

U.S. Vital Records on the Internet – Lesser Known Sources

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Vital Records: Records of Birth, Marriage, Divorce and Death

- ◆ Index vs. extract vs. image – what type of record are you looking at?
- ◆ Which organization, agency or individual created the record, index or extract? Why?
- ◆ Index vs. Image: Indexes rarely contain all info from original records. Always seek original image.
- ◆ Time frame: Dictates laws in effect and jurisdictions involved. Do the background research.

Questions to Ponder: Why are you stuck? What is your goal? Where have you tried?

1. Ancestor social status: Orphan, Apprentice, Indentured servant, Slave, Divorced, Widowed, Health Issue, criminal? Female?

2. Have you identified and searched all *relevant jurisdictions*? They can change.

- New England - Town Level [New Jersey Astrid Johnson experience.]
- MapofUS.org <https://www.mapofus.org/>
- Atlas of Historical County Boundaries <https://publications.newberry.org/ahcbp/index.html>
- RootsTech Free Video Archive -2018
<https://www.rootstech.org/category/2018-rootstech-sessions?lang=eng>

Search All the Jurisdictions and Find More Records - Laurie Castillo – Friday 2 March 2018

3. Have you done *background research* to find out what records were kept and what still exists?

- Learned what records were kept?
- Who kept them?
- Which still exist?
- Where they are now?
- Paid the \$? -- **Sending for US Vital Records – What is available? Where is it?**
Where to Write - <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/w2w.htm>

4. Have you explored possible *vital record substitutes*? Other sources may provide needed information:

Birth/Age Newspapers ◆ Federal census clues ◆ Church – baptism, christening, confirmation ◆ Adoption ◆ Orphan home, Work house ◆ Apprenticeship, Guardianship ◆ School enrollment, yearbooks, reunions ◆ Delayed birth records ◆ Social Security Application ◆ Medical records ◆ Draft registration, Militia lists, Service records ◆ Mid-wife records ◆ Licenses ◆ Voting records;

Marriage Newspapers incl. engagement & wedding notices, wedding write up ◆ Federal census clues ◆ Marriage License ◆ Church: banns, marriage list, payment for minister and facilities, minister's personal records ◆ City Directories – often list female as spouse or widow of ____ ◆ Later marriage records sometimes ask # of marriage – catch previous marriage/divorce info ◆ Marriage under previous married name;

Divorce Newspapers; Federal census clues ◆ City directory alone – females may revert to maiden name ◆ Remarriage located – bride under previous married name;

Death Newspapers - death/funeral notices, obituary, funeral summary, probate process notices for creditors/debtors, war deaths, news articles ♦ Federal census clues ♦ Church - funeral/memorial mass, burial records; funeral home ♦ Cemetery sexton records ♦ Monument company records ♦ Published tombstone extracts ♦ Military service - last pension payment date, widow's pension starts/ends, military tombstone applications, local veterans' memorial ♦ Reports of local epidemics, disasters ♦ coroner's reports ♦ SSDI; SS ACI;

General Sources State census ♦ Family bibles, letters, journals, pictures, albums ♦ Passenger lists, naturalization ♦ Passport ♦ Medical records ♦ Probate records ♦ Tax rolls ♦ School/College records, transcripts, graduation certificates, awards, yearbooks, scholarships ♦ Criminal, Prison, FBI records ♦ Employment records, professional organizations, credentials/licensure ♦ Fraternal and volunteer service organizations and societies [Masons, GAR, Knights of Columbus, Elks etc.] ♦ County and Local histories;

5. **FamilySearch Wiki – A Good Beginning**

https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/United_States_Genealogy

♦ **FS Record Finder - for more search ideas**

- Select Record Finder at top right of screen.
- Chart has 3 columns: *Searching for (Goal)*, *Best Records to Search*, and *Alternative Records*.
- Chart will provide suggestions for more types of records that may supply the needed data.

♦ **At the U.S. Vital Records page also see sections:**

- Beginners Corner
- How to Find Information – BMD Tutorials
- Vital Records Topics
- Substitute Records

♦ **Specific State:** At the U.S. Vital Records page scroll down to list of states & territories. Select specific location for more information. Each state and territory has done things differently.

➤ **Missouri Background Example:**

- **FS Wiki** → **Missouri State Archives**
- **Reclaim the Records** <https://www.reclaimtherecords.org/>
- **Reclaim the Records Facebook Page** <https://www.facebook.com/ReclaimTheRecords/>
- **Missouri Birth Index 1920-2015** <https://www.missouribirthindex.com/> 1910-1919 soon
- **Missouri Death Index 1968-2015** <https://www.missourideathindex.com/> more soon
- <https://archive.org/details/reclaimtherecords>

6. Other FamilySearch Resources: www.FamilySearch.org Click Search→ then choose from:

a. Records: Search by name, search by state, search by collection

b. Family Tree – One Family Tree worked on by any and all participants

c. Genealogies = AF + IGI + PRF + Partner and Community Trees + Guild of One-Name Studies.

d. Catalog: Search by Surname, Place, Keyword and Subject. [K & S bring up other things.]

e. Books: Only the FHL/BYU digitized books are listed in the FS Catalog.

FS Books/ FS Digital Library = 325,000+ items from 15 libraries. Searchable.

f. Images

7. Free Online Books & Publications

Locating Online Databases Part Three: Digitized Books

https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Locating_Online_Databases_Part_Three:_Digitized_Books

- ◆ **Internet Archive** <https://archive.org/> [orange book icon] 28.5 million eBooks & texts
- ◆ **Hathi Trust** <https://www.hathitrust.org/> 17+ Million digitized items
- ◆ **Google Books** <https://books.google.com/> 15.7 million volumes

8. Libraries: State, University, College and Public Libraries.

- ◆ Institutional Subscriptions: Research databases that cannot be had otherwise.
- ◆ Special Collections; Electronic Databases;
- ◆ **WorldCat** <http://www.worldcat.org/> “WorldCat connects you to the collections and services of more than 10,000 libraries worldwide.” Use to locate books near you or for Interlibrary loan.
- ◆ **Locating Libraries:**
 - List of U.S. State libraries and archives
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_U.S._state_libraries_and_archives
 - Public Libraries <https://publiclibraries.com/> State Public libraries, National, College
 - Google _____[City, County, State, Academic] Library {Libraries}

9. National & State Archives

- ◆ **National Archives (NARA)**
 - Access to Archival Databases (AAD) <https://aad.archives.gov/aad/> Online databases.
 - Vital Records at NARA <https://www.archives.gov/research/vital-records>
- ◆ **Council of State Archivists [CoSA]** www.statearchivists.org/connect/resources-state/
- ◆ **ThoughtCo.** - U.S. State Archives Online (originals in possession of State)
<https://www.thoughtco.com/us-state-archives-online-1422754>
- ◆ **Illinois State Archives** <https://www.cyberdriveillinois.com/departments/archives/> see Databases

10. Digital Archives:

- ◆ Digital State Archives <https://sites.google.com/site/statearchives/home?authuser=0>
- ◆ DPLA Digital Public Library of America <http://dp.la/>
- ◆ LOC Multi-State Collaborations <https://www.loc.gov/rr/program/bib/statememory/#Multi>
- ◆ Mountain West Digital Library <http://mwdl.org/> Includes: UT, NV, ID, MT & HI
- ◆ LOC State Digital Resources: Memory Projects, Online Encyclopedias, Historical & Cultural Materials Collections <https://www.loc.gov/rr/program/bib/statememory/>
- ◆ Arizona Memory Project <https://azmemory.azlibrary.gov/> At menu see Contributing Institutions.
- ◆ State Resource Guides <https://www.loc.gov/rr/program/bib/states/>
- ◆ Google: _____County Archives

11. Archives and Manuscript Collections

- ◆ ArchiveGrid <http://beta.worldcat.org/archivegrid/> Locate Archives, search across collections by location, topic, event, surname or full name.
- ◆ National Union Catalog of Manuscript Collection, a.k.a. “NUCMC”
<http://www.loc.gov/coll/nucmc/oclcsearch.html>
- ◆ Library Res Guide for Finding Manuscripts & Arch.
<https://guides.library.harvard.edu/archives/us>
- ◆ State & Regional Sources for Online Finding Aids
<https://guides.library.harvard.edu/archives/us#AF>
- ◆ CLIR: Hidden Collections Registry <http://registry.clir.org/> Projects in progress

12. State, Regional, County and Local Historical and Genealogical Societies:

- ◆ State Historical Societies in the United States

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_U.S._state_historical_societies_and_museums

◆ Note: A combination search is available for State Archives, Libraries, and Historical Societies at Genealogy Trails <http://genealogytrails.com/main/statearchives.html>

◆ List of Historical Societies - https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_historical_societies

Scroll to United States and search state by state.

◆ Google _____ [town, city, county, state] Genealogical Society or Genealogy Societies in _____ [state, region, county, town, etc.]

◆ State Historical Society of Missouri: Digital Collections <https://shsmo.org/collections/digital>

State Historical Society of Missouri - **Basic Genealogy: Vital Records**

Class Video <https://shsmo.org/news/2021/basic-genealogy-pt4> Vital Records Class Handout

<https://files.shsmo.org/handouts/BasicGenealogy04-VitalRecords.pdf>

13. Revisit the Courthouse – Explore less common record types and learn terminology:

https://familysearch.org/wiki/en/United_States_Court_Records.

◆ Consider coroner's reports and records, licenses, public office appointments, civil & criminal lawsuits, property disputes & elections

<http://www.genealogytoday.com/articles/reader.mv?ID=1508>

◆ Death Records: 10 Documents Every Genealogist Should Acquire – Dollarhide

<http://www.genealogyblog.com/?p=18043> Consider ordering documents you cannot obtain free.

14. Government Agencies and Other Repositories – Hunting with Google

◆ Search for “state + agency of interest” example: Arizona & Health Department or “State + Free + Record of Interest” example “Arizona + Free + Death Records”

Result = Arizona Health Department

<https://www.azdhs.gov/licensing/vital-records/genealogy/index.php>

◆ See **Social Security Death Index** [FS, ANC] & SS Application and Claims Index [ANC]

<http://www.genesearch.com/socialsecurity.html>

15. Free Premium [i.e. pay] Websites available at the FHC Portal – in person. Go to

<https://www.familysearch.org/help/helpcenter/article/what-genealogy-websites-are-available-in-family-history-centers>

The 19th Century British Lib.

Newspapers Digital Archive;

Alexander Street Press;

Arkiv Digital Online –

Swedish Records;

FamNet-New Zealand;

Fold3--US Military Records;

Kinpoint Premium;

Newspapers.com

Paper Trail – Western

Migration Records;

Puzzilla & 1911 British Cen.

Also LDS Partner Sites:

American Ancestors;

Ancestry.com;

FindMyPast;

Geneanet;

MyHeritage;

16. Lists, Links, Portals and Short Cuts

◆ Online Searchable B, M, Divorce and Death Indexes <https://www.deathindexes.com/sites.html>

◆ Marriage Records for Genealogy <https://mhl.org/marriage-records-genealogy>

◆ USGenWeb www.usgenweb.org Includes state and county websites for the entire U.S.

◆ Linkpendium <http://www.linkpendium.com/> Search by Localities or Surnames and topics.

- ◆ Genealogy Trails <http://genealogytrails.com/>
- ◆ Cyndi's List www.cyndislist.com List of sites organized by category and/or location.
Cyndi's List: U.S. Vital Records - <https://www.cyndislist.com/us/vital/> Select State.
- ◆ Random Acts of Genealogical Kindness – Vital Records <http://www.raogk.org/vital-records/>
Also select State Guides at the top of page > Choose state + review specifics> choose county
- ◆ Vital Records Online by State <https://www.thoughtco.com/vital-records-online-by-state-1422785>
- ◆ Free Arizona Digital Archives for Genealogy
<https://www.sassyjanegenealogy.com/free-arizona-digital-archives/>

17. More Awesome Websites for Vital Records Info:

- ◆ **Cemeteries**
 - **FindAGrave** www.findagrave.com
 - **Interment.net** www.interment.net
 - **National Gravesite Locator** <http://gravelocator.cem.va.gov/> National Cemeteries
- ◆ **Western States Marriage Index:** AK, AZ, CA, CO, ID, MT, NM, NV, OR, UT, UT Ter, WA, WY <https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/1854302>
- ◆ **Italian Gen Group** - NYC 5 Boroughs - vitals B, M, D <http://www.italiengen.org/> Not just Italians.

18. Newspapers – Almost anything! Births, marriages, deaths, divorces, business ads, election results, applicants for marriage licenses, school programs, club meetings, crimes, accidents, natural disasters;

- ◆ **Chronicling America -LOC** <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/> Free digitized newspapers.
- ◆ **The Ancestor Hunt** <http://www.theancestorhunt.com/> “39,100+ links to free newspapers” , “3,600+ obituary collection & indexes” & tutorials
- ◆ **Newspapers.com U.S. Marriage Index, 1800s-1999 on Ancestry.com 600+ million pages** <https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/62116/> includes marriage license applications, wedding announcements. See video <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9b0yr6LH690>
Newspapers.com U.S. Obituary Index, 1800s-current 810,467,407
<https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/61843/> Obit. Index to become available at FS.

19. When Standard Vital Records Do Not Exist

- ◆ Your Guide to Finding and Using U.S. Vital Records <http://www.barbsnow.net/VitalRecs.html>
- ◆ Birth, Marriage, and Death (BMD) Record Links
http://www.theancestorhunt.com/bmd-links.html#.W_FadehKjct 3 articles:
 - 27 Ways to find ancestor Birth Information,
 - 22 Ways to Find Ancestor Marriage Information, and
 - 21 Ways to Find Ancestor Death Information. See Links.
- ◆ Vital Records Alternatives <http://vita-brevis.org/2015/04/7-vital-record-alternatives/>
- ◆ Alternative Records and Genealogical Research
<http://thegscc.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/08/Alternative-Records-and-Genealogical-Research.pdf>
- ◆ **Book:** The Family Tree Problem Solver; Marsha Hoffman Rising; Family Tree Books; Cincinnati, Ohio, 2005; revised 2nd edition 2011, 3d edition 2019; All are good.

20. More Insight in to Family Deaths or Disappearances

- ◆ **Epidemics and Pandemics in the U.S.** <http://www.joycetice.com/articles/epidemics.htm>

- ◆ **GenDisasters** <http://www.gendisasters.com/> Fire, Flood, Earthquake, Industrial, Mining, etc. Orphanages, Veteran/Soldiers Homes, Asylums, Prisons, County Farms and Poorhouses.
- ◆ **US Orphan Research** https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/United_States_Orphan_Research
- ◆ **Your Guide to Finding Orphaned & Adopted Ancestors**
<http://www.barbsnow.net/adoption.htm>
- ◆ **US Adoption Research**
https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/United_States_Adoption_Research
- ◆ **Asylum Projects** https://www.asylumprojects.org/index.php/Main_Page
- ◆ **Poorhouses & Poverty** <http://www.cyndislist.com/poor/>
<http://www.cyndislist.com/poor/general/>
- ◆ **Prisons: Cyndi's List** <http://www.cyndislist.com/> Location →USA→ State → Prisons & Prisoners or see Prisons, Prisoners & Outlaws - General Resources <http://www.cyndislist.com/prisons/general/>
- ◆ **Prisons - Ancestry.com**→ Search →Card Catalog→ Keyword Prison→ Filter by Location – USA
Note: Prisons, veteran's homes, poor farms, etc. often had their own cemeteries and kept their own records.
- ◆ **Blacksheep Ancestors** <https://www.blacksheepancestors.com/> Prisons, Convicts, Outlaws & Criminals, Court Records, Executions, Insane Asylums, Pirates;

BONUS

21. Have You Googled? The Clem Oswald Story

22. US Federal Census Clues

Census Records.Com 1790-1940 https://www.censusrecords.com/content/1790_Census
Scroll down the page and see the links for each census from 1790-1940

Looking for Ancestor Clues in US Census Records

<https://www.familytreemagazine.com/records/census/ancestors-clues-census-records/>

23. Legal Ages: If you are searching for an approximate birth year it helps to know what the minimum age was for various court and civic processes. Here are some articles that may help:

Part 1: How old did folks have to be <https://www.legalgenealogist.com/2012/01/17/part-1-how-old/>

Part 2: How old did folks have to be <https://www.legalgenealogist.com/2012/01/19/part-2-how-old/>

Legal Age <https://genfiles.com/articles/legal-age/>

United States Legal Ages https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/United_States_Legal_Ages

NOTE: All urls checked as of 23 Mar 2021