

# PURSUING YOUR ELUSIVE ANCESTOR ON THE ROOTSWEB WEB SITE

By Randy Seaver

One of the first things that beginning genealogists should do is determine if somebody else has done some of the research work for them. There are several FREE websites which can help you find others who are interested in your surname or your particular ancestral families. Of course, you must make the effort to prove that the work of other researchers is accurate.

The first site that I visit to mine genealogical data is at [www.rootsweb.com](http://www.rootsweb.com). There are several databases here, plus some researcher-submitted data. Try them – you find some useful genealogy data and some distant cousins.

## 1) [The Rootsweb WorldConnect Database](#).

This is composed of over 420 million entries submitted by genealogists all over the world, with over 4 million different surnames submitted in about 400,000 databases.

If you enter the surname and given name of your ancestor into the box on the entry page, the program takes you to a list of hits. Bear with me as we investigate a typical search:

1) Enter "**Seaver**" as the Surname, "**Isaac**" as the given name.

2) You get 17 hits. If you click on one of the names in blue, you can see the entry for this person in the database. For instance, click on the 15th listing of Isaac Seaver (submitted by **hendersonscholes** - see his name in the RH column).

3) This takes you to the entry for that person, which provides birth, death, marriage, parent and child information. You could click on a parent or a child to get information on them. It also provides whatever notes the submitter included. It also provides the submitters name and email address.

4) Do you see the blue words "**Index**" "**Descendancy**" "**Register**" "**Pedigree**" "**Ahnentafel**" just above the data for the person in the database? If you click on one of these, you will get a report. "**Descendancy**" will give you a six generation Descendants report, "**Register**" will give you a Register report of descendants, "**Pedigree**" will give you a pedigree chart, "**Ahnentafel**" will give you a six generation ancestral report, etc.

5) Click on "**Ahnentafel**" and you will get an Ahnentafel report (list of ancestors back from the person in the file) for up to 6 generations. You can do a **[File]** **[Save As]** and save this report to a file on your hard drive. You can print it off by doing a **[File]** **[Print]** or you can highlight text, then **[Edit]** **[Copy]** and **[Paste]** the text into your word processor and save it.

6) Back to steps 1 and 2. What if you get hundreds of hits for your ancestor of interest? You can narrow the search by going to the bottom of the page in Step 2 (the list of 17 hits). If you enter birth dates or localities (I recommend year only and state only), or death data, or marriage data, or parent's names, or a spouse's name (try only a given name), you can reduce the number of hits and zero in on your ancestor of interest.

Caveat emptor, however! Not all data submitted is accurate. On Step 2) above, do you see all of the entries with Isaac Seaver's spouse being Martha Whitney? All of those are erroneous entries. Martha Whitney was the wife of Benjamin Seaver, not an Isaac Seaver. Obviously, your job is to prove whatever data that you find is

accurate.

Go explore this web site - put your own ancestor of interest in Step 1 above. I've only explained the very basics here. The database is a tremendous boon to genealogists - and it is all FREE.

## 2) Other Databases

[Rootsweb.com](#) also has 45 databases (including the WorldConnect database submitted by researchers, which I described above) that comprise vital records, the Social Security Death Index, and many others.

You can input a given name and surname in the search form at the top of the main Rootsweb page that says "**Search Rootsweb.com.**"

If you put in say "**Isaac**" for a given name and "**Seaver**" for a surname, and click Search, you get a list of entries in 3 Rootsweb databases.

If you input no given name and "**seaver**" in the surname field, and click Search, you get entries in 26 of 45 Rootsweb databases, including vital records. Note that these are only entries in Rootsweb databases - Rootsweb does not have the complete census records, or other records, only records submitted to Rootsweb.

Note that you can use the asterisk (\*) as a wild card in the name fields in case you want to cover alternate name spellings in the databases. This will probably increase the number of hits. If you have too many hits to search, then you could input different spellings of the given name or surname.

## 3) Researcher-Submitted Rootsweb FreePages

One of these is the [Rootsweb Freepages](#), which are submitted by researchers for others to browse.

Using the [Freepages link](#), you are led to a page with letters and numbers. You can click on one of the letters (say, S for Seaver) and see if someone else has submitted data for the Seaver surname. When you do this, you will see that you are a victim of the way the submitters named their pages. If they called their file the "Descendants of Robert Seaver" then you will find it in the D list and not the S list.

There is another way to find Freepages with your surname of interest. You can [Google](#) the string [**rootsweb freepages seaver**] (or your own surname of interest) and come up with quite a few hits, all on the Rootsweb freepages. If you want to find people with a specific ancestral person or couple, you could Google the persons name (e.g. [**rootsweb freepages "robert seaver"** ]) or two surnames (e.g., [**rootsweb freepages seaver ballard**]). I find this method much easier and more efficient to use.

There is another way to search the Rootsweb Homepages and Freepages by doing:

- 1) Go to the [Rootsweb.com](#) site.
- 2) Click on the "**SearchThingy**" link in the list of "**Search Engines and Databases**"
- 3) That takes you to a [page](#) where you can input Keywords for your ancestor search. Say you input the keywords "Isaac Seaver Westminster"
- 4) You then get a list of 19 pages on Rootsweb Homepages and Freepages and the USGenWeb that contain the

search keywords.

The problem here is that you cannot put names in quotes in order to find people named "Isaac Seaver," like you can in [Google](#). You get web pages with all of the keywords somewhere on the page - it may be Isaac Smith and Fred Seaver. Putting a locality may help to narrow the search a bit.

Play with this a bit with your elusive ancestors and see if someone has submitted information about them.