

The Amateur Genealogist by Celia Lewis, MA, Genealogy consultant

Newspapers, Obituaries – A Wealth of Family Information.

TIP: Search newspapers for 1 day to 3 weeks past a death for obituaries, as well as articles which may be written about your ancestor.

Your ancestors may well have inserted an obituary notice in their local paper when a death occurred. At times, that obituary (or a re-write) may also be printed in a newspaper where a father/grandfather or other historical family member was born. Currently, some families also have a Guestbook online, hosted by the same newspaper, for visitors and friends to write notes about the deceased.

All of these sources of information can be mined for the important details of full names, birthdates, birthplaces, marriages, names of children and grandchildren, historical ancestors, occupations, church, affiliations with organizations/associations, cemetery place, and more! In online Guestbooks, you may also find detailed information on your relative's friendships, other relatives, early exploits, and personal stories which make their history come alive.

Check out state/provincial universities and libraries for their collections of local newspapers – many of which are no longer being printed. These may be only on microfiche, or the images may already be indexed and available online. More and more are available each month.



In the Vancouver Public Library, I was able to read two obituaries written for a relative, giving me details on children, marriages, and current residences at the time. This gave me more than enough information to track down 4 more cousins! And gave me a clue on where to look for my relative's ancestors in Ontario, Missouri, and Pennsylvania as well. What a find!

Another greatgreatgrandfather's exploits were written up in the Gettysburg Compiler, May 13, 1908: details of where he was educated, worked, moved to, resided, children, details of his brothers and sisters, where they lived at the time. A great deal of very useful information to confirm and add to my family tree notes. An earlier newspaper, The Star and Sentinel, Sept. 26, 1878, included half a column on another of my relatives: my greatgreatgrandfather's father, Judge Joseph J. Kuhn., giving me further details of my Kuhn ancestors.

Search listings on
http://genealogy.about.com/od/historic_online/Historic_Newspapers_Online.htm

Questions: Email Celia@RootsBasic.com

TIP: Google "historic online newspapers" or "historic newspaper collections"