

16 Free, World-Class Google Tools To Help You Organize, Find Old Records & More!

We are who we are because of our ancestors, friends and yes, our extended families. President Elder Dallin Oaks at Brigham Young University in 1978 stated in a speech: "[Where much is given, much is expected](#)." When the Lord of the harvest has lavished great attention on a particular portion of his vineyard, he expects it to bear fruit, at least in proportion to the attention he has lavished. My life has been blessed exponentially by my ancestors who came to America 100+ years ago from Eastern Poland with no language skills, with no formal education and/or no vocational career sets. By the time I was born in 1943, the American dream was a reality and here I am today making a difference for others through family history and as a retired music educator. My goal is for my children and future generations to appreciate my efforts to help others. And hopefully the Foothills Ward Temple & Family History Facebook Group can open doors for others to better record their stories, personal stories and find their ancestors. In this posting, there are 16 free, world-class Google tools for you to organize your genealogy, find old records and more. Most of Google's tools are free, and they work your computer and your mobile devices. they'll help you stay organized, virtually in travel to ancestors' neighborhoods, locate, essential information about history and records—and it's just a start. If you're not using these 16 Google apps and tools for genealogy, you're missing out. Let's increase your Google IQ, right now.

Search

Google's search engine <search.google.com> is, of course, its bread and butter. Typing in an ancestor's name—or a name and a place, or an ethnic group and can lead to obituaries, background information, and other unexpected discoveries. Try different combinations of a last name or a person's name alone or with another term, such as place matches on a Google search can include website pages, images, books and more. If you're lucky, you might even get matches and online databases, such as Ancestry.com, Newspapers.com or Find A Grave, but you still need to search those individual databases to do a more comprehensive search.

Gmail

An email account is a quintessential tool for any genealogist today. I used to get excited whenever a thick envelope arrived in the mail from a genealogy contact. It might've had copies of old records and photographs, pedigree charts full of names, or a handwritten letter describing the researcher's latest discoveries. But these days, most of my genealogy correspondence is conducted via email, and those records and photos come as email attachments.

Google's Gmail, <mail.google.com> has evolved into one of the best email services. Its spam filter keeps junk mail out of your inbox, and its powerful search makes it easy to find messages. To do a simple search, just enter terms in the search box at the top of the screen. For more options, click on the down arrow in the search box.

Gmail's translation feature makes it possible to carry on an email exchange with someone who writes in a different language. Just display the message, click on the down arrow to the right of the message date, and select Translate Message. Once you do that, a bar displays above with options to change languages and always translate messages written in a particular language.

Gmail has a good search feature, but you still might find it worthwhile to use labels to organize your messages. Labels act like folders, but you can easily apply more than one label to a message. When you display a message, click on the label icon at the top of the screen and check the boxes for all the labels that pertain to the message. You can create new labels here, too, such as for surnames and places.

Docs

If you'd like to create a research plan or write a letter to request records or to a relative who doesn't use email, you might turn to a word processing program like Microsoft Word. But the free Google Docs app <docs.google.com> offers much of the same functionality as Word, plus several other advantages.

You can access, create and edit your documents from your phone, tablet or computer. You can invite others to view, download and collaborate on a document—no need to send a file as an email attachment. Also, you don't have to worry about backing up your documents since they're online. Google Docs does lack some of Word's features (for instance, it can create footnotes, but not endnotes), but it's adequate for most word processing tasks.

Sheets

Think of Sheets <sheets.google.com> as a free alternative to Microsoft Excel. It's great for genealogists who like to use spreadsheets to create a research log and organize data (such as DNA matches). Just like its Docs app, Sheets lets you access your spreadsheets from any device and share them with others without having to type out an email.

Photos

Google's Photos app <[photos.google.com.replaces](https://photos.google.com/replaces)> its Picasa desktop photo program, which was discontinued in 2016. Like Picasa, Photos lets you do basic photo editing, such as adjusting contrast and color, and cropping and rotating images.

Instead of tags, Photos relies on facial recognition. Photos' powerful search works well and even recognizes animals and objects, such as a dog, a beach or flowers—a shortcut when you're adding descriptions to your pictures. But if you've already organized old family photos using a desktop photo manager, such as Picasa or Windows Photo Gallery, Photos can be frustrating. You can't apply tags to photos (or at least, not easily) or view tags that you've already attached to them.

Photos organizes images by date, and you can easily jump to a date on the timeline. That's fine for recent digital photos, but old family photos get added to the timeline on the date they were scanned. You may want to organize them in folders—called albums—by family.

Google gives you unlimited cloud storage of photos less than 16 megapixels and video shot at 1080p or lower. You can store larger images and higher-resolution video for a fee. Photos also lets you create a photo book and share albums.

While Google Photos may not be an ideal step up for those accustomed to organizing old family photos with desktop software, it's a useful tool for backing up and sharing your photos.

Drive

Google Drive <drive.google.com> gives you 15GB of free online storage to upload and store your photos, videos, stories, scanned records and other files online, access them from any device, and share them. You can invite others to view, download and collaborate on the files, and you can search your files to quickly find the ones you need. You can upload files and folders individually from your computer to Google Drive or use Backup and Sync (see no. 7) to back up your files continuously. Gmail messages and attachments that you send or receive (as well as original quality uploads to Photos) count against the cap, but anything you create with Docs or Sheets doesn't. Additional online storage costs \$19.99 a year for 100GB or \$99.99 a year for 1TB. The most you can pay for it is \$299.99 for 30 TB of storage.

Backup and Sync

Download and install this app to create an online backup of your computer files, including documents, scanned records and photos. Then use your phone, tablet or computer to access your files on Google Drive <google.com/drive/download> and your photos and videos on Google Photos <photos.google.com/apps>.

Backup and Sync continuously saves and stores all your folders or just those you select. For photos, you can choose either high quality or original quality. You can back up unlimited photos and videos at high quality without counting against your 15 GB of online free storage on Google Drive, but it compresses photos larger than 16 megapixels and videos with a resolution on higher than 1080p. Original quality backs up large photos and videos at their original -ize, but they count against your 15 GB cap on Google Drive.

Backup and Sync saves only the latest version each file, so it's not a replacement for a regular - backup system. Most backup systems keep multiple backup copies of each file saved at different times, so you can revert to an earlier version a file if it becomes corrupted or you want to retrieve a pre-edited version.

Maps

Maps can help you pinpoint where your ancestors lived, and where their records might be. Google Maps <google.com/maps> shows an aerial view of the whole world and street maps of many cities and towns. maps usually highlight populated places, physical features and landmarks. Search on name of a township or county, and you'll current boundaries. Download the Google Maps app on your smartphone for help getting to cemeteries and libraries.

Maps can help you identify churches and cemeteries that might have gravestones and records pertaining to your ancestors. Google Maps draws on current map and business listings, so small cemeteries no longer in use and churches that have closed might not appear.

In the late 1970's, I blindly wrote three times in six month increments to the village clerk of Novo Mesto, Slovenia in quest of my great-grandfather's birth certificate of Anton Turk. I had a translator transcribe my English to Slovene. With no answers for a year, I tried two more times prayerfully and bingo, After the last mailing the clerk did send me vital information including doing the genealogy on everybody who ever lived in those homes for several generations. See the sample for a warehouse of information related to the surnames and house numbers for multiple generations. And what's embarrassing, I didn't send any money since I didn't know if anybody would ever respond and and share that information in a communist country, Yugoslavia under Marshal Tito. Consequently, I did send her donations and received two additional landmark letters with more houses and their genealogy. Click [here](#) for one of those many pages.

Earth

Using satellite imagery and aerial photography, Google Earth lets you explore the globe. Just and to replace or address and quotation marks fly quotation marks the location. Use the integrated Street view to see a 360° view from the street, makeup of photos taken from car mounted cameras. By clicking and dragging the image you can walk down the street where your ancestors lived.

You can also find businesses near the place you search. When exploring the new place, I prefer to access Street view from Google Maps because it takes you to the exact address. When you access Street view from Google Earth, you might end up at a nearby building. Click [here](#) (9:54 minutes) for a video presentation of my Eastern European roots originally done in Google Earth Pro. For a synopsis of my life story, click [here](#) (12:11 minutes). Because these presentations are in video renditions, you may need to pause the videos for convenience to read place cards for their inspirations that are posted there.

Books

Google books <books.google.com> lets you search the text of millions of scan books, such as family and local histories, and city directories. If a book is out of copyright or the publisher has given permission, you can view and download the entire book for free. Otherwise you might be able to see only an excerpt part of text -or nothing at all.

Advanced Book Search <books.google.com/advanced_book_search> lets you add criteria to narrow your search, such as author, title and subject. Put my last name, **Kuzmich**, in the search box for Find Results With All of the Words, and *genealogy* in the subject box. This returns more than 300 matches, including a book with Russian origins with nobility. Try searching on just an unusual name or a name plus another term closely associated with the person or family, such as a place. Put quotation marks around a name to search on the exact phrase.

On the search results page, select the Tools tab, then select the Any Books dropdown arrow to choose whether you want results to show only Free Google ebooks, any eBooks or books where only a preview is available. Download PDF. You can't download just one

page, but you can clip portions of text. Display the page where your search term appears, click on the scissors icon and drag your mouse cursor to outline the text you want to save. Copy the contents of the Selection Text box by clicking quickly in it three times to select it, and then holding down the Ctrl and C keys (on a PC) or pressing Command + C (on a Mac). Finally, paste the text into a document.

News Archive

Google's News Archive <news.google.com/news/papers> provides free access to digitized newspapers from Brazil, Canada, Costa Rica, Germany, Mexico, Poland, Scotland and the United States dating from 1738 to 2009. Sadly, Google stopped adding newspapers or helpful features to News Archive in 2011. You can browse the newspapers, but they're listed alphabetically by title and not by place of publication, making it hard to tell if News Archive has papers for a particular city.

Try this: Put the city and state name in the search box, along with your ancestor's name, then click on the Search Archive button. This may give you a few matches, but sometimes this search tool misses relevant articles, so you also may want to search for ancestors in subscription **Newspaper Databases** such as [Newspapers.com](https://www.newspapers.com) or **GenealogyBank** <www.genealogybank.com>. (Then you can check if News Archive has the papers containing hits on your family.)

Keep

Keep <keep.google.com> is similar to Evernote <www.evernote.com>, a popular note-taking app among genealogists. Keep is handy for taking notes as you research online, as well as creating lists, such as a family history to-do list of sources you'd like to check. You can copy notes to a Google Doc and organize notes with color-coding and labels (which work like tags). For example, you could create labels for surnames, places, record types and archives, and later find all your notes with a particular label.

Add location-based reminders to notes and check off listed items as you complete them. Once you install the Chrome extension, just highlight text on a webpage and click on the Keep lightbulb icon to save the text as a note. With the keep smart phone app, you can dictate notes and let the software transcribe them. Evernote has more robust features than keep such as text formatting and the ability to organize notes into notebooks. But Keep is simpler and integrates well with Google features you might already be using

Scholar

Google Scholar <scholar.google.com> is really two separate searches. Select the Articles radio button to search research articles, theses and books. You probably won't find an ancestor mentioned by name, but you might try searching on a place, occupation or religion, maybe combined with the word **history**. That could turn up articles that help you learn more about your ancestors' lives.

Select the Case Law radio button to search an extensive collection of US court opinions—helpful if your ancestor was party to a case or a legal decision affected his

life. They include state appellate and state supreme court cases since 1950; federal district, appellate, tax and bankruptcy courts since 1923; and Supreme Court cases since 1791. Search on just a last name if it's an uncommon one, or on both first and last names. Click on Select Courts to limit your search to specific states or courts. For more search options, click on the three bars on the upper left and select Advanced Search.

Translate

Google Translate <translate.google.com> comes in handy if you need to translate an old record, read a foreign-language website or email someone who speaks another language. It can perform translations between more than 100 languages. For an instant translation, simply type in the box on the left and select the target language on the right. Click on the double-square icon to copy the text for pasting in another document.

You can also translate entire websites. If you use Google's web browser, Chrome, when you visit a foreign language website, it will offer to translate the page for you. At any time you can also click on the broken square icon to the right of the website address and Chrome to translate the page.

Google Duo

Google Duo <duo.google.com> is the highest quality video chat mobile app developed by Google, available on the Android and iOS operating systems. It's free, simple and works on Android phones, iPhones, tablets, computers, and smart displays, like the Google Nest Hub Max. If you know how to smile when engaged in a family history call, consider how much more charisma you can add to the conversation with a visual, personal connection. Their cooperation may even exceed your expectations?!

YouTube

Owned by Google, YouTube is the world's second largest search engine. It has videos on just about any topic imaginable, including how to research your family history. Searches on Germany genealogy and Scottish genealogy turned up tips for researching German genealogy and beginning Scottish research both from the Brigham Young University family history Library. A search on DNA tests produces a match on breaking down the science behind at the necessity results from ancestry in DNA.

Searches on towns, counties and other places uncover videos about places where ancestors lived. Search on "Krempachy, Poland" where my grandmother was born and you'll want to travel there. See https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=Krempachy+Poland. To authentically view my Eastern European ancestral roots as a keepsake moment, click [here](#) for 38 360 degree virtual panorama photos in Poland, Slovenia and Ukraine. Even though my grandchildren and future generations may never have the opportunity to visit their ancestral roots in Eastern Europe, these keepsake photos are necessary and readily available share with my extended family. Recently, my extracting grandchildren wanted him learn more about the very villages that they were extracting. Now they can

really relate to the phrase that “a picture is worth a thousand words.” Here’s the video of Krempachy that was the winning video clip: [click here](#) (4:24) with authentic music, beautiful landscape and much excitement.

Closing Comments

Never underestimate the power of technology tools as they can help make your time more efficient and effective when embracing family history challenges. Hope these 16 free, world-class Google tools help you better organize your genealogy, find old records and more. In the meantime, below are 24 commonly used Google Quick Links to best take advantage of these powerful 16 powerful apps presented here.

Google Quick Links

- Account Settings <myaccount.google.com>
- Advanced Search <google.com/advanced_search>
- Alerts <google.com/alerts>
- Bookmarks <books.google.com>
- Books search <books.google.com>
- Calendar <calendar.google.com>
- Chrome web browser <google.com/chrome>
- Drive <drive.google.com>
- Earth <google.com/earth>
- Hangouts <hangouts.google.com>
- Help Center <support.google.com>
- Gmail <mail.google.com>
- Google Duo <duo.google.com/>
- Images search <images.google.com>
- Keep <keep.google.com>
- Maps <google.com/maps>
- Mobile apps <get.google.com/apptips/apps>
- News Archive Search <news.google.com/newspapers>
- Patent search <patents.google.com>
- Photos <photos.google.com>
- Play store <play.google.com>
- Toolbar <google.com/toolbar>
- Translate <translate.google.com>
- Voice <google.com/voice>
- Web search <search.google.com>