

Are You Ready to Unlock Your Genealogy?

DIANE L. RICHARD LOOKS AT TWO OF THE NEWEST ONLINE RESOURCES FOR INTERNET GENEALOGISTS



I REPORTED IN the December/January 2007 issue of *Internet Genealogy* that two new projects, Footnote and AncestorsOnBoard, were scheduled to go “live” early in 2007. Both have done so and we are excited to report what these new resources contain and how they seem to be working out.

FOOTNOTE

www.footnote.com

Overview

The goal of this project is to place digital versions of historical documents online. The original preview version of the website focused on select documents from the Pennsylvania Archives and includes Early Settlements, Revolutionary War, Whisky Rebellion and more. You could search these documents and get a feel for how the search results are presented and the interface for viewing the documents. It was clear that there would be excellent access to digital documents on the final website and that a powerful search engine and digital viewing interface existed. Many technical elements were “cleaned up” and improved during the test phase, as new content was added.

With the website now fully operational and documents continually being added, I can talk in some detail about what the website contains and how it operates.

Membership is free and entitles you to: Search all titles and view any free title, upload your own documents and photos, and create a member page on any topic. For an additional \$9.99 US per month (or \$99 US per year), you can purchase an all-access membership which entitles you to: Access all images on Footnote, save, share, download and print images, upload your own images and create your own member pages.

As stated on Footnote’s website: “We have created powerful tools that let you interact with and enhance what you find. Annotate important information on the image, easily organize and share your findings or collaborate with people who have similar interests.

Footnote also gives you an opportunity to share your story, ideas or research with others by creating your own ‘Member Pages’.”

When you visit the site, you are first greeted by a teaser blurb that, each time you access the home page, will highlight a featured database. Below that are links to a few of the featured databases and you can also learn about “What’s Coming Soon to Footnote”. And you will also see a link inviting you to “See the introduction video”. I found the video a bit slow to load (using my cable

access), but once the content was all “buffered”, the video played smoothly.

It is well worth taking a few moments to watch this video. It will help you make the most of the site, as it gives you an excellent overview of the tools available; more than I can share with you in this article!

A key element on the main page — and repeated throughout the site — is the search and browse components. You can “browse all titles” to see a comprehensive list. Or, just above the “browse all” icon, is a search function. Unless you truly want to browse through all the documents in the collection, or have a very specific time, place or document focus, it’s probably best to start with a global website search. Remember, however, that broad searches can often bring up many, many entries.

Searching

A document set I found of particular interest was that for the Southern Claims Commission, which was for filing reimbursement claims for items used by the US Army during the Civil War. I am currently working on a project involving an Alfred Wilson of Giles County, Tennessee. Since I didn’t find a record of him serving in the war, it made sense to check

with the Southern Claims Commission filings — and I found Wilson and his claim! Since I knew from another source that Wilson should have a disallowed claim, I used the search engine to locate it.

The search engine will search on all documents. If you want to narrow the range of the search, you can use Boolean terms (e.g. AND) or you can use quotes around your search term (e.g. “Alfred Wilson”).

You can also use the “browse” feature to locate files. In fact, for this situation, the search engine found Wilson and his claim as the first entry, whereas, when navigating through the browse menu, Wilson isn’t listed for Giles County! (A reminder that indices can be incomplete or mis-linked, so the absence of a record may only indicate a technical or index glitch.)

I did notice that the names are alphabetized by forename and not surname and it was still easy to navigate through the list.

Viewing/Printing

Once you click on an image, you will have the option to enlarge or shrink it, add an annotation or comment, add it to a gallery, download or print the image. If the document has multiple pages, thumbnails of each page of the document will display along the bottom of the screen. However, you can hide the thumbnails should you wish to have a larger viewing area.

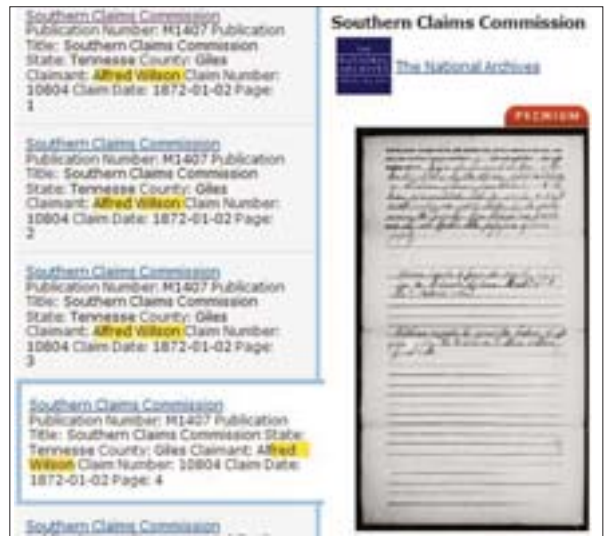
The files downloaded are in JPEG format and range in size from about 750 KB to 1.5 MB, so they are good resolution and can easily be viewed on your home computer, either after you download the images or in real-time. The download process was straightforward; however, you can only download one page at a time.

Finding this claim online — which typically would have required a visit to a National Archives and Records

Administration (NARA) location and involved lots of searching to find the appropriate entry — took little time and resulted in a high-resolution copy, saved to my computer. If I had wanted to print it, I have that option also — the image will print full size and have the footnote log and image identification information at the top.

Annotations

To take advantage of the Annotation feature, click on “Add Annotation”. This brings up a box (to place where the annotation is to go), a conversation bubble and options for person, place, date or text. If you want to note the people in the document, you can keep clicking on “person”,



Above: The entry found for the claim by Alfred Wilson to the Southern Claims Commission; the fourth page of the claim is displayed and to the left is an overview of the description of the found document.

Left: Browsing the Southern Claims Commission for claims from Giles County, Tennessee.

put in each person’s name, one at a time. If you want to add a place, the steps are virtually the same. The image on the next page shows what the viewing screen looks like once I have annotated a page of the file (you can put annotations on every page, if you want). It now shows that I have annotated this page and how many “types” of each annotation there are. I also added this image to my gallery to remind me that the file has been found and is available for viewing.

Keep in mind that, with any index, the entries are a result of human input, digital scanning and/or original spelling. So, remember to try both name and place variants. For instance,

be necessary. Though I knew that a George F. Myers had served and knew his unit, I didn’t have the regimental information. So, I did a global search on George F. Myers and found an entry. The information provided tells me that, in addition to his name, he served with Company A, 3rd Regiment, Kentucky Calvary, he died on 27 November 1915 in Crofton, Kentucky — Bingo! I also noticed that the card, shown on the next page, says “dead” as it was Myers’ widow who filed for his pension in 1915, after he initially filed in 1880.

And, in case you are wondering, there are databases besides those that deal with the Civil War. You can research from the

Unlock Your Genealogy

Continental Congress and FBI case files in the 20th century to Naturalization Records for New York, Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, Maryland and the Eastern District of Louisiana (for select courts in select time periods).

Recent historical research had me looking into some files of the FBI for the same time period as the posted records. The challenge here is that the information is organized by case file. So, unless you have that particular information, a general "search"

will be your best means of locating a particular record. Keep in mind, however, that it's harder to correlate your findings with the content of the FBI case files than when

searching on the Civil War records. Luckily, the connections between my search terms and the entries found were clear.

Member Pages

Another great tool is the ability to create "member" pages. Simply enter a title and description and you are on the way to having a personal page. I created a page to mirror the research done on the Wilson family of Giles, Tennessee. You can create as many member pages as you want.

For each member page, you can create as many associated "topic" pages as you like. I created a page that has a link to the Southern Claims Commission "folder" for the claim of Alfred Wilson. I was able to attach an image to this page. The attached images can be from your "gallery" or you can upload other images.

Partnership with NARA

It was recently announced that Footnote.com agreed to a partnership with NARA "to digitize selected records from [its] vast holdings." The 4.5 million pages that have been digitized so far are now available at

www.footnote.com/nara.

As of press time, the NARA documents included on Footnote.com include:

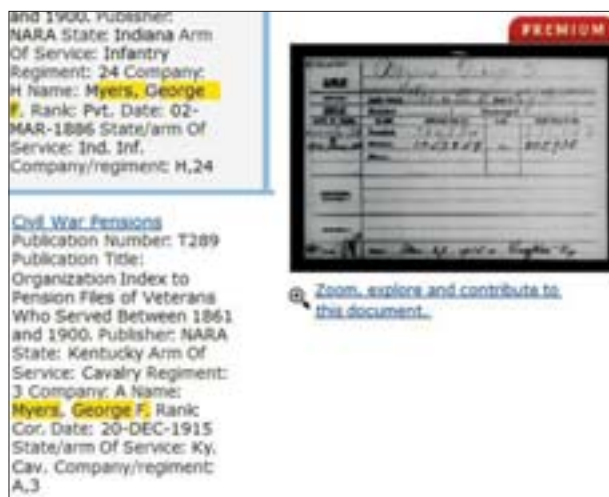
- Papers of the Continental Congress — the correspondence, journals, committee reports and records of the Continental Congress (1774-89).

- Constitutional Convention Records — journals of proceedings, early drafts and other papers relating to the formation of the US Constitution.
- Mathew B. Brady Collection of Civil War Photographs — Brady led a team of photographers that captured thousands of images of the Civil War.



A Footnote's member page created on Alfred Wilson and his Southern Claims Commission claim.

- Southern Claims Commission — in the 1870s, southerners claimed compensation from the US government for items used by the Union Army, ranging from corn



Above: The Civil War Pension Card for George F. Myers as it appears on the Footnote website.

Left: An example of a found image/document that has been annotated in Footnote.

and horses, to trees and church buildings.

- Civil War Pension Index — index to pension applications for service in the US Army between 1861 and 1917, grouped according to the units in which the veterans served.
- Investigative Case Files of the Federal Bureau of Investigation 1908-22.

This overview just scratches the surface of what you can find on Footnote.com and it is anticipated, especially with the NARA partnership, that a steady stream of digital documents — previously unavailable over the Internet — will become available. With the ability to find and download images of original documents, annotate images, post your own related images, create member pages and network with others, there is a lot of potential for the utility of Footnote.com for the genealogist, family historian or simply the history researcher.

ANCESTORS ON BOARD

www.ancestorsonboard.com

This project sees www.findmypast.com (formerly 1837Online.com) working in association with the UK's

National Archives. The site features a database of the BT27 Outward Passenger Lists for long-distance voyages leaving the British Isles from 1890 to 1960. This database will help, not only those researching British roots, but possibly those ancestors who traveled from elsewhere in Europe. Most Scandinavians and those who traveled from German, French and other European ports, often went through Southampton or Liverpool if they were traveling to Australia, India, New Zealand, South Africa or elsewhere.

AncestorsOnBoard.com is now up and running and, at press time, contained the passenger lists for 1890 to 1909. The data can also be searched on the parent website, FindMyPast.com.

When you input your search parameters, you will be told how many exact matches and also how many close matches.

To actually view a match, you will be charged five units to view a transcript and 30

- units for an image. The most basic pay-per-view pricing schemes are:
- 90-day plan: 50 units @ about \$0.20 US or about \$10 US
 - 365-day plan, 313 units @ about \$0.16 US or about \$50 US

Note that FindMyPast.com also has a subscription plan that does not appear to yet include the passenger records. Purchasing the units was straightforward.

Basics of Searching

Although I have basically accounted for all my Maleckis who emigrated, I did a search on Malecki and checked that I would like to "include variants" in the search. The results were presented clearly and I was then given the option to choose a transcript or an image and incur the associated charge. Whether or not these are some overlooked ancestors of mine will require further research!

For some reason, when I clicked on "view" for either the transcript or the original record, I

was not able to get it to display, though, I could right click and open the information in a new window. I don't know if this is just my computer or a bug to be aware of.

The transcript included the pertinent information: Name, Date of departure, Port of departure, Passenger destination port, Passenger destination, Age, Marital status, Sex, Occupation, Passenger recorded on, Ship and additional details.

First name(s)	Last name	Sex	Age	Port of departure	Destination country	Destination port	Year of departure
Malecki	Michalina	F	32	Liverpool	USA	New York	1905
Malecki	Adam	M	30	Liverpool	USA	New York	1905
Malecki	Adam	M	28	Liverpool	USA	Philadelphia	1905
Malecki	Adam	M	26	Liverpool	USA	Boston	1905
Malecki	Adam	M	24	Liverpool	USA	Portland	1905
Malecki	Adam	M	22	Liverpool	USA	Portland	1905
Malecki	Adam	M	20	Liverpool	USA	Philadelphia	1905
Malecki	Adam	M	18	Liverpool	USA	New York	1905
Malecki	Adam	M	16	Liverpool	USA	New York	1905
Malecki	Adam	M	14	Liverpool	USA	New York	1905
Malecki	Adam	M	12	Liverpool	USA	New York	1905
Malecki	Adam	M	10	Liverpool	USA	New York	1905
Malecki	Adam	M	8	Liverpool	USA	New York	1905
Malecki	Adam	M	6	Liverpool	USA	New York	1905
Malecki	Adam	M	4	Liverpool	USA	New York	1905
Malecki	Adam	M	2	Liverpool	USA	New York	1905
Malecki	Adam	M	0	Liverpool	USA	New York	1905

Above: Search form for AncestorsOnBoard.com. Left: Search results for a search for a passenger record for Malecki (and variants).

lists that I did not realize the original documents could be in color — until now!

As the lists for 1910-60 are made available online, it will be more

convenient for you to research a British or European ancestor who emigrated in the 1890s, right up to the mid-1900s. When combined with online passengers lists for Castle Garden, Ellis Island, Canadian ports, Hamburg, Bremen and other ports, finding and tracking our ancestors will be that much easier.

Searching Revisited

I also searched on an entry that had taken me years to find previously. I eventually found it on EllisIsland.org, and learned the following:

First Name: Michalina
Last Name: Owezarch
Ethnicity: Polish
Last Place of Residence: Kelisch
Date of Arrival: August 12, 1905
Age at Arrival: 32
Gender: F
Marital Status: M
Ship of Travel: Etruria
Port of Departure: Liverpool
Manifest Line Number: 0024

Passenger List Contents

Remember, for US passenger records, the information required was minimal through 1890, and, starting in 1891, more information was recorded. In 1906 and 1907, even more detailed information was required including birth place and name and address of nearest relative in native country. Myra Vanderpool Gormley has an informative article on US passenger's lists at www.genealogy.com/8_mgpai.html.

You will find these BT27 Passenger lists even more sparse. The information included is only name, age, occupation and (from 1922) a UK address for each passenger. The AncestorsOnBoard website has a nice overview of these passenger lists at www.ancestersonboard.com/static/about.html. It is noted that "There is no single, standard format. Passenger lists vary in size and in length, they changed over time, and different shipping lines had

Unlock Your Genealogy

I took the opportunity to see how easily I could find this person in the AncestorsOnBoard site. Could it handle this spelling of the surname, which is actually a variant of Owczarek?

Well, it didn't find her when I put in Michalina Owczarek (and said to check variants).

Back when I was first looking for her, I only knew her last place of residence (since I had found her husband arriving separately) and I knew a range of years when she

"Please enter a last name with at least two characters." Sigh. This time I tried no first name (figuring that could have been misspelled) and put in just:

*Last name: Owe**

Sex: Female

Year of departure: 1905 to 1905

Ship name: Etruria

Voila! I finally found her and this is how the entry is on AncestorsOnBoard:

OWEZANK Michulina, 32, F, 1905, Liverpool, USA New York

Keep in mind that indexes are created by people (and machines) reading handwriting, so you, too, may find that your family is indexed in one resource with one spelling and in another resource with a different spelling.

Otherwise, when you search, you will find the entries that match your search criteria and then have the option of looking at just transcription or the actual image. It's nice to see the actual image, although the transcripts appear to include all (or most) of the pertinent data. If you are looking for individuals who traveled under different surnames or if you are interested in seeing who was traveling together from the same village, then I recommend viewing the actual image.

To get news about the project, you may sign up to receive updates to get the latest news and developments.

Whether you are researching an immigrant who came via the UK, a Civil War Veteran or perhaps someone whom the FBI had its eyes on, you will find these databases invaluable.

And, though we know the scope of what AncestorsOnBoard will include, we anticipate that Footnote will have exponential growth as the NARA documents are digitized and other documents are brought online. The explosion of original document portals, such as these, is exciting! Are you ready to unlock your genealogy?

Passenger Record from 3 April 1890, from Glasgow to New York.

emigrated. I did not know which ports she emigrated from or immigrated to. This is the search that I was trying to replicate.

There is a wildcard element to the search engine, so next I tried Michalina Owcz* (note that you cannot use a wildcard + "include variants"). Nothing. Next, I tried Owcz*. Nothing. Now, entering dangerous territory (many search engines do not like you to use less than three letters before a wildcard), I tried Michalina Ow*. And, this time I got an error message "This search is too complex. There must be at least three characters before any wildcard in the last name."

Given that I know from my previous experience that Owe* was not something that I would have tried for a long time, it was serendipitous that I had found her previously. So, I put in the entry found on Ancestry. Nothing. I then tried Michalina, year 1905, and ship *Etruria*. I got an error message

This meant that both her first and last names were indexed differently than on the Ellis Island website. And, when I clicked on a transcript for her entry, the information included a nice bonus — it also listed the other family members, her children, traveling with Michalina:

Name: Michulina OWEZANK

Date of departure: 5 August 1905

Port of departure: Liverpool

Passenger destination port: New York, USA

Passenger destination: New York, USA

Age: 32

Marital Status: Married

Sex: Female

Occupation: Wife

Passenger recorded on: Page 6 of 16

The following people with the same surname travelled on this voyage:

Czeslawa OWEZANK Page 6 of 16

Edward OWEZANK Page 6 of 16

I OWEZANK Page 6 of 16

Joseph OWEZANK Page 6 of 16



Diane L. Richard has been doing genealogy research for almost 20 years. She currently does professional research in North Carolina

and has never lived where any of her ancestors migrated from or to! So, she is very experienced with using the Internet to do research and she can be found online at www.mosaicrpm.com/Genealogy