



The Art of Finding Living People

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- What is Descendancy Research?
 - “Reverse Genealogy” – Instead of searching for your ancestors, you’re searching for their descendants
 - Similarities and differences with traditional genealogy
- Why would you want to locate living people?
 - Family members lost to time
 - Collaborate with family members
 - Searching for biological family
 - Other Forensic genealogy
 - Heir search, mineral rights
 - Identify DNA matches
- Look but Don’t Touch
 - Begin researching living people like you’re visiting a museum
 - You want to conduct research on living people without disturbing anything (at least initially)
 - It may be tempting to message, call, or write a living relative immediately, but it’s important to not shake the tree unless you’re prepared (assuming it’s even necessary to make contact at all)
- How to Research Living People
 - Genealogical Proof Standard
 - Identify your research question
 - Going up and down the tree
 - Make sure your initial information is well-researched and accurate
 - Build your trees laterally
 - Identify all the descendants of common ancestors and research each line into the present
 - Important: It doesn’t have to be pricey to locate living relatives
- Tools for Finding Living People
 - Do you have any clues from your initial resources?
 - Do you have a name or username? Age? A place of residence?
 - Google or other search engines

- How you search can provide more precise search results
- Quotation marks “ ”
- Wildcards – Question mark (?), asterisk (*), Percent (%), Underscore (_)
 - On Google, asterisk for whole word wildcards; single or multiple letters don't work as well
- Boolean searches
 - AND, OR, NOT (- on Google)



🔍 "Adina Newman" AND genealogy



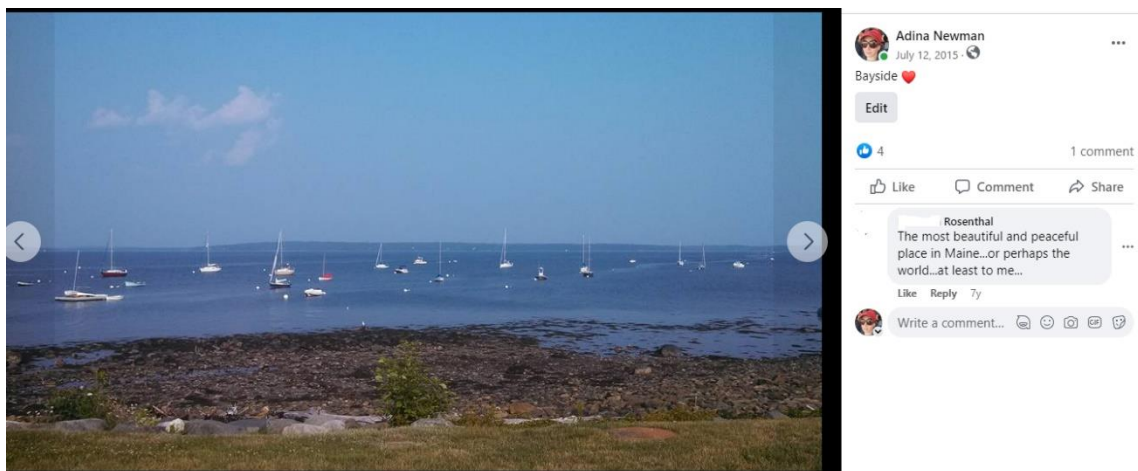
🔍 "Adina Newman" OR "My Family Genie"



🔍 "Adina Newman" -genealogy



- Pre-Existing Family Trees
 - Although it's important to verify all information found in family trees, pre-existing family trees can provide an important launch point to help you identify and locate living people
 - Ancestry, MyHeritage, Geni, Wikitree
- People finding websites
 - You can explore several people finding sites without a fee, such as White Pages, Clustrmaps, FastPeopleSearch
 - Not all information is necessarily accurate or up to date, but serves as a starting point
 - Can also pay for more detailed results (e.g., BeenVerified)
 - Public records also available at Ancestry, FamilySearch
- Newspapers
 - Newspaper articles, especially obituaries, can provide detailed information on living people
 - Legacy.com has several more recent obituaries
 - Newspapers.com, GenealogyBank, Chronicling America, newspapers available through the local library
- Social Media platforms
 - Facebook
 - Besides locating people of interest, look at friends lists, wall posts, photo comments and likes to build the network of the person of interest
 - Other social media platforms like Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn may also provide information on living people and point to other relatives



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- Yearbooks
 - Several available on Ancestry and MyHeritage
 - Classmates.com, E-Yearbook.com
 - Local libraries, archives, and genealogical societies also may have yearbooks within their collections
- How to Locate an Elusive Relative
 - Speak to Relatives
 - They might offer clues to help you narrow your search, such as a previous residence, occupation, a spouse or child's name
 - Look at the FAN Club
 - If you're dealing with common names in more populated areas, it can be helpful to focus on other family members associated with your person of interest that are easier to track down
 - Examples: Check relatives on people finding sites, friends or followers on social media platforms
 - Cyndi's List, FamilySearch Research Wiki can provide insight into potential resources and areas of interest
- Contacting Living Relatives
 - If you've decided you want to make contact, identify your goals
 - Sometimes people get spooked when people contact them, so it's helpful to identify yourself and clearly state your objectives
 - Consider your audience: Will you send a message through a genealogy database (e.g., Ancestry)? Call them? Email them? Write and mail a letter? Send a Facebook message?
 - Might you have something to offer them? If you're looking for information, it might help to offer a living relative information you have or a copy of a record or photograph in your possession to show good faith
 - It's important to understand that relatives may not be receptive to contact. Be patient. Your relatives may need time to process your question and/or request, especially if it's about a delicate matter (e.g., surprise biological family). Provide them with your contact information, and if you need to follow up, keep the communication positive and productive. You cannot force relationships, but your best chance is to make a good first impression, be clear in your objectives, and remain cordial in your follow-up