

Newspaper Research

Building and Researching Your Family Tree, a Twelve Part Series

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What is a Newspaper?

Newspapers are created to share the news of the day/week; they are NOT created to be a lasting record. Newspaper publishers are in the business of selling tomorrow's paper.

The paper used for printing is often of poor quality, and quickly becomes brittle and discolored. Preservation techniques include physical storage, microfilm, and digitization.

There are many different types of newspapers. Some serve specific audiences or locations.

Audience	Location
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ethnic (Czech, Hispanic, Jewish)• Business (Agricultural)• Organization (School, Fraternal Group)• Religious (Baptist Association)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Community (Waco)• Regional (Central Texas)• State (Texas)• Out-of-state (Southern)

What is in a Newspaper?

A few examples of the types of information of interest to genealogists found in newspapers:

- Letters
- Mail at the Post Office
- Obituaries, funeral notices
- Marriage/engagement announcement
- Listings
- Business notices (openings, closings, mergers)
- Social news snippets
- Divorces
- Family reunions
- Passenger lists
- Birth announcements and lists
- Land transactions
- Sports write-ups
- Letter to the editor
- Probate – searching for heirs
- Advertisements
- Runaway slaves
- Photographs
- Arrivals/passenger lists
- Military information – draft, deserters, deaths, pensions, obituaries, reunions
- News stories and other life events (graduation, retirement, lived to be 100)

Where are Newspapers?

In Libraries

Libraries (public and academic) have long been collectors of their local newspapers. Check with libraries near where your ancestor lived to ask about their local newspaper collection. Resources from the Library of Congress's Chronicling America and WorldCat can also help locate newspaper repositories.

Many historic newspapers have been indexed, abstracted, or transcribed. Check the library catalog or WorldCat for published print resources in the area you are researching.

Online

An increasing number of papers are becoming accessible online. This convenient access and broader indexing (using OCR) makes finding information in newspapers even more accessible. Paper availability varies by database. It is important to look for all available resources.

Newspapers.com through WMCL

The Waco McLennan County Library provides library card holders free access to newspapers.com. Log-on from home using these steps:

1. Visit www.wacolibrary.org
2. Click the "Learning & Research" tab at the top.
3. Select the "History & Genealogy" sub-section.
4. Select the desired database. (Newspapers.com Library Edition)
5. Login using your Waco-McLennan County Library Card (barcode & PIN)

Search Strategies

- Use quotation marks around multiple words that should be searched as a single term, such as a name. (Ex: "Robert Coats" instead of Robert Coats)
- Use every name variation and possible spelling. Do not forget to also search using nick names.
- Use filters and sorting options to narrow and organize search results.
- Broaden your search results by looking for stories picked up by newspapers in other cities or covered at a later date.
- When you find something interesting save it or print it. It can be challenging to find something twice.
- Evaluate the information you find. Is it trustworthy? What clues does it provide?

Genealogy Links

Finding Newspapers

Library of Congress Directory/Union List chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/search/titles/

WorldCat www.worldcat.org

Digitized Newspapers

Newspapers.com (\$ or FREE with WMCL library card) www.newspapers.com

Chronicling America chroniclingamerica.loc.gov

Elephind www.elephind.com

Portal to Texas History texashistory.unt.edu

Genealogy Bank (\$) www.genealogybank.com

Other

Library Homepage www.wacolibrary.org

WMCL Catalog & Local News Index waco.polarislibrary.com/polaris/