How to Get the Most from Chronicling America

Most people who search for historical newspapers as part of their genealogy or history research are aware of Chronicling America. If you aren't, here's a short description from the **Chronicling America** (CA) website. I would also recommend that you peruse the CA **About** page.

"Chronicling America (ISSN 2475-2703) is a Website providing access to information about historic newspapers and select digitized newspaper pages, and is produced by the National Digital Newspaper Program (NDNP). NDNP, a partnership between the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) and the Library of Congress (LC), is a long-term effort to develop an Internet -based, searchable database of U.S. newspapers with descriptive information and select digitization of historic pages. Supported by NEH, this rich digital resource will be developed and permanently maintained at the Library of Congress. An NEH award program will fund the contribution of content from, eventually, all U.S. states and territories."

Every year, in August, the NEH announces the awards for that year. Awards started in 2005, and except for 2006 have been given every year. Every state as well as DC, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands have been participants except New Hampshire. Massachusetts received its first award in 2021. Generally the award provides a grant to digitize 100,000 pages per year.

On the CA website, the **U.S. Newspaper Directory, 1690 to Present** exists. Quite simply it is a database that will help you find where U.S. newspapers can be accessed, either online, in original newsprint form, or via microfilm. The search capability of this online directory helps you find what archives, libraries, etc. own newspapers that are cited in the database. There are currently 157,520 listed titles.

A tutorial describing how to use this directory effectively is in the next two pages of this guide. An additional tutorial on how to best use the Search capability of the Chronicling America website is on the last page of this guide.

Below are some interesting statistics and other information about the contents of the Chronicling America Online Historical Newspaper Database and Directory for each state.. The links will take you directly to the available online CA titles for each state.

State	Total # of Titles Published	Total # of Titles in CA	State	Total # of Titles Published	Total # of Titles in CA	State	Total # of Titles Published	Total # of Titles in CA
Alabama	2,376	19	Louisiana	2,031	135	Oklahoma	3,653	27
Alaska	811	76	Maine	1,605	21	Oregon	1,793	66
Arizona	1,827	110	Maryland	1,789	65	Pennsylvania	8,089	101
Arkansas	1,992	65	Massachusetts	4,639	4	Puerto Rico	574	6
California	10,037	76	Michigan	4,054	55	Rhode Island	775	22
Colorado	2,679	61	Minnesota	4,039	109	South Carolina	1,510	123
Connecticut	2,118	41	Mississippi	1,806	257	South Dakota	1,523	82
Delaware	410	111	Missouri	4,784	93	Tennessee	2,862	131
DC	846	71	Montana	1,254	105	Texas	5,877	69
Florida	2,424	50	Nebraska	4,040	66	Utah	632	39
Georgia	2,588	36	Nevada	701	52	Vermont	1,149	70
Hawaii	531	23	New Hampshire	1,368	N/A	Virgin Islands	59	1
Idaho	832	87	New Jersey	1,999	23	Virginia	3,073	103
Illinois	9,010	86	New Mexico	1,354	88	Washington	3,060	89
Indiana	4,875	63	New York	12,736	25	West Virginia	1,241	93
Iowa	3,981	86	North Carolina	2,991	128	Wisconsin	3,560	62
Kansas	6.985	51	North Dakota	1,515	49	Wyoming	572	15
Kentucky	2,177	79	Ohio	7,679	186			

The fact is that all old newspapers ever published in the United States are not online. Much less than you might think.

What is your guess of the percentage? 10%? 20%? 5%?

No, the answer (at least with respect to Chronicling America) is that there are approximately 3,600 online titles and there have been over 157,500 titles ever published in the U.S. That yields just a tad over 2.3%. That's not much, is it?

Of course, Chronicling America doesn't represent all of the online titles and digitized pages available. My research results in about 39,000 free online links for the U.S. (see the **Newspaper Links** page on this website for all the links). So 39,000 (online) in comparison to 157,500 (published) – that's about 24% of the titles. What about some of the paid sites, such as Genealo-gyBank, NewspaperArchive, Newspaper.com, etc.? GenealogyBank on their website claims over 13,000 titles and Newspapers dot com states 20,000. And that doesn't count Newspaper Archive, or My Heritage collections. And there is considerable over-lap probably.

So if we are being generous, let's add another 15% for the paid sites. That says that 30% have been digitized. That's titles, NOT pages. A single title that has one page from one issue in our math example counts the same as a title published daily for every year for a hundred years. The moral of the story is that with all the date gaps that we newspaper researchers run into – it is almost impossible to figure out how much indeed has been digitized.

So let's just say for now that 15 to 30% of all U.S. newspaper pages have been digitized. Personally, I think that's a very high number, but……

That leaves about 70-85% that are NOT online! Now, what the heck do we do? OFFLINE RESEARCH – that's what.

And the Library of Congress helps us out with the **US Newspaper Directory from 1690 – Present** so we can do off-line research.

This handy directory provides not just multiple ways to find newspapers published, but tons of facts about those newspapers. Just do your choice of searches from the main **US Newspaper Directory from 1690 – Present** page. Here's an example of a "fact" page". It is presented in two parts. the first image is the Top Half, and the second is the Bottom Half.

About The villager. (New York [N.Y.]) 1933-current
New York [N.Y.] (1933-current)

About | Libraries that Have It | MARC Record

Title:
The villager. : (New York [N.Y.]) 1933-current

Place of publication:
New York [N.Y.]

Geographic coverage:
- Brooklyn, Kings, New York | View more titles from this: City County, State
- Greenwich Village, New York, New York | View more titles from this: City County, State
- New York, New York, New York | View more titles from this: City County, State

Publisher:
W.G. Bryan and Associates

Dates of publication:
1933-current

Description:
- Vol. 1, no. 1 (Apr. 13, 1933)-

Frequency:
Weekly

Language:
- English

Subjects:
- Brooklyn (New York, N.Y.)--Newspapers.
- Greenwich Village (New York, N.Y.)--Newspapers.
- Kings County (N.Y.)--Newspapers.
- New York (N.Y.)--Newspapers.
- New York (State)--Kings County.--fast--(OCoLC)fst01220099
- New York (State)--New York County.--fast--(OCoLC)fst01234953
- New York (State)--New York--Brooklyn.--fast--(OCoLC)fst01312516
- New York (State)--New York--Greenwich Village.--fast--(OCoLC)fst01322891
- New York (State)--New York.--fast--(OCoLC)fst01204333
- New York County (N.Y.)--Newspapers.

Here is the Bottom Half.

Notes:
- "A weekly newspaper reflecting the finest traditions of Washington Square and Greenwich Village."
- Available on microfilm from New York Public Library (1933-1985).
- Latest issue consulted: Vol. 70, no. 22 (Sept. 20, 2000).
- Published at: New York, N.Y., <1933>; Greenwich Village, N.Y. <1947>; Brooklyn, N.Y., <Dec. 14, 1989->; New York, N.Y., <1999->.
- Publishers: W.G. Bryan and Associates, <1933>; Bryan Publications, <1947>; Serif Press, <Dec. 14, 1989->; Community Media LLC, <Sept. 1999->

LCCN:
sn 83030608

OCLC:
9548003

ISSN:
0042-6202

Related Links:
- http://www.thevillager.com/

Holdings:
○ View complete holdings information

See all the interesting information about the paper? If you had an ancestor from the area that you think might be mentioned in this paper – and the paper was not online – maybe you could find it at an archive or library in original form or microfilm. From this "facts" page, you can actually find out where the newspaper is held. Just click on the "View complete holdings information" link at the bottom. Here are some of the results for this newspaper:

Libraries that Have It: The villager. (New York [N.Y.]) 1933-current
New York [N.Y.] (1933-current)

About | Libraries that Have It | MARC Record

HOLDING: Cornell Univ, Ithaca, NY
○ View more titles from this institution

Available as: Unspecified
Last updated: 03/2014

HOLDING: Franklin D Roosevelt Libr, Hyde Park, NY
○ View more titles from this institution

Available as: Microfilm Service Copy
Dates:
- s=<1945:4:19>

Last updated: 05/1991

HOLDING: New York Hist Soc, Newsp Proj, New York, NY
○ View more titles from this institution

Available as: Original
Scattered issues wanting

Dates:
- <1933:4:13, 5:25-1934:5:3,17-6:14,28-8:16,30-9:27>
- <1934:10:11-25, 11:8-12:6,20-1935:7:11>
- <1935:8:1-11:21, 12:5-1936:2:20, 3:5-7:16, 8:6, 9:24-10:22>
- <1936:12:17-1937:4:15>
- <1937:5:6-1961:6:8,28-7:20, 8:3-24, 9:28-10:12-26, 11:9>
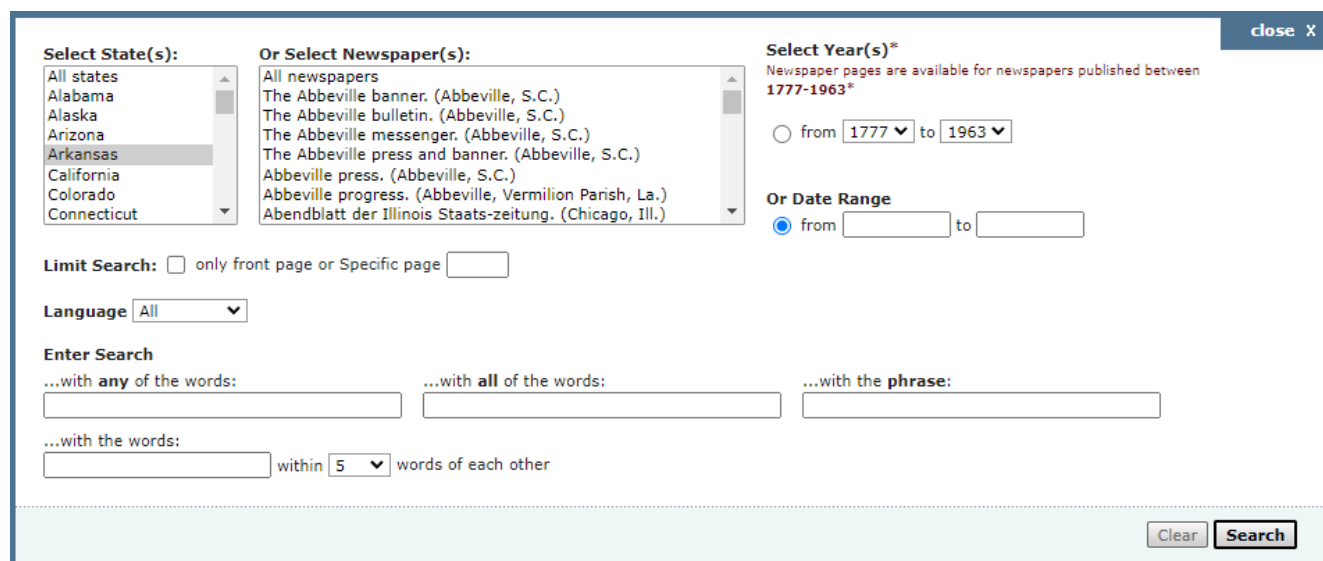- <1961:11:23-1963:1:24, 2:7-5:16,30-7:25, 8:8-1964:9:17>

Last updated: 09/1992

So, you can see that it is available for your browsing pleasure at several libraries and archives – both in original and in microfilm form. Don't give up if your paper of interest is not online. Visit the **US Newspaper Directory from 1690 – Present** from the Library of Congress. Good Luck – persistence will win out.

How to Get the Most from Chronicling America

Essentially, there are two methods to search Chronicling America for historical newspapers. Basic Search, available from the Home Page as well as the "Search Pages" tab, allows you to enter your search criteria, and restrict results to a single state and to a range of years. The Advanced Search, which I highly recommend that you use most if not all of the time, has TEN different fields that you can enter that will allow you to narrow your search. Below the image is a description of each of these fields and how to use them:

Select State - one or more states can be selected, by holding the CTRL key and clicking on all of the states that you wish to search at one time; or you can choose "All states".

Select Newspaper(s) - you can select one or more (or all) newspapers from which to conduct the search. Note that selecting a state does not restrict the newspapers in this field, unfortunately.

Select Year(s) - you can restrict your results to a range of years; currently between 1777 and 1963 by choosing a "from" year followed by a "to" year.

Date Range - you can restrict your results to a range of dates by choosing a "from" date followed by a "to" date.

Limit Search - you can restrict your search to a specific page withing the newspaper issue; for example Front Pages, page 8s, etc. This is handy if you are looking for a specific section of a newspaper and it generally is on page 16, such as the Vitals Section for example.

Language - you can restrict the newspapers searched by a specific language, Currently there are 19 languages available in the collection.

Enter Search with any of the words - similar to a Boolean "or", enter all of the words that you wish to search for. In this case, any occurrence of one or more of the words on a page will trigger a positive result.

Enter Search with all of the words - similar to a Boolean "and", enter all of the words that you wish to search for. In this case, all of the words must occur on a page in order for a positive result to be returned.

Enter Search with the phrase - similar to entering a phrase of more than one word encased in quotation marks. In this case, all of the words in the exact phrase must occur on a page in order for a positive result to be returned.

Enter Search with the words within X words of each other - this is called a proximity search. In this case, you enter the words, and then select 5, 10, 50 or 100. This is handy if you are searching for more than one person, event or subject, and also very useful when middle initials are used in people's names. For example, if you are searching for Franklin Roosevelt, a proximity search of 5 words would return pages with Franklin Delano Roosevelt or Franklin D. Roosevelt. A subject example is entering *tax reform* within 5 words. This would include results for any occurrence of *tax reform*, but also *reform of income tax.*