

# Tracing pasts: Web links us to newspapers, history

June 18, 2009 02:41:00 PM

By [LINDA KLEBACK](#)

*Genealogist Linda Pazics Kleback formerly was a researcher at the Bay County Public Library. She now lives in Maryland. For an archive of her columns, go to <http://www.newsherald.com/search/?q=Kleback&fstype=site&x=23&y=5>*

Newspapers are one of my favorite resources for family history research. No other material gives us a better insight into the daily lives of so many of our ancestors.

I spend a lot of time finding obituaries, births, marriages, personal columns and other topics while browsing newspapers, both online and on microfilm. It's a time-consuming task since there are not many indexes available.

Some online papers do offer an every-word search, and I think we'll see more of that in the future as more newspaper collections are digitized. However, it will be many years before we digitize a lot of the old newspapers. Fortunately we have some great sites we can use now. I want to share some sites I came across while browsing online.

The University of Pennsylvania offers links to free newspapers at <http://gethelp.library.upenn.edu/guides/hist/onlinenewspapers.html>. One link is to the Birmingham Iron Age newspaper from Birmingham, Ala. The years available are 1874 to 1887. You can both browse and search these papers. There are other digitized resources anyone interested in Birmingham will enjoy at [http://www.bplonline.org/resources/Digital Project/Collections.asp](http://www.bplonline.org/resources/Digital_Project/Collections.asp).

Another link at <http://www.uflib.ufl.edu/UFDC/UFDC.aspx?cfdn11> is to the Florida Digital Newspaper Library. They describe their mission beautifully: "Florida's newspapers are a state treasure, the historian's and genealogist's best friend, and the community's collective memory. In the world of newspapers, today's news is already history, from the moment their stories are printed. The *Florida Digital Newspaper Library* exists to provide access to the news and history of Florida."

Many of the newspapers are only short runs, but they are really fun to read. This site also features a browse and a search function.

Four links to Georgia online newspapers appear on the Penn Web site. One of the links takes you to The Cherokee Phoenix which is described as the first American Indian newspaper. The years available are 1828 to 1833. Most states have some representation; it's worth taking a look.

A more general site listed is Chronicling America, a Library of Congress site at <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov>. It offers a variety of digitized newspapers, including some issues of the Panama City Pilot.