

# Instant Genealogy Website!

by Thornton and Marty Gale

Note – This article is a summary of how to quickly create a genealogy website by exporting your data from your genealogy software program to a series of HTML web pages. For a complete explanation of creating a genealogy website, see the book “Getting Started on Your Genealogy Website” available from the [www.genealogyhosting.com](http://www.genealogyhosting.com) website.

**H**ave you been thinking about making the plunge and creating your own genealogy website? It’s a lot easier than you think. All you actually need is a domain name from [www.genealogyhosting.com](http://www.genealogyhosting.com) and your genealogy data which is stored on your genealogy software program. The purpose of this article is to show you how. But first, there is a basic question to be answered:

## Why Create a Genealogy Website, Anyway?

The major reason to create a genealogy website is communications. Genealogy research is founded on communications. You must contact and exchange information with your family members and fellow genealogists to further your genealogical research. You create a genealogy website to facilitate this communication process. Once your genealogy research is on a website, people all over the world can find it easily. In particular, your genealogy website will be indexed by the search engines so that it can be found easily. This means your long-lost cousins will eventually find your website as they research some of the same ancestors as yours. It’s much easier to send a prospective source of information the URL of your website than to send him or her a pile of papers. And notice that they always have your latest information.

## A Free Website with Your Domain Name

You can have a genealogy website for free! This is because when you register a domain name at [www.genealogyhosting.com](http://www.genealogyhosting.com), you get a free, but fully functional, website. The free website is ad-supported and a small banner of advertising appears at the top of each web page of the website. But its free and this means you can quickly get started on your genealogy website for just the small yearly fee of registering your genealogy domain name at [www.genealogyhosting.com](http://www.genealogyhosting.com)!

So what’s a domain name? A domain name is the moniker that a website will be known as. For example, lets say that the genealogist Margaret Schmidt has a genealogy website of [www.schmidt14.org](http://www.schmidt14.org). Then her domain name is technically the last two nodes of the website name i.e., “[schmidt14.org](http://www.schmidt14.org).” The technical term for ownership of a domain name is to “register” it. You obtain a domain name by registering it at a web hosting company such as [www.genealogyhosting.com](http://www.genealogyhosting.com) and paying a small yearly fee. Once you register

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your domain name, you will own it and can continue to own it for the rest of your life, passing it down to your children and grandchildren just like any other asset.

Note – we have included a detailed explanation of domain names in the article “Stake your Claim with a Domain Name!” available on the [www.genealogyhosting.com](http://www.genealogyhosting.com) website.

## Genealogy Software Program Genealogy Database “Mini-Website”

The basis of your instant genealogy website will be your genealogy data from your genealogy software program. All modern genealogy software programs such as Family Tree Maker, PAF, The Master Genealogist, or RootsMagic are capable of exporting a comprehensive, hyperlinked series of HTML web pages from your genealogy database they store. The results will be an integrated, multipage “mini-website” that can be browsed using any web browser. This “mini-website” can be uploaded to your free website as the contents of your website thus making your research available to the world.

The process is fairly easy: You just export your genealogy database from your genealogy software program using the export to website option (or similar name). This process results in a series of HTML files which are stored on your local hard disk to the folder you specify. Then you upload the contents of this folder to your website lock-stock-and barrel. Then, as time passes, whenever you make changes to your genealogy data using your genealogy software program, then you just repeat this process of exporting and uploading replacing the previous version of your website.

The exported mini-website, being interconnected by hyperlinks, is very easy to navigate and use. In many ways, it is competitive with the genealogy software program itself because of the capabilities of hypermedia. Also, your mini-website. is great to have on genealogy research trips. Once it is uploaded to your free website, then it is available world-wide. For example, when you are at a research library, you can just go over to one of the public computers and enter the URL of your website to look at your data.

## Step-by-Step Process to Create Your Instant Genealogy Website

The process of creating your instant genealogy website is to export your “mini-website” from your genealogy software program then upload it to your website. But first you have to get a website which means first you have to register a domain name at [www.genealogyhosting.com](http://www.genealogyhosting.com) so you can get it free. The steps to create an instant genealogy website boil down to these:

1. Register your domain name.
2. Setup your free website under your domain name.

3. Export your genealogy data from your genealogy software program to a “mini-website.”
4. Upload your “mini-website” to your website.
5. Test your website.

Let’s go through each of these steps in detail:

## Register your Domain Name

It’s simple to register a domain name at [www.genealogyhosting.com](http://www.genealogyhosting.com). The only real problem will be to select and register a domain name that communicates the content and meaning of your website. The problem is that often your ideal domain name is not available (i.e., someone else has registered it). We have suggested how to find alternative versions of your base domain name in the article “Stake your Claim with a Domain Name!” available on the [www.genealogyhosting.com](http://www.genealogyhosting.com) web site. No matter what, you can always append a sequence number to your base domain name if it is not available. For example, Margaret Schmidt selected the domain name “*Schmidt14.org*” for her website of [www.schmidt14.org](http://www.schmidt14.org). Follow these steps to register a domain name:

- Log on to your [www.genealogyhosting.com](http://www.genealogyhosting.com) Account Manager (i.e., after first going through the simple and non-invasive process of setting up your account).
- Select “Domain Names” from the top (black) menu bar then select “Register Domains” on the pull-down menu..
- Enter your domain name in the text box then select the last node such as “.com,” “.org,” or “.info” and select “Search.”
- This will display the availability of that domain name. Notice that the availability of various other last nodes of the domain name as well as variations on the base domain name will be also be offered.
- If you are interested in an international domain name, then click the “International Domains” tab.
- If you don’t see a domain name that appeals to you, then click the “Smart Search” tab for suggestions on variations of the base domain name.
- Once you find a domain name that’s available, then click it then click “CONTINUE” which will take you through the shopping cart sequence to register that domain name..
- Click through the shopping-cart offerings and select any additional services you desire (if any). Notice that there will be a lot of great offers from [www.genealogyhosting.com](http://www.genealogyhosting.com) during the check-out sequence.
- You will only commit to buy the domain name at the very end of the shopping cart sequence and only then when you enter the code imbedded in an image.

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## Setup Your Free Website

Once you have registered your domain name at *www.genealogyhosting.com*, you can proceed to setup your free website.

- Log on to your *www.genealogyhosting.com* Account Manager.
- Expand the “All Products” at the bottom (which will display a comprehensive list of all *www.genealogyhosting.com* products) and click on the “Hosting Account List”.
- This will display the “Manage Hosting” screen with a list of any hosting accounts you already have as well as any credits you have for free hosting accounts. Since you just registered a domain name, you will have at least one free hosting credit.. Click on the “Use Credit” next to the “Free Hosting Credits:”
- A list of your domain names will be presented in a pull-down menu on the right hand side of the screen under “Setup Free Hosting.”
  - Choose the target domain name which will be used to access your free website.
  - Also, you must choose the operating system of your web server. Click either the “Free Windows Hosting” or “Free Linux Hosting.” We recommend you select the Linux option since Linux is part of the “Open Source” movement which provides software for free or at cost. With a Linux operating system for your website, you will always have many more free web applications than the Windows option. Later, these may be useful to you.
- This will put you back on the “Manage Hosting” screen with a new entry in the list of hosting accounts labeled “New Account.” Click its “Setup Account” button which will take you to our “End User License Agreement.” Read it and if you agree then click “Accept.”
- This will take you to the “Hosting Control Center”. There are several options you can select at this point. You can just use the default values for these options which will do just fine for now. However, at the bottom is where you enter your password information (“User Name” and “Pass Word”). These are very important so write them down. They will be required to upload files or update your website. Click “Continue” then “Submit.” Click on the “View Account List.” Your new account will have a pending status for several minutes. Wait until its status is “Setup” before trying to access it (i.e., keep clicking the “refresh” button on the “Hosting Control Center”). You can continue to the next step below but return here to check it before you attempt to upload the files of your “mini-website” to it (described below).

## Export Your Genealogy Data to a “Mini-Website”

Next you would use your genealogy software program to export your genealogy data to a series of HTML pages which we call a “mini-website.” As we pointed out above, it is a “mini-website” because it is a self-contained, complete website containing your genealogy information. In fact, it may be easier to navigate or search your genealogy data using this “mini-website” than the genealogy software program itself.

Any modern genealogy software program will be capable of creating a “mini-website” of the genealogy data it stores. In the following example, we will use the Personal Ancestral File (PAF) as our example genealogy software program (since it is neutral and will hopefully not incite a debate). In any genealogy software program, you will select which ancestors to be included in the “mini-website.” It is important to be careful here since you may not want to export information on living people.

- Start PAF and click “Tools -> Create Web Page...”. At this point, you will select the ancestors in your genealogy database that you want to include in your mini-website. In PAF, click “Select” then choose the ancestors to include (or use an “All” filter to select them all then tweak the list from there) then click “Select” then “OK”
- This will present the “Create Web Page” screen of PAF. Click “Next>” then fill in a meaningful “Web page description.” Specify a folder in the “Local web page folder.” PAF will generate your “mini-website” to this folder. Notice it’s location on your hard drive will be of the form:

C:\documents and settings\your name\my documents\web\xxx (where “yourname” is your Windows logon name and “xxx” is the “Local web page folder” you selected).

- Click “Finish” and the web page creation process will execute. Once complete, a message will be displayed showing the exact folder name to which PAF exported the web pages. Note it and write it down. Then click the “OK” button
- At this point your “mini-website” can be opened and tested on your local hard drive (just navigate to the above folder and click on the “index.htm” file.

## Upload Your “Mini-Website” to Your Website

The next step is to upload your “mini-website” from your local hard drive to your website. You use a special process called FTP (File Transport Protocol) to upload the files of your “mini-website.” This is much easier than you think. In fact, there are two very easy ways to accomplish this.

### **Windows FTP**

This is the simplest if you use Microsoft Windows. You just open two Windows Browsers (one on your local computer and the other on your website) then drag the files of your “mini-website” from your local computer to your website. Proceed as follows:

- Open a Windows Browser on the folder containing your “mini-website” as explained above. In the example above, this was the following folder:

C:\documents and settings\your name\my documents\web\xxx (where xxx is the “Local web page folder” you selected)

- Open a second Windows Browser on your website:
  - Open “My Computer” (or any other Windows Browser).

- Enter "*ftp://www.yourwebsite.org*" in the address bar of the Windows Browser (i.e., substituting your own website name).
- A password challenge will be displayed. Enter your user name and password (i.e., that you selected and wrote down when you setup your website as described above).
- This will open up a Windows Browser on the root folder (i.e., the base folder) of your website. You will see a list of any files and folders on your website and you can click on them to open subfolders in the usual way.
- You can then upload files from your local computer to your website by just dragging and dropping them from the local Windows Browser to the website Windows Browser.
- Proceed by selecting all the files and folders of your "mini-website" on your local and dragging them, lock-stock-and-barrel, to your website. It will take several minutes to complete.

### **FTP Client**

You can also use the "FTP Client" built into your hosting control center to upload the files and folders of your "mini-website" to your website. You would use this approach if you were not a Microsoft Windows user (i.e., the previous "Windows FTP" is quicker and simpler for Microsoft Windows users).. First, make sure the status of your website is "Setup" before trying to access it (i.e., keep clicking the "refresh" button on the "Hosting Control Center"). Then proceed as follows:

- Log on to your *www.genealogyhosting.com* Account Manager.
- Expand the "All Products" at the bottom and click on the "Hosting Account List".
- Select "Hosting Account List" then "Open" the Control Panel of your website.
- This will put you in the "Hosting Control Center" for your web site. Click the "Content" link then the "FTP Client" link. Answer "Yes" to the security questions.
- Once the FTP Client is started, notice that the list of files on the left corresponds to your local hard drive and the list of files on the right corresponds to your website on the web server. The idea is to select the files from your local hard drive then upload them to the website. First, make sure your PAF export of your "mini-website" is complete and is closed (this will make sure there are no file conflicts when you perform the upload).
  - On the local hard drive (left side) navigate to the folder containing your mini-website. In the example above, this was the following folder:  
  
C:\documents and settings\your name\my documents\web\xxx (where xxx is the "Local web page folder" you selected)
  - Once the above folder is exposed, select all the files and folders in it (i.e., CTRL-A) then click the double arrows. This will cause the file upload to start. It will take several minutes to complete uploading all the files of the mini-website.

### **Error Recovery:**

No matter which FTP upload process you use (i.e., Windows FTP or FTP Client) there is the possibility of problems. This is because you are attempting to access and upload files to a foreign computer (the web server). There will be extensive checking and the upload process will be finicky. If the upload process fails, try these steps which should correct the problem:

- Make sure PAF (i.e., or your genealogy software program is closed) to prevent file locking conflicts.
- Close the web browser of your "Hosting Control Center" and restart it.
- Use the alternative FTP process. For example, if you are using Windows FTP then try it with the FTP Client and vice versa.

### **Test Your Website**

The final step is to test your website. This final step can only be done when the domain name of your website has been propagated to the internet. If it is a brand-new domain name, then this process will be quick (a few hours or less). However, if you are repurposing an existing domain name (i.e., your domain name has already been used for a website) then the propagation can take up to 24 hours.

- Start a web browser (such as Internet Explorer or Netscape Navigator, etc.)
- Enter the URL of your website in the address bar. For example, Margaret Schmidt would enter her URL of *http://www.schmidt14.org*.
- If your new website is not opened (i.e., your parked web page is opened instead) then wait awhile and try it again.

### **Further Reading**

There are several useful publications on the *www.genealogyhosting.com* website which will explain the various details of domain names and web hosting:

- Open *www.genealogyhosting.com*.
- Click the "FAQ" button on the top menu bar. This will take you to the "Help Center."
- Click the "Help Guides" on the top menu bar. This will expose a list of PDF help documents. Notice under "Hosting" that there are some good documents:
  - "Getting Started with Linux Shared Hosting" (select this one if you selected Linux for your website above).
  - "Getting Started with Windows Shared Hosting" (select this one if you selected Windows for your website above).