

# Genealogy

## The Genealogical Resources of the Western Reserve Historical Society Library

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As an introduction to a discussion of the genealogical department of the Western Reserve Historical Society Library, some account of the Society and its collections may be of interest. It was founded in 1867 and from that time to 1898 it occupied expanding quarters on the Public Square in Cleveland. From 1898 to 1941 it was located at University Circle, 107th and Euclid. The Society moved to its present quarters, two large Florentine style residences on East Boulevard, opposite Wade Park, in 1939 and 1941. One of these seventy-room buildings houses the historical museum and the other the library.

From its founding to 1913, the Society continued as a kind of semi-professional organization but did some collecting and publishing in a very creditable manner. On that date, the first full time director, Wallace H. Cathcart, was appointed. His experience had been in the rare-book field, and he had a collector's feeling for books. Much of the present collection is due to his work. Elbert J. Benton, professor of history and dean of the Graduate School of Western Reserve University, succeeded him and served as director until his death in March, 1946. The writer's incumbency dates from January, 1947.

The stated object of the Society was "to discover, procure, and preserve whatever relates to the history, biography, genealogy, antiquity and statistics connected with the City of Cleveland and the Western Reserve, and generally what relates to the history of Ohio and the Great West." While the Society carries the name Western Reserve and is charged first with concern over that area, it has never confined its activities to the Western Reserve alone but has viewed quite seriously the last phrases giving its purposes, and has taken Ohio, the Northwest, and American history generally, especially the nineteenth century, and American genealogy as its field. Strangely enough, one will find certain non-Ameri-

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can materials there—world exploration, Napoleana, and English history for example—but these items have been windfalls generally, and much energy is not being expended in those directions.

The over-all resources of the library consist of about two hundred thousand books, perhaps one hundred thousand pamphlets, some twenty thousand volumes of newspapers, about one thousand rolls of microfilm, a fairly extensive collection of maps and atlases, and something like a million manuscripts. To mention a few of the areas of subject matter, there is much material on both sides of the Civil War, a more extensive Lincoln collection than one might expect, a good collection of American travels, much railroad material, and a fairly good Indian section, besides a large body of local history materials. In addition, there are the broader fields, such things as pictures, medals, and by a large margin, the best collection of broken-bank currency in the United States.

It is generally understood that the genealogical section of the Western Reserve Historical Society Library is the sixth in rank in the United States. Probably it can be justly claimed to give unusual service. This section of the library is in charge of Mrs. Emma Hawley, a professional genealogist of long experience.

The materials in this section are on open shelves, which greatly facilitates genealogical work. Besides the usual bibliographical aids such as catalogues and indexes, Mrs. Hawley is there to advise patrons regarding the most likely sources and methods of procedure. Years of experience have enabled her to direct the search into the most likely channels and to put her finger on a multitude of facts of interest. The "usual library service," which is freely given, has been extended to an unusual length. Obviously, it is not possible to do extended research on a free reference basis.

The area of greatest interest and activity for any genealogical library is always a wedge facing in the direction from which the people in its area have come. In this case, the wedge extends from Ohio to the northeast and southeast and covers the states of New England, especially Massachusetts and Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, and Virginia. The apex reaches back into Indiana and northern Illinois, but the activity in that direction usually relates to residents there whose ancestors came through Ohio on

the way west. Only occasionally does one find a Clevelander who has drifted back eastward from this area. There is a minor interest in Kentucky and Tennessee.

Of particular interest in this work are the family histories. Of these the library has some thirteen thousand. It is, of course, difficult to localize these since they cut across state and regional lines. In consequence, however, of the intense interest in genealogy in New England, inspired by the aura of the Mayflower and Lexington and Concord, more of them concern this section than any other. This section is constantly growing, largely by gifts, but the family history appetite of a genealogist is insatiable.

County histories have long been used by the general historian with some reserve, but they have proved of great value to the genealogist. The coverage of county histories by states is as follows: Ohio, probably complete; New York, good; Massachusetts, complete; Connecticut, almost complete; Maine, good; Vermont, good; New Hampshire, good, Rhode Island, fair; New Jersey, good; Pennsylvania, good; Virginia, fairly good; Delaware, good. The library, unfortunately, has only a moderate number of county histories of Indiana and Illinois.

Throughout there is a certain but varying amount of general and local history, which is useful. Of this type of material the greatest amount naturally concerns the immediate homeland of Ohio, especially the Western Reserve, and this is of the greatest use. All libraries, of course, slant their classification and their shelving to fit their peculiar needs. This library does the same and much of the local history materials are oriented with reference to their use in genealogy.

There are, of course, the bibliographical aids peculiar to genealogy, the indexes, lists, rosters, etc. To list many of these, which every genealogical library might be expected to have, is much like saying that Western Reserve has a dictionary and the *World Almanac*. And yet, if one proposes to use the library, one may wish to be assured even regarding the stand-bys. Among these are the *New England Historical and Genealogical Register*, the *New York Genealogical and Biographical Record*, James Savage, *Genealogical Dictionary*, the *Mayflower Index* edited by William A. McAuslan, Earl G. Swem, *Virginia Historical Index*, and the scholarly *Genealogical Dictionary of Maine and New Hampshire* by Charles F. Libby. Lineage books are in a slightly different category

since there is always the problem of completeness in many and sometimes long series. Essentially all the lineage books which have been published, including the D.A.R., the National Society of the Daughters of American Colonists, Founders and Patriots, and Colonial Dames are to be found here. Among the state papers and archives are all those published for New England, New York, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Delaware, Virginia, and some of Georgia. The library has a complete set of official Ohio publications, but from a genealogical standpoint these are not comparable to those just mentioned. The collection includes all of the published rosters of Revolutionary War soldiers from all the colonies. Examples are the voluminous records of *Massachusetts Soldiers and Sailors of the Revolutionary War* and the scanty *Roster of Revolutionary Soldiers of Georgia*. Related records are the lists of Revolutionary War pensioners. Coming closer to home and the present is the *Roster of Ohio Soldiers in the Civil War*, in eleven volumes.

A list of some of the important items illustrates the scope of the collection. Donald L. Jacobus, *American Genealogist*; Donald L. Jacobus, *History and Genealogy of Old Fairfield*; *Genealogical Magazine of New Jersey*; *Putnam's Historical Magazine*; *Tyler's Quarterly Historical and Genealogical Magazine*; *William and Mary College Quarterly Historical Magazine*; *Holland Society of New York Collections*; *Worcester Historical Society Publications*; *Narrangansett Historical Register*; Publications of the genealogical societies of New Hampshire, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Ohio; Publications of local historical societies in Pennsylvania and other states; State historical magazines; William W. Hinshaw, *Encyclopedia of American Quaker Genealogy*; and Orra E. Monette, *First Settlers of Ye Plantations of Piscataway and Woodbridge*.

Since many Hoosiers might wish to trace their ancestry through a generation which lived in Ohio, there may be an interest in something further on the local history material of Ohio. Among the most useful items in this field are the Census Records of 1850 for the State of Ohio. This was the first United States Census to list the names, ages, and nativity of all persons. The usefulness of this information is obvious and the microfilm record in twenty rolls is in frequent use by the genealogist and the public. It may be well to add, for the

benefit of those who are not familiar with this detail, that the Reference Division of the National Archives in Washington has the census records, so far as they exist for 1850, 1860, and 1870. One may inspect any of them there—nearly all are in the original—or one may, by arrangement with working genealogists there, have a search made of any county for a fee. Photostatic copies of any of these pages may be had for a reasonable price.

The library has many of the marriage records of Ohio. These are being copied by counties by the D.A.R., and the work is to be continued. These names are alphabetized by name of the husband and wife and typed for use. In addition the library has many of the cemetery records, especially in the Western Reserve. Then there are the county histories mentioned above and innumerable town histories, lodge and church records, poll lists, land records, letters, and “other items too numerous to mention”—as the sale bills put it.

Just a word about English and Continental European genealogy. The library considers this outside of its field and it has almost nothing for the continent. By agreement, the Cleveland Public Library, which ranks well among the scholarly public libraries, has built up a collection of material invaluable to the English genealogist, i.e. archaeological and historical publications, lineages, etc.—although they do not do genealogical work themselves. It happens, by accident or earlier design, that the Western Reserve Historical Society Library has a fair amount of English genealogical material of this kind. A list of some of these items, follows which anyone is welcome to use, although the library would not presume to offer professional assistance or bibliographical completeness in this field. Some two hundred and fifty volumes of parish marriage registers; William Musgrave, *Obituary prior to 1800*, five volumes; *Miscellanea Genealogica et Heraldica*, twenty-eight volumes; Devon and Cornwall Record Society *Publications*; *Genealogist*, forty-three volumes; *Genealogical Magazine*, volumes one to seven; Harleian Society *Publications*, the visitation series, fifty volumes; and the Registers, thirty-two volumes; Extracts from Scotch Church Records, and Miscellaneous Peerages.