

13 Types of Genealogical Information You Can Find in Old Yearbooks

Yearbooks from high school or college are one of the most fun set of records for a genealogist to search. It provides you with a ton of story-like information about your ancestor's life. What their interests were, what sports and clubs they participated in, and often some goofy snapshots of them before they settled into being an adult. And of course, you get to see what they looked like.

So, what useful genealogical information that you can derive from old yearbooks?

- Residential Location—the specific address and city are not presented, but typically the school is within 5 to 10 miles from their actual residence. Some smaller area schools may include their residential address. Some colleges may include their city of residence.
- Interests—The clubs and other interests may provide a clue as to their future occupation, for example 4-H Club. Where they in ROTC? Maybe this provides a clue to which future military service they were a part of.
- Signatures—Although autographs and the few words that are written may seem silly, there may be mention of what your person may do in the future. And who knows, if their siblings or cousins went to the same school and are also in the yearbook, mention of their relationship may be included. Maybe, just maybe, girlfriends and boyfriends in high school may end up being spouses in the future. Don't underestimate the clues that may be in autographs.
- Age—you will know the year of the yearbook and based on their class, e.g., senior, sophomore, etc. you can roughly estimate within a year their birth year. Of course if they skipped a grade or were held back a year, that may make your estimate off a year or so. But again, it is a great clue.
- Non-student information—faculty and other employees are generally included in yearbooks. Maybe your ancestor/relative worked at a school for 30 years. This might provide you with a photo of them for multiple years!
- Photos—this is the holy grail of yearbooks. But not only will you get “headshots”, but also your ancestor/relative in sports, clubs, and other interesting scenes that help you fill out their life story.
- Rural Schools—might include younger students in a combined school that includes elementary or middle schools grades. In the late 1800s and early to middle 1900s, many students didn't stay in school past the 6th or 8th grade.
- “FAN” Club—friends and acquaintances can be determined not just by the appearance of other students in the yearbook, but who autographed your ancestor/relative's yearbook can — provide other research targets that might indicate a longer relationship into the adult years. Again, don't underestimate the clues that may be in autographs. They may be invaluable to your research.
- Advertisements—may not necessarily provide direct information about your ancestor/relative, but may give you a sense of the community where they went to school.
- Nicknames—generally via autographs or other notations about your ancestor/relative, nicknames can be critical information to use when searching old newspapers. Maybe Richard Johnson was a left-handed baseball player nicknamed “Lefty”. In newspapers he might have been found as “Lefty Johnson”
- Middle Names—are not generally found in yearbooks, but possibly. However, many students “went by” their middle name rather than their first name, so this might be helpful in future genealogy research about the individual.
- Maiden Names—you've found the woman; you know what her married name is; and you know where she lived in her high school years. Check out the yearbooks in the area. If you know what she looked like, you might find her in a yearbook. Tedious yes, but a possibility. Maybe she married her high school sweetheart. Check out their yearbook.
- Military Service—during World War 1 and World War 2, there might be separate lists in the yearbooks for students who were in the military.

Do you want to search or browse through over 13,000 Free Online Yearbooks from the U.S. and Canada? Just go to the [Yearbooks Page](#) on The Ancestor Hunt website.

