

FINDING YOUR ELUSIVE ANCESTOR IN THE GENFORUM 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.

The Genforum Message Board site is at www.genealogy.com. This collection has thousands of surname boards, thousands of locality boards (one for each county in every state or province), and some topic boards.

If you click on <http://genforum.genealogy.com/>, you can determine if there is a message board for your surname or locality of interest. In the "Forum Finder" box, enter a surname, state name or county name in the box to find a Message Board. When you click on "Find" 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 and checking the list of surnames with a Board. 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 <http://genforum.genealogy.com/seaver/> for the Seaver message board. As of today, there are 348 posts on this surname message board. You could choose to read them all one-by-one, but GenForum provides a Search capability at the top of the page.

To search on just the Seaver message board, you would enter a name and/or locality in the "Search this Forum" box and click on "Go". If you were searching, say, for Isaac Seaver, you might enter just "Isaac" in the Search box and click "Go". There are six posts which mention a given name "Isaac". You could click on the link of a post 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.

Once you click on a message, you can determine if there were responses to that message, and by clicking on the highlighted title, you could read the responses. You can print the messages by clicking on the [Print Message] button, and a printer friendly page appears, with the email address of the submitter. To get back to the Message Board list, you can click [[<--Back](#)] until you get there.

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 GenForum page and searching for a surname, you can edit the URL (the address for the web page) for the Seaver surname message board, the one that ends in ".../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 ".../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, ".../ny/jefferson/" for Jefferson County, New York. Note that you could backspace back to ".../ny/" and hit Enter and get the New York state message board. You could also change ".../ny/" to say ".../md/" and go to the Maryland board. You could add "annearundel" to get to the Genforum board for 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 to be able to go to another surname or locality without starting at the beginning on Genforum. 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.

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.