
MORE INFORMATION ON FAMILYSEARCH.ORG AND OTHER FREE DATABASES

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In Volume 27, Issue 2 page 54 of the Newfoundland Ancestor, Robert R. Halfyard, does a wonderful job of describing the functionality of recent changes to the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints (LDS) FamilySearch Web Site. Let me add that it appears that the ultimate goal is to digitize all the LDS holdings that were formerly only available on fiche or tape to make them available on FamilySearch. As I understand it, LDS members are transcribing and digitizing at a pace that will make the records available within ten years. As a digression, LDS has made their PAF genealogy software available for free for years. If you do not have genealogy software, you can download Personal Ancestral File (PAF) and PAF Companion Software (options include Tutorials) at the FamilySearch home page. The Uniform Resource Link (URL) is:

<http://www.familysearch.org/eng/home/welcome/pafDownload.asp>.

I produce Registry Reports and Pedigree Charts using the PAF Companion software.

Other organizations are making their databases available at no cost, notably, Ancestry.com. The web site home page has a Tab to Ancestry Freebies. The URL is <http://www.searchforancestors.com/>. Click on the Freebies Tab. The default screen collects a Person's information for a global search. At the default screen, a user can click on other links like Censuses and Immigration which will give you different search screens. Databases that are available for example include:

- US Censuses up to the 1930 Census
- Boston Passenger Lists Online Index 1820-1943
- Ship Passenger Lists, Border Crossings and Naturalizations

My father's 1925 Border Crossing record indicates that he was living with a cousin in Dorchester Massachusetts. Images of the original records are often available. The image of the border crossing record is the only record that I have in my Dad's writing. (Mom usually signed his name for him and one usually could not tell the difference.)

The New England Historic Genealogical Society has made databases available for free at its AmericanAncestors.org web site. The URL is: <http://www.americanancestors.org/> Unlike Ancestry.com/ Freebies, Guest Registration is required. At the Home Page, simply click on the Free Account Tab to register. And click on the Register Button at the next screen to get to the form to enter the required registration data. (Please remember the Password that you create.) I have been using the Search/Database Catalog to search for items for friends and relatives. For example, after we discovered that my wife's maternal great grandmother and eight of her nine children emigrated to Massachusetts in 1883 from Galway Ireland, we have been using the site's Massachusetts Vital Records database to research the family. Images of records are available and are downloadable as JPEG files. I use the latter to zoom in on specific records. Marriage records are especially fascinating because they identify the parents of the couple and the street address of the celebrant. Google Maps has helped me to zoom in on specific locales, especially the Churches that the marriages were recorded for. We learned that two of her granduncles were married in the same parish that we were married in about 50 years later. Irish immigrant Advertisements lists lots of Newfoundlanders including my great, great grandfather. For a friend, I am also searching for Mayflower descendants and in the Maine Marriage records database.

For those of you who are doing research on Massachusetts residents, the state has made some of its databases available for free to the public. The URL is <http://www.sec.state.ma.us/arc/arcsrch/SearchWelcome.html>. Currently, there are only three databases available:

- Massachusetts Archives Collection Database (1629-1799)
- Index to Passenger Manifests (1848-1891)
- Index to Vital Records (1841-1910)

The Index to Passenger Manifests is interesting because the state collected information on families, specifically who came with who.

My wife is pedigree Irish. We look for relatives in two free Irish data bases. The major database is the Irish Republic Census Records for 1901 and 1911. The URL is <http://www.census.nationalarchives.ie/>. We look for her Cork, Galway, and Waterford County family records. Griffith's Valuation is interesting. The URL is" <http://www.askaboutireland.ie/>. Unfortunately, its records only list the heads of households. We have hit the wall on discovering which of the two John McGraths in Knockanore, Waterford County is her ancestor. (Of course, if they are father and son, they both may be ancestors.)

Happy Hunting!