

Getting an Education for Genealogy, Part 3 Libraries and Archives

Hi everyone! Welcome back to Family Digging. I am Paul Hendee, here with Carolyn Lancaster. Today we're going to finish up our Getting an Education for Genealogy series focusing on libraries and archives.

We cannot delve deeply into all the worthy places to search for your ancestors, but attached to the transcript for this podcast you'll find a list of some of the major players in the arena including links to many of them. Just go to familydigging.com and under the transcripts tab you will find it. Feel free to download or e-mail it to yourself (for your personal use only). This list might find a good home on a computer screen file where you can just copy and paste the link you want into the search bar and be there instantly. If you subscribe to our podcasts, free of course, you can access our links pages and the digital library which we are currently developing. These will expand your easy-to-access options.

So, Carolyn, where shall we begin?

Libraries! But fair warning - I have been somewhat of a library rat all my life. I got my first library card when I was four and a half. My very first full time job was with an investment bank in New York City where I worked in a research library, and I've been an avid user of libraries all my life. Today we'll focus on US libraries, but rest assured that as we begin to talk about

doing research in other countries libraries will definitely be covered.

There are all kinds of libraries: national, state, historical, genealogical, academic, military, special collections, local public libraries and more. To some extent libraries, archives and societies can and do work together. You can find a state library and a state archive sharing space. Genealogical societies are often based in their local genealogical library and provide volunteers to help patrons with their research. So, try thinking of these organizations as conglomerates of learning.

Let's begin with genealogical libraries. The largest such library in the world, by far, is the Family History Library in Salt Lake City, Utah. I have found it nearly impossible to keep track of how many records they have, as they add over 30 million per month on a regular basis. But as fast as they have been going to add easily available records to our knowledge base, they still have well over 80% to go.

Many records go to familysearch.org for free access to all. Other records have been digitized but have contractual or other legal obligations attached which prevent public access for a period of time. In many of those cases you can access those records by physically going to your local Family History Center or Affiliate Library. Where I live in Florida there are three such centers and an affiliate library within 30 miles of my home. Most such centers have limited space and hours. They may also need time to receive any materials you wish to peruse via a

loan from the main Salt Lake City Family History Library. You would be well advised to call in advance to ascertain if and when those records can be available for you. The centers also have a number of subscription sites that you can freely access there when you were there. Finally, the centers are generally staffed with experienced family historians who could be very helpful in guiding you to even more records. My experience with family history centers overall has been very good.

Then there are records which have transcriptions available on FamilySearch or Ancestry but there may be no image of that record available. Typically, this is also due to a contractual obligation. Both FamilySearch and Ancestry do a tremendous amount of digitizing for others. When they write up their contract for a particular job, they most often include a right for the digitizing organization to have exclusive access to the images for a period of several years. Once the term of the contract is over, those images disappear and either a new contract is drawn up or the images become available to a wider group of users. So, grab images and scan them into your computer and back them up as soon as you find them. Remember, the images are your real proof; transcriptions are secondary and they certainly can be expected to contain more errors than a primary source.

The next largest genealogical library in US is the Allen County Public Library Genealogy Center in Fort Wayne Indiana. I find this place very interesting. They have lots of records, more and more of which are being digitized. They have a very active free

webinar calendar, and many sessions are freely available to all thereafter on YouTube. They have a very large number of town and county histories as well as a huge number of family histories; but perhaps one of the best things about a ACPL is PERSI, the Periodical Source Index.

PERSI will not often directly lead you to records about your ancestor in particular, although there are plenty of transcriptions of town and county records to be found in the journals used to create the index. PERSI is a subject index which is produced by the library from thousands of journals and other periodicals relating to family history and more. The index is updated monthly.

The vast majority of genealogical writings (besides books) is in periodicals. If an article appears in a journal, such as the New England Historic Genealogical Register or TAG - The American Genealogist, you can expect the article to appear in PERSI. Likewise, if you are a member of your local genealogical society and receive their newsletter, chances are very high that the articles therein will be referenced in PERSI. If you have written an article or book about family history, you can expect to find peer reviews as well as criticisms from the genealogy community. Many times PERSI articles will highlight a factual error found in the work, or items that do not provide enough convincing evidence on a given matter to justify the author's conclusion of proof. You won't find your particular ancestor on PERSI, unless their name is part of the title of the article. Again, this is an index of subjects.

There are several ways to search on PERSI and several YouTube sessions have recently been done by the library and others which will explain how to use PERSI in detail. Try Genealogy Gems' YouTube channel. They recently did a three-part series on PERSI. You may find that resources show PERSI located at findmypast.com, but that is out of date. PERSI is now recently back at the Genealogy Center at ACPL.

What PERSI provides is an index of articles with information as to where and when it was originally published so that you can locate a copy of it; and if you physically go to ACPL, the chances are very good that they might have a copy of that periodical in their collection. For me, ACPL is a valuable tool where time and time again I have uncovered new information relevant to my search for my family roots.

The most important thing about any major genealogical library or other archival visit it's that you go prepared. Plan ahead. Call or e-mail well in advance to confirm the details: days and hours open, to what extent do you need to arrange for the institution to have the specific materials you need available for your use upon your arrival, whether there is an online catalog available to peruse in advance to help you locate what you need; what are the house rules about what you may or may not bring with you? i.e. a laptop? a portable scanner? pens or pencils? a camera? What are the related costs of entry? copying? parking? etc. What about masks? Get as much information as possible in advance, and be sure to arrive with a specific list of things you

are hoping to find as well as any background info that you have already discovered. Also, bring a sweater or other wrap with you as most archival materials are deliberately kept cooler in temperature for better preservation. There is a list of many of the major genealogical libraries with links to them attached to this transcript.

So what other kinds of libraries can be helpful? Until recently I didn't realize how many states now have military museums or libraries which house the records of the state veterans and often their volunteer militiamen. These are very valuable for genealogists. I used the New York State Military Museum's archive to discover the truth of my great grandfather's Civil War service to finally resolve a false family legend. The information I needed was easily found, and included some primary records, and it was free. They call it a museum, but it is much more than that in my opinion. Do a Google search for military records/military archives/military museums/or military libraries, or visit cindyslist.com under the same categories.

Then there are presidential libraries. Carolyn and I discovered at least one way we are related by accessing information held at the Rutherford B. Hayes Presidential Center on the descendants of John and Adam Hurd, two of the earliest settlers of Stratford, CT. As it turns out, President Hayes was very interested in family history and there are a good number of such histories in his library. Thaddeus Hurd, a local architect and historian, donated a lifetime of research on the Hurds and thousands of photographs to the Hayes Center upon his death.

Over forty boxes worth! The head librarian at the Center went through it all and created a remarkable genealogy from it which is freely available at the Presidential Center's website. And what a great gift it is for us!

There are academic libraries which can be very rich resources for family historians. University libraries in particular hold a wealth of historical and related gems, just waiting for curious family diggers to come along and find a good use for them. The ability to access a university's holdings varies widely from open access to limits on anyone not a current student at the school. If it does allow access to non-students, try using their Libguide to get familiar with their holdings.

Every state in the U S has a library, archives or both where historical records are kept. Just how accessible those records are varies widely. The state's privacy laws often come into play as there are regulations governing how long important personal information on an individual, such as birth, death and marriage data, should be held privately to protect the living from financial fraud among other things. Links those repositories can be found on our familydigging.com website, freely available to all subscribers.

One of the very best resources that genealogists can use is a local Public Library. It is here that you can often find death announcements, obituaries and other articles from local newspapers. Many libraries have very low cost copying services for these items, or have microfilm available needed to do your

own searches. They can also often arrange for library loans from other libraries or give you guidance on how to obtain a printout of an article from a book that they are unable to lend. They often collect yearbooks from local schools, as well as funeral home and cemetery records. More and more public libraries these days are offering webinars via Zoom, free to all in many cases; and more and more are developing YouTube channels to archive those sessions. See conferencekeeper.com for a calendar of them. Some house local genealogical societies where you can get some help with your family history.

I try to make it a habit of visiting (virtually for the most part) the Public Library sites located in every place that my ancestors lived. My favorites so far are the libraries in Bath, ME and Watertown, MA. The reference librarian in Bath has a true wealth of knowledge about the town and its history and has been exceedingly generous with her time doing look ups for me on the Moffatt and Deering families. As for Watertown, a number of my immigrant ancestors from England settled in Watertown in the 1630s, and lucky for me they have great resources at the free public library to help researchers fully explore those folks and their descendants.

Last on today's list of libraries is the Library of Congress, and what an institution it is! First, they are in the business of digitizing American newspapers in their Chronicling America department, and it is one of the largest such projects that exists - free to all. They have a large collection of journals and periodicals, and even over 7000 comic books! LOC is home to

the US Patent Office, with services for authors and those who need fair use guidance. They also have a very large section for services to the legally blind and print disabled. For many years Carolyn's dad availed himself of those services, receiving audio books and magazines every month. It helped him from going crazy with boredom as he became less and less mobile. A very good use of our tax dollars.

LOC also has at least one publication listing all of the family histories held there and there are a ton of them. Along with family and regional newsletters, LOC also has a significant number of local histories, maps and genealogical charts. Its records and databases come from sources in over 470 languages, and is global in scope. For those who cannot come in person, LOC does have duplicating services for a fee and interlibrary loans are available on many items, but definitely do not expect to get original historical documents or maps that way.

Next we will turn to archives and we want to touch on two in particular. One, the National Archives and Records Administration – called NARA. Both NARA and LOC are great places to search for your ancestors. Both have very active digitization programs on going to dramatically reduce the amount of records being lost to paper damage over time. They also have great tools and resources for educators, historians and genealogists. Here is just a partial list of what can be found on NARA: U S census records from 1790 to 1950, military service records, immigration and naturalization records, federal

land records, resources for genealogists and educators, guides for research and free printable forms to help organize your research. Then there are tools for research including: OPA – the NARA catalog for their digitized records; AAD - Access to Archival Databases, which has a treasure trove for family historians; microfilm and presidential library databases; subject indexes and more. In their section for education resources, I'm really pleased about the quality and depth of resources to teach about civics and using primary sources for history and research, as well as many founding and milestone documents to help, but there is much, much more useful for everyone.

The main NARA facility is in Washington DC; then they have a number of regional branches spread over the country. Each branch has (at least in part) unique holdings and functions so be sure to search each center out to narrow the search for what you are expecting to find. This is an archive that is filled to the brim with information useful to us all - another great use of taxpayer dollars. COVID-19 brought an abrupt halt to all but the most vital work at NARA, mostly involving active military and veterans' needs. They are slowly coming back to life in 2022 and we wish them well.

The other archives we want to highlight today are those that house religious records. Many denominations of Christians and Jews in particular now have central archives to house their history and records, and genealogists should not overlook them. Vital records, for the most part, are a modern thing. Pennsylvania was granted to William Penn in 1681 but

Pennsylvania did not mandate the keeping of birth, death and marriage records until much later. In 1852-1854 an early attempt at recording births and deaths was attempted at a county level. A second attempt began in 1893, and finally the state took on the responsibility in 1906. As to marriage records, licenses began to be required in 1885. Before that each congregation had their own requirements which vary widely between denominations. Often the officiant took the records of who he had married or christened with him to the next parish.

Depending on your location, it could be that marriage was considered a civil event. In Massachusetts vital records for this state were supposed to be kept by each town from the original founding of the town, but the government had to establish laws twice, the latter with penalties for noncompliance, to get the system working even moderately successfully. Ministers were not permitted to marry folks for quite some time; just magistrates held that function. Watertown was without a magistrate for over 20 years after Sir Richard Saltonstall returned to England, so everyone wanting to marry had to go elsewhere to do that. The systems were actually spotty at best.

In much of New England, congregational records were more important than many other record types. Membership in the church was often required in order to be able to vote on town affairs or to hold local office, for instance. As time evolved and various denominations sprung up, the need for a place to hold these records became apparent and archives were begun, mostly on denominational basis. Today access to those records

is getting easier and easier. Some places to go to locate them are: (1) [thefamilysearch.org](https://www.familysearch.org) research wiki, (2) [cyndislist.com](https://www.cyndislist.com) under religious records, (3) [LDSgenealogy.com](https://www.familysearch.org/ldsgenealogy.com), (4) [linkpendium.com](https://www.linkpendium.com), and (5) do a Google search for the particular denomination you are searching. If they don't give you what you need, try contacting the local Historical Society. Religious records, when they can be found, are important sources of information for genealogists. The latest major addition of church records to become available to all are those from the Congregational Church, and that was this year in 2022. So copy and paste the links at the end of our transcript and you'll be able to learn more.

Last but not least, Roman Catholic records for the USA are finally starting to become available: the New England Historic Genealogical Society is receiving many church records for New England parishes, in particular Boston. Beyond that, use the location research sites we just recommended above in this podcast; more and more are becoming available each month.

Well Folks, we hope that our series on Getting an Education for Genealogy has helped you discover new and interesting places and ways to learn about your family history. Next time we're going to explore several kinds of societies and how they can help you in your quest. As usual, if you would like a transcript of this podcast with links included, please go to our website at familydigging.com open the transcripts tab, and e-mail it to yourself or download it (for your personal use only). To be notified of our next podcast or to obtain access to our digital

library, just subscribe by providing your name and e-mail address. It's all free and we share information with no one.

Until next time, happy digging!

Paul and Carolyn

PS: Don't forget the next page.

Libraries + Archives for Genealogy

FHL - Family History Library (Salt Lake City)

<https://familysearch.org>

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints owns the largest genealogical library in the world, and it is administered by familysearch.org. Access its online databases, etc. via that site. You must register for a free account with them to have access to their records, but there is no requirement to put your tree on their one, worldwide shared tree. Great research wiki, records - many with images, books, collections, learning center and more.

Genealogy Center at the Allen County Public Library (Ft. Wayne, IN)

<https://acpl.lib.in.us/genealogy>

Lots of local histories and genealogies from all over the country and more. Home of PERSI, the PERiodical Subject Index, which indexes over 6,000 journals from the US and elsewhere. Very active webinar calendar, much of which shows up later on their YouTube channel. Second largest genealogy library in the USA.

Library of Congress (Washington, DC)

<https://loc.gov>

Under the Research and Reference Tab, choose Genealogy for Research Guides, Finding Aids, and under the digital collections, don't miss Chronicling America - Historic American Newspapers (one of the largest digital newspaper databases in the world - and free. LOC has a global focus, and participate in a World Library, so it is a great place to discover research opportunities all over the world.

New England Historic Genealogical Society Library (Boston)

<https://www.americanancestors.org>. (subscription)

For anyone with ancestors from New England, New York, and increasingly other states, this is a very important resource. You can go

physically to the library for a one-day fee, or join the organization for an annual fee and thereby gain access to many of their digital records (which are very substantial), OR (drumroll, please) join the nearest genealogical society to you that has digital access to NEHGS as a benefit of membership for a much lower fee.

National DAR Library (Washington, DC)

<https://dar.org/> If you suspect you have an ancestor connected with the American Revolution, this is a good place to search, using their public online GRS - Genealogical Research System. They also have other publically available resources. But the majority of their resources are only at their Library in Washington, DC (open to the public) or available to DAR members only.

Other major genealogical libraries in the US (shown below) and the major archives all have links on the Family Search Research Wiki below:

- 1. Newbury Library (Chicago, IL)**
- 2. Mid-Continent Public Library - Midwest Genealogy Center (Independence, MO)**
- 3. Clayton Library Center for Genealogical Research (Houston, TX)**
- 4. Birmingham (AL) Public Library**
- 5. Denver (CO) Public Library**
- 6. Dallas (TX) Public Library**
- 7. Detroit (MI) Public Library**
- 8. New York (NYC) Public Library**

https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/United_States_Archives_and_Libraries

For those searching outside the USA, use this link to get to the place you seek, then connect with the type of facility (or record) you wish:

https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/Online_Genealogy_Records_by_Location

Also, consider bookmarking this to discover almost all you need to know about upcoming learning opportunities:

<https://conferencekeeper.org>

HAPPY DIGGING!

Carolyn and Paul