

# Building a Family Website

Sandra J. Crowley - [sandrac@tx.rr.com](mailto:sandrac@tx.rr.com)

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Websites for genealogists can take a variety of directions from a simple blog about your family research to a site that includes galleries of photos and databases of ancestors. Before starting to create your site, however, you should step back and look at the big picture. Why do you want to build a website and what kind of content do you intend to provide? What actions, if any, do you want from your viewers? Or is your site simply a way to share information about your research with family and friends.

There are no right or wrong answers; there are just YOUR answers. Once you've decided what you want your site to be, the process of finding the right tools and building your site begins. Following are some questions to ask as you're evaluating what you want to do along with some resources to consider after you've made your decision. This is by no means a complete list because technology is forever changing and improving. Your best resource for the latest information is the internet itself.

During this process, visit other family sites to help you identify what you like and don't like about their sites. Seeing what someone else has created will give you ideas of what you don't want to do as well as what you want to do. A list of some sample sites is included in this document.

## **Why Do You Want to Build a Site?**

- Repository for your genealogy findings
- Connect with others who are researching your surname
- Photo gallery where you can share pictures with others and vice versa
- Blog to share your research journey
- Something else ....

## **What Information Will You Include?**

Some websites have a specific focus. Answers to the above questions will help you identify the type of content you want to include on your site. One of the first decisions needs to be whether you are going to focus on one of the surnames you're searching or multiple surnames. My recommendation is to start with one and then add another if desired. Don't try to do everything at once or you may become overwhelmed. Take it a few steps at a time.

You need to decide whether you will include images or just documents. Will you include a blog, and if so, will you allow people to comment? Do you have a famous ancestor that you want to make the focus of your site? For example, my family is connected to Benjamin Crowley who settled in Arkansas and gave Crowley's Ridge its name. The family homestead is still standing. There are sites that tell his story; however, if I had different information or another slant to the story, I might want to develop a site that covers that. The other option, of course, is to share the story with the site that is already developed and link to it from my site. Consider all options when planning your site.

## **How Will Your Site Be Organized?**

The easiest approach is often the simplest. If you have a paper filing system that works for you, consider mimicking that same system for your family site. It will make digitizing and filing information much easier and faster. Remember to consider the navigation of your site; how viewers will move through and interact with your site.

## **What Tools are Available to Develop Your Site?**

One of the first decisions is whether you want to have your own domain name for your site or use one of the free tools, such as WordPress or Weebly, that you let you create a site as a "sub-site" of theirs. If you set up your site as a subset of theirs, then you might be able to create a site for free. If you use your own domain name, there will be costs involved. One consideration is whether to create a free site as a test. It's a great way to learn how to use a web building tool and try out some ideas before spending any money. Each of these tools offers additional features for a fee, but if you are starting with a

simple site, you should be able to create a free one. If you want to include audio or video, you will need to consider other options. The difference will be how people access your site. Example: [yoursite].weebly.com or yoursite.com

## **Checkout These Sites**

**The Genetic Genealogist** – Blaine Bettinger’s website dedicated to all things DNA (<https://thegeneticgenealogist.com/>)

**The Legal Genealogist** – Judy Russell explores legal issues of interest to genealogists (<https://www.legalgenealogist.com/>)

**The Family Curator** – Denise Levenick shares information about preserving and sharing your family history (<https://thefamilycurator.com/>)

**Jana’s Genealogy and Family History blog** – one of the longest running genealogy blogs (<http://janasgenealogyandfamilyhistory.blogspot.com/>)

**Family sites** – (<http://www.tngsitebuilding.com/usersites.php>)

These sites are created by TNG Sitebuilding software; however, they may give you an idea of the type of family site you want to build. Unless you want to use a database of your ancestors as part of your site, you can use any of the other platforms to build a site. The major feature that TNG offers other platforms is the ability to import a GEDCOM file that can be part of your site.

**The Girouard Family** – (<http://www.girouard.org/>)

**Family site created as Weebly sub-site** - (<http://pointerfamilyfromstorycountyowa.weebly.com/>)

**Climb Your Family Tree** – Getting Started in Genealogy Weebly sub-site – (<https://genealogystarter.weebly.com/>)

This site is new; updates weekly!

**Your Surname** – Google your name and family genealogy to see if there is a site related to one of your surnames. Searching “Crowley family genealogy” yielded the following Irish site: (<http://www.crowleyclan.com/>)

## **Platforms/Hosts for Building Your Site**

<b>Potential Platforms to Build Your Site</b>	<b>Potential Internet Hosting Services for Your Own Domain</b>
Weebly.com - <a href="https://www.weebly.com/home/">https://www.weebly.com/home/</a>	Host Monster - <a href="https://www.hostmonster.com/">https://www.hostmonster.com/</a>
WordPress.com or WordPress.org - <a href="https://www.wordpress.com">https://www.wordpress.com</a>	Ready Hosting - <a href="https://www.readyhosting.com/">https://www.readyhosting.com/</a>
Wix.com - <a href="https://www.wix.com">https://www.wix.com</a>	Go Daddy - <a href="https://www.godaddy.com/">https://www.godaddy.com/</a>
SquareSpace.com - <a href="https://www.squarespace.com/">https://www.squarespace.com/</a>	MyDomain - <a href="http://www.mydomain.com/">www.mydomain.com/</a>
SiteBuilder - <a href="https://www.sitebuilder.com/">https://www.sitebuilder.com/</a>	Network Solutions - <a href="https://www.networksolutions.com/">https://www.networksolutions.com/</a>
TNGSitebuilding - <a href="http://www.tngsitebuilding.com/">http://www.tngsitebuilding.com/</a>	Blue Hosting - <a href="https://www.hosting.co.uk/">https://www.hosting.co.uk/</a>

## **A Few Tips**

**Organize & focus your content** - Keep it simple and avoid “information overload.” Make sure you have logical categories and easy navigation so visitors to your site can find what they are looking for quickly

**Optimize photos and images** – Resolution is less a factor here than when printing and image. All you need is 72-96 dpi for a quality image on the internet. Uploading a 300 dpi image that is 1.2MB will only result in a decreased response time for your visitor. Lower resolution that does not impact the quality will insure quick response from your pages.

**Update consistently** - Update frequently; viewer like new content. If you have images on the home page, consider changing them on a periodic basis.

Building a family website can be challenging; it can also be fun and open a world of connections for expanding your research and enriching your stories. Don’t be afraid to jump in and try it. Once you have the information digitized, you can always change to a different format, expanding to a larger platform, or break it into several sites to make it easier to manage. Just take it one step at a time.