Genealogy Research at the Hancock County Public Library

The purpose of this guide is to assist in researching ancestors that may have resided in Hancock County, Indiana. While the information in this pathfinder is primarily geared for Hancock County, it lists many website links, strategies, and books that can assist in research beyond the county level. A copy of this guide is also available on our website.

This guide includes three key sections:

- Getting started with basic research
- How-to books located in the library
- Helpful websites

For more information or research assistance, do not hesitate to ask for assistance from library staff.

- Stop by the Information Desk or the Local History Room to speak with a librarian
- Call us at (317) 462-5141 ext 240

HCPL also has a program called the Genealogy Interest Group. Meetings cover a wide range of subjects from local history, research strategies, state and country research. They are also held in a variety of formats from open research to lecture to webinars. The group generally meets every second Monday of the month at 7 p.m. Check the online calendar, newsletter, or contact a staff member for more information.
GETTING STARTED WITH BASIC RESEARCH

If you suspect or know that someone in your family line has a Hancock County connection, identify what you already know and construct an ancestral chart or family tree. Provide the full name of the ancestor you are researching and list known or approximate dates for vital events (birth, death, marriage, residence, etc.).

STEP ONE – OBTAIN DEATH RECORD

- Begin your search by obtaining death records for your relative(s)
- Something to know, Indiana did not publicly record deaths until 1882
- For deaths prior to 1882 consult *Hancock County, Indiana Tombstone Inscriptions: One Hundred Years, 1833-1933* by Sue Baker, HANCOCK 929.5 B
- For deaths from 1882—1920 consult the online Hancock County Death Index [www.rootsquest.com/indiana/hancock/death/index.html](http://www.rootsquest.com/indiana/hancock/death/index.html) or the print version in the genealogy collection. Death records were transcribed from the 1938 WPA *Index to Death Records for Hancock Co., Indiana*.
- For deaths from 1921—1989 consult the print edition of *Hancock County Death Records Index 1921—1989*, GEN 929 H
- Access digitized Indiana Death Certificates 1899-2011 via Ancestry.com or Ancestry Library Edition (free access at library)
- Birth and Death records are on file and can be provided by the Vital Records Department upon written request accompanied by proper identification and payment by check and money order. The cost of death certificates is $15.00. The cost for birth certificates is $15.00 for a combination certificate (includes regular size and laminated wallet size). Genealogy records are recorded back to 1882; although some records were incomplete or not recorded at all. Individuals must contact the Health Department office to see if genealogy records are available.

  *Hancock County Health Department*
  Hancock County Annex
  111 Legion Place Suite 150
  Greenfield, Indiana 46140
  Phone: 317-477-1125
  [Website](http://www.rootsquest.com/indiana/hancock/death/index.html)
STEP TWO – FOLLOW-UP ON DEATH RECORD CLUES

OBITUARIES:

- HCPL has an extensive collection of newspapers available on microfilm and digitized on Newspapers.com (see “Helpful Websites - Newspapers” below for instructions). If you have pinpointed the date of death, the following papers may contain the obituary you are seeking. Newspapers are not currently indexed except for the *Hancock Democrat* 1860-1876, HANCOCK 929.377258D

  *Hancock Democrat [Journal] newspaper (1860-1973)*
  *Hancock Republican newspaper (1889-1973)*
  *Daily Reporter newspaper (1908-present)*

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION:

- Refer to books in the Hancock County collection to build a biography on a person.

- To expedite research, refer to the WPA *Hancock County, Indiana Index of Names of Persons and of Firms*, HANCOCK 977.258 H, to quickly locate references to individuals and firms in specified books prior to 1940. See book for titles indexed. A digital copy can be found at: [https://familysearch.org/search/catalog/563907](https://familysearch.org/search/catalog/563907)

CEMETERY RECORDS:

- Refer to books in the HCPL collection: *Hancock County, Indiana Tombstone Inscriptions: One Hundred Years, 1833—1933* by Sue Baker, HANCOCK 929.5 B or the *Alphabetical List of Burials, Park Cemetery, Greenfield, Indiana*, HANCOCK 929.5 A to find their burial place

- Park Cemetery Records & Gravesite Information
  Rita Padgett
  [cemetery@greenfieldin.org](mailto:cemetery@greenfieldin.org)
  Phone: 317-477-4387
  Fax: 317-477-4358

- To obtain more information on cemeteries that are maintained by a church, contact that specific church for records

- To obtain more information on abandoned cemeteries, contact the township’s trustee or the Hancock Cemetery Board
  Find current trustee: [http://hancockcoingov.org/hancock-county-indiana-township-trustees](http://hancockcoingov.org/hancock-county-indiana-township-trustees)
Hancock County Cemetery Board: http://hancockcoingov.org/hancock-county-indiana-cemetery-board

SOCIAL SECURITY DEATH INDEX:

- Search the Social Security Death Index on Ancestry.com or Ancestry Library Edition (free access at library) for the person’s date of death.

- You can request a full copy of your ancestor’s social security information by filling out an application form containing as much of the following information as possible:
  - Maiden name of person’s mother and married name(s)
  - Father’s name
  - Date and place of birth
  - SSN if possible

- This record will provide: full name at time of application, full birth name, mailing address at time of application, age, date of birth, place of birth, father’s full name, mother’s full name, sex, ethnicity, application for SS number or railroad retirement, current employer’s name and address, date signed, applicant’s signature.

- For a copy of your ancestor’s SS-5 (application for social security), you must make a Freedom of Information Act request via the SSA-711 form.
  - FOIA request information: https://www.ssa.gov/foia/request.html

BIRTH RECORDS:

- Something to know, Indiana did not publicly record births until 1882.

- To obtain dates, the library has the WPA Index to Birth Records, HANCOCK 977.23 I for years 1882 to 1920. Also, Hancock County Indiana Court Records by Sue Baker, HANCOCK 929.377258 B, includes an index for court recorded birth from 1867-1919.

- Access digitized Indiana Birth Certificates 1907-1940 via Ancestry.com or Ancestry Library Edition (free access at library).

- Physical records are available at the Health Department’s Vital Records Department. Not all records exist or are complete. Please contact office prior to payment or request Health Department
  Hancock County Courthouse
  111 American Legion Place, Suite 150
  Greenfield, Indiana 46140
MARRIAGE RECORDS:

- Something to know, Indiana publicly recorded marriages prior to statehood when the area was known as the Northwest Territory. Marriage records exist as early as around 1780. Hancock County marriages were first recorded in court records as early as 1828. Application and certificates of marriage were not recorded until 1882.

- Prior to 1877 boys seventeen years old and girls fourteen years old could get a license to marry with the consent of a parent or guardian. Cousins could also marry. About 1877 the law was changed to boys age eighteen and girls age sixteen. Marriage of cousins not allowed. In 2015 court rulings allow same-sex couples to marry. Currently, the law is age eighteen without consent, seventeen with consent, and fifteen with parental and judicial consent.

- To obtain dates, the library has various marriage indexes for years 1828 to 1920. These are located under: WPA Marriage Index 4 volumes, HANCOCK 929.377258 I; Marriages Abstracted from Newspapers HANCOCK 929.377258 M; Early Marriage Returns and Records HANCOCK 929.377258 R


- Physical records are available in the Hancock County Clerk of Courts office
  Hancock County Courthouse
  9 East Main Street, Room 213
  Greenfield, Indiana 46140
  Phone: 317-477-1109
  Website

STEP THREE – SEARCH THE CENSUS: 1790-1940

- After you have obtained the vital statistics and obtained family information, check census records for further information. Census records are a genealogical treasure trove providing such information as ages of people in the households, names of heads of households, type of employment, geographical origination of parents, educational level reached, special physical conditions, number of live births of the mother, hired hands, etc. Records are available beginning in 1790 with the latest available being 1940. There is a 70 year moratorium on census records.
1790—1840: lists names of heads of household only in every state
1850—1940: lists the name of every person in a household whether a family
member or otherwise (1890 census was destroyed by fire.)

- Census records may be searched using Ancestry Library Edition (free access at library) or
  HeritageQuest (free access at library or at home with HCPL library card). Also available
  in the HCPL Local History Room are the following books to help you with this search:

  *American Census Handbook*, by Thomas J. Kemp. GEN 929.3 K
  For British Census: *Census: The Expert Guide*, by Peter Christian. GEN 929.1072 C
  For British Census: *Making Use of the Census*, by Susan Loomis, GEN 929.1072 L

**STEP FOUR – OTHER COURTHOUSE RECORDS**

**TAX RECORDS:**

- Tax records for most Indiana counties do not exist prior to the early 1840s. Occasionally
  an earlier duplicate record will exist, these can be found at the county courthouse.

- Microfilm copies of tax records dating to 1840 are available in the Hancock County
  Treasurer’s office. They can be viewed in the County Recorder’s office.

  Hancock County Treasury
  Hancock County Annex
  111 American Legion Place, Suite 205
  Greenfield, Indiana 46140
  Phone: 317-477-1152
  Fax: 317-477-1726
  [Website](#)

**PROBATE RECORDS:**

- Probate is a court procedure where a will is proven valid or invalid.

- Records generated during probate include: wills, bonds, petitions, accounts, inventories,
  administrations, orders, decrees, and distributions. These records provide a great
  wealth of information and in some instances may be the only source for dates or
  connections to other individuals. For early records, probate proceedings were not
  always recorded separately from other court events. Be sure to check all available
  records.

- The following courts had jurisdiction during these periods pre-statehood:

  Probate Court (1790-1805)
Court of Common Pleas (1806-1813)
Circuit Court (1814-1816)

- After statehood and the formation of Hancock County in 1828 the circuit court had jurisdiction.

- Probate Records may be researched at the Hancock County Circuit Court.
  Hancock County Courthouse
  9 East Main Street, Room 302
  Greenfield, Indiana 46140
  Phone: 317-477-1107
  Website

- Also available in the HCPL Local History Room are the following books to help you with this search:

  *Hancock County, Indiana Court Records* by Sue Baker, HANCOCK 929.377258 B
  *Will Records of Hancock Co. Indiana 1828-1859 and 1876-1908* by Maurice Holmes, HANCOCK 977.258 H

**LAND RECORDS:**

- Resources in the HCPL collection include: *Early Landowners of Hancock Co., Ind.* by Maurice Holmes, HANCOCK 977.258 H, indexes original purchases from the USA and early landowners from 1828-1837; various plat maps; also see the “Helpful Websites” section for researching property and land.

- For current property and tax information refer to Beacon. Beacon is a GIS application and is how Hancock County records property and tax information.
  Go to: [https://beacon.schneidercorp.com/](https://beacon.schneidercorp.com/)

- Deeds to property may be researched at the Hancock County Record’s office.
  111 South American Legion Place, Suite 202
  Greenfield, Indiana 46140
  Phone: 317-477-1142
  Website

- Property transfers may be researched at the Hancock County Auditor’s office.
  111 South American Legion Place, Suite 217
  Greenfield, Indiana 46140
  Phone: 317-477-1105
  Fax: 317-477-1712
  Website
- You may also want to refer to *Land and Property Research in the United States* by Wade E. Hone GEN 929.1072 H or *Land Records of America and Their Genealogical Data* by E. Kay Kirkham GEN 929.1072 K in the HCPL collection.

**STEP FIVE – SEARCH AT THE STATE LEVEL & ONLINE**

If you’re ready to move on from a search at the local level, there is much more to be had elsewhere. There are a variety of genealogical institutions across the country and online resources that can provide new information about your ancestors. The listings below provide what are generally considered to be the most comprehensive places for research at all levels. A much larger listing of online resources exists in the last section of this pathfinder. One is encouraged to investigate all avenues of potential research opportunities from the prolific Ancestry.com to local institutions like genealogical societies or public libraries.

**INSTITUTIONS:**

- **The Indiana State Library** is an excellent, nearby place to search for statewide records. The ISL collection includes over 40,000 printed items (family histories, indexes to records, how-to-books, cemetery transcriptions, family history magazines, and more) as well as microfilmed federal census records, Indiana county records, passenger lists, and military pension information. The emphasis of the collection is on Indiana and bordering states as well as eastern and southern states that were sources of migration into Indiana. The library also provides access to numerous online databases and services.

  315 West Ohio Street
  Indianapolis, Indiana 46202
  Phone: 866-683-0008
  [http://www.in.gov/library/](http://www.in.gov/library/)

- **The Allen County Public Library Genealogy Center** in Fort Wayne, Indiana is the second largest genealogy collection in the United States, just after the Family History Library in Salt Lake City, Utah. At just over 100 miles away, it is well worth the drive for Hancock County residents. The collection includes over 350,000 printed items and over half a million items on microfilm. The focus of the collection is largely North American based with additional materials on the British Isles and German region. The library also has a large amount of materials on Native American and African American research. The library provides access to numerous online databases and services.

  900 West Washington Boulevard
  Fort Wayne, Indiana 46802
  Phone: 260-421-1225
  Email: [genealogy@acpl.info](mailto:genealogy@acpl.info)
ONLINE RESOURCES:

- **Ancestry.com Library Edition** provides access to a wealth of indexed and digital records. Included but not limited to: Census, military, court, immigration, vital records, periodicals, biographies, and directories. Access is limited to in-library use only. Use the library’s wifi or computer lab to access the site. Guest passes are available for non-county residents at the information desk. An at home version of the website is available via subscription at a rate of around $200 per year. Visit the [HCPLibrary.org](http://HCPLibrary.org) reference page for access.

- **HeritageQuest Online** is an essential collection of unique material dating back to the 1700s and is geared for both hobbyists and professionals. Included resources are: the federal U.S. Census and other census rolls, family and local history books, military records, Freedman’s Bank, city directories, and more. Access is available for free at the library or at home with an HCPL card. Visit the [HCPLibrary.org](http://HCPLibrary.org) reference page for access.

- **FamilySearch.org Family History Library** is the largest genealogy collection in the world. Access is provided free of charge just by signing up for a free account. HCPL’s Greenfield and Sugar Creek Branch are Affiliate Libraries. More online records are available when accessing FamilySearch from an Affiliate Library. All that is required is a free account and accessing FamilySearch.org from the library’s network. [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org)
  
  **FamilySearch Help Center & Research Wiki**
  [www.familysearch.org/ask/](http://www.familysearch.org/ask/)

- **National Archives & Records Administration (NARA)** offers a variety of government records and database types. NARA is well-known for their military and census records but there are many more specialized collections such as prison records, the Nazi-Era cultural property database (information on forcibly seized items by Nazi Germany), and photographs. There is also a section geared specifically towards those researching ancestors. [www.archives.gov](http://www.archives.gov)

- **The U.S. Genealogy Web Project** is a volunteer project that began during the infancy of the internet. The site is organized by state and county. Most resources compiled here are from local volunteers. This site is particularly beneficial for planning research or seeing what resources are available online at local and national institutions. [www.usgenweb.com](http://www.usgenweb.com)
GENEALOGY HOW-TO BOOKS IN THE HCPL COLLECTION

There are two main areas in the library that house genealogy materials. Those that circulate and those that do not. Materials located in the Local History Room do not circulate. They are designated by three shelf identifiers: INDIANA, GENEALOGY, HANCOCK. These identifiers will appear before the call number, an example would read GENEALOGY 929.1 R (alternative GEN 929.1 R). Materials located in the circulating collection will not contain this identifier. The same example, if located in the circulating collection would read 929.1 R. Items in the circulating collection are available for checkout.

The following is a partial list of genealogy help books in the Local History Room:

- *Ancestry’s Red Book: American State, County and Town Sources.* 2004. GEN 929.1 R and available online


- Byers, Paula K. *Native American Genealogical Sourcebook.* 1995. GEN 929.1 N


- Everton, Walter M. *The Handybook for Genealogists.* 10th ed. GEN 929.1 H

- Frey, Valerie J. *Preserving Family Recipes: How to Save and Celebrate Your Food Traditions.* 2015. GEN 641.5028 F


Ryskamp, George R. *Finding your Hispanic Roots*. 1997. GEN 929.1 R


**GENEALOGY ONLINE RESOURCES**

**CENSUS**

To search census records, use Ancestry.com (in-library only), FamilySearch.org or HeritageQuest. All are available under the Reference & Research page at HCPLibrary.org.

United States Census Bureau
http://www.census.gov/en.html

Census Records – National Archives and Records Administration
http://www.archives.gov/research/census/

Overview of the U.S. Census – Ancestry.com

U.S. Federal Census Records – FamilySearch.org
https://familysearch.org/census/us

Blank U.S. Census Forms – Family Search.org
https://familysearch.org/learn/wiki/en/United_States_Census_Forms

**CHURCH HISTORY**

Overview of Church Records – Ancestry.com

United States Church Records – FamilySearch.org
https://familysearch.org/learn/wiki/en/United_States_Church_Records
Church History of Greenfield

DEATH

Overview of Vital Records – Ancestry.com

United States Vital Records – FamilySearch.org

Find A Grave
findagrave.com

Hancock County
Abandoned Cemetery Maintenance – Hancock County Township Trustees
http://www.hancockcoingov.org/hancock-county-indiana-township-trustees.html

Hancock County Death Index 1882-1920

Park Cemetery Information – Hancock County, Indiana (full index available at library)
http://www.greenfieldin.org/gravesite-information

Surrounding Areas
Anderson Public Library Genealogy Special collections (Madison County)
http://www.and.lib.in.us/special-collections/

Hamilton East Public Library (Hamilton County)
http://hepl.lib.in.us/indiana-room/

The Indianapolis Commercial Newspaper Index, 1882-1930 (Marion County)
https://www.statelib.lib.in.us/commercial/

The Knightstown Banner Obituary Archive, 1908-2017
http://thebanneronline.com/archive_obituaries.htm

New Castle-Henry County Public Library
http://genealogy.nchcpl.lib.in.us/eventsTable_view.php

Shelby County Public Library Obituaries
http://cdm16633.contentdm.oclc.org/cdm/
Indiana
Cemetery & Burial Registry – Indiana Department of Natural Resources
http://www.in.gov/dnr/historic/3748.htm

Cemetery Locator File – Indiana State Library
https://www.statelib.lib.in.us/cemetery/cemetery_search.asp

IMAGES

Indiana Historical Society
http://images.indianahistory.org/
Two collections in particular:
  Mitchell Printing Co. Collection, circa 1865-1930
  W.H. Bass Photo Company Collection, circa 1897-1970 (Indianapolis area)

Indiana Memory
https://digital.library.in.gov/

IMMIGRATION

Port of New York Passenger Records – Ellis Island
www.ellisisland.org

One-Step Webpages by Stephen P. Morse – Passenger records for Ellis Island and other ports of entry into the United States.
http://stevemorse.org

LOCAL HISTORY

Joseph L. Skvarenina Collections for Hancock County History – Available at HCPL

Indiana Resources - Allen County Public Library Genealogy Center
http://www.genealogycenter.info/indiana/

Local History Contacts – Find Genealogical & Historical Societies
http://www.indianahistory.org/our-services/local-history-services/local-history-contacts
Red Book: American State, County, and Town Sources – Ancestry.com

MAPS

Land Records in Indiana – IN Commission on Public Records
http://www.in.gov/icpr/2582.htm

Hancock County
Historical City Maps of Greenfield, IN

1906 Atlas of Hancock County – includes landowner information

Plat Books of Indiana Counties, volume 3 – Hancock County begins page 15
http://indiamond6.ulib.iupui.edu/cdm/compoundobject/collection/IndianaPlat/id/3127/rec/1

Maps available at the Indiana State Library
http://www.in.gov/library/2597.htm

Indiana
County maps, atlases, and plat books available at the Indiana State Library
http://www.in.gov/library/2533.htm

Indiana Historical Aerial Photo Index, Overview – Indiana Geological Survey
http://igs.indiana.edu/IHAPI/

Indiana Historical Aerial Photo Index, Map – Indiana Genealogical Survey
http://igs.indiana.edu/IHAPI/Map/

Maps Collections - Indiana State Library
http://www.in.gov/library/3551.htm

Map Collections – Indiana University
http://libraries.iub.edu/map-collections-0

Plat Books of Indiana Counties – All counties, 6 volumes
http://www.ulib.iupui.edu/digitalscholarship/collections/indianaplat
MILITARY RECORDS

Veterans History Project – Library of Congress
https://www.loc.gov/vets/

Overview of Military Records – Ancestry.com

National Archives & Records Administration (NARA) Access to Archival Databases (AAD)
http://aad.archives.gov/aad/

National Archives & Records Administration (NARA) Military Records
http://www.archives.gov/research/military/index.html

Civil War Soldiers and Sailors System Database – National Park Service

NEWSPAPERS

Indiana State Library - Indiana Newspapers available to Indiana residents for free on Newspapers.com through INSPIRE. There will be a link to Newspapers.com on the main page. inspire.in.gov
Hancock Democrat (1860-1957)
Greenfield Daily Reporter (1908-1963)

AIM Media Collection – Accessible only at the Hancock County Public Library locations or with a Newspapers.com subscription.
https://aim.newspapers.com/
Greenfield Daily Reporter (1964 – near current)

Hoosier State Chronicles: Indiana’s Digital Historic Newspaper Program – Accessible for free at any location.
https://newspapers.library.in.gov/
The Evening Republican (Nov. 1894 – Jun. 1896)
Evening Star (Apr. 1905 – Dec. 1906)

Indiana State Library’s Indiana Newspaper Holdings guide
http://www.in.gov/library/newspaperholdings.htm

Indianapolis Newspapers Database, 1848-1991
https://www.statelib.lib.in.us/IndyNews/1848_1991_search.asp
Library of Congress Chronicling America – Historic American Newspapers
http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/#tab=tab_advanced_search

Library of Congress U.S. Newspaper Directory, 1690-Present
http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/#tab=tab_advanced_search

New York Historical Newspapers – Old Fulton NY (this is a legitimate website)
http://fultonhistory.com/Fulton.html

PROPERTY AND LAND RECORDS

Land Records in Indiana – IN Commission on Public Records
http://www.in.gov/icpr/2582.htm

U.S. Department of the Interior – Bureau of Land Management
http://www.glorecords.blm.gov/search/default.aspx

Hancock County

Beacon – Local Government GIS for property information and taxation
https://beaconbeta.schneidercorp.com/?site=HancockCountyIN

Greenfield Historic District Design Review Guidelines

Greenfield Historic Landmarks
https://www.facebook.com/GreenfieldHistoricLandmarks

Hancock County Interim Report, 1983 – IN Historic Sites & Structures Inventory
http://indiamond6.ulib.iupui.edu/cdm/ref/collection/IHSSI/id/18376

Historic Board of Review

National Register of Historic Places – Hancock County
http://www.nationalregisterofhistoricplaces.com/IN/Hancock/state.html

Indiana

Historic Preservation & Archaeology - Indiana Department of Natural Resources
http://www.in.gov/dnr/historic/
Indiana Landmarks
http://www.indianalandmarks.org/Pages/default.aspx

Indiana State Historic Architectural and Archaeological Research Database (SHAARD)
https://secure.in.gov/apps/dnr/shaard/welcome.html