

Finding Your Ancestors in the Draper Manuscript Collection

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Born on 4 September 1815, Lyman Copeland Draper grew up listening to the Revolutionary War stories told by his grandfather and the War of 1812 tales of his father. He became fascinated with American history, particularly the history of the west.

After securing the financial backing of his cousin's husband, Peter A. Remsen, Draper began collecting information about the Revolutionary War and the settlement of the west. Travelling extensively, he met with and interviewed pioneers, veterans, and their children. He copied documents, clipped or transcribed articles from newspapers, copied documents, wrote and received letters, and occasionally was given original documents. He copied maps and drew new ones. He even purchased parts of the collections of John Dabney Shane and Samuel J. Rea, historians working in the same time and places as himself. These he compiled into volumes by subject matter.

Upon Remsen's death, Draper was forced to find another source of income. He secured a position at the State Historical Society of Wisconsin and continued his collection of documents and other information and continued to compile and re-compile them into volumes.

Draper's intention was to use his manuscripts to write a book on western history and biography tentatively titled *Sketches of the Lives of the Pioneers*. He died before his efforts came to fruition. In this, Draper was like a graduate student who never publishes because there might be some, presently unknown, piece of information that will render his current conclusions obsolete. In truth we are the same, waiting forever to publish our own family histories in the hope of one more clue identifying an elusive ancestor.

Upon his death, Draper willed his collection of manuscripts to the State Historical Society of Wisconsin. Shortly thereafter, the society took possession of the papers, and Society Executive, Reuben G. Thwaites, oversaw the efforts to make the collection available for

public use. This involved continuing Draper's arrangement of loose manuscripts into bound volumes.

The society arranged the volumes by subject into fifty series, each one given a one or two letter pressmark (A through ZZ with I and II not being used). Subsequently, the volumes were microfilmed and made available to libraries and other institutions. Any item can be found on film if the series, volume, and page number are known. Typically they are recorded in the format volume series page. For example, the citation 25 C 12 references volume 25 of the Daniel Boone Papers (series C), page 12. Sometimes the "page number" is actually an item number in that particular volume rather than the page number.¹ These became the 491 volumes that are now known as the Draper Manuscript collection.

The Special Collections Department at St. Louis County Library Headquarters has the only complete collection of the Draper Manuscripts in the St. Louis area.

Content of the Collection

In the twenty-first century, our vision of the American West tends to be colored by our experiences of television and movie westerns. We think of the Wild West as the land of cattle rustlers, outlaws, and desperados, a land of stage coaches, saloons, ranchers, and a few Native Americans, with noble lawmen barely able to keep trouble at bay. Draper's west is the Trans-Appalachian west (see map on page 1), a place infinitely wilder than the west of our imaginations. The courthouse and the lawman were both on the other side of the mountains. The Indians were at least an equal if not greater force than the settlers. The two groups, in the best of conditions, lived in an uneasy truce. People had to rely on themselves. There was no cavalry to ride to the rescue.

By the time Draper began his collecting, this Trans-Appalachian west was a settled land. In talking to the children and the grandchildren of the pioneers and listening to the revolutionary war stories, he felt he was on a mission: A mission to preserve a history that was already receding, at least in part, into memory.

How to find records

Although the Draper Manuscripts are rich in information, they are not the easiest resource to use. There are a number of indexes and finding aids that will help a researcher use the collection. Each will be considered below.

¹ For alternative ways to cite the Draper Manuscripts, see Harper, Josephine L, *Guide to the Draper Manuscripts*. Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1983, p vii. [R929.3 H294G and 929.3 H294G] or Mills, Elizabeth Shown, *Evidence Explained: Citing History Sources from Artifacts to Cyberspace*. Baltimore, Maryland: Genealogical Publishing Company, 2007, p129 [R 907.2 M657E and 907.2 M657E].

Guide to the Draper Manuscripts

Any discussion of the Draper Manuscript Collection must begin with a discussion of Josephine Harper's *Guide to the Draper Manuscripts*.² Her work begins with a discussion of the entire collection, and then provides an overview of each series within the collection, and finally outlines the contents of each volume of the series.

Consider, for example, the description of the randomly chosen Series F, the Joseph Brandt Papers. At a first glance, a researcher might conclude "My ancestors do not include any Brandts. I do not even know who Joseph Brandt was. This could not possibly apply to my research." According to the introduction to the series, Joseph Brant was a "noted Mohawk chief whose Indian name was Thayendanegea." Early in the Revolution he "was given a British captain's commission." He became the leader of the "British Indians in New York and northern Pennsylvania where he directed or participated in battles and terror-inspiring raids from 1777 through 1783."³ If your ancestors were from western New York or northern Pennsylvania during the Revolutionary War, this might be a series that would be of interest to you.

Harper provides additional information about each volume in each series. Typically she lists events and key names that are mentioned in it. For example, in Series F, Volume 2, she lists the Devil's Hole Massacre, the Susquehanna Delawares, John Brown, Fort St. John, the Battle of the Cedars, Ezekiel Brown, John McKistry, Elizabeth Knox, Jonathan Maynard, and Lois Eaton among others. These descriptions may mention an ancestor's name or a battle or other event he or she participated in.

Following the description of the series, Harper provides a general index of names and subjects included in her volume descriptions. It lists the series and volume numbers where the name or subject can be found.

Four appendices complete the book. Appendix I contains an index to the Revolutionary War Pension Applications found in the Draper Manuscripts. It lists the series and volume number where the individual's papers can be found. Not every Revolutionary War Pension recipient is included because Draper did not establish contact with all of them. This appendix is less useful than it once was, because all of the Revolutionary War Pension records are searchable on the Fold3 database available through St. Louis County Library.

Appendix II contains a listing of additional personal data found in the manuscripts. The index includes authors of signed publications, cartographers, correspondents and other writers who contributed information to Draper, persons interviewed and subjects of obituaries. The entries list the series and volume numbers of the reference.

² Harper, Josephine L, *Guide to the Draper Manuscripts*. Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1983. [R929.3 H294G and 929.3 H294G]

³ Harper, p28.

Appendix III lists the more than 575 cartographic pieces in the collection. Few of these maps are original to the Revolutionary War or settlement periods, but they offer a sense of place that cannot easily be found elsewhere. Many of the maps were hand drawn by Draper. The index lists pressmark, volume, and page number.

Appendix IV provides the reel list of the 1980 microfilm edition of the collection, the filming owned by the Special Collections Department.

Calendars

The State Historical Society of Wisconsin published several volumes of indexes to parts of the Draper Manuscript Collection. Called the "Calendar Series," they take their name from the chronological order of the abstracts in the front of the book. An index of the principal names (of people or locations) follows to help the researcher. It does not appear that every name listed in the papers appears in the index, but instead only the key names relative to the documents.

Calendars exist for:

Series J	George Rogers Clark Papers
Series U	Frontier Wars Papers
Series CC	Kentucky Papers
Series DD	Kings Mountain Papers
Series QQ	William Preston Papers
Series SS	David Shepherd Papers
Series TT	South Carolina Papers
Series UU	South Carolina in the Revolution Miscellanies
Series VV	Thomas Sumter Papers
Series XX	Tennessee Papers
Series ZZ	Virginia Papers

To use the calendars, begin by searching the volume indexes. The page number in the index will refer you to the page number in the book for the name or event. Go to that page to read the abstract and find the citation in the manuscript indicating the series, volume, and page number where the item can be found.

Transcriptions

Craig L. Heath transcribed and published several of the Manuscript Series. Each of these transcriptions includes an every-name index. Not only does the index make the documents accessible but many people find the transcriptions significantly easier to read than the handwritten manuscripts. As with all transcriptions, the researcher must use the actual document in conjunction with the transcription to avoid perpetuating unintended transcriber errors.

Transcriptions exist for:

Series A	George M. Bedinger Papers
Series V	Georgia, Alabama, and South Carolina Papers
Series Z	Illinois Papers
Series GG	Mecklenburg Declaration ⁴
Series TT	South Carolina Papers
Series ZZ	Virginia Papers (volumes 1-5 only)

Others have also worked on transcriptions of parts of the Draper Manuscript Collection. The Special Collections Department has the following volumes:

Series B	<i>The Life of Daniel Boone</i>	Ted Franklin Belue
22 S 241—268	<i>Lyman C. Draper's Notes on His Interview with Samuel Boone</i>	George F. Doyle
6 S 19—241	<i>My Father, Daniel Boone</i>	Neal O. Hammon
21 U	<i>Action at the Galudoghson</i>	December 14 1742 Jared C. Lobdell
Various	<i>Frontier Memories II</i> and <i>Frontier Memories III</i> ⁵	Dale Payne
Series D	<i>Border Forays and Adventures</i>	Robert Barton Puryear III

Indexes

Karen Mauer Green compiled an *Index to the Draper Manuscripts: Series NN, The Pittsburgh and Northwest Virginia Papers*. The index includes every name mentioned in the text. A brief introduction explains how to use the index for efficiently finding the documents in the original manuscripts.

Draper himself indexed some, but not all, of the volumes. If he created an index, it is included within the volume. Some of his indexes are more detailed than others. Some are more legible than others. Draper made these indexes for his own purposes. He did not make them for us. It is unclear if he indexed every name or only the ones he was interested in for his planned books. The Special Collections Department printed copies of these indexes for the volumes that are not otherwise indexed, transcribed, or calendared and placed them in four large white binders. Each of these indexes must be searched separately

⁴ St. Louis County Library does not have a copy of the transcription of the Mecklenburg Declaration.

⁵ *Frontier Memories III* also includes a revised version of *Frontier Memories I*.

Documentaries

In the early years of the last century, The Wisconsin Historical Society published five compilations of items extracted from the Draper Manuscripts. The items were selected from across the various series and volumes to explain in a chronological order some of the events of the Revolutionary War and the time immediately preceding it.

The five, in historical order are:

Documentary History of Dunmore's War, 1774.
The Revolution on the Upper Ohio, 1775–1777.
Frontier Defense on the Upper Ohio 1777–1778.
Frontier Advance on the Upper Ohio, 1778–1779.
Frontier Retreat on the Upper Ohio, 1779–1781.

Each of these volumes contains an index of names. By finding a name in the index, a researcher can go to the page in the compilation. The page in the documentary will list the citation of the original document in the Draper Manuscripts.

Other authors have also compiled histories from the Draper Manuscripts. The patterns of indexing and citation vary with the individual author. Some of these works are:

Harry G. Enoch	<i>Affair at Captina Creek.</i> <i>In Search of Morgan's Station and "the Last Indian Raid in Kentucky".</i>
Louis Knott Koontz	<i>The Virginia Frontier, 1754–1763.</i>
Jared C. Lobdell	<i>Further Materials on Lewis Wetzel and the Upper Ohio Frontier.</i> <i>Indian Warfare in Western Pennsylvania and Northwest Virginia at the Time of the Revolution.</i> <i>Recollections of Lewis Bonnett, Jr. (1788-1850).</i> <i>The Bonnett and Wetzel Families.</i>
Edward P. McCullough	<i>The Early History of Montgomery County, Kentucky.</i>
Dale Payne	<i>Biographical Sketches of the Pioneers.</i> <i>Narratives of Pioneer Life and Border Warfare.</i>
Darren R. Reid	<i>Daniel Boone and Others on the Kentucky Frontier.</i>

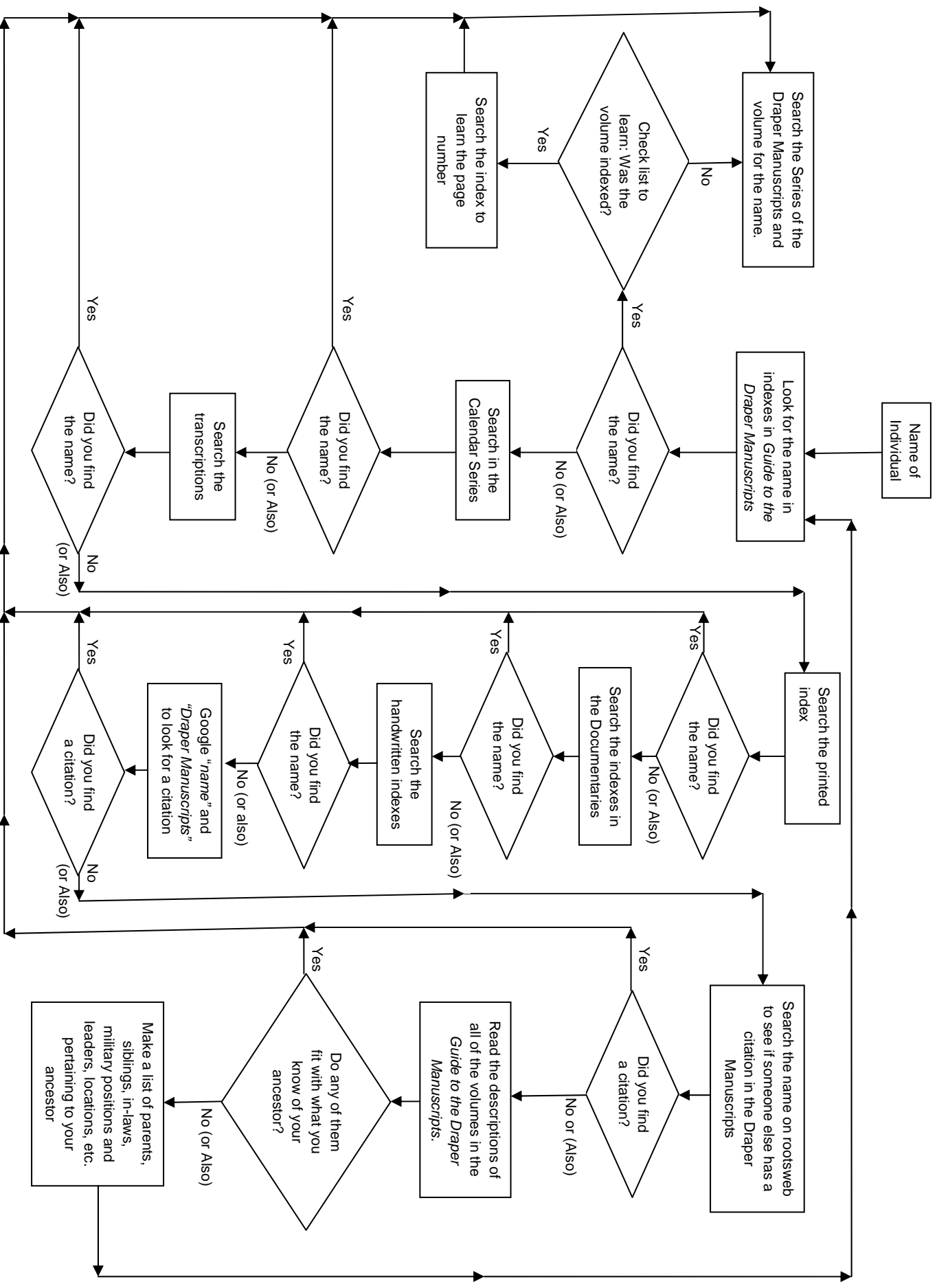
Strategies for Finding your Ancestors

The key to a successful search is to exhaust all reasonable possibilities. The flow chart in this handout is one example of a logical process to follow as you move through the various resources. If you follow the steps it will guide you through a process of searching for your ancestors in the Draper Manuscript Collection.

The Draper Manuscripts are not now and not ever likely to be an easy resource to use. With planning and persistence, however, they do not have to be an insurmountable challenge.



How to Search for Your Ancestor in the Draper Manuscript Collection



Glossary of Terms Used in the Flow Chart

Calendar Series: Set of six books created by the Wisconsin Historical Society to make the Draper Manuscripts more accessible. Each of the six volumes covers one or more series of the collected manuscript volumes. The Calendars feature an index at the back of the book referencing abstracts of information in the front of the book which in turn reference a manuscript series, volume, and page number.

Documentaries: The Wisconsin Historical Society compiled five volumes of history from documents in the Draper Manuscript Collection. Scholars, including Draper himself, also created similar works based on documents found in the manuscripts.

Draper Manuscript Collection: A group of documents relating to the Revolutionary War and the settlement of the Trans-Appalachian west assembled by Lyman Copland Draper in the mid to late 19th century. Also known as the Draper Papers and the Draper Manuscripts.

Guide to the Draper Manuscripts: Book written by Josephine Harper detailing the contents of each volume of the manuscripts. Contains an index of all names mentioned in the book as well as four appendices.

Handwritten Index: These are indexes created by Draper for some of the volumes of the Manuscripts. Copies of these indexes for volumes that have not been calendared (see Calendar Series) or Transcribed (see Transcriptions) have been printed from the microfilm and placed in four binders in the Special Collections Department at St. Louis County Library.

Printed Index: Karen Mauer Green created an every name index for Series NN, the Pittsburgh and Northwest Virginia Papers.

Series: When the Wisconsin Historical Society took possession of Draper's Manuscripts, they continued his organization system of combining the various volumes of the collection into 50 series by subject (such as the George Rogers Clark Papers, the Kentucky Papers, etc.). Each series was assigned a one or two letter pressmark to identify it. There are Series A-Z and AA-ZZ with I and II not being used.

Transcriptions: Various writers, scholars, and other individuals have created word for word transcriptions of individual volumes of the manuscripts. Most have an every name index.

Volume: Set of manuscripts bound together into one book. These original books belong to the Wisconsin Historical Society and have been microfilmed. The films are available at many libraries including the Special Collections Department at St. Louis County Library.