

# Researching Your Family Tree

*A guide to genealogical resources at your  
Milwaukee Public Library*



MILWAUKEE  
PUBLIC LIBRARY

The Milwaukee Public Library maintains an extensive collection of genealogical materials. Thousands of people have used its books, periodicals, atlases, databases, and other resources to discover their roots.

## How to Get Started

**Interview** your family and find family documents.

**Read** at least one book on how to do genealogical research.

**Attend** a Researching Your Family Tree program offered by the library.

**Join** one of the many genealogical societies in Milwaukee such as the Milwaukee County Genealogical Society and the African American Genealogical Society of Milwaukee.

**Use** the library's collections and talk to the librarians.

## Print Resources

MPL's print resources are useful for both the beginning and experienced genealogist and can be found using CountyCat, the library's online catalog.

**Method Books:** These "how-to" guides can be general or focus on particular geographic areas, ethnic groups, or record types.

**Bibliographies and Indexes:** Standard indexes like the *Passenger and Immigration Lists Index* and *American Genealogical-Biographical Index* help locate family names in hundreds of published works.

**Published Histories:** Local family histories, city or county histories, church histories, and more contain genealogical clues.

**City Directories:** Directories list local residents and businesses during a specific year in time. MPL has an extensive collection for Milwaukee and other Wisconsin cities.

**Periodicals and Periodical Indexes:** Genealogical and historical society publications contain unique information, and indexes help identify where specific articles are published.

**Newspapers and Indexes:** MPL has the *Milwaukee Sentinel* and the *Milwaukee Journal*, ethnic newspapers, community newspapers, and more. Print indexes can locate death notices and obituaries in local papers.

## Digital Resources

MPL's website, [www.mpl.org](http://www.mpl.org), offers links to digital collections and indexes, many free genealogical websites, and to subscription databases, such as Ancestry Institutional Edition and HeritageQuest. Subscription databases can be used within City of Milwaukee libraries and, in some instances, by remote access to City of Milwaukee library cardholders.

Some of MPL's unique digital collections and indexes include:

- Milwaukee Historic Photos** contains thousands of photos of local scenes.
- Milwaukee County Marriage Certificates** includes digitized images of marriage certificates issued in Milwaukee County from 1822 to 1876.
- World War I Military Portraits** is comprised of more than 32,000 photographs, typewritten volumes, and service records of Milwaukee County veterans.
- Milwaukee History Clipping Index** provides a subject listing of people, places, events, etc. found in newspaper articles "clipped" from Milwaukee are newspapers from the 1930s to the 1980s.
- The City of Milwaukee Annuity and Pension Board, Employees' Retirement System** finding aid indexes 1,049 civil servants who retired from the City of Milwaukee from 1937 to 1949.

## Records

Census, vital, and cemetery records are invaluable for genealogical research. The easiest way to search census records is through MPL's online subscription to Ancestry Institutional Edition and HeritageQuest.

Some Milwaukee County vital records are available on microfilm and through Ancestry Institutional Edition:

- Birth records (1854-1911)
- Marriage records (1836-1911)
- Death records (1852-1912)

MPL also has microfiche indexes for Wisconsin vital records:

- Birth records (pre-1907)
- Marriage records (pre-1907, 1973-1997)
- Divorce records (1965-1983)
- Death records (pre-1907, 1959-1997)

Microfilm interment records are also available for a number of local Milwaukee cemeteries, such as Forest Home, Union, and Wanderer's Rest.

## Maps & Atlases

Central Library's Frank P. Zeidler Room contains hundreds of maps and atlases useful for genealogical research.

Historic maps of Milwaukee show the city as early as the 1850s.

Plat maps can show property ownership, and the online *Wisconsin Land Ownership Map and Plat Book Index* indexes the library's collection of land ownership and plat maps for Wisconsin counties, some dating to 1858.

Fire insurance atlases for Milwaukee can help trace the history of a property.

Historic world atlases are useful in locating older towns and villages that no longer exist.

## Special Collections

Special collections are comprised of unique resources, some of which can only be found at Milwaukee Public Library.

The Great Lakes Marine Collection offers biographies of ships' captains and information about vessel owners.

Milwaukee Road Archives hold the railroad's employee records, photographs, and other corporate materials.

Local History Manuscript Collections contain the unpublished materials from local individuals and groups.

Tax rolls provide a historic record of local property owners.

City of Milwaukee Archives hold annual reports, correspondence, subject files, department journals and ledgers, committee minutes, and more.

Milwaukee County Genealogical Society Family Files may include resources such as family trees, obituaries, clippings, correspondence, family group sheets, and more.

*For more information on genealogical resources, please visit the Central Library's Frank P. Zeidler Room or any Milwaukee Public Library location. To speak with a librarian, call (414) 286-3000 or visit [www.mpl.org](http://www.mpl.org) for chat and email services.*