

They All Resided in the Same Area: Creating a Locality Guide

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Locality Guides

A document for you to collect information and links to resources for quick access.

Locality Guides for Purchase (select examples):

- NGS Research in the States:
<https://www.ngsgenealogy.org/ris/>
- Family Tree Magazine State Research Guides:
<https://store.familytreemagazine.com/genealogy-research-state-guides/>

Locality Guides Online (select examples):

- FamilySearch Research Wiki:
https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/Main_Page
- Red Book: American State, County, and Town Sources:
https://wiki.rootsweb.com/wiki/index.php/Red_Book:_American_State,_County,_and_Town_Sources
- Library of Congress - U.S. State and Territory Guides:
<https://guides.loc.gov/local-history-genealogy-research-guides/state>
- The Family History Guide:
<https://thefhguide.com/>

Sample Locality Guides from ProGen:

- ProGen Alumni have access to hundreds of submitted Locality Guides. A few have been made available publicly:

<https://progenstudygroups.com/resources/#dh-tab-resources|2>

NGS Magazine - *Creating and Using Locality Guides as Genealogical Tools* by Jan Joyce, DBA, CG, CGL, AG:

- Article and downloadable Locality Guide template available at Jan Joyce's website:

<https://genealogylogically.com/locality-guide>

Formatting Your Locality Guide

A Locality Guide can be formatted to best fit your needs and be considered a live and flexible document. As new records are discovered or web addresses changed, the guide can be updated accordingly. The flexibility is especially convenient as each locality may have unique record collections that are not applicable to other locations.

Consider keeping the guide on the cloud for easy accessibility while on research trips and at repositories. Many cloud drives have apps that can be accessed from your mobile device for research on the go.

If printing your guide, it is recommended to include full URLs. If your guide is only going to be accessed digitally, embedding hyperlinks will help the visual of the guide be less-cluttered.

- To embed links, try using the shortcut: Ctrl K (PC) or ⌘ K (Mac). Links can be embedded on images, too!

A Table of Contents can be added to help organize the information and help provide quick access to pages by hyperlinking them directly.

Give thought to how to best display information that fits your needs. Utilize headings, font colors, tables, and more to separate different topics and collections. If copy/pasting information including images and/or screen shots, remember to include a source citation as to where the information came from so that you can find it again.

Important Topics to Include

These are the most common topics found in examples:

- **History:** When did the area form? If applicable, who was the parent town/county? Did the boundaries change?
- **Vital Records:** Who holds the vital records? What are the start dates for when the vital records began? Are there restrictions for ordering the vital records? What is the cost for ordering vital records?
- **Local Repositories:** What are the local repositories and their hours? What collections of interest do they hold? Do they provide look up services? Are any of their collections available online? Think about including libraries, historians, historical societies, genealogical societies, universities, government offices, and more.

Resource Checklist

Delve into details of common genealogy records:

- **Cemetery:** List the cemeteries in the area and the years that they formed. If desired, add links to each cemetery in Find a Grave and similar websites. Add links to active cemetery sites that contain contact information and online maps.
- **Census:** Direct links to searchable databases can help to save time drilling down to exact censuses. Add both federal, state, and special censuses as applicable. Other items to consider are enumerator directions, breakdowns of election districts, any special circumstances, etc.
- **Church Records:** List the churches in the area, their histories and directories, and years that they formed/merged/closed. Direct links to online records if available.
- **Court Records:** What courts are there? When did they form/end and what records might they have created? Where can you find those records (in person/online)? Collections may often include military enlistments, criminal, probate, naturalization, and more.

- **Directories:** Beyond City Directories, also include membership lists, mug books, voter registration lists, and yearbooks. Lists of what is available and, of those, which can be linked to online and what repositories have them in person.
- **Histories:** Historical County Histories and modern histories can be listed. Direct links to publications online can be added (Google Books, Internet Archive, Hathi Trust, and more). Bicentennial types of celebration books often also include local histories and biographies of early residents. Links to historic laws could also be added.
- **Land Records:** Our ancestors often were land owners and can be found in deed books. Descriptions of where the deeds are found, how they are indexed, and where they are held in-person and online. If known, add more particular information about accessibility of the in-person record access as sometimes older books are stored off-site and only accessible to the public when requested ahead of time.
- **Maps:** Consider adding links to historical maps found on David Rumsey's website and the Library of Congress. Many different types of maps can be included such as Bird's Eye View Aerial Maps, Land Ownership Maps, County Plat Maps, and Fire Insurance Maps.
- **Newspapers:** Lists of newspapers that were published locally and regionally can be listed. Other types of publications can be included such as religious and school newspapers. Adding the years that were published and where to find them online and/or in person.
- **State Repositories:** The State Library, Historical Society, and State Archives likely will have on-site and online collections applicable to your area.

You can specialize your Locality Guide however you would like. Have fun with it!