



# THE SEARCHER

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WIGS NEWSLETTER –Spring 2018 - Vol. XXIII No. 1

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## WHIDBEY ISLAND GENEALOGICAL SEARCHERS (WIGS)

Bringing together the generations to strengthen and support the family bond!

WIGS meets the second Tuesday of each month, September through June at 1:00 PM in the fire station at 2720 Heller Road, Oak Harbor, WA.

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### OFFICERS and COMMITTEES

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President: Jackie Vannice  
 Vice-Pres.: Barbara Green  
 Secretary: vacant  
 Treasurer: Joyce Boster  
 Auditor: vacant  
 Historian: Jeanan Richter  
 Library Custodian: Bob Keough  
 Membership: Judy Wagner  
 Parliamentarian: Betty Leitch  
 Programs: Bobby O'Neal  
 Education & trips: Pat Gardner  
 The Searcher: John Richter  
 Refreshments: Eleanore Grieg  
 Sound: David Flomerfelt  
 Ways & Means Charlotte Santos  
 Webmaster: Janice Keough

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### VISIT OUR WEBSITE

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For a quick check on what is happening with WIGS, visit <http://www.whidbeysearchers.org>

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### MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

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"Kudos" to our WIGS membership for stepping up to become involved in so many new and different activities this year!

Right around the corner (as of this writing), we will be creating the display case for "Women's History Month" at the Oak Harbor Library from March 1-17th, followed by our WIGS member panel discussion scheduled during our March 13th general meeting. Also during the month of March and at the library, we will give our first genealogy presentation on the 28th which will be open to the public . Later in the spring, an educational class is in the works at the Oak Harbor Senior Center that we hope to have completed before we break for the summer months.

So much to do and so little time! New ideas are brewing so stay tuned to a great year. Again, we couldn't do all this without our wonderful members. Thank you!

Jackie Vannice

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**WANTED**

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Someone to volunteer to be the WIGS Secretary. This is an important position that is looking for **YOU!** An organizational minded individual to be responsible for recording proceedings of the Executive Committee, Board of Directors, regular and special meetings of the society. Other duties are outlined in the by-laws of the society.

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**WIGS Coming Attractions**

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**Tuesday April 10, 2018** Leland Metzler will speak to us about electronic record keeping.

He founded Heritage Quest in 1985 and has worked as Managing Editor of both Heritage Quest Magazine and The Genealogical Helper. He currently operates Family Roots Publishing Company, writes daily at GenealogyBlog.com, writes the weekly Genealogy Newsliner, conducts the annual Salt Lake Christmas Tour to the Family History Library, and speaks nationally, having given over 2000 lectures since 1983.

**Tuesday May 8, 2018** Speaker and topic to be announced.

**Tuesday June 12, 2018** Speaker and topic to be announced.

**HEROES:** What a man in a boat does.

**CONTROL:** A short, ugly inmate.

**ge.ne.al.o.gy:** where you confuse the dead and irritate the living.

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**WHAT'S HAPPENING ELSEWHERE**

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**Genealogy Society of South Whidbey.**

Meets in Freeland at Trinity Lutheran Church in their Chapel & community building. Meetings start at 12.45 PM.

**Monday March 12, 2018** Steve Morrison will give two 30 minute presentations. (1) Favorite Resources for Irish Genealogy. (2) Irish Quakers Migration to Pennsylvania.

**Monday April 9, 2018** Jill Morelli will speak on her travels through the Midwest: 6500 miles and 32 repositories. If you're intimidated by going to the courthouse, Archives, State Libraries, this presentation will cover pre-trip organization, what you will find, plus how to find it with examples and lessons learned.

**Monday May 14, 2018** Janet Camarata will talk about Hidden Finds in Church records. This program will help you with the use of Church records as a research source.

**Seattle Genealogical Society (SGS)**  
**Spring Seminar**

Saturday, May 19, 2018 SGS Annual Spring Seminar  
Family History: What the Future Holds by D. Joshua Taylor

The Seattle Genealogical Society (SGS) invites you attend our Annual Spring Seminar featuring nationally known and recognized genealogical author, lecturer, and researcher, D. Joshua Taylor, M.A., M.L.S. The title of his lecture is: Family History: What the Future Holds. Glimpse the future of family history through

changes in technology, research methods, and other community developments.

On Saturday, May 19, from 9:00am to 4:00pm. Fairview Christian School, 844 NE 78th Street, Seattle, WA. For more information visit: <http://www.seattlegenealogicalsociety.org/>

### **Olympia Genealogy Society**

Saturday, April 7, 2018

2018 Spring Seminar presented by Lisa Alzo entitled *Find Your Immigrant & Miscreant Ancestors*. Topics: Immigrant Cluster Communities Past, Present & Future, Silent Voices: Telling the Stories of Your Female Immigrant Ancestors, Diseases, Disasters and Distress: Bad for your Ancestors, Good for Genealogy, and Murder, Mayhem and Town Tragedy.

See brochure at : <http://www.olygensoc.org/2018SpringSeminarBrochure.pdf> for full details.

Register by 23 March 2018.

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**Online Records**  
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Are you ready to start searching for records online, but not sure where to start? We've got you covered with our tips on the 7 types of records you should start looking for, and where you can find them.

It's both a blessing and a curse: We're lucky that so many genealogy records are available online, but the frenzied release of an index to New York City pace of posting means new projects that are important to your research might escape notice. As fast as the good news appears, it fades, forgotten, into a sea of other family history headlines.

We need you to look here: We've gathered seven areas of exciting development in online records, where digitization and transcription efforts from organizations large and small are making your research

easier and more productive. Where you once had to laboriously locate records in person, but you now have much-improved chances for success using just your computer. Start searching these new and growing online record collections today.

### **1. Birth and death records**

A maze of bureaucracy and state laws governing the release of vital records, not to mention the request fees and wait times, can put your 20th-century ancestors' birth and death data out of reach. But recent projects to post vital record images or (more commonly) indexes are increasing your chances of finding birth and death information on the web. If your results are from an index, use that information to request a copy of the document from the state vital records office or archive where possible.

A lot of the progress is made possible by Reclaim the Records, a nonprofit public records advocacy group founded in 2015 by genealogists, historians and journalists. The organization follows state freedom of information laws—and insists that state offices do the same—to obtain record sets that aren't online or readily available to the public. In 2017, Reclaim the Records secured the release of an index to New York state deaths (outside of New York City) from 1880 to 1956. It took 17 months and a lot of back and forth with the state government, but you now can browse through the pages of the digitized index at Internet Archive. Subscription website Ancestry.com subsequently indexed the records so you can search them. The state death index has geographical gaps in several urban areas that kept their own records. Reclaim the Records also has requested records from those cities. Buffalo deaths (1842 to 1944) are currently available; Albany and Yonkers are underway.

Another acquisition is an index to New Jersey births and deaths from 1901 to 1903, as well as marriages from 1901 to 1914 (that's the index by bride's name; a grooms index covers 1901 to 1903). It's now on Internet Archive.

The group also has actions pending for New York City birth certificates for 1910 to 1917, a New York State birth index for 1880 to 1942, and Missouri indexes to births from 1910 to 2015 and deaths from 1965 to 2015. Read more here.

## 2. Marriage records

In 2016, FamilySearch and subscription website Findmypast launched the US Marriages Project to index marriage records, targeting this record set because it usually provides a wife's maiden name and sometimes even her parents' names. You can search the indexed records on Ancestry.com, as well as FamilySearch and Findmypast. The latter site's US Marriages Collection lists more than 100 million marriages from 1650 to 2010.

Subscription website MyHeritage offers the New York City Marriage License Index, 1908 to 1929, an index to marriage licenses from the five boroughs of New York that were filed at the New York City Clerk Offices. It includes more than 1.5 million marriage license records. For later unions, thank Reclaim the Records for another victory (read the whole sordid tale) in securing the

American names. "When a certain name is found in different places, how do you know this person is one and the same marriages from 1930 to 1995.

Across the harbor, Reclaim the Records also negotiated the release of an index to 115 years of New Jersey marriage records, dating from 1901 to 2016. You'll find it digitized here. The records aren't searchable by name here—they're browse-only—although there are index volumes.

And now that the records are public, you can bet a big genealogy site will come along and turn the names into a database you can search.

## 3. Church records

Findmypast also is adding church records in its Catholic Heritage Archive, which in addition to marriages, includes baptisms and some death records. Recent and planned US additions come from the archdioceses of Baltimore, Philadelphia, New York and Cincinnati. You'll also find church records here from England, Ireland and Scotland.

Those with Beantown ancestry, take note: The New England Historic Genealogical Society (NEHGS) and the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Boston have announced a multi-year collaboration to create an online searchable database of millions of sacramental records from more than 100 parishes across greater Boston. You'll find an index to these records on Ancestry.com, where you can link to the image at the NEHGS' American Ancestors website (subscription required).

A couple of years back, after the National Library of Ireland posted free, digitized (but not searchable by name) Irish Catholic Church registers up to 1880, genealogy companies swooped in to index the records. You now can use searchable databases at Ancestry.com and Findmypast. At the latter site, the records are free to access.

## 4. Records of enslavement

The Digital Library on American Slavery is a good place to turn to if you're searching for ancestors who were enslaved. Operated by the University of North Carolina at Greensboro Walter Clinton Jackson Library, this site indexes documents from other websites focusing on race and slavery in the American South: the Race and Slavery Petitions Project; North Carolina Runaway Slave Advertisements; and the

Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database. A project called People not Property: Slave Deeds of North Carolina is under development.

While much of the material is North Carolina-based, the site has information from all 15 slaveholding states and Washington D.C. Sources include 18th- and 19th-century wills, estate inventories, court proceedings, runaway slave ads, deeds and bills of sale for enslaved individuals, and insurance registries (slaveowners would insure their slaves as valuable property). “We’ve pulled information from these other sites into a local database, so it’s faster to access what you’re looking for,” says site designer and digital technology consultant Richard Cox. The advanced search function lets you add a date range, state and slaveowner’s name to your search. “Slaves often didn’t have last names, or names changed when they were moved to another plantation, so often you’re looking for a first name only,” Cox says. “That’s why it’s helpful if you have more information that can narrow down your search.” Search results direct you to the site the information comes from.

The library is working with partners who are looking to expand access to slave documents across the entire United States, and to distinguish African-person Cox asks. This partner-group will try to verify names to make that determination easier.

In June 2016, FamilySearch launched its volunteer-created name index to digitized Freedmen’s Bureau records, which document assistance the bureau provided to displaced persons after the Civil War. According to FamilySearch, it contains names of 1.8 million of the four million African-Americans who were enslaved.

Read more about these records in the January/February 2017 Family Tree Magazine. Another post-Civil War

resource is the Last Seen database of newspaper advertisement placed by freedmen seeking family who’d been sold off during slavery.

### 5. Sanborn fire-insurance maps

Sanborn fire insurance maps, produced for roughly 12,000 US towns and cities starting in 1867, can show you how your ancestor’s neighborhood changed over time and provide information that’s essential for finding property records. You’ll discover street names that have since been changed and locations of buildings that no longer exist.

You used to have to go to a big library to find these maps. Then last year, the Library of Congress, which houses the largest collection of Sanborn maps, has posted more than 25,000 of them on its free website. Look for this collection to grow to 500,000 maps by 2020.

To search, type a place (city, county or state) into the box at the top of the page and click the magnifying glass. You might find that Sanborn published multiple sets of maps for your ancestor’s town, spaced years apart. Click a collection title to view the maps. For larger cities, look for a street guide or “index map” that tells you which page should show your ancestor’s street. See our step-by-step search demo.

But the Library of Congress website isn’t the only place to find Sanborn maps. Check with local, state and university libraries for digitized collections. Maps for Indianapolis, IN., for example, aren’t yet online at the Library of Congress, but you will find maps from 1887, 1898 and 1914-15 on the website of the Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis Library website. (They’re also accessible, along with other resources, via the state library’s Indiana Memory website) Similarly, Cincinnati maps for 1904 are digitized on the website of the Public

Library of Cincinnati and Hamilton County. The Portal to Texas History has Sanborn maps from 173 counties in the Lone Star State.

You can use the Digital Public Library of America to connect you with the Library of Congress and other digitized Sanborn maps. Search for Sanborn map and the place, and in your search results, use the filters on the left to narrow your results if needed.

#### 6. Burial records

Crowdsourcing technology and cemeteries' advancements in online record-keeping are increasing the size of online burial databases like Find A Grave, BillionGraves and Interment.net. "We add 300,000 to 500,000 new records each month," explains Steve Johnson, creator and manager of Interment.net. Unlike other online burial databases, however, this site isn't completely crowdsourced. Users don't edit or take ownership of records. "Our site sources records mostly from the sexton of each cemetery, so what you're looking at is the actual record the cemetery's office has, or what the cemetery was willing to provide." It does contain some transcriptions from cemetery visitors. You'll also find "Special Collections" lists of burials and deaths related to flooded cemeteries, mine disasters and the Woodmen of the World fraternal organization.

You can start your search by choosing a country tab at the top of the page and drilling down to a cemetery by location. Or use the site's search form, which allows for name variants and misspellings. Check the Newest Transcriptions Published page for newly published records from your family cemeteries.

The longest-lived and perhaps the best-known cemetery database, Find A Grave—owned by Ancestry.com since 2013—relies

largely on user-contributed gravestone inscriptions and other data. Take care when using biographical information and "calculated relationships" that may be in a memorial; site managers don't independently verify this information. Find A Grave has undergone a recent makeover that's somewhat controversial among long-time contributors, but should make burials easier to search on your phone. Get search tips for the new site.

BillionGraves, which began building its user-contributed database via mobile apps, is the largest source of GPS data for gravestones. Due to a partnership with genealogy website MyHeritage, the site and app are available in 25 languages, making them user-friendly to international contributors.

#### 7. War of 1812 military pensions

These applications for pensions and bounty land are being posted for free at Fold3 <[go.fold3.com/1812pensions](http://go.fold3.com/1812pensions)>, in a project funded by the Federation of Genealogical Societies' successful Preserve the Pensions campaign. After hitting a snag in 2017, conservation and digitization of the files have resumed; the collection on Fold3 is now two-thirds complete. Applications are based on military service between 1812 and 1815, and may include the original application form as well as affidavits and other supporting documentation.

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### **Online U.S. Atlas of Historical County Boundaries**

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One of the more useful tools for genealogists is the Atlas of Historical County Boundaries created by the Newberry Library in Chicago. When I first started in genealogy, one of my biggest frustrations was trying to find records of ancestors in the county where they lived. Many genealogical records are created by counties. In many cases, I knew the town

where they lived and I also knew what county the town was in. Yet I couldn't find the records that normally are kept in county courthouses, such as probate records or the deeds of land transfers.

As I gained more experience, I soon learned that the problem was mine. I had looked in the country records for the county lines of today. In many cases, the county lines had moved over the years, even though my ancestors had not moved an inch. Once recorded at the county courthouse, records normally remain at that courthouse forever, even if the county lines are redrawn later and the property or the town in question is then "moved" to a different county.

For instance, if your ancestor lived in the town of Smallville in Washington County when the information was recorded at the courthouse and later the county lines were redrawn so that town of Smallville and your ancestor's location were later in Lincoln County, you still need to look for older records in the Washington County courthouse. Existing courthouse records usually are not moved to a new courthouse when county lines are redrawn.

Experienced genealogists all know that you need to look in the county courthouse for the correct county as of the date the records were filed. But how do you find the the correct county lines as of the date(s) your ancestors lived there and left records? You can find several books at well-equipped libraries that will provide that information. However, the Atlas of Historical County Boundaries will provide the information as well without requiring the time and travel expenses of visiting a well-equipped library. Yes, you can find the information without leaving home. The Atlas of Historical County Boundaries web site is available FREE of charge. You can even download the files to your own computer and save them or use them as you please. The online atlas has been available for

years but I find that many genealogists are unaware of its existence and do not know how useful it can be.

With the Atlas of Historical County Boundaries, you can view records on a per state basis, an interactive map, or choose the time slots that best meet your requirements. You can search by location or by time or by both. To use the web site for the first time, select a state from the map on the site's home page to view all of the Atlas' content related to that state, including shapefiles, chronologies, and metadata. If you cannot quickly find the information you seek, narrow the search by choosing from the available list of options. Probably the most useful option for genealogists is to display maps by dates.

A lot of helpful information about the site can be found on the "Using the Atlas" page at:

[http://publications.newberry.org/ahcbp/usin\\_gatlas.html](http://publications.newberry.org/ahcbp/usin_gatlas.html).

This is a web site worth bookmarking. You probably won't need to use it often but, if you do ever have a need, it can supply the information you seek quickly.

The Atlas of Historical County Boundaries is available at the Newberry Library's web site at:

<http://publications.newberry.org/ahcbp>.

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**Pioneer and First Citizen Program**  
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The Washington State Centennial Pioneer Certificate Program was begun by the Washington State Genealogical Society (WSGS) in 1984 in anticipation of the state's centennial admission to the union in 1889. The initial certificates were issued to applicants who could prove their ancestors were in Washington Territory prior to its admission to the Union on 11 Nov 1889. These descendants' names, almost 18,000,

were printed in a two-volume set of books entitled "Washington Pioneers" in 1992. A third volume, published in 1993, included Pioneers and First Citizens (those in the state on or before 31 Dec 1900). The three original volumes are out of print, but an index is available here. WSGS members have access to family lineages in the Members' Only section of the website. The books may also be available in libraries or eBay.

Pioneer and First Citizen Certificates are still being issued, although they are published only on the WSGS website at this time. If you can prove your ancestor was in Washington prior to 11 Nov 1889, you may be eligible to purchase a Pioneer Certificate. If your ancestor was in Washington on or before 31 Dec 1900, you may be eligible to purchase a First Citizen Certificate. More information, including resources to prove residency, is available in the Pioneer and First Citizen Program brochure. An application and instructions are available at <https://wasgs.org>

Many states have similar programs. You may want to check out the state genealogy society of your home state to see what they may offer.

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**Washington State Genealogical Events  
and Information**  
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I recently found this website that you may wish to bookmark. You can use this to search for genealogical information by counties. On the left side click on County Recourse Guide, a subset of Washington Resources.  
<https://wasgs.org/eventListings.php?nm=76>  
Check out the other areas on this site. There may be enough to encourage you to become a member of the WSGS. Your support will help fund the resources the society makes available. It also allows

access to the members only page. \$12.00 per year, 1Jan-31 Dec

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**Obituaries**  
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Recently I was looking for the obituary of a 2<sup>nd</sup> cousin, who died in Oak Harbor, 2007.

I just learned about him while doing some research on an ancestor line. I called the Whidbey News Times and was told two things:

1 That the county libraries have microfilm of their paper, where I located his obituary.

2 The newspaper web site has digital obituaries from the recent past.

<http://www.whidbeynewstimes.com/obituaries/>

Taking the next step you can search for newspapers you are interested in researching and see if they have obituary records. This may have only recent deaths. Newspapers.com and genealogybank.com will allow you to search the papers they have digitized, fees apply.

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**Free BMD**  
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**England** – FreeBMD has again updated their website with more records. This is a great website.

FreeBMD is a registered charity that aims to transcribe English and Welsh birth, marriage and death records. These official government records go back as far as 1837. The website currently has some 266.4 million records.

FreeBMD is an incredibly popular website. It typically gets more than 150,000 search queries a day. And, as the name implies, it is free. The records can be searched by first name, last name, date range, county, district and spouses name. [[FreeBMD](#)]