the repository that holds it.

Danish Demographic Database

<ddd.dda.dk/ddd_en.htm>

Hans Christian Andersen himself couldn't have come up with a more magical resource for researching Danish roots. But it's no fairy tale: nearly 400,000 emigration records (1869 to 1908), almost 13 million census records dating to 1769, probate records, and even info on the former Danish colony of St. Croix.

Digitalarkivet

<digitalarkivet.uib.no>

A countdown clock at this National Archives of Norway website tracks the days, hours, minutes and seconds until the release of the 1910 Norwegian census, but there's plenty to keep you occupied in the meantime: the 1801, 1865, 1875 and 1900 censuses, plus digitized parish registers and probate records. There's even a one-click search of all the databases.

Federation of Eastern European Family History Societies

<feefhs.org>

Newly redesigned, the website for this long-established organization lets you click on a map in its Resource Directory to jump into resource guides and databases ranging from Albania to the Ukraine.

The Genealogical Society of Finland

<www.genealogia.fi>

The society's HisKi project is putting Finnish church records online; they'll even be searchable, though the search capability is still in a testing phase. Instructions are in English.

Genlias

<www.genlias.nl/en>

There's no point in putting your finger in the dike to hold back this flood of Dutch records: Genlias contains 13.5 million records, representing almost 55 million individuals, drawn mostly from post-1811 civil registers but also including inheritance declarations dating from 1808.

JewishGen

<www.jewishgen.org>

Handsomely redesigned, this site affiliated with the Museum of Jewish Heritage also recently added 104,500 records and 20,700 photos to its Online Worldwide Burial

Registry. Among its wide array of databases, don't miss the Family Finder surname database, ShtetLinks and the Family Tree of the Jewish People.

PolishRoots

<www.polishroots.org>

Covering all the areas historically part of the Polish Commonwealth, this attractive site includes FAQ for beginners, plus maps, translation tips, links and back issues of the *Gen Dobry* e-zine.

Swedish Roots

<www.genealogi.se/roots>

Swedish genealogy sites seem to charge for almost everything, but this home of the Federation of Swedish Genealogical Societies is packed with free info, much of it in English. You can post a query on the *Anbytarforum* message boards in English, and odds are a helpful Swede will reply.

High-Tech Tools

The Ancestry Insider

<ancestryinsider.blogspot.com>

Get the latest scoop on the world's largest paid genealogy site, Ancestry.com, and largest nonprofit genealogy organization, FamilySearch, with this always-engaging blog.

Diigo

<www.diigo.com>

Though not specifically targeted at genealogists, this tool for collaborative online sticky notes will quickly become a favorite for highlighting family history finds.

Evernote

<www.evernote.com>

Another general-purpose tool, Evernote makes saving your online finds as easy as clicking a button; then you can tag or search saved pages and sync them across platforms—on your PC or Mac, on the Web or on your iPhone. You can even e-mail items to yourself at a special Evernote address, or save shots of textual records from your phone's camera that you can run through optical character recognition. (Get a tutorial on page 70.)

Getty Thesaurus of Geographic Names Online

<www.getty.edu/research/conducting_research/vocabularies/tgn>

This database of nearly 900,000 places does a lot more than just tell you where an ancestral place is located. It includes historical places (with dates), alternate spellings and hierarchical relationships—so, for example, you could discover that Castello di Belcaro is a place in the Province of Siena in Italy's Tuscany region.



Use WorldCat to tap into the physical holdings of thousands of libraries.

Google Book Search

<books.google.com>

We're fans of all the ways to use Google for genealogy, but the fast-growing Book Search is a special favorite. An agreement with authors and publishers promises to extend its reach even further, but already the ability to browse old books is the best thing to happen to genealogists since the library card.

Internet Archive

<www.archive.org>

This site includes the Wayback Machine, 150 billion pages rescued from the internet's past, plus nearly 1.9 million texts, including family and local histories.

WorldCat

<worldcat.org>

An invaluable portal to the world's non-virtual libraries, WorldCat searches more than 1.5 billion items in 10,000 libraries around the world—from your computer or your mobile phone (at <www.worldcat.org/m> or with the RedLaser app for iPhone).

Share and Share Alike

Facebook

<facebook.com>

Genealogists have discovered social networking, and the internet may never be the same. With a boost from family history apps, you can use Facebook to exchange family tree info and images.

Flickr

<www.flickr.com>

Like Facebook, this photo-sharing site wasn't designed specifically for genealogy or history, but that hasn't stopped us from using it for everything from tombstone images to old family photos. If it's good enough for the Library of Congress <www.flickr.com/photos/library_of_congress> and the Smithsonian Institution <www.flickr.com/photos/smithsonian>, it's good enough for us.

GenForum

<www.genforum.com>

Though its parent site, Genealogy.com, is moribund, GenForum's vast collection of free message boards—organized by surname, place and research interest (such as immigration or wars)—remains vital and busy. Researchers post hundreds of messages daily; they're searchable back to the turn of the millennium.

Geni

<www.geni.com>

With more than 80 million profiles, Geni is one of the most popular places to share your family tree, photos and even videos. It's been honored by experts from *Time* magazine to *PC Magazine* to, well, us.

Shared Tree

<www.sharedtree.com>

Adhering to open-source principles, this pioneer in online genealogy software has no size limits for trees and is GEDCOM compatible. You can create your own forums, debate tree changes with distant kin, and create charts when the discussion is done.

Sorenson Molecular Genealogy Foundation

<www.smgf.org>

You don't have to purchase a DNA test to search the databases here. The Y-Chromosome database contains results for more than 36,000 samples, linked to test-takers' pedigree charts; because only males have Y-DNA, this database is ideal for surname research. The mitochondrial database adds another 70,000-plus searchable test results and genealogies.

Tribal Pages

<www.tribalpages.com>

Home to more than 350,000 family websites with 50 million names, Tribal Pages offers GEDCOM import, charts and reports, mapping and free newsletters customized to your family. ■

Contributing editor **DAVID A. FRYXELL** edits *Desert Exposure*, a free publication for southwest New Mexico. Its website at <www.desertexposure.com> is, of course, free.