

## Newspapers In Family History Research

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## Newspapers are Full of Family History!

- Genealogists primarily use newspapers for their obituaries, but they have other information.
- Newspapers tell the week-to-week, day-to-day stories of ancestors' lives.
- The smaller the town or county, the more important the ancestor is to the newspaper.



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## Basic Considerations

- Determine the time and place your ancestor lived. This will help you find the right paper.
- If there doesn't seem to be a newspaper, look for later newspapers in the same time or nearby publications.
- Keep track of the paper's publication schedule
  - You may need to make a calendar or use an online calculator to track items that happened "last Friday".



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## More Considerations

- Treat the newspaper as you would any other source.
  - Does the information appear elsewhere?
  - Can it be corroborated from other sources?
  - Consider the context of where you find the information? Is it a news story? A letter?
- Try to see as much as of the paper around the time you want as possible.



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## ERRORS In Newspapers?

- Newspaper workers are human, and it takes many people to make a newspaper, even today.
  - Information passes through many hands before the paper ever "hits the stands", multiplying the chance for human error.
- Sources may relay incomplete, inaccurate or even false information to the paper, intentionally or unintentionally.
- If something seemed drastically wrong, check the next issue or next few issues for corrections.



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## Begin at the End! Obituaries!

- Obituaries are a good place to start.
- They try to summarize life story.
  - In older times, staff members wrote obituaries.
  - Now they come from the family or the funeral home. *The Arizona Republic* encourages e-mail submissions.
  - Their tone has shifted over the years, generally becoming shorter.



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## Obituaries

- Generally high points of a person's life.
  - Date and place of birth
  - Weddings
  - Children
  - Profession
  - Places lived
  - Church affiliation
  - Fraternal organization affiliation
  - Surviving relatives
  - Deceased relatives



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## Obituaries

- There may be funeral details to help further research.
  - Pallbearers
  - Funeral Home
  - Cemetery



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## Death Notices

- Precede obituaries.
- Newspapers get this information first, sometimes from the funeral home, possibly from law enforcement agencies.
- Weekly papers will probably print the notice first, then the obituary at the earliest opportunity.



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## Funeral Notices

- Sometimes, if you cannot find an obituary or death notice, there are notices of when the funeral is scheduled.
- The *Arizona Republic* used to run them near the classified ads.



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## News Stories About Death

- If a death was newsworthy, it may show up in different places than on the obituary page.
- There may also be an obituary, or there may just be the story.



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## Time Saving Tip

- If you have access to a whole paper and do not have an exact citation when looking for obituaries, check the table of contents on the first page of the paper.
  - Some papers always run them in the same place.
  - Others move them as space allows or the number of obituaries changes.



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## Engagements and Weddings

- You may find one or both.
- Information
  - Full name of spouse
  - Possibly name of church and minister
  - People who attended the wedding.



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## Birth Announcements

- These became more popular after early 1900s.
  - Usually lists parents; sometimes more or less.
  - Modern papers tend to list birth weight and length.
- Sometimes these come with a picture, depending on the paper and the ability to get the picture in before deadline.



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## Anniversaries

- Papers usually mark 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversaries and 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversaries.
- May be a story or may be a display advertisement.
- If there was a family gathering around the anniversary, it can show other family members or allied families.



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## Divorces

- May give the wife's maiden name, a sometimes difficult piece of information to find.



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## News Items

- Family members may be mentioned in news stories.
- Sometimes, an obituary may point the way to a story regarding an untimely or unusual death.
  - The event may be in both places in the paper. Sometimes the obituary will follow the event causing the death in the next issue.



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## Feature Stories

- Feature stories are longer pieces about a subject or individual.
- They are sometimes called “Human Interest” stories.
- They may have biographical information that goes beyond that in obituaries and other sources.



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## Business

- Did your ancestor own a business or pursue a trade?
- Businesses often advertise. However, there may be stories about them in the news or business section.



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## Business Features

- Businesses may be featured as a news item.
- This may or may not be treated as "hard news", depending on the business's relation to the paper and how much advertising they buy!



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## Military News

- Military Organizations send news items back to hometowns.
- People joining the military may send news items into their local paper. Military Bases may have their own newspapers.
- You can use your ancestor's service information to find likely dates and times to begin searching.



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## Crime!

- Newspapers consistently report on crime.  
Your ancestor may a victim or perpetrator!



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## Legal Notices

- Governments are often required to legal notices in the local “paper of record.”
  - Notice of Estate Settlements
  - Notice of Sheriff’s Sale
    - If you know your ancestor went bankrupt, their possessions may have been auctioned off.
    - Mention of such a sale may also show up in the Probate.



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## Ethnic and Foreign-Language Newspapers

- These contain immigration news.
  - Ship arrivals
  - Auctions for passengers who could not afford to pay their passage.
  - Advertisements for missing friends and relatives.
- News of visitors from the Homeland
- A perspective on immigrant life.



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### Other Newspaper Sources For Information

- Family Reunions
- School News
- Hotel Visitors Lists
- Letters To The Editor



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### Scrapbooks of Clippings

- Level of accuracy depends on whoever put the scrapbook together.
- They sometimes act as a better filter towards items of family interest.
- What they collect may give clues to other families or allied families.
- May or may not have the dates and titles of the newspapers.



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### Newspaper Abstracts

- Appear in books and periodicals and on Ancestry.com.
- Periodicals will be indexed by Periodical Source Index (PERSI).
- Some books contain very particular excerpts: *The Search For Missing Friends*.
- The newspaper itself will generally have more information than an abstract, but the abstract will be more specialized.



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## Sources For Newspapers

- Arizona State Library and Archives
  - We have Arizona Newspapers in both physical form and on Microfilm.
  - The Arizona State Archives retains newspapers 5 years and older.
    - This schedule may be changing.
  - The State Library of Arizona maintains the current 5 years.



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## Current Arizona Newspapers

- The State Library of Arizona retains every current newspaper it can receive. The stacks keep expanding!



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## Older Arizona Newspapers

- The majority of older Arizona Newspapers are on microfilm, but there are still stacks left.



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## United States Newspaper Program

- This is a joint project between the National Endowment for the Humanities and the Library of Congress to “locate, catalog and preserve newspapers located within the United States.”
- Begun in 1980s.
- <http://www.neh.gov/projects/usnp.html>
  - Page has links to information on each state, including Arizona.



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## Arizona Newspaper Project

- Began identifying titles in 1991.
  - 1,520 titles identified.
- From 1992-2004, catalogued newspapers.
  - Information expanded to 1,774 titles.
- The project has filmed more than 1 million pages as of 2003 and the work is ongoing.



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## Interlibrary Loan

- Different libraries offer different Interlibrary Loan Services.
- If time and finance allow, see the whole newspaper than just a particular item.



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## Using WorldCat

- The Arizona State Library has access to WorldCat, a catalog with material from more than 10,000 libraries.
- You can also use WorldCat at [www.worldcat.org](http://www.worldcat.org)
- The OCLC version of WorldCat has a Publisher Location I have found useful in finding small-town newspapers.



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## What If You Can't Find It In WorldCat?

- The paper itself, if still in print.
- The local library.
- The local historical society.



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## Information An Interlibrary Loan Needs

If you find a in an abstract and want a copy of a single obituary, try to include as much information as possible, such as:

- Newspaper title
- Title of article or obituary name
- Author of article



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## Digital Newspapers

- I suggest searching digital newspapers the “traditional” way: look for a specific event that happened around the time the issue was printed.
- “Metadata” remains inconsistent (To my satisfaction) and searching for names can lead to unwanted results.
  - A search may yield a given name on one part of the page and a surname on another part, but *not* joined together.
- May be scanned from the newspapers themselves or from microfilm.



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## Digital Newspapers

- Many institutions are moving towards online access of newspapers collections.
- In May 2005, the Library of Congress and the National Endowment for the Humanities began developing a project to digitize newspapers.
  - This is like the United States Newspaper Program, but with digital newspapers.



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## Chronicling America

- Chronicling America is the site from the National Digital Newspaper Program.
  - <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/>
- Chronicling America newspapers run from 1836-1922
- The Arizona State Archives is currently working on digitizing older newspapers.



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## Arizona Titles in the National Digital Newspaper Program

- Arizona titles in the NDNP include the *Arizona Republican*; *Arizona Silver Belt*; *Bisbee Daily Review*; *Coconino Sun*; *Graham Guardian*; *Mohave County Miner* and *Tombston Epitaph*, up until 1922.



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## GenealogyBank

- Newsbank offers a pay service called GenealogyBank.
  - As of *this writing*, the cost is \$19.95 per month or \$69.95 per year (Averages to \$5.83 per month.)
- They also offer a library version called America's GenealogyBank.
  - The Arizona State Library does not carry this service.
  - GenealogyBank has more than 3,800 titles, while the library version has a little more than 2,200.



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## Newspapers.com

This is a “product” owned by Ancestry.com. As of this writing, cost is \$79.95 per year or \$7.95 per month.

(I suspect there is a discount if you have a subscription to Ancestry.com)

Boasts: “67+ million pages from more than 2900 newspapers across the United States”



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## Other Sources For Digital Newspapers

- Large papers have begun digitizing their archives.
  - Some are more recent archives, and some go back decades.
- Google searches sometimes turn up newspapers and obituaries that the paper or someone else has digitized.
- You may have to pay for access to them.
  - If you have a home delivery subscription to the *New York Times*, their archive runs from 1851-1922. If your library has ProQuest, you can also access these issues.

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## Wikipedia

- Wikipedia contains a list of online newspaper archives.
  - [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_online\\_newspaper\\_archives](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_online_newspaper_archives)
- As with all other information on Wikipedia, verify their sources.
  - However, this list is mainly a collection of links.
- The section for the United States goes state by state.

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## In-Print Newspapers Online

- Many newspapers now have online access.
  - Often you must just register for access.
- Smaller newspapers focus on current events.
- Information may or may not be archived.
  - If you see an obituary or other story you want, it can be a clue towards getting a paper copy.
  - You must sometimes pay for older archived materials
- It is worthwhile to check papers in family members' hometowns to keep up on the news.

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# THE END

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