



NOTE: This is the eleventh in a series of articles that were released monthly throughout 2017 as part of the celebration of the NH State Library's 300th anniversary. The State Library was founded in Jan. 25, 2017 and is the first state library in America.

Thinking about your family tree this Thanksgiving? Find out more – at the NH State Library

November 13, 2017: Today's ability to access information with just a few keystrokes can make you feel connected to any topic you can image. But access to everything can leave you feeling disconnected, too. Sometimes, learning more about yourself, your family and its history can help you get your feet back on the ground.

Most of us have a general idea of where our ancestors came from, but those family anecdotes are just that— anecdotes—and when generations move on, the stories often change or are forgotten. That's where genealogical research comes in.

Genealogy has been the second most popular hobby in the United States for more than four decades (gardening is the first) and there are several television shows that focus on it. While discovering your past used to mean poring through mountains of dusty old archival materials—if you could find them—today's genealogical research takes many forms, including online databases, digitized media and, yes, historical documents. There's no better place to start looking than at the library.

The State Library in Concord has a rich collection of genealogy resources to help you track your family's history through the years. Each has specific information that can help you learn more about your ancestors.

The internet has changed the way we do all kinds of research, and genealogy is no exception. Two popular online genealogy databases, Ancestry.com and HeritageQuest, have revolutionized how genealogical research is done. The two share many sources but they also have unique features that can help you find specific details about those who came before you. Here at the State Library, you can access each of them by using our public computers or our Wi-Fi.

Newspapers are another terrific way to find information and they have the special ability to put history in context, because you can look at stories, photos and advertisements that are in the editions of the papers that mention your relatives. The State Library has the largest collection of New Hampshire newspapers on microfilm available anywhere in the state—more than 500 titles. Many papers in our collection date back to the 1800s, with a few even reaching back to the 1700s.

While you might think of annual city and town reports as a place to go to find out budget information, they're actually terrific resources for genealogical research. From 1887 to 1939, New Hampshire towns were required to include births, deaths and marriages in their annual reports, and many continue to report these vital records, which are incredibly helpful in determining the dates of important life events. All New Hampshire municipalities are required by law to submit copies of their annual reports to the State Library, and the ones in our collection date from the mid- to late 1800s up to the present day.

The State Library has other sources that can help you with your search, including town records – our collection includes dozens of volumes from the 1700s through mid-1800s – and town histories. We also have more than 2,800 family histories that have direct ties to New Hampshire. If your family is one of them, a good portion of your research may have already been done for you.

The State Library isn't the only place in New Hampshire that you can work on genealogy. Many public libraries in New Hampshire provide access to Ancestry.com and HeritageQuest; they also have town reports and other materials in their collections that can help you with your research. Working with both your public library and the State Library, you'll have lots of valuable resources to help you, including librarians. They're experts at finding the best information resources available.

So, if conversation at Thanksgiving dinner or perhaps a television show gets you thinking about researching your roots, know that answers are out there. You just need to get started, and libraries are here to help.

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