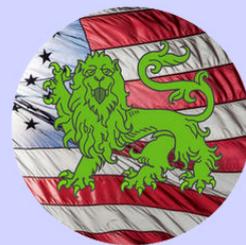


THE ULTIMATE FREE GENEALOGY RESEARCH REFERENCE GUIDE



FamilyHistoryFoundation.com

● HOW-TO USE THIS GUIDE

- Stop hitting paywalls. This reference guide compiles the top 20 trusted websites where you can find census data, military records, ship manifests, and cemetery logs for \$0.
- Keep this PDF on your desktop. When you hit a "brick wall" on one site, click the next link on this list to try a different angle.

---The "Big Five" & General Records---

● 1. FamilySearch

- Best For: The absolute best all-around free alternative to Ancestry. Census, vital records, and global trees.
- Link: www.familysearch.org

● 2. The National Archives (NARA)

- Best For: Official US Federal records, military service files, and naturalization documents.
- Link: www.archives.gov

● 3. Cyndi's List

- Best For: A massive categorized directory of over 300,000 genealogy links. If it exists, it's listed here.
- Link: www.cyndislist.com

● 4. RootsWeb

- Best For: Old-school community mailing lists, message boards, and user-contributed family trees.
- Link: home.rootsweb.com

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5. HeritageQuest Online

- Best For: accessing census data and Revolutionary War records (often requires a local library card to log in remotely).
- Link: www.heritagequestonline.com

--- Cemeteries & Vital Records ---

6. Find A Grave

- Best For: Locating burial sites, headstone photos, and linking family members in reliable cemeteries.
- Link: www.findagrave.com

7. Billion Graves

- Best For: GPS-tagged headstone images. Great for finding exact plot locations in large cemeteries.
- Link: billiongraves.com

8. FreeBMD

- Best For: Civil Registration indexes of Births, Marriages, and Deaths for England and Wales (1837–1997).
- Link: www.freebmd.org.uk

9. Online Searchable Death Indexes

- Best For: A curated list of death records and obituaries organized by state and county.
- Link: www.deathindexes.com

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--- Location-Specific & Volunteer Projects ---

10. USGenWeb Project

- Best For: deeply local research. Click your state, then your county, to find records uploaded by local volunteers.
- Link: www.usgenweb.org

11. WorldGenWeb Project

- Best For: The international version of USGenWeb. Essential for research outside the United States.
- Link: www.worldgenweb.org

12. Genealogy Trails

- Best For: Transcriptions of wills, biographies, and obituaries contributed by history buffs.
- Link: genealogytrails.com

13. AccessGenealogy

- Best For: Native American research (Dawes Rolls) and specific US military rosters.
- Link: accessgenealogy.com

14. The Olive Tree Genealogy

- Best For: Canadian genealogy, Palatine immigrant ships, and early passenger lists.
- Link: www.olivetreegenealogy.com

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--- Immigration, Libraries & Newspapers ---

15. The Ellis Island Foundation

- Best For: Passenger search for 65 million immigrants who arrived in NYC (1820–1957).
- Link: heritage.statueofliberty.org

16. Library of Congress (Chronicling America)

- Best For: Searching millions of digitized historic American newspapers (1777–1963).
- Link: chroniclingamerica.loc.gov

17. Digital Public Library of America (DPLA)

- Best For: Primary source images, letters, and maps from museums and archives across the US.
- Link: dp.la

18. New York Public Library Digital Collections

- Best For: High-resolution historical maps, photos, and city directories (not just for NY!).
- Link: digitalcollections.nypl.org

19. Open Library

- Best For: Borrowing out-of-print family history books and local county histories digitally.
- Link: <https://openlibrary.org/>

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20. GenForum

- Best For: Searching old message board threads by surname or specific region.
- Link: www.genealogy.com/forum

Need help organizing all these finds?

- Don't let your research get messy. Check out our latest guides on organizing your findings and breaking through brick walls.
- Find the reference article online: "[Free Genealogy Research: The 2025 Guide to Finding Ancestors for \\$0.](#)"
- Visit Us: FamilyHistoryFoundation.com