

Social history is the study of ordinary people's lives. To incorporate social history into genealogy, consider questions beyond names and dates. Research what life was like for your ancestor, what they ate, what they wore, how did they go about their everyday life, what was a typical day like, etc.?

Social history adds context to your ancestor's life and/or it leads to additional records. Studying social history will show you the answers. It can help you:

- Understand your ancestor's work or military experience
- Learn about disease outbreaks that impacted communities
- Trace ancestral migration paths
- Discover unusual weather conditions where family lived
- Identify why people left one place and settled another
- Fill gaps in an ancestor's timeline or between censuses
- Shed light on keepsakes, heirlooms, and old photographs
- Explore ethnic or cultural heritage

Social history research uses:

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|------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| ✓ Traditional genealogical sources | ✓ Photographs |
| ✓ Manuscript collections | ✓ Newspapers |
| ✓ Ephemera | ✓ Diaries, journals and letters |
| ✓ Books | ✓ Interviews |

General Resources

Two articles addressing what is social history? <https://www.legacytree.com/blog/what-is-social-history> AND <https://www.historytoday.com/archive/what-social-history>

100 websites for social history: <http://philibertfamily.blogspot.com/2012/08/100-social-history-websites.html>

Family History Writing Studio tips, programs, coaching and courses to shape genealogy research into shareable stories <https://www.familyhistorywritingstudio.com/>

Family History Writing Studio YouTube channel:

https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=family+history+writing+studio

Explore artifacts, photos, stories and historic sites by time period <https://www.americanheritage.com/>

International Association of Labor History Institutions social history portal: archives, libraries, document centers, museums and research institutions specializing in heritage, history and theory of labor and social movements (world-wide): <https://socialhistoryportal.org/>

Library of Congress social history: <https://www.cyndislist.com/us/loc/social-history/>

American Social History Project: <https://shec.ashp.cuny.edu/>

The social historian <http://www.thesocialhistorian.com/>

Use google to search for specific historic events and/or first-person accounts

Old magazine articles <http://www.oldmagazinearticles.com/home.php>

Social networking, general resources: <https://www.cyndislist.com/social-networking/general/>

Digital Public Library of America <https://dp.la/>

New York Public Library digital collection, more than NYC area: <https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/>

Making of America, primary sources in American social history from the antebellum period through reconstruction: <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/mw?a=listis&c=1930843488>

Steps for fact-checking online family trees: <https://familytreemagazine.com/strategies/fact-check-family-trees/>

Strategies for researching the right ancestor and avoiding mix-ups:

<https://familytreemagazine.com/research/avoid-ancestor-mixups/>

DoHistory <http://dohistory.org/>

University of Washington: social history for genealogy. While accessing links requires UW ID, the site offers research guides for a variety of topics--women's history, labor history, the civil rights movement and more <https://guides.lib.uw.edu/c.php?g=341504&p=8805349>

Add life events to put ancestors into historical perspective to produce integrated timeline (many genealogy software programs also offer this feature): <http://www.ourtimelines.com>

Eyewitness to history <http://www.eyewitnesstohistory.com/index.html>

Women

Discovering American women's history: <https://digital.mtsu.edu/digital/collection/women>

Tracing women by understanding social history: [https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Tracing_Women_by_Understanding_Social_History_\(National_Institute\)](https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Tracing_Women_by_Understanding_Social_History_(National_Institute))

Women's impact on US economic life 1800 - 1930: <https://curiosity.lib.harvard.edu/women-working-1800-1930>

What did you do in the war Grandma? (WWII)

https://cds.library.brown.edu/projects/WWII_Women/Grandma.html

History, Biography, Genealogy Research Books

Don't forget the history in family history:

<https://www.genealogy.com/articles/twigs/rhonda031600.html>

Non-profit library of free books, movies, software, music, archived websites, and more. Books out of copyright, including family and county history books, also a digital lending library:

<https://archive.org/>

Books still in copyright and not available to read in full online for free? Try <https://www.worldcat.org/> to see if it's available through inter-library loan

Biographies, location specific: <https://www.cyndislist.com/biographies/locality/>

Free genealogy books online: <http://genealogysearch.org/free/digitalpublications.html>

Familysearch digital library: <https://www.familysearch.org/library/books/>

Google books how-to: <https://lialisson.com/free-google-books-for-genealogy-research/>

US history chronologically by topic: <https://www.ushistory.org/us/index.asp>

HathiTrust Digital Library: <https://www.hathitrust.org/>

Google books: <https://books.google.com/>

Oral Histories and First-Person Narratives

Oral history tips: https://www.genealogy.com/articles/research/95_carmack.html

Organizing oral history information: https://www.genealogy.com/articles/research/70_afteroral.html

Gathering family memories: https://www.genealogy.com/articles/research/80_taylor.html

Oral histories and interviews, general resources: <https://www.cyndislist.com/oral/general/>

Southern history, personal letters, oral history, maps, photographs: <https://docsouth.unc.edu/>

Manuscripts from the Federal Writers' Project, 1936 to 1940, including first person narratives: <https://www.loc.gov/collections/federal-writers-project/>

The Dust Bowl, autobiographies and oral histories: <https://libguides.tccd.edu/c.php?g=240523&p=1609055>

Oral histories, Ellis Island <https://www.nps.gov/elis/learn/historyculture/oral-histories.htm>

Their own words: <http://deila.dickinson.edu/theirownwords/searchbooks.htm>

Full text of US and Canadian women's letters and diaries (pre-Colonial to 1950+):
<https://search.alexanderstreet.com/nwld>

Creating Your Own Oral History

Story Corps, nonprofit encouraging collection of interviews from people of all backgrounds, has a free oral history app to use for planning and doing interviews. <https://storycorps.org/>

Step-by-step guide to do oral history project <https://www.baylor.edu/library/index.php?id=974108>

Planning an oral history project and interviewing tips: [The American Folklife Center \(Library of Congress\)](#)

Queries and Message Boards

Ancestry message board (free): <https://www.ancestry.com/boards/>

Queries and message boards general resources: <https://www.cyndislist.com/queries/general/>

GenForum, free genealogy message board <https://www.genealogy.com/forum/>

Village by village contact site for local history in the UK and Ireland: <https://curiousfox.com/>

Free UK-based genealogy message board: <https://www.rootschat.com/>

Historic Disasters, Events, and Tragic Accidents

Search also for specific events online and in historic newspapers.

1918 influenza epidemic (video): <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/films/influenza/>

Disasters: natural and man-made: <https://www.cyndislist.com/disasters/>

Worst man-made disasters in recent history: <https://www.insider.com/worst-modern-manmade-disasters-world-environment-day-2019-5>

Deadliest natural disasters by type: <https://www.titlemax.com/discovery-center/lifestyle/deadliest-natural-disasters-by-type/>

Deadliest natural disasters in US history: <https://www.history.com/news/deadliest-natural-disasters-us-storm-flood-hurricane-fire>

Ten deadliest world natural disasters: <https://www.livescience.com/33316-top-10-deadliest-natural-disasters.html>

Mining Accidents/Disasters

Worldwide mining accidents: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mining_accident

Worldwide worst coal mining accidents: <https://www.mining-technology.com/features/feature-world-worst-coal-mining-disasters-china/>

Eight of the worst coal mining disasters: <https://www.nsenergybusiness.com/features/worst-coal-mining-disasters/#>

World's deadliest mine disasters: <http://www.rmmagazine.com/2014/08/01/worlds-deadliest-mine-disasters/>

Coal and metal and non-metal mine accident resources <https://usminedisasters.miningquiz.com/>

UK coalmining accidents and deaths: <http://www.cmhrc.co.uk/site/disasters/>

Mine disasters in the United Kingdom: <http://www.mineaccidents.com.au/mine-events/disaster/gb>

Mining accidents in US, Canada, New Zealand and Australia: <https://miningaccidents.weebly.com/>

Pennsylvania coal mining records: <https://www.phmc.pa.gov/Archives/Research-Online/Pages/Coal-Miner-Records.aspx>

Specific Events and Eras

National World War I Museum <https://www.theworldwar.org/>

Smithsonian magazine The History of the Flapper <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/arts-culture/the-history-of-the-flapper-part-1-a-call-for-freedom-11957978/>

Voices from 19th century America: <http://www.merrycoz.org/adults.xhtml>

America in the 1930s <http://xroads.virginia.edu/~1930s/front.html>

Civil War surgery: <http://www.historynet.com/the-truth-about-civil-war-surgery-2.htm>

19th century American children and what they read <http://www.merrycoz.org/kids.xhtml>

Food and Fashion and Miscellaneous

Information about food and its social context throughout history <https://www.foodtimeline.org/>

Feeding America, the historic American cookbook project:

<http://digital.lib.msu.edu/projects/cookbooks/index.cfm>

Cornell University's HEARTH--home economics archive, research, tradition, history (1850-1950):

<https://digital.library.cornell.edu/collections/hearth>

Recipe curio <http://recipecurio.com/>

Groceteria. supermarket history since 1999: <http://www.groceteria.com/>

Fashion era <http://www.fashion-era.com/>

Vintage patterns wiki http://vintagepatterns.wikia.com/wiki/Main_Page

History of household paraphernalia: <http://www.oldandinteresting.com/>

Domestic objects from the past: <https://homethingspast.com/blog-2/>

Historic catalogs of Sears, Roebuck and Co., 1896-1993 \$

<https://search.ancestry.com/search/db.aspx?dbid=1670>

Sears Archives <http://searsarchives.com/>

Photos

Programmer, created by US Farm Safety Administration and Office of War Information: search 1935-1943 photos <https://www.photogrammar.org/maps>

Pictorial history of Kentucky coal mining <http://kycoal.homestead.com/>

Shorpy Photo Archive <http://www.shorpy.com/>

National Archives digital photography collections:

<https://www.archives.gov/research/alic/reference/photography>

Miscellaneous

Civil War content: <http://www.sonofthesouth.net/>

Agricultural and farm innovations <https://www.thoughtco.com/history-of-agriculture-and-farm-machinery-4074382>

American house styles from This Old House: <https://www.thisoldhouse.com/house-styles>

Vintage and retro memories: <https://clickamericana.com/>

Brief history of the ground fishing industry in New England

<http://www.nefsc.noaa.gov/history/stories/groundfish/grndfsh1.html>

Digital archive of American architecture: <https://www.losthstory.net/fa267/>

History of American education web project <http://www3.nd.edu/~rbarger/www7/>

History of sanitary sewers <http://www.sewerhistory.org/>
Library of Congress-digital collections <https://www.loc.gov/collections/>
Library of Congress-Performing Arts Encyclopedia <http://www.loc.gov/performingarts/>
America's Quilting History <http://www.womenfolk.com/historyofquilts/>
Lowell Mill Girls http://faculty.uml.edu/sgallagher/Mill_girls.htm
National Museum of Civil War Medicine <http://www.civilwarmed.org/>
David Rumsey Map Collection <https://www.davidrumsey.com/>
Memorial Hall Museum online <http://www.memorialhall.mass.edu/home.html>
National Museum of Funeral History <http://www.nmfh.org/>
Online guide to traditional games <http://www.tradgames.org.uk/index.html>
Story of farming <http://historylink101.com/lessons/farm-city/story-of-farming.htm>
The Workhouse <http://www.workhouses.org.uk/>
Union Pacific Railroad-past and present railroad job descriptions
<https://www.up.com/heritage/history/past-present-jobs/index.htm>
Yale's Avalon Project, documents relevant to the fields of law, history, economics, politics, diplomacy
and government: <http://avalon.law.yale.edu/default.asp>
Tax history museums <http://www.taxhistory.org/www/website.nsf/Web/TaxHistoryMuseum>
Tenement Museum <http://www.tenement.org/>

Social Media

Free webinar, [Ancestry Academy - Cousin Bait: Make Social Media Work for You](#): explores what to find
on Facebook and Twitter. as well as other less obvious places to search
Genealogy and history (in English) Facebook groups/pages, a 436-page PDF file containing 16,700+
links (updated Jan 2021): <https://moonswings.files.wordpress.com/2021/01/genealogy-on-facebook-jan-2021.pdf> File includes hyperlinked table of contents. *Note:* Future updates and list
maintenance is being handled by Cyndi's List at <https://cyndislist.com/facebook>.
Download Canadian list (includes French-speaking groups) at
https://genealogyalacarte.ca/?page_id=10169, and an Australian list at
<https://www.lonetester.com/2020/12/facebook-for-australian-history-and-genealogy-2/>
Facebook groups such as Random Acts of Genealogical Kindness (US and world), Random Acts of Photo
Restoration, and Obituary Look-ups may be particularly helpful; also city/county/regional
genealogy/historical society groups.