

Getting Started with Your Family History

Search, Save, & Preserve



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Topics

- Searching Online
- Organizing Physical Records
- Scanners and Cameras
- Managing Digital Records
- Backups



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How does a document get on-line?

1. Somebody had to create it!
 - Errors are often introduced when the information is being recorded
2. The document is digitized
3. A index is created



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Factors Affecting Accuracy

- Handwriting
- Language differences
- Spelling variations
- Informant could not read or write
- Informant did not know (correct) information



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Digitizing & Indexing

- A digital image of the document is created
- The index (what you search) is created
 - The information may already be incorrect
 - The information may be hard to read
 - The condition of the document may have deteriorated since it was created
 - They may type it wrong.



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Variant Spelling

“Remember, you and your family know how your name is spelled and has been spelled for generations, but the recording clerk [or transcriptionist] did not know.” - Sipe, p. 9

Sipe, Karen V. 1998. *Genealogy made easy*. Mineola, N.Y.: Dover Publications.



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Search Techniques

- Year Ranges
- Variations on the first name
- Wildcards
- Quotes
- Don't use the last name
- Search for Parents, Spouse or Children
- Specify facts that are not likely to be wrong

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Family Search

www.familysearch.org

- One of (if not the) largest genealogy organizations in the world
- Offers free access to an expanding collection of genealogical records.

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Discover Your Family History

Records Trees Catalog Books

Our records span billions of names across hundreds of collections—including birth, marriage, death, probate, land, military, IG extracted, and more.

Name → George Last Names → Lowe

Birthplace → Tennessee

Year (Range) → 1845 1850

Range of Years

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Try variations on the First Name

Search Results for Historical Records

1-20 of 458 results for -Name: G W Lowe, Last: Birth Place: Tennessee, Last Range: 1845-1850

First Name	Birth	Residence	Year	Event	Spouse	Child
G W Lowe	1845	Tennessee	Mar 1847	Tennessee		Josiah Lowe
G W Lowe	1845	Tennessee	1848	Tennessee		George Lowe
G W Lowe	1845	Tennessee	1848	Tennessee		Josiah Lowe
G W Lowe	1845	Tennessee	1848	Tennessee		Josiah Lowe

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Ancestry.com

www.ancestry.com

- Offers some free services, and anybody can perform a search
- However, only paying subscribers can access the records
- Most public libraries offer free access.

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Name Variations?

Try using Wildcard Characters

- * Matches 0 or more characters
- ? Matches any single character

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More On WildCards

- Can be used anywhere in the string
 - Han*
 - Low*ski
 - *son
 - Sm?th
- Need to specify at least 3 real characters
 - H*
 - *on

These Won't Work!



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Quotes: “”

First & Middle Name(s) Last Name

“G W” Lowe

Match all terms exactly

U.S. Public Records Index, Volume 2 Schools, Directories & Church Histories ★★★★★	NAME: G W Lowe RESIDENCE: 1925-1993 - Greenback, TN
Tennessee State Marriages, 1780-2002 Birth, Marriage & Death ★★★★★ View Image	NAME: W G Lowe SPOUSE: Bessie Willett MARRIAGE: 12 Oct 1903 - Greene
Tennessee State Marriages, 1780-2002 Birth, Marriage & Death ★★★★★ View Image	NAME: G W Lowe SPOUSE: Miss. Ella Clark MARRIAGE: 29 Sep 1870 - Rutherford



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No Matches?

- Search for children or a spouse
- Look for other family members
- Use broad Wildcard name searches (*owe, Low*) with:
 - Location
 - Gender
 - Race/Nationality
- Don't specify the First or the Last name



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Match all terms exactly

Name First & Middle Name(s) Last Name

“G” “Lowe”

Event Birth Year Location

1880 Wisconsin, USA

Family Member First Name Last Name

Gender Female

Race/Nationality White

Partial spelling of first name with wildcard

Don't specify a last name

Specify a Birth date range

Specify other facts that are not likely to be indexed incorrectly...

Names are frequently indexed incorrectly... use of wildcards and/or eliminating them from your search entirely may help you find the records you are searching for.



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Finding People The Hard Way...

- If you are confident that somebody really should be in/on a particular record (census, manifest, etc...) but you just can't find them in the index...
 - Try looking at the document
 - Knowing the name(s) you are looking for gives you a huge advantage over the indexer
 - You may be able to recognize the name in spite of bad handwriting or poor image quality.



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Family Search

Browse by Location

All Record Collections

- Africa
- Asia and Middle East
- Australia and New Zealand
- Canada
- Caribbean, Central and South America
- Continental Europe
- Mexico
- Pacific Islands
- United Kingdom and Ireland
- United States




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Search Techniques

- Use Year Ranges
- Try variations on the first name
- Use Wildcards
 - * Match on zero or more characters
 - ? Match on Single Character
- Use Quotes
- Don't use the last name
- Search for Parents, Spouse or Children
- Specify facts that are not likely to be wrong

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You will accumulate a lot of documents...

- Pictures
- Census Records
- Birth Certificates & Confirmation Records
- Marriage and Divorce certificates
- Death and Burial Records
- Emigration Records
- Maps

Start to organize them NOW!

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Traits Of A Good Organizational System

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intuitive and not arbitrary • Easy to Use • Adaptable • Expandable • Consistent 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Easy to File • Easy to Retrieve and File Again • Right for You • Helpful in Analysis
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Physical Information Organization

- By Surname
- By Location
 - All relatives in a specific location
- By Type
 - All census records for the Smith surname
 - All property tax receipts from Lake Geneva, WI
- Mary Hill Color-Coding System

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Mary Hill Color System

The diagram shows a semi-circular chart divided into colored segments. The segments are color-coded by relationship: Paternal Grandmother (green), Maternal Grandfather (red), Paternal Grandfather (blue), and Maternal Grandmother (yellow). The chart is divided into four quadrants, each representing a different grandparent relationship. The segments within each quadrant represent different family members or records.

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Preservation of Materials

- Physical materials
 - Acid-free or conservation quality board boxes
 - Packaging depends on material type
 - **Documents:** Acid-free envelopes or polyester sleeves
 - **Photographs:** Plastic or paper folders or pockets; free of sulfur, acids, and peroxides
 - **Old photograph albums:** Store intact in boxes that are free of sulfur, acids, and peroxides

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Research Log a.k.a. Research Calendar

- Records sources that you have reviewed
- Prevents repeating a search for the same information
- Should include information for every publication or website reviewed
 - Date of research
 - Repository
 - Title, author, publication date
 - Results

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Research Log/Calendar

- Needs to be something you can use wherever you are researching
- Can be a combination of tools
 - Paper (a form or a notebook)
 - PC or Tablet (spreadsheet, work processor or some other application/program)
 - Web based
 - Wiki
 - Blog

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Example: Form

Research Log
Page: _____

Ancestor's name: _____

First: _____ Middle: _____ Last (Maiden): _____

Born: _____ Married: _____ Died: _____

Male
 Female

This person is on pedigree chart number _____

line number _____ ancestor is child number _____

on the family group record of (Husband's name): _____

Research objective <small>Question about an event, relationship, place, or subject</small>	Name and Location of source <small>Include name and address of the source person, object or record repository. When it applies, include title, author, publisher of book, document, writing, electronic database, web site, etc.</small>	Search Date	Notes about source <small>May include a reason for its selection, description of its condition, summary and analysis of information found, etc.</small>	File number <small>You assigned to identify each of information from source</small>

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Family Tree Maker Notes

Person
Notes
Media
Tasks

01/08/2005 - Found Marie D. Hanson on the 1930 Census - says she was born about 1887 and that she immigrated in 1908.

01/09/2005 - Found a Marie Dahl in the 1900 Norwegian census:

Data on domicile:

Census year: 1900
 Municipality: Kristiana
 Municipality number: 0301
 Street name: Josefines Gade 16
 Street number:
 City district:
 House owner:
 Number of flats: 1
 Number of persons in this domicile: 9

Father: Rasmus Dahl, Occupation "Fuldmægigt i Norges Bank, og forevigt Eier af nogen capital", born 1831 in/at "Vaage i Gudbrandsdal"

Mother: Lina Dahl, born 1842 in/at Jevnager.

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Digital Capture: Scanning

- Physical materials to scan
 - Important documents (e.g. marriage licenses, military records, naturalization papers)
 - Letters/correspondence and other documents
 - Photo negatives (need attachment)
 - Slides (need attachment)
 - Photographs
 - Advertisements

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Scanner

- A very useful device for the genealogist
- Allows you to obtain high quality digital images of documents
- There are several types of scanners to choose from



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Hand Scanner

- a.k.a. a Wand scanner
- This is a portable device, usually battery operated
- You move the scanner over the document
- No PC required (to scan)
- The files are save in memory and transferred to a computer later using a cable or by transferring the memory chip from the scanner to a computer



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Flip-Pal Mobile Scanner

- Portable battery operated scanner
- No PC required
- Can use like a mini flat bed scanner
- Can also turn it over and place it on top of the document to be scanned
- Can scan images larger than the device and use software to 'stitch' the image back together



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Flat Bed Scanner

- As the name implies, you place the document to be scanned on a flat panel, close the cover and scan the document
- Many scanners also support an automated document feeder
- Can also be used to scan pictures, negatives and slides (usually requires an attachment)
- Allow you to vary the scan density and you can save files in a variety of formats
- The best way to get 'archive quality'



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Guidelines For Archival Scans

- Scan in color
- At least 300 dpi
- Full image size (100%)
- Save in TIFF format
- Scan the front & back of materials,



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Digital Camera

- You can also use your digital camera to create digital images of documents
- This is very useful for documents that do not fit onto a scanner (bound books, pictures, large maps, etc.)
- Any digital camera will do
- Even the camera in your phone will work!

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Photographing Tips

- Use a tripod
- Use a dark background or backdrop
- Set up your camera to capture high-resolution images
- Shoot from different angles
- Try with and without a Flash



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Get Started Today!

“Just like archiving your physical memories, you need to set simple goals, make a plan and follow through.

Remember — your digital assets are going to continue to grow, almost exponentially, so establishing a system now is only going to benefit you and your family for generations to come.”

– *FamilyArchives.com*



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Suggested Directory Structure

- My_Genealogy
 - My_Family
 - My_Scandinavian_Family
 - Places



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Add ‘Standard’ Directories

- My_Genealogy
 - My_Family
 - Amborn
 - Births
 - Census Records
 - Deaths
 - Marriages
 - Pictures
 - Kimball
 - Schulz
 - Zang
 - My_Scandinavian_Family
 - Places



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Meaningful File Names

- Start the file name with the year, or include the entire date (YYYYMMDD)
- Include a short subject
- For a subject with more than one word:
 - Do not insert spaces
 - Start each word with a capital letter
- Use an underscore to separate years, subjects, and series numbers



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Example File Names

19430321_HansonArnold_Marriage_AmbornAnna_USA_MO_Hannibal.jpg

19550517_HansonAnthonyEdward_BirthCertificate_USA_WI_Rice_Lake.tif

19550623_HansonAnthonyEdward_Baptism_USA_WI_Birchwood.gif



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Alternate File Structure

- You may want to have top level categories instead of Surnames



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Alternate File Names

LastFirstMiddle_Date_Event_Country_State_City

- AnderssenKristiaFalder_19001203_Census_Norway_Nordland_Nesna.jpg
- AnderssenPederHenrick_1865_Census_Norway_Nordland_Nesna_Ytrelevang.xls
- AnderssenPederHenrick_1865_Census_Norway_Nordland_Nesna_Ytrelevang.xls
- AnderssenPederHenrick_19001203_Census_Norway_Nordland_Nesna_Handaa.xls
- AntonsdatterIngerMarie_18860131_Birth_Norway_Østfold_Skiptvet_Aasen.jpg
- AntonsdatterIngerMarie_19001203_Census_Norway_Østfold_Tune.jpg
- AntonsdatterIngerMarie_19011006_Confirmation_Norway_Østfold_Tune.jpg
- AntonsdatterIngerMarie_19080502_Emmigration_Norway_Østfold_Rakkestad.jpg

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Backing Up All That Digital Data on your PC

- Many people only think about creating a backup *after* they have lost their data due to:
 - Burglary
 - Fire
 - Flooding
 - Disk crash
 - Virus
 - OMG! Moment...**

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I Recommend Two Backup Paths

- Subscribe to an on-line service like Mozy, Carbonite or Backblaze
 - This insures you have a off-site archived copy of your files
 - But what happens if your system becomes infected with a virus? Now you have two copies of useless files

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Local Backups

- You should also make (and archive) periodic backups
- Do this by;
 - Installing a second drive in your desktop
 - Purchasing an external disk drive
 - Use your CD/DVD Drive
- Keep several recent copies

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www.dallasgenealogy.org



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