

MyHeritage: Your Personal Genealogy Archive

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Many of us are not able to travel to those places where our ancestors lived to do genealogy research. This should not deter us from finding information about our ancestors. MyHeritage can be your “home away from home” online archive to help you find information about your ancestors. It’s true that everything is not online but are you using the online tools like MyHeritage and all they offer.

What is an Archive?

An archive is defined by the Society of American Archivists as: *An organization that collects the records of individuals, families, or other organizations* (<http://www2.archivists.org/glossary/terms>).

There could be one or more of these types of archives in any area where your ancestors were from:

- County Archives: Collects and preserves local government records. Many also collect genealogical and historical records.
- State Archives: Collects and preserves state government records. All of them collect historical and genealogical records from across the state.
- Historical Societies: Many collect and preserve genealogical and local historical records are also considered an archive.
- Genealogical Societies: Many collect and preserve genealogical and local historical records, are considered an archive.
- Museums: Museums have records that are in back rooms and on exhibit and display. Museums are considered archives. Don’t forget the museums!
- Libraries: Many of our local public libraries, state libraries and university libraries have genealogical and historical records archives at their facility.
- University & College Libraries and Archives: Many genealogists overlook these important archives. They have genealogical and historical records in their archives for genealogists to explore.

The term “archive” is not solely used to represent a county or state archive; any organization that accepts, collects, and preserves government, historical and genealogical documents, records, memorabilia, and artifacts is considered an archive, even if they don’t have the word “archive” in their title. I like to say, “There is an archive for everything.”

Your Personal Genealogy Archive

All genealogists have a personal genealogy archive. Your archive could include documents, photographs, scrapbooks, diaries, old letters and even family heirloom artifacts. We should be using online databases and websites to add to our personal genealogy archive with digitized records, indexes, and information.

Collection Catalog

Walk into almost any archive or access the archive website and you will find a Collection Catalog. This catalog will help you know what that archive has in their records collection. MyHeritage, just like other archives, has a Collection Catalog that we should be using to help us navigate their website.

-To get to the Collection Catalog, click “Search” at the top of the main page and a dropdown menu will appear, then click on “Collection Catalog”.

-You can search the Collection Catalog by Collection Name or Keyword, or you can choose from the list of All Collections located at the right on the Collection Catalog main page.

Digitized Records

When we visit an archive in person or their website, we are always on the lookout for digitized content. This could be documents, photographs, newspapers, scrapbooks, or diaries. More and more of our local archives are digitizing their records. Just like the local archive, MyHeritage has digitized records collections.

-To get to digitized records click on “Search”, click on “Collection Catalog” and to the left will be a list of subjects and any of these will contain digitized records that you can search by surname.

Photographs

All archives have photographs in their collections. Most of their photographs are donated to the archive by individuals. Similarly, MyHeritage has photographs and they are shared by MyHeritage members on their family trees.

-The photograph collection includes public photos, videos and documents posted by MyHeritage members on their family trees.

-To get to user uploaded photographs click on “Search”, click on “Collection Catalog” and click on “Photos” at the far left and search by surname.

-It is important that you contact the person who owns the family tree and photographs to ask permission to use their photographs in your own genealogy.

-Making connections with those that have created a MyHeritage family tree and shared their documents and photos could help us make progress in our own research.

-Consider creating your own family tree on MyHeritage and share your family history with others and possibly connect with others researching the same families.

Family Group Sheets & Family Trees

Many archives have family group sheets and family trees in their Manuscript Collections or Vertical Files. These records are normally donated to the archive by individual researchers. MyHeritage offers the same type of genealogy records that are shared by genealogy researchers.

-Family Group Sheets and Family Trees: MyHeritage offers a place where you can place your family tree and where you can see family trees of others. Keep in mind that you need to verify any information found on any online family tree.

-To get to MyHeritage Family Trees, click on “Search” and click on “Family Trees”

-MyHeritage gives you the ability to search by name, surname, or keyword.

-There are different view options for your Family Tree that you can print out and use like a Family Group Sheet.

-To use these features, click and choose “Family View”, “Pedigree View”, “Fan View”, and “List View” located above your tree to the right.

-MyHeritage family trees have documents, photographs and other information attached that have been contributed by family researchers and many times are not found online anywhere.

Newspapers

Genealogists use newspapers for research to find all kinds of information. Newspapers contain more than just obituaries and we should be scouring each page to find any information about our ancestors. When we visit the various archives, they could have newspapers on microfilm, in large bound volumes and even original newspapers. MyHeritage also offers access to newspapers from around the world.

- To get to the newspaper database, click “Search” and then click “Newspapers”.
- Search by your ancestor’s name, family surname, publication date or publication place.
- MyHeritage has newspaper for the United States, France, Australia, and Canada.
- The database contains digitized newspapers that we can access and read from home.

It’s Not All Online!

It would be wonderful if all genealogical records were online. The reality is that only about 5% of the world’s genealogical records are online. That means the remaining 95% of the world’s genealogical records are sitting in archives, libraries, genealogical societies, historical societies, university archives and museums.

- Travel to the archives where your ancestors lived. Ask about Manuscript Collections, Vertical Files, Scrapbooks, Diaries, and any records not available online.
- If you can’t travel, use communication resources readily available to you. Email the archives, call them, contact them through their social media channels and develop a working relationship with them and they will be a huge help to you and your genealogy research.
- Scour archives websites to find indexes of records and records that have been digitized. You will be surprised by how much you might find.

Use What is Available to Tell Your Ancestor’s Story

Genealogists should be using a mixture of websites and archived records to tell our ancestor’s story. Our ancestors have so much to tell us if we will be diligent to search all resources, including the records on MyHeritage!

FREE Legacy Family Tree Webinars to Help You Navigate the MyHeritage Site

FREE: Top 10 Secrets to Using MyHeritage by Daniel Horowitz

<https://familytreewebinars.com/webinar/top-10-secrets-to-using-myheritage/?category=myheritage&sortby=newest>

FREE: Different Ways to View Your Tree at MyHeritage by Uri Gonen

<https://familytreewebinars.com/webinar/different-ways-to-view-your-tree-at-myheritage/?category=myheritage&sortby=newest>

FREE Searching for My Ancestor's Records by Moshe Etlis

<https://familytreewebinars.com/webinar/searching-for-my-ancestors-records/?category=myheritage&sortby=newest>

FREE Printing Charts and Books on MyHeritage by Uri Gonen

<https://familytreewebinars.com/webinar/printing-charts-and-books-on-myheritage/?category=myheritage&sortby=newest>

FREE Making the Most of MyHeritage Resources with the Help Center by Daniel Horowitz

<https://familytreewebinars.com/webinar/making-the-most-of-myheritage-resources-with-the-help-center-knowledge-base-and-site-settings/?category=myheritage&sortby=newest>