

FamilySearch and Ancestry Combined for Genealogy Research

[Video Link](#)

About Ancestry and FamilySearch

Ancestry

You should know that Ancestry.com is a paid service where you have individual trees. There are [free records and indexes](#) you can view without a subscription. You can also set up a [free guest account](#) where you can build a tree. Learn more about what you can do with a free guest account [here](#).



Also, you can sign up for a [14 Free Trial at Ancestry](#) (affiliate link) and see all the records behind the pay wall. This is a good strategy if you find something in the free indexes that warrants further investigation. You can always turn it off before the 14 days expire, to avoid charges to your credit card

FamilySearch

FamilySearch is a free service to everyone to use and uses one giant collaborative world tree. There are no individual trees on FamilySearch. Keep in mind, others working on the tree can change what you add to the tree, with reasons for the change.

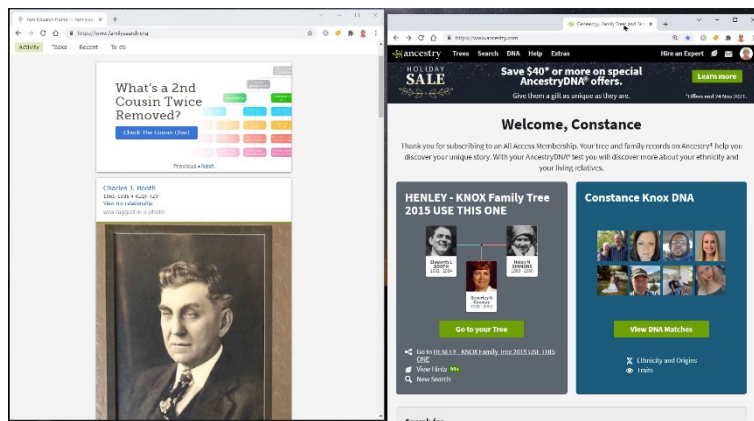


Both services have excellent records, some are unique, and some overlap. Therefore, using both together is a very powerful research strategy.

Using Two Screens or Frames

Consider using two screens or two windows (if you are working on one screen) to have both services open at the same time.

Alternatively, you could have two browser tabs open (one for Ancestry.com and one for FamilySearch.org) and bounce back and forth between the two tabs/services as you research.



GenealogyTV.org



YouTube.com/GenealogyTV

Searching Census Records

You may find that searching census records (or any images) that are hard to read, switching to another service may provide you a better view of the same image. Especially with government records like U.S. Census, I have found this to be helpful. Below is the same image on Ancestry and FamilySearch. Both have image adjustments, so make sure you see the tool icons to help read the images better.



Searching Census on FamilySearch

This is the process I used in the video for looking for a specific image in the U.S. Census on FamilySearch.org. As a reminder from the video, the image on Ancestry was too light, so searching for it on FamilySearch (in this case) gave me a better image.

1. FamilySearch.org > Search > Research Wiki > North America > United States > State > Census (Right side panel) > 1920 > FamilySearch Link > Search Name and an Event Date > Scroll Results to find your person.
2. View the image.
3. Adjust the contrast higher and the brightness lower to increase readability.

Searching Census on Ancestry

While not shown in the video, here is the process for doing the same search on Ancestry from the start. So, if you found a hard to read image on FamilySearch, try switching to Ancestry to see the same image.

1. Search > Census and Voter Lists > Enter Name and an Event Date > Search > Filter to Year (if necessary) > Scroll List > Hover over list for mini view > Click View Image.
2. Tool icon on right will open viewing options.
 1. Use Invert Colors to see a negative view.
 2. Use Enhance Image to add contrast.

Searching Vital Records

Civil Records

Keep in mind that most birth and death certificates were not mandated in the U.S. until about 1909-1912 (depending on the state). Marriage records date back to the mid 1800's (depending on the state). Prior to this time, seek church records.

Vital Records on Ancestry

Search Tab > drop down to Birth, Marriage & Death > Search by Name > Filter (left side) to record type > Search by Name > Use Auto Fill if person is already in your tree.

Name:	William Smith
Death Date:	2 Sep 1923
Death Place:	Wayne, West Virginia
Mother Name:	Melissie Smith
FHL Film Number:	1953104
Wills and Probates:	Search for William Smith in West Virginia Wills & Probates collection
<input type="button" value="Save"/> <input type="button" value="Cancel"/>	

In the video, searching for my ancestor's death records on Ancestry, showed a FHL Film Number. This means Family History Library microfilm number.

Family History Libraries are part of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. These libraries are available for everyone to use, regardless of religion.

Over the years, the church has microfilmed millions of records and made available on FamilySearch.org for free (also created by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, a.k.a. the Mormons).

Tip: From your ancestor's profile on Ancestry, look at the Member Connect tab other members researching the same person. Then look at their trees > same ancestor > gallery to see if they have uploaded an image of a vital record. You may find the same in leafy hints.

Vital Records on FamilySearch

1. Search > Records > under Find a Collection click on Browse All Collections > in left column under Collection Type choose Birth, Marriage, & Death > Filter (left side) to Location > Review list for possible record sets to review.
2. Search the Record sets by name and event date.

Note: The camera icon indicates the record collection has images.

Filter by Collection Title

Collection Title

Show only collections with images

Place

- United States of America 7
- West Virginia 3

Date

- 1750 - 1799 2
- 1800 - 1849 3
- 1850 - 1899 7
- 1900 - 1949 7
- 1950 to present 3

Collection Type

- Birth, Marriage, & Death 3

Historical Record Collections

Showing 1-7 of 7 Collections. Show All

Title	Records	Last Updated
West Virginia Births and Christenings, 1853-1928	767,876	Jul 22, 2021
West Virginia Births, 1853-1930	1,046,880	Jan 31, 2019
West Virginia Deaths and Burials, 1854-1932	32,106	Jul 22, 2021
West Virginia Deaths, 1804-1999	2,224,230	Nov 2, 2021
West Virginia Marriages, 1780-1970	1,554,372	Nov 9, 2021
West Virginia Marriages, 1854-1932	59,412	Jul 22, 2021
West Virginia, County Marriage Records, 1776-1971	711,602	Nov 9, 2021

Death Certificate for William M. Smith 1923

In my experience, I will often find vital records on FamilySearch that I can't find anywhere else.

Tip: From your ancestor's profile on Ancestry, look at the Member Connect tab other members researching the same person. Then look at their trees > same ancestor > gallery to see if they have uploaded an image of a vital record. You may find the same in leafy hints.

3. On FamilySearch, Right-click and "Save as" the image to your computer.

Search Engines Are Different

Using both Ancestry and FamilySearch to search for the same information will get drastically different results. This is because some of the records they hold are different and because the search engines work differently.

Try doing a search for one of your ancestors using the same exact information (name, event date, event place) to see your results.

This does not mean that all results belong to your ancestor. However, they differences may provide new clues.

On Ancestry

Search > All Collections > Fill in the Fields > Search.

If you use the autofill (for ancestors that are already in your Ancestry tree), consider removing extra data if you are not getting the results you desire. Sometimes too much information can filter out records you need.

On FamilySearch

Search tab > All Records > in top search box click More Options > Fill in fields > click Search.

Card Catalogs Title Searches

In this video we did a Title Search and a Keyword Search on both. Below are the steps I took for both of those searches.

On Ancestry – Title Search

Search tab > Card Catalog > Title Search.

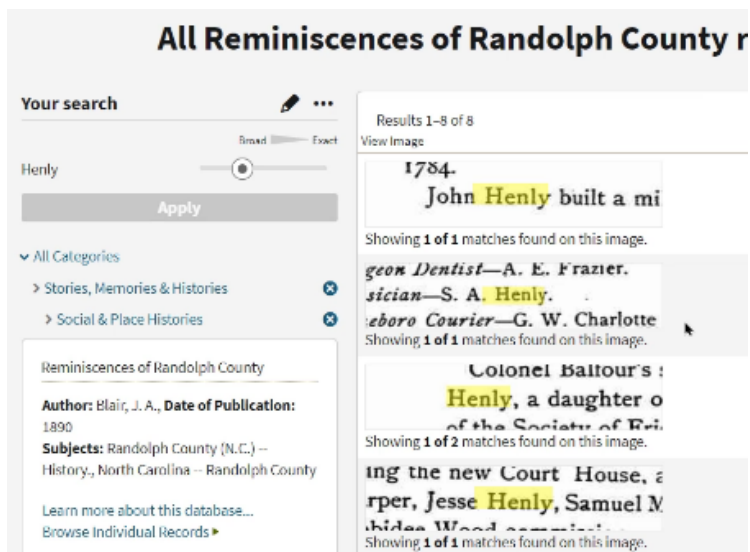
The screenshot shows the search interface for 'Reminiscences of Randolph County' on Ancestry. The page title is 'Reminiscences of Randolph County'. The search area includes a 'Search' button, a checkbox for 'Match all terms exactly', and several input fields: 'First & Middle Name(s)', 'Last Name', 'Year' (with 'Any Event' label), 'Location' (with 'City, County, State, Country' label), 'Keyword' (with a dropdown menu showing 'e.g. pilot or "Flying Tigers"'), and 'Page Number'. There are 'Search' and 'Clear search' buttons at the bottom of the search area. On the right side, there is a 'Browse this collection' section with links for 'Table of Contents', 'Title page', 'Front matter', 'Formation of Randolph', 'Asheboro Directory, 1890', and 'Back matter'. Below that is a 'More help' section with links for 'Search tips', 'Understanding records', and 'What do I do next?'.

In my case I was searching for a book, but you could also search for a record set.

Be mindful that if you are searching for a record set and you don't find what you are looking for, do the same search as a Keyword search instead. Title searches often need an exact title.

Once you click into a record set or book, you may get a search box where you can search for your ancestor's name. Note the quick links on the right side under "Browse this collection."

Be sure to try various spellings of your ancestor because the Optical Character Recognition (OCR) is looking at text and not for various spellings. In my case, I had to change the name from "Henley" to "Henly" to find results.

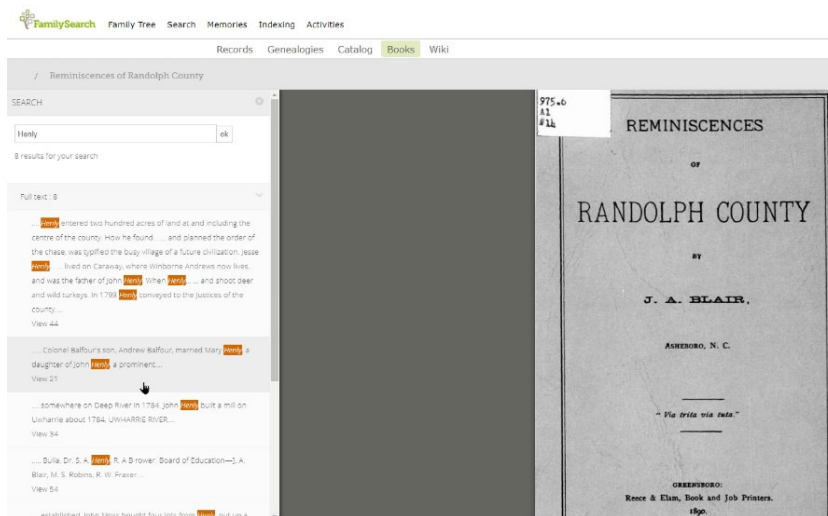


On Family Search - Title Search

Search tab > Card Catalog > Titles > Fill in the Title Field > click Search.

On FamilySearch, if the book is available, click through the link provided to see the images.

Use the search icon at the bottom of the screen to bring up a search box to do an OCR search for your ancestor's name. Just like on Ancestry, you need an exact spelling since this is an OCR search.



Card Catalog Keyword Searches

From the same card catalogs as shown above on either platform, try using keyword searches for the same information.

In my experience, **I have better luck with Keyword searches** as opposed to Title searches on both Ancestry and FamilySearch.

Try various keywords for different results.

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