

Obituaries for Genealogy Research

What is an obituary?

What? A death announcement placed in a newspaper by a family member or close person for a fee

Who? Immediate family, relatives, ancestors, friends, and other persons of interest to the genealogist

Why? Can relate other important details such as the cemetery, home address, birthplace, and relatives. On rare occasions offers a short biography.

Where? For our purposes, obituaries are published by news services either in physical newspapers, online, or in scans of physical newspapers online!

Not everyone had one. It is **not** a Vital Record (legal government document).

Obituaries did not usually run on the same day as the death.

Common headlines for obituaries/death notices, including (but not limited to):

“Died”

“Deaths”

“Funeral Notice”

“Mortuary Notice”

“Necrology”

“In Memoriam”

Appearances can change over time.

Finding an obituary from 1804-1972:

Louisiana Division/City Archives Louisiana Biography & Obituary Index

Created from 650,000 original index cards in the Louisiana Division. These cards were all transcribed by WPA worker who searched through the text of actual newspapers. After transcription they were typed, and then nearly 60 years later were entered into a database by other workers. Many people have touched these and they were all human—there may be some errors!

Some newspapers are more thoroughly covered than others. It is substantially complete for the Daily/Times-Picayune.

These cards are what make up our **online obituary index**.

To access:

Go to archives.nolalibrary.org

Scroll down to the link under “Genealogy”

Click on the bright red “Search the Index” link

Tips:

-Start with just the surname

-If you have too many results, include a first name

-Once you find an entry, review the papers and citations mentioned. Write them down!

-Try many different spellings. Obituaries are created by humans, and anyone from relatives to the typesetters could have made a mistake

-Start with only the last name if it is a less common name. The more fields you enter, the fewer results you get. Too many search terms could be the difference between 1 result and 0 results! Or vice versa—if it is a very common name, you'll want to narrow your results by adding more search terms.

Finding an obituary from 1972-2011:

USGenWeb Archives Times-Picayune Obit Index

To access:

Go to archives.nolalibrary.org

Scroll down to the link under "Genealogy"

From the black links on the left-hand side, choose "Other New Orleans Obit Indexing Projects"

The direct link is: www.usgwarchives.net/la/orleans/tpi.htm

Using the index:

-Choose a year

-Use "CTRL + F" on your keyboard to bring up a search window you can use to look for the last name

-Once you find a name, write down the date. This is when the obituary ran in the paper.

Finding an obituary from 2010-2019:

Legacy.com

To access:

Go to www.legacy.com

Using the site:

- Start by choosing "More Options >" so you can limit your search to the Times-Picayune and New Orleans Advocate

-Choose your state and city

-The drop down menu for dates offers an option for "2010-2017". There are also more recent dates.

- Note the death date in case you need to go to another version of the paper

- Note the icon indicating that the obituary ran in the Times-Picayune

- Click to "View Obituary" to view the obituary

- You can click on "Read More>" or the newspaper buttons at the bottom to continue to the obituary

- At the bottom there **may** be an obituary date you can use in the database or microfilm, but it is **not guaranteed**. Write down the date of death in case there is no publication date.

-Sometimes older obituaries are behind a paywall (2010-2016-ish)

- Note the date of death in the visible part and use it to search the papers around that date

Baton Rouge Indexing

-Baton Rouge Advocate Obituary Index at East Baton Rouge Parish Library, 1952-1991

<http://www.ebrpl.com/obits.html>

-We have the Baton Rouge Advocate on microfilm from 1856-2005

We have a citation – now what?

Newsbank (JPL)

-Times-Picayune, 1838-1988

-Times / Weekly Times, 1863-1881

New Orleans Newspapers [Newsbank] (NOPL)

- Times-Picayune, 1838-1988
- States, Item, & States-Item, 1877-1979

Newspapers.com (JPL & NOPL)

- Several newspapers from La. And the Gulf South. Includes many small, older New Orleans papers from circa 1830s-1930s

Jefferson Parish Library Website

- The Bee (L'Abeille), 1827-1923 (no card required)

If it ran from 1988-2017, you will likely need to come view the microfilm in person

- A few, text-only obituaries made it into the Newsbank databases during these years, so perform a search first, just in case

For 2017-Today, you may simply search the appropriate newspaper database for the name.

If it's not in a paper or on a date offered digitally, you can come in and view the microfilm at the Louisiana Division, 219 Loyola Ave. The Jefferson Parish East and West Bank Regionals also offer microfilm of larger newspapers.

- At 219 Loyola, we have a microfilm viewer that can print for .25 cents a page, or 3 digital viewers that allow you to save images to a USB stick for free.

Finding an obituary in newspapers

At www.jplibrary.net, you can access Newsbank and Newspapers.com

- If you access it from home, you will need a **Jefferson Parish** card number
- you can also access The Bee (L'Abeille), no card required

At www.nolalibrary.org, you can access New Orleans Newspapers [Newsbank] and Newspapers.com

- If you access it from home, you will need a **New Orleans Public Library** card number

Both sites connect you to the Louisiana Library Connection Gateway

- Once logged in, scroll down and look on the left for your databases

Reciprocal Borrowing: Get both Cards!

- If you have a card from either New Orleans Public Library or Jefferson Parish Library, you may take advantage of the Reciprocal Borrowing Agreement to **obtain a card from the parish you do not reside in**

-This is only between New Orleans Public Library and Jefferson Parish Library.

- New Orleans Parish Library also offers a reciprocal card to St. Bernard Parish residents

-How to get a reciprocal card:

- Bring your current library card to any branch of the opposite parish's library and tell them you would like a copy of their card so you can access the online databases

- You will need to be in good standing with your home parish library, usually less than \$5.00 in fines on your account

-Make sure you get a physical copy of the second card!

-How to use the reciprocal card

- You can only access one parish's databases at a time
- Check in the upper right corner of the Louisiana Library Connection Gateway to see which library you are logged in under
- Choose "Enter Card #" if you would like to change libraries, and thus see the specific databases offered by that parish

Using News Orleans Newspapers/Newsbank

1. Pick the collection of papers (Historic, Current) you want to look at
 - When using NOPL's version, they are called "Current New Orleans Newspapers" and "Historic New Orleans Newspapers"
2. Inside the collection, pick the specific paper you want to look at (or search them all from this page)
3. Inside the newspaper title, choose your year from the drop-down menu
4. Once the year is chosen, choose the month and the day from the calendars to open up the issue
5. After choosing the day, you will be in the issue for that date. Choose your page and find the column with obituaries in it

Using Newspapers.com

1. Choose "Browse" from the upper left hand corner
2. Choose your state, city, newspaper title, year, month, and date, and then click on the paper to view
3. Choose your page and find your column

Newspaper microfilm in the Louisiana Division

- We have almost all New Orleans newspapers, 1787 – present
 - Earliest newspaper, 1787-1797, is published in Paris and has New Orleans content
 - Earliest N.O. paper (Moniteur de la Louisiane) is from 1802 – in French.
 - First English language N.O. paper (Louisiana Gazette) is 1804.
- A good many newspapers from other Louisiana towns and cities
- A few out-of-state newspapers

What is inside an obituary?

Dates

Of death, of residency, of birth, of funeral

Locations

Cemetery, place of death, home address, nation of birth

Family

Spouse(s), children, parents, and others

Events

Disease, disasters, accidents

Affiliations

Religion, profession, charity work

Obituaries contain more and more information the more recent they are.

Finding obituaries from outside New Orleans

Free

- Chronicling America - [Chroniclingamerica.loc.gov](http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov)
Chronicling America is an extensive indexing and digitization program by the Library of Congress. It can help you find digitized papers or can provide you with an index of all papers that ran in any location in the United States!
- WorldCat – worldcat.org
 - Search for any newspaper title to see what libraries may carry it
 - Format options:
 - Newspaper** means a physical copy
 - Microfilm** means microfilm!
 - eNewspaper** means a digital database (usually must be accessed on-site)
 - Results under “**Find a Copy Online**” means that there may be digital copies, but chances are you must be a member of a university/library to view them
 - Results under “**Find a copy in the library**” are obtainable in the library they are listed by. Many places do not require you to be a student to visit and view microfilm.
 - What if you can't find it locally? Take the citation from Worldcat.org to your library's Inter-Library Loan (ILL) department and see if they can try to order it for you.

Free-ish

- Contacting public libraries & genealogy societies (may have loan or reproduction fees)
 - Reference librarians and genealogy society members from your desired locale are excellent people to contact if you don't know how to find obituaries for a certain location. They often know about indexing projects and special search sites available on the Internet.
 - Begin by Googling the terms “public library” and/or “genealogy society”, plus the city/state/county/location you are looking for
 - If you are having a hard time navigating a library's website, look towards the bottom or around the edges for an “Ask a Librarian” link or something similar
 - Some libraries offer digital or mail reproductions of certain articles. Inquire with their reference librarians to find out! There may be fees associated with this type of service.
 - Look for contact e-mails on genealogy society websites.

Paid

- GenealogyBank.com

Where to go after you have your obituary

- With your newfound information from an obituary, there are many resources you can search
 - Tombstone Index**
 - Available on microfilm at the Louisiana Division and in the Est Bank Regional Local History area
 - Created by WPA. Rolls for multiple local cemeteries, organized alphabetically.
 - Good to turn to when an obituary does not list a cemetery
 - You will still need a ballpark list of cemeteries to search through
 - Census**
 - Available on Ancestry.com – FREE at any NOPL & JPL Library Branch

-Available through HeritageQuest – Free database you can use at home with your library card

City Directories

- Same as above, 1861-1990s
- 1805-1861 are available on microfiche in the Louisiana Division
- Some are transcribed on USGenWeb sites

Court Records – Successions, Orleans Parish

-Indices

Civil District Court Index of Successions:

<http://archives.nolalibrary.org/inv/cdc/cdcprobatev3-4.htm>

2nd District Court Index of Successions

<http://archives.nolalibrary.org/inv/2dc/2dcsuccession.htm>

Civil District Court and Second District Court available on microfilm at the Louisiana Division/City Archives

Second District Court also digitized on FamilySearch.org

Draft cards

- Available on Ancestry at any library
- Available on Fold3 at home with your library card

Immigration and Naturalization Papers

- Indexes, Declarations of Intention, and Naturalizations available on microfilm at the Louisiana Division/City Archives.
- Some records can be found on Ancestry.com
- Passenger Lists are complete on Ancestry and HeritageQuest

Marriage Documents

-Orleans Justice of the Peace Records – Marriages 1846-1880

Index

<http://archives.nolalibrary.org/~nopl/inv/jpmarrindex/jpmarrindex.htm>

Available on microfilm at the Louisiana Division/City Archives once you find the name in our indexes

Vital Records

- Secretary of State Vital Records Index, <http://www.sos.la.gov>
- Has index entries for vital records that are open to the public
- Louisiana did not require birth certificates until 1918, so coverage is spotty.

Church Records

- Archdiocese of New Orleans: archives.arch-no.org
- Diocese of Baton Rouge: <https://diobrarchives.org/>