

PATHER FINDER



SOURCES FOR MODERN RESEARCH

ALLEN COUNTY
PUBLIC LIBRARY
Genealogy Department





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Research in the period after 1900, and especially after 1930, can be challenging because of record restrictions, as well as time lags in the release of records and publication of corresponding indices and abstracts. While many of the standard record indices available in the Genealogy Department end early in the twentieth century, some sources exist that can propel research toward the present. Keys to doing successful modern research include knowing what is available, both in print, online, and other formats; contacting local repositories in the area of interest for unpublished records; and using sources seldom consulted when researching earlier time periods.

VITAL RECORDS

Many counties in the United States allow only limited access to vital records filed after a certain date, despite the fact that these are public records by law. Courthouse personnel often require the researcher to submit the individual's approximate or exact date of birth or death before providing a record. Luckily, library sources exist that can provide this information. These include the following sources.

Vital Records Indices in Book form for the 20th century typically are limited to the first several decades, with precious few such indices existing for the early years of the 21st century. To determine what indices exist, check the online catalog at www.ACPL.Lib.in.us under the county name.

Remember that if the subject heading "Registers of births, etc.," appears in the description of a particular book, it does not necessarily indicate that the book is a birth record book. "Registers of births, etc.," is a subject heading the Library of Congress assigns to many different types of books that contain a vital date. Hence, cemetery listings, death records, marriage records, and obituaries may be included in this category.

Also check the *World Family Archive Genealogy Data* links under E-Resources on the library homepage to find vital record indices available in that format. These indices tend to be similar in nature to print publications.

Vital Records Indices on Microtext, as well as some of the actual vital records themselves, are available for the 20th century for some states. Check the State Records section of the microtext catalog under your state of interest to determine what vital records indices and actual records are available.

Vital Records Indices Online as well as digital copies of some of the vital records themselves are becoming increasingly common. Strategies for finding such indices and digital copies on the Internet should include visiting the websites of the state library, state archives, and state historical society of the state in which you are conducting research. It is also imperative that the USGenWeb pages for both your state and your county of interest are checked. Indexing and providing access to vital record data is a key focus of many USGenWeb volunteer input teams. Including the websites of public libraries in your research area can often prove beneficial as well.

The Social Security Death Index online usually includes the following information about 76 percent of people who died between 1962 and the present: Name, birth date, month and year of death, Social Security number, and zip code of last residence or where last payment was sent or both. Only 2 percent of deaths in the index date from before 1962. With the information it provides, the researcher can:

- Write to the courthouse in the county where the individual last resided and try to obtain a copy of the death record;



- Write to the library in the county where the individual last resided to obtain a copy of the obituary; and
- Write to the Social Security Administration to request a copy of the individual's Social Security application.

By doing all three, researchers will be able to gain all or some of the following information about the individual: birth date, place of birth, parents' names (including mother's maiden name), place of birth of parents, occupation, death date, place of death, cause of death, burial place, survivors' names and where they lived at the time of the individual's death, and the name of the funeral home. Often the obituary will include more information, such as organizational or church affiliations of the person, the length of time he or she lived in the area where the death took place, military service, etc.

A helpful volume for analyzing a death record once it has been obtained is *How to Get the Most out of Death Certificates* by Carolyn Earle Billingsley and Desmond Walls Allen. /Gc 929 B49h/ Another helpful volume by Desmond Walls Allen, this one analyzing social security applications, is *Social Security Applications: A Genealogical Treasure*. /Gc 929 A153s/

Obituary Abstracts/Indices and Cemetery Transcriptions are often more readily available than death record indices for recent time periods and provide some of the same information. Obituary indices may be virtually up-to-date; cemeteries may have been read and the resulting transcriptions published within the past few years. To find published obituary and cemetery volumes, search online catalog under the city or county you are researching, or under the name of the cemetery if known.

Obituaries and cemetery transcriptions also may be published in the periodicals of local genealogical or historical societies. To find these, perform a search of articles by location and record type in the **PERiodical Source Index (PERSI)**. One could also do a general keyword search in **PERSI**.

Once an individual's death date and place is known, the following books provide sources for requesting the death record, an obituary, and information from the funeral home. These books are located at the reference desk in the Genealogy Department:

Kemp, Thomas. *International Vital Records Handbook*. Baltimore, MD: Genealogical Publishing Company, 2000. 4th ed. /Gc 929 K32ia/

American Library Directory: A Classified List of Libraries in the United States and Canada. New York: R. R. Bowker, 2002. /027 Am3a/

The National Yellow Book of Funeral Directors. Youngstown, OH: Nomis Publications, 1995. /Gc 929.11 N234 1995/

Newspaper bibliographies are available in the Historical Genealogy Department for a number of states and include information on where newspapers are available and for what dates. See the Pathfinder titled *Newspaper Research*.

Genealogy and Local History Periodicals contain a variety of articles in addition to obituary abstracts and cemetery transcriptions that provide birth, marriage, and death information for the modern era. Some examples include family group sheets and pedigree charts of members, local newspaper excerpts (including end-of-year listings of marriage licenses and deaths), compiled family histories, etc. Access to items in periodicals is available through the periodicals' own indices - often including every name - and the **Periodical Source Index**, which is an article or subject index.



MILITARY SOURCES

Several Genealogy Department sources exist that provide information on servicemen and servicewomen of the 20th century. They include:

Vietnam Veterans Memorial Directory of Names. Washington, D.C.: Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund, 1986. /Gc 959.7043 V67/ Includes name, rank, service, date of birth, date of casualty, city, state, whether missing in action, panel and line number on the memorial.

Korean Conflict Casualty File, 1950-57. 2 vols. /Gc 951.9042 Aa1u/ and *Combat Area Casualties, Southeast Asia, 1957-1986*. 2 vols. /Gc 959.7043 Aa1un/ Both produced by the National Archives Center for Electronic Records. The file includes name, branch of service, home of record, date of birth, race, religion, and marital status among the date it provides.

The *FamilySearch* system of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints includes the *Korean Conflict Casualty File* and the *Combat Area Casualties*.

Although records for World War I and World War II generally are not yet available, the department does have a number of regimental histories for units that participated in these conflicts. To locate them in the online catalog, look under the name of the regiment or division in which the person served, or under the name of the war in which the individual participated.

The Genealogy Department also has the complete *World War I Draft Registration Cards, 1917-1918* for all states. Consult the title by John J. Newman, *Uncle, We Are Ready!* for useful information on how to access specific registrations. /Gc 940.410 N465un/

The Business and Technology Department's Government Documents Division has several sources that list the names of modern era military personnel for each branch of the service. These can be requested by title, Government Documents (SuDOC) number and year. A number are listed in the following.

Air Force Register. /D303.7/ Active and retired personnel, 1949-1979.

Commissioned and Warrant Officers of the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps and Reserve Officers on Active Duty. /D208.12/ 1941-1985.

Official Army Register. /D102.9/ 1932-1976. This source lists regular commissioned and warrant officers on active duty and retired officers and warrant officers on active duty. It includes the soldier's name, pay grade, rank, and birth date, among other information.

Register of Commissioned and Warrant Officers, U.S. Naval Reserve. /D208.12-2/ 1943-1985.

Register of Retired Officers, Navy and Marine Corps. /D208.12-3/ 1960-1984.

Another book that may help researchers find soldiers and sailors is Richard S. Johnson's *How to Locate Anyone Who Is or Has Been in the Military*. 8th ed. Spartanburg, SC: Military Information Enterprises, 1999. /Gc 973 J632h/ It also is available for checkout through the Business and Technology Department. /355.0025 J63h/

Researchers may write for records of their 20th century soldier to the National Personnel Records Center, 9700 Page Blvd., St. Louis, MO 63132. However, eighty percent of army records at this location were destroyed by fire in 1973.



DIRECTORIES

The Genealogy Department has an excellent collection of city directories that will place an individual in a given locality at a given time in the modern era. Directories for major U.S. cities covering the time period prior to 1936 can be found on microfilm. Check the microtext catalog drawers labeled "**City Directories**" for a list of holdings. The department also has a large collection of Polk Company city directories in print dating from the early 1960s to the present. Some earlier print directories, by Polk and other companies, are available as well. To determine whether a print directory is available for a specific town or county, check the online catalog at www.ACPL.Lib.in.us under the name of the city with the term directory.

Current Indiana city directories are in the Business and Technology Department on the first floor. Fort Wayne city directories are located both with the Fort Wayne and Allen County, IN materials, depending on coverage, as well as in the regular city directory shelves. All other print city directories are located in the regular city directory shelves.

Online phone directory products are available through the e-resources link on the library's homepage. Compiled from marketing lists and other sources, these are a fairly current list of names, addresses and telephone numbers for many millions of individuals and business across the United States. Each product has a slightly different coverage and varying search capabilities.

The Genealogy Department has Fort Wayne telephone directories from 1911, 1912, 1916, 1924 and 1929 to the present. Use the following call numbers.

Pre-1985: /977.202 F77t/

1986-88: /977.202 F77fote/

Post-1988: /977.202 F77te/

The Business and Technology Department has a collection of current telephone directories for larger U.S. cities. County seat libraries often hold collections of city directories, county rural directories, and telephone directories. Library addresses and telephone numbers can be found in the *American Library Directory*, kept near the reference desk.

MISCELLANEOUS SOURCES

Other sources providing information on people who lived or are living during the 20th century include:

- The 1900, 1910, 1920, and 1930 Federal Population Census Schedules are available in the Historical Genealogy Department with their corresponding indices.
- Many county histories with biographical sketches have appeared in the past decade. These resemble the "mug" books that were popular at the turn of the 20th century in that they include biographies submitted by people from the county featured.
- *Ancestral File* of the *FamilySearch* system of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints includes some recent information, although dates for people still living typically are shadowed. This resource is available online at www.FamilySearch.org.



- Family histories are donated to the Historical Genealogy Department daily. Many of these tracefamilies to the present day. To determine whether a genealogy is available for the family of interest, look under the surname (such as "Smythe family") in the online catalog.
- Fort Wayne newspapers are located in the first floor Periodicals area. A few other newspapers also are available. To determine whether the library has a particular newspaper, check the *Periodicals Information Access List*. /Gc 011.54 AL5p/
- The Genealogy Department has a good collection of annuals for Allen County schools. Look under the name of the school in the online catalog.
- Check the Family History Library Catalog online for additional 20th century vital records and other records available through local Family History Centers. Any microfilmed material listed in the Family History Library Catalog can be obtained on loan for research at the library here in Fort Wayne for a modest handling fee.

OTHER SOURCES

Salvation Army Missing Persons Locator Service. This is a service for locating relatives, not classmates, military buddies, or former boyfriends/girlfriends. The inquirer must provide essential information about the person and include a \$10 non-refundable donation. The Salvation Army reserves the right to accept or reject any request. To obtain a missing persons inquiry form, contact the nearest Salvation Army office.

Social Security Administration letter-forwarding service. As a service of last resort, the SSA will forward a letter to an individual's latest address for a "strong humanitarian purpose" if the letter-writer includes the person's name, Social Security number and birth date. Write: SSA, Department of Health and Human Services, 6401 Security Blvd., Baltimore, MD 21235.

Drivers' Records. By writing to the State Motor Vehicles Registration Office or Drivers License Office in the state where the individual is believed to live, it may be possible to obtain information such as Social Security number, address, date of birth, and dates and locations of accidents and traffic tickets. Check the Findex Indexes on the library's website under E-Resources.

You Can Find Anybody! By private investigator Joseph Culligan, offers more suggestions for finding living people. Copies are located in the Readers' Services Department of the library. /363.2336 C89y 2000/