

# Net Notes

## GHOST TOWNS USA & UNITED STATES GHOST TOWNS

<http://freepages.history.rootsweb.com/~gtusa/usa.htm> & <http://www.ghosttowns.com/ghosttownsusa.html>

HOW OFTEN DO you find an ancestor listed in a community and when you look at a modern map, you can't find it? That might be because the locale is one of "over 50,000 ghost towns, near ghost towns, semi-ghost towns, and tiny backwater burghs that have faded greatly from their peak times." Many of these places are discussed on these two websites, both of which are organized by state.

Research in North Carolina of some families in Swain County and area introduced me to the Tennessee Valley Authority, the Fontana Lake/Dam Project and the relocation of those buried at Judson Cemetery to Lauada Cemetery; flooding out an area to make a lake creates such a need. The outcome of all this was that the community of Judson (once 600 residents strong) disappeared from the landscape of North Carolina by 1944 when the dam was completed. Judson is one of the listed ghost towns.

Some places are infamous, such as North Carolina's Fort Raleigh/The Lost Colony and Jamestown in Virginia, while many other communities were formed in response to fleeting events, such as the various gold and other rushes, and disappeared just as quickly. Check out California: "crumbling desert ruins to the majestic ghost to Bodie, to the remains of hundreds of transient 49'er gold camps... well over 9,000 locations".

There are those communities affected by the switch from wagon and horse trails to the advent of the railroad. In the summer of 2007, I visited one of these, Appomattox Court House. It was formed in

1819, and rose to historical significance when General Robert E. Lee surrendered to General Ulysses S. Grant there, ending the US Civil War. After the war, the prosperity faltered, the nearby railroad station of Appomattox Station grew and, in 1892, the courthouse burned down. This was the death knell for

Appomattox Court House, as the county seat was transferred to Appomattox Station, which dropped the "station" from its name.

Other communities weren't successful due to the location or conditions that were not conducive to agricultural or some other economic activity. Take for example, Glastenbury (Bennington County), Vermont. "The town was chartered in 1761, and it grew slowly, with only 53 folks living here in 1840... in 1880 reached its peak of 241 people. By the 1930s it had faded and was classified as a ghost town... Because the altitude was a little higher than surrounding towns, the buckwheat, corn, oats, potatoes and rye didn't do as well. Sheep were also raised and the local maples

tapped for syrup. Local trees were harvested and burned for charcoal... [by 1882] the trees were gone and the charcoal industry died out. People left, and by 1930 only seven remained. In 1937 the town was officially disbanded, and the former town is now being reclaimed by nature."

The pages of these websites are filled with many more stories, all of which impacted somebody's ancestors — maybe yours? — DIANE L. RICHARD



*Above: Bodie, California was once home to 10,000 people and is now considered the US's best preserved ghost town.  
Below: Chloride, Arizona once had 2,000 residents.*



## RESOURCE SHELF

<http://www.resourceshelf.com>

THE INTRO TO THIS website is intriguing: "Welcome to ResourceShelf, where dedicated librarians and researchers share the results of their directed (and occasionally quirky) web searches for resources and information."

The key person behind ResourceShelf is Gary Price, a librarian and the Director of Online Information Resources at Ask.com. With that attention grabbing introduction and those credentials, I decided to check it out.

On the left-hand side you find a list of categories. Wearing my Internet genealogist hat, I discovered the following of particular interest: Information Science (Digital Repositories, Digitization Projects, etc.) and Resources (Archives and Special Collections, Arts & Humanities — Genealogy, History, etc.)

With a category called genealogy, how could I resist? Some recent entries in this category were:

- UK: Search the "Burnt" records online for the first time (referring to WWI Records)
- Genealogy Research and Social Networking: Myfamily.com Launches Free, Enhanced Beta Version of Family-Focused Social Networking Site
- U.S. National Archives and FamilySearch Team Up to Digitize and Index Mountains of Historic Documents (See also: Plenty of Primary Material to Go Around, Visit Footnote.)
- National Personnel Records Center Opens more than Six

Million New Military Personnel Files

- Genealogy Research: North America Local and County Histories to Go Online
- A quick peak at Digitization Projects revealed:
- UK: Spectacular Hidden Treasures Online for the First Time
  - UK: 30 Years Later: Historic Documents from 1977 via UK National Archives Now Available (Free)
  - The Race to the Shelf Continues: The Open Content Alliance and Amazon.com

And, an even quicker look at Archives and Special Collections disclosed:

- Chronicling America and Building the National Digital Newspaper Program
- Digging Deep at the National Archives (piece in *Prologue*, the NARA publication)

These are news items that I typically would have learned about from a variety of sources — making it nice to have them in one place. You can also "search" using keywords. And, there is an associated weekly newsletter to which you can subscribe, <http://www.resourceshelf.com/newsletter>

plus an RSS feed, <http://www.resourceshelf.com/feed/>.

Whether you're a "news junkie" or looking for information on new online genealogy research databases, ResourceShelf is great in that it's a collection of resources that aren't solely focused on genealogy, yet have great relevance to our research! — DIANE L. RICHARD



## THE POORHOUSE STORY

<http://www.poorhousestory.com/>

THOUGH WE'D LIKE to think that our ancestors never had need for a poorhouse (poorfarm, almshouse, et al), the vagaries of life sometimes necessitated a stay in such a house — essentially, an early form of what we now call "welfare". This is a great site to learn about the history of the poorhouse system, plus it includes lots of information, organized by state.

As the site states, its purpose is "To provide a clearinghouse for information about 19th century American Poorhouses for... history buffs, genealogists, teachers/students, and others with a similar interest."

I found this site as I was researching George Overby, "a tramp from Fayetteville", as the *Durham Tobacco Plant* newspaper stated in January 1881. Since the newspaper article went on to talk about how he had to serve 30 days in the poorhouse, I was curious to learn more about his plight. Though I didn't learn much about Durham's poorhouse, for North Carolina

I found a list of poorhouse locations, a list of the State of North Carolina Archives' holdings on the subject (typically accounts and minutes of "Wardens of the Poor", this system ended in 1868 to be replaced by the Boards of County Commissioners, until 1919), as well as some transcriptions of relevant records, images and more.

This made me curious about other states and their records — it's easy to browse the various states. The available information is presented in much the same order on each state's page.

As with any resource, the amount of material varies greatly from state-to-state — due to record availability and partially because the site depends on information supplied by volunteers.

Whether a poorhouse stay may not be part of your family tree, visit and get a fascinating glimpse of this 19th-century institution. — DIANE L. RICHARD

