

How do I find people and missing Vital information?

1. For people who were born in the USA or who migrated to the USA, I start with US Censuses and US databases.
 - a. For US Censuses, I prefer Heritage Quest¹ on the Morrill Memorial Library Web Site. I do not look in 1890 because most of the records were destroyed. Because Heritage Quest is not available at the Dedham Library, I use Ancestry Library as an alternative².
 - b. For US immigrants, some US censuses (like the 1900 Census) has the arrival year.
 - c. For US immigrants where I have an arrival year, I look for Passenger Manifests in Ancestry Library, Castle Garden, Ellis Island and Mass Archives.³
 - d. For US immigrants, if there could be multiple versions of the same Surname, I use Steve Morse's templates. (It requires Ancestry to be open.)
 - e. For US, Canada and Newfoundland immigrants from Ireland, I look for records in the Pilot Advertisements.⁴
 - f. If it looks like the person was married in Massachusetts before 1920, I look for the Marriage record in AmericanAncestors. The Marriage record contains parents' names often the mothers' maiden surnames and sometimes both the officiating person's name and address.⁵
2. For Atlantic Canadians, Newfoundlanders, British, Scots, and Irish, I look in their Censuses in Ancestry Library. For Canadians who lived in 1901 and/or 1911, I look at the Automated Census of Canada. Ancestry Library, FamilySearch⁶ and FamilySearch/Community Trees are other favorites.⁷
3. For Canadians from Atlantic Canada, I look at my Links document for the Province. The Novascotiagenealogy web site is great for births, marriages and deaths! FamilySearch has a great database for Canada Marriages, 1661 – 1949. It shows the source record including records for the Nova Scotia, Antigonish Catholic Diocese, 1823-1905.
4. For Irish, I look in the Census of 1901 and of 1911. If the person is not in the Censuses, I look in Census substitutes.
 - a. For Irish born after 1864, I look in Ancestry Library for Civil Registration records.
 - b. For Irish males born before 1864, I Google the combination of Surname and Griffiths Valuation.
 - c. For Irish Immigrants to Massachusetts, I look in the Mass Archives Passenger Manifests data base.
5. If I have an idea of when the person died, in all of the above, I work backward from that date.
6. If I have an idea when the person was born, in all of the above, I work forward from that date.
7. I look for burial records in web sites that have headstone information etc. CBGEN is great!
8. If I can determine a location, I Google the person's name and location. I look in Ancestry Library for the person's name and location. I look in FamilySearch for the person's name and location. I look in FamilySearch/Community Trees' Advanced Search for the combination of Country, Locality and the person's surname. A favorite is Canada, RC Diocese of Antigonish which covers Vital Records in 7 Counties.
9. If I find anything: I copy the Image(s) to my PC; I list the people that the person lived with; and I update the data base including providing an audit trail to the source(s).

¹ Heritage Quest is available 24/7 from anywhere that can access the Norwood Library Minuteman databases.

² Ancestry Library is available only at the Norwood Library on the Library's LAN. There is no Wi-Fi access.

³ Access to the Ellis Island Database requires registration. The other three web sites are available 24/7 from anywhere.

⁴ Available on the AmericanAncestors Web Site or on the Boston College Web Site. AmericanAncestors has free accounts. Registration is simple!

⁵ The user can drill down to an image of the source Marriage register document which always contains the individual who performed the ceremony and sometimes contains a street address where the ceremony was performed. It covers marriages up to 1914.

⁶ FamilySearch allows registered users to drill down to an image of the source record.

⁷ FamilySearch Community Trees is still in development. I use Advanced search to see the updated list of countries and locations.