

DIANE L. RICHARD LISTS HER FAVORITE WEBSITES FOR RESEARCHING GENEALOGY

Top 30 Websites For Family Research



AS YOU MAY KNOW from the article "130 Best Genealogy Websites!", which appeared in the June/July issue of *Internet Genealogy*, or from just browsing around the Internet, there are a lot of great genealogy and family history related websites. Since it has been a few years since I've created my own list of favorites, it seemed like a good time to do so!

Given that many of the larger websites (e.g., Ancestry, FamilySearch, HeritageQuest, etc.) always show up on "best of" lists, I've decided not to include them in this one. My list includes everything from other large commercial websites to free personally created websites.

To make sure that my list didn't get too long (which would have been very easy to do), I limited myself to just a few categories of record types or research focus topics that are important, either to

the research I do or they are websites that I find are often overlooked by genealogy researchers. You will also find that some categories, like State or County Records and Vital Records, just introduce you to a couple of examples of the types of these websites that exist, so do check to see if whatever locale you are researching has its own website with this type of information.

Don't see some websites you were expecting? I'm not surprised. Just remember that I've just listed a few of my favorite websites.

Regardless of whether you are a novice or a professional genealogist, it never hurts to review another researchers' list of favorite online resources. Hopefully, you might find I've listed a new site that you weren't aware of, or reminded you of one you haven't visited lately.

DIGITIZED NEWSPAPERS

GenealogyBank

www.genealogybank.com

This subscription-based website has digitized images from over 4,300 newspapers and will eventually include a collection of 280 African-American newspapers, 1827-1999. The newspaper collection is divided between historical newspapers (1690-1980) and obituaries (1977-current). Additionally, there are historical books and document collections and the Social Security Death Index. Whether you are looking for family "color" or to confirm details, newspapers are a wonderful resource.

Chronicling America (Library of Congress)

www.loc.gov/chroniclingamerica/

Free access to digitized US newspapers. This site allows you to search and view newspaper pages from 1880-1922 and find information about American newspapers

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published between 1690-present. Eventually, the project will include historically significant newspapers from all the states and US territories published between 1836 and 1922.

Google News

<http://news.google.com>

Google News is a computer-generated news site that aggregates headlines from news sources worldwide. It searches across a large collection of historical archives, including major newspapers, magazines, news archives and legal archives. Search results include both content that is accessible to all users (e.g., BBC News, *Time Magazine* and the *Guardian*) and content that requires a fee (e.g., *Washington Post Archives*, Newspaper Archive, and *New York Times Archives*). In addition to searching for content online, there is digitized material in the News Archive Partner Program.

British Newspapers, 1800-1900

<http://newspapers.bl.uk/blcs/>

If you are searching UK ancestors, this is a newspaper site for you! Explore two million pages of 19th century newspapers from over 49 local and national titles.

AFRICAN-AMERICAN

Afrigeneas

www.afrigeneas.com

The word AfriGeneas is derived from African-American Genealogy Buddies and the site is devoted to African-American genealogy, from researching African ancestry in the Americas to genealogical research and resources, in general. It is also an African Ancestry research community featuring a mail list, message boards and daily and weekly genealogy chats.

Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database

www.slavevoyages.org/tast/index.faces

This database includes information on almost 35,000 slaving voyages that forcibly embarked more than 10 million Africans for transport to the Americas between 1514 and 1866. Records of the voyages have been found in archives and libraries throughout the Atlantic. They provide information about vessels, enslaved peoples, slave

traders, owners and trading routes.

Digital Library of American Slavery

<http://library.uncg.edu/slavery/>

A searchable database of detailed personal information about slaves, slaveholders and free people of color, drawn from petitions to southern legislatures and country courts filed between 1775 and 1867 in the 15 slaveholding states in the US and the District of Columbia.

MAPS

David Rumsey

www.davidrumsey.com/

This free site keeps improving. High quality digital images and sophisticated viewing options make it the go-to place for maps. The historical map collection contains over 22,000 maps and images.

The collection focuses on rare 18th- and 19th-century North American and South American maps, with historic maps of Europe, Asia and Africa also represented. The collection also includes atlases, wall

maps, globes, school geographies, pocket maps, etc.

MSR Maps (which used to be TerraServer-USA)

<http://msrmaps.com/>

It has a great collection of freely available US topographic (topo) and aerial maps. These maps are a great way to get a sense of the "lay of the land" or geography for a locale you are researching. Being able to see features, both on a topo map and an aerial map, can really help your research.

CENSUSES

AccessGenealogy

www.accessgenealogy.com/

This site is particularly good for letting you know what census records are available online. For census records, you can choose a state, pick which census year is of interest and then be presented with a breakdown of what online census resources exist. It's also a great resource for Native American research. Access is provided to Native American Records, Native American Rolls, Indian Tribal Histories and much more!

DIGITIZED FAMILY HISTORY, ET AL AND BOOKS

Google Books

<http://books.google.com/>

Although it's not a genealogy-specific collection, it contains either the full contents (for books in the public domain), snippet views or



The homepage for David Rumsey's website, (www.davidrumsey.com/)

sometimes just the title and author. When you can find a full digitized book online, it can be invaluable. For example, one can get a full view of several editions of "Reports of Cases in Equity Argued and Determined in the Supreme Court of North Carolina" from the 1800s!

Family Histories Archive

www.lib.byu.edu/fhc/

This site encompasses local, county and family histories. Currently, there are over 61,000 items in the collection, including books from not only BYU and the Family History Library from the Allen County Public Library, Clayton

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Library Center for Genealogical Research and the Mid-Continent Public Library. You can search on surname, author, title or search on a term. For the latter, put in your county or community name and see what “pops up”. You will likely be pleasantly surprised!

BOOK IDENTIFICATION AND LOCATION

WorldCat

www.worldcat.org

Want to know if certain records have been abstracted or transcribed or are available on microfilm? Looking to see if a particular book can be found close to you? Need to place an Interlibrary Loan (ILL) with your local library? Go to this website. It’s a catalog of over 1.5 billion items available through libraries, including books, DVDs, CDs and articles. It has truly brought a worldwide collection of libraries to our fingertips!

GENERAL RECORDS AVAILABILITY

Linkpendium

www.linkpendium.com

There isn’t a project that I start where I don’t first consult this resource. With new materials constantly available online and in print, it’s hard to keep up. This site, organized by state and then county, lists out what records and resources are available online for different record categories. Resources listed have free access unless you see (\$). It is now expanding to encompass the UK and Ireland and surnames worldwide.

DIRECTORIES

Historical Directories (UK)

www.historicaldirectories.org/hd/

Is a digital library of local and trade directories for England and Wales, from 1750 to 1919.

Directories are such a great way to get a snapshot of our ancestors, their neighbors and the community. The historical context they provide is invaluable. For example, “The period 1760 to 1850 was one of sustained, if rather erratic, growth for directories. This was driven by increased trade, urbanization and transport improvements”. You can find directories

by location (county) or by decade or do a keyword search.

Distant Cousin

<http://distantcousin.com/Directories/>

The availability of US directories is not as consolidated as those for the UK. This website has a nice collection of online directories (and other records) which have frequently helped track a family through the years in between the decennial census records. If you don’t find the records for your city of interest online, check out City Directories of the US, www.uscitydirectories.com/, which encompasses print, microfilm and online directories.

STATE OR COUNTY ARCHIVES

STATE ARCHIVES Library of Virginia (LVA)

www.lva.gov

[virginia.gov/](http://www.lva.gov/virginia.gov/)

A must-see for anyone researching their Virginian ancestry! Start with searching the LVA Catalog, as many entries are for individual’s named in select documents. Can’t find who you seek? Check out the associated Virginia Memory digital collection, www.virginiamemory.com/collections/. If you still have not found them, then scroll through the Guides and Indexes, http://www.lva.virginia.gov/public/using_collections.asp#_guides-NewspapersandMagazines and you will find collections of many more records than can be listed here including newspaper, military, land patents, etc.

Illinois State Archives

www.cyberdriveillinois.com/departments/archives/databases.html

This is one of the first state digital archives available to researchers. It has continued to be a great resource when researching in Illinois. Its included records are public domain land tract sales, servitude and emancipation records, veteran’s records, pre-1900 marriage index and pre-1950 death indexes. It also includes



Above: Homepage for the UK Historical Directories, (www.historicaldirectories.org/hd/)

Below: The homepage for Virginia Memory Digital Collection, (<http://www.virginiamemory.com/collections/>)



links to record groups digitized and available at the local regional archive depositories (IRAD).

COUNTY ARCHIVES

Delaware County PA

www.co.delaware.pa.us/depts/archives.html

This recently discovered archive is a great example of what a local community has made available. You will find vital records, estate administrations, criminal case records, insolvent debtors and liquor licenses lists, along with naturalization records and orphan court records, wills and much more!

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Craven County NC

<http://newbern.cpclib.org/research/resources.html>

Many hours have been spent going through the records covering New Bern and Craven County. The records range from 1715 tax lists to an obituary index with death notices covering 1751-1903 and 1968-2010, with coverage of some other years. With the port city of New Bern, Craven County saw the makings of much of North Carolina's history.

LINEAGE

Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR)

www.dar.org/library/online_research.cfm

The online Genealogical Research System is a must-see for anyone considering NSDAR membership or trying to ascertain if a family member was a Revolutionary War veteran. The database contains the names of Revolutionary War Patriots whose service and identity have been established by the NSDAR. Included is information on the dates and places of birth and death, names of spouses, residence during the Revolution, rank and type of service, and the state where the patriot served.

EMIGRATION/NATURALIZATION

Ellis Island

www.ellisland.org/

From 1892 to 1954, more than 12 million immigrants entered the US through the portal of Ellis Island, a small island in New York Harbor. Many Americans have emigrants who started their lives in the US after entering the country through this port. If your ancestor emigrated during this period from the UK, Europe, Scandinavia etc., there is a good chance that they came through this port (although, if your family is like many, some came through NY, some through Philadelphia, some through Boston, etc!)

Castle Garden

www.castlegarden.org

This free site offers access to an extraordinary database of information on 11 million immigrants from 1820 through 1892, the year Ellis Island opened. Over 100 million

Americans can trace their ancestors to this early immigration period.

Joe Beine's websites

If you are doing emigration/naturalization and not checking out the websites created by Joe Beine, you are probably missing something! Quickly go to "What Passenger Lists are Online?", www.germanroots.com/onlinelists.html, and "Online Searchable Naturalization Indexes & Records", www.germanroots.com/naturalization.html, to see what is available online and what is not.

ISTG (Immigrant Ships Transcribers Guild)

www.immigrantships.net/

Volunteers have transcribed over 11,000 Passenger Manifests. You can search what ISTG has transcribed or you can browse each volume (there are 12 as of this article going to print) where the ships are listed by date, name, port of departure, port of arrival and surname (especially helpful with those spelling variant issues).

This site is great if you are seeking passengers who arrived in the 17th- and 18th-centuries and it has pretty extensive holdings for the 19th century and later.

NYC Naturalization Database - Volunteer Efforts By The Italian Genealogical Group

www.italiangen.org/databaselist.stm

This website has put a great collection of naturalization record indexes for Naturalizations recorded in the Eastern District (consisting of Kings, Richmond, Queens, Nassau and Suffolk Counties), Southern District (consisting of Manhattan, Bronx and Westchester Counties), as well as the Nassau and Suffolk county and Bronx and Queen Borough Supreme Courts. The col-

lection is expanding to include other New York state naturalization records.

VITAL RECORDS

Joe Beine's websites (individual effort)

Before you embark on your vital records research, check out Joe Beine's "Online Searchable Death Indexes and Records", www.deathindexes.com/ and his "Online Birth and Marriage Records Indexes for the USA", <http://www.germanroots.com/vitalrecords.html>. These two websites are an updated list of what vital records are currently available



The homepage for NYC Vital Records by the Italian Genealogical Group.

(<http://www.italiangen.org/VRECLIST.stm>)

online and save you the headache of wondering whether what you need can be accessed online.

Cook County Vital Records (community)

www.cookcountygenealogy.com

This site contains birth certificates that are 75 years or older, marriage certificates that are 50 years or older and death certificates that are 20 years or older. Also note that the Chicago Fire of 8 October 1871 destroyed all Cook County vital records prior to that date. Record keeping resumed in 1872. A great example of a how one big city is making its records available.

Missouri Digital Heritage Collection (state)

www.sos.mo.gov/mdh/

This website has a great collection

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of pre-1910 birth and death records and death certificates for records created after 1910 and over 50 years old. Once you find those vital records, check out the collection of naturalization records (1816-1955), service cards of over 576,000 Missourians who served in 12 wars and military engagements, and more.

NYC Vital Records (community) Volunteer efforts by the Italian Genealogical Group
www.italiangen.org/VRECLIST.stm

This site has put a great collection of marriage and death indexes online covering the boroughs of New York City, as well as marriage indexes for the counties of Nassau and Suffolk. If you are researching individuals who lived in these communities in the 1864-1948 time period, you'll want to visit this site.

FINNISH ANCESTRY
Finnish Genealogical Society
www.genealogia.fi/indexe.htm
 A free extensive collection of transcribed and searchable collection of church records (Hiski: christening, marriage, burial, movement, communion, etc), Finnish cemetery records, biographical indexes, records of Finnish communities in the US, etc. Good English interface.

Emigrant Register
www.migrationinstitute.fi/sinst/emigrantregister.php
 Another invaluable Finnish research tool. A computerized database containing over 550,000 entries, including passport records (1890-1950), passenger records of the Finnish Steamship Company (1892-1910), passport records and more. In 2010, it will be adding more databases such as the records of tens of thousands of Finnish emigrants through the port of Gothenburg. Good English interface. You can search for free and full access requires payment and registration.

Finland's Family History Association
www.digiarkisto.org/sshy/index_eng.htm
 Images of original church (e.g.,

communion books) and census records. This project was started in 2004 and they have put a tremendous amount of



Above: Finland's Family History Association homepage.

(www.digiarkisto.org/sshy/index_eng.htm)



Left: Search for long-lost British ancestors at British Origins.

(www.britishorigins.com/)

parish records for baptisms, marriages and burials dating from 1538, an extensive military records collection, and

more. They have the records for my ancestral parish (Ylistaro) and farm (Lammi) now up! There is an English interface, though think of it more as online digitized microfilm. You need to use the menu to find the community and records you seek and then manually scroll through them as you would a microfilm. They are well worth the effort!

Finnish Historical Newspaper Library
<http://digi.lib.helsinki.fi/sanomalehti/secure/main.html>

Helsinki University Library is digitizing all newspapers published in Finland 1771-1890. This website is only for the bravest since the newspapers are entirely in Finnish or Swedish without any English translation! Though, you can search on place/family names and look for connections.

UK RECORDS (ENGLAND, WALES, SCOTLAND, IRELAND)

FindMyPast
www.findmypast.co.uk

If you want to see some great digitized images of the 1911 census and UK passenger lists (long-haul voyages leaving the UK between 1890 and 1960) in color, check out this site, which also includes the complete 1841-1911 census collection,

more. **British Origins**
www.britishorigins.com/ Whether searching British or Irish roots, this collection of pre-1837 marriage registers, indexes and abstracts of wills, court, poor law and apprentice records, census records, Griffith Valuation and Survey Maps will certainly help. You will also find Directories, electoral registers, apprentice and other record types. Another great tool in the arsenal of anyone researching British ancestry.

Irish Family History Foundation
www.irish-roots.ie/

This site has exploded onto the scene and it provides access to an unparalleled collection of Irish records. It is the coordinating body for a network of Irish county-based genealogical research centers which have computerized millions of Irish genealogical records, including church records, census returns and gravestone inscriptions. Start your research into the records of Ireland here!

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