

An Obituary Obsession

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Why Obituaries?

- A good place to start
- There can be a flood of information contained in one document.
- Easy to obtain, no law prohibiting who can get a copy of an obituary.
- Inexpensive – most of the time the only cost is for copy fees and postage.
- Contain many clues depending on the length and detail of the obituary.

What you need to know about obituaries:

- Some can be long, some can be short
- A “typical” Obituary
- Is it accurate? – Never consider an obituary correct, always corroborate information with other records.
- An obituary is made up mostly of secondary information.

What an obituary can tell you:

- Basics – Name, death, cemetery/burial, parents, birth, marriage, children
- Not-so-basics – Cause of death, accidents, maiden names, business, migration, religion, land ownership, naturalization, immigration, marriages of children or siblings, military service, photographs and so much more!

Obituary Nuggets & Tips:

- Illnesses were sometimes reported before death.
- There may be other articles after the obituary about your ancestor if the death was accidental or noteworthy.
- Look in newspapers where your ancestor was born or lived for a long time even if they moved away and died elsewhere.
- Look in newspapers not only where they died, but where your ancestor’s children lived.
- Detailed immigration information such as dates of arrival may be included.
- You will find fun information that makes your ancestors’ lives more interesting.
- Learn about their hobbies, character traits, stories and details about their deaths.

Where an Obituary can lead you:

- census records
- land records
- city directories
- probate records
- school records
- naturalization
- church records
- ships' lists

How to obtain Obituaries:

- Online indexes - Center for Archival Collections at BGSU and WCDPL, in Bowling Green, Ohio, R&B Hayes Center, SSDI to obtain location of where to look
- Random Acts Of Genealogical Kindness - volunteers by county willing to do free research, many do obituary lookups
- Local library web sites will usually give policy information on research requests
- Newspaper digitization projects - Ancestry.com, Colorado's Historic Newspaper Collection, OldenTimes.com, America's Genealogy Bank
- Take a trip and visit the local libraries yourself

Websites:

- Random Acts of Genealogical Kindness www.raogk.com
- Colorado's Historic Newspaper Collection www.cdpheritage.org/collection/chnc.cfm
- Center for Archival Collections www.bgsu.edu/colleges/library/cac/collhome.html
- Wood County District Public Library wedpl.lib.oh.us
- OldenTimes.com www.OLDENTIMES.COM
- Ohio Historical Society www.ohiohistory.com
- America's Obituaries and Death Notices (available through Denver Public Library with your DPL library card number) www.denverlibrary.org
- Obitpage.com www.obitpage.com/links.html - links to online obituaries

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