

Searching for Your Ancestors in Historic Newspapers



Claudia C. Breland

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Genealogy and Online Research
Gig Harbor, Washington
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Title page image: *The Omaha Sunday Bee*, 6 February 1916; digital image; *Chronicling America* (<http://www.chroniclingamerica.loc.gov>: accessed 3 Sept. 2014).

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Finding the Newspaper You Need

The U.S. Newspaper Program was created several years ago in a collaborative effort to preserve our nation's history as told in historic newspapers.

However, it's a mistake to depend only on newspapers that are online. Public libraries, university libraries, archives and historical societies across the country are the repositories for thousands of rolls of microfilm. Any thorough search for news stories about your ancestors should include not only the newspapers that are digitized and easily searchable, but also those that may require looking at microfilm.

But how do you go about finding the newspapers that were published in the time and locality that you're interested in? Here are some online resources that can help.

WorldCat:

<http://www.worldcat.org>

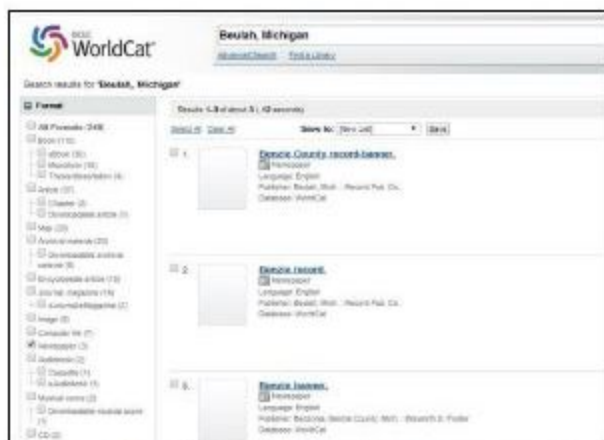
This is an online catalog to the world's libraries. As well as listing books, DVDs, CDs, and articles, it also lists library holdings of historic newspapers.

Keep in mind that WorldCat does not list every library owning these items; it only lists the libraries that subscribe to their service.

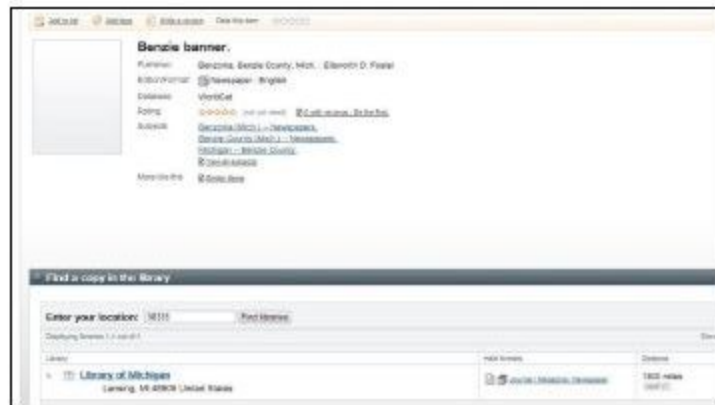


Here I've clicked on the "Everything" tab, and typed in "Beulah, Michigan". I'd like to know what newspapers are available for this little village in northwestern Michigan.

There are 248 items resulting from this search. If I click "Newspapers" to the left that reduces the results to 3 titles the *Benzie Record*, the *Benzie Record-Banner*, and the *Benzie Banner*.



If I click on the 3rd title, Benzie Banner, I get this screen, which tells me which libraries have it:



This screen shows me that the Library of Michigan owns this title, and even how far away it is from my home zip code!

In order to do some additional sleuthing, I can click on the subject heading for newspapers for Benzie County:

[Benzie County \(Mich.\) – Newspapers](#)

It turns out that there are actually 16 entries for newspapers in this county, including the *Frankfort Weekly Express*, the *Thompsonville News*, and *Fruit and Farm News*. Always check out the other newspapers in the county where your ancestors lived.

Free Newspaper Databases

When you're searching for newspaper articles about your ancestors or the places they lived, there are free websites that are treasure troves of information.

Chronicling America

<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/>

The Library of Congress, established in 1800 by James Madison and Thomas Jefferson, is one of the largest libraries in the world. Far from being just a repository for books, however, they have a vast online collection of digital items. These include maps, prints and photographs, manuscripts, films and sound recordings – and of course, newspapers.

Chronicling America is a searchable website of digitized newspapers, produced by the National Digital Newspaper Program, a joint effort of the Library of Congress and the National Endowment for the Humanities. It covers 1836 to 1922, and includes newspapers from 39 states. This is an ongoing project, and the newspapers that are included are chosen for many different reasons: the area covered within the state, their importance in the community, and from recommendations from local librarians.

From the home page you can do a simple search, an advanced search, or look at a listing of all the digitized newspapers, organized by state. In this listing you can narrow your search by ethnicities or languages. Newspapers after 1922 are not included because they are copyrighted.

Subscription Databases

In addition to the free newspapers you can find online, there are subscription databases that deal primarily with newspapers and other historic records. Most of these are available to individual subscribers, and some through institutions. It pays to investigate every possibility for finding out about your ancestors' lives!

With any subscription or membership, it is important to read the fine print carefully. Each company has its own "Terms of Service" which dictates how you can use or share the information you find online. If you sign up for a trial period of 7 days, use a one-time credit card, and make a note on your calendar to cancel before the trial period ends, if you don't intend to continue. Some websites practice auto-renewal; make sure you know if your subscription will be renewed automatically, or if you'll be asked to renew each year.

Ancestry

<http://www.ancestry.com>

1-800-262-3787

Ancestry.com is one of the largest genealogy databases, and includes a substantial number of newspapers. Their US Obituary Collection includes over 28 million records, and their digitized newspapers include significant titles from Illinois, Iowa, Ohio and Pennsylvania. These newspapers are only available with an individual subscription, and are not available through the Ancestry Library edition.

Ancestry has several subscription levels, which you can see [here](#):

<http://www.ancestry.com/cs/offers/subscribe?sub=1>

You can see the alphabetical list of newspaper titles here:

<http://search.ancestry.com/search/group/histnews>

One of the important collections in Ancestry is not under Newspapers, but under Birth, Marriage and Death Records. The Historical Newspapers, Birth, Marriage & Death Announcements, 1851-2003 is composed of pages from the following papers:

The New York Times, 1851-2001
The Los Angeles Times, 1881-1894
The Boston Globe, 1872-1922
The Chicago Defender, 1921-1975
The Chicago Tribune, 1850-1985
The Hartford Courant, 1791-1942
The Washington Post, 1877-1990
The Atlanta Constitution, 1868-1929

You may not think to look in this collection if your ancestor did not live in these large cities. However, often obituaries appeared for people who lived in the surrounding areas.

<p>GOLDSCHMIDT.—At her home, Hackensack, N. J., on May 16, Florence Elsworth, eldest daughter of Edward and Florence Elsworth Goldschmidt, aged 17 years and 1 month. Funeral from Christ Church, Hackensack, on Friday, May 18, at 10 A. M.</p> <p>HALE.—At Fitchburg, Mass., May 16, Henry A. Hale, formerly of New York, in the 76th year of his age. Funeral Saturday at 11 A. M.</p>

“Died,” *New York Times*, 18 May 1900; digital image;

“Historical Newspapers, Birth, Marriage & Death Announcements, 1851-2003,” *Ancestry* (<http://www.ancestry.com>; accessed 29 Aug. 2014).

Arizona

Libraries with Newspaper Indexes

Coconino & Yavapai Counties

Sedona Public Library Obituary Index

1963-2012 928-282-7714

http://www.sedonapubliclibrary.org/obit_search.php

Coconino County

Northern AZ University Cline Library

Arizona-Champion-Coconino Sun, Name Index, 1887-1894

<http://library.nau.edu/speccoll/indexes/Sun/intro.html>

also

Obituary Index, 1883-2004

<http://www6.nau.edu/library/da/obits/display/browseby.cfm>

Genealogy Societies with Newspaper Indexes

Arizona Obituary Archive, over 70,000 obituaries

No indication of date range or newspapers included

<http://obits.arizonagravestones.org/>

Cochise County Obituaries

PDF, transcribed

<http://www.mychochise.com/obits.php>

Maricopa County

Mesa FamilySearch Library Arizona Obituary Search

\$15 per search request

480-694-1200

admin@mesarfhc.org

<http://mesarfhc.org/search/azobits.htm>

Maricopa County

West Valley Genealogical Society Obituary Search,
1963 to present 623-933-4945

<http://www.azwvgs.org/obits.asp>

Yavapai County

Northern Arizona Genealogical Society Obituaries
1962-2001

<http://nags.weebly.com/obituaries.html>

Yavapai County

Sharlot Hall Museum Obituary Database
1973-present

<http://www.sharlot.org/archives/gene/index.html>

Digitized Newspaper Collections

Arizona Digital Newspaper Program

<http://adnp.azlibrary.gov/cdm/newspapers/>

University of Arizona, Historic Mexican &
Mexican American Press 520-641-6423

<http://tinyurl.com/qelkf8a>

Gila County News-Courier, 1942-1945

<http://tinyurl.com/k7g5tkh>

Pima & Pinal Counties

The Little Cowpuncher

1930s & 1940s

<http://cowpuncher.library.arizona.edu/newspaper/toc.htm>

Pinal County

Casa Grande Public Library Digital Archives

1912-2012 520-421-8710

<http://casagrandepl.newspaperarchive.com/>

Microfilmed Newspaper Collections

University of Arizona

1510 E. University Blvd.

Tucson, AZ 85721-0055

520-621-6406

Listing of newspapers by city, 1854 to present

<http://www.library.arizona.edu/help/how/find/newspapers/arizona>

Books

Lutrell, Estelle, *Newspapers and periodicals of Arizona, 1859-1911*. Tucson, University of Arizona, 1950.