

## Message Boards

There are usually others researching the same surnames and localities that you are seeking. Before the World Wide Web came into most of our lives, phone calls and writing letters to the few researchers we happened across was our only way of communicating. The internet opened the door to a whole new way of communicating between researchers.

Genealogy sites usually have message boards to aid in the process of communicating with other researchers. A message board is likened to a big bulletin board. You can write/email others who are seeking information on the same surnames and localities you are researching.

**Surnames:** In the message boards find your surname, taking note of names spelled similar to yours, such as Roaten, Roten, Wroten, etc.

**Locations:** Post your information in the state, county and city message boards. There are also message boards for other countries, such as Italy or England. In a matter of seconds you can relay information across the country to cousins that you can share family histories with!

The awesome thing about message boards is that you can gather all kinds of great information. I have seen wills posted, military records and family histories related on the message boards. When writing an inquiry, don't try to put two or more queries on one message. Write a message per search of surname or locale. Keep to the facts, readers tend to pass by too wordy a query.

The important thing to remember is to be patient. I have posted an inquiry and did not get a reply for three years, while others are answered the same day. These genealogy sites keep the message in their database ongoing. Someone may not find your query until much later than when you wrote it. So don't give up.

One thing to keep in mind. As I stated earlier, these messages will stay for long periods of time, years. Some of us change internet carriers and our email addresses might change. Keeping a log of the messages you post along with the dates is a good idea. Then, if your email, or even address or phone number (if you posted it) has changed, you will know where to go to do the updates of the new contact information.

As these message boards are open to the public for all to see, please be sensitive to personal and private information. Don't relate stories or facts that are personal to someone else for all to read. Be careful when giving out phone numbers and addresses. You can always have the researcher contact you privately once you've made a connection.

Always check back often as new people are always visiting these message boards. I have read a message board with no luck; one month later I checked back and there was a new match for me.

I know of a woman who was researching a message board; there was a query that matched her family. Her parents divorced when she was young and her father had disappeared. He came back into their lives before his death, but not much about his missing years were discussed. Based on this message board, she learned her father had remarried and divorced again, but had a son. This woman learned that along with her sisters, she had a new brother that lived in the next state to her! This brother had used the message board to try to find out more about his deceased father and found new sisters!

In summary, message boards can be used much like big bulletin boards. You can seek others who have surnames and localities like yours and see if they match. Once you've made a connection, sharing information can confirm your match. Message boards can be located on genealogy sites such as Ancestry, Rootsweb and most county genealogical sites. Message Boards have brought many families

closer together and enabled the sharing of information at a much faster pace. The greatest thing is all the new "cousins" you may meet along the way.

Contributed by Tina Sansone