Working With Rootsweb FreePages Accounts

By Patricia Geary

Contents

Introduction

> *Genealogy is the Fastest Growing Hobby in North America- For a hobby that revolves around dead people, genealogy is remarkably popular. It is considered by most to be the fastest-growing hobby in North America, with many surveys and media sources proclaiming that it has surpassed quilting, stamp collecting and even gardening in popularity.* ~ from About.com ~

In February 1996, Rootsweb.com was registered as a domain name. In the Fall, Winter, and Spring of 1996-97 RootsWeb began support for the USGenWeb Archives and for many USGenWeb counties. At present (1998), RootsWeb hosts more than 2,700 Websites and 3,600 mailing lists. ~ from Volume 1 Number 2, 24 June 1998. ~

- There are more than 32,258 genealogy-related mailing lists on RootsWeb covering surnames, U.S. counties and states, other countries and regions, ethnic groups, and other topics.
- There are more than 132,000 message boards on RootsWeb.com related to surnames, localities, and other topics.
- Freepages Communities (posted as of February 2011) I'm not sure if the account numbers are up to date or not.
    - There are 14805 Web pages in the genealogy community.
    - There are 2343 Web pages in the family community.
    - There are 1005 Web pages in the history community.
    - There are 1066 Web pages in the misc community.

RootsWeb houses tens of thousands of websites for the genealogy community. It provides the space free of charge but ad banners will be displayed on your site. To me that is a small price for free web hosting.

RootsWeb completed its merger with Ancestry.com during the summer of 2000.

The tutorials included in this EBook were first published on my websites:

- Genealogy Web Creations
- Genealogy Computer Tips and Tutorials
- Genealogy Computer Tips – for RootsWeb accounts

My hope is this EBook will make it a little easier to manage and understand your Freepaages account and webspace.

Pat Geary

Getting Started with RootsWeb FreePages

Request Your Account

I am assuming you have already requested your webspace on the FreePages server. No, then you will need to do that first. See [Request a Web Space Account](#). You will first need to agree to the [RootsWeb Agreement for Freepages Web Space Accounts](#).

Then provide the following information:

- Your **Real name** - both first and last.
- Your **email address**.
- A **name for your account**.
- What you plan to use this account for.

PLEASE NOTE: Your account name will become part of your URL, as in http://freepages.communityname.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~acctname/.
The account name must be at least 4 characters long and must consist only of lower case letters and numbers, but may not begin with a number. No spaces or characters (such as - _ / . ') are allowed.

Select your account name carefully as names of accounts can NOT be changed and you may not close an account and open a new one.

Once you request your account and it is granted, you will receive an email from the Web Space Accounts Administrator. Please make sure you allow some time for the approval process - perhaps three to five days. **The acceptance email you receive will read something like this**:

Your FreePages Web space at RootsWeb is ready!

To access your account, you need to know these things:

F T P   H o s t n a m e: users.freepages.rootsweb.ancestry.com

U s e r   I D: youraccountname

P a s s w o r d: AbCdeFGh

PLEASE READ THIS ENTIRE LETTER BEFORE YOU WRITE TO US!

(Note that RootsWeb is case sensitive and the password must be typed *exactly* as it appears here: cutting and pasting is a good idea ...)

When you look in your directory, you'll see subdirectories called "genealogy_html", "family_html", "history_html" and so on. Upload your HTML and GIF files into whichever subdirectory relates to your pages.

EXAMPLE: A file uploaded to the "genealogy_html" subdirectory will immediately be visible to the whole Web at:

 http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~accountname or

A file uploaded to the "family_html" directory will immediately be visible to the whole Web at:

 http://freepages.family.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~accountname

PLEASE NOTE: Because of our commitment to providing improvements to genealogy services, many of the community directories, such as music, arts, games, are no longer available. I have also subscribed you to the Freepages-Help-D@rootsweb.com mailing list, where all of the FreePages users at RootsWeb swap ideas.

For unsubscribe instructions, please see: http://freepages.rootsweb.ancestry.com/help.html.

If you want to place your GEDCOM file on the internet, please do **NOT** upload these to your Freepages account. They will work so much better if you will upload them to WorldConnect - http://worldconnect.rootsweb.com/ - as there your visitors will able to view your family and download only the portion they would like to use. GEDCOM files uploaded [to FreePages] as a .GED file may be deleted by staff at any time.

Do NOT upload MP3, zip, avi, mpg, rm, ram, exe or other similar type files. You may not use your account to upload files for downloading by other users. Your FreePages account may not be used for file storage. Violation of this rule will cause your account to be deleted without warning.

The search Engine will index your new pages and enter them in the FreePages Directory. To read more about this go to: http://freepages.rootsweb.ancestry.com/howlist.html

The Help pages are here: http://freepages.rootsweb.com/help.html

Make sure you keep this message in a safe place. And remember that IF you change your email, you should notify RootsWeb of the change. If not, and you lose your password, you may have a hard time getting the reminder messages for what it is.

Username and Password

Please note that your username and password for RootsWeb.com or Ancestry.com is **NOT** the same as your username and password for your FreePages website. They are NOT interchangeable. To sign into your FreePages site, you must use the username and password that was included in the above email.

You can sign in to the [Freepages file manager](#) here.

IMPORTANT NOTE: When asking for help, do **NOT** include your *FreePages password* as part of your message. If you do so, you are posting it to a very large mailing list and will then need to request a new password. Requests to change your password should be sent to: accounts@rootsweb.com

Getting Started On Your Site

Before you get started with working on your site, you should read [Understanding YOUR Freepages Account Structure](#). While you can request only ONE freepages account, you actually have NINE available for your use.

Now that you have received your welcoming email with your account information, where do you start? The above email does NOT give you some information you might need or find helpful in getting started. Additional information is included below. Please READ it and follow the links for more details. Since each of you will have different levels of experience and will certainly not be using the same web editor or ftp program, this information will not answer "ALL" of your questions.

Planning and Organizing your Site

Before you begin willy nilly making pages and uploading files, spend some time in organizing HOW you want to setup your site. If you publish everything (images, pages, documents, etc) to one directory, you are going to be overwhelmed as your site grows and finding files becomes impossible.

For information on **organizing your genealogy site** and space, please see the following resources:

- [Planning a genealogy website](#) is also available as a 42 page EBook in pdf format for you to download. It contains graphic images and clickable links as well as a table of contents. The EBook is zipped for faster download. Save it to your desktop, extract the file and it is ready to use.
- [Building Your Website Step by Step](#) by Cheri Zuber

HTML

HTML, which stands for **HyperText Markup Language**, is the predominant markup language for web pages. Even if you use a **WYSIWYG** web editor, a basic knowledge of HTML can make life a lot simpler.   If you have no previous experience with HTML, I suggest you do some studying which will make it much easier to both work on your pages AND find and fix errors and display issues. Some good resources are:

- [Very Basic HTML](#) by Pat Asher
- [HTML Tutorial](#) by W3Schools

- [XHTML Tutorial](#) by W3Schools
- [The Bare Bones Guide to HTML](#)
- [HTML Tutorials](#)

If your pages aren't made yet, you'll need some sort of html software or you can use the RootsWeb online editor.

Detailed instructions for using the [RootsWeb online editor](#)

You will probably want to look for a WYSIWYG HTML editor. With this type of editor, you work on what looks like the actual webpage, and the program writes the HTML code. Some editors do this job much better than others. **WYSIWYG** stands for **What You See Is What You Get**.

For more information, see a list of some [Web Authoring Software](#).

There are a number of free editors as well as commercial ones. Download, install, and try them out until you find one that you are comfortable with and is easy to work with.

If you are already familiar with writing HTML code, you can use Notepad or any plain text editor to design your pages as well as a WYSIWYG editor.

FreePages Online File Manager and Editor - If you have a FreePages account, you can choose to use the **Online Editor** to create either a basic page or create more complex designs using WYSIWYG Edit. I will be honest, I do not like the online editor but it may work for you.

For more detailed instructions on using [FreePages Online File Manager and Editor](#)

FTP

FTP stands for **File Transfer Protocol** - This is the language used for transferring files from YOUR computer to the RootsWeb server. In order to publish your pages to your server space, you will need a ftp program. There are any number of FREE ones you can use OR you can choose to use the RootsWeb File Manager.

Detailed instructions for [Using RootsWeb File Manager](#)

- [Publishing With FTP](#)
- [Filezilla](#)
- [WS_FTP](#)
- [Pat Asher's Drag-n-Drop pages](#)
- [Cheri Zuber's Drag-n-Drop Pages](#)
- [Internet Explorer FTP Set Up Instructions](#)

Naming Your Pages

Your first page which is the Home Page of your site must be named one of the following:

- index.html
- index.htm
- index.shtml

These are the file names which allow you to shorten your URL from:

http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.com/~johndoe/index.html

to simply

http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.com/~johndoe/

This first page (the Home Page) becomes the portal, or entryway to your site. This becomes the URL that will lead visitors to your Freepages site. From this 'home page' you will direct people to other content via hyperlinks. You can create web pages in any of the directories available and link to them from any page. Other pages on your site can be named almost anything you want BUT they should not be overly long.

IMPORTANT NOTE: File names should be all lowercase with NO spaces and NO special characters (# " & % , etc). If you need/want to separate words, then use a hyphen to do so. This applies to ALL file names, not just your HTML pages. The file extension can be either .htm or .html. It does not matter which but try and be consistent.

For a more detailed discussion on naming your pages, see Naming Web Pages by Pat Asher.

Your Home Page should be uploaded/published to the root directory you are using and NOT a subfolder. If you are using the genealogy_html section then upload the file to that directory. Why? For the same reason stated above. If you upload it to a subfolder, then you cannot use the shortened url.

Summary and Resources

You have requested space on the RootsWeb servers and received your welcoming letter with some basic instructions. Hopefully, you have availed yourself of some of the basic resources mentioned above. Additional resources are listed below:

- Genealogy Web Creations - Website Design for the Genealogist includes a free ebook available for download.
- Help for the Beginning Web Author by Pat Asher
- Genealogy Computer Tips by Cheri Zuber
- Computer Tips & Tutorials by Pat Geary

Use the [freepages mailing list](#) to ask questions you might have along the way. There are many people of all skill levels who are willing to help you get started on this new journey. No question is too simple or dumb. And if you don't understand the answer, ask again. Remember, we were ALL beginners at one time.

Understanding YOUR FreePages Account Structure
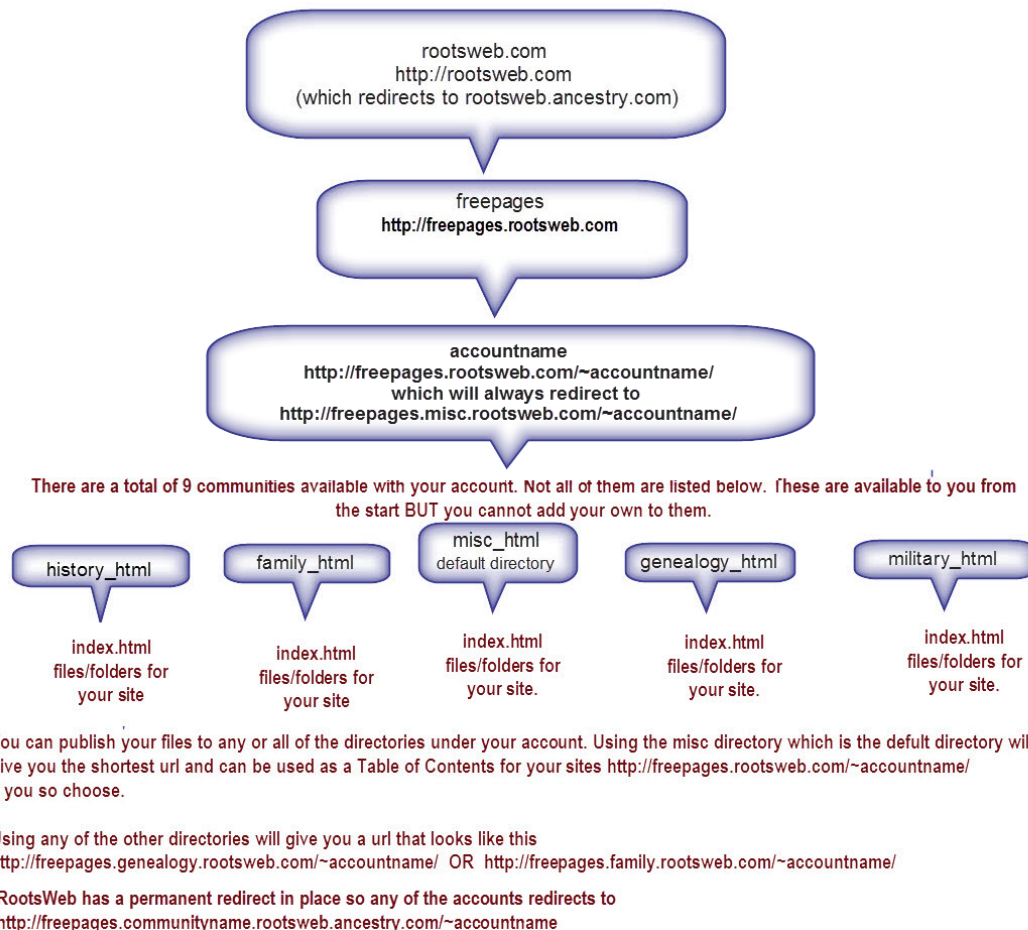
Figure 1 - Graphic depiction of Freepages account structure

Once you have applied for your freepages account and it has been granted, you might want to take a look at YOUR particular account structure and how you can use it.

The default directory for your account is misc_html. You also have a series of other communities/folders you can use for your site or sites that are part of the initial setup. While you can have only one freepages account, in actuality you have nine you can use. Each one is a separate subdirectory/folder as shown below. Each one can contain an entirely separate site with a completely separate look to it.

If you are used to working with the Freepages File Manager, the same communities are reflected in the menu dropdown for "**Select which community you want to work with**."
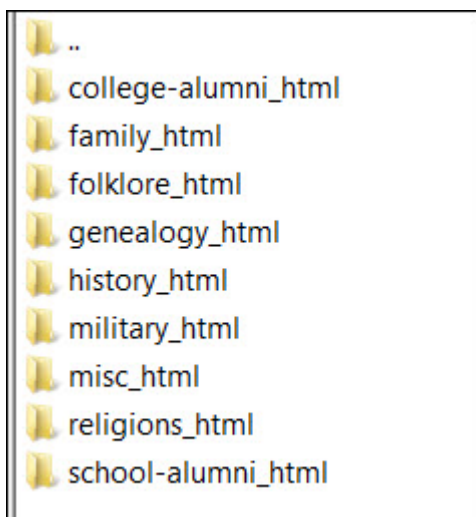
Since the misc_html folder is the default folder for your site, the shortest url for your site would be: http://freepages.rootsweb.com/~accountname/

This will redirect to http://freepages.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~accountname/

If you have published an index.html file to your misc_html subdirectory, you will see that page when someone goes to the short url for your site. Using the misc folder with an index.html page as a table of contents, you can link to each of the communities you have chosen to use. If you do NOT have an index.html page in your misc directory, then all you will see is something like the image shown below which is a listing of the contents of the misc folder/directory.

Figure 3 - Contents of misc_html directory with no index.html

A good example of an account holder who has chosen to set up her site using multiple directories with a table of contents in the misc folder is:

http://freepages.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~florian/ Judy has chosen to publish an index.html page to her misc subdirectory as well as use that directory for a portion of her site. This way she has a short url she can give to folks. Clicking on any of her links will take you to each of the communities she has chosen to use.

When linking between the various communities available to you, you will need to use an absolute link (the full url of that community) NOT a relative link. Hyperlinks within one community can use relative links. If you don't know the difference, read [Relative and absolute urls](#)

Setting up Your site on YOUR Computer

If you are going to use more than one of the communities/folders available to you, my advice would be to set each of them up as a separate website on your computer. Whether you choose to use the name of the community/folder as the folder name of that site OR the name of what the site is about is up to you. Just make sure YOU understand your setup.

So the setup on your computer might look like the graphic below with each folder containing an index.html page and folder for images plus any other folders and pages you might add.
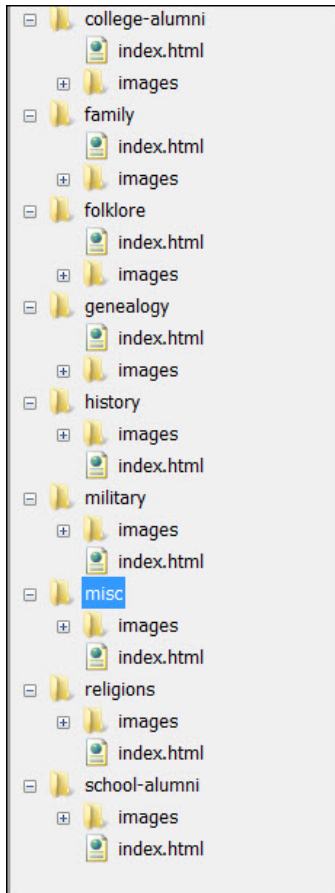
Figure 4 - Example computer setup using all Freepages communities

You are not required to use each community but they are included with your account setup and you may use as many or as few as you wish. Whether you choose to use one community or all of the communities, take the time to organize your site.

Publishing Your Sites

If you decide to use a setup something like the above, then each of the sites would be published to a different remote directory. Using the instructions publish with Filezilla, the destination that would change would be the remote directory and the location of the site on your hard drive.

Additional Resources

- Planning a Genealogy Website a free EBook available for download

Using FileZilla

FileZilla is open source FTP software distributed under the terms of the GNU General Public License and available FREE from http://filezilla-project.org/

Download and install FileZilla. Before you can use it to upload your site, you will need to configure Site Manager.

Configuring Site Manager

You will need the following:

- FTP Path - this is different for each of the RootWeb servers
  o FreePages server use ftp://users.freepages.rootsweb.ancestry.com/
  o **NOTE: The old settings used by RootsWeb before it became a subdomain of Ancestry.com appear to still work.**
- Usename - from your welcoming letter
- Password – from your welcoming letter

Go to File > Site Manager > New Site

Click the New Site button and a new folder appears. Give it a name and add the site details.
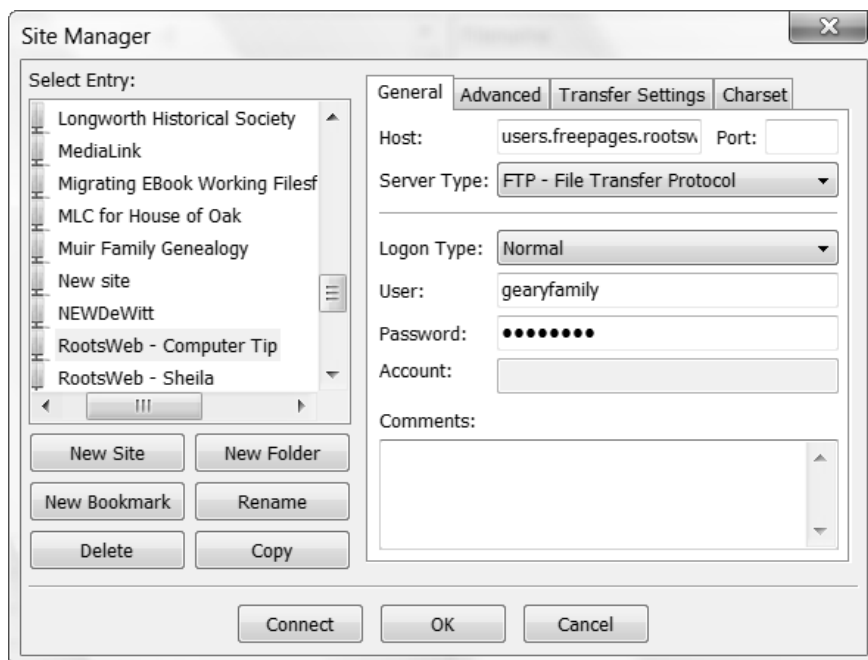
GENERAL TAB:

- **Host** - users.freepages.rootsweb.com/
- **Servertype** - leave the default FTP
- **Logontype**: Normal
- **Username**: from your RootsWeb welcome letter
- **Password**: from your RootsWeb welcome letter. Since your password is case sensitive, you may want to use cut/copy and paste from your e-mail program to make sure that you don't mistype it.
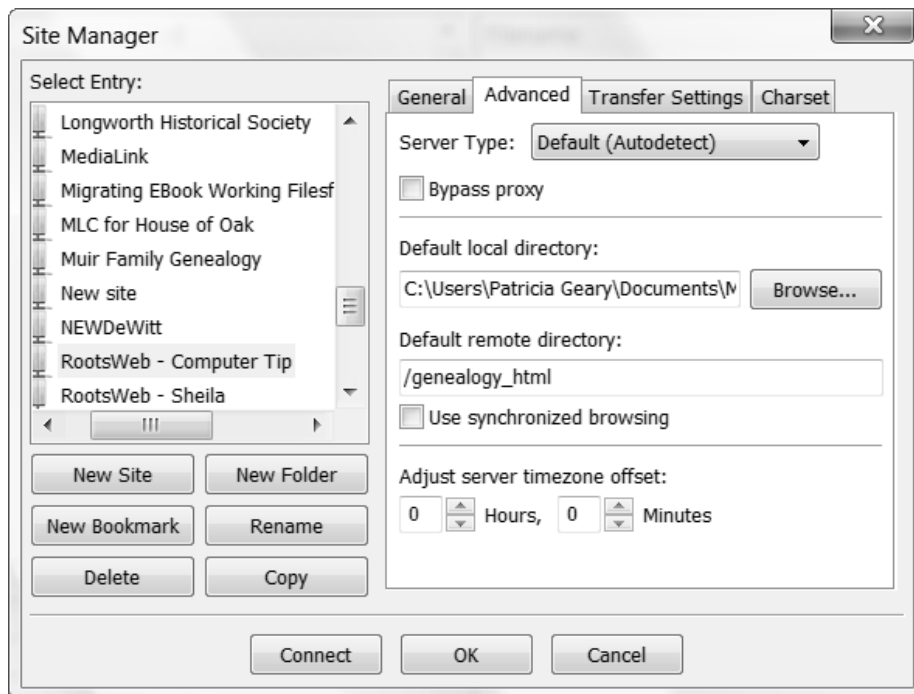- **Comments**: Add details if you want

Figure 6 - Filezilla Advanced Tab

ADVANCED TAB:

- Default Local Directory: Your website on YOUR hard drive
  EXAMPLE: C:\Users\Patricia Geary\Documents\My Web Sites\freepages
- Default Remote Directory: /genealogy_html or one of the communities

TRANSFER SETTINGS:

- Default OR Active OR Passive (Choose Default or Passive - RootsWeb servers now REQUIRE a Passive Connection)

CHARSET TAB:

- Autodetect

Click the Connect button and make sure your connection works. The files on the server will show in the Remote Pane (right side) and the files on your hard drive will appear on the Local site Pane (left side).
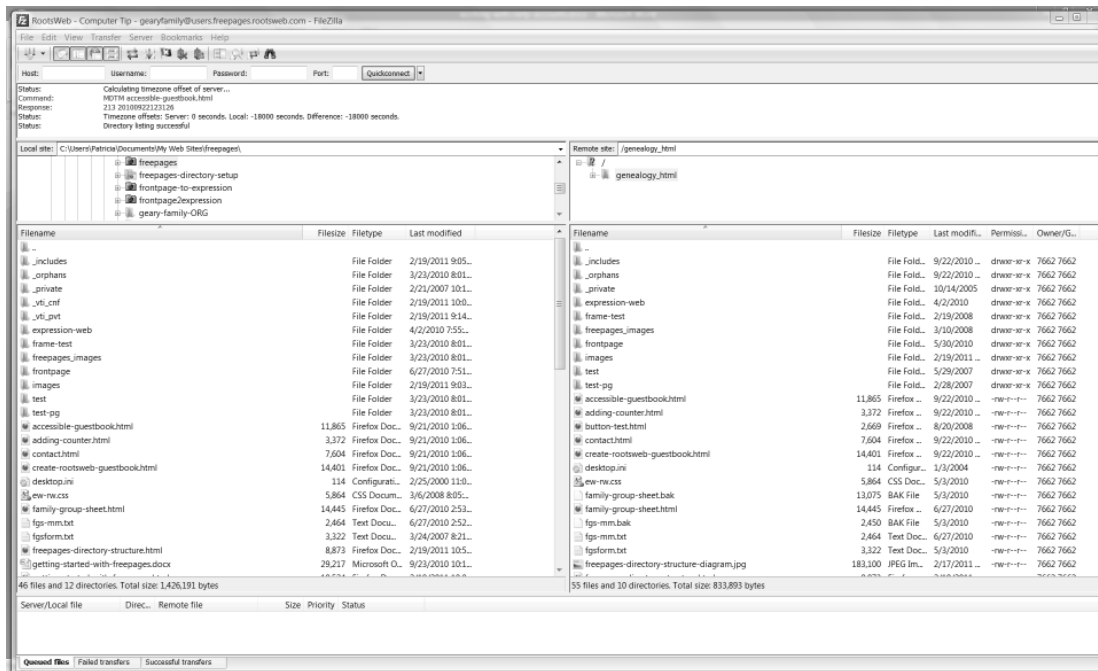

Figure 7 - Filezilla Local and Remote site

Publishing Using FileZilla

Connecting to the Server

File > Site Manager > Double click the site name in the left hand pane.

Select the files on your hard drive. In the 'Local Pane' select the first file/folder with the mouse, hold down the Shift key and scroll down while still holding the shift key and select the last of the files/folders. This will select all the files, right click and press upload.
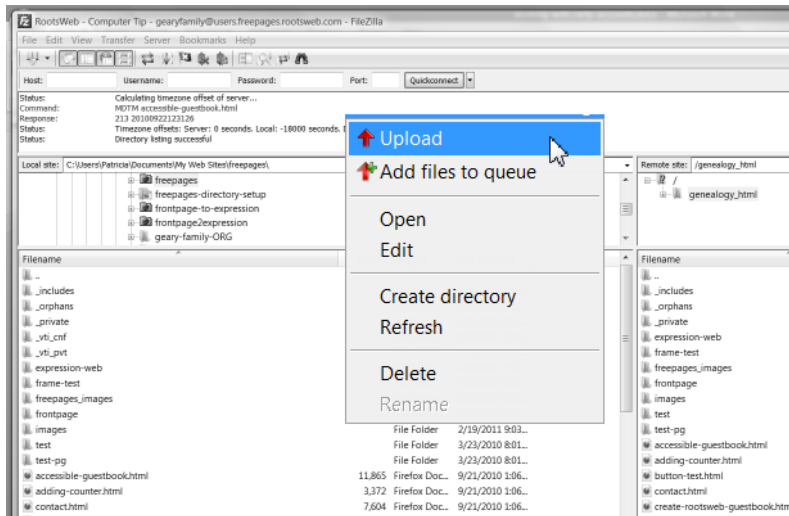
Figure 8 - Filezilla File Upload

Your files will proceed to upload and when completed you should see the new files in the right pane.

Additional Resources

- [FileZilla Setup Screen Shots](#) by Barry Carlson

Using RootsWeb File Manager

If you wish to use the RootsWeb file manager, make sure you select the correct file manager for the type of website you have at RootsWeb.

- [Freepages file manager](#)
- [WWW file manager](#)
- [Homepages file manager](#)
- [Virts file manager](#)

For the purpose of this tutorial, I am using the [Freepages file manager](#)

Step 1: Login into File Manager

Figure 9 - Log in to Freepages FIle Manager screen

Enter your Account Name: You will have received this in your welcoming email. It is the part of your url that is the part after the tilde ~ so my User ID is gearyfamily
Enter your Password: Enter the password you were given in your welcoming email. Copy it instead of typing it and be sure not to copy any extra space before or after the password. **Remember it is is CAse SenSItive!**
Tick Remember my password if you want RW to remember it.
Click Log In button

Step 2: From the dropdown menu, select the '**community**' you want to work with. i.e. Family or Genealogy or History or any of the others offered. The "Communities" listed are the ones offered. You cannot rename these communities or add new ones. Click '**Enter File Manager**' button.
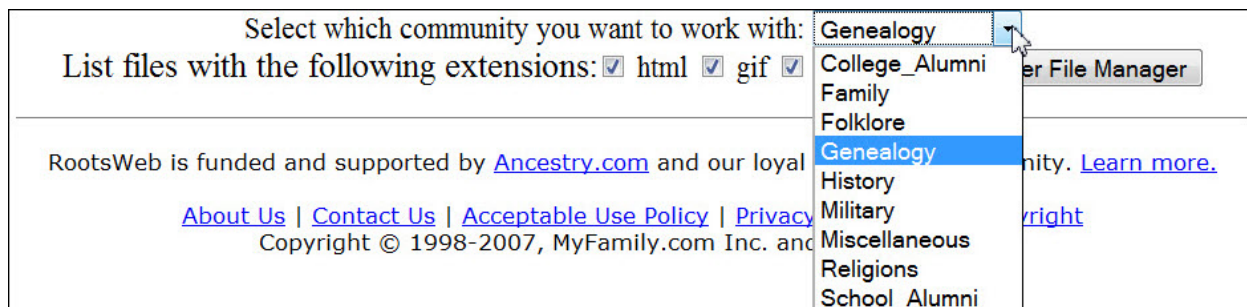
Figure 10 - Select the Freepages community from the dropdown menu

You will then see a list of all the files and folders currently within your website. If this is a new site, you'll see that there are no sub-folders or files as yet, but there will be as you upload your created pages.

Clicking on any of the folders (displayed in blue) will take you to a listing of the files/folders within that specific directory.

Scroll down to the bottom of the page and you will find:

- **HTML Editing Controls** where you can use the WYSIWYG editor or the plain text editor. To edit a page, you must first select the page from the listing above.
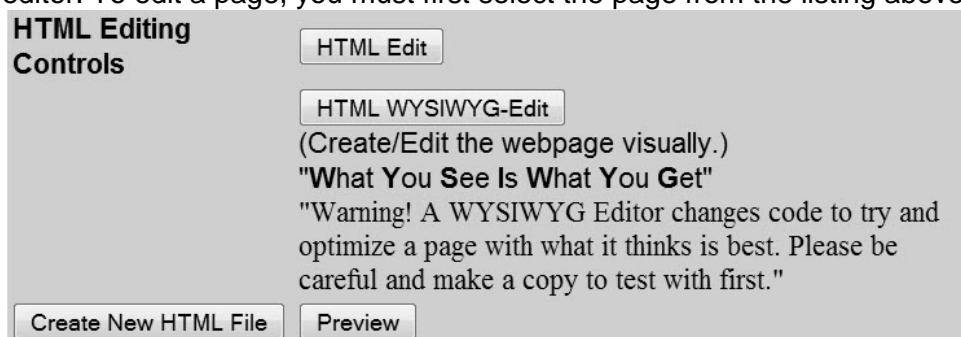

Figure 11 - HTML Editing Controls

- **File Controls** where you can rename or delete files. To rename or delete a page, you must first select the page from the listing above.
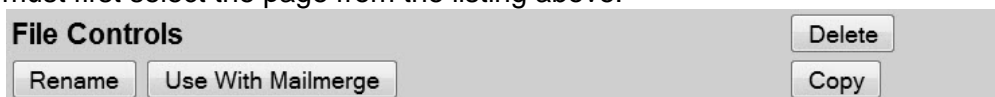

Figure 12 - Freepages File Controls

- **Subdirectory Operations** where you can create and delete subdirectories

Figure 13 - Freepages Subdirectory Options

- If you want to get a feel for how the File Manager works, you can practice before you start work. Go to the **'Create Sub-Directory'** and make a folder called "test" without the quotation marks. You should receive a message that the file has been successfully created. Click **Return to File Manager**

Enter the name of the new subdirectory:

test

Create Subdirectory

Now go up and click on the folder. For now it will be empty because you have not uploaded anything. For now, click back on the community name where you made your test sub-folder. Highlight the radio button beside the folder "test" and go back down and Delete Sub-folder. A confirm message will show, asking you to confirm your request to delete.

Important Note: If you had webpages uploaded in your "test" sub-folder, ALL would be deleted if you delete the sub-folder.

- **File Upload Utility** where you can upload/publish your files.

File Upload Utility

File upload utility

☐ Convert filenames to lowercase

	Browse…
	Browse…
	Browse…
	Browse…

Send this many files at once: 4

Send Files   Refresh

At the very bottom of the screen you will find the '**File Upload Utility**', set to a default of 4 files. First, check and make sure you are the correct folder is displayed for where you want your files to go. If not, use the dropdown menu to select the correct folder.

Listing of http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.com/~gearyfamily/

Select which community you want to work with: Genealogy   ·
List files with the following extensions: ☑ html ☑ gif ☑ jpg ☑ other Refresh Directory

If you are uploading your images and you want them in a folder named images, then the url at the top of the page would show

Listing of http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.com/~gearyfamily/images/ (using my site as an example)

'genealogy' is the name of the community
'gearyfamily' is my account
'images' is the folder I will be uploading to

You can change how many files to upload at once (4 files is the default). Click browse > Navigate to the web folder on your computer > Click on each file you want to upload. The file name will appear in the boxes. Click the '**Send Files**' button.

NOTE: DO NOT CHECK the radio button to convert filenames to lowercase. If you do and ANY of your folders/file names have any CAPITAL letters, your links are going to be broken. This is ticked by default.

Personal Observation

I find this an extremely tedious method to upload a large number of files to the server. I much prefer using FileZilla or another of the free FTP programs or publish the files/folders from my web editor publishing interface.

Using Rootsweb Online Editor

I will preface this section by saying I do not use any of the online editors and I do not like the online editors. I believe there are enough choices for free html editors that using these very basic tools is not necessary.

According to the RootsWeb Help desk:

The Online Editor can step you through the process of creating your first Web page. Even if you have no experience in creating a Web page, the Online Editor can create a page for you in minutes. The following procedure explains how to use the Online Editor to create a Web page.

Creating Your Web Page

Sign in to your account using the [Freepages file manager](#). If you need more detailed instructions see Using RootsWeb File Manager. Select the community you want to work with from the dropdown menu (see Figure 10) and click enter File Manager.

There are two editors you will have access to once you enter the File Manager. The one described in Method One is a very basic editor; the second method is a WYSIWYG editor. If you choose to use these editors you can find detailed instructions from the links below.

- **Method One**: [Online Editor: Creating Your First Web Page](#)
- **Method Two**: [Online Editor: HTML Editing Controls](#)
- **Method Three**: [Using RootsWeb Online WYSIWYG Editor](#)

Previewing Your Web Page

Once you've created your web page, you can preview it in either of two ways:

- Click the **View** link just to the right of the file name and the file will appear in your browser screen. You will also see the RootsWeb banners which are part of your page.
- You can use the Preview button (in the HTML Editing Controls section) to preview the web page. Note that the Preview button can also be used to view any file that you place, create or edit on the RootsWeb server.

Click the Back button on your browser to return to the Online Editor.
IMPORTANT NOTE: Using the online editor creates a very basic web page.

RootsWeb FreePages Banners and XHTML Doctype

RootsWeb masthead banners are displayed on all free hosted websites. If you are using the HTML Transitional doctype and your pages **already validate**, you should experience no problems with the banner validating.

If on the other hand, your account is hosted on any of the Rootsweb servers and you are using the XHTML doctype, your pages will NOT validate because of the banners. Good News, there is a "fix."To change the banner code so that it will validate if you are using the XHTML doctype create a file named "banner_select" containing only the text: **XHTMLNeutral** and nothing else. The file should be a plain text file and the file name must NOT include a file extension, i.e. do NOT name it banner_select.txt or banner_select.html

- Upload the file to your misc_html directory for FreePages server.
- Upload the file to the public_html directory for www, homepages and virts accounts.

If you are using the File Manager –

1. Sign in to your account with FileManager
2. Enter your username and password
3. Select the misc_html directory for FreePages sites
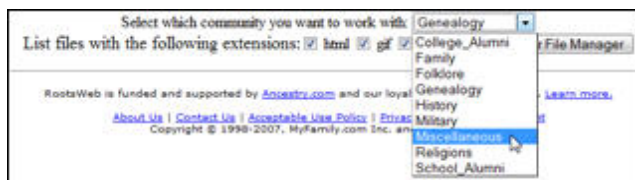
4. Click Enter File Manager
5. Scroll down to File Upload Utility
6. Browse to the banner_select file on your computer > Select It
7. Click Send Files

This will change the banner code for your entire Freepages account, e.g. family_html, genealogy_html, military_html, etc. as well as misc_html. If your system will not allow you to save or upload a file without a file extension, upload the file with the extension as required by your system, then rename the file on the server. File Manager can be used to rename the file without the file extension or your ftp program.

XHTMLNeutral is actually just one of four banners you can choose from; you can use any one of the four following words in your banner_select file to choose different banners.

- BasicNeutral [the default; it validates as HTML 4.01 Transitional]
- XHTMLNeutral [validates as XHTML 1.0]
- BasicGreen or XHTMLGreen [as above, but with green backgrounds]

If you are using one of the specialty banners (USGENWEB WORLDGENWEB CANADAGENWEB, or USGWCENSUS), these have not changed. You will have to decide between the specialty banners and XHTML validation.