

# Cracker Crumbs

*Unlocking the Past Towards the Future*

*Manatee Genealogical Society*

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## 2013-2014

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Don't forget that the MGS Board usually meets the last Wednesday of the month at 10 AM at the Manatee History Records Library in Bradenton (Sep - Apr). All members are welcome.

## EDITOR'S NOTE

The question of the day is: "Do we need a newsletter?" Today, many groups like ours do not have newsletters. Newsletters were important years ago when resources like the internet, email, etc. were not available to disseminate information to members. If we decide to continue a newsletter, we will need a volunteer editor. The acting editor has produced this newsletter for the past three years, and it is time to enlist a new individual, or abandon the newsletter concept

The job of MGS editor is what the individual makes it. My formula was to accumulate material that I thought was of interest to members and package this information into a MS Word template, and then save it as a PDF file for electronic distribution. The editor's job is basically a cut-and-paste effort using newsworthy genealogical information and local MGS news. The process is not "rocket science". This will be the last newsletter until we have a volunteer to carry-on these duties, or change the newsletter concept.

This is your winter issue of Cracker Crumbs. I hope you find it instructive and interesting. Let the MGS Board know if you are interested in carrying on this activity, or participating in some other MGS administrative activity. We always need volunteers to distribute and lighten the workload. Thank you.

Jim McHugh, Acting Editor

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## MGS Meeting Topics for the Remainder of the Season

Tue - Feb. 4, 2014: "Effective Online Queries", Drew Smith of the "Genealogy Guys" will discuss this popular topic. We all need to get the most out of what is available via the internet.

Tue - Mar. 4, 2014: "Immigration to North America & Naturalization", Bryan Mulcahy, Reference Librarian, Fort Myers-Lee County Library in Fort Myers FL will give us an excellent discussion of this important topic.

Tue - Apr 1, 2014: "Photographs and Genealogy", by Ed Sandbach. Ed is a professional photographer who has been involved with genealogy for many years.

Tue - May 6, 2014: "Ask the Experts", this popular topic will be presented again. A panel of experienced researchers will address your questions and other topics of special interest. You can submit your questions prior to the meeting, or ask them at the meeting.

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## A Little-Known Government Genealogy Service

from Eastman's Online Genealogy Newsletter, November 24, 2013

A little-known program of the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) provides genealogy information that may be difficult or impossible to obtain elsewhere. The records include naturalization files, visa applications, and citizenship tests, and may reveal family secrets and mysteries. In addition to relatives, historians or researchers can also request files.

Under the USCIS Genealogy Program, which started in 2008, requests are usually completed within 90 days. The government will run a search of the name, as long as the person is deceased. If there are records available, the government charges additional fees for the files. The fee for a record copy from microfilm identified as (M) is \$20 per request. The fee for a copy of a hard copy file identified as (HC) is \$35 per request. More information about the fees associated with each file series may be found at <<http://www.uscis.gov/history-and-genealogy/genealogy/historical-records-series-available-genealogy-program>>.

The documents typically include immigration information, often (but not always) including exact hometowns in their ancestors' native countries. The files often have information on brothers, sisters, aunts and uncles. Many times it is useful to obtain the records of your uncles, aunts, and cousins who also immigrated from "the old country."

If the immigrant applied for American citizenship, the details are also included in these files. For anyone of Japanese, German, or Italian origin who lived in the United States during World War II, the documents often include FBI reports about the person's activities, including friends, family, and political activities.

For more information about the program, check out <http://www.uscis.gov/genealogy>.

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## ***Four Free Websites to Find Old Maps***

Posted by Diane Haddad, Family Tree Magazine Staff (11/19/2013)  
<http://blog.familytreemagazine.com/insider/>

In genealogy research, old maps can help you:

Pinpoint the location of your ancestor's property. Follow migrating ancestors across the ocean, around the country or through the city. Answer questions such as where two branches crossed to produce the next generation. Figure out where a family went to school, church and the grocery store. Identify potential cluster research subjects (i.e., the neighbors). Understand your ancestors' neighborhoods.

Explore these four websites to find free maps of the places your ancestors may have lived.

1) David Rumsey Historical Map Collection: The maps and other cartographic images here focus on rare 18th- and 19th-century North American and South American materials. You can view maps, compare them side-by-side and download hi-resolution files. Link: <http://www.davidrumsey.com/>

2) Hargrett Library Rare Map Collection: This University of Georgia site features maps depicting the New World, Colonial and Revolutionary America, Revolutionary Georgia, Union & Expansion, the American Civil War, Frontier to New South, Savannah and the Coast and Transportation.  
Link: <http://www.libs.uga.edu/hargrett/maps/>

3) Library of Congress Map Collection: You'll find historical maps galore, and almost all can be downloaded.  
Link: <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/gmdhtml/gmdhome.html>

4) Perry-Castañeda Library Map Collection: The collection includes both historical and present-day maps of the Americas and the world. Click on US to go to a page of links for each state.  
Link: <http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/>

## ***Military College Preparatory Schools***

Contributed by Bryan L. Mulcahy, Reference Librarian,  
Ft. Myers-Lee County FL Public Library, Ft. Myers, FL

Periodically we receive queries from patrons seeking information and records from military college preparatory schools or academies. For those not familiar with these institutions, conducting a basic Internet search using the term "Military College Prep Schools" will bring up a host of websites and specific school links containing information on the history of the school, current status, alumni, etc. This is applicable even if the school has been closed, as is the case with the one I attended briefly in the 1960s, Miami Military Academy.

Military schools of this nature began to appear in the aftermath of the Civil War and were established throughout the country. Each academy had its own history in terms of development, but they were especially prominent from the early 1920s through the late 1960s. The fallout from Vietnam caused many to close permanently in the 1970s, but a significant number are still in operation.

Until the 1970s, admission to most academies or schools was limited to boys between the ages of 11-17 or grades 6-12. The intent was to provide an environment where they would develop leadership skills, patriotism, independence, intellectualism, and the desire to pursue a military career. Academies developed their curriculum through the Junior Reserve Officers Training Corp. (JROTC) whose mission was to instill in students values of citizenship, service to the United States, personal responsibility and a sense of accomplishment. The goal was to help groom a higher intellectual level of potential servicemen and officers for the nation's military and/or to serve in civilian government.

Options for locating records and other information depend on the institution and its guidelines for access. If the institution is still in operation, contact the Office of the Registrar. If the institution has closed, locating information can be challenging but not impossible. The following options have proven to be successful:

1. Virtually all academies/schools no longer operating, such as Miami Military Academy, have well-established alumni associations that have a proven track record for being very helpful.
2. Since most of these schools were under the jurisdiction of the United States military, the National Personnel Records Center (NPRC) has some surviving records and information.
3. The State Department of Education set standards and licensed the schools to operate.
4. Most schools were accredited and affiliated with other educational organizations that may have potentially useful information or research advice. Examples would include the Florida Council of Independent Schools; Southern Association of Independent Schools; National Association of Independent Schools; and Association of Military Colleges and Schools.
5. Clues also may be found in old family records, letters, souvenirs, obituaries, tombstone inscriptions, and local histories. BLM 10/31/2013

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## ***Home Sources and Genealogical Research***

Contributed by Bryan L. Mulcahy, Reference Librarian,  
Ft. Myers-Lee County FL Public Library, Ft. Myers, FL

Genealogical research, like charity, should begin at home. The first step involves recording everything you know about your family. The following points are of particular importance:

Talk to parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins, even neighbors.

When interviewing older members of the family, consider recording their answers and memories on tape or video to preserve the information for future generations.

These interviews may help in future research especially when those inevitable discrepancies arise and clarification is needed to determine what was actually said.

Family documents, photos and other sources can provide you with valuable clues to help get the research process started.

These home sources may include the names of ancestors, dates and places for births, marriages and deaths and insight into what life was like for your ancestors.

In almost every family, one or two members, perhaps more, become the "unofficial" family record holders. Key documents often end up in their possession.

Beginning the research process at home may lead to several time and money saving benefits:

Provide links and clues to previously unknown or additional records and sources.

Identify additional family members in the old country or other places of residence.

Provide specific dates and places for birth, death, and marriages.

Provide clues and insights about major events that impacted life decisions within the family or an individual member.

Provide clues on migrations both in the United States, Canada, and the old country.

May provide the researcher with original documents, photographs, certificates, etc.

May provide information and insights to help formulate questions and strategies for oral histories.

May help identify candidates to approach for oral history interviews.

One barrier to the efficient use of home sources is the inevitable difficult family member. While there are some families where one member hoards the family records, and does not share, this is relatively uncommon. In such situations, be as kind and persuasive as possible in asking the individual for permission to examine such records. When dealing with a difficult family member, avoid any mention of taking the records with you and returning them at a later date. Your chances of success in this type of situation are slim and none.

In other families where this is a problem, the record holder is usually worried about preserving the records, and concerned that if he or she loans them to a family member, they may get accidentally lost or destroyed.

The best strategy is to gradually gain their confidence by first requesting permission to examine the records in their presence. Make careful notes. At a later date, as you get closer to your family member, he or she will come to trust you more, and may volunteer to let you take the records to make photocopies. When it comes to historical documents and/or family heirlooms, overcoming barriers within a family, even in the best of circumstances, is usually a gradual process. This is particularly true if the documents or heirlooms are in the possession of an elderly family member. BLM 9/30/2013

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## ***Nineteen Kinds of Death Records and Their Uses***

Posting by David Rodeback on 10/23/2013 at the WorldVitalRecords.com Blog  
Provided courtesy of <http://www.worldvitalrecords.com>

Last month, I listed 28 places to find birth information, and the number could have been higher. Death records are less ubiquitous, probably because documents with birth dates accumulate for a lifetime. But there are still several excellent places to find death records, and some of them have a wealth of other information.

### **Death records**

#### **Examples of death certificates and obituary**

##### **Death Certificates**

The official record in modern times is a death certificate. Depending on the time and place, it may be issued by a doctor or other medical practitioner who attended the deceased, or by an official registrar of vital records. Besides providing the name of the deceased and the time and place of death, it may include various details. In fact, death certificates can be interesting reading. (Sorry, is that too grim?) You may find: cause of death (sometimes in grisly detail); last place of residence; age at death; birth information; marriage data, including marital status and spouse's name; burial information; parents of the deceased and their birthplaces.

As with birth certificates, every jurisdiction has its own rules about when death certificates become publicly available, who can obtain them in the meantime, and the processes for obtaining them. The Internet is your best friend, when you need to find where and how to obtain an official copy of a death certificate. For example, if I were searching for my brother's death certificate, I'd start with this search term: "Colorado death certificate."

For genealogical purposes, WorldVitalRecords <<http://www.worldvitalrecords.com>> could prove to be your best friend. We have indexed hundreds of millions of death records from around the world, and many of our one billion family tree records also contain death information.

Most US states began recording deaths in the early decades of the 20th century. Many US counties started decades earlier. In New England, towns began recording deaths as soon as they began to be towns. There is similar variation from nation to nation, and often within nations.

In the United States, for most deaths since the 1930s, the Social Security Death Index (SSDI) is useful and could be considered an official source. It is available at WorldVitalRecords.

### **Other Sources**

Church records often include deaths and burials.

### **Obituaries**

#### **Example of newspaper obituaries**

Obituaries are fairly reliable sources of death information, because they tend to be written within a few days of a death. They are rich, but less reliable, sources of other information, which is less proximate. They may contain birth and marriage data, as well as the names of family members who preceded the deceased in death, and surviving family members and their spouses. It's common to find information about education, military service, and professional activities, among other biographical information. However, bear in mind that obituaries tend to be written on short notice, with short deadlines, and at a time of emotional stress. Writers usually are relying mostly on memory, with a minimum of documentation and little time to remember, research, and write. Moreover, the emotion of the moment and a reasonable desire not to offend family members may color both the selection and wording of biographical detail. If you can't find an obituary at WorldVitalRecords (often you can) or elsewhere on the Internet, check the library for local newspapers. The funeral home involved, if you can identify it, may keep a file of obituaries, too.

Funeral programs tucked away in drawers, boxes, and files can be good sources of death information.

News articles and death notices in newspapers are reasonably reliable, contemporaneous sources. (Of course, obituaries often run in newspapers, too.)

Family histories, family Bibles, and family member journals can be good sources of information as to the timing and circumstances of someone's death.

Siblings, children, other close relatives, neighbors, and close friends may be good sources of clues, at least, and a general sense of when and how someone died, even if they don't remember precise dates.

Cemetery records may even include obituaries. And by all means don't forget tombstones, where death information is literally carved in stone. (You can search millions of tombstones at WorldVitalRecords.)

Death dates listed in Roll of Honor, Nos. VII-X. U.S. Quartermaster's Dept. (1866).

Military records may have death information, if the individual died in military services. Military pension records generally include death information, regardless of the time and circumstances of death. In fact, a spouse's military pension records may include an individual's death information, too.

Probate records often have death information.

That box in the attic probably won't be as fruitful a source of death information as it is of birth information, but it may still be useful. Letters, bills, and other documents may have actual data or at least offer clues.

Census records can offer circumstantial evidence of the year — perhaps I should say the decade — of someone's death. If the 1930 census lists great-grandpa but the 1940 census doesn't, this may suggest that he passed away between those two censuses. Tax records, city and phone directories, and land records can narrow the time down further.

Duplicate!

As always, when your search leads you to a record, don't just record the information in your tree. Record the source, too. And if you find an actual document, upload it to your tree, share it with family members, and put it in a file folder — all of which will help others to find it.

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## *Digital Historical Newspapers*

Have you ever wished you could find links to all the online historical newspapers in one place? A place where they were listed by county and city so you could find the newspapers your ancestors read? People are working on doing this. Best to use search engines to identify your needs. Family Tree Magazine had a very good summary in their November 2013 Issue. Check out that Article. In the mean time, you can check out these sites for links to historical newspapers. Places to start are:

Good summary at Family Search:

[http://familysearch.org/learn/wiki/en/Digital\\_Historical\\_Newspapers](http://familysearch.org/learn/wiki/en/Digital_Historical_Newspapers)

Library of Congress Link: <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/newspapers/>

Another Link:

<http://www.xooxleanswers.com/free-newspaper-archives/us-state-and-local-newspaper-archives/>

The Online Historical Newspapers Website (not sure how up-to-date site is at present)

Site Home Link: <https://sites.google.com/site/onlinenewspapersite/Home>

USA Historical Newspaper Links: <https://sites.google.com/site/onlinenewspapersite/Home/usa>

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