

[The Generations Network, Inc.](#)

The Generations Network, Inc. Just *who* and *what* is this massive and relatively new player in the world of Family History and Genealogy. Chances are quite good you have never heard of them. However there is a real good likelihood you know some of the *parts* of this company. Do you recognize any of these organizations?

[MyFamily.com](#)

[Ancestry.com](#)

[Genealogy.com](#)

[Rootsweb.com](#)

[Ancestry.co.uk](#)

[Ancestry.ca](#)

[Ancestry.com.au](#)

[Ancestry.de](#)

[Family Tree Maker](#)

[Ancestry.it](#)

[CensusRecords.net](#)

[FamilyHistory.com](#)

Currently these are the major organizations that make up *The Generations Network, Inc* which has its home base in Provo, Utah, with branches overseas. There are several other familiar genealogy websites that have provided important and reliable information for genealogists for several years. They are likely to join this company in the near future. In addition other companies are interested in buying some of the smaller organizations that are left. Some will resist and hold on for as long as possible. Others are expected to fall in the near future. In 3-5 years only two or three large organizations may well own 80-90% of the content of today's genealogy websites. AND you will pay to use this information, much of which is now FREE.

The name of the game seems to be merger, consolidation, bigger (but not necessarily better), and take-over's. We have seen this in manufacturing, banking, credit card companies, and the insurance industry but did we ever think this would come to genealogy? Why not? There is money to be made and investors are making their move.

What does all this mean to the amateur genealogist? Well for one thing we will have less websites to chase down as we pursue our elusive ancestors. On the other side of the *coin*, it will cost us more *coins* to do what many of us have done for few or no *coins* in the past.

Perhaps you have noticed a common thread that is being used to *lure* the novice genealogist at some of these familiar websites. Banners read something like this; *New FREE databases just added*. When you enter the name, dates and places into the familiar search box and click on the SEARCH button you are quickly taken to the next page. There a familiar message asks you to sign up for a 10-14 day FREE TRIAL to access this *FREE* information.

So now you must register with your credit card to get the *free brief trial*. AND you must remember to contact the vender within that 10-14 day period to tell them you do not wish to continue, if that is your choice. You will quickly learn that it will be very difficult to talk your way out of these agreements, (a la AOL!). The high pressure sales folks on the other end of the line are quite experienced at sweet talking you into continuing as a member for say at least a 3-6 month period, at which time you must again go through the process to either cancel or continue. Be mindful that the six month price is usually much more than half the one year subscription. Also, most contracts will have automatic renewal and automatic charges to your credit card...unless you call and cancel well before the deadline!

The pressure is on as *we* demand more and more databases be placed online...and preferably at as few sites as possible. Family historians are no different than other shoppers, we like *one stop shopping*. Of course this convenience will cost us and there is no guarantee that those *initial discounted annual subscriptions* will be around when you come to renew.

Will the end result be better? Consider two recent changes, one not too good, *and the other?* (I'll let you decide). Recently *Ancestry.com* announced they will no longer provide FREE access to their databases at the Family History Centers operated by the Mormon Church. And the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) has announced an agreement with a new player in this field, *Footnote.com*, <http://www.footnote.com/>. Do you really think they are into this for the sport of it all? But, give this some thought. I expect you will agree there are *some* benefits.

HMF~ TOM: 04/07/2007