

# Putting a Face to a Name: Finding Old Family Photos

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## Is it possible for the genealogy researcher to find old family photos?

As genealogy researchers, we know a lot about our ancestors. We can place an ancestor on the map at any given point in time. We know what they did for a living, how many children they had, if faith was important to them, and even if they broke the law. In some cases, we even know about their mental health.

**What we really want to know is what they looked like!** Secretly, we wonder if we looked like them. Which side of the family did we take after?

We do have options for finding old family photos and seeing what our ancestors looked like. Even better, many of the places you can search are *free*.

## Tips & Resources To Find Old Family Photos

### 1. Ask Your Family.

Ask your immediate family, AND ask those more distant relatives if they have old family photos. Your ancestors shared family photos.

**Genealogy Tip:** No “cousin” is too far geographically or on the family tree not to have photos of your ancestors (or at least information) on your old family photos.

### 2. Check local and state archives.

Archives often have photograph collections and your ancestors could be among them. Photographs can be found in an archives digital collection or on-site at

the archives. Ask the staff for assistance in where their specific repository keeps its photographs.

**Genealogy Tip:** Ask the archivist about photo collections on the shelf that have not been cataloged yet.

### 3. Church Histories & Directories

Churches of all sizes will often publish a history of their church and/or a directory with photographs of its members. Church histories frequently contain photographs of their founding members.

Find these at:

- The Church Itself
- Current and Former Members
- Local Historical Societies
- Special Collections at University Libraries
- The State or Regional denomination's offices
- The Local Library

### 4. Flickr

Archives and large libraries are using [Flickr](https://www.flickr.com/) [https://www.flickr.com/] to house digital collections including many photographs!

### 5. Yearbooks

Many yearbooks are being digitized and can be found in archives online collections. Find yearbook collections at the large genealogy databases such as [Ancestry.com](https://www.ancestry.com) , [FindMyPast](https://www.findmypast.com) and [MyHeritage](https://www.myheritage.com) also have yearbook collections.

Check the local library and the historical society for where your ancestor lived for copies of yearbooks.

### 6. Orphaned Photo Sites

Spend time searching for your ancestors' photos on orphaned photo sites:

- [DeadFred.com](https://deadfred.com/) [https://deadfred.com/]
- [Ancient Faces](https://www.ancientfaces.com/family_history) [https://www.ancientfaces.com/family\_history]
- [Old Photographs Of African Americans – Unknown Faces \(OPOAA\)](https://www.opoaa.com/) [https://www.opoaa.com/]

## 7. Online Auction Sites

Old family photos sometimes end up in antique shops and online auction sites. Check [Ebay](https://www.ebay.com/) [ https://www.ebay.com/] and [Etsy](#) for old family photos and local antique shops.

## 8. Published Family History Books

Published family histories on a specific family line or surname can contain photographs of your ancestors.

Explore [WorldCat](https://www.worldcat.org/) [https://www.worldcat.org/], [Internet Archive](https://archive.org/) [https://archive.org/] and the local library for family histories.

## 9. Online Family Trees

Explore online family trees for photographs of your ancestors, but *be careful*. Online trees do contain errors.

If you find a photograph of your ancestor in an online family tree, I recommend you reach out to the tree owner. You are both researching the same person and they may have other photographs for that family.

## 10. Google Image Search

Type in an ancestor's name and click on "images" in the results page.

**Genealogy Tip:** I recommend including a date range and location in your search to help narrow down the results.

## 11. Other Miscellaneous Places To Check

- Passport applications - Be sure to check the second page!
- Gravestones
- Vertical files
- Directories
- Newspapers

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