

A high-angle photograph of a surfer riding a large, curling blue wave. The surfer is positioned in the lower-left quadrant of the frame, riding the base of the wave's face. The wave is a vibrant blue color, and the background is a clear, bright blue sky.

Surfing for Ancestors

**Getting the Most out of
Genealogy Web Sites**

**Also online with live links at:
RCGSWI.org/tutorials**

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COURSE OVERVIEW

- EVALUATE & CITE ONLINE RECORDS**
- SEARCH ENGINE TIPS & TRICKS**
- MESSAGE BOARDS & MAILING LISTS**
- LOCATE SURNAME RESEARCHERS**
- ONLINE GENEALOGY DATABASES**



EVALUATING ONLINE RECORDS

THE HARSH REALITY:

- **75% of Genealogical Records are not (yet) Online, and**
- **50% of what is Online is Unreliable (un-sourced, wishful compilations)**



EVALUATING ONLINE RECORDS

ATTRIBUTES OF ONLINE FACTS

- **The Source:** Original or Derivative
Is a source the original (or image) OR a re-typed or indexed version?
- **The Information:** Primary or Secondary
Did the person reporting a fact witness it OR hear from others?
- **The Evidence:** Direct or Indirect
Does the evidence directly prove OR indirectly hint at a conclusion?



EVALUATING ONLINE RECORDS

DOCUMENTING ONLINE FACTS

- **Citation:** Specific info pointing to a fact that will lead others to the same Fact
- **Source:** The book, web page, person, or publication where the Citation is found
- **Repository:** The library, web site or location where the Source is found



WEB SURFING MYTHS

- **ALL SEARCH ENGINES ARE ALIKE**
- **ALL SEARCH ENGINES WORK FROM CURRENT INDEXES**
- **ALL SEARCH ENGINES PRODUCE IDENTICAL SEARCH RESULTS**
- **SEARCH ENGINES HAVE FULLY INDEXED THE INTERNET**



WEB SURFING MYTHS

- **ONCE YOU FIND A WEB PAGE, YOU CAN ALWAYS GO BACK TO IT LATER**
- **SEARCH ENGINES ARE “DUMB” BRUTE FORCE TOOLS**
- **YOU CAN FIND ANYTHING ON THE INTERNET WITH WELL-REFINED SEARCH TECHNIQUES**
- **WHEN GOOGLE SHOWS 857,000 TOTAL HITS, THE RESULTS LIST CONTAINS 857,000 LINKS**



SEARCH ENGINE TIPS & TRICKS

USE THE RIGHT SEARCH ENGINE(S)

- **Google.com** (75% Market Share)
- **Bing.com** (Microsoft owned)
- **Linkpendium.com** (Directory)
- **DuckDuckGo.com** (Privacy)
- **Mocava.com** (Genealogy)

Search Engine List: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_search_engines



SEARCH ENGINE TIPS & TRICKS

USE A METASEARCH ENGINE(S)

- Mama.com
- iBoogie.com
- FamilyTreeSearcher.com

CONSIDER A DESKTOP META-ENGINE

- www.Copernic.com



SEARCH ENGINE TIPS & TRICKS

FIX #1 “404 - SITE NOT FOUND”

- HIT BACK BUTTON & RETURN TO RESULTS
- EXAMINE THE “BROKEN” SEARCH RESULT FOR A “[Cache](#)” LINK
- CLICK “[Cache](#)” TO VIEW TEMPORARILY SAVED WEB PAGE IMAGE
- COPY & PASTE KEY INFO TO YOUR PC



SEARCH ENGINE TIPS & TRICKS

FIX #2 “404 - SITE NOT FOUND”

- COPY THE URL (WEB ADDRESS)
- GO TO: WWW.ARCHIVE.ORG
- SEE: “WAYBACK MACHINE” SEARCH BOX
- PASTE THE COPIED URL INTO THE BOX
- VIEW A TIMELINE OF WEB “SNAPSHOTS”
- SELECT & OPEN AN OLDER ARCHIVED VERSION OF THE SITE WITH YOUR INFO.



SEARCH ENGINE TIPS & TRICKS

SEARCH DENSE TEXT PAGES QUICKLY

- **ACTIVATE YOUR BROWSER'S "FIND" TOOL**
(**Edit > Find**, or alternatively hit **Cntrl + F**)
- **IN THE FIND FIELD, TYPE THE MOST OBSCURE OF YOUR SEARCH TERMS**
- **CLICK THE "Find or Next" BUTTON TO QUICKLY JUMP FROM INSTANCE TO INSTANCE WITHIN A LONG WEB PAGE**



SEARCH ENGINE TIPS & TRICKS

THE BASICS

- **USE lower case SEARCH TERMS**
- **DUBLE-CHEK YOUR'E SPELING**
- **SEARCH BOTH WHOLE WORDS
& ABBREV.**
- **AVOID PLURAL NOUNS**



SEARCH ENGINE TIPS & TRICKS

THE BASICS

- **SELECT SEARCH TERMS THAT ARE SPECIFIC, BUT NOT TOO SPECIFIC**
- **THEN, REPEATEDLY REVISE YOUR SEARCH BASED ON THE NUMBER & QUALITY OF SEARCH RESULTS**
- **AIM FOR 200 OR FEWER RESULTS WITH SOME RELEVANT HITS IN THE TOP 20**



SEARCH ENGINE TIPS & TRICKS

SPECIAL OPERATORS (Google)

- SEARCH USING **AND**¹ TO DECREASE RESULTS
william AND clinton Hits: 151,000,000 100%
- SEARCH USING **OR** TO INCREASE RESULTS
bill OR william clinton Hits: 276,000,000 182%
- SEARCH QUOTE MARKS (“ ”) TO FIND PHRASES
“william clinton” Hits: 321,000 0.2%

¹ search engines treat a space between two search terms the same as an **AND** operator (**william clinton** is treated the same as **william AND clinton**)



SEARCH ENGINE TIPS & TRICKS

SPECIAL OPERATORS (Google)

- **ASTERISK (*) WILDCARD FINDS MISSING WORDS**
“william * clinton” Hits: 111,000,000 74%
- **AUTOMATICALLY FIND SYNONYMS**
“william clinton” genealogy Hits: 21,100 0.0014%
- **A PLUS SIGN (+) forced INCLUSION of search term**
“william clinton” +genealogy Hits: 8 0.0001%
- **A MINUS SIGN (-) forced EXCLUSION of search term**
“william clinton” -monica Hits: 293,000 0.2%



SEARCH ENGINE TIPS & TRICKS

CREATIVE COMBINATIONS (Google)

- FORWARD & REVERSE NAME PHRASES 426,000 2.8%
“william clinton” OR “clinton, william”
- NAME PLUS RESEARCH TARGET TERMS 523,000 3.5%
“william clinton” OR “clinton, william” +will
- NAME PLUS GEOGRAPHIC LIMITER 142,000 0.1%
“william clinton” OR “clinton, william” arkansas
- MAN’S SURNAME & WIFE’S MAIDEN NAME 64,500 0.4%
clinton rodham genealogy



SEARCH ENGINE TIPS & TRICKS

ADVANCED SEARCH PAGE (Google)

Go to www.Google.com; Click [Advanced Search](#)

A screenshot of the Google Advanced Search page. The page has a light blue header with "Advanced Search" on the left and "Advanced Search Tips" on the right. Below the header, there are four radio button options: "with all of the words", "with the exact phrase", "with at least one of the words", and "without the words". To the right of these options are three empty search input boxes. Further right, there is a dropdown menu showing "10 results" and a "Google Search" button. Four blue arrows point from the text below to the search options and input boxes.

Exact Phrase = “ ”

All of the Words = AND

Without the Words = -

At Least Some of the Words = OR



SEARCH ENGINE TIPS & TRICKS

COMPLEX GOOGLE SEARCH TERMS

- SEARCH WITHIN AN ENTIRE WEB SITE

site:www.Rootsweb.com “elijah james” 29 hits

- SEARCH FOR SITES WITH LINKS TO A WEB SITE

link:www.Vesterheim.org “Ole Skavlem” 24 hits

- SEARCH FOR ONLINE GEDCOM FAMILY TREES

filetype:ged “george bradford” 5 hits

- SEARCH FOR SURNAME WEB SITES

allintitle:“bradford genealogy” 302 hits



SEARCH ENGINE TIPS & TRICKS

USE ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

This site produces a list of smart and pre-formatted genealogical searches

www.familytreesearcher.com/



SEARCH ENGINE TIPS & TRICKS

SEARCHING PROBLEM SURNAMES

- **Occupational Surnames**

Tailor, Cooper, Baker, Brewer

- **Animal Surnames**

Wolf, Fox, Sparrow, Hawk, Robin

- **Geographic Surnames**

Lane, Street, Church, Hall, Rivers



SEARCH ENGINE TIPS & TRICKS

- **Strategy # 1: Use Search Engine Operators**
Search: brewer +surname -baseball -beer
- **Strategy # 2: Surname-Only Web Sites**
www.searchforancestors.com/quicksearch
<http://lists.rootsweb.com>
<http://www.linkpendium.com/families/>
- **Strategy # 3: Find Surname Researchers**
<http://rsl.rootsweb.ancestry.com>



SEARCH ENGINE TIPS & TRICKS



Finding our roots together.

Welcome to RootsWeb.com [Sign in](#)



[DISCOVER MORE >](#)

[Home](#)

[Searches](#)

[Family Trees](#)

[Mailing Lists](#)

[Message Boards](#)

[Web Sites](#)

[Passwords](#)

[Help](#)

Surnames matching Radle

New entries are marked by a +, modified entries by a *, and expiring entries by an x. Clicking on the highlighted code words will give the name and address of the researcher who submitted the surname. (If no names are listed below this line, then none were found.)

[Alternate Surnames](#) (Click for a detailed list of alternates)

You might have to scroll left or right to view all of the information

Surname	From	To	Migration	Submitter	Comment
Radle	1758	1919	GER>PA	arobbin	
Radle	1795	now	DEU>PA>IL>MO>OK,USA	dholland	
Radle	1830	now	AUT>WI	Sukey	
RADLE	1890	1973	PA? > Rock Co., WI, USA	brad4d	Geo Bixby RADLE (PA?) m. Alice FEIRN, Rock Co., WI
Radle	Mo	Ky	Mo>Ky	dkqualls	

Surfing for Ancestors – Getting the Most out of Genealogy Web Sites



SEARCH ENGINE TIPS & TRICKS

GOOGLE TOOLS FOR GENEALOGISTS

- **GOOGLE BOOK SEARCH** search: bradford genealogy
books.google.com
- **GOOGLE IMAGE SEARCH** search: “hiram bradford” portrait
images.google.com
- **GOOGLE NEWS ARCHIVES** search: “ira bradford” plymouth
news.google.com/archivesearch
- **GOOGLE ALERTS** build automatic ongoing Google searches:
read ‘how-to’ article: rcgswi.org/google-alerts



MESSAGE BOARDS & MAILING LISTS



MESSAGE BOARDS (a place)

Searchable electronic (Web) bulletin boards organized by surnames, locations or other topics. Also known as ***discussion groups***. Users can post & reply to messages from one another. “Lurking” users can just read and review others “threads” or chains of historical discussions.

MESSAGE BOARDS & MAILING LISTS



MAILING LISTS (a group of people)

- Discussion forums which operate through email. Also known as a listserv.
- A group of subscribers to a message board who receive a mass email detailing each new posting (**list mode**) or collected weekly summaries of new postings (**digest mode**).

MESSAGE BOARDS & MAILING LISTS



Ancestry: boards.ancestry.com/

RootsWeb: boards.RootsWeb.com

AOL: rootsweb.com/~jfuller/gen_mail.html

GenForum: genforum.genealogy.com/

Helm's Toolbox: genealogytoolbox.com/

YourFamily: yourfamily.com/genealogy.html

MESSAGE BOARDS & MAILING LISTS



SURNAME MESSAGE BOARDS USES

- SEARCH FOR A SURNAME OR PERSON
- ADD TO AN EXISTING CONVERSATION
- POST A NEW MESSAGE
- SUBSCRIBE TO RECEIVE EMAIL NOTICES OF NEW POSTINGS (LIST or DIGEST MODE)



MESSAGE BOARDS & MAILING LISTS

POST A QUERY TO A MESSAGE BOARD

- The **Post New Message** page opens with empty text fields
- Note the **Five Options/Actions** available to you:
 - **Your Name:** Consider revising to a **first name only**
 - **Subject Line:** **ANCESTOR NAME, LOCATION, DATE**
 - **Query Body:** (**see next slide** for best practice)
 - **Notify me when anyone replies:** **Check the box**
 - **Display my email for my messages:** **Check the box**



MESSAGE BOARDS & MAILING LISTS

QUERY SUGGESTIONS (Best Practice)

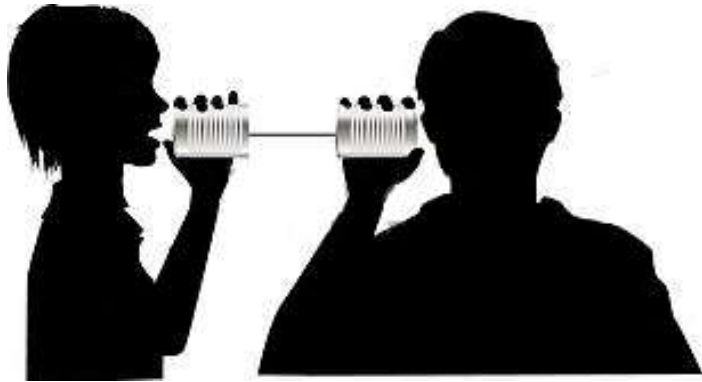
- **Short focused Subject Line: Name, Location & Date facts**
- **Type SURNAMES: all Capital Letters (e.g., Edna WAITE)**
- **To help others' searches: Repeat Surname for each Given Name; Show both Maiden & Married names**
- **No Initials or Middle Names, except A.K.A. after Full Name**
- **No Abbreviations (DO NOT use Wf, b., marr., bur., div., etc.)**
- **Ask for Assistance; Provide your “Conditions for Sharing”**



MESSAGE BOARDS & MAILING LISTS

CONSTRUCT AN INFORMATIVE SUBJECT LINE

Ira BRADFORD (1830-1895) Vermont > New York > Wisconsin



MESSAGE BOARDS & MAILING LISTS

Ira BRADFORD (1830-1895) Vermont > New York > Wisconsin

Seeking information about Ira BRADFORD, born 1820 in Eastern Townships of Quebec, Canada or Berkshire, Franklin County, Vermont to Joseph BRADFORD and Percis BRADFORD (nee Percis DARRAH). Ira married Sarah Bradford (nee Sarah SWEETING) in Syracuse, Onondaga County, New York. Ira pioneered Plymouth, Sheboygan County, Wisconsin in 1842 where he died in 1895. Sergeant Ira A. BRADFORD also served in Civil War. His children: Helen BRADFORD, George BRADFORD, DeWitt BRADFORD, Charles BRADFORD, Frank BRADFORD, Celia BRADFORD, Morton BRADFORD & William BRADFORD. I have good source citation/ Will share photos & documents with family.



LOCATE SURNAME RESEARCHERS

Find Surname Researchers Online

- **Rootsweb Surname List:** rsl.rootsweb.com/
Email contact info for surname researchers organized by state & country
- **Surname Stuff –** Ancestry.com/learn/facts/
Surname Meaning, Origin, Life Expectancy, Immigration Rate & Occupations
- **Surname Stuff –** SurnameWeb.org
Tons of Resources: Surname Origins, Researchers, Family Web Sites & more
- **Surname Stuff –** Linkpendium.com/families/
Linkpendium Family Discoverer finds Surname among 2.8 million sites



LOCATE SURNAME RESEARCHERS

Find Living Surnames in a Location

- Go to www.phonebooks.com
- Click People Search tab
- Enter Last Name, City & State; click “Search”
- From results page, click: “View Full Profile”
- Cold call carefully, *“Hello, my name is Sarah Williams and I think we might be related. My great grandfather was...”*
- Be polite & low key – ask if someone is the local family historian.



ONLINE GENEALOGY DATABASES

FREE *GENERAL DATABASE* SITES

- **Ancestry** – www.Ancestry.com (\$\$\$, free at Hedberg Library)
25,000 databases; census, BDM, newspapers, military, trees, maps, more
- **RootsWeb** – www.RootsWeb.com (free)
Msg. boards, mail lists, trees, SSDI, user web sites, World Connect, RSL
- **USGenWeb** – www.USGenWeb.com (free)
Volunteer-run, State & County level databases; content & quality vary
- **American Local Hist Netwk** – www.ALHN.com (free)
Vast array of topics and County level detail; content & quality vary
- **LDS Family Search** – www.FamilySearch.org (free)
Ancestral File, IGI, Pedigree Resource File, British, US & Canadian Census



ONLINE GENEALOGY DATABASES

GENEALOGY "PORTAL" SITES

- **Linpendium WI** – Linkpendium.com/wi-genealogy/
Comprehensive genealogy links for Wisconsin; drill down by county; (free)
- **Surname Web** – SurnameWeb.org (free)
Tons of Resources: Surname Origins, Researchers, Web Sites & more
- **Cyndi's List** – CyndisList.com (free)
Over a Quarter Million Links on every conceivable genealogy topic
- **WI Full Text** – RCGSWI.org/full-text-resources.html
35 links to Full Text, searchable Books, Atlases, Directories & more (free)
- **WisList** – RootsWeb.com/roots-I/USA/wi.html
RootsWeb's exhaustive list of Wis. Genealogy Links of all Kinds (free)



ONLINE GENEALOGY DATABASES

SPECIALIZED DATABASE SITES

- **Biographies** – www.USBiographies.org (free)
Many thousands of published biographies organized by Co. & State
- **Land Records** – www.glorerecords.blm.gov (free)
Federal land records and document images, 1820 - 1908
- **Civil War Service** – www.itd.nps.gov/cwss (free)
Names & information for 6.3 million Union & Confederate soldiers
- **Burials** – www.FindAGrave.com (free)
Over 20 million graves – many with photos, inscriptions and GPS coord.'s
- **Immigration** – <http://stevemorse.org> (free)
Custom Searches of Ellis Island, Castle Garden and other Ports of Arrival



ONLINE GENEALOGY DATABASES

SPECIALIZED DATABASE SITES

- National Archives Passenger & Ship Lists–
<https://aad.archives.gov/aad/series-list.jsp?cat=GP44> (free)
- Canadian Census Records 1901/1911/1921 –
<http://www.automatedgenealogy.com/> (free)
- Free UK Birth, Marriage & Death Records–
<http://www.freebmd.org.uk/cgi/search.pl> (free)
- Castle Garden (Pre-Ellis Island) Immigration –
<http://www.castlegarden.org/searcher.php> (free)



ONLINE GENEALOGY DATABASES

ROCK Co, & WI DATABASE SITES

- **RCGS** – RCGSWI.org (free; some pages are ‘members-only’)
Search Rock Co. pioneers, Indexes, tutorials, webinars & 100’s of Links
- **WHS** – WisconsinHistory.org/genealogy (free)
WI State Historical Soc.: WI obituaries, Vital Records, biographies & photos
- **WSGS Rock Co.** – WSGS.org/cpage.php?pt=76
WI Genealogical Society Rock Co. Page: Book Indexes, Cemetery List
- **HPL** – HedbergPublicLibrary.org/refgenealogy.php
Hedberg Public Library Online Subscriptions – Free at home w/HPL card
- **Rock** - RCGSWI.org/150-rock-co-links.html
RCGS resource page – 150 links for online Rock County resources (free)



ONLINE GENEALOGY DATABASES

FREE FUN GENEALOGY SITES

- **Surname Maps** – www.locatemyname.com/ (free)
View your surnames' geographic distribution on worldwide maps
- **Surname Maps** – <http://forebears.io/surnames> (free)
Search US & European surnames for meaning & geographic distribution
- **Surname Info** – www.Ancestry.com/learn/facts/
Surname Meaning, Origin, Life Expectancy, Immigration Rate & Occupations
- **MyFamily** – www.MyFamily.com (free)
Easily build a Family Web Site; Share Trees, Photos & Audio (by phone!)
- **Family Crests** – www.houseofnames.com (free)
View family crests, ancestral origins and heraldic lore



***BAD* ONLINE GENEALOGY DATABASES**

FRAUDULENT GENEALOGY SITES

- **SearchYourGenealogy.com**

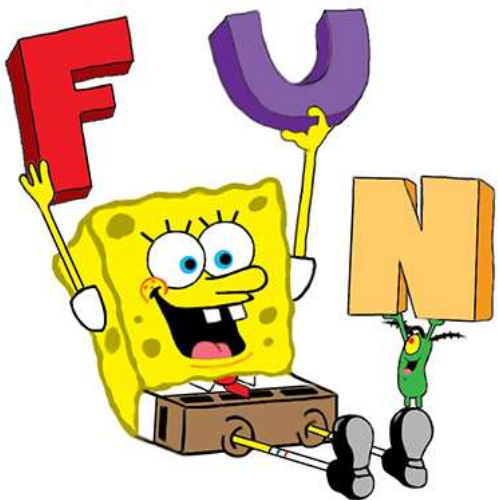
The sites claim to have “the largest online genealogical search tool”

- **Ancestry-search.com**

promoted as the foremost genealogy resource, but charge for links to others

- **Australian-Ancestry.com**

Blogs report false, misleading and deceitful promotional materials



ONLINE GENEALOGY DATABASES

FREE FUN GENEALOGY SITES

- **Kids** – kids.familytreemagazine.com/kids/default.aspx
View suggested beginner activities for youngsters (free)
- **Surname Maps** – <http://forebears.io/surnames> (free)
Search US & European surnames for meaning & geographic distribution
- **Surname Info** – www.ancestry.com/learn/facts/
Surname Meaning, Origin, Life Expectancy, Immigration Rate & Occupations
- **Software** - www.cyndislist.com/software/free/ (free)
Genealogy software – both local & cloud software for PC or Mac systems
- **Family Crests** – www.houseofnames.com (free)
View family crests, ancestral origins and heraldic lore

A high-angle photograph of a surfer riding a large, curling blue wave. The surfer is positioned in the lower-left quadrant of the frame, riding the face of the wave as it curls over. The water is a vibrant blue, and the sky is a lighter blue with some white clouds. The overall scene is dynamic and energetic.

Surfing for Ancestors

Getting the Most out of Genealogy Web Sites

Questions

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