

# Digging Deeper into FamilySearch

## About FamilySearch

FamilySearch.org is a free genealogy website operated by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. It provides access to a vast collection of genealogical records, including birth, marriage, death, census, and military records from around the world. Users can create family trees, search historical records, and access research guidance. FamilySearch is one of the most widely used resources for family history research, with millions of records added regularly.

## Remember Your Goals

As you work through the research process, keep your goals in mind. For example, the front page of the FamilySearch.org website often features hints and teasers that can lead you down rabbit holes.

Stay  
Focused

Begin with your research question. Who are you researching, when and where they lived, and what specific information are you seeking?

## Basic Guides

If you are new to FamilySearch, there are two recent episodes available that cover the basics of the platform. I recommend **watching these first** to lay the groundwork for a deeper dive into the FamilySearch website. The episodes are titled "[The Guide to FamilySearch](#)" and "[The Best Tools on FamilySearch](#)." This lesson *digs deeper* into the nuances of FamilySearch.

### *Starting a Tree*

When you create a new account on FamilySearch, the platform will guide you through a wizard to help you get started by adding yourself, your parents, grandparents, and so on. Eventually, you will connect with the World Collaborative Tree.

If you are not already on FamilySearch, I highly recommend setting up a free account. FamilySearch is always free and will remain so, making it a valuable asset for any family historian.

## Ancestor Profiles (Briefly)

For those that are new to FamilySearch, here is a Brief overview of some of the key tabs that are important to genealogy research.



## Profile - Details

The Details tab is where you will do most of your work. Here, you will find all the data for your ancestor and the ability to search for records across various platforms directly from the ancestor's profile. Since this is a collaborative tree, others will also contribute to the information in the profile.

To edit anything in the Details tab, click the pencil icon and make your changes. Be sure to use source information to support any additions you make.

While the left, larger column contains all the data and family information, the right column helps you understand the possible errors, shows who else is contributing, and allows you to search additional platforms like Ancestry, Find My Past, and MyHeritage directly from the ancestor's profile.

## Profile - Sources

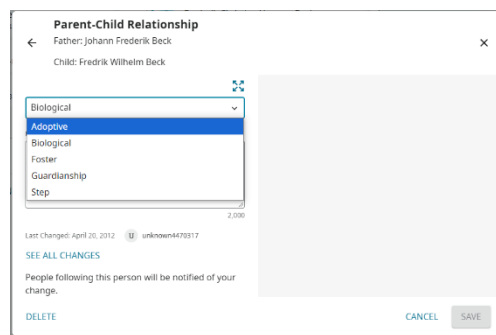
At first glance, the Sources tab appears to be just a list of records for your ancestor. However, you can click the down arrow on the right side of each source to see more details.

It is a good habit to examine each record thoroughly and, when possible, view the image to access all the data. Remember, not all information is indexed. Also, take note of the various contributors listed in the "Created" column on the right.

**Remove Relationships** – To remove a relationship (after you are confident in doing so), click the pencil icon next to the person you want to update. Explain why the change is needed by providing a reason statement and include evidence to support your editing or removal of the relationship.

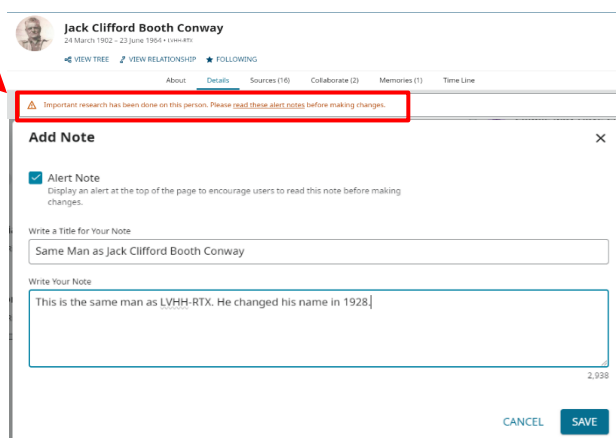
## Changing Relationships from Biological to Adopted

I have had several questions about how to switch a relationship from biological to adopted on FamilySearch. Simply select the pencil icon next to the current relationship (to go into edit mode) on any person in a profile and click the drop-down menu and choose Adopted. Then give it a reason or source documentation and save.



**Adding Alerts** – In the Collaborate tab, you can add a note and check the alert box to create an alert at the top of the ancestor's page. This lets others know, for example, not to change something because “you are their daughter” or have factual information.

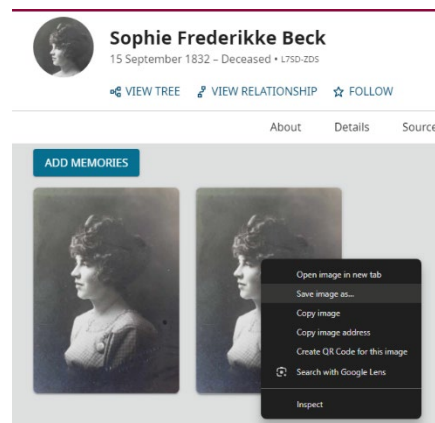
**To add an Alert** at the top of the ancestors page. In the right column, click **Add Note** then **check the Alert Note check box**. **Type your title and information.**



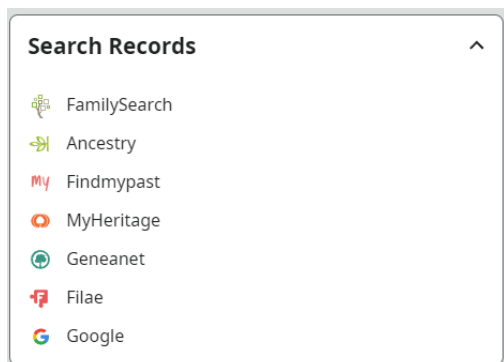
## Downloading Images

To download images as JPG, go to the **Gallery**, right-click on the desired image, and select "Save Image As." If you do not save from the Gallery, the only option available will be to save the image as HTML, which is not ideal.

This profile had two copies of the same image, so don't be confused by this example.



## Record Research Strategies



### Records Search from the Ancestor Profile

One of the best features of the FamilySearch platform is the ability to search for records across multiple platforms directly from the right-hand column of the Details tab. I recommend right clicking each platform and opening it in a new tab so you can keep your original profile open for reference. Keep in mind, any of these platforms that require a paid subscription, you will need a subscription in order to

access them.

It is always a good idea to search multiple platforms. While some records overlap, especially governmental ones, each platform may offer unique records, and their search algorithms work differently, potentially providing you with different results.

## Experiment Full Text Search

The FamilySearch Full Text Search is a **groundbreaking new feature in genealogy research**. Although it is still in the experimental phase, the **results have been remarkable**. Unlike traditional indexing, which focuses on names, this tool reads handwritten text and converts it into searchable text. Once the handwriting is extracted, the software makes the entire content searchable, allowing you to search by phrases, names, places, or a combination of these. Is it perfect? No. However, we are finding tons of records we never knew existed.

### How to Find the Full Text Search

To **access the Full Text Search**, return to the **home page** by clicking the FamilySearch logo in the upper left corner. Scroll down to the bottom, and on the **right-hand side**, you will see **FamilySearch Labs**. Click on "**View Experiments**." From this page turn on the "**Expand your search with Full Text**." Book mark this page if needed.





## Searching the World Tree

Alternatively, if you click on Search and then select "Family Tree," you will be taken to a search box where you can search the World Collaborative Tree for ancestors by name or ID.

The screenshot shows the FamilySearch website interface. At the top, the 'Search' menu item is highlighted in red. Below it, the 'Family Tree' menu item is also highlighted in red. The main content area features a large green banner with the text 'A Family Tree for the Human Family' and a search box. To the right, there is a search interface with two tabs: 'Find by Name' and 'Find by ID'. A blue arrow points to the 'Find by ID' tab. Below the tabs, there are sections for 'Add Ancestor Information', 'Add Life Event', 'Add Family Member', and 'Add Record Options'. A 'SEARCH' button is visible at the bottom of the search interface.

### Find by Name

I recommend opening the "More Options" button to expand the search criteria. This allows you to add additional details to narrow your search results. Although you might see thousands of results, if you have a tree built and connected to the world tree, the algorithm will help direct you to the most relevant records.

### Find by ID

Each ancestor on FamilySearch has a unique ID. Be sure to record these ID numbers and URL reference links in your research notes and as sources on other platforms (like Ancestry). This will enable you to move seamlessly between platforms, enhancing your research. Combining FamilySearch with Ancestry, for example, is a powerful strategy that can yield excellent results.

The screenshot shows the 'Find by ID' tab of the search interface. The 'Ancestor ID' field is highlighted in green. Below the field, there is a note: 'An individual's unique ID number is in the format XXXX-XXXX.' A 'SEARCH' button is visible at the bottom of the search interface. A blue arrow points to the 'Find by ID' tab.

### Duplicate Ancestors

Given the many contributors to the collaborative tree, you may encounter duplicate ancestors. There are procedures for merging duplicates, but this is beyond the scope of this lesson.

## Genealogies

This can be a hidden gem. Searching under the Genealogies section in the Search tab reveals GedCom export files, lineages, or pedigrees that researchers have uploaded to FamilySearch or other platforms. These genealogies are not connected to the Family Tree but are standalone lineages exported from partner platforms or uploaded by researchers themselves.

To access this, go to **Search** and then select **Genealogies**. Here, you can search all available genealogies in one place or scroll through a carousel displaying several types of genealogies imported into the collection.

Search Memories Get Involved Activities

Genealogies Catalog Books Wiki

### Genealogies

FamilySearch Genealogies is a large directory of family trees, also known as lineages or pedigrees, that people and organizations have shared with FamilySearch. We organize the information into collections and make it available for you to search.

## Search All

First Names  Last Names

Place  Year

City, County, State, Province, or Country Birth or Death Year

SEARCH MORE OPTIONS

### Explore one of our collections

Within them you'll find thousands of family trees submitted by individuals and professional organizations.

#### Search for a specific tree

Let us help you find the tree you're looking for. Enter a surname or place associated with the family, and we'll search for it in all of our collections.

Keyword Search

VIEW ALL TREES

HIGH DATA ACCURACY

#### Community Trees

An effort to gather and publish the genealogy for an entire town or community. These are family trees, along with their sources, from specific time periods and geographic locations around the world.

VIEW ALL TREES IN THIS COLLECTION

SEARCH FOR A PERSON

HIGH DATA ACCURACY

#### Oral Genealogies

Spoken lineages and histories from places around the world, especially Africa and Oceania. FamilySearch preserves the audio file and creates a family tree from its contents.

VIEW ALL TREES IN THIS COLLECTION

SEARCH FOR A PERSON

## Search Individual Record Sets

Scrolling further down, you will have the option to **upload your own family tree using the Gedcom file**. Simply download your family tree from a platform like Ancestry (exports as a Gedcom file) and then upload your tree to FamilySearch. This is a great way to preserve your family tree as you see it. For those experiencing conflicts with other researchers on FamilySearch, this is a good place to add your information.

### How is FamilySearch Genealogies different from FamilySearch Family Tree?

Genealogies is a database of tens of thousands of personal family trees, lineages, and other histories. The FamilySearch Family Tree, by comparison, is a single tree or lineage for the entire human family.

GO TO THE FAMILY TREE UPLOAD YOUR INDIVIDUAL TREE



## Catalog

Searching the Catalog on FamilySearch allows you to search Books and materials, microfilm and other publications that are available. Online and in libraries around the world. Probably 1 of the greatest strengths of this is the ability to search Bibliographies and local histories.

### Searching for Gazetteers

Gazetteers can be helpful in searching for small townships, crossroads, or even creeks. Try searching the catalog for the place by state or region and the keyword Gazetteer.

The screenshot shows the FamilySearch Catalog search interface. On the left, the 'Refine your search' sidebar is visible, with 'Place' set to 'United States, Virginia' and 'Subjects' set to 'Gazetteer'. The main search results area shows 'Search Results for FamilySearch Catalog' with a 'PRINT' icon and 'Catalog Print List (0)'. Below this, there are 'Notes' and 'Place Information' sections. The 'Places within United States, Virginia' section lists several results, including 'Chataigne's Virginia business directory and gazetteer' by Chataigne, J. H. (J. Henry), 'A gazetteer of Virginia' by Gannett, Henry, 1846-1914, and 'A Gazetteer of Virginia and West Virginia' by Gannett, Henry, 1846-1914; United States. Geological Survey. Each result has an 'Add' link.

## FHL Numbers

Searching for an FHL number on FamilySearch can be straightforward when using the Records Search area. For instance, if you find a record on Ancestry that is difficult to read and it includes an FHL number in the source citation, you can use that number on FamilySearch to locate the same record. You may find a clearer picture of the record on FamilySearch.

To do so, first **copy the FHL number and make note of the page or image number for reference**. Then on FamilySearch go to **Search, Records**, then open the **More Options** link. From there under the Add Record Options you will see a submenu called **Image Group Number (DGS) or Film Number**. Click that and enter the the FHL number.

Search for the ancestor or browse the film to find the same page.

The screenshot shows the 'Add Record Options' form in the FamilySearch interface. The form is divided into several sections: 'Add Ancestor Information' (with fields for Name, Alternate Name, and Sex), 'Add Life Event' (with tabs for Birth, Marriage, Residence, and Death, and a 'Place' field), 'Add Family Member' (with tabs for Spouse, Father, Mother, and Other Person), and 'Add Record Options'. The 'Add Record Options' section has tabs for Location, Type, Batch Number, and 'Image Group Number (DGS) or Film Number'. The 'Image Group Number (DGS) or Film Number' tab is selected, and the number '805383' is entered in the corresponding field. Below this, there are fields for 'Country or Location' and 'State or Province'. At the bottom, there is a 'Show Exact Search' checkbox and a 'SEARCH' button.

## Collaborate

Not all family information is available online. I highly recommend collaborating with other researchers working in the same areas as you. To do this, access your tree view, click on an ancestor, and check the side menu to see the number of collaborators associated with that ancestor. By clicking on the Collaborate link, you will be directed to a list of these individuals. You can also find this option in the Collaborate tab of the ancestor's profile.

The screenshot shows a mobile interface for a family tree profile. At the top, the user's name 'Constance Knox' is visible. Below it, there are navigation icons and a profile picture. The main content area shows the profile for 'Anne Myhill' (L5PN-551). The profile includes a 'Collaborate (4)' link, which is highlighted with a red box. Other information includes 'Sources (41)', 'Memories (0)', 'Birth: about 1647', 'Elizabeth, Virginia, British Colonial America', and 'Death: 7 June 1727', 'Virginia, British Colonial America'. There are also buttons for 'PERSON' and 'TREE', and a 'Vitals' section with 'Birth • 9 Sources about 1647', 'Elizabeth, Virginia, British Colonial America', and 'Christening'.

## Research Wiki

The Research Wiki is an excellent resource for finding information on where records are located for specific subjects or locations. To access the Research Wiki, go to the Search tab at the top of the screen and select Research Wiki from the dropdown menu.

The screenshot shows the FamilySearch Research Wiki homepage. At the top, there is a navigation bar with 'Family Tree', 'Search', 'Memories', 'Get Involved', and 'Activities'. The 'Search' tab is selected. Below the navigation bar, there is a dropdown menu with options: 'Records', 'Images', 'Family Tree', 'Genealogies', 'Catalog', 'Books', 'Research Wiki', and 'Cemeteries'. The 'Research Wiki' option is highlighted. The main content area features the title 'FamilySearch Research Wiki' and the subtitle 'A Genealogy Resource Guide' with '107,903 articles'. Below this, there is a search bar and a map of the world with colored regions: North America (orange), Europe (blue), Asia (green), and Africa (red). A 'List of all Localities' button is overlaid on the map. A 'Jump-start your research' box is also present, stating 'Guided Research will help you find the best databases for select locations.' and includes a 'Guided Research' button.



Once there, drill down into the country, and then the state or province in which you are interested. You will find various record categories listed on the right-hand side, with detailed information in the center column. The map on the page includes hyperlinks for each county, enabling you to explore further.

Keep in mind that some records might be organized at the state or regional level rather than the county level. As you navigate each location, consider your research question, and use the record types listed on the right-hand side. These links will guide you to relevant sections of the page with additional hyperlinks. Even on FamilySearch, the Research Wiki provides links to other platforms or wherever the records may be found.

## Links to Other FamilySearch Lessons

[Guide to FamilySearch](#)

[OMG! Bingo! Finding a 5 Year Old Girl Missing from the 1880 Census \(Full Text Search\)](#)

[FamilySearch Hidden Records](#)