

Overview of *FamilySearch.org*

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FamilySearch.org is a free genealogy website operated by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS Church). It provides access to a vast collection of genealogical records, family trees, and research tools to help individuals discover their family history.

As a FamilySearch Affiliate Library, the Thornton Public Library offers free access to millions of restricted records. *You may view most records from home. If you encounter a lock symbol, that means those records must be viewed at the library because of restrictions in the digitization agreement with the repository where the original records are maintained.*

Key Features:

1. **Free Access/Create an Account** – Unlike many other genealogy websites, *FamilySearch* is completely free to use. You just need to create a free account. No credit card is required, and no personal information is shared. You can do this at home. Just click on “Create Account” in the upper right corner of the homepage.
2. **Family Tree Building** – Users can create, edit, and collaborate on a *shared* family tree. The platform encourages a single, global tree rather than private, individual trees. *The disadvantage to creating your tree on FamilySearch is that others may access and edit your tree. Sometimes, these changes can be helpful, but sometimes, inexperienced users may post incorrect and undocumented information.*
3. **Record Collections** – *FamilySearch* has billions of historical records from all over the world. The countries are listed at <https://www.familysearch.org/en/search/location/list>. The records include:
 - Birth, marriage, and death records
 - Census records
 - Church records
 - Compiled genealogies
 - Court records
 - Directories
 - Immigration and Naturalization
 - Land records
 - Military records
 - Newspapers
 - Probate records
4. **Searching for Records** – There are now three ways to search for records on FamilySearch. As with all searches, try spelling variations. Check out the “Tips and Resources” and “Learn How to Use the Catalog” articles. They will save you time in the long run.
 - a. **Main Search Page** – [https:// www.familysearch.org/en/home/portal/](https://www.familysearch.org/en/home/portal/). This is a basic search, casting a very wide net. For example, your surname search may return a deed or will if your ancestor was the buyer/seller or testator. However, it likely will not return a deed in which your ancestor was named as a neighbor, beneficiary, or witness.
 - b. **Library Catalog** – <https://www.familysearch.org/en/search/catalog>. In addition to surname and keyword searches, this option allows you to search by location and view a list of the different types of records that are available.

- c. **New Full Text Search** – <https://www.familysearch.org/en/search/full-text>. This is in the experimental stage and doesn't yet cover all the records, but *it is a game-changer!* Not only does it search the indexes, it offers full-text searches of the documents, along with transcriptions. If your ancestor appeared *anywhere* in a document, it will show up in this search.
5. **Research Wiki** – https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/Main_Page. This is an outstanding resource, with articles on different locations, record types, research strategies, and available records.
6. **Memories and Photos** – Users can upload and share family photos, documents, and stories to preserve their heritage at <https://www.familysearch.org/en/discovery/recordme/>.
7. **DNA Integration** – *FamilySearch* itself does not offer DNA testing, but users can connect their trees with results from other services like [AncestryDNA](#), [FamilyTreeDNA](#), or [MyHeritage](#).