

The Good, the Bad, and the Reality: Researching Insane Asylums, Poor Houses, and Orphans Homes
 Genealogical Society of Collier County, 11 Feb 2020
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Records vary widely: access, kind of repository, kind and extent of records

Search terms (ADD geographical location): asylum / almshouse, poor house, workhouse, “house of industry”/county home, city home, orphans’ home, foundling home / poor farm, city farm, town farm, county farm, home farm / reformatory, infirmary, hospital / pauper institution, pauper settlement

First clues: Family records/photos, Death certificates, Censuses—federal & state

Data on dependent/poor populations report on US Censuses:

US Census	Disabled/depend.	Veteran	Work	Income	Property Values	Dwelling
1840	●	(Pensioners)				
1850	13		7			
1860	14		7		8, 9	
1870	18 ¹		7		8, 9	
1880	15, 16-20		13, 14			
1890	? ²	● ⁷	? ²			
1900			19, 20 ³			25-28
1910	31,32	30	18-22			26-29
1920			26-28			7-8
1930		30,31	25-29			7-10
1940 ^{5,6}	25		21-31 ^{4,5}	32, 33 ⁵		4-6
● = yes	# = Column					

¹See also Col. 20: Male citizens of US, over 21 yrs, rights to vote denied, grounds other than rebellion or other crime.

²If surviving: Col. 22-23 (“defective”), Col. 16-17 (occupation, months employed)

³Occupation, trade, or professions of each person 10 years and over

⁴Col. 22: Involved in Emergency Work (WPA, NYA, CCC, etc) 24-30 Mar 1940

⁵Supplemental Questions: Social Security: Col. 42-44; Work: Col. 45-47

⁶Col. 17-19: Residence, 1 Apr 1935

⁷1890 Veterans Schedule

Also: **1880 Defective, Dependent, Delinquent Classes Schedule**—Ancestry has digital images for AL, CA, CT, GA, IL, IA, KS, ME, MA, MI, NE, NJ, NY, OH, OR, PA, SC, TN, TX, VA, WA;
 See blank forms for all 7 schedules at <https://www.archives.gov/research/genealogy/charts-forms>
US Census on Deaf Family Marriages and Hearing Relatives, 1888-1895
US Federal Census Mortality Schedules, 1850-1885

For income/property values: Calculate dollar values/inflation across time at **Inflation Calculator**, <https://www.in2013dollars.com/> for 1635-2020, US/Canada/Australia, Europe, ...

Digging deeper: SEARCH everywhere and be persistent!

--Find A Grave, cemeteries

--Newspapers: obituaries, record of family situation (county poor fund disbursements, local “news” column)

--Local sources: maps, local historical encyclopedias/atlases, Sanborn Fire Insurance maps of town/city

--Institutional records—may find at Google Books or HathiTrust Digital Library (free)

Digging deeper, continued:

- County records/archives, county court records local historical societies archives/member knowledge
- State archives
- National Archives for WPA, CCC, NYA
- See GSCC 2016 program: Marsha Kreucher on Adoption Records, <http://thegscc.org> --Helpful Links
- Personal contacts: historical society's Facebook page, Ancestry message board
- Websites (free):

The Poor House Story, poorhousestory.com

National Orphan Train Complex (Museum, research center) <https://orphantraindepot.org/history/>
Asylum Projects, http://asylumprojects.org/index.php/Main_Page

See also *Asylum Projects Facebook* page for lots of images, information

Olive Tree Genealogy (choose Almhouse or Insane Asylums) <https://www.olivetreegenealogy.com/>

Genealogy Trails: See *Search Our Site* (Use Ctrl-F function to search for name on document)

<http://genealogytrails.com/>—volunteer transcriptions of local records

Digital Public Library of America (free, immediately available digital resources) <https://dp.la/>

Family History Daily (articles, courses, tools for genealogy research) <https://familyhistorydaily.com/>

ArchiveGrid—catalog of archival institutions' holdings (WorldCat)

See "How to locate any offline genealogical record in 1 minute," *Family History Daily*

<https://familyhistorydaily.com/genealogy-help-and-how-to/archivegrid-offline-genealogy/>

Cyndi's List, choose *Hospitals, Asylums & Sanitoriums*, narrow by geographical location

<https://www.cyndislist.com/medical/>

- Think local, search globally. GOOGLE everything!

What was your ancestor/family doing in these years?

- 1797 Panic
- 1807 Depression
- 1815-1821 Depression
- 1837 Panic
- 1857 Panic
- 1873 Panic
- 1893 Panic/Depression
- 1907 Panic
- 1920/21 Depression
- 1929 The Great Depression (→1941!)

Sources: Morton (May/June 2014), "Researching Ancestors Who Were Poor," *Family Tree Magazine*

Glazer (Mar 2009), "Hard Times," *Family Tree Magazine*

EPIDEMICS: Check general epidemic timelines in US and notices/news in local newspapers

- Smallpox: mid-1600s, 1721 Boston [v: 1700]
- Yellow Fever: from Caribbean, 1793 Philadelphia--5k died, 17K fled city
 - [v: 1935/license 1953]
- Cholera: 1832-1866 in 3 waves, NYC (St Louis 1849)[v: 1896]
- Scarlet Fever: 1858 New England (95% affected were children)—strep throat
- Typhoid 1906-1907 [v. 1896/license 1914]
- Polio, USA: 1916-1955 [v: 1955]
- Influenza, USA: "Spanish flu" 1918, "Asian flu" 1957 [v. 1942]
- Diphtheria: 1921 peak in US [v: mid-1920s]

Source: "The Most Dangerous Epidemics in US History," Healthline,

<https://www.healthline.com/health/worst-disease-outbreaks-history#1>