Searching Newspapers Tips and Tricks
Genealogy Day at the Beach 2026
By Heather Wright

Websites

These are only a few of the numerous sites you can find newspapers on. This is meant to be a starting point, not an exhaustive list. Sites with a $ require a membership to access. Sites through the Library of Virginia or the Virginia Beach Public Library require a library card to the respective institution.

Newspaper only sites:

Chronicling America	https://www.loc.gov/collections/chronicling-america
Elephind	https://www.elephind.com/
GenealogyBank $	https://www.genealogybank.com/
Google News Archive	https://news.google.com/newspapers
NewspaperArchive $	https://newspaperarchive.com/
Newspapers.com $	https://www.newspapers.com/

As part of a broader site:

Ancestry $	https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/catalog/?category=38
FamilySearch	https://www.familysearch.org/en/search/newspapers/
Findmypast $	https://www.findmypast.com/newspapers
MyHeritage $	https://www.myheritage.com/research/category-8000/newspapers

Through the Library of Virginia

Virginia Chronicle	https://www.virginiachronicle.com/
Virginia Newspaper Directory	http://www.lva.virginia.gov/collections/vnd

Through the Virginia Beach Public Library

Access World News -- Heritage Hub -- New York Times -- Norfolk Journal and Guide -- Virginia-Pilot
All found here: https://libraries.virginiabeach.gov/books-more/digital-library/research?resources2-category=1279128

State-based sites

California Digital Newspaper Collection	https://cdnc.ucr.edu/cgi-bin/cdnc
Florida Digital Newspaper Library	https://newspapers.uflib.ufl.edu/
Georgia Historic Newspapers	https://gahistoricnewspapers.galileo.usg.edu/
NYS Historic Newspapers	https://www.nyshistoricnewspapers.org/
Maryland Newspapers	https://speccol.msa.maryland.gov/pages/newspaper/digitized.aspx
North Carolina Newspapers	https://www.digitalnc.org/newspapers/
Pennsylvania Newspaper Archive	https://panewsarchive.psu.edu/
West Virginia Newspapers	https://wvnewspapers.advantage-preservation.com/

Tips for saving on sites with subscriptions

- **Free Access Days** - Sites may offer free access at times throughout the year, especially around holidays. Note that it may be limited to certain collections.
- **Sales** – Look out for sales, especially during holidays or events like RootsTech. You can save a significant amount compared to the retail price.
- **Alternative access** - Learn what other resources have access to, such as the library or a FamilySearch Center.

Search for

People	Buildings	Occupations	Events
Towns/cities	Addresses	Items	Groups

Searching tips

- **Try name variants**
  - Nicknames (i.e., Snooks Burkhart, Skip Jones, etc.)
  - Initials (i.e., O.B. Hovermale)
  - Mrs. husband's name (i.e., Mrs. Harry Crow)
  - Titles (i.e., Dr., Rev., Miss, etc.)
  - Abbreviations (i.e., Wm. for William, or Jn. for John)

- **Use quotation marks around multiple keywords to look for them together.**
  For example: "*Harry Crow*" will return results with those two words together,
  while *Harry Crow* will return results with either word on the page.

- **Use wildcards and Booleans**
  - **? for one letter** - Johns?n returns Johnson, Johnsen, etc.
  - *** for multiple letters** – A*ison will include Arrison, Arison, Addison, etc.
  - **AND, OR, NOT** –
    Smith AND Jones, Allegheny NOT Allegany, "Harry Hovermale" OR "Rumsey Hovermale"

Using search filters

- **Start wide, then narrow**
  - This is especially true for a unique name/term.
  - The more common your search term or name is, the more filters you will need.
  - Sites may or may not have filters to help narrow results. If they do, options will vary.

- **Dates**
  - **Start with the person's lifetime**. This should get you information on them and their death.
  - **Open it to their children's lifetimes**. You may find them mentioned at least in their obituaries.
  - **Do a broader search from their children's deaths to the present**, especially if it was someone of note in the community, for whatever reason. I've found people mentioned in retrospectives or remembrances.

- **Categories**
  - Category filters may or may not be an option, i.e., obituary, marriage, birth, etc.
  - If it is there, give it a try, especially if there are too many results to look through.
  - If you don't find what you are hoping for, remove the filter and look again.
  - I've found this filter not to be the best and have come across many obituaries that weren't sorted into the category filter.

- **Location**
  - Start with where they lived.
  - Open it to neighboring states, especially if they are close to a border.
  - Search areas where children, siblings, or other family members lived. They may have been mentioned as visiting, or even had their obituary published there too.
  - If something notable happened, the story may be published widely. These shouldn't be discounted. I've found more in-depth articles from papers further away than the coverage in the local paper.

- Type
  - You may come across more narrow filters such as Ethnicity, language, or publishing frequency.
  - Ethnicity and language filters may be useful, depending on your search results.
  - A publishing frequency filter will only be helpful if you don't know the paper's name but know that it came out once a week, or twice a month, or whatever the case may be.

Search Logs

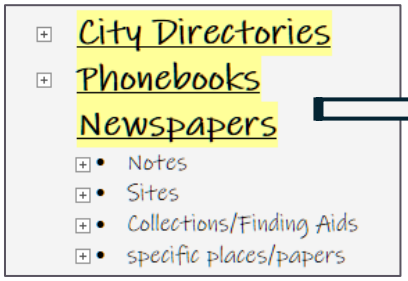
Keep a record of your searches. This can be a master log or a note kept on a person's profile or however else you may record notes. Track the following:

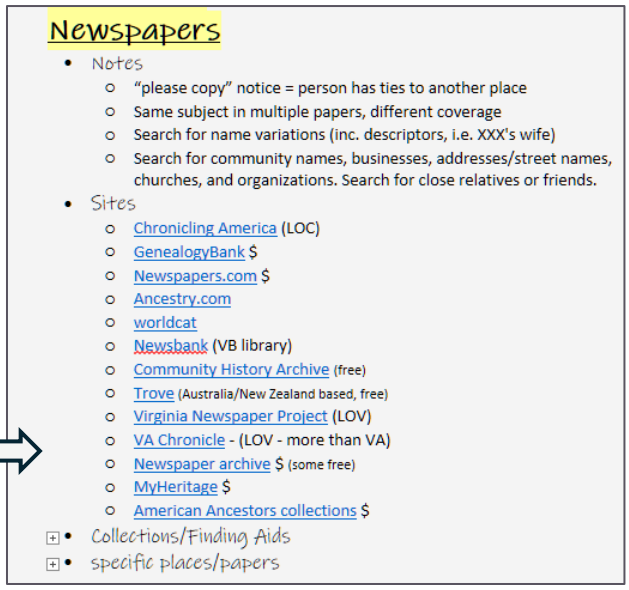
- **Search date**. If you notice you haven't looked into a person for years, it may be time to look again. New papers or pages may have been added to a collection.
- **Sites visited**.
- **For each site, record who or what you searched for**, including any variants or special searches with the AND, OR, or NOT qualifiers. You may think of something new to try and can reference what you already did.
- **Results**. You don't have to list everything you found, record the result count for each term searched for. Note what you found or didn't find in general terms, such as "Marriage announcement located. Obituary not found yet."

Build your search resource list

Once you find a website, keep a link or record of it so you know it was good --- or if it wasn't worth looking at.
The same goes for archives, including libraries or other places that may give you access on site to a collection you can't get to at home.

I keep a research template in OneNote.
Under Newspapers, I have 4 subcategories: Notes, Sites, Collections/Finding Aids, and Specific places/papers.
When I open Notes and Sites further, this is what I have:



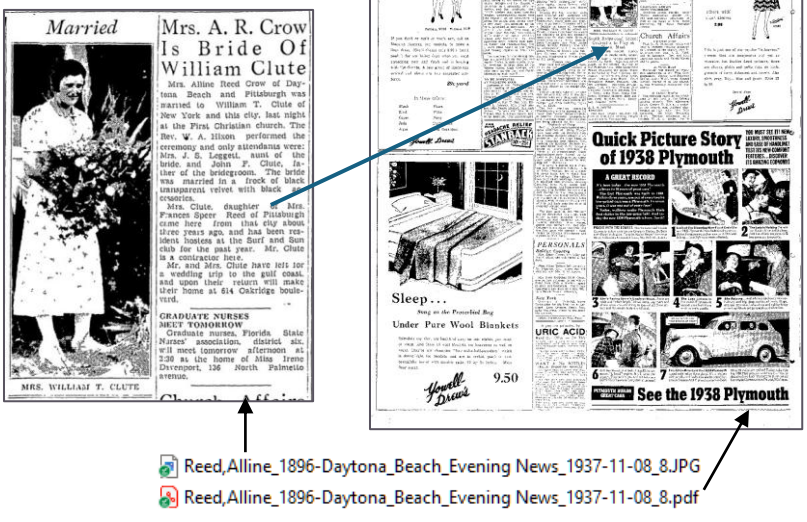


Print and Download an Articles

Even if you attach something to an online tree, you may lose access to it in the future. This may be due to a subscription lapsing, or even the site losing a license to the material.

To guarantee you can look at the article later, print and/or download it.

- **Print to paper**. Generally, not the option I'd recommend. You have no ability to zoom into the article or copy/click any text.
- **Print to a pdf file**. In cases like newspapers.com, this will automatically put the source information on the page – including the paper name and location, publish date, page number, and access date.
- **Download an image file**.
  - You may be able to download the whole page or a portion of the page.
  - If you download or print a portion of the page, either do a second version that includes the source information or note it somewhere you'll be able to associate it with that file.
- **Clip the article**
  - If you don't see a way to print or download something, you can always do a screen capture.
  - Again, if you only grab a portion of the page, make sure to get the source information.



In this example, I downloaded the whole page as a pdf. It has the paper information at the top, which will allow me to find it again. I also clipped the article of interest and saved it as a jpg.