

Finding Records Using the Resources on FamilySearch

By Dana Palmer, CG[®], CGL[®]

dana@treasuredlineage.com

www.treasuredlineage.com

The FamilySearch.org website (<http://www.familysearch.org/>) has many free resources available to researchers. Using filters and other advanced search techniques can help you find those elusive ancestors.

There are six main places on FamilySearch with record collections:

1. RECORDS

- *Search Collections by Name* – This is a good way to search if you don't know what collection your person is in and you have basic facts about the person.
- *Browse All Collections* – This is my favorite way to search and allows you to browse to a location or topic, then choose the applicable record collection. This way to search is good for finding names that are misspelled or mis-indexed.
- *Research by Location* – This is helpful to see what records are available for a specific region in both the indexed and un-indexed records. It usually has links to free webinars and is very useful for people researching internationally.

2. **FULL-TEXT SEARCH:** Searches done here come from records in the CATALOG and IMAGES and are done using AI and handwriting technology. It allows you to find any name or keyword typed into the search box found in the record regardless of whether it is the primary person mentioned. Results from restricted records will not appear unless you are at a FamilySearch center or affiliate.

3. **IMAGES:** This is where the newly digitized collections are organized. Some microfilms are restricted due to the content and dates contained within, so they will not be available for viewing. Searches are done by location. Once the location is selected, life events and locations within the selected place can narrow down search results. Click on the collection and view the images like you would in the catalog.

4. **CATALOG:** Search by location and then choose the applicable category of record you want to search. Microfilms that have been digitized will have a camera icon to the far right. Camera icons with warning symbols have to be viewed at a FamilySearch Center or FamilySearch affiliate. Magnifying glass icons allow searches by name within the collection, but it may not cover all the dates or facts on the microfilm. So, if you don't find it using the magnifying glass search feature, check the record manually by clicking on the camera icon and searching the pages directly or using the Full-Text Search icon if it is available. In the United States, search by county and state, unless your location is in New England, then search by the town. For locations outside the USA, search by the town or parish name unless you are looking for civil registration records kept at the county or state level. You can find vitals, deeds, court records, tax records, census, etc. here.

5. **BOOKS:** This is where you will find books from FamilySearch's vast collection as well as those from contributing libraries. This is a good place to find books about your family, county histories, and other published books for various locations.

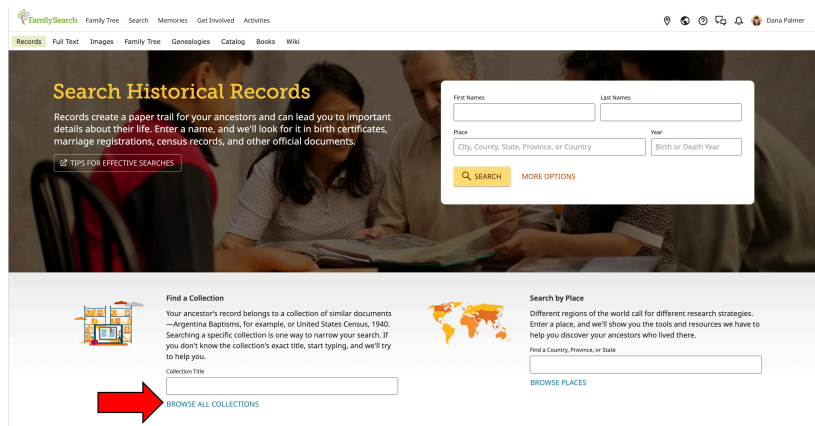
6. **RESEARCH WIKI:** Click the blue online records to see what records are available on other websites. Some record collections may also be found by clicking on the applicable archives or repository links. This is where you will find word lists and other useful tools for languages other than English. Topical searches such as specific Civil War companies or immigration can also be used. Make sure to check if the GUIDED RESEARCH has tools for the area you are researching.

RECORDS

The historical record collection (<https://www.familysearch.org/en/search>) has both indexed and unindexed collections from the massive microfilm and microfiche records of FamilySearch.

If you can't find your family by typing their information into the search box, use filters to specify the collection or click on **BROWSE ALL COLLECTIONS**.

Click on the specific locality or topic you want to search. If you choose United States, click on the specific state to get the collections for that area. Try using various search tricks and filters until you find them.



The screenshot shows the filter interface. On the left, there's a 'Filter Collections' sidebar with a list of collection types. A red arrow points to 'Censuses & Lists'. On the right, there's a 'Place' filter list with a dropdown menu. A red arrow points to 'United States of America'. A second red arrow points to the 'United States' checkbox in the state list.

Filter Collections	Collection Type	Count
<input type="checkbox"/>	Image collections	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Birth, Marriage, & Death	1,968
<input type="checkbox"/>	Censuses & Lists	322
<input type="checkbox"/>	Church Record	5
<input type="checkbox"/>	Compiled Genealogies	5
<input type="checkbox"/>	Directories	23
<input type="checkbox"/>	Ethnicity	4
<input type="checkbox"/>	Genealogical Record	1
<input type="checkbox"/>	Government Record	54
<input type="checkbox"/>	Migration & Naturalization	323
<input type="checkbox"/>	Military	315
<input type="checkbox"/>	Miscellaneous	144
<input type="checkbox"/>	Newspapers	3
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other	5
<input type="checkbox"/>	Probate & Court	329

Place	Count
Africa	57
Asia & Middle East	74
Australia & New Zealand	55
Canada	114
Caribbean and Central America	105
Continental Europe	802
Mexico	66
Other	15
Pacific Islands	25
South America	163
United Kingdom and Ireland	285
United States of America	1,743

State	Count
All United States of America	1,743
Alabama	29
Alaska	10
Arizona	36
Tennessee	27
Texas	75
United States	153
Utah	55
Vermont	25

Use the filters to narrow down the database selection so you get better search results. This example includes records kept at the United States level including census, military, and other records such as the tract books from the U.S. Bureau of Land Management.

FULL-TEXT SEARCH

FamilySearch's Full-Text Search (<https://www.familysearch.org/en/search/full-text>) allows users to search for names or words in record collections. All names are indexed, not just the primary ones, and may include parents, neighbors, witnesses, etc. Many of the included records are from deeds and court records. Results from restricted records will not appear in Full-Text results unless you are logged in at a FamilySearch center or affiliate.

Unlock new discoveries with Full-Text Search

Search inside unindexed historical records to uncover names, dates, and details that standard searches can't find.

Names and dates added to the EDIT SEARCH box must appear on the page of the record for it to appear in the search results.

Start your search

Keywords: Sarah

Name: "Thomas Perrin"

Place: City, County, State, Province, or Countr

Year (Range): From To

Image Group Number (DGS): 007561265, 007943373

SEARCH

Full-Text Filtered Search Results (12)

SEARCH TIPS **Fact View**

Search **EDIT SEARCH**

Keywords: Sarah
Name: "Thomas Perrin"

Filters **CLEAR FILTERS**

Place: United States of America, Pennsylvania, Bedfo...

Bedford, Pennsylvania. Tax Records 1826-1835

Greens and Brown

Deed books: Bedford, Pennsylvania. Deed Books 1925

Orphans court dockets, records of requests and appointments of guardians for ...

© Dana Palmer, 2026

IMAGES

IMAGES (<https://www.familysearch.org/en/records/images/>) has the more recently digitized records from FamilySearch. Check back often for updates.

Explore Historical Images
Browse records that haven't been made searchable through indexing yet.

Start your search with a place.
FamilySearch will look for records created there. Want to search by name instead?
[Search Historical Records.](#)

Place
New York

- New York, United States
State, 1776 - Present
- Atlantic States, United States
Geographic Region,
Alternate Name: New York
- Northeastern States, United States
Geographic Region,
Alternate Name: New York
- New York City, New York, United States

Are you new to using Explore Images?
We can guide you through a search using collections of similar documents that can provide additional context for your search. You can also search for a specific collection by name by using the search bar.

Collection Title

HELP ME FIND A COLLECTION BROWSE ALL COLLECTIONS

Feedback

Indexed (or transcribed) data is used to search for specific records. However, many records have not been indexed, so it is not possible to search for names in these records yet.

The search feature on this page lets you browse all images on FamilySearch, including unindexed records. This means you could find documents that may not appear in traditional searches!

LEARN MORE

Refine Search ×

Place
New York, United States ×
[United States](#) > [New York](#)

New York	151,463
63 Places Within	
Albany	2,136
Allegany	1,004
Broome	747
Cattaraugus	571
Cayuga	1,640

[SHOW ALL 63](#)

Date

- All
- Residence (315)
- Property (138)
- ✓ Legal (118)
- Death (67)
- Marriage (61)
- Military Service (49)
- Migration (23)
- Biography (7)
- Other (5)
- Birth (4)
- Employment (3)
- Religious (3)
- Education (1)

[SHOW ALL 25](#)

Life Event

Legal (118) ▾

Try these first:

- Legal Records 251
- Court Records 85
- Probate Records 47
- Wills 33

[SHOW ALL 25](#)

See also:

- Mortgages 17

RESET UPDATE

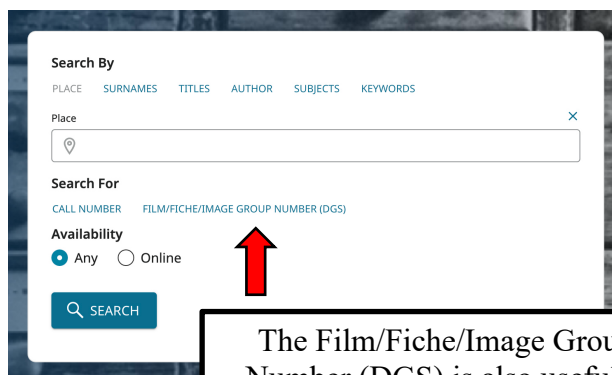
Use life events and the location filters to further narrow down the databases.

CATALOG

The CATALOG (<https://www.familysearch.org/en/search/catalog/>) is a compilation of all the books, microfilms, microfiche, etc. that are available at the FamilySearch Library in Salt Lake City, Utah. These records are copies of original records (vitals, census, church, tax, court, etc.) from around the world.

To find records for a specific locality, type in the county (for the US) or town/church (for international countries). Click the drop-down arrow from the available categories.

Choose a link from the available records and see if there is a camera icon next to the microfilm. If there is a camera icon, then the records can be viewed online. If there is a camera icon with a warning symbol above it, then the records can only be viewed on a local FamilySearch center or FamilySearch affiliate.



Subjects

Locality Subjects

[United States, Ohio, Hamilton - Taxation](#)

Film/Digital Notes

Film Number or Image Group Number (DGS)

Note	Location	Collection/Shelf	Film	Image Group Number (DGS)	Format
1816-1817	Granite Mountain Record Vault	United States & Canada Film	559350	4849389	
1818-1823	Granite Mountain Record Vault	United States & Canada Film	506585	4848944	
1824-1826	Granite Mountain Record Vault	United States & Canada Film	506586	4848945	
1827	Granite Mountain Record Vault	United States & Canada Film	506587	4848946	
1828	Granite Mountain Record Vault	United States & Canada Film	506588	4848953	
1829	Granite Mountain Record Vault	United States & Canada Film	506589	4848954	

Choose the magnifying glass to search the collection by name.

Clickin the camera icon takes you to the original images for that collection which can be searched page by page.

The icon of the paper with a plus symbol in the corner is the Full-Text Search icon.

Clicking on this icon will take you to the Full-Text Search page and fill in the DGS number into the search box. Add in your ancestor's surname to find them more quickly in that specific collection.

RESEARCH WIKI

FamilySearch's Research WIKI (https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/Main_Page) is a free website resource database similar to Wikipedia, but its focus is on genealogy research and sources. It can be searched by keyword for specific articles or by browsing topics or locations. Many articles and how-to instructions about family history can be found or posted on this site.

External website links to databases and other records can often be found using the Research Wiki for a specific locality. It is extremely useful if you want to know when records started for a specific location, where the originals are stored, and if any part of the collection is online.

Understanding how to find records using the resources in the Research Wiki will save you many hours in your search.

For some locations GUIDED RESEARCH is available to help you get started.



Mason County, Kentucky Record Dates

Information for this chart was taken from various sources, often containing conflicting dates. This information should be taken as a guide and should be verified by contacting the county and/or the state government agency.

Known Beginning Dates for Government County Records ^[4]						
Birth*	Marriage	Death*	Court	Land	Probate	Census
1852	1789	1852	1792	1789	1789	1810

*Statewide registration for births and deaths started in 1911. General compliance by 1917.

Record Loss

There is no known history of courthouse disasters in this county.

Boundary Changes

- 1788--Mason County was created 5 November 1788 from Bourbon County.
- County seat: Maysville^[5]
- [Kentucky Individual County Chronologies](#) - Newberry Library list of all boundary changes by county

You can search localities such as a state, county within a state, or country. For locations in the United States, it is very helpful to understand when each locality started keeping records and if there is record loss. Genealogy word lists and handwriting tools can be found on the applicable country page.

SOME SEARCHING TRICKS ON FAMILYSEARCH

Filters: allow you to use an exact or a very broad search parameter for your person in the historical record search. Be careful with exact filters on names; sometimes it will eliminate your person. Exact filters on date ranges and localities work best.

Wildcards: helpful to find people with abbreviated, misspelled, mis-indexed, or nicknames.

- Use the **question mark (?)** symbol to replace a single letter within the word. It can be used multiple times in a word.
 - So, Eli?abeth would result in searches for Elizabeth and Elisabeth.
 - This is especially useful if the second letter is indexed or recorded different than expected (Jrseph versus Joseph).
- Use the **asterisk (*)** symbol to look for multiple letters.
 - On FamilySearch you only need one letter before the * wildcard feature.
 - If you used ROS* as a given name, you would get Rosa, Rose, Ross, Rossina, Rosina, etc. and all variations on the given name starting with Ros.
 - If you used JOH*SON, you would get Johanson, Johansson, Johnson, Johannsson, etc.
- **Combinations** – you can also use the asterisk and question mark wildcards in combination such as: T?r* or S?l?n* or Joh*s?n. This is really helpful if you have letters that are often interchanged with others or an ending that is not consistent.

Unindexed Records: many records have not been indexed by FamilySearch or are partially indexed. In RECORDS these are usually listed as BROWSE IMAGES instead of the number of records listed. Search by location and then the collection type to find the record collection you want. Then search the digitized microfilm until you find your entry. Many of these records, especially deeds and probate records, may have an index at the beginning or end of the digitized collection. Check for these as they may save you time finding your entry. Remember to also attach the record to the applicable person in the Family Tree. Some of these collections may be included in Full-Text Search.

Collection Title	Records	Last Updated
Germany, Anhalt, Dessau, City Directories, 1866-1919	Browse Images	12 April 2013
Germany, Baden, Archdiocese of Freiburg im Breisgau, Catholic Church Records, 1463-1931	11,311,393	3 December 2025
Germany, Baden, Church Book Duplicates, 1804-1877	732,740	2 December 2025
Germany, Baden, Stebbach, Church Book Extracts, 1675-1951	Browse Images	14 June 2024
Germany, Bavaria, Catholic and Lutheran Church Records, 1591-1963	198,383	2 December 2025
Germany, Bavaria, Catholic Church Records, 1650-1875	1,140,810	15 June 2024
Germany, Bavaria, Diocese of Augsburg, Catholic Church Records, 1569-1940	8,417,332	2 December 2025
Germany, Bavaria, Nuremberg, Civil Registration, 1803-1886	1,235,779	12 April 2019
Germany, Bavaria, Traunstein, Family Group Sheets, 1830-1900	Browse Images	22 October 2013
Germany, Births and Baptisms, 1558-1898	25,934,160	3 December 2025
Germany, Brandenburg, Bernau bei Berlin, Jewish Records, 1688-1872	Browse Images	5 February 2013
Germany, Bremen, Catholic and Lutheran Church Records, 1746-1970	32,926	2 December 2025
Germany, Deaths and Burials, 1582-1958	3,003,142	3 December 2025

Collections in the Records without the camera icon may have digital images elsewhere on the FamilySearch website (usually Catalog or Images).

Microfilm / Batch searches: allow you to find all the names in a specific batch or microfilm. This saves a lot of time because all the surnames on that microfilm or batch can be quickly found using this type of search. You can then go to the catalog and click on microfilm/microfiche/image group number, type in the number, and find the original record, even if the image is not in **RECORDS**.

For records without the digital image attached in Records, find the microfilm or digital folder number.

Go to the CATALOG and locate the applicable microfilm or digital folder number and click the camera icon to view the image.

Subjects

Locality Subjects
[Germany, Preußen, Hannover, Hannover, Hannover - Church records](#)
[Germany, Preußen, Hannover, Linden, Linden - Church records](#)

Film/Digital Notes
 Film Number or Image Group Number (DGS)

Note	Location	Collection/Shelf	Film	Image Group Number (DGS)	Format
Taufen, Heiraten, Tote 1665-1711	Granite Mountain Record Vault	International Film	185183	102339410	
Taufen 1703-1751 Heiraten 1712-1732 Tote 1712-1759	Granite Mountain Record Vault	International Film	185184	102339411	
Taufen 1752-1782 Heiraten 1732-1780 Tote 1760-1787	Granite Mountain Record Vault	International Film	185185	102339412	
Taufen, Heiraten, Tote 1781-1817	Granite Mountain Record Vault	International Film	185186	102339413	
Taufen, Heiraten, Tote 1818-1841	Granite Mountain Record Vault	International Film	185187	102339414	
Taufen, Heiraten, Tote 1842-1852	Granite Mountain Record Vault	International Film	185188	102339415	
Taufen 1853-1860	Granite Mountain Record Vault	International Film	185189	102339416	
Taufen 1861-1864	Granite Mountain Record Vault	International Film	185190	102339417	

FAMILY TREE

FamilySearch's Family Tree (<https://www.familysearch.org/en/family-tree/>) can be a powerful tool if used properly. Be sure to merge duplicates and add all family members. The more information you add to the person's DETAILS page, the more likely record hints will pop up in RESEARCH HELP for that person. Review these hints and add the applicable ones to that person. Mark "Not a Match" if the record is not for that person. Often new records will be found as more records and data is listed.

If a record does not appear in the RESEARCH HELP, you will have to find it manually by searching RECORDS, CATALOG, IMAGES, or FULL-TEXT SEARCH. Once you find the record, be sure to attach it to the person in the tree so it is easy to find it again.