

Family Tree Connection and Live Roots

I'M ALWAYS LOOKING for new sources of information, as well as more efficient and productive ways to search the plethora of databases that now exist. With so much available on the Internet, this is no longer an easy task. Let's talk about one of the more unique repositories for data, Family Tree Connection, as well as a new search portal, LiveRoots. These are both the brainchild of Illya D'Addezio, who many of you may know from the website Genealogy Today.

FAMILY TREE CONNECTION

Family Tree Connection, www.familytreeconnection.com, is a website that attempts to fill an overlooked niche in the genealogy industry — small documents. The average size of the documents in the collection is less than 1,000 names, with many documents having fewer than 100 names. Many small documents are filled with rich information about our ancestors. The site is subscription based, and a one-year subscription costs \$29.95 US.

Some interesting document sets are reports from railroads and mining inspectors that include information about accidents, insurance reports that include property claims and death benefits (many with cause of death), and tax lists that show property ownership or voting eligibility (e.g., poll taxes). You will also find documents from fraternal organizations, school records, church memberships, business associations, graduation lists, clubs and societies, obituaries and necrologies, employment records, orphanage residents and telephone directories.

Since D'Addezio purchases the documents whose data he includes, they are primarily from North America. And, based on the availability of documents, the col-

lections tend to be geographically slanted to those parts of the country where older documents are more readily available. Therefore, the New England states have more records available.

The database is fully indexed — you can search by a combination of last name, first name, region (e.g., state), city location and year range. You can also browse the collection by document types and location. Typically, 10 to 20 new resources go online every week, typically on Sunday, and the collection currently includes

facts of their life. I try to learn enough to help me and others imagine what that person was like when they were alive. Family Tree Connections' unique collection of documents is the type of resource that can help you do that.

LIVE ROOTS

Live Roots, www.liveroots.com, is a specialized search engine that assists with locating genealogical resources, regardless of where they may be stored. It is a single resource that bridges the gaps between independent genealogy



At Family Tree Connection, you can find documents from clubs, societies, tax lists and more.

more than 4,000 different resources. The resources vary in size, so the total number of names added each week is usually between 5,000 and 15,000.

This is a fun collection of documents to browse. These are the types of resources that really help flesh out your ancestors. Obviously, we all start by confirming the dates and places of birth, marriage, children and death. I don't know about you, but I don't want to be remembered just for my vital statistics! So I certainly don't want to research my ancestors, yet not look beyond the basic

websites, large commercial ancestry repositories and printed family history materials that have not been digitized and published on the web.

Besides the databases at Family Tree Connection, Live Roots includes references to some of these major collections: AfriGeneas, Ancestry.com, DistantCousin.com, Family History Library, FindMyPast.com, Footnote.com, Genealogical Publishing Company, GenealogyBank.com, Interment.net, JewishGen.org, NARA, New England Historic

Genealogical Society, Olive Tree Genealogy and WorldVitalRecords.com. There is also the inclusion of some RSS feeds of many of the popular blogs. A short list of the major data collections currently referenced is available at www.liveroots.com/roots/live.php?xc=HelpTopic&xo=lrhelp&xr=9&xz=lr.com

Because the NARA catalog is being digitized by multiple companies, such as Footnote and Ancestry, their databases are linked to the NARA entries.

A typical search separates results into four groups:

- Surname Results
- Transcribed Ephemera
- Subscription Data (Family Tree Connection and two other projects — the Military Roots Project and Old Town Reports)
- Resource Results

The “Transcribed Ephemera” section covers some of the most interesting documents, and is probably my favorite part of the collection. Some of the documents included in this category are:

- Index of War Ration Books
- Funeral Card Index
- The Margaret Holland Collection
- Business Card Collection

On the left-hand side, you will see an icon legend that explains the icons used. Each type of document or media is tagged with a specific icon. Checking the icons lets you quickly scan a long list of resources to find exactly what you’re looking for. Remember that not all sources of information are created equal. A photo of a funeral card will be better than an online transcription, which might be better than a printed book of the same material and better still than a website that may, or may not, have anything more than links.

The results are ranked by how close to your query they are considered to be, with those ranked highest listed first. Essentially, the search is a combination of “AND” and “OR” logic. The results display the “AND” matches first, followed by the “OR” matches. Results where the word is in the title will rank higher than those where it is in the body, though both types of results are included.

I like this feature; I get frustrated with databases that only search the title — more often than not, the people I seek are not headliners!

And, though the search results focus on the term you enter as a “surname”, this does not mean that you cannot search for a place! For example, if I enter North Carolina, it first assumes that these are two surnames, “North”



Live Roots includes an index of funeral cards, such as this example from 1891 for Mary B. Anderson.

and “Carolina”, and lists those results. Though, when it lists “Resource Results”, these are an alphabetized list of relevant entries for the state of North Carolina.

Remember that a surname like Smith will bring up a lot of results, so use some care if your interest is in a common surname. You may do better visiting the separate large databases, where you can narrow your search parameters.

Also, when you pull up an entry, such as for a 1913 Sussex County (DE) Farm Directory, you may see lists of “Similar Resources” and “Related Resources”. These are suggestions for other resources that you might consider in your search.

LIVE ROOTS RESEARCHER

Another service the site offers is the option to hire a “Live Roots Researcher”. This service allows you to hire a researcher to travel to the location of a variety of resources (e.g., books, microfilm) and obtain a digital copy of the information. The full details for this service are available at www.liveroots.com/about/paid-research.html

Starting in January 2009, the “live” aspect will begin growing rapidly with the addition of more than 500 resources that are not available online. Visitors to the site will be able to request live assistance from professionals in obtaining documents from them.

CONCLUSION

The nature of pulling information from multiple places means that occasionally the results can be daunting for a beginning researcher, especially for a common surname. If your target surname is more obscure, or you are focusing on a geographic locale, the resulting list will be much more manageable! Does this mean that if you are a beginning researcher you shouldn’t use this website? No. It means that it might be a needle-in-a-haystack issue until you have more information on your ancestors, so be patient!

As D’Addezio said, “The ultimate goal, which may or may not be attainable, would be to be able to make one search request and get results from a variety of sources ... all combined. As a genealogy-junkie myself, this has always been something I’ve craved. After a while, it gets tiring going to site after site, plugging the same surnames to see if there is anything new.”



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