FamilySearch
A Beginner's Guide

With over a billion records from a variety of sources, FamilySearch is an excellent resource for exploring your family history.

Step 1: Search for Records

Visit PPLD's website[1] to access Family Search remotely.

Do I need an account?
No. FamilySearch records are available without an account. However, account creation is free and allows you to access the Family Tree, edit the Research Wiki, and index records.

🟥 **Click on *Search*** and select *Records* from the menu

🔵 **Enter your ancestor's name** and life events such as birth marriage, residence, death, etc. (try including more or less information to vary your results)

🔺 **Add life events** by clicking on the event title

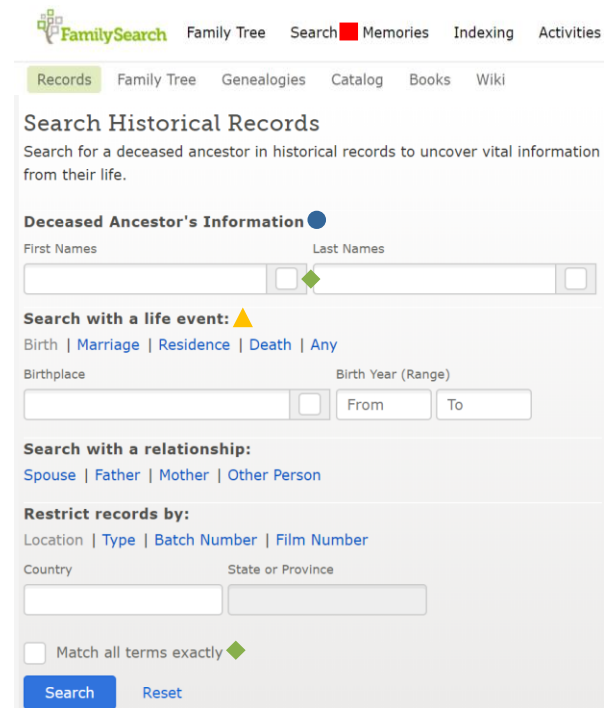**Search results**, by default, will include results that are exact *and* similar to your search terms

🔶 Check the box next to the field to match that term exactly

🔶 Check *Match all terms exactly* to match every field entry

Too few or too many results? Refine your search!
From the search results page, you can:
- Edit and add to your search terms
- Filter the results[2] by collection (e.g. United States Census, 1930), sex, and year or place of birth, marriage, residence, death, etc.

Tip: FamilySearch[3] provides tips for searching records and other categories including books and the catalog. As with any genealogical database, not all FamilySearch digital collections have been indexed. These records need to be browsed and are not (yet) searchable.
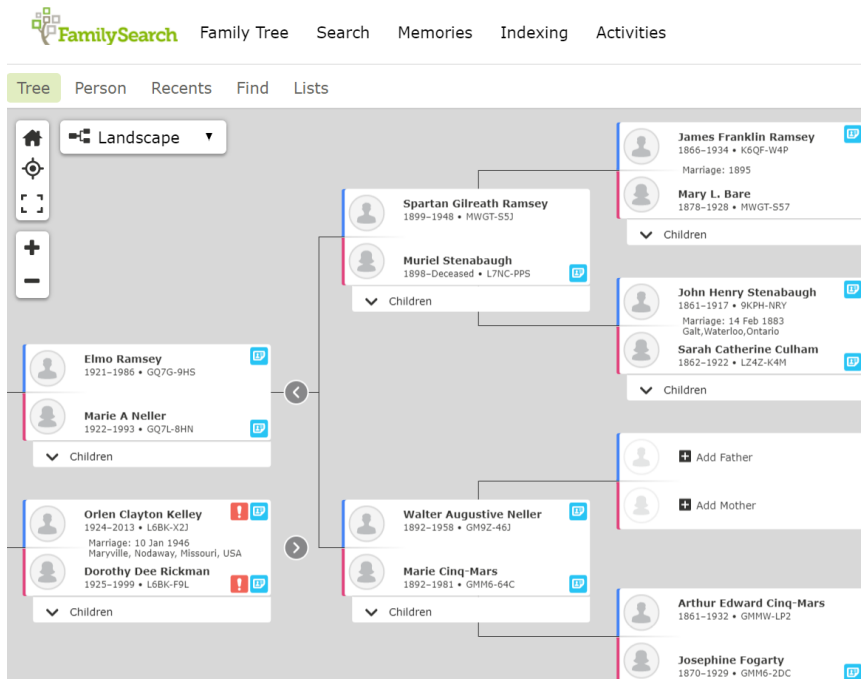
Step 2: Grow your Family Tree

The FamilySearch Family Tree differs from many other tree-building websites. When using the FamilySearch tree, you are adding to a shared tree rather than constructing an individual tree. Every person entered into the family tree is given a single profile and modifications are collaborative. *A free FamilySearch account is required to use the Family Tree.*

Add Yourself
Click on *Family Tree* and select *Tree* from the menu. Your name appears as you entered it during account creation.

Work Backward
Add your parents (by clicking on *Add Father*, etc.) and continue working backward. FamilySearch will suggest potential matching profiles that have already been created by other users.

View and Edit Ancestor Profiles
Click on a name to access that ancestor's profile. View additional details, attach records, add photos and stories and collaborate with other users to discover and document your ancestor's story.

Note: Information about living people, including yourself, is not visible to other users.

Tip: Other users may have already constructed a significant portion of your Family Tree through common ancestors. While this is an opportunity to share research with other genealogists, it also means that you should verify the research completed by others.

Step 3: Take Your Research to the Next Level with the Research Wiki

The FamilySearch Research Wiki is an online genealogical guide. This guide will direct you to genealogy databases and websites, while also providing guidance and research strategies. To find it, click on *Search* at the top of the page and select *Research Wiki* from the menu.

Useful resources include:
- Location guides – how to research ancestors from specific countries, counties, etc. (search for a location on the Wiki homepage[4])
- Records guides[5] – how to use varying record types by location
- Topical guides – how to research specific topics (e.g. U.S. Civil War[6])
- Historical Records Collections[7] – details about individual collections
- Local Family History Centers[8] and PPLD Special Collections (a FamilySearch affiliate library) – provide access to restricted collections that are not available from home

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Is there a FamilySearch app?

Yes. The FamilySearch Family Tree app will allow you to:

- View and edit your family tree
- Access personalized research "hints"
- Search and view records
- View a map of your ancestors
- And more!

More information is available on the FamilySearch website[10].

Tip: When using the Research Wiki, search for places and topics, not people. The Wiki will help you navigate how to research records from the locations where your ancestors lived. Learn more about the Wiki,[9] including tutorials, research guides, and more!