

*“If at first you don’t succeed, search, search again.
That is why we call it research”*

2018 FamilySearch.org

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About FamilySearch

It's all about family. FamilySearch is a nonprofit family history organization dedicated to connecting families across generations. FamilySearch believes that families bring joy and meaning to life.

USING Familysearch to find your ancestors: This is a free website but you must have an account to use it.

Firstly make your part of the FamilySearch family tree as accurate as possible

- Get enough of your information added to Family Tree that you can connect up to existing information in the tree. Start with you and what you know, then work your way back, examining your Family Tree pedigree.
- Look for inconsistencies, incorrect relationships, and individuals without sources.
- Add photos, stories, documents, and audio files as you work back.
- Attach proof arguments as a PDF to the individual’s person page documenting your evidence and analysis; write GOOD REASON STATEMENTS.
- Find problems or places that need additional information? Add additional children, data, or sources – particularly sources!
- Fix incorrect relationships (parents w/wrong children, two sets of parents, incorrect spouses). Do this by EDITING the relationships.
- Cannot delete individuals unless you are the one that entered them and no one else has contributed to the individual’s profile.
- May need to merge individuals to correct some of these problems – do so with care!
- Use the 'Life Sketch' field on the individual’s page to explain their life (perhaps a short bio), as well as potentially any reasoning behind why you believe *this* John Smith b.1785 in Toronto is NOT the same as *that* John Smith, b. 1785 in Toronto. Can help prevent newcomers from merging them.
- If you have a particularly “volatile” ancestor (one to whom changes are made frequently that are incorrect), put a Watch on them by clicking the star symbol under their name.
- Keep an eye on what’s happening with Family Tree: <https://familysearch.org/blog/en/whats-new-onfamily-tree/>.

There are several places to look for information:

1. In the FamilySearch Tree Landscape View shows the Pedigree. **Research helps** are shown as coloured icons click to view details.

2. Person Details Page There are two places to search using information already on the individual’s record or ‘Person Details’ page.

Research Hints There may or may not be any suggestions in this section. These are records that FamilySearch has found using the information on the Person Details page that seem to match very closely. Also, this area shows identified data problems. Check them out to see if they are the right person. Three hints will show in the box. Click '**Show details**' to see all hints.

You can also remove these hints by clicking the '**Not a Match**' option and giving a good reason statement. If you are in a FHL or have subscriptions to the **Partner sites** you can click to choose and sign in from the Person Details page.

3. Fan Chart A good way to see if direct line ancestors are missing. Mouse over and click on any name to see the Summary box.

4. Descendancy View (Click **Tree** far left to find it in a drop down box). Used for doing descendancy research and checking to see if there are hints and suggestions which show up as a blue or purple icon. Be sure to select 4 generations to see more.

5. 'SEARCH' found on the top of the page *FamilySearch* menu bar this does a general search with detailed information you add yourself. Mouse over '**Search**' and a dropdown menu will appear with several choices:

Records: Search Historical Records fill in what you know and search to see what indexed records are available (Census, Birth Marriage and Death, Church records, etc.).

Family Tree: enter a name and find your own family members if their name has been added by other families to the tree.

Genealogies: Family Trees from Ancestral File, Pedigree Resource File, community groups, and the IGI. This information was submitted by Family Search users. These are read-only records. Scroll down this page to add your own GEDCOM file to this part of the site and preserve it.

Catalog: Search the catalog of genealogical materials (including books, online materials, microfilm, microfiche, and publications) made available by FamilySearch. Films can no longer be ordered, but digitized records can now be found in the catalog – sometimes images, sometimes indexes can be viewed at home or in the FHL.

Books: Family History Books is a collection of more than 350,000 digitized genealogy and family history publications from the archives of some of the most important family history libraries in the world. The collection includes family histories, county and local histories, genealogy magazines and how-to books, gazetteers, and medieval histories and pedigrees. The valuable resources included in Family History Books come from the following partner institutions:

Wiki: The wiki can help you find out where you can search by knowing about the places and records that are available internationally, both on FamilySearch and elsewhere.

Options and Tips for Searching Historical Records if you understand the way search options work, you have a better chance of finding the historical records you need. Unless looking for a specific type of record, you should leave many search fields blank, even if you know the information. Records can exist about an individual, but the records do not contain all of the information you know. Entering less information helps your search criteria match record content more closely and improves search results.

Below are general search tips:

- Search for deceased people who lived before about 1940.
- Enter the name of only one person in the First Names field.
- You can leave fields blank and estimate information.

When searching for a woman, search with her maiden name to find records created before marriage. Use her married name to find records created after. Or try your search with just her first name and the names of her spouse or her parents.

SEARCH - General Research Strategies

1) Search using less information.

The person's record may be in the system, but it may not contain all of the same information that *you* know. Entering less information increases the number of possible matches. If you get too many hits, then you can start adding more information to narrow the search. To begin a search: try searching with only the name and one event, such as a birth date or a death date. Birth is best because it is listed on more kinds of records, e.g., birth, christening, census, etc. The date can be exact or just a guess with a probable year or range of years.

- * If the name is not common, search using the name only.
- * Try adding a location country, county, etc.
- * Leave the main fields blank, and enter only the parents' names or only the spouse's name.
- * Try different combinations of information.

2) Focus on unusual names.

They can help identify a specific family if members of the family have very common names.

3) Use more information or different information to narrow your search results.

If the person's record is in the system and has a lot of information, adding more information to your search can help narrow the results.

4) Conduct an exact search.

Using exact searches on dates and places can be helpful, since it limits the search results to people who lived in a specific place and time.

5) Search for a close relative instead.

You might not be able to find the record of a certain person for several reasons, such as:

- * The record may not have a lot of information that the system can use for matching.
- * The record may contain information that is very different from what you are looking for.
- * The person might still be alive. The Search feature will not find the records of living people.
- * The person might be deceased, but the record might lack the death information that would let the system publish the record. In cases like these, search for the record of a close relative instead, such as a parent, grandparent, spouse, or sibling. Then navigate to the person you want to find.

6) Try different spellings and ranges of dates.

Keep in mind spelling of names can vary. Information was often given orally and handwritten by

officials according to how they heard or interpreted what they were told. Nicknames were sometimes used, dates were not always exact, and old handwriting has sometimes been misinterpreted by transcribers and indexers.

7) Try a "Wildcard"

Some sites such as Ancestry and Google let you use a "wildcard", which allows you to replace one or more letters of a name with an asterisk or a question mark which only replaces one letter. This can be very helpful when there are variations in the spelling of a name in the records, or the writing style of the original record has been misread by an indexer and appears spelt differently in the indexed record. Viewing an original document can help you discover mistakes and judge for yourself. One nice thing about FamilySearch vs Ancestry is that you can put in just one letter and then an asterisk. (So when I search for Działowski, I might just put in a D* or even a J*, since the "Dz" in Polish sounds almost like a J.) For those really tough names, this can be very helpful!

8) Try reversing First Name and Last Name

Sometimes entering Barton Thomas will get a result for Thomas Barton, depending on how the name was recorded.

Attaching records that you find on FamilySearch:

If you find a record that matches your person, you may attach it to your person's Person Details Page as a source. There is a blue button at the bottom of the record that states **Review and Attach**. If it is already attached to that person's file, it will say "**View in Family Tree**." If you would like to make sure that all family members have this source attached to their records, you can click '**Review attachments**'. If you click on "View Image" you can see the original document from which the information was obtained. Not all Indexed records have an original image available for viewing in FamilySearch. Sometimes the original image is available to view on another site such as Ancestry.com or Findmypast.com.

When you click on the blue button a screen will appear that allows you to check the information that appears on the new record with the information you have on the Person Details page, to make sure it is the same person.

If you decide to attach the record, give a good reason statement, choose your tags, then click "**Attach**" and it will be attached to your person under **Sources**.

You can also create a 'new source' by filling in the web URL, source citation, and details in the appropriate field boxes found under **Sources**.

FamilySearch Family Tree is a unified collaborative family tree for all of the human family and everyone can see everything for deceased people. Only you can see the information on your living family members.

Because it is collaborative we all see the same records and can make changes to those families. When you have gone to a lot of trouble to research and have found your family you want to keep the information correct. Adding sources with a good reason statement increases the likelihood

that your records will not be changed. A good reason statement is logical, lets you understand why a change was made, and helps you to remember if you made the change and why.

Reason Statements

Examples of poor statement are: "Because I wanted to," "They are the same," "Matches the person exactly," or "Because they had kids." If you do not like to write a reason statement you can copy relationship information from the source record as a minimum statement.

A reason statement should be relevant, clear, and make sense to other users. The objective should rely on the evidence, not speculation or emotion. Write in complete sentences focusing on the ancestors and sources. If the information has been estimated give a reason, e.g., "Marriage date *estimated from the birth of the first known child.*"

Writing reason statement can be tedious and so you can use autofill programs like Shortkeys, Simplefill (Chrome plug-in) or a doc file and just copy and paste.

Examples of a good reason statement: "Deleting a duplicate relationship," "Duplicate record showing family relationships," "Provides evidence of a christening date and location also naming the parents," or "Correcting date and place name to Family Search standard text."

Identifying the contributor

To see changes made to a record and the contributor, click **Show all** (found on the right side under **Latest changes** on the Details page). The names of all who have contributed and made changes to that particular record will show. Clicking on the name will either give you an email address or you can send a message. Moreover, names of the contributor can be found by clicking on the information to show the contributor plus the date the information was entered. This is a good way to find cousins and others who are working on your family and you can then collaborate. Information shown as "Added by FamilySearch" refers to information that came over from the old *New Family Search* database, the IGI, etc.

Using the Life Sketch

The Life Sketch appears at the top of each person's Details page in Family Tree. It is typically used to provide a brief overview of a person's life. You may want to include important facts to help other researchers. For example, "Jane had an older sister by the same name who died as an infant," or "Jane worked as a seamstress in London from 1845 to 1848." The Life Sketch box accepts only text, no special characters or images. It holds about 10,000 characters, or about 1,500 words. Longer narratives can be placed in the Memories section of the Person page.

Also, adding photographs and documents to **Memories** when available is another way to prove that your information is correct. When a memory is tagged from the **Gallery** to a particular individual the information contained remains with that record.

Video-Research Wiki

<https://www.familysearch.org/ask/learningViewer/734>

Series of short information videos on searching records in FamilySearch:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3x-zsm8dlc&index=1&list=PLGng78LVGBHF3Npj7kfn1aOoNKoadb6>

https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/IGI_Batch_Number_Descriptions