



Locating Records in Archives From Your Couch

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Myths:

#1. It's All Online.

Although billions of records are digitized, billions upon billions more remain.

#2. If it's not online, it doesn't exist.

There are many reasons records which exist are not online, including cost of digitizing, existing laws, and privacy concerns.

#3. If it's not online now, it will be eventually.

Cost of digitization alone makes this unlikely.

Challenges to Locating Records:

Our ancestors moved or did business in neighboring cities and counties.

Borders moved around our ancestors.

Record creators, especially governmental creators, kept records they created after the jurisdiction boundaries changed.

Records have moved:

Jurisdictionally [such as court and government records].

With the people who created or received them [including items like Bibles and letters].

Records created by the FAN club are not considered.

Collection descriptions do not include detailed indexes; searching by individual name is ineffective.

Success Strategies

Identify a specific research question. What do you want to know?

Identify types of records which are most likely to contain information about that question.

Identify FAN club members that might have had knowledge about the answer to the question.

List the times and places these records were most likely created in.

Begin searching where the records were created and expand as needed.

Don't assume the records are still where they were created!

Suggested Repository Types to Search:

State and National Archives

County Courthouses and Recorder Offices

Historical and Genealogical Societies

Occupational Archives

Church Archives and local Parishes

Religious and Fraternal Organizations

Lineage Societies

Public and University Libraries

Museums

Home Sources and Familial Collections

Search Tips:

Subject Searches compare your search terms against the subject headings in the catalog entry. Keyword Searches are free text searches, and may require refining because of large numbers of results.

Suggested keyword and subjects:

- Location your ancestor lived in.
- Your ancestor's occupation, such as "coal miner" or "tobacco stripper."
- Laws which may have directly affected your ancestor, such as the Chinese Exclusion Act.
- The Religion of your ancestor, and specific churches they attended.
- Schools or employers your ancestor is connected to.
- "Nicknames" for events or groups, such as "Homesteaders" or "49ers."
- Historical Events; such as women's suffrage or the Great Famine of Ireland.
- Military battles or regiments.

Research Help:

The repository may conduct research for a fee. This helps offset the cost of providing the records to you and helps support the organization. If they cannot assist with research, consider the following options:

- Association of Professional Genealogists www.apgen.org
- National Genealogical Society: Society & Organization Directory
<https://ngsmembers.ngsgenealogy.org/Societies-and-Organizations-Directory2>
- Consider trading research time with a genealogy friend.
- Ask family who live near the repository, even if they aren't genealogists.
- Obituary Lookups <https://www.facebook.com/groups/FREEOBITUARYLOOKUPS/>

Bibliography & Resources:

- <https://www.cyndislist.com/> : A collection of links to genealogically relevant sources.
- <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/search/titles/> : Chronicling America's US Newspaper Directory.
- <http://www.worldcat.org/> Search the collections of over 10,000 libraries worldwide.
- <https://researchworks.oclc.org/archivegrid/> Search the archival material holdings of over 1,000 repositories.
- https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Main_Page FamilySearch Research Wiki.
- <http://www.oac.cdlib.org/> Online Archive of California, 120 California archives, libraries, museums, and other institutions.

William Thorndale and William Dollarhide, *Map Guide to the U.S. Federal Censuses, 1790-1920* (Baltimore, Maryland: Genealogical Publishing Co., Inc.), 1987.