

Godfrey Memorial Library: A Mountain of Information

BACK WHEN FEW newspapers were digitized and available online, a subscription to the online offerings at the Godfrey Library was essential to gain access to many newspapers (as well as other resources). This was convenient because it allowed people to get information without physically having to go to a library. Years later, I can still say the same. Even with the advent of GenealogyBank, www.genealogybank.com, the newspaper collection at Ancestry.com, www.ancestry.com, World Vital Records, www.worldvitalrecords.com, and other resources for digital newspapers, I still subscribe to the online Godfrey Scholar Program. It continues to provide me with valuable access to unique newspaper collections. And, it has much more than newspapers.

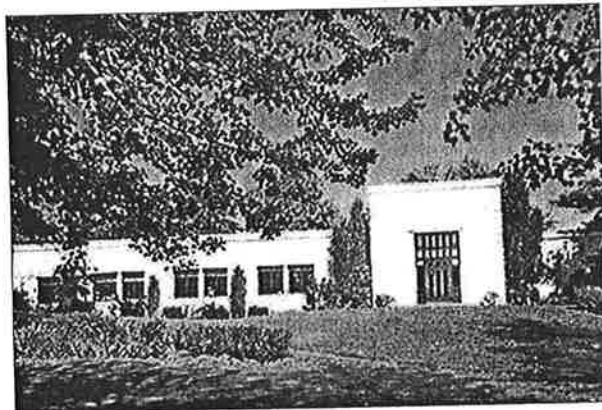
The Godfrey Memorial Library, www.godfrey.org, is a physical library that has been in existence since 1947, located in Middletown Connecticut, just south of Hartford.

Besides being a library, it is also a Family History Center. And, you can search its catalog online. So if you live in Connecticut, Massachusetts, Rhode Island or you're just passing through, do check it out.

Additionally, Godfrey Memorial Library is the owner and publisher of the American Genealogical Biographical Index (AGBI), which contains more than four million names, statistics and sources for research. It also includes over two million records from the Boston Transcript, an index to the books and periodicals on Godfrey Memorial's shelves. Visitors can make use of this valuable resource by making an AGBI search request, or if you have a subscription to Ancestry.com,

Diane L. Richard looks at one of genealogy's best kept secrets!

AGBI is accessible via that as well. Ancestry.com also has an article about AGBI, <http://www.ancestry.com/learn/library/article.aspx?article=663>. Use the form provided on the site for a surname search, photocopies of the pages on which a searched surname appears are then made by staff and volunteers.



Godfrey Memorial Library, Middletown, Connecticut.

ONLINE GODFREY SCHOLAR PROGRAM

Years ago, a colleague mentioned a library where you could access databases online — a pretty novel idea at the time. Being an inveterate internet genealogist, I decided to try it out. Though the offerings and services have changed, and evolved through the years, I still consider it some of the best money I spent to gain access to genealogy resources. Where there used to be one membership level, there are now several. More sophisticated and newer database providers have raised rates and adjusted offerings and recognize that not everyone's needs are the same.

They now have the following subscription offerings. Red (Basic),

\$35, includes Premium Databases (Ex: 19th Century US Newspapers, Accessible Archives 19th Century Newspapers, *London Times* Digital Archives, American National Biography, OCLC World Cat) and Godfrey's own unique digitized content, donated genealogical books, research materials and projects. Blue, \$65, includes all the Basic Content plus Newspaper Archives.com. Green, at \$75, includes all the Basic Content plus World Vital Records US Collection. Gold, at \$100, includes all the Basic Content plus Newspaper Archives.com, and World Vital Records US Collection.

Regardless of subscription, you have access to several digital newspaper archives as well as some unique digitized content.

NEWSPAPERS AT GODFREY
The digital newspaper archives at Godfrey is where I spend most of my research time. I frequently examine 19th Century Newspapers (Infotrac), 19th Century Newspapers (Accessible Archives), Early American

Newspapers (1690-1876) (Newsbank) and *London Times* Digital Archives Newspaper Archives.com.

The newspapers found at Newspaper Archives.com have probably been the most helpful to me for my research projects, followed by Infotrac's 19th Century Newspapers. I have found relevant information in all of these collections.

The easiest way to locate these databases is either under the "Godfrey Scholar Premium Databases" folder or under the folder labeled "Newspapers/Journals".

When you click on your newspaper of choice, you will be taken to that database. Since these are all

unique databases, follow the given instructions on how to search for, save and print articles. For example, when researching the Overby family, the newspaper articles were helpful in learning more about this family. In particular, I learned about the colorful history of George Overby. A reference in his wife's obituary (found elsewhere) explains, "the eldest daughter married a young man who was well thought of, but in a short time he became a victim of intemperance and deserted his family" (*Chatham Record*, 9 September 1886). Though these are only glimpses into the life of the Overby family, they gave clues to where to look to learn more about the family. From 19th Century Newspapers, the following articles tell us quite a bit about George and his family. Listed as a "tramp" formerly from Fayetteville, he was arrested in February 1881 in Durham, North Carolina as reported in the Raleigh, North Carolina newspaper. In the Spring of 1881, the Orange County, North Carolina Court of Pleas and Quarter Sessions heard the case, "State vs Geo Overby" for assault and battery. He was ultimately found not guilty.

George Overby was again remanded twice more, this time on 13 July 1881 and in August 1881. This is the last we hear of him. I know that when his wife died in 1886, he was no longer with that family. By the time of his mother's death in 1896, it appears that he is not alive since we can account for the surviving children referenced in her obituary.

In 1886, there is a brief announcement of his wife Julia's death in the Raleigh newspaper and also in a longer piece in the Fayetteville newspaper (hometown of her estranged husband George).

There were additional news pieces about George's extended family in Fayetteville. This shows what can be learned from one newspaper collection. Imagine what you can learn by checking out all the newspaper archives! For a list of what's included in the 19th Century Papers collection,

Mrs. Julia Overby died in Pittsboro, N. C., on the 6th inst. Mrs. Overby was the wife of Mr. Geo. F. Overby, formerly of Fayetteville, and had many warm friends and admirers in this place. She left two sons. The *Record* speaks highly of her virtues and noble efforts to aid her orphan sisters and maintain her little flock until death's summons came.

... George Overby, a tramp, hailing from Fayetteville, one night last week knocked Mr. James Dodd down and robbed him of all the money he had in his possession. Overby was arrested and tried before Mayor Link, and sent to jail to await the action of the law. . . . Hillsboro is to have

Top: The death of Julia Overby, 16 September 1886, *The Observer and Gazette, Fayetteville*.

Bottom: The arrest of George Overby, 24 February 1881, *News and Observer, Raleigh*. (via 19th Century Papers Infotrac)

visit <http://www.gale.cengage.com/tlist/NCNP.html>.

THE ONLINE GODFREY SCHOLAR PROGRAM HAS MORE THAN NEWSPAPERS!

When you sign in to Godfrey, the first place to check is "Godfrey Scholar Premium Databases", which is where the more unique databases are identified. Subsequent folders typically are a reverse chronological list of recent additions, followed by folders arranged topically and then a sequence of folders for individual states and then individual countries. The collection also includes the American National Biography, Oxford African American Studies Center, Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, Reference USA, The American Civil War: Letters And Diaries and African American Newspapers.

PARTNERSHIP WITH WORLD VITAL RECORDS

Additionally, Godfrey has partnered with WorldVitalRecords.com to bring some of its unique collection to World Vital Records subscribers (as well as online Godfrey Scholar Program subscribers). When you click on the "Godfrey Collection" folder, you are taken to the books from the Godfrey Memorial Library that have been digitized and are part of the World Vital Records site. The collection includes numerous

funeral sermons (more than 1,200 funeral sermons and memorials), biographies and autobiographies, family histories and other publications of interest to the genealogist/family historian.

OTHER GODFREY CONTENT

Besides the newspapers and unique content, the state and country folders contain information readily available elsewhere on the web. What is nice about these folders is that they contain information that is not directly available from any single place — they give you a capsule view of some of the resources available for that locale. When starting a new project, I will often visit the appropriate state folder just to see what is listed and if there is a resource that I have overlooked.

CONCLUSION

Anytime I get stuck on a project, I visit the online Godfrey Scholars site. That is what happened for the Overby project — all the trails for George had dried up and then I searched in the Godfrey newspaper archives and found the articles about him. We still don't know what ultimately happened to George, but we do know that he rattled around the courts, jails and workhouses for much of 1881.

If a "tramp" from Fayetteville can be found in newspaper archives, imagine what you might find for more upstanding citizens or that elusive ancestor.

DFH

Diane L. Richard has been doing genealogy research for over 20 years. She currently does professional research in North Carolina and can be found online at www.mosaicrpm.com/Genealogy

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