

FamilySearch in the 21st Century

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PRESENTERS, from Riverside County, CA:

Jean Wilcox Hibben – PhD, MA
909-994-6114
circlemending@gmail.com
<https://circlemending.org>

Maggie Rawlins – Family History Consultant
951-233-8230
Maggierawlins@mac.com

Access website: <https://familysearch.org>

What it is

FamilySearch is a non-profit organization sponsored by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and has been serving Church members and others in their genealogical and family history research since 1894, when, initially, it was created as the Genealogical Society of Utah. Records have been microfilmed by the organization beginning in 1938. The trademarked name of the organization has been FamilySearch since 1999, about a year after digitizing records began.

<https://www.familysearch.org/en/blog/24-fun-facts-about-familysearch-you-may-not-know#:~:text=FamilySearch%20celebrated%20its%20first%20125,and%20experienced%20many%20wonderful%20advancements>.

Microfilm distribution and ordering was discontinued in September 2017, marking the time of major availability of digitized records on the FamilySearch.org website. Nevertheless, not all of the digitized microfilms are available for home use online. Some require being at a FamilySearch Library, Center, or affiliate.

<https://www.familysearch.org/en/newsroom/familysearch-completes-digitization-of-massive-microfilm-collection>

The immense project of digitizing records from microfilms held by FamilySearch was completed in the 2nd half of 2021. 2.4 million rolls of microfilm have been digitized in the project, but that does not mean that the work is over; records in repositories around the world continue to be digitally copied.

<https://www.familysearch.org/en/blog/familysearch-microfilm-collection-digitized>

Why aren't all the collections available online? A common question, and, though not a difficult one to answer, the reasoning may seem a bit inconsistent from one collection to another. Every collection (or, in some cases, partial collection, separated by years, e.g., "before 1920" and "1920 and later," representing different regulations due to privacy issues and other aspects governing the stewardship over the records) is subject to a contract or use agreement between FamilySearch and the respective repositories. In some cases, repository government requires specialized contracts creating differences from one collection availability to another.

What can be found? Where?

Super exciting changes, revisions, additions, corrections . . . the FamilySearch teams (and there are many) are ALWAYS working

Have you checked the WIKI? It's most likely there, whatever "it" is.

- "Who" has the records – the repositories, organizations, websites, etc.
- "What" exists and
- "Where" to find it (on FamilySearch as well as ALL OVER the web, both for cost and for free)
- "Why" a given record or collection might be helpful or was created
- "When" records were created as well as when repository collections were moved from one location (online or brick & mortar) to another
- "How to" locate something (think "histories," "locations," "cultures," "peoples," "dates," "events," etc.)

Nothing is too unusual, outdated, limited, extensive, etc. for the WIKI and what you don't locate on it today may be there tomorrow . . . return often! (You can contribute your information, too; be part of the process.)

Definitions

Search – You enter a name and/or descriptive information and the search engine will select matches that respond to your data (the more information you provide, the fewer the "hits" you will get; the less information you provide, the greater the number of hits – start with a lot of detail and then go back to refine the search by removing information in order to increase the number of hits OR start with a broad search and then add information to reduce the quantity of results)

Searching uses the indexes that have been prepared by the Indexing project.

Searching can be "exact" (meaning every piece of information you provide will be matched exactly) or "exact & close" (meaning the search engine will use a "soft" or "fuzzy" search, applying "Soundex" principles for the names and general date ranges and places for the events) or "exact, close, & partial" (meaning the search will yield results for anything that even comes close to the information you provide).

Browse – As we did in the days of record research with microfilms, page through each screen shot of the resource being examined. The number of records in the collection is in the upper right corner, along with the number of which record that is currently displayed (use that information to determine whether or not browsing is practical, timewise, for you).

Browsing refers to looking through a list of collections or scrolling through the records within a specific collection.

Get help with "Tips and Tricks for Using FamilySearch's Historical Record Collections"

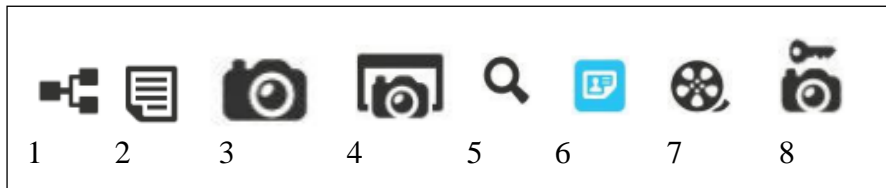
https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/img_auth.php/c/c9/Tips_and_Tricks_for_Using_FamilySearch%27s_Historical_Record_Collection.pdf

Types of Historical Records in that collection on the website

Organized by geographic region; includes but is not limited to . . .

- Vital records – birth, marriage, death
- Military records – draft, pension, service
- Burial & christening records
- State and US Census records
- Probate and Estate records

What do the icons mean?



From left (click on the one desired):

1. View family tree
2. Transcription (maybe from an indexer) available
3. Actual image available on FamilySearch.org
4. Image available at another (Partner) website
5. Collection is searchable
6. Database includes “Record Hints” (from Indexed collections)
7. Records from collection on film only, must be viewed at the Family History Library (in Salt Lake)
8. Image is available, but can be viewed only at a Family History Center, FamilySearch Library, or affiliate

Navigation (*suggestion: while reading about the steps, work thru them on your computer*)

From the home page, use the menu at the top, next to the “FamilySearch” logo. Click “Search” and select the database collection you are interested in (“Records” will take you to the Historical Record Collections including such items as those mentioned above; “Research Wiki” will get you to the information collection mentioned earlier). At the “Records” page, you can enter your search parameters (be sure to narrow down to at least the country or the search may take a very long time). “More options” will give additional parameters (search with place, date or date range, with family members, etc.). To narrow the search parameters scroll down to “Find a Collection” and enter the collection name (if you know it) or click the “Browse all Collections” link under that search box on the left or go to the right to “Search by Place” by the world map. It is also possible to “Browse places” by clicking that link under the related search box. Searches may also be done by the catalog, also listed on that “Search” menu; use “keyword search” to get anything that might relate to your sought for material.

From the “Browse all Collections” page, you can select your record collection choice from the menu on the right side, labeled “Filter collections.” This option allows you to narrow the selections by checking (or not) the “Show only collections with images” box. Additional filtering options will assist in keeping browsing manageable.

Be advised that noting the “Last Updated” information can aid you in not duplicating research or missing the latest records identified. Keep a record of that information to aid in future searching and browsing.

For any and all collections (even “sub” collections – e.g., State Census records will likely be different from one state to the next, etc.), read the “How to Use this Collection” information when you are examining a particular group of records to be sure it includes what you are looking for. Elements that are not part of the collection are often listed here and reading this information can save you hours of fruitless searching and browsing!

Don't get lost! While navigating through the many FamilySearch pages, usually you will be taken to a separate screen in a new tab, as opposed to leaving the first page to go to the next, but not always. Find your way back by right clicking the link you wish to access, then, from the drop-down menu, select “open in a new tab” or “screen.” No more wandering around to find your way back home!

The post-search screens

First screen – *Filtered Results*

- Listing of hits for your search parameters (or a screen that tells you there were no matches)
- Check the “icons” (see list above)
- View the information by clicking the link, or, if provided, the triangle or open arrow (∨ or ∧) at bottom, right, or left of the record listing
- View the original document by clicking in the “view” box
 - Note: Many images require the user to register before viewing (registration is minimal – your name and email address, choose a user name and password, and identify the “security” word)

Second screen – *Transcription*

- A full, printable transcription of the record will be provided, along with the FHL (GS) film number that provided the information
- Transcription of record provides you with various possible options. Click “Save” or “Share” to
 - Download - a *.jpg of the image to your hard drive (which you can print later or just hold in a file on your computer)
 - Print – allows you to print the transcription (recommended for source information provided)
 - Save the data to “My Source Box” for examination later (held online, not on your computer)
 - Share with someone else via email or social media
 - Attach to Family Tree – for trees on FamilySearch, the program will automatically identify your ancestor on the source with the corresponding person on your FS tree
 - View (not available for all documents)
 - Allows you to see the digital image of the item (may be accessible only if browsing . . . information will clarify options, if any)
 - Viewable documents have an image of a generic document at the left or instructions to sign in to view
 - Some “view” options will take you off site (sometimes to a “pay” site, such as Fold3®)

Third screen – *Actual Record*

- Arrive at the screen by clicking one of the aforementioned icons
- Options (all are retained in the “full screen view”) – Some of these are listed under “tools”
 - Full screen
 - makes the image large enough to view easily
 - (return to abbreviated view by using your keyboard ESC key)
 - Rotate - clockwise or counter-clockwise, by quarter-turns
 - Invert (negative with positive)
 - make white on black more legible
 - sometimes reversing a positive view to white on black brings out material otherwise missed
 - Zoom in or out to view better
 - Save - to your computer
 - Print
 - whole image or selected portion
 - various options for the printing of the document
 - Image # (for browsing all records in the collection)

To change search options


The *Results* (and subsequent) screens give the option to

- Refine search
 - Add or subtract search parameters to increase or decrease number of hits using a small search screen superimposed over the previous results
- New search
 - Check another record collection or different ancestor without going back to the beginning of the program

Additional suggestions

- Use the information on the *Transcription* screen to get the specifics needed for source citation. (Note: a “Cite this Record” write-up – with “Copy Citation” button to make it easier – gives the basics, but still can be boiler-plate, so be sure the information you put in your citation includes all necessary data to find the record again.) Another way to be sure all needed data is included:
 - Use the FamilySearch Catalog Film number to research the film information from www.FamilySearch.org
 - click on “Catalog” link from “Search” tab
 - click on “Film or Fiche” to get search screen
 - enter film number (accessed from record transcription in the Historical Record Collection search) in the search box
 - use the film information for specifics on the record
 - use information on Author, Title, and Publication for use in preparing your source citation (but clarify how the image was viewed and from what website)
- If provided, click on “About this collection” on the search page to view information on the records in question to learn how the records were compiled, what they contain, etc. (or go to <https://wiki.familysearch.org> to view the specifics on the various records)

But wait, there's more (and more, and more)

- “Help” – Upper right corner of most FS screens, click on the encircled question mark 

(All of these are easy to navigate using the “right click” recommendation in the earlier box about not getting lost; many do not automatically open new tabs)

- Help Center – specifically for the website; FAQs
- Community – ask for or give help and ideas; be part of the FS world
 - links and information on Family History Centers and other affiliated centers, libraries, etc. (categories listed on the right) – See “Family Search Centers,” below, for easy link to information
 - Indexing projects (see more info below)
 - “Blog” – Be involved in the FamilySearch community by interacting with others who are using the resource;
<https://www.familysearch.org/en/blog/>
- Contact us – by region – request assistance or discover how to get it
 - “FamilySearch Centers” – Near as I can tell, this is the most difficult information to locate on this website. However, a geographic search engine to locate a FamilySearch Center, FamilySearch Library, or affiliate near you can be accessed at
<https://www.familysearch.org/en/centers/about>
- Helper Resources – discover tools to help find family; more FAQs but on specific, not necessarily FS-related topics (but some related to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints) – Sort of a potpourri
 - “Training” link includes videos from many experts in the various genealogy-related fields (not necessarily Church-connected)
 - hundreds of online courses on numerous topics (menu for general topic areas is on the left or scroll down to a “search” box)
- “Other links” from home page –
 - Indexing – Become a FamilySearch Indexer and contribute to the many different projects going on, including requesting particular record sets from perhaps one of your ancestral regions (Also listed as “Get Involved” on the “Community” page) – There are always projects needing indexing; help yourself and others and get involved . . . it costs nothing and can be done in short time increments or long periods of time. Also there: an ongoing Q/A and discussion forum linked on the “Community” page.
 - Activities – many, and for all ages: <https://www.familysearch.org/discovery/>
- “FamilySearch Mobile Apps” – for smart phones, different ones for different purposes: <https://www.familysearch.org/en/blog/familysearch-mobile-apps>

Before this gets totally out of hand, we have included some links for things believed to be more difficult to find on the website (Google was used to narrow searches of the FS site). Hope these are helpful and know there is much, much more, and not all this is in the presentation. Best wishes in your Roots Pursuits.

Information provided here is current as of 14 July 2023; no guarantee of accuracy after that date.