

## SPECIAL SOURCES FOR FINDING BIOGRAPHICAL COMPILATIONS

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Censuses, military records, death certificates, funeral notices etc. can provide useful biographical information. However, many sources also exist for identifying articles containing personal data found nowhere else. Perhaps 8,000,000 individual Americans prior to 1930 had articles about their lives in biographical compilations, "mug books," such as the often reprinted volumes by the Goodspeed Company. Sometimes the footnotes in a scholarly biography of a prominent, even though distant, relative will lead to genealogical sources on ancestors you share with that person.

Some 2,000,000 of these biographical sketches, total, are included in our microfiche of K. G. Saur's *American Biographical Archives* (the sketches are in alphabetical order.) Many sketches are indexed the *Biography and Genealogy Master Index* (BGMI) which we have as part of our Ancestrylibrary.com subscription (see below). The Birmingham Public Library has many of the biographical sources cited, including *Appleton's Encyclopedia of American Biography* (1887-1889). Our book collection on the sixth floor includes many "who's who" books from the 1970s and earlier that contain biographical information from such categories as American scholars and prominent women.

### INTERNET

Seemingly the most obscure biographies (books on individuals) can be at least identified through the card catalog of the Library of Congress on line or through On-line Catalog Library Corporation (OCLC, available as "First Search" in the Alabama Virtual Library, available in any Alabama Library). Access to the *Biography and Genealogy Master Index* (BGMI) is available in book and CD-ROM computer disk format. Ancestrylibrary.com includes that resource, the *American Genealogical-Biographical Index* (AGBI), bibliographies that are also available as books at libraries such as the Birmingham Public. The Allen County-Fort Wayne Public Library has compiled *Periodical Resource Index* (PERSI). Heritagequest offers to libraries access to 25,000 local and family histories (7.2 million pages) and also to PERSI. Our computers have subscriptions to both Ancestrylibrary.com, Footnote.com, Genealogybank.com, and HeritageQuest.com.

### SOURCES BY STATE OR CATEGORY

**Local Histories.** The HeritageQuest website has 25,000 local and family histories that can be searched by word. The free search engine Google (books) also does this for three million books. The Allen County-Fort Wayne Public Library has a monster index to biographical sketches in local histories: Historical and Biographical Index of North East, Mid East, Mid-South, Mid West, U. S. A. It is available in our microfilm drawer 1.

and from LDS Family History Centers. The Local History and Genealogy Room of the Library of Congress has a card catalog, prepared many years ago, of biographical sketches in local history works that have no indexes.

Given below are some examples of other biographical indexes. This list is not complete and omits family files and card catalogs that are commonly in found major research libraries and archives. The sources illustrate that this material takes many forms. Individual state archives and libraries should be queried about local sources of biographical information. State guides such as Davis, *Tracing Your Alabama Past*; Davis, *Georgia Research*; Lipscomb, *Tracing Your Mississippi Ancestors*; Greene, *Nevada Guide to Genealogical Records*; and Spivy, *Genealogical Research in Ohio* provide information on biographical indexes for those respective states. If you include whatever information that you have on the person you seek in your query, frequently the person responding will check for the person you seek. Almost all colleges, universities etc. have biographical files on graduates.

**Alabama.** The Birmingham Public Library has a typescript index, "Alabama Biographical Sketches," prepared in the 1930s. We have a copy of this work on the sixth floor of our library. The Birmingham Public Library has placed this source on its website and has plans to update it: <http://bpldb.bplonline.org/db/biographies>

Field Code Changed

**Arizona.** A database of Arizona biographies is: <http://www.lib.az.us/bio/index.cfm>

**California.** J. Carlyle Parker, *An Index to the Biographies in 19th Century California County Histories* (Detroit: Gale Research, 1979).

**Colorado.** The Colorado Historical Society has the C. W. A. and other indexes to information on persons in Colorado.

**Confederates.** The Broadfoot Company's reprint of the series *Confederate Military History* (1897) includes biographical sketches inserted in the original series after 1900. The Georgia volume alone has more than 600 genealogical/biographical sketches. We have on microfilm from the Library of Congress selected microfilm of Confederate government records, Mss 13,744 (The Pickett Papers) that includes applications for passports and for jobs with the Confederate State Department. These papers are rich in biographical information but have no index and are arranged in rough chronological order.

**Deaf.** See the Internet web site DeafBiographies.com.

**Federal Sources.** Although covering far more manuscript than printed material, a very useful research tool for sources in the National Archives is *Genealogical and Biographical Research: a Catalog of National Archives Microfilm Publications* (1983). Among the holdings discussed in that publication are the often autobiographical applications for Federal jobs from presidents John Adams through U. S. Grant (we have this microfilm). The booklet accompanying the microfilm for each administration includes an alphabetical list of the applicants. Such requests were usually made by persons of some, at least local, prominence but, in any case, these records frequently mention past histories and personal connections. Applications by individuals to individual departments for employment such as Justice, State, Treasury,

War etc. survive but have not been microfilmed and must be searched in person or mail from the National Archives. Postmasters, before the advent of the civil service exams, were almost always chosen by local political bosses, not by application to Washington. Entry 185 of Record Group 217 Records of the General Accounting Office has applications for federal jobs, 1813-1824.

The papers of many of the founding father of the United States are online, see Founders Online: <http://founders.archives.gov/about> Catalog descriptions of prominent people often contain detailed biographical information. Locating these collections can be done through the free site Archivegrid.

**Georgia.** The Georgia Local History and Genealogy Department of the Atlanta-Fulton County Public Library has a card catalog to biographical material on Georgians and another for African-Americans. The Name File, a monster set of cards with public service and other information on tens of thousands of Georgians has been placed on the Internet as part of the Georgia Archives' website.

**Louisiana** Louisiana Biography and Obituary Index from the Historic New Orleans and the New Orleans Public Library is available on line at: <http://www.nutrias.org/~nopl/obits/obits.htm>

**Medical Professionals (chiefly physicians).** Indexes to compilations of biographical data on persons in this field including Arthur W. Hafner, *Directory of Deceased American Physicians, 1804-1929* (1989); Lisabeth M. Holloway, *Medical Obituaries: American Physicians' Biographical Notices. . .before 1907* (1981); and Martin Kaufman, *Dictionary of American Medical Biography* (1984). The National Genealogical Society, for a fee, provides access to these sources and others, including the American Medical Association Deceased Physicians' File, at its web site. Other professions are often represented by state compilations but especially clock makers, jewelers, photographers, and artists.

**Missouri.** The St. Louis Public Library has indexes to biographical material on its past residents. The index can be accessed on its web site. The Missouri Historical Society (St. Louis); State Historical Society of Missouri (Columbia); and the Missouri State Archives (Jefferson City) each also have indexes to biographical materials on Missourians. Many books have been published as biographical reference works on persons in Missouri. We have several of these books in our collection.

**New Jersey.** See Donald A. Sinclair and Helen E. Maher, *A New Jersey Biographical Index* (1993).

**South Carolina.** See Richard M. Côté, *Dictionary of South Carolina Biography* (1985).

**Tennessee.** The Genealogy Department of the Memphis/Shelby County Public Library has an extensive card catalog to biographical material on Tennesseans but with a special emphasis on Memphis.

**Virginia.** Catherine B. Hollan, *Virginia Silversmiths* (2010) also includes biographical sketches of engravers, counterfeiters etc.

**Wisconsin.** The Wisconsin Historical Society has a special collection of biographical and subject matter from newspapers that can be accessed through its web site: <http://www.wisconsinhistory.org/research.asp>

## **OUR AWARD WINNING GENEALOGY PROGRAM**

**The Family & Regional History Program, Wallace State College, P. O. Box 2000, 801 N. Main Street, Hanceville, AL 35077-2000 (Phone: 256-352-8263) is headquartered on the first floor of the college library. The Wallace State College is located south of Cullman, Alabama, on Highway 31, a few miles east of Interstate-65 (take the Hanceville Highway 91 Exit), roughly one hour from Birmingham, Florence, Gadsden, and Huntsville. Our collection is completely open to the general public. The hours are 730 AM to 815 PM, Monday through Thursday; 8 to 2PM on Friday; and 8 Am to 2 PM on Saturday. Our staff goes home at 4PM.**

**The Program also offers college credit courses in genealogy from basic courses to computers to such specialties as court house, Georgia, and Civil War era research. We also have field trips to archives and libraries across the South.**

**Our extensive and growing collection of research materials includes books, periodicals, microfilm, microfiche, CD-ROM disks, computer programs, family folders, and much more. We are able to borrow from the holdings of the Genealogical Society of Utah (LDS). Our collection centers on the southern states, the American Revolution, the Civil War, and southern Native-American research. For example, our microfilm holdings include all of the Confederate compiled service records. We have equipment to allow you to copy photographs and we microfilm old records of interest to our researchers. Lists of our holdings appears on the Cullman County GenWeb Site and our book catalog can be accessed through the library at the Wallace State College, Hanceville, web site.**

**For lists of our holdings, research handouts, or additional information visit our web site:**

**<http://www.wallacestate.edu/library/genealogy.html>**

**Robert S. Davis, M. Ed., M. A., heads the Family & Regional History Program, teaches its courses, and leads its field trips. Nationally recognized, he has published thirty books and some 1,000 other publications.**