Avoid Mistakes on Ancestry

Overview

We all make mistakes. There is no perfect family tree out there or at least I have never seen one.

Definitions:

Here are a few definitions that I will be using in this document, just so we are all on the same page.

Target Ancestor – The ancestor you are focused on today.

Full Work Up – A thorough research of the ancestor locating all records and adding them to my Research Notes.

Research Notes – One text document (I use Word) in chronological order for each ancestor.

Facts – These are the data facts that are in an Ancestors profile, like birth date, place of birth, etc.

Source – Where the fact came from.

ThruLines® - A product on the AncestryDNA platform that suggests the family lines.

Mistake #1

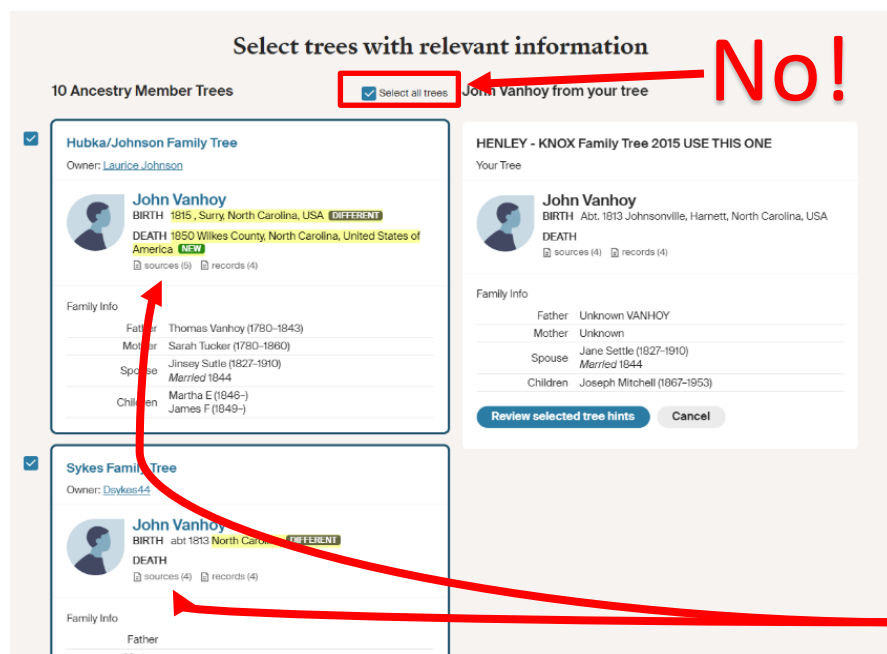### "Select All Trees" Box When Importing from Member Trees

First, *do not* import from other member trees unless you have reviewed the sources and believe they are a match.

By checking the "Select All Trees" box, you might add too many people too quickly which might cause duplicated ancestors, if you are not paying attention. This is a common mistake when importing information from other trees or records with many people listed.

Do not use the Select All Trees and blindly add people too quickly.

Note: There are occasions when one might want to do this if they are implementing the "Quick and Dirty Tree" strategy for DNA descendancy research.

Long story short, just do not import from other member trees. While this seems like a time saver, if you blindly add people to your tree, you might find out years later that you have been researching the wrong branch for years.

Research the sources instead. Drill into the member tree and review the sources.

Personally, I prefer to *not* use member trees at all until the very last step in my process. I research all records, import data for what is found in my research notes, and do a full work up on each ancestor before looking at member trees.

Mistake #2 Not Putting a Source on Records You Add

Let us say you have gone to the archives, or found something on a website, or you have an image, and you uploaded it to your ancestors profile. Please put some sort of information on when and where you found it and where it is now. The easiest way to do this is in the description box.

Even if it is an image of your grandmother, let people know it is in your personal possession. While an image might say that it originated from a specific ancestor, we know that is often not the case. People will download it (or use their software and sync) and then upload it again, and it looks like they originated it. Then you go to contact that Ancestry member only to find out they got it from "somewhere on Ancestry" and they cannot remember where. We always want to try and find the originator... or the location of the original record or image. Why? Because they might have more information than you are looking for.

Mistake #3 Not Removing Duplicated Facts and Sources

Keeping a clean profile, i.e., duplicated sources and duplicated facts are not needed.

Often, we will see duplicated name facts or birth facts, etc., in our ancestors profiles. Here is how to clean those duplicated facts and make sure they are attached to the correct sources.

Duplicated Facts

1) First, see what sources the duplicate facts draw to and take note of them.
2) Then pick one fact to keep. We will call this the "keeper" fact.
3) Review the sources to make sure they are correct.
4) Before removing duplicated facts, attach the sources associated with the fact you are removing with the "keeper" fact. Below you can see duplicate birth facts. They are essentially the same. We need to add the 1860 census to the "keeper" fact before deleting the duplicated birth fact.

a. Do so by editing the facts you are keeping. In this case it is the top birth fact that draws to multiple sources. Whereas the duplicated birth fact only draws to one source, so we will remove that one after we edit the keeper adding the 1860 census to it.
b. Edit the Keeper Fact
c. Click Attache Source
d. Click the + button to associate all sources. This will move the fact to the top Source Citations area.
e. There is no save button here, just x to leave that popout screen.
f. It is now safe to delete the duplicated fact. Click edit on the duplicated fact and click delete.

Duplicated Sources

5) Do the same for duplicated sources.
   a. Remove duplicates **after reviewing** to ensure they are duplicated. Sometimes they look alike in the profile but drilling into the record might reveal different data.
   b. Decide which to keep and which to discard.
   c. View the source to keep.
   d. Click on Associated Facts
   e. Use the + button to add any facts needed to the top section.
   f. X to leave the screen.
   g. It is now safe to delete the duplicate source but clicking view, then delete.

Mistake #4 Thrulines

There are several mistakes (or should I say misunderstandings) that people make regarding ThruLines®. Once you understand how it works, you can use it to your advantage to help solve genealogical problems.

Common misconceptions:

- People assume that ThruLines is perfectly accurate.
- Is that ThruLines is their tree. It is not.
- ThruLines shows all descendants.

ThruLines® is just *suggesting* how the descendants from a common ancestor.

In many cases you will find missing children of the common ancestor. Why?

- One is that there might not be descendants from all children who have taken a DNA test at Ancestry.
- If the descendants had taken a DNA test, they might not have identified themselves in their tree.
- DNA tests need to link to a public tree.

Case in point. Here you see my great grandfather Henry Gustav Henley. ThruLines shows three children, John H., Frances M., and Glenn C. Henley. The reality is that he had nine children. Only three of them have descendants that have taken a DNA test and have linked themselves to a tree.
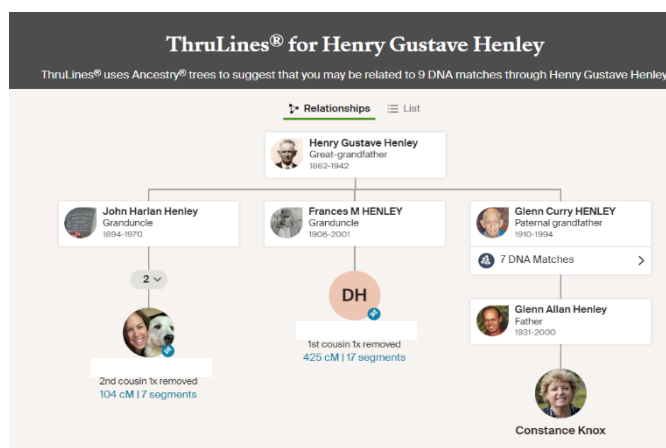
Mistake #5 It Has to Be Perfect Before It Can Be Public

Feeling like you need to have everything perfect before making your tree public. No, it does not. Every tree out there has mistakes. It will never be perfect. If you get run over by a bus tomorrow, all that work cannot be found. Do not let fear stop you.

You are missing so many tools and opportunities. By not having your tree public you are missing:

- DNA Connections
- Collaborating with other members.
- Connecting with cousins who might provide information.

Bonus Tip - Not Communicating

If you are not reaching out to family or other Ancestry members, you are missing out. On the Ancestry platform there are several ways to connect.

Use Ancestry messaging platform

- You will have the best success by keeping communications brief.
  - Tell them which lines you are working on, and that you might have information to share and very briefly what you are looking for.
  - Use the new email feature at the top of the ancestor profile.

Member Connect!

1. Go to an ancestor profile.
2. Under Tools in the upper right corner, drop down to Member Connect. You can also find it in the mini tool bar if you have that turned on.
3. Click the Suggested Connection (tab up top).
4. Click Connect with other members.

Note: You are not actually contacting them yet, you are merely connecting to them in this area. You can always drill into the members name and it will take you to the messaging center to contact them if you wish.

Once you click Connect, you will see a Connections tab at the top of the screen. You can now learn quickly about more records and images they have.