

BRAG BOOKS: BIOGRAPHIES AND COUNTY HISTORIES

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Everyone who does genealogical research comes to a point in their work where they hit the proverbial “Brick Wall”. It does not matter if you are a beginner, an experienced researcher or a professional genealogist, at some point in your research you will have to seek alternative sources for information. The need for alternative sources may be caused by a variety of problems. Usually primary or secondary records have not been created or have not survived.

Biographies may provide the valuable link to information about an ancestor and the problem to be solved. They are often available in a wide variety of research facilities making them easier to access than many primary records. The individual who the biography was about or a close family member often supplied biographical information.

Biographies began in the early 1800s and reached their peak between the 1880s and the early 1900s.

BIOGRAPHIES

TYPES OF BIOGRAPHIES

- * General Biographies
 - * Encyclopedias of ...
 - * Cyclopedias of ...

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* Who's Who in:...

- America
- State Locations
- County Locations
- Regional Areas Locations
- Arts
- Business
- Judicial Areas
- Medicine
- Military Organizations
- Occupations
- Politics and Political Organizations
- Religious Denominations
- Science

TYPES OF INFORMATION FOUND

- * Names and nicknames
- * Birth and Death dates and places
- * Current and former places of residence
- * Parents
- * Siblings
- * Name of spouse(s)
- * Date and place of marriage(s)

- * Divorce information
- * Children Names and nicknames
 - Dates and places of birth
 - Schools attended
- * Education
- * Occupation
- * Place of employment
- * Religious affiliation
- * Political affiliation
- * Military Service
- * Civic affiliations
- * Immigration and Naturalizations
- * Special honors received
- * May include several generations of ancestors
- * May reference other collateral relatives
- * Pictures or artist drawings

Disadvantages To Using Biographies

- * Usually selective rather than comprehensive
- * Had to meet the criteria for inclusion
- * May be enhanced to add color to the subject
- * Few women were included

LOCATING BIOGRAPHIES

- * Public and Private Libraries
- * Government and Private Archives
- * College and University Libraries
- * Historical and Genealogical Society Libraries

LOCAL HISTORIES

COUNTY HISTORIES

Local histories began in the 1850 and continue to be printed in various forms today. County histories may cover an entire county or a small portion of the county. They may also cover one township or town in the county. The amount of detail found in the history will depend on size of the geographic area the history will cover. Larger or multi county histories will contain less detail on individuals and are less likely to include separate biographies of individual citizens. Separate biographies included in these larger histories are usually of very prominent citizens and include only the very basic details of their life. Generally, they will include the name, residence, birth date and place, occupation, spouse, date and place of marriage and names of their children.

TYPES OF INFORMATION FOUND

- * History of the locality
- * Founder(s) of the locality
- * Prominent Citizens
- * Biographical background of founders and prominent citizens
- Chronological list of significant events including the history of religious, political or civic groups
- * Erection of important buildings
- * Natural disasters

- * Military events and involvement.
- * Maps of historical significance
- * Land Ownership maps
- * Businesses
- * Interviews with older or prominent citizens

LOCATING BIOGRAPHIES

- * Public and Private Libraries
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Analyzing and Evaluating Biographical Information

As with any secondary source of information, the information found in biographies and county histories should be verified with other sources. When ever possible primary sources should be used for verification. When primary sources are not available, the following criteria should be considered in determining the creditability of the information found.

Who supplied the information for the biography? Was it supplied by the individual, a family member or someone with an interest in the outcome of the biography? Was the information given by someone with personal knowledge or was it secondary information provided by someone else?

Has the publication been published by a publishing house or company using quality printing and binding methods?

Is the publication a good quality work or has it been sloppily put together? Is it full of obvious mistakes in spelling and grammar?

Are the biographies documented with information sources so that the facts can be evaluated? If each biography is not documented, does the compiler explain how the information was gathered in an introduction or forward to the book?

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