Recommended Online Genealogy Resources

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General Resources

Access Genealogy has one of the largest collections of free online resources for genealogy research in the United States. Among the hundreds of thousands of websites, researchers will find a wide range of records and U.S. history, though their specialty is Native American materials. https://accessgenealogy.com/

Cyndi's List is a database with thousands of links, all well organized, and is considered the go-to place for genealogy research. It's basically a card catalog for genealogy websites. The categories list or the search bar can be used to find websites related to specific topics, though browsing categories is strongly encouraged. The site is free to use though some of the links will be to paid sites. Cyndi uses a dollar sign icon to indicate when this is the case. http://www.cyndislist.com/

Digital Public Library of America (DPLA) collaborates with libraries, archives, and museums across the United States to allow for discovery of materials from the many cultural institutions in America all in one place. Over 53 million images, texts, videos, and sounds can be found at DPLA. All of the materials are publicly viewable though some are still under copyright, but users can easily check the status of materials of interest. This free website provides guides to explain more about how it can help with family history research https://dp.la/guides/for-family-research-guide-to-dpla or other activities. https://dp.la/

Europeana displays historical materials from thousands of cultural institutions across Europe. Libraries, archives, museums, and galleries share materials such as books, newspapers, music, videos on art, artwork, science, sports, archaeology, and more. Materials are free to use and users are encouraged to share their creative ways of using the materials. https://www.europeana.eu/en

Familysearch is one of the most recommended websites by genealogists of all skills. A free account is required but the site is free to search. https://familysearch.org/ Many services are provided, such as:

A historical records database. https://www.familysearch.org/en/search/
A catalog of digital books. https://www.familysearch.org/en/library/books/
A learning center. https://www.familysearch.org/en/help/helpcenter/learning-center/
Free 20 minute consultations. https://www.familysearch.org/en/help/helpcenter/one-on-one
Their very popular wiki, which contains thousands of articles on many topics and locations, is a highly recommended resource. https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/Main_Page

Genealogy Tip of the Day is a useful site with very short tips on all kinds of subjects. Sometimes simple is the most helpful. Tips can be received by email or by "following" the page on Facebook. http://genealogytipoftheday.com/

Internet Archive/Wayback Machine is an excellent site for researchers to use. Free material (out of copyright) of all kinds from books to videos are available here. These are generally available for download in various formats. The census records can be found on this site, though they are not indexed. Another popular feature, the Wayback Machine, can be used to find archived versions of webpages that are no longer working, though not all websites/pages will be archived. Another feature of Internet Archive is the ability to check out digital books (see Online Books section). https://archive.org/

Library of Congress (LoC) serves the United States Congress, is America's national library, and oversees the United States Copyright Office. LoC contains over 170 million items from all over the world and in many languages and formats. Materials include oral histories, images, documents, newspapers, sound recordings, maps, and so much more. https://www.loc.gov/ Many services and resources are provided, such as:

Genealogy Research Guides https://guides.loc.gov/sb.php?subject_id=152244

Preservation information https://www.loc.gov/preservation/about/faqs/index.html

Veteran's History Project https://www.loc.gov/programs/veterans-history-project/

National Genealogical Society has "organized helpful tips, articles, and recommended resources for every level of family researcher" and they "offer a free sampling of beneficial articles from NGS Magazine, NGS Quarterly, and NGS Monthly". A few resources listed here require creating a free account. https://www.ngsgenealogy.org/free-resources/

Specialized

Evidence Explained is an excellent website for learning about sources and analyzing evidence. The forum is quite active with lots of great discussions, which are also shared on social media. The book of the same name is considered a must-have item in any genealogy library. https://www.evidenceexplained.com/

The Legal Genealogist, Judy Russell: is the place to go and the person to contact for researchers who need to know anything about laws, courthouses, copyright, ethics, or anything even remotely related. Judy is also an excellent presenter, so it is worth signing up for any free event at which she's speaking. Her blog is very popular and her opinion on legal matters, in particular, are highly respected. http://legalgenealogist.com/

National Archives & Records Administration (NARA) has many resources and tips, and researchers can order military records through the website. They also do a virtual genealogy fair each year,

which is another terrific learning opportunity (see Genealogy Series in the Attend Workshops and Conferences section). http://www.archives.gov/research/genealogy/start-research/

National Genealogical Society (NGS) Genealogical Proof Standard (GPS) & free resources pages
NGS has a free resource to help researchers learn about Understanding Genealogical Proof. Other links on this webpage provide additional resources. https://www.ngsgenealogy.org/going-to-the-next-level/understanding-genealogical-proof/

Random Acts of Genealogical Kindness (RAOGK) is "a global volunteer organization". Volunteers obtain documents, images, etc. for those who cannot get to them. The site also provides state guides and record guides. Learn more about the process at their site: https://raogk.org/

Books online

Some books can be found online, either in full or as a preview. Many books that are out of copyright (including some town histories!) can be downloaded for free at these websites:

Cyndislist provides links to several more websites at which digital books can be found: http://www.cyndislist.com/books/ebooks/

Google Books: http://books.google.com/

Hathitrust is a collaboration of academic and research libraries who provide access to digital materials as much as copyright law allows. Some materials will be limited to member institutions, but many useful materials are available to everyone. https://www.hathitrust.org/

Internet Archive has thousands of books that are out of copyright and can be viewed online and/or downloaded for free. https://archive.org/details/texts

Internet Archive also loans digital books that are not out of copyright. Create a free account to borrow books: https://archive.org/details/inlibrary. Learn more about the process here: https://help.archive.org/help/borrowing-from-the-lending-library/

Gravesite Collections

BillionGraves & Find A Grave are two separate websites which both provide free access to burial & final disposition information around the world. Data and photos are added by volunteers, so not all are online, but there are millions of memorials available. Photos, GPS data, transcriptions, and obituaries are among the information that might be found on these sites. Anyone can create a free account and contribute, or use other features such as creating lists of relevant memorials or requesting photos of headstones.

https://billiongraves.com/

https://www.findagrave.com/

Maps

Atlas Of Historical County Boundaries is an interactive map that allows researchers to view boundary changes in the United States over time from the colonial era through 2012. Additionally, researchers will find chronological text descriptions, and metadata in two forms: a detailed document and a one-page summary. http://publications.newberry.org/ahcbp/index.html

Cyndislist includes an entire category about maps! Choose from the Category Index (Topographical, Ethnic Group, Military, Fire Insurance, etc.), then explore the links Cyndi has compiled. Some will be free, some will require payment. https://cyndislist.com/maps/

David Rumsey Map Collection is a collection of over 151,000 digitized maps (so far!) that range from the 16th–21st century and includes maps from all over the world. A variety of items are included such as atlases, wall maps, school geographies, maritime charts, and manuscript maps. High resolution images are available for viewing, and the site also provides many tools which allow users to interact with the content in a variety of ways. http://www.davidrumsey.com/

Library of Congress Map Collections includes thousands of maps from many events, locations, and more. Maps from Sanborn Fire Insurance, Railroads, Civil War, Panoramic (Bird's Eye Views), National Parks, and so much more can be found among the digital collections. https://www.loc.gov/maps/collections/

Maine Bird's Eye View Maps 1870-1905 is an online collection of maps that offer a unique view of Maine towns and cities. Materials for this collaborative database were provided by Osher Map Library and Smith Center for Cartographic Education (OML), the Maine Historic Preservation Commission (MHPC), and the Maine Historical Society (MHS). https://digitalcommons.usm.maine.edu/oml-maine-birds-eye-view-maps/

Maine Historical Maps contains links to various websites that provide historical maps of Maine. https://www.mainegenealogy.net/map_search.asp

Old Maps Online is a collaboration of various organizations and institutions including universities, libraries, museums, private collectors (such as David Rumsey), Geographic Information Systems and technology experts, and others. Search results include links to the organization or institution at which the map is held. http://www.oldmapsonline.org/

OnTheWorldMap Website is a collection of free printable maps for traveling or education needs. Though these aren't historic, they can be useful for genealogists who want to explore the areas from which their ancestors came. https://ontheworldmap.com/

Osher Map Library and Smith Center for Cartographic Education at the University of Southern Maine contains almost 500,000 cartographic items dating from 1475. More than 75,000 of these items from around the world are freely available for online viewing. https://oshermaps.org/

Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps provide details about structures, water systems, and more. The maps included keys which are important to understanding and interpreting the information. Learn more about them, and find digital versions of some the maps here: https://www.loc.gov/collections/sanborn-maps/about-this-collection/

Newspapers

Chronicling America from the Library of Congress is a free resource that provides access to some digitized newspapers from 1777-1963. Information includes the date ranges of publication, geographic reach, frequency of publication, and more. https://www.loc.gov/collections/chronicling-america/

U.S. Newspaper Directory from the Library of Congress provides information about American newspapers published from 1690-present. Check the directory to see what newspapers existed in the locations of interest, including ethnic and religious newspapers, and to find out where to access them in libraries and archives. https://www.loc.gov/collections/directory-of-us-newspapers-in-american-libraries/?searchType=advanced

Cyndislist has links to MANY newspaper resources including general resources, ethnic newspapers, farming and agricultural newspapers, religious newspapers, and much more. The site is free to use though some of the links will be to paid sites. Cyndi uses a dollar sign icon to indicate when this is the case. https://www.cyndislist.com/newspapers/

Old Fulton New York Post Cards is a free website whose title does not convey all the materials they have available. This link goes to a webpage where one can "Search over 57,255,105 Old Newspaper pages from US & Canada" https://fultonhistory.com/Fulton.html

Google News Archives contains historical newspapers digitized during a project that lasted from 2006-2011. Newspapers are arranged by title, not location, so it's helpful to know which newspapers were available in the locations being sought (tip – check Chronicling America). Each newspaper indicates the number of editions available and the date range. https://news.google.com/newspapers?hl=en