

## Top Ten “Go To” Records

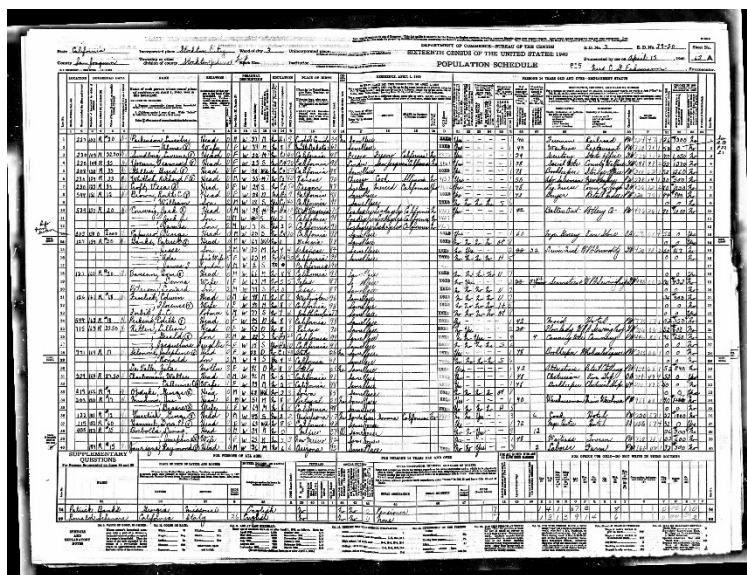
Here are my top ten “must look for” records. These are your classic standard records you should be looking for when researching every ancestor. Keep in mind that this is not everything. This list could have been the top 100 list, but this is a great start.

### #1 Wills & Probate

Wills and probate records topped the list of places you should be looking. While not everybody had a will, you may find a probate packet for your ancestor even if they died without a will (a.k.a. intestate). Probate packets and wills can often be found on Ancestry.com in the United States and at the State Archives. For more recent Wills and Probates, you might need to look to the county courthouse in which the death occurred.



### #2 Census



Census records are often the backbone of our genealogical research because they happened every decade in the United States. They can provide excellent information of our ancestors life, family, occupation, landholdings, age, place of birth, parents place of birth, immigration status, and locations throughout their lifetime. The type and amount of information found within censuses vary throughout the years. Keep in mind that in the United States Federal Census records are available from 1790 through 1950 currently, except for 1890 which

burned in a fire.

Federal census records come in many forms, such as the most popular being Population Schedules, but then there is also Agricultural, Mortality, and Slave schedules (depending on the year).

Don't forget to look for State Census Schedules as well. What you'll find depends on the state and year and information within these records will vary from state to state.



GenealogyTV.org



YouTube.com/GenealogyTV

## #3 Vital Records



Vital records include birth, marriage and death. Keep in mind that, in the United States, most birth and death records were not available until around 1909 and many locations did not come into compliance in until as late as 1919.

You may find marriage records that go back to the mid 1800's and in some areas even earlier.

Look for indexes and registries, but more importantly seek the original records whenever possible.

Look for Marriage Banns and Bonds that stated a

couples intent to marry.

## #4 Maps & Migrations

I find that many people overlook maps and migration patterns. Your ancestors had to have gotten there somehow. How did they get there?

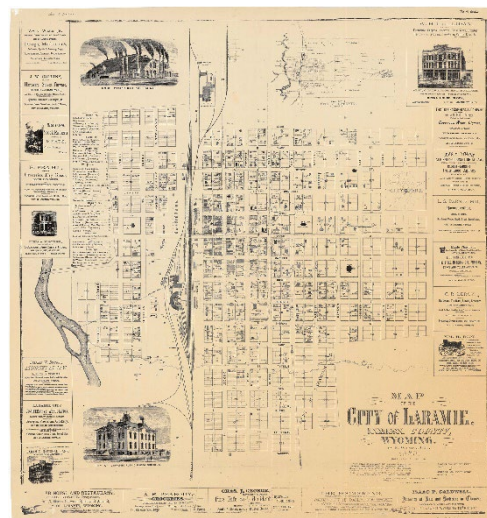
State archives are an excellent resource for historical maps. Also look to the local county libraries, historical and genealogical Societies.



## #5 Cemeteries

Cemeteries and cemetery records are excellent sources of information. Not only can you find the tombstones, but if the office is still active at the cemetery, you can often find records of your ancestors burial, including information about the family. Typically, it was the family who filled out the burial paperwork.

Don't forget there are free online resources such as [FindAGrave.com](http://FindAGrave.com) and [BillionGraves.com](http://BillionGraves.com) and [CemeteryCensus.com](http://CemeteryCensus.com) (in select states).

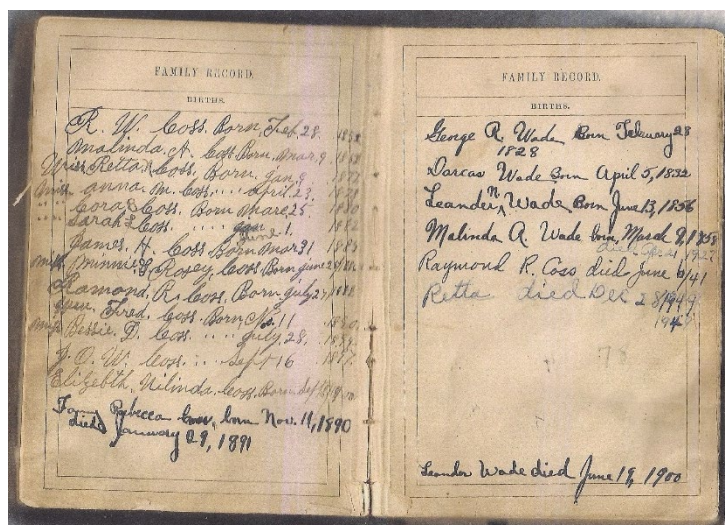


## #6 Bibles

Bible records can include birth, marriage and death information, as well as other religious information.

Look to the front matter of the Bibles to determine when the Bible was produced. This will give you an indication as to when the information contained within was written into the family bible.

Research the descendants to see if they may have inherited the family bible. In online resources, look in the other member galleries for images of bibles.



Often state genealogical societies do projects where they scan family bibles and preserve them. Also look to state archives.

## #7 Immigration & Naturalization

With the Immigration and Naturalization category, there are three sets of records. You have Immigration records, (records where people are arriving into a new country), Emigration records (where people are leaving the country), and there are Naturalization records (where someone is achieving citizenship).

With Naturalization records in the United States, a person had to apply with their “first papers.” First, papers were merely your intent to become a citizen and pledge your allegiance to the United States. Then five years later, they would apply their “final papers” in order to receive their citizenship.

Keep in mind that a woman who married a man who was already a citizen, she became a citizen automatically and may not have naturalization papers.

In some cases, soldiers were able to expedite the naturalization process to achieve citizenship while serving in the military.

If you find the passenger list for your ancestor, look for the image of the ship. This image is from [NorwayHeritage.com](http://NorwayHeritage.com).



*S.S. Geiser Painted by Antonio Jacobsen 1882*



## #8 City Directories

City directories are an excellent source of information as they were often created every two years. This helps create a timeline of your ancestor and where they were. Additionally, if they moved, it was often noted in the last city directory they appeared in and often it would name the place in which they moved.

A married couple would often be listed together, usually with the wife's name in parentheses. You can also find occupations, address and phone number in the city directories. If your ancestor owned a business, look for ads.

**VOLPE H THOMAS (Eleanor S) v-pres The  
Melcher & Prescott Agency Inc LA  
4-4535 h Severance rd LA 4-4567**

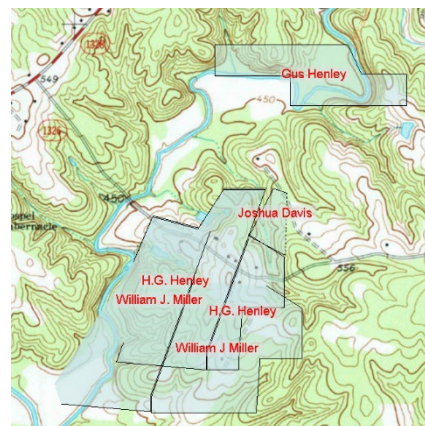
Be sure to look for all city directories and import them into your documents. This will give you a fuller timeline.

## #9 Land & Deeds

Land and deed records are usually held at the county level, usually at the Registrar of Deeds office, but may have been moved to the State Archives for older records (depending on the location).

Be sure to look for plat maps as well. If you find land records, research the land owners prior to and after your ancestors ownership. It could be that the land was handed down to their children or inherited it from their elders.

If you have a land description in either a will or deed, you can use land platting software like Deed Mapper found at [Direct Line Software](#)



## #10 Newspapers

Newspapers are some of the best places to find birth, marriage, obituaries, business, and social announcements. This is the color, the stories, the nitty gritty of what was happening in your ancestors lifetime.

**Prairie Center.**  
Mrs. Kautz called on Mrs. Barnes Monday.  
J. S. Steed made a trip to Olathe last week.  
Miss Ethel Oshel Oshel is slowly improving.  
Gus Henley purchased a fine span of mules Monday.

## #11 Family Histories and Manuscripts

Of course, whenever possible, you want to seek out family histories and manuscripts. I find best luck finding that information at the state archives and the state libraries. These can also be found at county libraries. A simple Google search may discover Family Histories. Search Google Books. Search all of the online platforms such as Ancestry.com, FamilySearch.org, and MyHeritage.com.

**CITE YOUR SOURCES for all records you find!**