

Research Guides to Your Ancestors Online

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<http://www.finding-forgotten-stories.com>

Think back to the town where you grew up. The clothes you wore, where you shopped, went to school and worshipped. What you were expected to do and what you were expected not to do! The stories that everybody just knew about that place and the people that lived there. Wouldn't it be interesting to know all of that about your ancestors in the time that they lived?

A wise genealogist, Lou Szucs, tells us that you should be able to speak for half an hour about the place where your ancestor lived. It's a critical piece of studying our family history. But how do you get to be that knowledgeable?

What counties and towns did your ancestors live in? You need to be able to talk about all of those places like you knew them. Just like politics, all genealogy is local. And you need to organize your research tools and your knowledge of the area so that you can find it quickly.

Organizing What You Know and Where to Find It

For each state, county and town create a research guide that contains:

- A map or maps. You can mark where your ancestors might have lived.
- A paragraph or two about what you know of the history of that area. Include the good, the bad and the ugly.
- A timeline of events that happened when your ancestors lived there.
- A list of records that are available and where to find them.

Where Did They Live?

The first step to describing where your ancestors lived is to find them on a map. And not one map, but many maps. Topographic and physiographic maps will help you understand the lay of the land and what crops they might have grown. This will also help you understand a wide variety of topics including where the nearest courthouse, cemetery and church was and migration patterns into and out of the area.

Getting to Know the People

All communities are different. Not just within a state but within a county or a geographic region. Examining local newspapers and local histories will give you a clue to how people thought about the world that they lived in. They will also help identify events both big and small and local and national that were impactful to your ancestors.

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County Evolution

You may know what county your grandparents lived in, but are you familiar with the history of the county? Did the boundaries change? Which county was the parent county? Is there any record loss in your county and what impact does that have on your research?

Vital Events – Where Were They Recorded and Do They Exist?

What laws did your state have about recording birth, marriages and deaths and how did they change over time? Who could own property? What rights did women have and how does that impact your understanding of the records you look at?

Census Records, Tax Lists and Other Enumerations

Any record that puts your ancestor in a specific place and a specific time is a good record. What census records exist or were destroyed in your area? Do you know where to find tax lists for your ancestors or if they even exist? Are there military enlistment records? Church records?

Land Holds Many Clues

Find every deed that mentions your ancestor whether they were a buyer, a seller or a neighbor. Kinship may be defined in a deed that is defined nowhere else. You may be able to pinpoint a death date when a neighbor's line is listed as "John Smith, deceased" and if you are having trouble finding a maiden name for an ancestress, checking the neighbors is a good place to start.

Probate and Other Legal Records

Whether your ancestor died with or without a will, if he owned anything, there is probably a record that documents what happened to his possessions or land. You want to know what types of records were created and where to find them.

Maps

- Newberry Atlas of Historical County Boundaries – <http://publications.newberry.org/ahcbp/>
- United States Physiographic Regions
 - https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_physiographic_region
- USGS Store Map Locator & Downloader
 - [https://store.usgs.gov/b2c_usgs/usgs/maplocator/\(xcm=r3standardpitrex_prd&layout=6_1_61_48&uiarea=2&ctype=areaDetails&care=%24ROOT\)/.do](https://store.usgs.gov/b2c_usgs/usgs/maplocator/(xcm=r3standardpitrex_prd&layout=6_1_61_48&uiarea=2&ctype=areaDetails&care=%24ROOT)/.do)
- Library of Congress Jedediah Hotchkiss Map Collection
 - <https://www.loc.gov/collections/hotchkiss-maps/about-this-collection/>
- Library of Congress Collections with Maps – <https://www.loc.gov/maps/collections/>
- David Rumsey Historical Map Collection – <http://www.davidrumsey.com/>

Pictures

- Library of Congress: Digital Collections
 - <https://www.loc.gov/collections/>
- Wikimedia Commons
 - https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Main_Page
- Flickr Creative Commons
 - <https://www.flickr.com/creativecommons/>

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Newspapers

- Library of Congress Chronicling America Historic American Newspapers
 - <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/>
- Newspapers.com - <http://www.newspapers.com>

Timelines and Events

- GenDisasters – <http://www.gendisasters.com/>
- South Carolina Timeline
 - <http://www.worldatlas.com/webimage/countrys/namerica/usstates/sctimeln.htm>
- North Carolina History Timeline
 - <http://www.datesandevents.org/american-timelines/33-north-carolina-history-timeline.htm>
- Timeline of Raleigh, North Carolina
 - https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Timeline_of_Raleigh,_North_Carolina
- Timeline of South Carolina in the American Civil War
 - https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/South_Carolina_in_the_American_Civil_War
- Timeline of United States History
 - https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Timeline_of_United_States_history

General

- The Library of Congress American Memory – <https://memory.loc.gov/ammem/index.html>
- Google Books – <http://books.google.com>
- Stories, Memories & Histories on Ancestry
 - <http://search.ancestry.com/search/category.aspx?cat=33>
- Library of Congress: Digital Collections - <https://www.loc.gov/collections/>
- Documenting the American South – <http://docsouth.unc.edu/>
- National Park Service – <https://www.nps.gov>
- USGenWeb – <http://usgenweb.org/>
- Ancestry Message Boards – <http://boards.ancestry.com/>
- Find A Grave – <https://findagrave.com/>

North Carolina

- USGS Physiographic Regions for North Carolina
 - https://nc.water.usgs.gov/projects/index_physio.html
- North Carolina Maps - <http://www2.lib.unc.edu/dc/ncmaps/>
- Digital Collections - <http://library.unc.edu/find/digitalcollections/>
- North Carolina State Archives: Digital Collections and Publications
 - <http://archives.ncdcr.gov/Public/Digital-Collections-and-Publications>
- North Carolina Family Records Online (State Library and State Archives)
 - <http://statelibrary.ncdcr.gov/digital/ncfamilyrecords/>
- North Carolina Office of Archives and History – <http://www.history.ncdcr.gov/>
- North Carolina History Project
 - http://northcarolinahistory.org/?gclid=CjwKEAIAIZDFBRCKncm67qihiHwSJABtoNIgd47kYIUw6h255aNdsH1KVkPkVUxDBNkJyVpMzy5jRoCvsjw_wcB

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- North Carolina Land Grant Images and Data – <http://www.nclandgrants.com/>
- State Archives of North Carolina on Flickr –
 - <https://www.flickr.com/photos/north-carolina-state-archives/>
- North Carolina Highway Historical Marker Program
 - <http://www.ncmarkers.com/Home.aspx>
- North Carolina Natural and Cultural Resources – <https://www.ncdcr.gov/>
- NCpedia – <http://www.ncpedia.org/>
- North Carolina Gen Web – <http://www.ncgenweb.us/>
- The Way We Lived in North Carolina – <http://www.waywelivednc.com/>
- North Carolina Probate Records on Ancestry
 - <http://search.ancestry.com/search/db.aspx?htx=List&dbid=9061&bm=U>
- North Carolina Family History Research, Ancestry Wiki
 - http://www.ancestry.com/wiki/index.php?title=North_Carolina_Family_History_Research
- FamilySearch South Carolina Records Online
 - <https://familysearch.org/search/collection/location/20>
- FamilySearch Wiki, North Carolina
 - https://familysearch.org/wiki/en/North_Carolina_United_States_Genealogy

South Carolina

- University of South Carolina Digital Collections – <http://library.sc.edu/p/Collections/Digital>
- SC Department of Archives & History – <http://archives.sc.gov/Pages/default.aspx>
- South Carolina Archives and On-Line Records Index
 - <http://www.archivesindex.sc.gov/>
- South Carolina Dept of Archives and History
 - <https://www.flickr.com/photos/scarchives/>
- South Carolina Gen Web – <http://www.scgenweb.org/>
- Family Search South Carolina Records Online
 - <https://familysearch.org/search/collection/location/25>
- FamilySearch Wiki, South Carolina
 - https://familysearch.org/wiki/en/South_Carolina_United_States_Genealogy
- South Carolina Probate Records on Ancestry
 - <http://search.ancestry.com/search/db.aspx?htx=List&dbid=9080&bm=U>
- South Carolina Family History Research, Ancestry Wiki
 - http://www.ancestry.com/wiki/index.php?title=South_Carolina_Family_History_Research
- South Carolina Historical Markers
 - <http://www.lat34north.com/HistoricMarkersSC/MarkerIndex.cfm>
- Georeferenced map of known S.C. Historical Markers
 - https://www.google.com/maps/d/viewer?mid=1t3m4iA_a3hA8J_oPtxxNJJ2M_A&hl=en_US&ll=33.69049557907872%2C-81.32880159895848&z=7

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