



LIBRARY OF CONGRESS PRINTS AND PHOTOGRAPHS DIVISION, LC-USF34-082618-C

RESOURCE ROUNDUP

# Social History Websites

**IN SCHOOL, WE** learned history by studying big events and big people. We pored over details of the Revolution, Abraham Lincoln, Manifest Destiny and the Great Depression, all from a comfortable (and detached) bird's-eye view. What we didn't learn was how those events affected ordinary people—such as our ancestors.

Social history bridges that gap by teaching us the everyday details regular folks lived through. It's a study of how your North Dakota ancestors recovered from the Schoolhouse Blizzard of 1888, or what foods were served at a Sunday dinner on the farm. Social history adds the flesh to genealogical charts, forms and data; it brings "real" history to life. You can begin delving into the details of your own forebears' daily lives by exploring 10 of our favorite social history websites.

## American Memory

[memory.loc.gov](http://memory.loc.gov)

The Library of Congress' multimedia website contains more than 9 million digital items, including interviews, photographs, books and recordings, with some items dating back as far as 1490. Pulling from 100 collections, subjects range from baseball to the Civil War to farming in the Great Plains.

Want to know what it was like to travel in early America? Read Alexander Hamilton's 1744 journal of his travels through the northeastern Colonies. Interested in 19th-century politics? Look for the 1861 broadside urging Massachusetts citizens to vote for Stephen A. Douglas for president.

You can search the entire site at once or drill down to search individual collections, a few of which we've singled out in this article.

## American Life Histories: Manuscripts from the Federal Writers' Project, 1936-1940

[memory.loc.gov/ammem/wpaintro](http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/wpaintro)

Explore a treasure house of memories taken from 2,900 interviews conducted for the Works Progress Administration (later renamed the Works Projects Administration). The keyword-searchable conversations in this American Memory collection offer insight into income, occupation, politics, religion and culture.

You'll find yourself looking through a fascinating window to social history, sometimes dating back to Civil War and slavery days. For example, in the words of a former Missouri slaveowner: "Slaves in Clinton County very often ran away, but they didn't go far. The pad-rollers, men hired to hunt them in the woods at night soon brought them



Visit social history websites to discover details of daily life on the farm (left), in the city or whatever setting your ancestors inhabited.

back. We had one man to run off. I was much frightened when they tied him up to lash him, but they never whipped him and he never ran away again.”

### Bethlehem Digital History Project

<[bdhp.moravian.edu](http://bdhp.moravian.edu)>

This collection chronicles the Moravian community of Bethlehem, Pa., from its founding in 1741 to 1844, when the community first opened to non-Moravians. Residents kept a community diary of milestones and everyday events; you can view translations from German for the years 1742 through 1745, as well as journals, memoirs and letters.

### Digital Library of Georgia

<[dlg.galileo.usg.edu](http://dlg.galileo.usg.edu)>

Digitized material from libraries, archives, museums and other cultural institutions lets you peer into the Peach State's past. Peruse 2,000 letters, military orders and archeological images created between 1730 and 1842. Civil War material includes a soldier's diary and two collections of letters, one from the wife of an Atlanta lawyer and plantation owner. And don't miss the Colonial will books.

You can search by keyword or browse by topic, county, time period, institution or media type. (Learn about the history of Georgia's capital city, Atlanta, on page 37.)

### First-Person Narratives of the American South, 1860-1920

<[memory.loc.gov/ammem/award97/ncuhtml](http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/award97/ncuhtml)>

This American Memory collection contains 140 diaries, memoirs, travel accounts and ex-slave narratives. You can search by keyword or browse by

subject, author, title or place. Several topics relate to women's history, including diaries, social life and customs. One such item is Eliza Ripley's recollection of social life in New Orleans, including her experience with "domestic science" (housekeeping), her church, plantation life, entertaining and shopping. American Indian life is another core area of this collection.

### New Deal Network

<[newdeal.feri.org](http://newdeal.feri.org)>

More than 900 newspaper and journal articles, letters and advertisements cover subjects relevant to the period's social, cultural, political and economic history. Want to ride along on a 1931 road trip? Go to the Archives in the Attic section and read "Seven Months of Boyhood Adventures," the narrative of two 19-year-olds who traveled the country during the Depression. Particularly interesting is the cost of food: Three eggs and buttered toast cost 10 cents, for example.

### New York Public Library Digital Gallery

<[digitalgallery.nypl.org](http://digitalgallery.nypl.org)>

Interested in images of your ancestors' times? Check out this virtual photo album of more than 700,000 images from the library's holdings.

It's fun to browse by a broad topic such as Culture and Society or Arts and Leisure; you can then drill down further using the search options within individual collections—or search the whole collection.

Among the site's gems: images of fashions and Ellis Island immigrants, cigarette cards, landscape photography, floor plans of New York apartments and scenes of the city from the 1870s.

### Ohio Memory

<[www.ohiomemory.org](http://www.ohiomemory.org)>

Here you'll find 75,000 primary sources from more than 4,100 collections covering Ohio life, culture and history to



**TIP:** Living history museums provide an up-close-and-personal look at what your ancestors' lives were like. Find ones of interest at <[www.alhfam.org](http://www.alhfam.org)> (click Living History Resources, then Museum Links).

1903. You can search all collections by keyword, or browse by subject, place or contributor. Subjects offer a fascinating look at everyday life, including railroad statistics, a riot following a 1924 Ku Klux Klan rally, and papers for an indentured apprentice.

### Plymouth Colony Archive Project

<[www.histarch.uiuc.edu/plymouth](http://www.histarch.uiuc.edu/plymouth)>

Dig into documents pertaining to the social history of Plymouth Colony from 1620 to 1691. You'll find court records, colony laws, 17th-century journals and memoirs, probate inventories, wills, town plans, maps and fort plans.

The site is laid out like a research room: Click the area you want to enter, such as Grave Art in New England, Probate or Times of Their Lives.

### Raid on Deerfield: The Many Stories of 1704

<[1704.deerfield.history.museum](http://1704.deerfield.history.museum)>

Read both sides' accounts of the famous 1704 raid on Deerfield, Mass., by 300 French and their American Indian allies. At the time of the raid, 112 Deerfield men, women and children were captured and forced to march 300 miles to Canada during winter.

Material includes 17th-century popular songs, and 17th- and 18th-century French music. Perhaps your own Colonial ancestors would have raised their voices in singing "Our Forefather's Song"—it's been traced back to 1643 New England.

» Nancy Hendrickson