

Genealogy

The Nashua Library provides our patrons with free access to two genealogy databases: Ancestry Library Edition (LE) and Heritage Quest. These databases, along with others that may be useful in genealogical research, are located on our A to Z Resource List page (<http://www.nashualibrary.org/explore/research/a-z-resource-list/>).

In this class, we will focus on searching Ancestry LE and Heritage Quest, but the skills we cover should be helpful when using any other genealogical database.

- Also make sure to look at Nashua Telegraph Historical (digitized versions of the Nashua Telegraph through February 1952, keyword searchable).

Ancestry Library Edition (LE)

Ancestry is made up of thousands of small collections of genealogical records that are able to be searched at one time. Ancestry is continually adding records and items to its collection, so if you don't find information on someone at first, be sure to check periodically to see if more information has been added. Ancestry Library Edition (LE) differs slightly from the Ancestry that individuals might pay to get access to. You can only access Ancestry LE from inside the library. You will also not have the ability to post to message boards or generate family trees while using Ancestry LE, though you will be able to look at messages or family trees other have posted. You will, however, have access to the U.S. and international records.

Getting to Know Ancestry

The screenshot shows the Ancestry Library Edition website interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with the Ancestry logo and links for HOME, SEARCH, MESSAGE BOARDS, LEARNING CENTER, CHARTS AND FORMS, NEW COLLECTIONS, and NASHUA PUBLIC... Below the navigation bar is a purple banner with the text "Would you like to improve your Ancestry experience? Give us your feedback." The main content area features a large image of a group of people with the text "Searching for that right moment" and a "BEGIN SEARCHING" button. To the right of this image is a "Receive Records at Home" section with a "Send Your Find Home!" form and a "Send document" button. Below the main image are four search categories: SEARCH CENSUS, SEARCH VITALS, SEARCH MILITARY, and SEARCH IMMIGRATION, each with a representative image and a brief description.

The Ancestry home page has a link to begin searching right on the home page. There are also links to popular types of records that you may want to explore—Census, Vitals, Military, Immigration, and a Quick Links section to popular collections of records. At the very top of the page, there is a menu.

- The “Home” button will always bring you back to the Ancestry home page. The Ancestry search engine can be a bit finicky—if you want to search for a new person, it is often best to go back to Home and start over to ensure that all search limiters are cleared out.
- The “Search” button will allow you to either search all of Ancestry’s record categories or specific sets of records. It also has a link to the Card Catalog, which has a list of each of the thousands of smaller records collections that make up Ancestry.
- The Message Boards allow you to browse or search information and discussions that other Ancestry users have posted. With Ancestry LE you can look at the message boards, but are unable to post things, unlike a personal subscription.
- The “Learning Center” has a “Research Aids” section filled with tutorials that you can take to learn more about doing genealogical research. There is also a “Maps” section with maps and information for each US state.
- The “Charts and Forms” button will bring you to a trove of blank genealogical charts and forms that would likely be of use to researchers. It also includes a collection of blank census forms that show the layout and questions asked in each census year.
- The “New Collections” button takes you to the card catalog where the items are sorted with the most recently updated collections first.

Searching Ancestry

The screenshot shows the Ancestry search interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with links for HOME, SEARCH, MESSAGE BOARDS, LEARNING CENTER, CHARTS AND FORMS, and NEW COLLECTIONS. The main search area is titled "Search" and contains several input fields and options:

- First & Middle Name(s):** Marie
- Last Name:** Smith
- Exact...:** Exact... Exact and... (dropdown menu is open showing options: Exact and..., Sounds like, Similar, Soundex)
- Place your ancestor might have lived:** City, County, State, Country
- Birth Year:** [input field]
- SEARCH** button and **Show fewer options** link.
- Add event:** Birth, Marriage, Death, About these settings, More
- Add family member:** Father, Mother, Sibling, Spouse, Child
- Keyword:** Occupation, street address, etc.
- Gender:** -- Select --
- Race/Nationality:** [input field]
- Checkboxes:**
 - Historical Records
 - Family Trees
 - Stories & Publications
 - Photos & Maps
- SEARCH** and **Clear search** buttons.

On the right side, there is a **Special Collections** sidebar with a **+ CARD CATALOG** button. It lists various record categories:

- Historical Records**
 - Birth, Marriage & Death
 - Birth, Baptism & Christening
 - Marriage & Divorce
 - Death, Burial, Cemetery & Obituaries
- Census & Voter Lists**
 - U.S. Federal Census Collection
 - UK Census Collection
 - Canadian Census Collection
 - More...
- Immigration & Travel**
 - Passenger Lists
 - Citizenship & Naturalization Records
 - Border Crossings & Passports
 - More...
- Military**
 - Draft, Enlistment and Service
 - Casualties
 - Soldier, Veteran & Prisoner Rolls & Lists
 - More...
- Schools, Directories & Church Histories**
 - City & Area Directories

When searching Ancestry for the first time, it is best to start by casting a wide net and narrowing your results. To do this, search all categories of Ancestry records, unless you are looking for a certain type of record (such as a military record or a burial record). The search page will show you a form with boxes to enter the information that you know. It first shows you a short form with just a few questions, but you

can click “Show more options” to add more information. Don’t worry if you cannot fill out all the boxes—just fill out what you know.

To fill out the form, click in each box and enter the requested information you are certain of.

- Ancestry does not just look for exact spellings of names, it allows for misspellings. As you fill out most fields, you will see a check box appear below it with the word “Exact”. If you click on exact, you can specify how closely matched to that field the results must be. If you don’t check the box, you will get a broader range of results. Likewise, when you enter dates, you can set range of years you would like Ancestry to search for on either side of a date. It is best to keep *at least* +/-1 year to help you get the most out of census records, which often look for the age of a person on a specific date. (Someone will be recorded as 18 even if they turn 19 the following day. The date of birth will be estimated based on the age that appears in the form, making it very easy for date estimates to be off by one year.)
- When filling in the location field, you will see that a list of locations will appear as you type. Selecting from the list will allow you to make best use of the location-based search limiters.
- *Remember:* the more details you enter, the fewer—but more precise—your results will be. If you don’t find what you are looking for, take some information out.

Sorting through Search Results

With so many records, the search results Ancestry returns can be numerous. Search results are ranked, which means that the records that match all the fields you filled in are at the top, followed by the records that match fewer fields, followed by records that match just one field.

There are Search Filters on the left of your results that allow you to set whether you are looking for broad or narrow matches to most fields. For example, if you entered a location, you can use the slider to choose if you want it to match the Country, State and Adjacent States, State, County and Adjacent Counties, County, or the exact town you entered. After you adjust any of the sliders, click the “Update Results” button.

Below the Search Filters are record Categories that you can use. If you are just looking for a certain type of record, such as a marriage record, you can limit your results to just records from that a category. As you select these categories, there will be breadcrumbs (or clickable links) that will allow you to work back out to broader categories or all categories.

When looking at your search results, you may see two types of records—Matching Person (from family trees) and Matching Records.

- The Matching Person records will bring you to user-contributed family trees. Some of these may be meticulously researched with supporting documents attached to the record of each family member, or they may not offer any supporting evidence. Family trees can be a wonderful find that help lead you in the proper direction, but make certain you verify any information you may get from them.
- Matching Records are the individual documents (such as census records, birth and death records, marriage records, passenger lists, and enlistment records) that you would typically think of when looking for genealogical records. If you let your mouse hover over the blue title of each result, you will see a preview box with a thumbnail picture of the records and a brief summary of information found in the record. If you want to see more, click on the title of the document. You will be brought to a page with a more in-depth transcription of some of the

Heritage Quest Online

Heritage Quest is a smaller genealogy database that was purchased by Ancestry in the last few years. They have done a lot of upgrades to the searching and image quality, and have been adding in newer contents. Heritage Quest allows you to search 11 different record collections, along with some map and photo collections. Heritage Quest also has some international content and has been adding to the available records collections. Unlike Ancestry, which allows you to search all collections at once, you need to select that collection you want to search before entering information. Many of the collections use the same search interface as Ancestry, but a few still have an older search interface.

Getting to Know Heritage Quest

Home Search HeritageQuest

HeritageQuest Online

Discover your family history today

SEARCH RESEARCH AIDS MAPS

Welcome to HeritageQuest Online at the Library

We've updated our look, added the ability to send records home, and added new content:

- City Directories
- 1850 and 1860 Slave Schedules
- U.S. Indian Census Rolls
- Mortality Schedules
- Agricultural and Industrial Schedules
- 1890 Veterans Schedule

Searching for that right moment

US Census Records

1940	1930	1920	1910	1900
1890	1880	1870	1860	1850
1840	1830	1820	1810	1800
1790				

View All

Receive Records at Home

Now you can send the records you find home. Click the "Send document" button

The Heritage Quest homepage has a list of the records they have recently added to their database and links to some of the more popular record groups. It also has a tip-of-the-day. In the top-left, you have a link back to the homepage and a search button. That search button is also the first item in the main menu, located in the red. The "Research Aids" section filled with tutorials that you can take to learn more about doing genealogical research. The "Maps" section brings you to a census map tool that allows you to see how state and county borders have changed with each census year.

Searching Heritage Quest

Home Search HeritageQuest

HeritageQuest Online

Select a Collection below to begin your search.

SEARCH RESEARCH AIDS MAPS

SEARCH CENSUS

1940 1930 1920 1910
1900 1890 1880 1870
1860 1850 1840 1830
1820 1810 1800 1790
All >>
Search Now

SEARCH BOOKS

Locate your ancestors in our Family and Local Histories Book Collection.
Search Now

SEARCH CEMETERIES

Search our Find a Grave indexes for these countries:
U.S., U.K. and Ireland, Canada, Mexico, Australia and New Zealand, Norway, Sweden, Germany, Italy, Brazil, and Global
Search Now

SEARCH CITY DIRECTORIES

Search Now

SEARCH MILITARY RECORDS

Search Now

SEARCH IMMIGRATION RECORDS

Search Now

Send Your Find Home!

Enter your email address and we will send you a link to your personalized Discovery Page where you can view and download all of the great finds you make while here.

Send document

We value your privacy. [Read our Privacy Statement](#)

U.S. Public Records

Na
Addr

Source Information:
Ancestry.com
UT, USA; Ancestry.com
Original data: U.S. Public Records, and C

Descriptions:
The U.S. Public all 50 states in

We need your help!

Help us make HeritageQuest better with your feedback!

We love hearing your ideas. Just take this short survey and at the end, you will find

When you click on the “Search” link, you will be brought to a page that shows all eleven record collections that Heritage Quest provides access to. You must select a record group to search before being brought to the search tool. For most record groups, the search form will be almost identical to what you saw when searching Ancestry. The record groups are:

- **Census:** This is the US Federal Census collection from 1790-1940 (no state or international censuses are included). These records include special census schedules, such as the US Territories and Military Force schedules, the US Indian census roles, and non-population schedules. The search features and image viewer are identical to that in Ancestry, and images can be saved or emailed to you the same way.
- **Books:** This collection includes family histories and place histories (such as city directories and histories of towns and organizations). Many historical city directories of Nashua are included. You can choose to search people, publications, or city directories by selecting the category on the top of the search page. You can search by people, place, or publication title. Once you select a title, you can search within the publication or pick a section from the table of contents on the right side menu. You can also look through the images one at a time using the viewer. The search features and image viewer are identical to that in Ancestry, and images can be saved or emailed to you the same way.
- **Cemeteries:** This allows you to search a resource called Find a Grave, which has cemetery records and user-contributed headstone photos of select cemeteries. The search features and image viewer are identical to that in Ancestry, and images can be saved or emailed to you the same way. Once you find a record, a link will take you the Find a Grave’s external website.
- **City Directories:** This collection is fairly extensive, and this link brings to the Books record group search page, with the City Directories option pre-selected.
- **Military Records:** This collection is comprised of several smaller military records collections, including the U.S. Revolutionary War Pension and Bounty-Land Warrant Application Files, the U.S., Records of Confederate Prisoners of War, and the U.S. Remarried Widows Index to Pension

Applications, as well as a few international collections and some smaller collections. You need to select the collection you want to search and will be brought to an Ancestry search interface.

- Immigration Records: This collection is quite small, and comprised of several smaller record sets of US and international immigration and naturalization records. The search features and image viewer are identical to that in Ancestry, and images can be saved or emailed to you the same way.
- Public Records: This is a compilation of various U.S. Public Records from 1950 to 1993. These records are all accessible to the general public by contacting the appropriate agency. The search features and image viewer are identical to that in Ancestry, and images can be saved or emailed to you the same way.
- Social Security Death Index: This collection is created from internal SSA records of deceased persons possessing social security numbers and whose deaths were reported to the Social Security Administration from 1935 to 2014. Not all deaths are reported. The search features and image viewer are identical to that in Ancestry, and images can be saved or emailed to you the same way.
- Revolutionary War Pensions: This brings to back to a sub-collection of the Military Records collection, where you can search the Pension and Bounty-Land-Warrant files, which gave pensions to those injured, their survivors, or land in reward for service.
- US Serial Set: This collection allows you to search for information about people and places in the Memorials, Petitions and Private Relief Actions of the U.S. Congress. At this time, this collection does not use Ancestry search features or viewer, but will likely be transitioned to it in the future.
- Freedman's Bank: This allows you to search the records of 29 of the 37 Freedman's Bank branches, open from 1865-1874 as a bank for newly freed slaves to save their money. You can search by name, location, or account date, or browse by state and year. Multiple records on each page can often show familial ties. The search features and image viewer are identical to that in Ancestry, and images can be saved or emailed to you the same way.

Tips

When searching databases for information, it is important to remember that not every record will have a person's name spelt the same way. The US Census was notorious for having creative misspellings of peoples' names. This is particularly true if you ancestor was an immigrant, especially if their English language skills were limited. If the census taker didn't know the language the individual they were enumerating spoke, they may have made their best guess on the spelling of a name, or spelt it phonetically. If your ancestor was Italian, for example, think about how an Italian person would have pronounced that name. Then, think of how someone who was not Italian and never heard the name before would try to spell that name. Write a little list and try using those spellings when you get stuck.

Another great tool to know use when searching are wildcards. Wildcards are symbols that can take the place of a letter or letters. The first is the question mark (?) and the other is the asterisk (*).

- The question mark (?) replaces one letter in a word. If you were searching the last name Hanson, for example, and you weren't certain if the name would be spelt Hanson or Hansen you could enter Hans?n and it would search for the name with any letter in place of the question mark (?).
- The asterisk (*) replaces an unlimited number of letters. For example, if you wanted to search for someone named Kirsten or Kristen, you could enter K*ten and it would search for both. You

could also leave it open ended—a search for Mar* would find Mary, Martha, Mark, Maryann, Margaret, etc.

An important item to note when you are searching any genealogy database –the 1890 Federal Census was destroyed by a fire at the Commerce Department in Washington, DC in January 1921. The surviving fragments consists of 1,233 pages or pieces, including records for parts of Alabama, the District of Columbia, Georgia, Illinois, Minnesota, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, South Dakota, and Texas. The records of only 6,160 of the 62,979,766 people enumerated survived the fire. The likelihood of you being able to locate any relatives in the 1890 census is extremely low, so don't drive yourself crazy trying to find out why you can't locate them.