



The Research Process, Research Help, and Searching Records

THE RESEARCH PROCESS

Why do we need to learn the Research Process? Isn't everything on the Internet? No!

If it's not coming up from a search, does that mean FamilySearch.org doesn't have the information I'm looking for? Where else would I find it? Where do I begin?

These simple steps used by professional researchers can help direct you to know how and where to search to find new information, get answers to go past your brick wall, or resolve unfounded information.

STEPS IN THE RESEARCH PROCESS

- Identify what you know
- Decide what you want to learn
- Select records to search
- Obtain and Search the record
- Evaluate and use the information

IDENTIFY WHAT YOU KNOW

Start by reviewing what information you already know from your own sources and reliable sources others have shared. Record that information on appropriate forms or computer family history programs. Keep your records organized.

- Use computer programs to generate forms. After you type information once, computers can generate many kinds of forms such as family group records and pedigrees. You can make frequent updates and share information while limiting the mistakes caused by redundant typing. (See also, FamilySearch Research Wiki "Genealogy Research Forms")
- Pedigree Chart
- Family Group Record
- Prepare a Research Log

DECIDE WHAT YOU WANT TO LEARN

- Identify families for further research
- Try to work on one family at a time – it is easy to get off on tangents
- Work on one research objective at a time.

SELECT RECORDS TO SEARCH

Selecting a record to search is the most complex part of the research process. You will need to:

- Identify a category of sources
- Choose a record type
- Select specific records
- Describe the record on a research log.

OBTAIN AND SEARCH THE RECORDS

You are now ready for the most exciting and rewarding step; find and search the records.

- Obtain the Records
 - Internet Resources
 - Family History Library
 - Other Research Libraries
 - Local Libraries
 - Interlibrary Loan
 - Original Record Holder
 - Courthouses and Government Offices
 - Archives
 - Societies
 - Publishers and Booksellers
 - Periodicals
 - E-mail and Correspondence
- View the Records
 - Read and interpret the Records
 - Formats of Records
- Search the Records
 - Look for Indexes (as a separate compilation, or within the record)
 - Search for the whole family
 - Surname Searches
 - Establish Search Ranges
 - Be Thorough
 - Know Limitations
 - Multiple Families
- Record the Results in your Log
 - If the Search Result is Negative
 - If the Search is Positive

EVALUATE AND USE THE INFORMATION

After you have searched records, you are ready to use the information you found.

- Evaluate what you found
- Transfer needed information to the appropriate forms
- Cite your sources
- Organize the new records
- Share your findings

When you have completed gathering information about a family, share your information with others by contributing it to Internet databases like FamilySearch.org, or by preparing and publishing a book, or article, or sharing it on an Internet site.

You will then be ready to start the process again to research another objective or individual.

RESEARCH HELP

In FamilySearch.org from the Person Details view, Research Helps are shown in a box on the right side of the page. They are also shown on the Landscape, Portrait and Descendancy views. Research Help includes Data Problems, Possible Duplicates, Record Hints and Research Suggestions. Click on the Show All link at the top of the Research Help box to open a new page that shows Research Helps. This view may allow some problems to be dismissed, if you have proof that they do not apply to the person.

Data Problems

- Data Problems are indicated by an icon that is a white exclamation point on a red background.
- The system analyzes each person's data and flags any problems. Examples include a non-standardized date or place, birth after the mother's or father's death, birth after mother's childbearing years, death before birth year, etc.
- Click on the individual data problem link to open a more detailed explanation of the problem.
- Correcting an individual's data and relationships will resolve many data problems. This may require additional research to determine correct dates and relationships.
- Some Data Problems, such as non-standard dates and places, must be corrected to clear the Data Problem icon.
- Resolving data problems helps improve the quality and accuracy of the information in Family Tree.

Possible Duplicates

- FamilySearch.org alerts you if there are duplicate people with similar names and information in the database.
- You will be given the option to Merge the multiple duplicates into a single person or choose Not a Match.

Record Hints

Record Hints are indicated by an icon that is a white record image on a blue background.

- Record Hints are links to records found by FamilySearch.org that likely match that person. FamilySearch.org compares the information for each deceased person in Family Tree with indexed records and displays possible matches.
- Click on the name of the person in blue to open the hint. A card appears with the information about the record. To close the card, click anywhere outside the card, but within the open window.
- If the Record Hint pertains to the person, the record can be attached as a source by clicking on the blue Review and Attach box at the bottom of the card. This will allow others to see the source of the information when they view that person's page.
- There may be more than one Record Hint for an event if more than one historic record for the event has been indexed, or if a particular historic record has been indexed multiple times.
- If the Record Hint does not pertain to the person, click on the blue Not a Match link at the bottom of the card to dismiss the Record Hint. If the Record Hint DOES apply to the person, or may be a duplicate record, DO NOT use Not a Match to clear the hint.
- The details of the Record Hint can also be shown by clicking the Show All link at the top of the Research Help box to open a new page that shows each record hint. The option to Review and Attach and Not a Match are also shown. This page also shows the option to review any Dismissed Hints. To see Dismissed Hints, click the Dismissed Hints tab under the grey person information.

Research Suggestions

Research Suggestions are indicated by an icon with a white signpost on a purple background.

- Research Suggestions are in Family Tree to alert users of possible record problems and missing data. They are FamilySearch.org suggestions for further research on that person and are generated as FamilySearch.org analyzes the information and finds deficiencies.
- Click on the icon or the blue suggestion to see an explanation of the suggestion. If the suggestion can be dismissed a grey x will appear at the right of the suggestion box.
- Using these Research Suggestions to direct your research will improve the accuracy and completeness of Family Tree.

SEARCH RECORDS

Search Records is on the right side of the Person Page directly under Research Help.

Using the Search Records function can increase the efficiency and effectiveness of research efforts. It builds a search request in FamilySearch.org or FamilySearch's partner sites; Ancestry.com, Findmypast and MyHeritage. Ancestry.com, Findmypast, and MyHeritage are paid subscription sites. They are available for free at local family history centers.



- Clicking on the FamilySearch logo in Search Records will open a new page showing the results of the search.
- Above the result is a banner that shows the person being searched with other information from their person page. Included are birth, death, parents and spouse.
- Below the banner on the left, the automatic search criteria are shown. The results can be modified by changing the search criteria. All the FamilySearch.org filtering options are also shown and can be used to focus the search.
- The search results are shown to the right of the search criteria. Clicking any column on the search result will expand the list of results to show the details of that result.
- Icons in the View column will open:
 - Attached persons in the Tree,
 - Record Details
 - Camera will show images, or Camera and Box allow you to load external websites.
- If the record has an image available, it may be viewed from the search results and attached as a source to the person.
- Other similar record matches will also be generated on the bottom right side of the Record Details pop out page.
- The record can be attached as a source by clicking the Review and Attach link in the blue box. If the record is already attached to an individual as a source, you will see a Tree icon. By clicking on the Tree you will be able to see who this record is already attached to.
- To attach the record as a source for the individual click the Attach Source link. A new window will open with the information from the record displayed on the left. On the right side the Family Tree data for the individual will show. If the individuals shown on the right are not correct, use the blue Not your family link under Family Tree to select the correct individuals from the tree.
- Clicking on the Ancestry, Findmypast or MyHeritage links in the Search Records box will show the results of an automatic search on those sites. Viewing the results of those searches requires you to have an account on those sites.