

# Using Digital Newspapers for Genealogical Research

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## Newspapers are so much more than obituaries, birth & death announcements

### You can find any or all of these:

|               |                   |                    |                  |
|---------------|-------------------|--------------------|------------------|
| Engagements   | Milestones        | Society News       | Crimes           |
| Marriages     | News items        | County Proceedings | Other Categories |
| Anniversaries | Maiden names      | Probate            |                  |
| Articles      | Photographs       | Military Service   |                  |
| Disasters     | Community history | Schooling          |                  |

### How best to utilize the digitized newspapers for genealogy research?

- Know what you are looking for:
  - What question are you trying to answer?
  - When did it happen?
  - Where did it happen?
  - What name?

### To get started you need to learn

- What papers were published in the area?
- Where were they published?
- When were they published?
- What still exists?
- Where can I find them?

### What papers were published?

- Library of Congress – Chronicling America
  - US Newspaper Directory, 1690-Present (What exists)
    - Search by State and County
    - Choose Dates range or leave as is
      - Click on a title for details: Volume and issues published

### Where to find digitized newspapers

- Local library – not usually digitized
- University library– some are digitized
- State Archives – not usually digitized
- State Newspaper Repository– some are digitized

### The National Digital Newspaper Program

<http://www.neh.gov/divisions/preservation/national-digital-newspaper-program>

### Google it!

- Search by city, county, or state or a combination of city and state or county and state and add “historical newspapers” or “online newspapers” or “digitized newspapers”
  - Search for Van Wert, Iowa historical newspapers
  - Search for Ohio historic online newspapers
  - Search: Historical newspapers <https://sites.google.com/site/onlinenewspapersite/Home/>

### What are the best web sites for ease of use?

- Depends on your computer skills.
- Most are fairly easy to navigate for viewing.

- Searches can be very different from site to site.
- Look for a “HELP” button or tab for an explanation of the site and tips for using it.

### **Are Digitized newspapers available through the Family History Centers?**

- There are not any newspapers at
  - Family History Centers
  - FamilySearch.org
  - Family History Library for the United States.
- These are published by local genealogical societies and individuals and available at the Family History Library or on microfilm.
  - Newspaper abstracts
  - Indexes
  - Newspaper clippings
- Look for Newspapers under the county and state in the catalog on familysearch.org.

### **Which web sites have the most complete collection?**

- Digitized newspapers by a sequence of years varies by the location, no one site has a complete collection.
- Each site has different newspaper titles from different locations.
- Subscription sites have contracts that must be renewed so a listing may go away.
- State newspaper repositories will have the most complete collections and sequences for that state.
- ALWAYS look at the list of newspapers on any subscription site BEFORE subscribing
- Don't waste money if they don't have newspapers in the location for the time period you need.

### **Similarities of newspaper websites**

- Search feature
- Can download images
- Can zoom in and out
- Can view in “full screen”

### **Differences in newspaper websites**

- Newspapers they offer
- State, county, and city they cover
- Cost: free or subscription
- Options for navigation of site
- Ability to see a preview of the page or article

### **Searching for Obituaries**

- Search for a surname
- Don't search by a first name unless it is an unusual name – too many results
- It won't show up if the name wraps in the column or is hyphenated
- Narrow the timeframe to a month or range between dates: January 26, 1898 and February 14, 1898

### **No results?**

- Might not be in that paper
- Not that period of time
- Might not be in ANY paper
- Might be spelled differently
- Might not have been legible when the page image was OCR'd

## What is OCR?

- OCR: Optical Character Recognition
- OCR is the computer program used to “read” the text in images to determine the character
- Only as good as the text in the image
  - You can’t decipher a letter from smudged, broken, or crooked text
- OCR would read an image of this slide and correctly decipher the letters – it is crisp and legible.
- Most newspaper and old document images are not crisp and clear
- They have
  - Smudges
  - Smears
  - Missing or faint ink
  - Foxing (brown spots and speckles on the page)
  - Ink spots, drops, splatter
  - Colors or a variety of shades of the aging page color
  - Broken type
  - Connected lettered
  - To OCR the page Color is removed

## Finding an Obituary

- Search
- Read each page of the issues beginning the day of death for a month after
- Read the paper for the day of death and check for morning and afternoon editions
- Scan each page of the newspaper including the classified section
- Look for headings like Death, Died, Obituary, Funeral
- There is the possibility it was never in a newspaper. At all. Anywhere. Ever. ☹
- Same applies to other searches in newspapers.
- Marriages: Look before the event for engagement, shower, marriage license announcements.

## Search In Historical Oregon Newspapers (Search results highlight hits)

- Searched Rosecrantz in Historical Oregon Newspapers
  - 45 Results, All 1900 or later, I want April 1855 marriage
- Searched for Choate (brides name)
  - 4022 results – too many to review, Joseph A. Choate is a character in a serial story
- Advance Search for Choate in 1855
  - 2 results, July 7, 1855 and December 1, 1855, Still not what I am looking for
- Searched first name of Erastus (groom) - Didn’t find it
  - Searched Bacon - 4 results, Nope, only ads for bacon

## Read the Oregon Argus - First issue published on April 21, 1855 in Oregon City

- Published each Saturday, each edition was 4 pages
- Read April 21, 28 and May 5, 1855 issues
- Found it! On same page as a hit for bacon! READ the WHOLE page.
- The Oregon Argus. (Oregon City [Or.]) 1855-1863, May 05, 1855, Image 3

## Online Sources for Digitized Newspaper Images - FREE

- **Chronicling America** (2,173 titles USA) <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/>
- **Google News** (2,445 titles globally) <http://news.google.com/newspapers> (Eugene’s Register Guard)
- **Historic Oregon Newspapers** (185 Oregon titles) <http://oregonnews.uoregon.edu/>

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- **Small Town Papers** (315 US titles) <http://smalltownpapers.com/index.php>
- **Fulton History** (985 titles US & Canada papers) <http://fultonhistory.com/Fulton.html>
- **Europeana** (3,589 European titles) <http://www.europeana-newspapers.eu/>

### Free Glimpse – Pay for view

- **ProQuest Archiver** 130 titles-mostly modern <http://www.pqarchiver.com/titles.html>
- Search for free
- Can see an abstract of the article for free
- Pay \$3.95 for a copy of the article only

### Online Sources for Digitized Newspaper Images – SUBSCRIPTION SITES

- **Paper of Record** <https://paperofrecord.hypernet.ca/default.asp> (**299 mostly other countries**) \$71.40 +tax CAD 1 year; \$29.85 +tax CAD 3 months; MAX 250 downloads per day
- **GenealogyBank** <http://www.genealogybank.com> (**3,981 titles +3,758 with recent obits only**) \$69.95 1 year; 30-day trial \$9.95
- **Newspapers.com** <http://www.newspapers.com/> (**285 titles**) \$74.95 6 months /\$149.80 1 year; 7 day free trial
- **WorldVitalRecords** <http://www.worldvitalrecords.com> (**None-only abstracts of vital records**) \$89.99 1 year; 7 day free trial
- **NewspaperARCHIVE** <http://www.newspaperarchive.com> (**1,647 titles**) \$49.95 6 ,months/\$99.90 1 year; 7 day free trial

### Where Else to Find Newspapers

- **Wikipedia: List of Online Newspaper Archives**  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:List\\_of\\_online\\_newspaper\\_archives](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:List_of_online_newspaper_archives)
- **The Directory of State Archives** [www.statearchivists.org/states.htm](http://www.statearchivists.org/states.htm)
- **Research Guides: Newspapers** <http://researchguides.net/newspapers.htm>
- **Cyndi's List – Newspapers** [www.cyndislist.com/newspapers/](http://www.cyndislist.com/newspapers/)
- **The Kentucky Edition** <http://www.uky.edu/Libraries/ndnp/listcounties.html>
- **Northwestern California Newspapers** <http://library.humboldt.edu/nwcnews/indices/bib.html>
- **Penn Libraries - Historical Newspapers Online**  
<http://gethelp.library.upenn.edu/guides/hist/onlinenewspapers.html>
- **The Library of Virginia** <http://www.lva.virginia.gov/public/guides/newspaperResearch.pdf>  
<http://www.lva.virginia.gov/public/guides/IndexingVaNewspapers.pdf>