



Five Tips for Newspaper Research

Mary Kircher Roddy offers some helpful tips on searching for your ancestors in online newspapers

NEWSPAPER RESEARCH CAN TELL US SO MUCH ABOUT THE LIVES of our ancestors. Here are a few short hints that might help you to break through a brick wall, or fill in the details of an ancestor's life.

<p>REPUBLICAN NATIONAL CONVENTION.</p> <p>FOR PRESIDENT, ABRAHAM LINCOLN, OF ILLINOIS.</p> <p>FOR VICE PRESIDENT, HANNIBAL HAMLIN, OF MAINE.</p> <p>Republican Nominations at Chicago.</p> <p>LINCOLN AND HAMLIN.</p> <p>Cheers by Thirty Thousand Republicans.</p> <p>PENNSYLVANIA PLEDGES TWENTY THOUSAND MAJORITY.</p> <p>IMMENSE ENTHUSIASM.</p> <p>Adjournment of the Convention Sine Die.</p> <p>CHICAGO, May 18.</p>	<p>Ohio named Hannibal Hamlin of Maine; Mr. Boutwell named N. P. Banks of Massachusetts; Mr. Smith of Indiana nominated Cassius M. Clay of Kentucky; Mr. Flourney of Pennsylvania named Gov. Reeder of Pennsylvania: The nominations were received with applause.</p> <p>Ballot for Vice President.</p> <p>FIRST BALLOT.</p> <table> <tr><td>Total vote,</td><td>471</td></tr> <tr><td>Necessary to a choice,</td><td>232</td></tr> <tr><td>Hannibal Hamlin of Maine,*</td><td>184</td></tr> <tr><td>Cassius M. Clay of Kentucky,</td><td>191</td></tr> <tr><td>John Hickman of Pennsylvania,</td><td>58</td></tr> <tr><td>Gov. Reeder of Pennsylvania,</td><td>57</td></tr> <tr><td>N. P. Banks of Massachusetts,</td><td>38</td></tr> <tr><td>Henry Wiluter Davis of Maryland,</td><td>8</td></tr> <tr><td>Sam Houston of Texas,</td><td>6</td></tr> <tr><td>Wm. L. Dayton of New Jersey,</td><td>2</td></tr> <tr><td>Wm. Reed of Pennsylvania,</td><td>1</td></tr> <tr><td>No choice.</td><td></td></tr> </table> <p>SECOND BALLOT.</p> <p>On the second ballot Massachusetts withdrew the name of Banks and cast 26 votes for Hamlin. Pennsylvania withdrew the name of Gov. Reeder and cast 56 votes for Hamlin. New York cast 70 votes for Hamlin. The second ballot resulted as follows:—</p> <table> <tr><td>Hamlin</td><td>362</td></tr> <tr><td>Clay</td><td>85</td></tr> <tr><td>Hickman</td><td>13</td></tr> </table>	Total vote,	471	Necessary to a choice,	232	Hannibal Hamlin of Maine,*	184	Cassius M. Clay of Kentucky,	191	John Hickman of Pennsylvania,	58	Gov. Reeder of Pennsylvania,	57	N. P. Banks of Massachusetts,	38	Henry Wiluter Davis of Maryland,	8	Sam Houston of Texas,	6	Wm. L. Dayton of New Jersey,	2	Wm. Reed of Pennsylvania,	1	No choice.		Hamlin	362	Clay	85	Hickman	13
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A newspaper clipping, such as the example above from the May 23, 1860 edition of Massachusetts Spy, might reveal an ancestor who was in attendance at the Republican National Convention in Chicago that year. (Image courtesy of GenealogyBank.com)

1 READ THE WHOLE PAPER

You've searched and scoured the newspaper and found the obituary for your great-great uncle. You've got the name of the cemetery, the church he was buried from and the names of a couple of relatives. Check, that task is done, plug it into your genealogy software, now you can move on. Whoa! Not so fast there, sister. Read the rest of that day's newspaper

(and at least the day before and after). I read the brief 28-word obituary for John Ahern in the Petaluma Courier of 1896 and thought I was done. I found another obituary in an Oakland newspaper for the same man, but he was referred to as John Lockren and I was thoroughly confused. If I had only read the next page of the Petaluma Courier, I would have learned that John Ahern had been living with his aunt, Anna Lockren, in Oakland and was known in the area there by her surname. It only took me five years to get back to Petaluma and read the rest of the newspaper. I could have saved myself several long years of research if only I'd been thorough the first time around.

2 PICK A NUMBER AND ADD 21 OR 25 OR 50

You've searched the newspapers for the article about your great grandparents' wedding and you found it (or maybe you didn't — grrrrr). But you know the date of the marriage. Check the newspaper where they were living 25 or 50 years later. There you might

find an article about the anniversary party. The write-up of my great-grandparents' 50th wedding anniversary in 1931 gave me names of anniversary guests who were at the wedding, as well as a description of the bride's dress in 1881 and where the newlyweds had gone on their honeymoon. Use this same tip to look for the details of someone's 21st or 75th birthday celebration.

3 NOBODY CAN READ JUST ONE

When you run across a story about your ancestor in a newspaper, check the other newspapers in the city or nearby towns for their accounts of the event. You might learn another detail or two or be presented with an alternate spelling of the name. I've found the same item in multiple news sources and my grandfather's name was spelled three different ways (none of them correct!) Just for the heck of it, run the names through some of the major newspaper databases such as GenealogyBank.com and Newspaperarchive.com, narrowing your search to the date of the event plus a week or two. Sometimes that odd little story about the train wreck in California might have hit the wire services and been run in a newspaper on the other side of the country.

4 ALL OCR IS NOT CREATED EQUAL

The Library of Congress' Chronicling America site (<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov>) has digital images from over 950 newspapers from 32 states and the District of Columbia. Some of these same newspapers are also searchable on

Here are a few newspaper sites where you might try out some of these tips...

Genealogybank.com – 6100+ newspapers with modern obituaries (1977-today) and historical newspaper content from 1690-2010. (Fee)

Newspaperarchive.com – 120 million newspaper pages from the US, Canada and the UK from 1607-present. (Fee)

Many local libraries subscribe to one or both of the above sites, and other databases such as "19th Century US Newspapers" and "New York Times Historical 1851-2007". Access is often available from home using a computer and entering your library card number. Check with your local library to see what is available to patrons. (Free)

More free sites:

Fultonhistory.com – New York State historical newspapers from 1795-2007, over 21 million pages. The Frequently Asked Questions link gives wonderful tips and tricks for searching. (Free)

Chronicling America (<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov>) offers digitized newspapers from 1836-1922. In addition, there is a directory of newspapers published in the US since 1690 which can help researchers identify what titles exist for a specific place and time and how to access them. Many of these titles which have not been digitized are available on microfilm and may be accessed via inter-library loan. (Free)

Google News Search – Google launched a newspaper digitization project in 2008, but pulled the plug on it in 2011. However, they didn't pull the existing content. A list of historical newspapers which can be browsed is available at <http://news.google.com/newspapers> (Free)

Sources for Canadian Newspaper content:

British Columbia Historical Newspaper Search
(<http://historicalnewspapers.library.ubc.ca>)

University of Alberta Libraries' Peel's Prairie Provinces
(<http://peel.library.ualberta.ca/newspapers>)

Manitoba Digital Resources
(<http://manitoba.ca/content/en/newspapers>)

The above three sites offer numerous scanned and searchable newspapers from the 19th and 20th centuries. (Free)

There is an excellent article on Wikipedia of online newspaper archives which provides links to digital newspaper content across the globe. For the United States and Canada, the lists are further subdivided into state and provincial links - http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:List_of_online_newspaper_archives

Another article at **Xooxle** (www.xooxleanswers.com/free-newspaper-archives/us-state-and-local-newspaper-archives/) provides links to various digitized newspapers on a state-by-state basis



alternate sites, for example through the California Digital Newspaper Collection (<http://cdnc.ucr.edu/cdnc>) and Fulton History (<http://fultonhistory.com/Fulton.html>) which carries an extensive collection of New York newspapers. The Optical Character Recognition used by the different websites may yield different results. Try your same search on multiple sites and watch the number of results you get multiply.

5 UNDERSTANDING OCR GLITCHES

Many of the searchable newspaper sites will show you a page or article view from the newspaper and also have a “text” button or

link which will show you what letters and words the OCR program read in that article. For instance, in the 1910 obituary in the San Francisco Call for Annie McGlynn, the OCR translated it as

*“MeGLYNN — ... Annie,
beloved wife of Joseph McGlynn,
and mother of Harold ami
Leslie MrOlynn...”*

When my human eyes read the article, I can see that Annie McGlynn’s survivors included Harold and Leslie McGlynn, but the OCR robot is slightly confused. If you understand that sometimes a “c” might look like an “e”, an “a” might read as an “s”

or a “G” might appear as “O”, you can use this to your advantage and play around with some of these more common glitches.

Apply one or more of these ideas to your newspaper research and who knows what new treasure you might dig up. ©

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Ontario Genealogical Society

May 31 to June 2

in Oshawa, ONTARIO, CANADA
UOIT/Durham College

<http://ogs.on.ca/conference>

conference2013@ogs.on.ca



**PULLING UP STAKES
PUTTING DOWN ROOTS**