

IN-GENious!

Newspapers: More Than Obituaries!

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"The newspaper is a Bible...", Henry David Thoreau wrote in an 1854 essay. He was referring to the influence a newspaper has on the public, but for genealogists, the same sentiment applies: Searching in newspapers should be a cornerstone of your research strategy.

The dates that state governments began to register vital events (births, marriages, deaths) vary. Indiana, for example, did not record births and deaths uniformly until 1882, and county officials did not begin sending copies of their records to the state until the turn of the century. An obituary can be a genealogist's mother lode with possible nuggets including dates and places of a person's birth and death.

Memorials and Other Notices

Even if your ancestor didn't have the money or the social standing to merit an obituary, the newspaper is still a great source to find a death report. Several years ago, I was stymied trying to find out what had happened to my great-great-great-grandfather who disappeared from records after the 1870 census. His wife was listed as a widow on the 1880 census, but I never found his tombstone in the area cemeteries. The mystery was solved when I searched the county newspapers and found a February 1875 resolution from a fraternal order to which he belonged [Example 1, next page].



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Marriages were recorded by the county clerk, but if those records have been lost or destroyed, newspapers may provide a substitute through published lists of marriage license applicants as well as separate items about some of the weddings. In some cases, the lack of a wedding was considered noteworthy [Example 2]. Even if your ancestors' wedding did not appear in the newspaper, you can glean information from anniversaries. Look for stories 20, 25 or 50 years after the marriage date to see if they had a celebration or reminisced about the day.

'Legal Stuff'

Newspapers are wonderful sources for the "legal stuff" – official information the local court or government agency was required to publish. Lists of delinquent taxpayers often included the location of their property. Notice of an administrator appointed for an estate [Example 3] also was required. It's easy to overlook these notices, but they can contain important pieces to the puzzle such as the fact that one of the heirs was not living in Indiana [Example 4]. Newspapers also provide information on topics the family

The following resolutions were adopted by
Haleyon Grange, No. 1030, Brownsburg, Ind.:

Whereas, It has seemed best to the Dispenser of all good to remove from our number at an unexpected hour our beloved brother, James Londer, by death, therefore,

Resolved, That while we feel deeply and keenly our irreparable loss, we recognize the hand of our Father in heaven who doeth all things well, and bow with tearful submission to the will of

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mourn the unexpected and untimely death of a dutiful husband and father.

4. That a copy of these resolutions be spread on the minutes of this Grange, and furnished to Hendricks county papers and the Indiana Farmer for publication, and a copy be presented to the family by the Master of this Lodge.

JAS. M. BARLOW, }  
ASA S. WHITE, } Com.  
W. Y. TURNER, }

Example 1:  
Lodge Resolution  
*Danville Union*  
11 February 1875, p3c6

### Changed Their Minds.

In March last, there was published in the **REPUBLICAN** a notice of a marriage license which had been issued to William R. Northcutt and Ellen Lee. Their friends wondered why they never married and this remained a mystery until the following note signed by Mr. Northcutt was received by the Clerk a few days ago:

Mr. Hogate, Clerk of Hendricks Circuit Court: I this day send you a marriage license that was taken out on the 7th day of March '91. On account of her friends, we have agreed to disagree and for that reason I return the license.

Example 2:  
News Item  
*Hendricks County Republican*  
6 August 1891, p4c4

may never have discussed openly – topics such as adoptions, divorces, and criminal cases.

**Administrator's Sale.**

**I** WILL SELL at Public Auction, on the 221 day of May, 1853, at the door of the Court House in Fort Wayne, Allen County, Indiana, the east half of the east half of the south-west quarter of section thirty-six (36), of township thirty-one (31), north of range eleven (11) east, in Allen County, Indiana, containing forty acres of land, the property of the estate of John Brooker, deceased.

Terms—One half cash, the balance in six and twelve months.

M. BROKER, Adm'r  
3w11

April 26, 1853.

Example 3:

*Fort Wayne Sentinel*  
15 May 1858, p3c3

**NOTICE TO NON-RESIDENTS.**  
STATE OF INDIANA, } ss:  
RIPLEY COUNTY, }

In the Circuit Court Sept. Term, 1897.

Jeremiah Roberts, Admr. }  
Est. of Thos. A. Blair,  
deceased. }

vs

Mary A. Blair, jr. }  
Joseph A. Blair, }  
John H. Blair, } No. 759.  
William A. Blair, }  
Effie L. Blair, }  
Everett E. Blair, }  
Emmitt C. Blair, }  
Leonard R. Blair. }

Whereas it has been made to appear to the undersigned Clerk of said court, by the affidavit of a competent witness, that Mary A. Blair, jr. Joseph A. Blair, John H. Blair, Wm. A. Blair, Effie L. Blair, Everett E. Blair, Emmitt C. Blair and Leonard R. Blair are necessary parties to the above petition to sell real estate of decedent to pay debts, and that one of said defendants is not a resident of the State of Indiana at this time. Therefore, the said defendants are hereby notified of the filing and pendency of the said petition to sell land, and the same will be heard and determined at the next term of said court, to be held at the Court House in Versailles, in said county, on the 1st Monday in September, A. D., 1897.

Witness, the Clerk and seal of said court this 26th day of June, 1897.

[SEAL] SAMUEL M. SMITH, Clerk.  
Corney, Atty for Admr. }  
July 15, 1897.

Example 4:

*The Osgood Journal*  
22 July 1897, p5c2

Many researchers already know how to find information on an ancestor's military service through copies of service records and pension applications. But newspapers also should be consulted for the period of the ancestor's service for any details of "local boys" in the conflict or any of the ancestor's letters home. Even after they have returned home, reports of regimental reunions (especially at 10, 20, or 25-year intervals after the conflict) can provide valuable information.

### Clues in Print

Newspapers around Indiana sometimes published clues to ancestors' whereabouts in unlikely ways:

Regular lists of the guests registered at hotels  
[Example 5]

A Washington D.C. law firm's continuing list of Hoosiers who obtained patents  
[Example 6]

Accounts of annual "Old Settlers" meetings  
(doubling as in-

## Hotel Arrivals:

From Wednesday, July 14, to 21

## HOTEL NORWOOD.

## INDIANAPOLIS.

J. W. Hurst A. F. Garrlott  
J. C. Ellis M. Postins

Philip Smith

## CINCINNATI.

E. W. Dixon Jos Ashone  
M. Menimel Julius Hahn  
C. E. Swetman M. Wertheim  
C. Shubinske Wm F. Belmer  
John E. Keller H. M. Ross  
C. W. Vogel

C. M. Bowers, Moores Hill

Sam'l Epstein, Rising Sun

Gilbert Yaeger, St. Louis

Ed. H. Arnold, North Vernon

A. Tripp, "

L. S. Haworth, "

Grant Johnson, Versailles

Ed Eble, "

R. T. Olmsted, "

B. J. Gallagher, Greensburg

Benj Meyer, "

J. L. Hill, "

L. Lloyd, "

D. C. Riley, "

S. P. Long, "

M. Grover, "

A. S. Crandall, Madison

E. F. Stevens, Poston

George Reisinger, Delaware

Louis Elohengreen, New York

J. P. Conyers, Milan

Jas. W. Kenan, "

C. A. Wilson, Burlington, N. H.

Olmer Johnson, Louisville

C. F. Soot, Dillsboro

H. D. Grlawe, "

H. Hoeferkamp, Versailles

W. B. McAvoy, Covington

J. R. Davis, Batesville

George Dettner, "

Q. Vonderheide, "

A. E. Shirling, Sunman

Frank M. Davis, Scottsburg

J. W. Sears, New Albany

J. E. Wells, Pierceville

D. Kidd, "

[Clockwise from top]

Example 5:

Hotel Arrivals

*The Osgood Journal*

22 July 1897, p4c3

Example 6:

Patent List

*The Osgood Journal*

4 November 1897, p5c2

Example 7:

Old Settlers List

*Hendricks County Republican*

13 August 1891, p8c5

## List of Patents.

Granted to Indiana inventors this week. Reported by C. A. Snow & Co., Patent Attorneys, Washington, D. C.

W. Butler, Redkey, Washington, D. C. glassware. G. M. Cheney, Indianapolis, Arch'culvert. T. A. Cole, Indianapolis, Combined cigar clipper and register. H. C. Mustard, West Point, Automatic device for operating whist-les. E. H. Olds, Fort Wayne, Whist-handle-bar clip. W. N. Payne, H. C. Fort Wayne, Fence-machine. H. C. lumber. D. A. Automobile.

aid by the band was also good.

The following were present, their names and ages being given: Josiah Garrison, 88; Jane Johnson, 85; Allen R. Seaton, 83; Harris Almond, 83; A. S. Wills, 82; Lavina Pringle, 81; Samuel Lotcher, 80; Mary Coffman, 80; Nicholas Fletcher, 80; Jonathan Parks, 78; M. W. Yowel, 84; Henry Holderman, 73; Wm. Pike, 73; Harrison Swindler, 73; A. D. McCormack, 72; Jno. Moon, 72; Parthena Almond, 71; Levi Koonik, 71; Murray Hollingsworth, 71; Elijah Osborn, 71; Barney Fox, 70; Wm. Ray, 69; L. H. Kennedy, 68; J. W. Hawkins, 68; C. V. Newman, 68; Elijah Tinder, 68; Charlotte Cassady, 67; Wm. Symmonds, 66; Q. Rust, 66; Madison Cropper, 66; Joo. Tarlton, 66; Wm. Mullen, 65; Abraham Owens, 64; Jno. O. Kennedy, 64; Harvey Wood, 64; L. J. Canary, 64; Adam Record, 64; C. C. Allison, 63; O. B. Dennis, 63; Jno. Hall, 62; H. Hadley, 62; Julia Holderman, 61; T. L. Canary, 61; A. Jordan, 61; Jas. D. Smith, 59; A. W. Carter, 58; Elizabeth Cox, 58; J. W. Wantland, 58; J. W. Craven, 58; Elizabeth Thompson, 57; Haroin Pope, 57; Rhoda Burcham, 56; Dr. A. Morgan, 55; Jno. Dilly, 55; K. ziah Symmons, 55; Jno. Martin, 55; A. G. Cropper, 55; M. Woodard, 54; G. W. Brady, 54; Van Johnson, 54; Chas. Shearer, 54; Fred Oakley, 53; Mary E. Little, 53; A. S. McCormick, 52; W. H. Mill, 51; Dr. Morgan, 50.

formal censuses  
of a county's  
older residents)  
[Example 7]

Ads for local busi-  
nesses  
(substituting for  
city directories)  
[Example 8].

Whatever information you are seeking, you may miss it if you restrict your search to the newspapers in the county where your ancestor lived. Newspapers served a larger audience, thanks to mail delivery and the telegraph. Metropolitan newspapers often had columns for outlying counties. Even neighboring states should be checked. The September 2005 [Vol. 16:3] issue of the *Indiana Genealogist* had several Indiana items from 1882 issues of *The Hicksville News* that served a town in northwestern Ohio. An 1881 Fort Wayne newspaper also carried items from Ohio and Illinois.

### Remote Access

I often hear from out-of-state IGS members how they wish they could be in Indiana to search the records. Thankfully, many newspapers are accessible at a distance from their point of publication. The Indiana State Library [140 N. Senate Ave., Indianapo-

## AUGUST HARTMAN,

Weil Appointed **Livery.**

Also Beer Saloon  
... CINCINNATI BEER.

## Osgood Jewelry Co.

Special prices on—

⌚ Alarm Clocks ⌚

Largest Stock of Jewelry  
... in the County.

## S. M. SMITH,

OSGOOD,

### Pure Drugs

Paints, Oils, Varnishes,  
Wall Paper, Window Shades, etc.

A Leader among the Drug Houses.

## Lawrence Kestler,

OSGOOD, INDIANA.

### Dry Goods, Groceries,

Shoes, Hats, Notions.

NEAR CHRISTIAN CHURCH.

See us for Fall Goods,

Example 8:  
Business Advertising  
*The Osgood Journal*  
4 November 1897, p5c2

lis, IN 46204; 317-232-3675] has an extensive collection of Indiana newspapers that cover many years and most counties. Many of the newspapers have been microfilmed and ISL makes them available at no charge through interlibrary loan at your local library (which may charge a small fee for a three to four-week loan). A list of the newspapers by county can be viewed online. ISL also has searchable indexes for some of the larger newspapers, including Indianapolis and New Albany. The newspaper databases are listed on the right at:

<http://www.statelib.lib.in.us/www/isl/whatwehave/npindex.html>

And if you are planning to visit the Allen County Public Library, you'll find that in addition to Fort Wayne holdings, it has newspapers from other parts of the state, including the *Indianapolis News* 1869-1932 and the *Indianapolis Star* 1903-present.

Newspapers also are becoming more readily available on the Internet, thanks to digitization. NewsBank has an Early American Newspapers collection which goes up to 1876. It's available only to libraries, so check to see if your library has a subscription to it.

Individuals can get a subscription to Newspaper Archive at <http://www.newspaperarchive.com> that includes issues from Fort Wayne, Kokomo and Indianapolis newspapers. Ancestry.com sells subscriptions for its Historical Newspaper collection which currently includes newspapers from Fort Wayne, Hammond and Indianapolis.

[EDITOR'S NOTE: Godfrey Memorial Library in Connecticut at <http://www.godfrey.org> includes access in its subscription to those newspapers as well as searchable databases with images of newspapers outside Indiana that refer to many Hoosier events. Other organizations that offer subscription databases with newspaper access can be found by searching online.]

The Indiana Historical Society in 1982 published John W. Miller's compilation of all Indiana newspapers known to have been published before 1980 with locations of existing copies: *Indiana Newspaper Bibliography: Historical Accounts of All Indiana Newspapers Published From 1804 to 1980 and Locational Information For All Available Copies, Both Original and Microfilm*.

The Hoosier State Press Association at <http://www.hspa.com> lists member newspapers published online and prints the *Indiana Newspaper Directory* annually with listings alphabetically by name and by county.

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