

PURSUIING YOUR ELUSIVE ANCESTOR IN THE ANCESTRY MESSAGE BOARDS

By Randy Seaver

An effective way to find other genealogists who may be researching your elusive ancestors, or have data about them, is to use Message Boards.

One of the largest collections of message boards is at www.rootsweb.com, which is affiliated with Ancestry.com. This collection has thousands of surname boards, thousands of locality boards, and some topic boards.

If you click on [this link](#), you can determine if there is a message board for your surname or locality of interest. In the "Search Message Boards" box, enter a surname, state name or county name in the box for "Find a Message Board". When you click on "Search" you will get a list of boards with the keyword you entered.

Alternatively, you could find a surname board by clicking on one of the alphabetic letters. You could also find a state or county board by clicking on "US States".

When you go to a specific message board, you can see a list of posts submitted by other researchers. For instance, click [here for the Seaver message board](#). As of today, there are 319 posts on this surname message board. You could choose to read them all one-by-one, but Ancestry/Rootsweb provides a Search capability at the top of the page.

To search on just the Seaver message board, you would click the button for the "Seaver Board" and enter your search terms. If you were searching, say, for Isaac Seaver, you might enter just "Isaac" in the Search box and click "Go". There is one post which mentions a given name "Isaac". You could click on the link and read the post and see if it helps you in your search. If you get too many hits with your search, then you could add a spouse's name or a locality to narrow the search.

Now I know that you have more than one surname, and are not too interested in the Seaver message board (only I am, apparently!). Rather than going back to the very beginning on the Rootsweb page, you can edit the URL (the address for the web page) for the Seaver message board web page, the one that ends in "...surnames.seaver". Put your cursor at the end of the URL, and click twice. That should put your cursor at the end of the URL. Then backspace over the name "seaver" and then type your surname of interest (say, "Smith") so that the URL ends in "...surnames.smith" and hit your Enter key. You can then go to the Smith surname message board.

Obviously, you can go to different surname message boards, with your surnames of interest, easily using this method.

You can do the same thing for localities too, but you will have to edit more letters in the URL, which ends with, for example, "...newyork.counties.jefferson" for Jefferson county, New York. Note that you could backspace back to "...newyork" and hit Enter and get the New York state message board. You could also change "...newyork" to say "...maryland" and go to the Maryland board. You could add ".counties.annearundel" to get to Anne Arundel County in Maryland.

I save one surname message board to my Favorites list and one locality board also, in order to be able to get to them quickly, and also be able to go to another surname or locality without starting at the beginning on Rootsweb. You don't need to save a Favorite for every surname or locality, using the method above.

I try to check my favorite surname and locality boards on a monthly basis, and every six months or so, I do a

search across all the Message Boards (the "All Boards" button on the Search line) for my real elusive ancestors, usually using a given name, a surname, a spouse's name and a locality. You can limit the search to a certain time frame by clicking on the Advanced Search link and selecting a time frame in the "Posted in the Last" box.

If you haven't used Message Boards before, you might be surprised by how much information is available there. You may even find a cousin or two that can help you, or vice versa.