

21 Do's and Don'ts When Researching Historical Newspapers

- **DO** Misspell search criteria words on purpose. The OCR process tries to create letters from dots, not words
- **DO** Search in the nearest big city or county seat
- **DO** Add the word (s) beloved, dear, or loving to help find obituaries
- **DO** a search with syllables rather than whole words to take advantage of the significant use of hyphenated words in older newspapers
- **DO** take advantage of free trials with subscription newspaper sites before you buy
- **DO** use abbreviations, such as Wm, Jos, Eliz, Ave, or Sgt, etc. in your search criteria
- **DO** search for husbands name with Mrs. for married women
- **DO** a search for a few weeks prior to death date in the newspaper for hospitalization, illness or accident - helps determine the cause of death
- **DO** try to exchange a "b" for an "h", or a "c" for an "e" and many other combinations since they are very similar to the OCR process many times
- **DO** search for a street address. You might be surprised.
- **DO** Have fun. It's rewarding to find out that your great uncle was shot at.
- **DON'T** just select a newspaper subscription database just because it's on sale
- **DON'T** assume that the newspaper collection has what you want just because the title is from your chosen city or town. Check the collection's date range
- **DON'T** assume that the cemetery stated in the obituary has not changed since the obituary has been published
- **DON'T** assume that the published obituary location is only published in the newspaper where death has occurred
- **DON'T** search just surnames
- **DON'T** just search U.S. newspapers based on ethnicity. Search newspapers in the ancestor's homeland
- **DON'T** rush out and purchase a subscription to newspaper collections. Libraries often subscribe to the same pay sites and if you have a library card, you may be able to search from home!
- **DON'T** assume that a wedding happened because your ancestor is listed in the Marriage Licenses Issued section. Cold feet does happen!
- **DON'T** assume that because an obituary states someone is a "native of" , does not mean they were born there.
- **DON'T** - Ever. Give. Up.