

Newspaper Research

Why Use Newspapers in Genealogy?

- To locate secondary or substitute information on our ancestors. When official records have been destroyed or are non-existent, newspaper articles maybe your only source of the information you need.
- To locate missing relatives. Many ancestors would write a “personal ad” asking for the whereabouts of a relative that just came from the old country and giving their contact information. Today many people do the same when looking for a missing relative in another city or state, or when researchers are looking for a relative of an ancestor.
- To understand the community and the time frame of our ancestors lives. What events were going on that had an impact on our relatives’ lives and the decisions they made. Why did they live where they did? What jobs were available there?

Advantages of Newspapers

- An easy to read document of the time
- Most are available in some form or another
- Most are or will be indexed. Just have to find who has the index!

Disadvantages of Newspapers

- Difficult to locate the right newspaper
- Difficult to locate the repository that has the newspaper
- Incomplete issues of the newspaper
- Deterioration of newsprint
- Reading newsprint on microfilm.
- The information is only as good as the person giving and writing it.

What to Watch Out for

- Misspelled names and places are common in newspapers
- Wrong dates
- Incorrect information given by a secondary source
- Bias of the reporter
- Miss-interpretation of the information given by the reporter
- Article not where it is expected to be in the pages of the paper
- Incomplete information or not the whole story, making the report slanted, strange, one-sided, too good to be true, or too bad and reflecting on your ancestor
- Some events were not reported or covered up.