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Genealogy Resource Guide

The Georgia Historical Society (GHS) Research Center holds a vast collection of material useful to genealogists or anyone conducting family history research. Resources such as the U.S. census, vital records, tax records, military records, cemetery records, and newspapers are some of the most commonly used material, but keep in mind that information about ancestors can be found in many other places. Researchers will find a broad collection of useful resources for the entire state of Georgia – as well as other southern states.

This is not an exhaustive list of all GHS genealogy resources. It is designed to serve as an introduction and to identify several categories of resources. We suggest you search our Research Center Catalogs (www.georgiahistory.com) for specific titles and shelf locations, as well as to identify additional resources such as archival collections, books, pamphlets, and serials related to genealogy or ask reference staff for further information.

Ancestry.com: GHS subscribes to Ancestry.com which is available at the Research Center's public computers. Ancestry.com is a resource for a variety of genealogical information including vital records, census records, military records, immigration records, and tax records, for example:

- *Georgia Property Tax Digests, 1793-1892*: This resource is located in Ancestry.com and allows researchers to locate an ancestor by county, where other important records may also be located (note, the digests list taxes according to where property was owned rather than where the payee lived). The digests do not often indicate family relationships, but they do offer details about a taxpayer and his (or her) estate.

Census Records: United States Census records are available for Georgia and other southern states for the years 1790 (reconstructed), 1820, 1830, 1840, 1850, 1860, 1870, 1880, 1890, 1900, 1910, 1920, and 1930. The Georgia federal censuses for 1790, 1800, and 1810 were destroyed by fire. Records are available in print, on microfilm, or via GHS's subscription to Ancestry.com (available at the public computers). Georgia county census indexes are also available at the Research Center.

Vertical Files: GHS's Genealogy and Biographical vertical files contain miscellaneous genealogical information, including family trees, Bible records, county cemetery indexes, unpublished family histories, newspaper clippings, research notes, and bibliographies. Materials have been donated and in some cases the source of information is not available. Indexes to the vertical files are available in the Research Center or on our website. See reference staff for assistance.

Vital Records: Georgia did not keep a statewide official registry of births or deaths until 1919, or official marriage records until 1805. GHS has some published records of births, deaths, and

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marriages for Chatham County that predate 1919, as well as records, abstracts, and indexes from other counties. Vital records may be available for other counties and locations, please search our Research Center catalogs for specific holdings. Ancestry.com is also a resource for vital records.

- An index to Georgia death certificates for 1919-1994 is available on microfiche. Other death information is available in the Main book collection: *Early Deaths in Savannah, Georgia, 1763-1803: Obituaries and Legal Notices* (Call Number F294 .S2 E37), the *Register of Deaths in Savannah, Georgia* series (Call Number F294 .S2 R35) for dates 1853-1938, as well as in multiple cemetery indexes at call number(s) F294 .S2 B65; C37; L28. GHS also holds the *Chatham County Health Department Death Cards, 1803-1893* (MS 1712) and *Chatham County Coroners Inquests 1845, 1877-1965* (MS 5125).
- Marriage records are available in the Main book collection for dates 1748-1877 in *Marriages of Chatham County, Georgia* (Call Number F292 .C37 M37, volumes I & II). For dates 1964-1971 and 1973-1992, please see our microfiche holdings.
- Will abstracts and indexes from various counties are available at GHS, but we hold few original wills. Search the Research Center catalogs to conduct an Advanced Search with the subject term "Wills" and county name as a keyword or other identifying information to search for these items.
- The City of Savannah Research Library and Municipal Archives holds original Savannah-Chatham County vital records that predate 1919; the Georgia Archives in Morrow also holds microfilm copies of some county records prior to 1919. Certified copies of vital records after 1919 can be obtained either from the Georgia Department of Public Health or the county where the event occurred.

Cemetery Indices: GHS has printed indexes for the four large Savannah cemeteries, as well as records from cemeteries from numerous other counties. Search our Research Center catalogs for specific holdings. For grave listings, search the cemetery general index or the online *City of Savannah Burial Information System* web page (<http://savannah.cemsites.com/>).

City Directories: Savannah City Directories are available in either hardcopy or on microfiche for most years from 1848 to 2001. Information can include name, name of spouse, occupation, and work and home address. Digital copies for many years from 1866-1960 are available online through Ancestry.com via the GHS public computer terminals. Early city directories are available on microfiche for Atlanta, Augusta, Columbus, and Charleston, SC.

Immigration Records: With a few exceptions, GHS does not have passenger manifests. Occasionally, the shipping news in the newspapers report recent arrivals. We have the print version of the *Passenger and Immigration Lists Index* from the first edition (1981) to the 2007 supplement. This is an ongoing index, giving each individual's name, age at arrival, port of arrival, and date of arrival, as well as the source of the information. There is no cumulative index for these volumes. Ancestry.com offers the same information in a searchable online database. GHS also has the *Port of Savannah Index to Naturalization Records, 1794-1910* (MS 1744) for individuals naturalized in Savannah or Chatham County from 1794-1910 (compiled from several original volumes located at the City of Savannah Municipal Library and Archives and at GHS).

Military Records: GHS holds printed records from the American Revolutionary War, War of 1812, Indian wars of the nineteenth century, American Civil War, and Spanish-American War. Search the Research Center catalogs to identify these items. Ancestry.com also offers a large database of military records from the Colonial period through 1981.

Land and Tax Records: These include print, microfilm, and manuscript sources from Savannah, Chatham County, and other Georgia counties. Search our Research Center catalogs to identify these items. Ancestry.com is also a source for land and tax records.

Wills: GHS holds few original wills, but we have several volumes of will abstracts and indices from various counties. Search the Research Center catalogs to identify these items.

Church Records: GHS holds the organizational records of several churches searchable by denomination and geographic location. Search the Research Center catalogs to identify these items.

Family Histories: GHS holds numerous privately published family histories from Georgia and elsewhere. Search the Research Center catalogs to identify these items.

Newspapers: Georgia and Savannah-area newspapers from 1763 to present are available on microfilm. Printed indexes for Savannah-area newspapers are available for the periods 1763-1844, 1850-1891, and June 1929-1985. Indexes for 1891-1895 are available on microfilm. Indexes for Savannah-area newspapers do not exist for September 1895-May 1929. GHS does, however, have the newspapers for these non-indexed years on microfilm.

Archival Collections: The archival collections contain original material ranging from personal papers to photographs to organizational records. Researchers should search the Archival Collection Finding Aids Database to find collections relevant to their research.

- *Georgia Infirmary Records, 1833-1973 (MS 0301):* Contain minute books, patient registers, birth records, and miscellaneous administrative materials. Minute books (5 volumes), January 15, 1833-October 10, 1960, contain minutes, treasurer reports, resolutions, and newspaper clippings. Patient registers (13 volumes) contain the names, addresses, date of admission, date of discharge, age, nativity, occupation, diagnosis, doctor, births, and deaths of patients admitted to the hospital from 1911 to 1973. Birth records are contained in one volume that dates from 1945 to 1956.
- *Victor G. Schreck Collection of Chatham County Property Records, 1730s-1920s (MS 1906):* Contains chains of title prepared by Lawyers Association of Savannah, abstracts of title, court proceedings, correspondence, marriage settlements, wills, and other records related to property in Chatham County, Georgia. The records were collected by Victor G. Schreck when preparing a history of Chatham County land records.
- *Walter Charlton Hartridge, Jr. Collection (MS 1349):* Contains genealogical research collected by Walter Charlton Hartridge, Jr. for over 1,500 individual families (and hundreds more collateral lines) covering the 1700s-1900s. Detailed genealogical charts, correspondence, legal documents, Bible, church and public record abstracts, memoirs, articles and clippings, photographs, etc. are included.