

How to Find the Original Record Source

[Video Link](#)

Here are some tips for how you can find the original source for records and indexes you may find.

Many of us search on Ancestry.com, FamilySearch.org, or other online platforms. The records you find there are not the original source. For example, census records in the United States are held at the National Archives and Record Administration. However, images of census records, are at places like Ancestry, FamilySearch, and MyHeritage.

In some cases, on various online platforms, you'll find indexes.

Anytime you find an index you want to seek out the original source. Why? Because the original source may have additional information. Looking at the original may explain transcription errors or how a name was misspelled, and it might have an ancestor's original signature. Those original signatures and other details may help you tie several records together.

For some who are studying to become professional genealogists, you will need to seek the original source for your source citations as well.



GenealogyTV.org



YouTube.com/GenealogyTV

On Ancestry Images (Such as Census Records)

When keeping notes or writing source citations, we want to collect all the top matter as well as the original source information.

In this case, finding the original source is only good for writing source citations

since the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) website is going to refer you back to Ancestry and FamilySearch for images. Since image copies are an exact replica of the original, the only reason to look at the actual document in person is to see the handwriting in hard to read images.

Should you wish to write a professional source citation for this record, it would look like this.

"1880 United States Census," database, *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com> : accessed 14 Feb 2022), entry for Thomas Sumlin, (age 10), ED 68, page 2B, Edgecombe County, North Carolina: citing NARA microfilm publication T9, roll 962.

You can copy the source citation from the information tab on FamilySearch which might be similar to professionally written source citations. However, it is not appropriate for a professional to do so. Use the book [Evidence Explained, by Elizabeth Shown Mills](#) (affiliate link) to learn proper source citations.

United States Census, 1880 ▾ North Carolina ▾ Edgecombe ▾ Lower Town Creek ▾ ED 68 ▾

Source Box Attach to Family Tree

Image 2 of 25

Print Download Tools

22	Miley W M 14	Son	1	Labour	1	N. C.
23	Jackson W M 14	Son	1	Labour	1	N. C.
24	Thomas W M 14	Son	1	Labour	1	N. C.
25	Annie W F 14	Daughter	1		1	N. C.
26	Sarah E W F 13	Daughter	1		1	N. C.
	Yamie L W F 11	Daughter	1		1	N. C.

Image Index Information

Catalog Record	Item Number	Film/Digital Note
1880 federal population census		North Carolina: Duplin (cont'd: E.D. 74, sheet 3-end) and Edgecombe (part: beginning-E.D. 70, sheet 26) Counties (NARA Series T9, Roll 962)
North Carolina, 1880 federal census : soundex and population schedules		Population schedules: Duplin Co. (ED 74, sheet 3-end) Edgecombe Co. (part: beginning-ED 70, sheet 26) (NARA Series T9, Roll 962)

Citation

"United States Census, 1880," database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:33SQ-GYBD-K6K?cc=1417683&wc=XHDP-7M9%3A1589411027%2C1589411264%2C1589411392%2C1589394792> : 24 December 2015), North Carolina > Edgecombe > Lower Town Creek > ED 68 > Image 2 of 25; citing NARA microfilm publication T9, (National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C., n.d.)

Copy Citation

Copy Source Citations on FamilySearch

Any time you see the word "citing," it is giving you the original location for this record.

Source Information

Ancestry.com and The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. *1880 United States Federal Census* [database on-line]. Lehi, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc, 2010. 1880 U.S. Census Index provided by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints © Copyright 1999 Intellectual Reserve, Inc. All rights reserved. All use is subject to the limited use license and other terms and conditions applicable to this site.

Original data: Tenth Census of the United States, 1880 (NARA microfilm publication T9, 1,454 rolls). Records of the Bureau of the Census, Record Group 29. National Archives, Washington, D.C.

Finding where Census Images are Located

1. Go to **FamilySearch.org>Search>Research Wiki...**
2. Drill into the location you are searching to the **state level** (for U.S. researchers).
3. On the right-side panel click **Census**.
4. Scroll down to see hyper links to the census record sets specific to the area you are researching.



United States Federal Censuses with Online Links [edit | edit source]

1790	1800	1810	1820	1830	1840
FamilySearch Ancestry.com	FamilySearch Ancestry.com	FamilySearch Ancestry.com	FamilySearch Ancestry.com	FamilySearch Ancestry.com	FamilySearch Ancestry.com
1850	1860	1870	1880	1890	1900
FamilySearch Ancestry.com	FamilySearch Ancestry.com	FamilySearch Ancestry.com	FamilySearch Ancestry.com	FamilySearch Ancestry.com	FamilySearch Ancestry.com
1910	1920	1930	1940	1950	1960
FamilySearch Ancestry.com	FamilySearch Ancestry.com	FamilySearch Ancestry.com	FamilySearch Ancestry.com	Release Date and Research Help	Release Date April 1, 2032

Scroll down further to give you other non-population schedules available and where to find them.

These non-population schedules can be helpful in finding additional information about your ancestors. For example, if your ancestor owned a farm, they might be in the Agricultural schedules.

If your ancestor died within 12 months of the regular Population Census, they might be in the Mortality Schedule.

Non-Population Schedules for North Carolina [edit]

Federal non-population schedules included such things mortality :

Year	Type of Census	Links
1890	Veterans	at Ancestry (\$) - index and images
1880	Mortality	at Ancestry (\$) - index and images
1880	Manufacturing	at Ancestry (\$) - index and images
1870	Mortality	at Ancestry (\$) - index and images
1870	Industry	at Ancestry (\$) - index and images
1870	Agriculture	at Ancestry (\$) - index and images
1860	Slave Owner	at Ancestry (\$) - index and images
1860	Mortality	at Ancestry (\$) - index and images
1860	Manufacturing	at Ancestry (\$) - index and images
1850	Slave Owner	at Ancestry (\$) - index and images
1850	Mortality	at Ancestry (\$) - index and images
1850	Manufacturing	at Ancestry (\$) - index and images

Indexes

Don't stop with the index! If there is an index, there is likely the original record somewhere. That index was created from some record somewhere. The trick is finding it.

In the example in the video, there was a marriage index on Ancestry for Francis Standly married to James M. Cavender. Knowing that FamilySearch is big into vital records, I found the image of the original record on FamilySearch.

Francis Standly
in the Mississippi, U.S., Compiled Marriage Index, 1776-1935

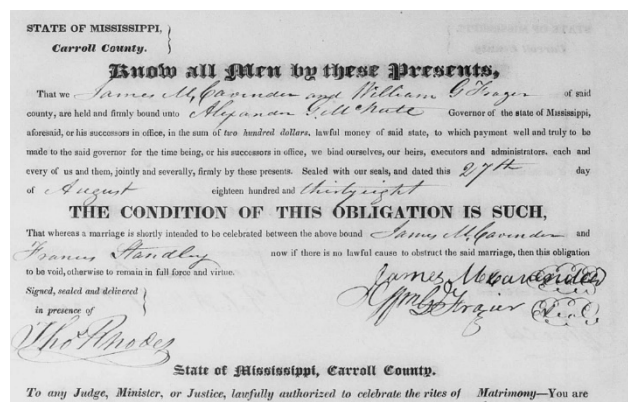
Detail Source

Name: Francis Standly
Spouse: James M. Cavender
Marriage Date: 27 Aug 1838
County: Carroll

Save

Suggest

- U.S. Fran
- 1881 Fran
- Pula Fran
- 1910 Fran



Family History Library Numbers (FHL's)

In any record, look for FHL numbers. These are references to the Family History Library's microfilm.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints have been microfilming records of genealogical interest for decades. They first made them available in their Family History Libraries (a.k.a. FHL).

As computer technology progressed, they built the FamilySearch.org website and have made many of those microfilms available for free on the website. There is no obligation to use these records.

Name:	Malissa Smith
Gender:	Female
Birth Date:	12 Mar 1883
Birth Place:	Wayne County, West Virginia
Birth County:	Wayne
Father:	Wm M Smith
Mother:	Almeda Smith
FHL Film Number:	583485


Save  Cancel

Image from Ancestry Record Hint

Keep in mind that not all FHL microfilms are available online. Some need to be accessed through their local Family History Libraries scattered throughout the world. The largest of the Family History Libraries is in Salt Lake City, UT. These records and libraries are free to use by anyone. The Church encourages you to make use of their resources.

On the next page are step-by-step instructions to find an FHL film on FamilySearch and how to find the ancestors once you are there.

Finding an FHL Film on FamilySearch

1. Go to **FamilySearch.org** and sign in. If you don't have an account, you will need to register for a free account to access the records. Don't worry, I have never gotten spam from them.
2. Click the **Search** tab at the top of the screen and choose **Records**.
3. Click **More Options** under the top search box.
4. Click on **Image Group Number (DGS) or Film Number** and enter the FHL number and click **Search**.
5. Once you are at the film, use the **Search** box on the right side to enter the name of the person you were looking for from the previous record. Then hit the **Search** button at the bottom of that panel.
6. Click on the **Image Icon** to see the record.
7. Review all the details! Always go to the next page... there might be more information.

Number Line	DATE OF BIRTH.	NAME OF CHILD, IF NAMED.	WHITE	COLOR.	SEX.	
					Male	Female
369	Apr 3 1873	Sonsonson Grace	/	/	/	/
370	Feb 28 "	Step James C.	/	/	/	/
371	Mar 10 "	Staley Ralph A.	/	/	/	/
372	Feb 12 "	Smith Katy	/	/	/	/
373	Dec 16 "	Shuff Merty	/	/	/	/
374	Jan 20 "	Smith Mary A.	/	/	/	/
375	Mar 12 "	Smith Malissa	/	/	/	/
376	Apr 25 "	Stewart	/	/	/	/

Social Security Death Index (SSDI)

The SSDI has two record sets on Ancestry. Often you will find your ancestors in both. You can also write to the Social Security Administration for the SS5 (application) and other records for your deceased ancestors (if you qualify).

Records for the SSDI started about 1935 and continue today.



[Learn more about the Social Security Death Index with this video.](#)

Find A Grave Index on Ancestry

Find-A-Grave is owned by Ancestry and is 100% created by volunteers.

Always drill into the URL link to Find-A-Grave to potentially find more information.

- Be sure to look at the **photographer** who might be a family member. If they have uploaded thousands of images and memorials, then they are likely not going to be helpful. But if they have only uploaded a few, they likely are a family member.
- **Look in the Flowers** tab for other family members who might have more information.
- **Leave flowers** to show others you are related and to remind yourself that you have been there, when you return at a later date.
- **Search the cemetery** for other ancestors by the same surname, they might be related.
- Take note of the **Memorial ID** and keep it in your records for each ancestor you find because you can later search by the ID number to get back to that same ancestor.

