

Representative sources for

## Backward Thinking in Twentieth Century US Research

### 1. Recent (Living People)

- a. **ZabaSearch:** [www.ZabaSearch.com/](http://www.ZabaSearch.com/)
- b. **PeopleLookup:** [www.peoplelookup.com](http://www.peoplelookup.com)
- c. **Intellius:** [www.Intellius.com](http://www.Intellius.com)
- d. **USA-People Search:** <http://www.usa-people-search.com>
- e. **Switchboard** (phone numbers & more): [www.switchboard.com](http://www.switchboard.com)
- f. **Pipl.com:** mega search of most of above sites: <http://www.pipl.com>
- g. **California Births (1905 – 1995):** <http://www.familytreelegends.com/records/calbirths>
- h. **Illinois Births:** <http://www.idph.state.il.us/vitalrecords/birth.htm> not all online

### 2. Vital Records: Death Records

- a. **Online Searchable Death Indexes for the USA:** <http://www.deathindexes.com/>
- b. **Davidson County Death Records 1900-1913**  
<http://www.tn.gov/tsla/history/vital/davidson2.htm>
- c. **Cemetery and Funeral Home Records @ Tennessee State Library & Archives (TSLA)**  
<http://www.tennessee.gov/tsla/history/guides/guide12.htm>
- d. **Graveyard records have been put online**
  - i. Interment: [www.interment.net](http://www.interment.net)
  - ii. Find A Grave: <http://www.findagrave.com>
  - iii. Legacy (obituaries): <http://www.legacy.com/>
- e. **Social Security Death Records**
- f. **Newspaper obituaries**

### 3. Vital Records: Marriage (Divorce) Records

- a. **County Clerk Recorder**
- b. **Church records**
- c. **Local newspaper society pages**

### 4. Vital Records: Birth

- a. **Statewide in most states after 1910**
- b. **County level early 20<sup>th</sup> century and earlier**
- c. **Christening records**
- d. **Delayed Birth**

### 5. Census Records

- a. **US Census Records 1940 >> 1900**
  - i. *HeritageQuest*  
[http://www.library.nashville.org/research/res\\_databases.asp#genealogy](http://www.library.nashville.org/research/res_databases.asp#genealogy)
  - ii. *Ancestry* [www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com) in Nashville Public Libraries
- b. **State Census** <http://www.researchguides.net/census/state.htm>
  - i. Wisconsin 1905 [www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com)
  - ii. New York 1915 (microfilm from Family History Library)
  - iii. Minnesota 1905



This page is also online @ <http://www.ddowell.com/class> for your clicking pleasure.

**6. Military Records:**

- a. **NARA:** <http://www.archives.gov/research/military/index.html>
- b. **NPRC:** <http://www.archives.gov/st-louis/military-personnel/> (service in WWI or later)
- c. **FamilySearch Wiki:**  
[https://www.familysearch.org/learn/wiki/en/United\\_States\\_Military\\_Records](https://www.familysearch.org/learn/wiki/en/United_States_Military_Records)
- d. **WWII Enlistment:** [www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com) 8.3 men and women
- e. **WWII Registration :** [www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com) required that men 18-65 register. About 10 million men
- f. **WWI (Draft Registration)** [www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com) 24 million men born between 11 Sept 1872 and 12 Sept 1900.

**7. California Voter Registration Records** [www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com)

**8. City Directories:** Check online catalogs of libraries in the localities of interest

- a. Chicago: <http://www.chicagoancestors.org/#tab-tools>
- b. Others on *Ancestry*

**9. Phone Books:** Check online catalogs of libraries in the localities of interest

**10. Schools, including colleges:** Look for student records, yearbooks, etc.

**11. Churches:** Membership records, christenings, weddings, funerals

## Backward Thinking in Twentieth Century US Research

Hopefully by now you are collecting any relevant family documents, are interviewing any family members who may have relevant information and are in the process of finding what other researchers may have already done on your family. What come next? To answer that question briefly: vital records and censuses.

**Vital Records** are generally considered to be **death, marriage (and divorce) and birth records**. Census records for the most part only are available in 1940 and earlier. Vital records can be as recent as yesterday or at least last month. It is good practice to verify any oral or written tradition by comparing it with official government records. This goes as well for previous family histories whether they are in books or on the Internet. Researchers vary greatly in skill and experience. As I have said before, paper (or silicone chips) will record any nonsense any fool writes down. So now is a great time to start collecting official documents that verify the events of your family history.

If you don't know where to start, check <http://usgenweb.org/> then select the state and locality. Remember these pages are volunteer-produced and vary considerably in the information and services they offer. Generally records for the last century have been consolidated at the state level and earlier ones are kept at the local level. Examine the vital records carefully that you collect. Some real gems may be hiding in the details—including who provided the information and who witnessed the document. Many states and localities are starting to put such records—or at least abstracts of them—online but there is tremendous variation across the country.

**Census Records:** Currently the 1940 Census is the most recent national enumeration available. There is a 72 year delay in release for privacy reasons. The 1940 Population census was released to the public on April 2, 2012. Templates for the U.S. Censuses make it easier to read the column headings, when you get stuck, using or interpreting the censuses, consult:

**Steven Morse's One Step search forms for ship arrival and census searching:**  
<http://stevemorse.org/>

**Census Templates and Questions for census enumerators to ask:**  
<http://usa.ipums.org/usa/voliii/tEnumForm.shtml>

**US Archives:** <http://www.archives.gov/research/genealogy/index.html>

**Archives vs. Libraries:** Technically, an archive contains the internal documents generated within an organization. In the case of the US Archives, its mission is to preserve the documents (paper or plastic or electronic) that are created by the federal government in the course of carrying out its work. Same for other levels of government and for non-governmental entities as well. Libraries, on the other hand, collect documents from outside the entity. In practice these functional lines may be blurred or both activities may even be combined.

