

# Advanced ancestry.com

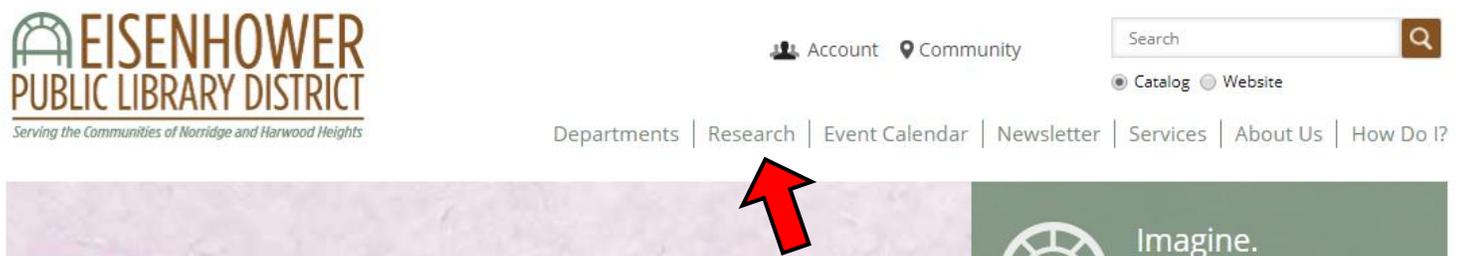
Updated: July, 2019

Ancestry.com is the world's largest and most popular genealogical website, with access to over 32 thousand databases containing more than 22 billion historical records and more than 3 million paying subscribers. In addition, Ancestry provides DNA testing (with over 15 million people in their database) that allows customers to discover their genetic ethnicity and find relatives with a common ancestral match. Ancestry.com is available in over thirty international markets and offers localized websites in nine countries.

## How to access Ancestry.com

The library edition of Ancestry.com can **only** be used while in the library. When using one of the library computers, the Eisenhower Library webpage will automatically be the first page that opens when you click on the Chrome, Firefox or Edge browser icons. If you bring in your laptop, you will need to type **www.eisenhowerlibrary.org** in the address bar.

Once on the library's website, click on the **Research** tab, located at the top middle part of your screen.



Next, click on the box to the left of **Genealogy**.

### Resources

#### Filter by Category

- |   |  |   |
|---|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Biography          | <input type="checkbox"/> Genealogy         | <input type="checkbox"/> Homework Resources |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Books & Literature | <input type="checkbox"/> General Reference | <input type="checkbox"/> Language Resources |

then click the green link for **Ancestry Library Edition**.

#### **Ancestry Library Edition**

**For in-library use only.** Search United States census records, military records, directories, passenger lists and more with the library edition of the popular genealogy resource.

## Review: Wildcards

**Wildcards** are unique keyboard characters that function as advanced search operators for search engines and databases, which are used in place of missing letters or numbers. Within Ancestry.com, they can assist you in finding relatives and recalling records despite being unsure as to the exact spelling of an individual's name. As such, they will only work in the name fields of the website.

The screenshot shows a search form with two main sections: "First & Middle Name(s)" and "Last Name".

- First & Middle Name(s):** The input field contains "James". Below it is a radio button labeled "Exact..." which is currently unselected.
- Last Name:** The input field contains "P?ter\*", where the question mark and asterisk are highlighted with a red dashed circle. Below it is a radio button labeled "Exact..." which is also unselected.

There are two wildcards available to us for searching Ancestry.com, the question mark and asterisk. However, they each have different purposes and will produce different results. Specifically:

- **Question mark (?)** - is used in place of a **single** letter
  - ✓ Example: searching for "Sm?th" will return both "Smith" as well as "Smyth"
- **Asterisk (\*)** - is used to replace **zero or more** letters
  - ✓ Example: searching for "Fred\*" will return "Fredrick", "Fredie" and "Fredy"

However, there are a couple of things to be aware of when utilizing wildcards, such as:

1. You must have at least three consecutive letters somewhere in the name
  - a. Example: "Sm?" or "Sm\*" will not work
2. A wildcard can be used at either the beginning or end of a name, but **NOT** both.

Obviously, it is preferable to use single character wildcard (the question mark) since that would indicate that you are more certain of the overall spelling and length of an individual's name. This, however, can vary due to personal circumstances and should not dissuade you from utilizing the multiple character wildcard (the asterisk).

## Filters

One of the key advantages of the **Show More Options** feature is that it allows you to limit your search results so that only exact matches of your terms will be displayed. Starting narrow (in terms of scope) is a good initial search strategy, particularly if you have detailed, reliable information. This will drastically reduce the number of records recalled, which will save you time as you begin “sifting” through your results. However, because it is unlikely that all of your information will result in an exact match, use the default search as an overall setting, with more specific limits elsewhere.

The screenshot shows a search form with the following elements:
 

- Search** header
- Input fields for **First & Middle Name(s)** and **Last Name**.
- Input field for **Place your ancestor might have lived** (City, County, State, Country).
- Input field for **Birth Year** with a calendar icon.
- A **Search** button.
- A **Show fewer options** dropdown arrow.
- An unchecked checkbox labeled **Match all terms exactly**, which is highlighted by a yellow arrow pointing to it from the right.

The **Show More Options** feature not only adds new search field options (Family Members, Keyword, and Gender), it will also allow you to pre-filter your search results even further. As you can see in the images below, you can adjust the settings for the **Name (First & Middle as well as Last)**, **Date** and **Location** fields.

Default settings pull records via all four options

This close-up shows the search field for **First & Middle Name(s)** containing the text "dwight". Below the field, a dropdown menu is open, showing the following options:
 

- Exact and...**
- Sounds like
- Similar
- Initials

 A yellow arrow points to the "Exact" option. The text "About these settings" is visible at the bottom of the dropdown.

This close-up shows the search field for **Last Name** containing the text "eisenhower". Below the field, a dropdown menu is open, showing the following options:
 

- Exact and...**
- Sounds like
- Similar
- Soundex

 A yellow arrow points to the "Exact" option. The text "About these settings" is visible at the bottom of the dropdown.

Note that the “initial” option found above has been substituted for “Soundex” matches

Initially, the **Name** filters available on Ancestry.com can seem a bit daunting for everyone. Do not let this prevent you from exploring these options as they can be especially useful for tracking down family members; including those that may have immigrated to the United States. Both **Name** fields have a default setting as well as an “exact match” setting, which by now you should feel comfortable using.

In the **First & Middle Name** field (see screen shots on previous page), we are provided with three alternatives to the default and exact setting: phonetic matches, names with similar meanings or spellings and records where only the initials are recorded.

1. **“Sounds like” (formerly “Phonetic”) matches** – this option will include names that sound similar to the one you entered. This allows for the inclusion of records where the name may have been accidentally misspelled or misheard by the enumerator (the census taker) and documented as such, or intentionally transliterated. The name may also have been transcribed and digitized incorrectly by the transcriptionist because they could not read the handwriting.
  - a. Example: searching for “John” will return “Johan”, “Johannes”, “Jan”, etc.
2. **Names with similar meanings or spellings** – this option will also include names that have either the same or similar meanings as the one you entered. Whether it was a conscious decision by the individual or simply how the census taker/immigration clerk recorded their names when they first arrived, this can be quite common among our immigrant ancestors.
  - a. Example: searching for the last name “White” will return “Blanco” (Spanish), “Bianchi” (Italian) or “Weiss” (German)
  - b. Example: searching for the first name “Guillermo” (Spanish) will also return “William”
3. **Records where only initials are recorded** – this option will include records where only the first initial of an individual’s first name is listed. This is commonly found in early census and military records, as well as when searching for members of the clergy (“Reverend J. Doe”), etc.

In the **Last Name** field, we no longer have an option to search for “initials only”, as surnames should never be abbreviated. However, we do have an option that was not listed in the First & Middle Name field: **Soundex matches**.

**Soundex** is a system developed in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century to assist with the indexing of older census records for publication. As the title indicates, names were classified and assigned a number by the sound of the first letter of the last name. This can be very useful when dealing with surnames that are easily misspelled or misheard, such as “Barker” and “Parker”, “Williams” and “Whillians”, “Thompson” and “Thompkins”, etc.

1. Example: searching for the last name “Whillians” will also return “Williams”, “Wallons”, “Wallin”, “Whelan”, “Whalen”, etc.

**Eastman's Online Genealogy Newsletter** has a free Soundex Calculator on their website where you can enter your last name to calculate your Soundex code. Here is the direct web address:

<http://www.eogn.com/soundex/>

Filters for any date fields can be helpful, particularly if you are unsure or simply do not know exact dates for the significant events in your ancestors life. On the **global search** screen, you will see a small calculator icon to the right of the **Date** field

The image shows a search form titled "Search". It has two input fields for "First & Middle Name(s)" and "Last Name". Below these are two more fields: "Place your ancestor might have lived" (with a placeholder "City, County, State, Country") and "Birth Year". A small calculator icon is positioned to the right of the "Birth Year" field, and a yellow arrow points to it from the right.

Clicking on this icon will pull up a Birth Year calculator. If you know (or have a general idea) of how old your ancestor was in a given year, this option will calculate their birth year for you.

The image shows a "Birth Year" calculator dialog box. It contains the text "He/she was about 75 years old in 1930". The number "75" is labeled "Age" and "1930" is labeled "Year". To the right of the "Year" field is a green "Ok" button, which is highlighted by a yellow arrow. A red dashed line outlines the entire calculator dialog box.

Once you've entered your information, click "OK"

The image shows the "Birth Year" field from the search form. The value "1855" is entered in the field and is circled with a red dashed line. Below the field is a checkbox labeled "Exact +/-..." which is currently unchecked.

If, on the other hand, you know an approximate date (birth, marriage, death, etc.) but weren't sure, you can use different date filters to avoid missing potential records.

**Place your ancestor might have lived**

City, County, State, Country

**Birth Year**

1900

Exact

Exact to...

- this year
- +/-1 year
- +/-2 years
- +/-5 years
- +/-10 years

**Search** Show fewer options  Match all terms

**Add event:** Birth Marriage Death Lived In Any Event

**Year** Birth 1900  Exact

**Location** City, County, State, Country

The filters available for the **Location** field, for example, can be extremely useful in tracking down family members. One of the more underused features on Ancestry.com is the ability to add "Any Event" to your search. While the **Show More Options** link generates several choices (see below), "Lived In" is an extremely useful option, particularly when it is combined with advanced filters for the **Location** field.

First click the **Show More Options** link. Then select "Lived In".

**Search** Show fewer options  Match all terms exactly

**Add event:** Birth Marriage **Lived In** Any Event More

**Year** Lived In

**Location** City, County, State, Country

**Add family member:** Father Mother Sibling Spouse Child

Now, click on the small empty box underneath the **Location** field to view the filters.

Year  Location  ✕

Lived In

✓ [Exact to this place](#) ←

Family member: Father  Exact to...

- This place
- County
- County and adjacent counties
- State
- State and adjacent states
- Country

[About these settings](#)

Initially, these options may not seem that necessary, particularly if, for example, you know that a relative lived in Cook County or (if you do not know the county) the state of Illinois. However, what if they had moved at some point in their lives? Perhaps some records were never updated with their current address? If you are trying to pin down a location and repeated searches are ending in frustration, please take advantage of the “adjacent counties” or “adjacent states” filters.

Also, please be aware that if you forgot to use filters before clicking on the “search” button, or want to modify them after you have viewed your search results, the filters will also be available on the **top left hand corner of the search results page** in the form of “sliders”, which you can click and drag to either the left or right. This can save you time, in terms of avoiding having to repeatedly return to the initial “search” page, while also allowing you to conduct an entirely new search from the same screen.

## All results for Dwight Eisenhower

Search Filters Broad  Exact Results 1–20 of 75,125 Records

dwight

eisenhower

Edit Search | New Search | [Update](#)

All Categories

- ▶ Census & Voter Lists 4,720
- ▶ Birth, Marriage & Death +5,000

**1940 United States Federal Census**  
CENSUS & VOTER LISTS  
[View Image](#)  
NAME: Dwight D Eisenhower  
BIRTH: abt 1891 - Texas  
RESIDENCE: 1935 - Washington, Was  
RESIDENCE: Fort Lewis, Pierce, Was

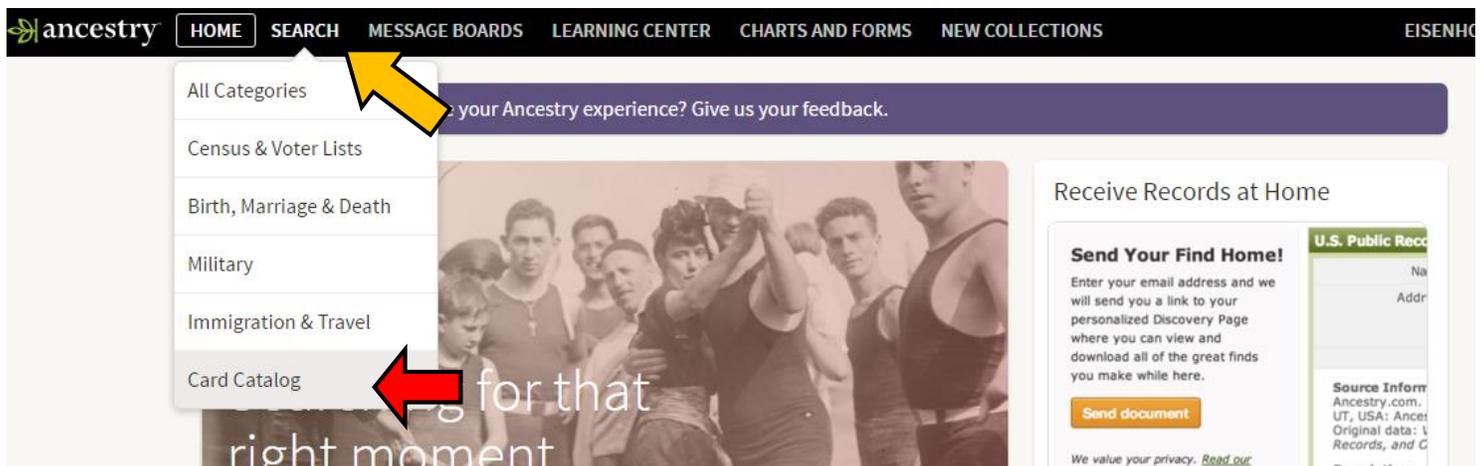
**1940 United States Federal Census**  
CENSUS & VOTER LISTS  
[View Image](#)  
NAME: Dwight D Eisenhower  
BIRTH: abt 1891 - Texas  
RESIDENCE: 1935 - Washington, Dist  
Columbia

A final bit of advice: while genealogical research requires us to be thorough, you should not be spending large amounts of time clicking through page after page of unsuccessful search results. You are all advanced users now; if you cannot find a relevant search result within the first two pages, do not be afraid to reexamine your search strategy and start again.

## Card Catalog

Another helpful tool provided by Ancestry.com is their **Card Catalog**. Much like a traditional library card catalog, this feature allows the user to examine and verify the existence of a particular database or record collection on Ancestry.com. It is important to note that searching via the **Card Catalog** will only *return database titles, not individual records by name*. You will need to click the link to enter the database and search for individual records.

To begin browsing, click on the **Search** tab, scroll down and click on **Card Catalog**



Once inside the **Card Catalog**, you may begin by typing in a keyword, such as a city, county or the name of a collection itself (if already known). Placing your cursor over a collection title without clicking (“hovering” over it) will generate an information box which will provide you with a basic description of that collection. This will not only inform you as to the nature of the collection, but also will save you time by not having to repeatedly select and then back out of specific collections.



The **Card Catalog** can also be used to identify what new collections have been added or updated. Remember, Ancestry.com adds thousands of records every day. A record that was previously unavailable may eventually be added to the collection. Make a point to periodically reexamine collections that you have already gone through.

The results are sorted based on popularity by default, so obviously Family Trees and the 1940 US Census collections are always at the top. However, you can change this by scrolling over to “Sort By” at the right of your screen and clicking on the caret. This will deploy the drop-down menu, from which you can select the desired sort criterion.

HOME SEARCH MESSAGE BOARDS LEARNING CENTER CHARTS AND FORMS NEW COLLECTIONS EISENHOWER

## Card Catalog

Searchable listing of all record collections

Title

Keyword(s)

SEARCH or Clear All

Filter By Collection

Results 1-25 of 112

Sort By Popularity

Popularity  
Database Title  
Date Updated  
Date Added  
Record Count

Title	Collection	Records	Activity
Cook County, Illinois Marriage Index, 1930-1960	Birth, Marriage & Death		
Cook County, Illinois Death Index, 1908-1988	Birth, Marriage & Death		
Historic Catalogs of Sears, Roebuck and Co., 1896-1993	Newspapers & Publications	252,502	

Once a new criterion is selected, the list will repopulate and an “Activity” column will appear on the far right, indicating what collections have either been recently added or updated. The “new” or “updated” tag will appear for 90 days.

Results 1-25 of 10,135

Sort By Date Updated

Title	Collection	Records	Activity
U.S., Chicago and North Western Railroad Employment Records, 1935-1970	Schools, Directories & Church Histories	10,264	NEW
Dortmund, Germany, Jewish Women Residents, 1930-1943	Stories, Memories & Histories	872	NEW
Web: United Kingdom, Royal Naval Officers' Service Records Index, 1756-1931	Military	66,212	NEW
Norway, Holocaust Compilation, 1942-1943	Stories, Memories & Histories	893	NEW
Web: New Bedford, Massachusetts, Whaling Crew Lists Index, 1809-1927	Schools, Directories & Church Histories	121,027	NEW
Victoria, Australia, Index to Naturalisation Certificates, 1851-1928	Immigration & Travel	19,369	NEW
Washington, D.C., Passenger and Crew Lists, 1942-1962	Immigration & Travel	156,905	NEW
Lancashire, England, Quarter Session Records and Petitions, 1648-1908	Tax, Criminal, Land & Wills	1,218,050	NEW

While the Card Catalog contains over fourteen billion records found within thirty-two thousand databases, it is a more specific option than the “global” search on Ancestry.com’s home page. In addition, it is also available for non-subscribers; i.e., **you can access the Card Catalog remotely**. However, when trying to access an individual record, you will come up against a “paywall”.

Geographic locations (cities, counties, states, etc.) can be used as a “title” search. If you do not have that information, you may also use it as a “keyword” search.

There are four filter options when using the Card Catalog: Collection, Location, Date and Language. These are located in the column on the left side of the webpage.

It is best to use the collection filter with at least one other simply because there are so many collections.

- Location filter – 10 main geographic areas with additional sub-areas included
- Date – can narrow results by century or by a particular decade within a century
  - This can be an enormous help if you are certain about your dates
- Language – Records available in English, French, Spanish, German, Italian and Swedish
  - You may not need this option until you begin dealing with international records (if at all)

Remember to read the individual database descriptions as you “hover” your cursor over the title. Occasionally the titles of record collections and databases can be misleading as to their actual content. This will enable you to efficiently manage your time on Ancestry.com.

Note that once you have established your filters, you can “open” the various collections in new tabs in your browser. This will allow you to easily navigate back and forth from your search results without needing to recreate your filters. Avoid opening separate windows as it is easy to lose your place and get confused. Your goal with these filters is to try and reduce the number of databases returned via your search. Optimally, you would want to be navigating no more than twenty databases.

## Genealogical Proof Standard

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The Genealogical Proof Standard is developed and published by the Board for Certification of Genealogists (<http://www.bcgcertification.org/>). This was designed for professional genealogists to prove that their work is up to a certain standard. However, anyone can go through this; you do not have to be a professional genealogist to make use of it, as it can be extremely useful to you. Essentially, it is a helpful guide for you to follow so that you know that the people you add to your family tree and the conclusions you reach are credible.

The standard itself involves five steps (not necessarily linear):

1. **Reasonably Exhaustive Search**
  - a. Ensures that you have looked at enough sources to come to a reasonable conclusion; that you haven't overlooked any obvious records or pieces of evidence
  
2. **Complete and Accurate Citation of Sources**
  - a. Document information and where you found it, so that you:
    - i. can find it again
    - ii. can understand whether or not the information is credible
    - iii. know what information the source is providing
  
3. **Analysis and Correlation of Collected Information**
  - a. Must look at your collected information within the context of your overall information. No one record is enough to authoritatively tell us what was happening in someone's life at that time.
    - i. There is no arbitrary number of records that indicates you have done enough. You will need all the records you can reasonably find
    - ii. Be aware: not all information is equal and not all sources are equal. Some are merely reflections of another record.
  
4. **Resolution of Conflicting Evidence**
  - a. Try your best to settle any conflicting pieces of information. These are typically dates, spellings of names, etc.
  
5. **Soundly Reasoned, Coherently Written Conclusion**
  - a. Be clear and detailed so that other family members can effectively follow your work and so it still makes sense to them years down the road. Explain why you came to the conclusions you did if it isn't clear from your research.

## Helpful Background Information for Genealogical Research

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As you continue to gain experience using Ancestry.com, you will realize that you are actually **researching** more than you are **searching**. That is because conducting genealogical research requires a level of familiarity with not only your family history, but of human history as well. That may sound overwhelming, but recognizing both the reasons why as well as the methods of how people have relocated themselves and their families is critical, as it will clarify decisions made by your ancestors that you may otherwise not understand. Therefore, it is highly recommended that you familiarize yourself with the following background information, as it will foster a better contextual understanding of the various record collections that are available, while also enabling you to search Ancestry.com in a more efficient manner.

## Census Records

- The Census is only released to the public seventy-two years after it was taken. The 1940 Census was the most recent to be released on April 2, 2012. The 1950 Census will be released in April 1, 2022.
- Be aware that there can be a significant difference in the types of information recorded from census to census. This is where those corresponding blank versions become incredibly useful
- Avoid using the “exact” filter when searching a census record, due to the strong probability of incorrect or misspelled names
- Early censuses (1790-1840) only recorded the name of the head of household as well as the number of people living there, grouped by age. Beginning in 1850, enumerators documented the names of everyone in the household
- Be sure to note and research the terminology used to record a person’s “race” on various censuses when searching, as racial designators have not only changed over time, but have also been applied somewhat inconsistently
- Please note that the majority of the 1890 census was destroyed by fire in 1921 under “suspicious circumstances”. However, there are some fragments of state censuses available, including Illinois (1825-1865)
- Censuses from the United Kingdom were originally released one hundred years after they were taken. However this has since been reduced to ninety years. Additionally, there may be unique symbols and markings on British censuses (made by enumerators) which may seem unfamiliar to Americans
- It is important to note that in regards to Canadian censuses, not all Canadians came from Britain (this was largely during the 19<sup>th</sup> century). Many came earlier (17<sup>th</sup> century) from different parts of Europe. Remember, Canada has a history with both France and England; it was ceded by Great Britain after the French & Indian War (1754-1763)
- Individuals may request their own records (before they are publicly available) via the Census Bureau's Age Search service. This service provides individual information from censuses that are still protected by the 72-year rule, but only to the named person, his or her heirs, or legal representatives. There is a Congressionally-mandated fee for this service.

## Finding Your Immigrant Ancestors

Three major waves of immigration to the United States:

- 1) 1600s – fleeing religious persecution or seeking new opportunities. Mostly German, English, Welsh or Dutch
- 2) 1800s – fleeing political turmoil, crop failure or poor living conditions (and seeking religious freedom) brought on by Industrial Revolution (1760-1840; 1840-1870). All over world, but mostly from Scandinavian countries, Ireland, Scotland, England, Turkey, Armenia and China
- 3) 1900s – fleeing political turmoil and wars (and seeking religious freedom). Most common were Jews from Poland, Germany and Russia, as well as Italians, Greeks and Austro-Hungarians

## Passenger Lists

For a variety of reasons, it is wise to exhaust all US resources before searching passenger lists:

- Colonial Era thru 1819 – United States did not require ships to maintain a passenger list, although a small number did
- 1820-1893 – now required of ships entering the United States. However, the information recorded is somewhat limited
- 1893-1906 – additional information (such as marital status, last residence, final destination, literacy, etc.) recorded
- 1906-ON – now required physical description of passenger, place of birth, address of closest living relative in country of origin
- Watch out for variations of both given and surnames, as these were often transliterated or “anglicized”
- Watch out for variations of listed nationalities, particularly if your ancestors are from Europe. Different records may list different countries and **both** can be correct as political borders often changed during periods of conflict
- Passenger lists did not record relationships, even if individuals shared a last name. In fact, they may still have been related if their last names were different

Beyond passenger lists, other immigration records to be aware of include:

- US Naturalization Records
- US Passport Applications (ancestors often travelled back and forth)
- Alien Registration Cards
- Border Crossings (Canada and Mexico [remember: often cheaper to enter the US via Canada or Mexico])

The level of traffic at various Ports of Arrival and Departure was dynamic. Between the years **1880-1920**, these were the most significant ports that immigrants used to reach the United States:

### Major Ports of Arrival to the United States

New York, Boston, Baltimore, Philadelphia, New Orleans and San Francisco

### Major Ports of Departure from Europe

Liverpool (England), Bremen (Germany), Naples (Italy), Antwerp (Belgium) and Hamburg (Germany)

- It is important to remember that simply because your ancestors **departed** from a specific port does not mean that they were actually **from** that area
- Remember, everyone did not arrive at Ellis Island. The Immigration Station there was not operation until **January 1, 1892.**

### Finding Your Female Ancestors

- Trace **ALL** of the children in your family. The children may not all belong to the same mother and this is not always apparent
- Check obituaries for maiden names. If parents not listed, perhaps a sibling is. If a sister has married, trace her new family.
  - Were the pallbearers named? If your female ancestor did not have sons old enough to serve, perhaps they were nephews, cousins or some other distant relation
- Check the census to see where the husband had lived before the marriage. Where are they listed as living afterwards in the next census? Where was the first child born?
  - If they are all the same location, try searching with only her first name and add other information
- Check all legal records (birth, death, marriage, baptismal, land, naturalization, military, etc.) for witnesses. If not her father, may be a brother, uncle, cousin, etc. Collect as many as you can and research them
- If all else fails, check your records and search again. **Really.** You are now a more sophisticated user of Ancestry.com. You would be surprised as to what you may have previously overlooked

### Native American Records

- If you had ancestors living in the United States during the early 1800s, you have a 50% chance that at least one relative is of Native American ancestry
- Take the time to learn about the geographic area where tribes lived and compare that information with that of your ancestors
- The Bureau of Indian Affairs (<http://www.bia.gov/>) is an incredible resource for discovering more about your native ancestry, including tribal information

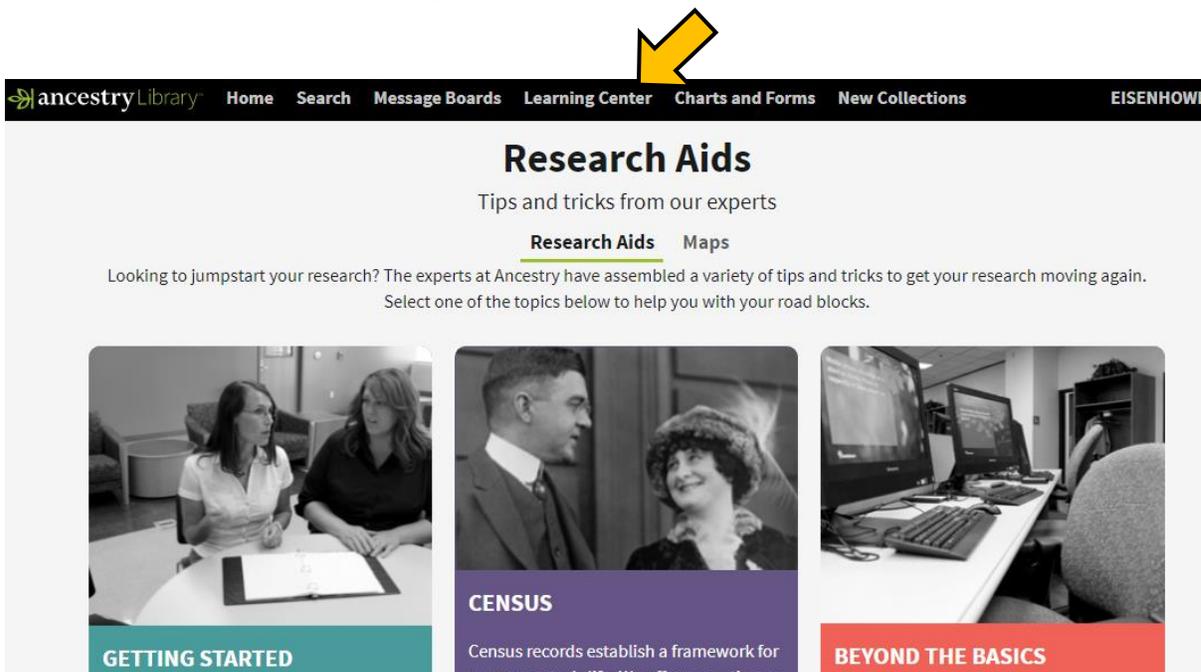
Once you have determined a tribal affiliation, you are now ready to begin searching Native American records.

### Military Records

Military records make up the largest collection available on Ancestry.com, spanning from the Revolutionary War until Vietnam. These include: draft cards, cadet applications, POWs of Japanese, etc. These collections will be examined in detail during our “Military Records on Ancestry.com” class.

## Additional Resources: The Learning Center

A great source of additional information and help is Ancestry.com's **Learning Center**, which can always be found at the center of the menu bar at the top of your screen.



ancestryLibrary Home Search Message Boards Learning Center Charts and Forms New Collections EISENHOWE

### Research Aids

Tips and tricks from our experts

Research Aids Maps

Looking to jumpstart your research? The experts at Ancestry have assembled a variety of tips and tricks to get your research moving again. Select one of the topics below to help you with your road blocks.

**GETTING STARTED**

**CENSUS**  
Census records establish a framework for your ancestor's life. We offer some tips on

**BEYOND THE BASICS**

Here you will be able to find genealogical research and translation guides that can assist you when dealing with records that were originally published in a foreign language, blank charts and forms for almost every record type found within Ancestry, and much more. In addition, please take advantage of Ancestry.com's YouTube Channel, which are regularly updated and full helpful, informative videos that cover a range of topics, search strategies and collection details.