

9 Reasons Why You Should Be Researching Voter Records

Voter registration records are available online and offline from all over the world and are what I consider a hidden gem of information that can assist you in advancing your family history and genealogy research. Here are 9 things that Voter Records can help you to find more about your ancestors:

- **They fill in the gaps between censuses** – in the ten years between censuses – people move, they die, they get married, etc. The advantage of voter registration records is that they can tell you their address, their occupation, etc. And they are generally published annually.
- **Middle names** – often a complete name is included in voter registration records – in fact the only place that I ever found my great grandfather's middle name was in several of these records. Prior to finding them, I only knew his middle name as an initial.
- **You can find a spouse** – after 1920 for all of America, women could vote – so at that time their names began to show up in Voter Registration records. Some states had passed women's suffrage laws prior to 1920, but just a few. To be complete – women in some states in the late 1700's had voting rights until they were all taken away by 1807. The given name of a woman is sometimes included in the voter registration record. For example, a Mary Smith who was married to a James Smith would be entered as Mrs. Mary Smith. If they both lived at the same address on the registration list, one could surmise that they were married to each other and you then could certainly search for better evidence; or they could be siblings or have a parent-child relationship. But at least there is a good possibility that they may indeed be married to each other.
- **Naturalization information** – in some records from the 1800's, the date and place of naturalization is included, which can provide leads for obtaining their detailed naturalization records.
- **Nativity** – again in the 1800's, the place of birth is entered, which is especially helpful for naturalized immigrants.
- **Physical Characteristics** – California Great Registers were quite thorough and included age, height, complexion, eye and hair color, as well as any distinguishing marks or scars.
- **Political party or affiliation** – usually abbreviated as Dem or Rep, but you will find other party names as well, in addition to "None". Remember that Democrats and Republicans from years ago did not necessarily align with the same principles or policies as the parties do today.
- **Precinct captains and election workers** – not available in voter registration records, but certainly voting related. Look in newspapers and you will find many lists of election workers. Many of my ancestors worked in precincts to assist in the electoral process.
- **Migration** – a few voter registration record sets include a question regarding how long the voter lived in the state, the county, and the precinct. This can be useful to determine when they moved, which can lead to additional research as to their whereabouts for census research as an example.

The Ancestor Hunt has about 1,000 Free Voter Record Collections! Check them out at

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