Working With
An Online Family Tree

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Why Post Your Tree(s) Online?
- Preserve and share your research.
- "Cousin Bait" -- Entice family members to add what they know.
- Connect with others you don't even know who are also researching your family.
- Improve your research skills.
- Improve your access to your research.
- Automated formatting of online record searches.
- Be notified of possible record/tree matches.
- Identify possible relationships to DNA matches.
- Create a backup of your work.

Items to Consider
- One universal tree or separate personal family tree(s)?
- Free or subscription site?
- Visible to everyone, only invitees, or private?
- Extent of synchronization with a desktop program?
- Availability of smartphone/tablet apps to view and interact with your tree(s)?
- Security of your data, including the information about the living individuals?
- Change notification and history?

Online Family Trees: Many Choices
- Universal trees: FamilySearch, Geni, WeRelate, WikiTree, etc.
- Personal trees: Ancestry, FindMyPast, MyHeritage, TribalPages, etc.

Some Disadvantages to Posting Your Tree Online
- You may have family circumstances that prevent you from having an online tree.
- Limited functionality compared to family tree software you run on your local computer (*e.g.,* reports, charts, etc.).
- It can be a challenge to keep track of multiple online trees on multiple Web sites.
- Others may change facts and information that you know are correct.
- You don't want to lose control of the data.

A Possible Middle Ground
- Genealogical tree search engines often use the parents, spouse(s), siblings and children of an individual to generate potential matches (hints) with records in their databases.
- Post only those three generations online in your quest for online matches.

Do It Yourself!
- To make your family tree available online but still retain complete control over your data, you can create your own genealogy Web site.
- You control how much information you choose to share and how easy it is for people to copy or download it, yet still make it easy for others to find your family tree and contact you.

Hints, Record Matches, etc.
- Hint: a small piece of information that helps you guess an answer or do something more easily. (http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/hint)
- Hints are automatically generated links to records in a database that might possibly match the individuals in your tree.
- Focus only on the hints for the individual/family you are currently working on.
- *It remains your responsibility to determine whether the hint correctly matches the individual in your tree!*

If The Hint Links to a Database Record…
- Begin with the assumption the hint is incorrect; then try to prove it is a correct match.
- Is it my ancestor or someone with the same or a similar name?
  - Remember, in genealogy, "correct" spelling is optional!
- Does the fact fit with that ancestor's timeline?
  - Verify location, age, date and place of birth, parents, siblings, spouse, children, etc.
- Also examine nearby records for possible relevance.

If The Hint Links to Another Family Tree…
- Bernard's "Goldilocks" Rule: How many people are in that tree?
  - Too few?   Too many?   Just Right!
- What is the ratio of sources to facts for the family member in question?
- How closely related is the tree owner to the family member?
- Independently verify all of the information in the record.
- *Follow the approach for Database Record Hints given above.*

The Genealogical Proof Standard
- Reasonably exhaustive research has been conducted.
- Each statement of fact has a complete and accurate source citation.
- The evidence is reliable and has been skillfully correlated and interpreted.
- Any contradictory evidence has been resolved.
- The conclusion has been soundly reasoned and coherently written.

Evidence Analysis: A Research Process
- Is it an *original* or a *derivative* record?
  - Original – the first recording of an event.
  - Derivative – reproduced by hand, machine, camera, scanner etc.
- Is it a *primary* or a *secondary* piece of information?
  - Primary – created by an eyewitness of the event, or an official whose duties required them to make an accurate record of the event when it occurred.
  - Secondary – created by someone who was not an eyewitness.
- Is the evidence *direct* or *indirect*?
  - Direct – any fact that is explicitly stated.
  - Indirect – any fact inferred from one or more pieces of evidence within the record.

Resources

The "Big Four"
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The Family History Guide. Ancestry | FamilySearch | Findmypast | MyHeritage

Family Tree Editors. Free Research on Subscription Web Sites. *Use this chart to compare what each site offers for free.*
https://familytreemagazine.com/general-genealogy/how-to-find-ancestors-free/#ancestry

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How Does Family Tree Determine Whether A Person Is Living Or Deceased?
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How Does Family Tree Protect The Privacy Of Living People?
https://www.familysearch.org/en/help/helpcenter/article/what-is-a-private-space-in-family-tree

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