

40 Fabulous Websites You've Got To Try!

Diane L. Richard goes online in search of the websites essential to your family history research



STILL HAVE THAT brickwall? Haven't yet found where your great-grandparents are buried? If you still have a gap in your genealogy research, one of these fabulous websites just might do the trick. Whether these sites are new to you or old familiar friends, pay them a visit and give them a try. Whether you are a novice or an expert, and regardless of where you are in your research, one of these websites just might make a difference!

Though we liked the alliteration of "40" and "Fabulous", the challenge of limiting the list to 40 was simply too great. So, some entries are a single site, while others have two or three websites listed. The list also embraces a few lesser known sites to provide some alternative places to look for those elusive ancestors.

Most are free, though some require a paid subscription. You will see **\$** to indicate a subscription service and **Free/\$** for a website with both free and subscription content.

The sites are not listed in any particular order, so sit back and enjoy reading about these fabulous resources. Who knows, maybe

you'll find a site you are unfamiliar with or maybe you'll be reminded of one that you haven't checked out in a while!

Black Sheep Ancestors

www.blacksheepancestors.com/index.shtml

Some of our most interesting family stories revolve around "black sheep" ancestors. Don't overlook this notorious group, they can be fun to research and add some spice to your family. This site has prison records for the US and UK, and insane asylum records for the US. You will also find links to historical court records, execution records and biographies of famous outlaws and criminals across the US, UK and Canada.

CEMETERY RECORDS

- **Findagrave**
www.findagrave.com
 - **Internment.net**
www.interment.net
 - **African-American Cemeteries**
<http://africanamericancemeteries.com>
- Cemetery records are wonderful, if you can find them! One way you might overcome misplaced ancestors is to search on these websites.

Findagrave and Internment.net each contain mostly unique data (there are some GenWeb archives that duplicate some of this information). The African-American cemeteries site has links all over the Internet, regardless of where the source material is stored.

IRISH RESEARCH

- **Boston Pilot**
<http://infowanted.bc.edu>
 - **Griffiths Valuation, 1848-1864**
<http://failteromhat.com/griffiths.php>
 - **Fianna**
<http://rootsweb.com/~fianna/>
- Have a "wee bit of Irish" in your blood? These websites may help you discover more about your Irish ancestry. *The Boston Pilot* printed a "Missing Friends" column of people looking for "lost" friends and relatives who had emigrated from Ireland to the US between 1831 and 1921. The Griffiths Valuation is priceless, given an absence of Irish census records until 1901. Fianna brings together many ideas and resources which might be of use to anyone beginning research in Ireland, or to those who have been researching and are looking for fresh ideas.

Free Public Records Online

<http://publicrecords.onlinesearches.com>
More and more public records are going online. These can include land deeds, vital records and probate records, to name a few. Now you have one stop where you can learn what is available for wherever you are researching. Some communities have records online dating back to the 18th century, whereas others have yet to create digital archives. If you haven't yet looked into the records of public authorities, this may be your lucky day!

Linkpendium USA

www.linkpendium.com/genealogy/USA/
This site is one of my favorites. For any state and/or county in the US, you find a straightforward list of available resources, organized by topic, all linked to the original source data. Included are a broad mix of free websites, subscription services, local history resources and so much more. Definitely check out this website to get a quick snapshot of what is available for whatever community you are researching.

WorldCat/OCLC

www.worldcat.org
Have you sometimes wondered if a book you'd like to check out is available locally? Or, whether your library might have some success getting a book via interlibrary loan for you? Check out the more than one billion items listed in the catalogs of more than 10,000 libraries worldwide! You can search for books, CDs and videos — all of the items you're used to getting from libraries.

NATIVE AMERICAN RESEARCH

• Access Genealogy

www.accessgenealogy.com/native/

• National Archives (NARA) Archival Resource Catalog (ARC)

www.archives.gov/research/arc/topics/native-americans.html

Does family legend say that you have a Native-American ancestor? These two resources contain many key records including the various tribal rolls, Native-American land patents, Indian census records, Indian history and so much more.

Do remember that just because someone lived in Indian Territory or there are family stories of trading with Native-Americans, you may not have Native-American ancestry.

Family Tree DNA

www.familytreedna.com

Whether you are considering DNA testing or not, check out this site. This is one of the largest DNA-testing websites, with more than 136,000 Y-DNA and mtDNA records. It provides information about DNA testing and currently hosts almost 4,000 surname projects. Are your surnames listed? If so, there is often a web presence that gives information on the surname and the "oldest" documented ancestor for the various lines of those tested. Maybe you will find someone researching your family?

PASSENGER LISTS

• Castle Garden

www.castlegarden.org

• AncestorsonBoard \$

www.ancestorsonboard.com

It's important to remember that not everyone came through Ellis Island. There are surviving records from other ports, too. Before Ellis Island, there was Castle Garden. Many Scandinavians and Europeans went through the ports of the British Isles and can now be found in the BT27 Outward Passenger Lists for long-distance voyages between 1890-1960 at AncestorsonBoard. Also, check for records of other ports (the newly indexed records for Hamburg are now available via Ancestry and the surviving Bremen lists for 1920-39 are at www.schiffslisten.de/index.php?lang=en.)

Canadian Genealogy Centre

www.collectionscanada.ca/genealogy/index-e.html

This is an excellent starting place for researching your Canadian ancestors. Some key databases are: Divorce in Canada (1841-1968), Canadian Censuses, Passenger Lists and Immigration Records, Western Land Grants, Naturalizations and so much more. Check back often as new databases are

being added all the time.

IRISH FAMINE PASSENGER RECORDS

New York

<http://aad.archives.gov/aad/fieldedsearch.jsp?dt=180&tf=F&cat=all&bc=sl>

New Brunswick

<http://archives.gnb.ca/APPS/PrivRecs/IrishFamine/?L=EN>

If you think you might have roots in the Irish Famine emigrants of the mid-1800s, these two collections of passenger lists might prove useful. The first site covers records for passengers who arrived at the port of New York between 1846 and 1851 and the second covers Irish Famine Migration to New Brunswick in 1845-52.

Social Security Death Index (SSDI)

<http://ssdi.genealogy.rootsweb.com/cgi-bin/ssdi.cgi>

This online database has almost 80 million records of deaths reported and/or death benefits paid out starting in 1962. The SSDI includes a few pre-1962 entries, but the great majority of those included in this index are from 1962 through to the present. Looking for a female ancestor and don't know her married name? Try putting in her birth date and first name, and maybe she will be revealed!

JOE BEINE

• Online Death Indexes, Records & Obituaries

www.deathindexes.com

• Online Military Indexes & Records

www.militaryindexes.com

• What Passenger Lists Are Online?

<http://home.att.net/%7Ewee-monster/online.html>

There is not a project I work on that I don't visit these three fantastic websites. The information on all three is presented in a wonderfully straightforward and organized manner. Better yet, the sites are updated regularly and you can even opt to receive e-mail updates on these and Beine's other useful compendiums. Visit <http://genealogyroots.googlepages.com> for more information.

GRC National Index

<http://members.dar.org/dar/darnet/grc/grc.cfm>

Think you have an ancestor or family with connections to the Revolutionary War? If so, check out the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) GRC index. The DAR made an effort to transcribe previously unpublished records of genealogical value. The index now includes nearly 17,000 typescripts of records from across the country and is available for searching. If you find a relevant entry, online help to decipher its meaning is provided.

OLD NEWSPAPERS

- **London Times & Newspaper Archive** \$

www.godfrey.org

- **Paper of Record**

www.paperofrecord.com/Default.asp

- **Brooklyn Daily Eagle**

www.brooklynpubliclibrary.org/eagle/

In the last few years, there has been an explosion of online newspaper archives. These are just a sample of the archives available. *The London Times*, via a paid subscription to Godfrey Memorial Library, Paper of Record with its mix of original newspaper images and the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, 1841-1902, all have excellent image quality and allow you to look at the full page in which a search entry is found. Don't forget to also check out your local library, as many feature free access to Proquest, Newsbank, Thompson-Gale and other online newspaper archive services.

- **New England Ancestors** \$

www.newenglandancestors.org/

Researching New England ancestry? This website is a wonderful resource. Even for those not necessarily researching in New England, the free newsletter always has interesting tips, news of interest to all and a "spotlight" article on the resources of a library or archive (typically outside of New England). With a paid subscription, you can access Massachusetts Vital Records and a plethora of other early New England records.

WAR GRAVES

- **Commonwealth War Graves**
www.cwgc.org/debt_of_honour.asp?menuid=14

- **US Department of Veterans Affairs Gravesite Locator**
http://gravelocator.cem.va.gov/j2ee/servlet/NGL_v1

For the UK, the Commonwealth War Graves site lists the 1.7 million men and women who died during the two world wars and the 23,000 cemeteries, memorials and other locations worldwide where they are commemorated. The Department of Veterans Affairs Gravesite Locator includes veterans and their family members in Virginia National Cemeteries, state veterans cemeteries and those buried in other cemeteries.

VitalRec.com

www.vitalrec.com

Not sure how to get vital records (birth, marriage, death, et al.) for your ancestors? Not sure when vital records were required by the state you are researching? This great little website will answer these questions and more.

QUAKERS

- **Quaker Corner**

www.rootsweb.com/~quakers/

- **Quaker Meetings**

www.quakermeetings.com

Though Quakers currently represent a fairly small percentage of today's population, at one time, Quakers had a strong presence in some New England states and down the eastern seaboard to Virginia and North Carolina. If your family has roots in Long Island, Pennsylvania, Virginia, North Carolina, etc., you may find that they were Quaker. These two resources will aid you in your search of a Quaker heritage.

AFRICAN-AMERICAN ANCESTRY

- **Afrigeneas**

www.afrigeneas.com

- **Freedman's Bureau**

www.freedmensbureau.com

- **Research Guide**

www.familysearch.org/Eng/default.asp?page=home/welcome/site_resources.asp

There has been an exciting increase in the number of websites whose focus is African-American

Have you hit a brick WALL?

It's time to try the latest technology to solve your genealogical puzzle

Family Tree DNA provides DNA testing for genealogists, and is the pioneer in the new field of genetic genealogy. Your ancestors left clues to your genealogy in you and other descendants. Unlock the clues with DNA testing.

SEARCH YOUR SURNAME

Your surname could already be part of a current project or, you could qualify to start a new Surname Project. Family Tree DNA provides a full spectrum of management tools for those interested in a Surname Project to focus on a surname or subset of a surname to determine who is related to whom.

FAMILY TREE DNA ALLOWS TO:

- Determine if two people are related
- Determine if two people descended from the same ancestor
- Confirm your Family Tree
- Find out who with your surname is related
- Prove or disprove a research theory
- Find others to whom you are related
- Get clues about your ethnic origin

DATABASE MATTERS: Family Tree DNA has the largest comparative database in the world with over 100,000 records and counting.

To search for your surname or for more details, please visit our web site

www.familytreedna.com

For additional information, please e-mail to info@familytreedna.com or call 713-868-1438

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ancestry. There are some unique challenges to researching African-Americans and these sites help demystify some of the challenges, as well as provide access to data unique to African-Americans.

JewishGen

www.jewishgen.org

Whether you are Jewish or not, this is a great website. Much of the research for Jewish records occurs in the Eastern European countries and, as such, many of the resources are invaluable to anyone researching Eastern European ancestry. Additionally, there is great information covering the US, UK and Scandinavia.

The Official Federal Lands Record Site

www.glorerecords.blm.gov

If your family purchased land in a Land Grant state or Eastern public lands, this website gives you access to Federal land conveyance records. Additionally, images of serial patents (land titles issued between 1908 and the mid-1960s) are on this site. Images related to survey plats, dating back to 1810, are being added as each state's documents are completed. You will see summary information for the land grant and be able to access a digital image of the original document.

LibraryThing

www.librarything.com

Do you have an extensive genealogy library or would like to have one? Looking for a new way to connect to others with similar research interests? If so, check out LibraryThing. LibraryThing helps you create a library-quality catalog of your real, or wish-list, books. Because everyone catalogs online, they also catalog together which connects people based on the books they share; whether for pleasure or family research.

Eastman's Online Genealogy Newsletter Free/\$

<http://blog.eogn.com/>

If you want timely information on new genealogy websites or other items of interest, this is the newsletter for you. You can receive

it via e-mail or just check out the site when you have a free moment. There is also a subscription-based Plus Edition (featuring additional articles) and other helpful materials on the site. The information is always timely and relevant. If you can only subscribe to one genealogy newsletter, this is the one.

VitalSearch Free/\$

www.vitalsearch-worldwide.com/

If you are researching ancestors in California, Kentucky, Texas or select other states, this site — whose key focus is vital records — can be a goldmine! There are both free and subscription options; a subscription lets you avoid advertisements and gives you access to select databases. Some of this data is not available elsewhere online or if it is, you have fewer search parameters to choose from (e.g. Ancestry has California deaths for 1940-97 and this site has them for 1905-2000). Definitely a hidden gem!

World Genweb Project

www.worldgenweb.org/

You might be familiar with the USGenWeb project, but did you know that there is a worldwide version? The information is organized on a region basis; each region then may have several GenWeb projects, e.g. Europe consists of the British IslesGenWeb, CenEuroGenWeb, EastEuroGenWeb and the MediterraneanGenWeb. Like the US project, you will find many free resources to help you research.

Civil War Soldiers and Sailors System (CWSS)

www.itd.nps.gov/cwss/

Have a US Civil War veteran in your family tree? This National Parks Service site is a database containing basic facts about servicemen who served on both sides during the Civil War. The information came from 6.3 million soldier records and other documents about Union and Confederate soldiers. Most of the entries have few details and this information can start you on a path to learn more.

Library of Congress' American Memory

<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/index.html>

This is a large collection that provides free online access to documents, sound recordings, still and moving images, prints, maps and sheet music that documents American history and creativity. The Map and Photograph collections are excellent, with the panoramic maps being fun to look at!

Making of America

www.hti.umich.edu/m/moagrp/ and Making of America is a collaborative endeavor to preserve and make accessible a significant amount of primary sources documenting American social history from the antebellum period through reconstruction. Between these collections, there are about 10,000 books, 150,000 journal articles and more! Maybe your family name or locale is included. Do check out both collections as they are unique and not interconnected.

UK RESOURCES

• UK & Ireland Genealogy (Genuki)

www.genuki.org.uk/

• Family History Online Free/\$

www.familyhistoryonline.net

• Free BMD

<http://freebmd.rootsweb.com/>

Do you have UK ancestry? If so, these websites are a great place to start! Genuki is organized by country, then county, then parish, and lists many available resources. FreeBMD focuses on vital records from 1837 to 1983; then you obtain information on what is in the index. Family History Online has about 66 million records, including parish registers, memorial inscriptions, censuses, poor law documents and others which can be searched for free and then you can pay to access more detailed information.

GeneaNet

www.geneanet.org

This website has been around since 1996, it is multi-lingual, and currently has almost 148 million entries! If you have European ancestral connections, you might

be surprised by the wealth of information to be found! You can search by family name and/or location. Often, when you find an interesting entry, there will be an external website that contains the supporting data.

Google Books

<http://books.google.com/bkshp?ie=UTF-8&oe=UTF-8&hl=en&tab=wp&q>

Google News Archives

<http://news.google.com/archivesearch>
Besides "Googling" something on the Internet, Google has other features helpful for those researching families and history. Google Books focuses on books, both those available in their entirety online and those for which snippets or limited previews are available. Google News Archive focuses on news items; you can search on all dates or search time period ranges. Each news item is either free, part of a subscription service or requires pay-per-view access.

DIRECTORIES

• Distant Cousin (US)

www.distantcousin.com/Directories/

• Historical Directories (England and Wales)

www.historicaldirectories.org

• Canadian Directories, Who Was Where?

www.collectionscanada.ca/canadian/directories/index-e.html

Directories are such a great way to learn about your family. These are my favorite broad directory sites when researching in the US, UK or Canada. Each is currently free and provides actual images of the directory pages.

Family History Archive

www.lib.byu.edu/fhc/

Though most of us are familiar with FamilySearch.org, did you know about the companion project to create a Family History Archive? There are about 170,000 family histories that are being digitized and placed online. Is someone you are researching included? You can search on surname, title or author or just go "fishing" and "search all". And, in the future, you could donate your family history to the collection.



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Pigot's *City of Dublin and Hibernian Provincial Directory...* (1824)
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BROAD SUBSCRIPTION RESOURCES

- **Footnote** **Free/\$**

www.footnote.com

- **GenealogyBank.com** **\$**

www.genealogybank.com

These two recent additions to online genealogy research are both based on access to digital images of original documents. Footnote has a partnership with NARA to digitize elements of its collection and currently includes FBI, Naturalization, Civil War Pension, Southern Claims Commission, Pennsylvania archives and other documents. GenealogyBank includes Historical Newspapers 1690-1977, Historical Books 1801-1900, Historical Documents 1789-1980, America's Obituaries and the Social Security Death Index (SSDI).

MAPS

- **David Rumsey Map Collection**

www.davidrumsey.com

- **Perry-Castañeda Library Map Collection**

www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/

- **GenMaps (UK)**

<http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.com/~genmaps/>

- **The Atlas of Canada**

<http://atlas.nrcan.gc.ca/site/english/index.html>

Maps are such an excellent way to understand where our ancestors lived. Maps can explain so much about where our ancestors were born, married and migrated from and to. And, don't forget that boundaries are dynamic... what is now a county/state/country boundary may not have existed a century ago.

SCANDINAVIAN RESEARCH

- **Genealogical Society of Finland**

www.genealogia.fi/indexe.htm

- **Institute of Migration Emigrant Register (Finland)**

www.migrationinstitute.fi/sinst/emigrantregister.php

- **Genline's Swedish Church Records** **\$**

www.genline.com

- **Danish Demographic Database**

http://ddd.dda.dk/DDD_EN.HTM

The Scandinavian countries have excellent records available via the web. These all have easy-to-use English-language interfaces, though recognize that not all the

content is in English and much of it is presented so that you can clearly understand the type of record and most of its content. So, just because your ancestors came

TRIED AND TRUE...

The following websites have a long history of aiding genealogists and family historians. And, like anything tried and true, you'll find yourself returning frequently:

- **Cyndislist**

www.cyndislist.com

This massive categorized and cross-referenced "list" contains at least 254,380 links in more than 180 categories!

- **Rootsweb**,

www.rootsweb.com

This grand-daddy of websites with free genealogy material continues to be a major resource for genealogists and family historians.

- **Ancestry.com** **Free/\$**

www.ancestry.com

This subscription website just keeps growing. The last few months have seen the addition of more passenger lists, census records, family and local histories, vital records, newspaper images and much more.

- **Ellis Island**

www.ellisland.org

Given that between 1892 and 1954, over 12 million immigrants entered the US through Ellis Island, this is a great place to look for an ancestor.

- **Steve Morse**

<http://stevemorse.org/>

New search engines and other resources are constantly being added and the flexibility and power of these search engines is incredible.

from Finland, Sweden or Denmark, don't think you cannot research them from your home.

ONLINE TRANSLATION

Babel Fish

<http://world.altavista.com>

Free Translation

www.freetranslation.com

As soon as you start researching someone overseas, there is a chance that the records are not in English. This is even true for ethnic parish records in the US and Canada. One way to partially

decipher these records or to even correspond is to use an online translation service. You often do get gibberish but you can normally translate enough to make some sense of the data and to write an effective, if a little awkward, e-mail or letter!

VOLUNTEER ASSISTANCE PROJECTS

Random Acts of Genealogical Kindness (RAOGK)

www.raogk.org

Books We Own

www.rootsweb.com/~bwo/

These two programs are the largest of the volunteer assistance projects. These individuals have kindly offered to provide limited research assistance in specific resources. Sometimes you will be asked to cover any costs incurred. And, if you receive some assistance from either of these projects, do consider volunteering.

Wayback Machine

www.archive.org/index.php

Ever discovered great information on a website but when you go to revisit it, the site no longer exists? Occasionally, if the website only recently disappeared, you can look at a "cached" version. What if it's been gone a while? That's where Wayback Machine comes in. It's the search engine of the Internet Archive project founded to build an Internet library, with the purpose of offering permanent access to historical collections that exist in digital format.

I can't promise that these websites will solve all your genealogy problems, but they are all worth a visit. Maybe one of these sites will become part of your "essential" research arsenal.

FC



Diane L. Richard has been doing genealogy research for almost 20 years. She currently does professional research in North Carolina and can be found online at www.mosaicrpm.com/Genealogy