

# Researching the Family Tree



With genealogical resources from your  
Milwaukee Public Library

# Genealogy

– the study of ancestry and family histories – is a popular hobby. The Milwaukee Public Library has an excellent collection of materials in this field in the Frank P. Zeidler Humanities Room at the Central Library. Thousands of people have used its books, magazines, atlases and other resources to discover their own roots.

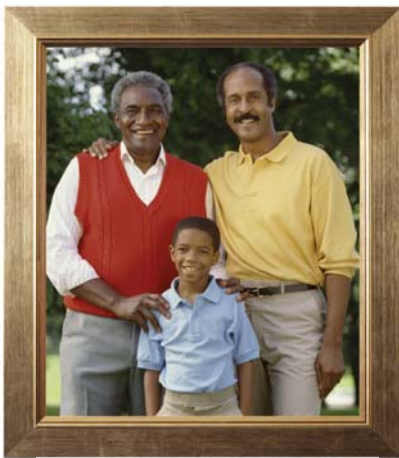
The genealogical materials at the library are enhanced by related collections. These collections deal with the history of Milwaukee and Wisconsin, the old Northwest Territory, and the colonies and states in the main migration pattern to this area. The collection includes materials on researching ethnic and foreign genealogy. The genealogical holdings include methods books on how to do research, bibliographies, county histories, family histories, genealogical periodicals, census materials and city directories for Milwaukee (1847- ) and some Wisconsin cities.

The best access point for items in the collection is CountyCat, the library's online catalog. CountyCat can be puzzling to beginners, so ask for a librarian's assistance.



## How to Get Started

**Interview your family and find family documents.** Gather as much information from family members as possible. Genealogy involves much more than trying to find a “ready-made” family history. Search for vital records such as birth, marriage and death certificates. Don't forget photos, bibles or diaries, which may contain names, dates and places.



**Read at least one book on how to do genealogical research.** Several of the books listed under “Methods” in this booklet will provide a basic overview of what efforts may be involved in the research. Other titles listed discuss more specialized searching techniques. A popular general history will provide the larger national or international context of your family's history.

**Use the Milwaukee Public Library.** Many print and online resources are available at the library. The majority of them are in the local history collection located in the Frank P. Zeidler Humanities Room at the Central Library. The best way to find

items in the collection is through CountyCat, the library's online catalog.

**Ask Library staff.** The library staff can assist you. They cannot do research, but can, with aid of catalogs, indexes, and experience, provide helpful guidance to materials.

**Attend a “Researching Your Family Tree” Program.** The Central Library offers a brief introduction to library genealogy resources for beginners every month.

**Join the Milwaukee County Genealogical Society.** This organization meets at the Central Library. Consider taking the classes the society offers. This is a good way to meet other genealogists.

**Organize the information obtained.** Use a master pedigree sheet along with individual family group sheets for each person on the chart. Record sources checked, where you found the source, and information obtained. (Be careful to make sure the information you record is original or a correct copy of an original source.)

# Internet, Digital Collections and Indexes

The Milwaukee Public Library's website, [www.mpl.org](http://www.mpl.org), offers links to digital collections and indexes, many free genealogical websites and to subscription databases, such as Ancestry Library Edition and HeritageQuest Online.

Subscription databases can be used within City of Milwaukee libraries and, in some instances, by remote access to City of Milwaukee library cardholders.

- The City of Milwaukee Annuity and Pension Board, Employees' Retirement System finding aid indexes 1,049 civil servants who retired from the City of Milwaukee between 1937 and 1949.
- Milwaukee County Marriage Certificates includes 20,037 digitized images of marriage certificates issued in Milwaukee County from 1822 to 1876. Note: not all marriages were registered at the Courthouse, since it was not required in the 1800s.
- The Milwaukee History Clipping Index lists local newspaper articles on persons published in the middle to late 20th century.
- The Milwaukee Road Archives includes indexes to the small selection of employee records.
- The Wisconsin Land Ownership Map and Plat Book Index lists land ownership and plat books and maps in the library's collection for Wisconsin counties, some dating to 1858.
- The World War I Military Portraits Index lists 3,192 military personnel from Milwaukee County.

# Methods Books

The beginning genealogist should read a basic introduction to genealogical research to get an idea of how to start. Since there are many routes a person can take in tracing family history, the researcher should also read one or more books that describe the various types of materials available.

These "how-to" handbooks introduce genealogy generally, or by geographic area or ethnic group. Other manuals help in doing research in specific fields such as census records, naturalization papers, passenger lists, and military records. Books on using the computer, recording interviews with audio or video equipment, organizing materials, and writing it all down are also available.

To search for "how-to" handbooks in CountyCat, click on "Advanced Search," type GENEALOGY in the first search box, type HANDBOOKS in the second box, change "Any Field" to "Subject" and click "Submit."

A classic, Gilbert Doane's **Searching for Your Ancestors** (929.1 D63 1992) offers a good balance between research methods and basic sources. **How to Do Everything with Your Genealogy** (929.1 M848 2009) and **The Family Tree Problem Solver: Tried-and-True Tactics for Tracing Elusive Ancestors** (929.1072 R595 2011) are other recommended titles.

The **Researchers Guide to American Genealogy** by Val Greenwood (929.1 G816 2000) is a standard in the field, as is **Red Book: American State, County, and Town Sources** edited by Alice Eichholz (929.1072073 R312 2004). Two of the most complete compendiums are **The Source: A Guidebook of American Genealogy** (929.3 S724 2006) and **Printed Sources: A Guide to Published Genealogical Records** (016.929373 P957).

Two books on using the Internet for genealogical research are **Plugging into Your Past** by Rick Crumb (929.10285 C956) and **Genealogy Online** by Elizabeth Powell Crowe (929.10285 C953G). Using DNA to trace your heritage is the subject of **Trace Your Roots with DNA** by Megan Smolenyak (929.1072 S666).

Books on researching specific topics, such as **Hidden Half of the Family: A Sourcebook for Women's Genealogy** by Christina K. Schaefer (R929.1082 S294), **Uncovering Your Ancestry Through Family Photographs** by Maureen Alice Taylor (929.1072 T244 2005), **American Naturalization Records, 1790-1990: What They Are and How to Use Them** by John Newman (323.623 N553AM 1998), **Organizing Your Family History Search** by Sharon DeBartolo Carmack (929.1 C287), and **Writing Family Histories and Memoirs** by Kirk Polking (929.1 P772) are also available.

Ethnic and minority titles in the collection include **In Search of Your German Roots** by Angus Baxter (929.1 B355IG 2008), **Black Roots** by Tony Burrough (929.108996 B9720), **Ancestral Trails: The Complete Guide to British Genealogy and Family History** by Mark D. Herber (929.1072041 H535 2006), **From Generation to Generation: How to Trace Your Jewish Genealogy and Family History** by Arthur Kurzweil (929.1 K96 2004), **Tracing Ancestors Among the Five Civilized Tribes: Southeastern Indians Prior to Removal** by Rachal Mills Lennon (929.1089973 L567), **Mexican American Genealogical Research** by John P. Schmal (929.1072072 S347), and **Asian American Genealogical Sourcebook** (929.108995 A832).



## Bibliographies & Indexes

A bibliography (list of books) which has become standard in genealogy is **American and British Genealogy and Heraldry** by P.W. Filby's (016.929 F479 1983). The monumental yet unfinished **Passenger and Immigration Lists Index** (929.3-P283) is a personal name index to 16th through mid-20th century printed lists, now containing more than five million names.

The Library of Congress and the National Archives have a series of bibliographies of their extensive holdings.

Some other significant personal and family name indexes include **The American Genealogical-**

**Biographical Index** (929.2 A498A2), **The Biography and Genealogy Master Index** (electronic subscription on the Milwaukee Public Library's web page), the **Greenlaw Index of the New England Historical Genealogical Society** (016.9293 N532), the **Genealogical Index** [of the Newberry Library] (016.929 N534) - an excellent genealogical library in Chicago with an emphasis on the United States, Canada, and the British Isles; and the **Subject Catalog of the Library of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin** (016.973 W811). The Milwaukee Public Library may not have all of the materials cited in these indexes, but often they may be copied or borrowed through interlibrary loan.

## Family Histories

The collection contains a large number of family histories, some donated by the Milwaukee County Genealogical Society, others by their authors, many of whom have used the collection in their research. The library does not purchase family genealogies, but will accept donations of histories of Wisconsin families.

Only by extracting family related information from sources generated for non-genealogical purposes - censuses, newspapers, local, county, state and national histories, atlases and a number of others - can a researcher complete the family picture as fully as possible. Church histories, histories of ethnic groups, maps (especially ones showing land divisions), books of wills, tax lists, lineage books of hereditary societies, and military records also help.

Additional genealogical material includes the local family files of the Milwaukee County Genealogical Society housed in the Frank P. Zeidler Humanities Room and name indexes to selected federal and state censuses.



## Periodicals

Readers should be aware that genealogical periodicals vary widely as to purpose and quality of content. Genealogical societies publish most of them, holding themselves responsible for a geographic area, such as a county. Others deal with one family or a historical theme such as immigration from Pomerania. Contents vary as to type, but the society's news, interpretive articles on a family or person, and printed primary sources is a typical mix.

Many of the library's genealogical magazines are gifts of the Milwaukee County Genealogical Society and the Wisconsin State Genealogical Society. All periodicals are listed in CountyCat. Most genealogical

periodicals are located in the Frank P. Zeidler Humanities Room.

Periodical titles include the **MCGS Reporter**, **Everton's Genealogical Helper**, **New England Historical and Genealogical Register**, and the **Wisconsin State Genealogical Society Newsletter**. Examples of classified journals that have call numbers are the **American Genealogist** (929.2 A499), the **New York Genealogical and Biographical Record** (929.1 N53), and the **Pennsylvania Genealogical Magazine** (929.1 G31).

# Periodical Indexes

Two major periodical indexes are the **Genealogical Periodical Annual Index (GPAI)** (016.929-G326), which covers the years 1962 to 2001 (it is no longer published), and the **Periodical Source Index (PERSI)** (016.9292-P445).

**PERSI** is an index of genealogical periodicals in the Allen County Public Library and has two separate parts - a retrospective name and place index covering periodicals published from 1847-1985, and annual indexes starting in 1986. The **PERSI** index can also be found at

HeritageQuest Online, available through the Milwaukee Public Library's website within City of Milwaukee libraries, and by remote access at BadgerLink, [www.badgerlink.net](http://www.badgerlink.net).

Indexes like the **GPAI** and **PERSI** are doubly important because many genealogical periodicals received by the library have no indexes of their own. The majority of genealogical periodicals are not indexed in mainstream indexing sources.

# Newspapers

The Business, Technology and Periodicals Department has all of the library's newspapers, both historical and current, and most of its microfilmed materials, which include census records, vital records and cemetery records.

The library has a good collection of local newspapers such as **The Milwaukee Sentinel** (1837-1995), **The Milwaukee Journal** (1890-1995), **The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel** (1995-present), **Evening Wisconsin** (1847-1937), **Milwaukee Leader** (1911-1938), and **Wisconsin Jewish Chronicle** (1938-present), plus much of the local ethnic press no longer published. An index to **The Milwaukee Sentinel** covering 1837-1890 is available in the Periodicals Department.

Partial indexes to **The Milwaukee Journal** (1915-1917) and local German newspapers (1844-1930) are available in the Humanities Room. The Polish

Genealogical Society's website has a database indexing paid death notices and some engagement, marriage, anniversary and birthday announcements from 1900 to 1935 in the **Kuryer Polski**.

19th Century U.S. Newspapers, available through the library's website within City of Milwaukee libraries, and by remote access to City of Milwaukee library cardholders, is an easy way to look up names and events that may have been printed in many different newspapers. Fully searchable by keyword, this database includes papers from across the U.S., and is particularly strong on the Midwest.

The Periodicals Department has machines for making paper copies from microforms. Both the Humanities and Periodicals departments have photocopiers. Some restrictions due to concern for preservation and copyright apply to photocopying.

# Census & Vital Records

The federal government has taken a census every 10 years, starting in 1790. It also conducted territorial censuses, beginning in Wisconsin in 1836. The State of Wisconsin conducted mid-decade censuses from 1855 to 1905. The content of the census records varies. **The Census Book** (929. 1072073 D665) is a helpful guide to census information.

The 1850 federal census is the first to list each person by name. Name indexes exist for many of the census records, some on film and some on paper. CountyCat gives details of the library's holdings, which chiefly cover Wisconsin from its territorial days through 1930. Federal censuses that include names are published 72 years after the statistical census.

The easiest way to search census records (1940 and older) is through the Milwaukee Public Library's online subscription to Ancestry Library Edition, available within City of Milwaukee libraries; and HeritageQuest, available through the library's website within City of Milwaukee libraries, and by remote access at BadgerLink, [www.badgerlink.net](http://www.badgerlink.net).

The library also has microfilm copies of Milwaukee County birth records (1854-1911), Milwaukee County marriage records (1836-1911), Milwaukee County marriage certificates (1822-1876), and Milwaukee County death records (1852-1912). Some indexes are available. All microfilm is located in the Periodicals Department.

The Frank P. Zeidler Humanities Room has microfiche indexes for pre-1907 birth records, pre-1907 and 1973-1997 marriage records, 1965-1983 divorce records, and pre-1907 and 1959-1997 death records for the state of Wisconsin. The Wisconsin Vital Records Office in Madison has comparable records for Milwaukee and other counties, and there are similar offices in other states.

Some obituaries and death notices for Milwaukee are available for varying dates. For many years there is no indexing. Ask the librarian for information on what is available.

## Federal Documents

The library's federal documents collection, numbering more than one million items, can be a gold mine of information. **The American State Papers – Class VIII, Public Lands** (328.73 U58AM), an eight-volume series on public land grants (1790-1837) is indexed in **Grassroots of America**;

**A Computerized Index to the American State Papers** (328.73 U58CAM). The indexed compilation of congressional documents known as the "Serial Set" also should not be overlooked.

## Maps & Atlases

The Frank P. Zeidler Humanities Room contains numerous maps of Milwaukee starting in the 1850s and continuing to the present. An 1876 atlas of Milwaukee County is also available, as are plat maps and atlases for other Wisconsin counties. Fire insurance atlases for Milwaukee can be help-

ful in tracing the history of a property. Older world atlases such as **Adolf Stieler's Hand Atlas uber alle Theile der Erde und uber das Weltgebaude: Karten** (912-S85H) are useful in locating older towns and villages that no longer exist.

## Military Records

The Milwaukee Public Library has collected information on Wisconsinites serving their country in the various wars and conflicts in which the United States has participated. Besides books published by individuals and the government, the library has created various files dealing mainly with Milwaukeeans. Much of the information was stored on 3x5 index cards and includes newspaper clippings, citations to daily newspapers, and miscellaneous information as

recorded by librarians or by various groups such as the local chapter of the American War Mothers. Many of these index cards have been diligently sorted, copied, and transcribed by a number of volunteers. Printed versions have been cataloged and these titles are also available to the public through the Frank P. Zeidler Humanities Room located on the second floor of the Central Library.

## Related Resources

Many special Local History collections in the Frank P. Zeidler Humanities Room are not yet listed in CountyCat but librarians will provide access to their indexes and contents lists.

The Great Lakes Marine Collection can be helpful in locating biographies of ships' captains and information about vessel owners. The Historic Photo Collection has thousands of photographs of local scenes; some with identified local citizens. The Manuscript Collections contains the unpublished writings of local authors, some of whom have family photographs and diaries.

The Permanent Pamphlet Collection contains biographical articles and printed works, along with company and church histories.

The City Archives is in the process of indexing its holdings. Some of the more useful new finding tools include an index to the names of babies born to women at the old Lying-In Hospital, and a register of physicians and midwives.

The tax rolls provide a complete record of local property owners beginning with Milwaukee's founder Solomon Juneau.

Local History also contains military records. Groups like the American War Mothers created registration cards for local soldiers during World Wars I and II. These often include newspaper articles and photographs.



# Interlibrary Loan

Items not available in the Milwaukee Public Library can often be borrowed through Interlibrary Loan. Many libraries publish guides to their holdings: **Genealogical Holdings of the Wheaton Public Library** (016.9293-G324) is one example.

The Internet is also a place to check for library holdings such as **Newspapers in the State Historical Society of Wisconsin** (011.35 N558), **Newspapers in Microform: US**

(011.35-N533) and **Newspapers in Microform: Foreign** (011.35-N532). Often specific material listed in these guides can be obtained through interlibrary loan.

Other materials such as census films and census indexes are also available through your local interlibrary loan office.

# Societies

One way to meet other genealogists is to join a genealogical society. Local societies include the Milwaukee County Genealogical Society, Wisconsin State Genealogical Society, African American Genealogical Society of Milwaukee, and other ethnic genealogical societies. Their

publications, meetings, and classes afford opportunities to learn about various research tools and current trends. They also offer opportunities for volunteer work on many interesting projects.

# Some Helpful Hints

When searching for genealogical information at the Milwaukee Public Library, the best place to start is CountyCat, a computerized listing of all cataloged materials located at the Central and neighborhood libraries and all Milwaukee County suburban libraries. CountyCat is a user-friendly system with a powerful keyword search capability, so researchers do not need to know an exact subject heading.

Try to be as specific as possible when using search terms. The broader the search term, the longer it will take to get results. Any librarian will be happy to provide assistance using CountyCat. Some subject headings of use to the genealogy researcher are listed below.

GENEALOGY and REGISTERS OF BIRTHS, ETC. are probably the most useful subject headings for genealogists and can be described as “catch-all” headings.

The subject heading GENEALOGY is subdivided geographically by name of country, state or province, county and city (i.e. GENEALOGY-UNITED STATES-WISCONSIN, GENEALOGY-SCOTLAND) and by family name (i.e. GENEALOGY-SMITH FAMILY). One may also search in reverse (i.e. WISCONSIN-GENEALOGY, SCOTLAND-GENEALOGY). GENEALOGY is also a subdivision for ethnic subject headings (i.e. CHINESE AMERICANS-GENEALOGY) and country subject headings (i.e. GENEALOGY-GERMANY).

REGISTERS OF BIRTHS, ETC. covers a wide variety of published records including cemetery, census, naturalization, marriage, etc.

Military rosters or regimental histories can be found by looking under the subject heading for individual wars, such as UNITED STATES-HISTORY-CIVIL WAR, 1861-1865-

REGISTERS. Some of these materials may also be found under the name of a state with the subdivision -MILITIA. For example: WISCONSIN-MILITIA.

Census records are frequently consulted by genealogists. The easiest way to determine if the library has a census record or index for a place in book or microfilm is to look under the name of that place for the subdivision -CENSUSES. For example, G. Lundberg's **Surname Index to The 1850 Federal Census of Chicago** has been assigned the subject heading of CHICAGO (IL) - CENSUS, 1850 - INDEXES. An additional heading would be Illinois - CENSUS, 1850 - INDEXES. It could also be found, with patience, using the author index under U.S. CENSUS, BUREAU of, 7th CENSUS, 1850.



# Useful Subject Headings

The following list is a brief guide to subject headings that may be useful for genealogical research. Subject headings

American Newspapers  
Apprentices  
Archives (also see archival resources under other topics and “archives” under ethnic groups and classes of persons)  
Baptismal Certificates  
Bounties, Military  
Cemeteries  
Church Records and Registers  
Church Records on Microfilm (other types of records in microforms could have similar headings)  
Court Records  
Death Notices  
Emigration and Immigration (used as a subdivision under names of countries, cities, etc.)  
Genealogy (subdivided by place, family name, and ethnic group)  
Family (histories may also be entered directly by family name, e.g. “Smith Family.”)  
Immigrants  
Indentured Servants  
Land Grants  
Land Titles  
Marriage Licenses  
Marriage Records  
Naturalization Records  
Obituaries

change. Usually there is a “see” or “see also” reference. If you cannot find a subject heading, check with a librarian.

Pensions, Military  
Probate Records  
Registers of Births, etc.  
Sailing Ships - Passenger Lists  
Ships - Passenger Lists  
Slave Records  
Steamboat Lines - Passenger Lists  
Tax Liens  
Taxation - Lists  
Wills



# Ethnic Groups

There are several subject headings applicable to ethnic groups, and they can be subdivided by place or form of material. For example, the library might have: AFRICAN-AMERICANS – GENEALOGY; IRISH AMERICANS – GENEALOGY – HANDBOOKS; IRISH AMERICANS –

WISCONSIN – MILWAUKEE; and MEXICAN AMERICANS – GENEALOGY – PERIODICALS.



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