

Verify Your Family Tree

1 VIDEO LINK

Do you have errors in your tree? Are you thinking about giving up and starting your tree all over again? Before you do, watch this video all the way through before making a big mistake.



Few weeks ago, I did a (different) video that must have hit a nerve. It was called "[If I Had to Do It Over Again.](#)" There were so many views and comments on this video I wanted to do a follow up.



Some thought I was suggesting starting the family tree over again. Not so. I was just pointing out what I would do if I were starting again. It was kind of a best practices video based on experience.

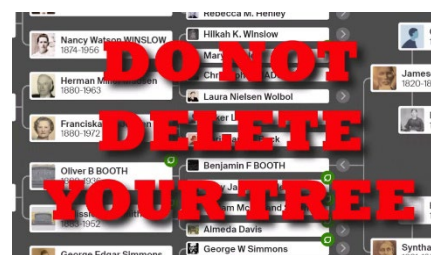
Note this process is demonstrated and instructed using Ancestry.com, but the strategy could be similarly used on most platforms.

2 LET'S GET STARTED ON VERIFYING YOUR FAMILY TREE

2.1 IDENTIFY THE PROBLEM

Is it a total mess or are you just not sure about a few links? Today we're going to help you figure it out.

Do not delete your old tree. Let's just verify the good stuff in it and disconnect the rest.



Starting over doesn't mean starting a new tree. That's a ton of work. You've spent hours, months, years, or (in my case) decades working on the family tree. You've done some good work there. Don't waste time doing the same work over again.

2.2 PICK ONE TREE

- I recommend you pick ONE TREE. That is your main "go to" tree for everything. Any other trees will support that main tree. Feel free to rename it if necessary so you don't forget.
- Also, this is the one tree that has the most people in it (to save you time).
- It has all DNA kits attached to it.



GenealogyTV.org



YouTube.com/GenealogyTV

3 STEPS TO VERIFYING YOUR EXISTING TREE

Here are steps to verifying each ancestor, one at a time. We're focused on our direct line ancestors, a.k.a. the pedigree view on Ancestry.

Work Backwards

3.1 #1 WORK BACKWARDS

Start with your parents and work methodically backwards verifying the links and records as you go.

The goal is to verify the **Pedigree chart** (direct line ancestors).

You'll verify the siblings and the F.A.N. Club (Friends, Associates, & Neighbors) when you are actively researching, after the verification process is complete.

You'll work from left to right and top to bottom, starting with your parents, then grandparents, and so on. This way you'll know where you left off when you return to your work.

You will eventually need to use the immediate family of each ancestor to help you verify records, but save verifying the siblings and all their details, for the research phase.

Note: You *might* need those siblings to verify your direct line ancestor. Do what you need to to verify the direct line ancestor before moving on.

3.2 DOCUMENTS

Make sure you have all the documents and items accurately attached. This is not a research phase. You're not searching for records, just checking what you have already. Research will come after you clean up what you have in each ancestor.



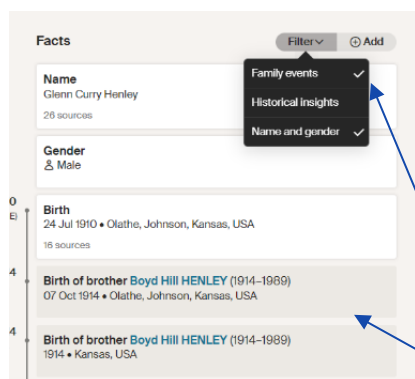
4 #2 ANCESTORS PROFILE

In the Ancestor's Profile, you'll be working left to right and top to bottom again, just like you'd read a book.

4.1 FACTS COLUMN

Starting on the left, look over the timeline. Does it look logical? Are there duplicated facts?

4.2 TURN OFF FAMILY EVENTS



I recommend you turn off the Family Events in the source column because it can be confusing. The grayed out boxes here are not facts to this ancestor but are facts in other family members that are shown here. Turning them off will minimize confusion.

Click the Filter above the facts column and uncheck the Family Events.

These are Family Events and not Facts to this ancestor and can't be edited.

4.3 REMOVE DUPLICATE FACTS

Any fact that is clearly a duplicate, you first want to identify the source for each of the duplicated facts and add those sources into one fact. Use the fact that has the most sources to save you time.

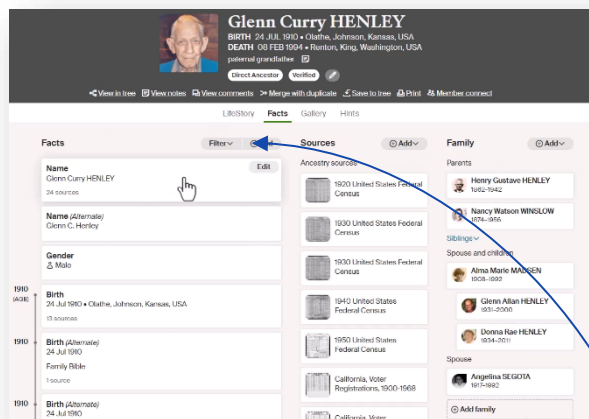
You may find duplicated Sources too. Make sure they are truly duplicated before removing them as they may be different records within the same record set.

4.3.1 Editing Names

If you're not seeing names, turn on Name and Gender under the Filter dropdown menu at the top of the Facts column.

4.3.2 Connie's Rules on Names

- Delete duplicate names.
- Leave various spellings of names as Alternate Names.
 - Turn on Alternate Facts to see them.
- Use the "Name" Fact instead of "Also Known As" fact because the Name fact is used in search functions at Ancestry, where as the "Also Known As" fact is not. Save the A.K.A. fact for nicknames that would never be used in a document.

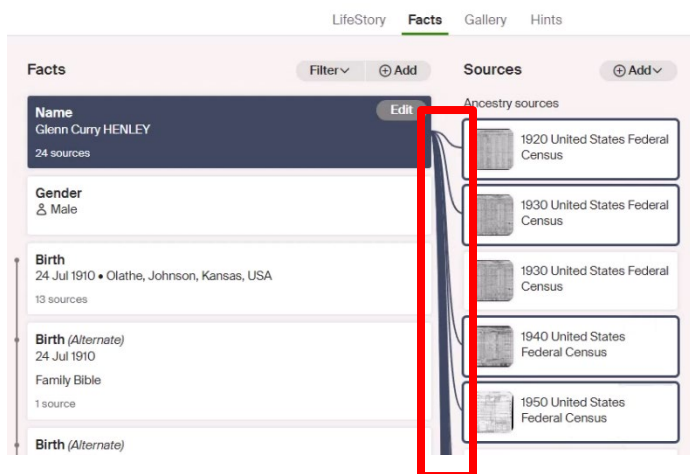


4.4 FACTS DRAW TO SOURCES

In most cases, once you attach a fact to a source in Ancestry, when you click on the fact, lines will draw to the sources to help you know what source supports that fact.

For example, clicking on the name fact draws to all sources that support the name.

In this example, there are two 1930 Census records, only one draws to the name fact. Once we verify the 1930 Census record is truly a duplicate and *not* another record to keep, we can delete the duplicated source. More in the Source section of this handout.



4.5 CLEANING UP MULTIPLE FACTS

When you have multiple facts that have the same or similar data, you can keep one and delete the other duplicated facts.

Before you do, identify which sources are attached to the facts that are going to be deleted and add them to the primary fact you are keeping.

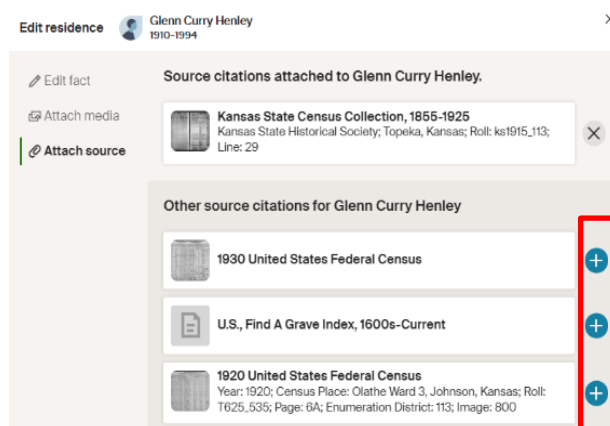
4.6 IDENTIFY SOURCES IN FACTS THAT WILL BE DELETED

- To do this, click on the Fact that will be deleted to see which source it is drawing to, make a note of it. In this case, the Kansas State Census.



4.7 ATTACHING SOURCES TO THE PRIMARY FACT

- Go to the **Primary Fact you are Keeping**,
 - Click Edit
 - Attach Source
 - Use the + button in the list of **unattached facts** (toward the bottom) to add the source you identified in the previous step to the list of attached sources (near the top). This saves automatically.
 - Close
- Delete the secondary duplicated fact you no longer need since you have attached all the sources to the primary fact you are keeping.



Verify Ancestors in Records

4.8 VERIFY YOUR ANCESTORS IN THE RECORDS

This is an important step in the verification process. It helps us to prove their existence in the records, in a place and at a time in their lives. It may also help verify the family links from child to parents. This is where you have confidence in each link in the pedigree chart.

Once you are done cleaning up the left-side Facts column, you can move the Sources column to clean up any duplicated sources.

Household members		
	Name	Age
	Henry E Henley	56
	Nannie W Henley	44
	Ursula Henley	20
	Kenneth Henley	16
	Maurice Henley	13
	Glenn Henley	9
	Boyd Henley	5

5 SOURCE COLUMN

5.1 DELETE DUPLICATE SOURCES (OPTIONAL)

Make sure Sources are truly duplicated and not two different records in the same record set.

If you are just verifying your tree, this level of cleanup could be done in the research phase, once your verification for each ancestor is complete. That's up to you.



Keep the Source that draws to the most Facts (and sometimes family). We'll call it the primary source (is the one you are keeping).

5.1.1 Removing The Duplicated Source

If there are two sources that draw to different facts, make a note of the facts and attach those facts the primary source as shown in previous steps.

Once you have the primary source attached to all the appropriate facts, delete the duplicated source by simply hovering over it, click on View and then Remove at the bottom of the window.

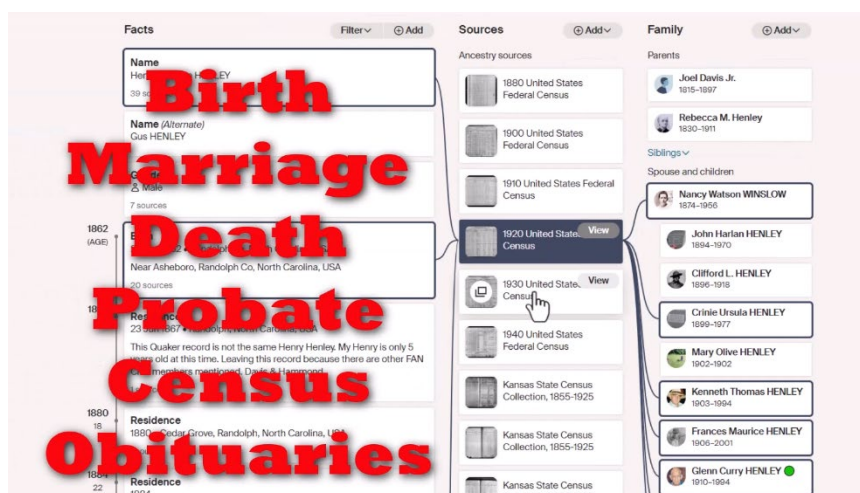
Note: Some people were enumerated more than once in the same census year. If so, keep both. You may also see multiples of record sets like City Directories. Check to make sure they are the same year and record before removing them.

5.2 DO YOU HAVE THE BASIC RECORDS?

- Do you have evidence of Birth, Marriage, and Death?
- Do you have the census records for the ancestor's lifespan (if available)?
- Is there an obituary, will, or probate package?

6 VERIFYING THE LINKS BETWEEN PARENTS AND CHILD

In many cases, you can verify relationships rather quickly with the information you already have found.



6.1 ASK YOURSELF:

- Do you have the primary/major records? If not, that's okay. (Birth, Marriage, Death, Probate, Census throughout their lifetime, Obituaries).
- Do the Sources draw to the family members?
- **Are there sources that name the parents and child together in the same record?** Does it name the relationship, or could it be a guardian the child is living with?

As you go back in time, it will become more difficult to verify each ancestor. Do the best you can.

6.2 CHOICES

At some point you're going to need to decide if the next generation going backward as unverified, hypothetical, or are you so unsure that you don't want them attached to your tree. If that is the case (that you don't want that branch connected to the main tree, then you'll need to break the connection.

I recommend that once you break the connection, you leave the branch floating in your tree. You may also discover a connection to your family later on.

7 RECORDS THAT TIE

7.1 DO THE RECORDS IN THE SOURCE COLUMN TIE TO THE FACTS COLUMN?

Do the Records in the Source Column Tie to the Facts Column? If not, it's okay. Those primary records (vital and census) are the basics for quick verification of other family members. You may need additional sources to help verify each ancestor.

7.2 OTHER RECORDS THAT HELP VERIFY GENERATIONS

If you're struggling to find records that tie your ancestors together, look to the F.A.N club, other family, and records like residency (city directories, phone books, school yearbooks, etc.). Especially helpful are the neighbors from decade to decade in census records.

Did you notice, none of the verification process uses other family trees?

8 MARK EACH ANCESTOR AS VERIFIED AS YOU GO

Use MyTreeTags™ to mark each ancestor as “Verified” as you go.

Mark As Verified

Click the pencil icon to use Tree Tags in the side panel, to mark as Verified, Unverified, Hypothesis, etc. You can even create custom tree tags. These will be seen by others if your tree is public.

Don't forget to save at the bottom of the MyTreeTags™ side panel.

The screenshot shows the profile page for Glenn Curry HENLEY. The profile includes a photo, name, birth date (24 JUL 1910), death date (08 FEB 1994), and location (Renton, King, Washington, USA). Below the profile are sections for Sources, Family, and MyTreeTags. A red arrow points from the pencil icon in the MyTreeTags side panel to the 'Verified' tag in the 'Research Status Tags' section.

Glenn Curry HENLEY
 BIRTH 24 JUL 1910 • Olathe, Johnson, Kansas, USA
 DEATH 08 FEB 1994 • Renton, King, Washington, USA
 paternal grandfather

Direct Ancestor Verified

View notes View comments Merge with duplicate Save to tree Print Member connect

LifeStory Facts Gallery Hints

Filter Add Sources Add Family Add

Ancestry sources

- 1920 United States Federal Census
- 1930 United States Federal Census
- 1940 United States Federal Census

Parents

- Henry Gustave HENLEY 1862-19...
- Nancy Watson WINSLOW 1874-1956

Siblings

Spouse and children

- Alma Marie MADSEN 1908-1992

MyTreeTags™ Notes Comments

- Create a custom tag
- Custom Tags
- DNA Tags
- Life Experience Tags
- Relationships Tags
- Research Status Tags
- Actively Researching
- Brick Wall
- Complete
- Hypothesis
- Unverified
- Verified

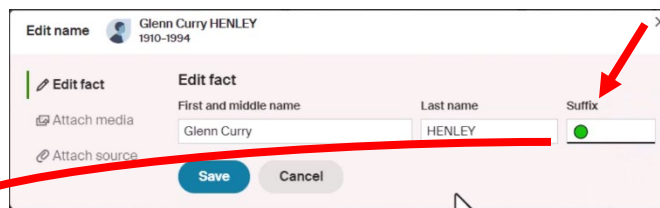
8.1 EMOJIS

Some like to add emojis to the Suffix field in the ancestor's profile so it shows in the tree.

You can copy free emojis from [EmojiPedia.org](https://www.emojipedia.org).



Using the Suffix field will not effect the search functions at Ancestry. Don't use emojis in the name fields, as it will mess with the algorithm at Ancestry. As long as the name is not too long, it will show in the tree view.



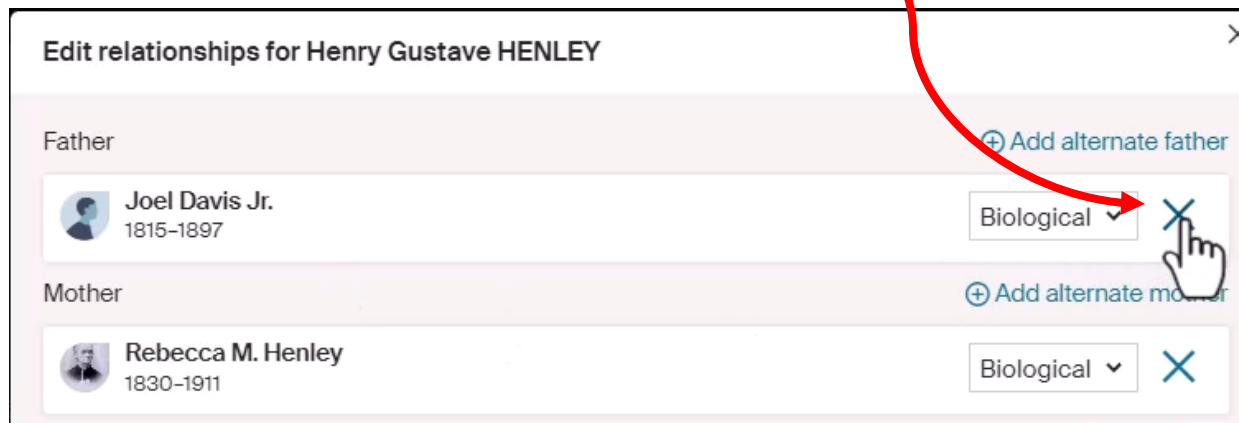
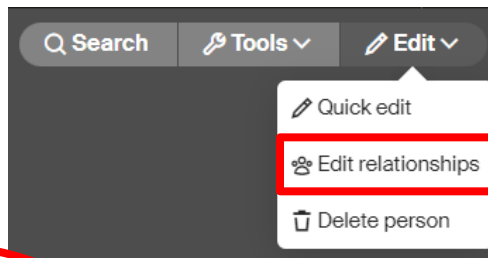
Breaking Connections

9 BREAKING APART A BRANCH OF THE TREE

If you want to break apart a branch of the tree that you either discovered is a mistake or are not confident in the connection, here is how to break the connection while still preserving the branch.

9.1 STEPS TO BREAKING THE BRANCH (REMOVING OR EDITING PARENTS)

- Here we're disconnecting a Parent and Child relationship.
- Click on the child (of the two ancestors you wish to disconnect) to open the profile view.
- In the upper right corner in the Profile View... Click on Edit, then Edit Relationship.
- **Click on the X** to the right of those you are disconnecting.
- Make sure you are disconnecting everyone associated with that branch of the family (i.e., Mother and Father).



10 ADD WEBLINKS BETWEEN THE DISCONNECTED PEOPLE

The only way to find the disconnected branch is to do a tree search from the tree view... unless you add weblinks to and from the possible connected ancestors.

10.1 STEPS TO WEB LINKING

- Search for the person you just disconnected from the main branch of your tree.
- Open the Profile
- Copy the URL (weblink) in the web browser.
- Go to the other ancestor's profile you want to connect this person to (so you don't forget about them, and they get lost in the tree).
- In the Facts tab, under Sources, click + Add, then Weblink.
- Paste the weblink and give it a name.
- You'll find the weblink at the bottom of the Source list.



Add web link ✕

Web address ✓

Link Name

Add
Cancel

10.2 WEBLINK IN THE OPPOSITE DIRECTION

Do the same as above in reverse linking the second ancestor to the first ancestor so you can click back and forth between them.

11 SET THE HOME PERSON AS YOURSELF

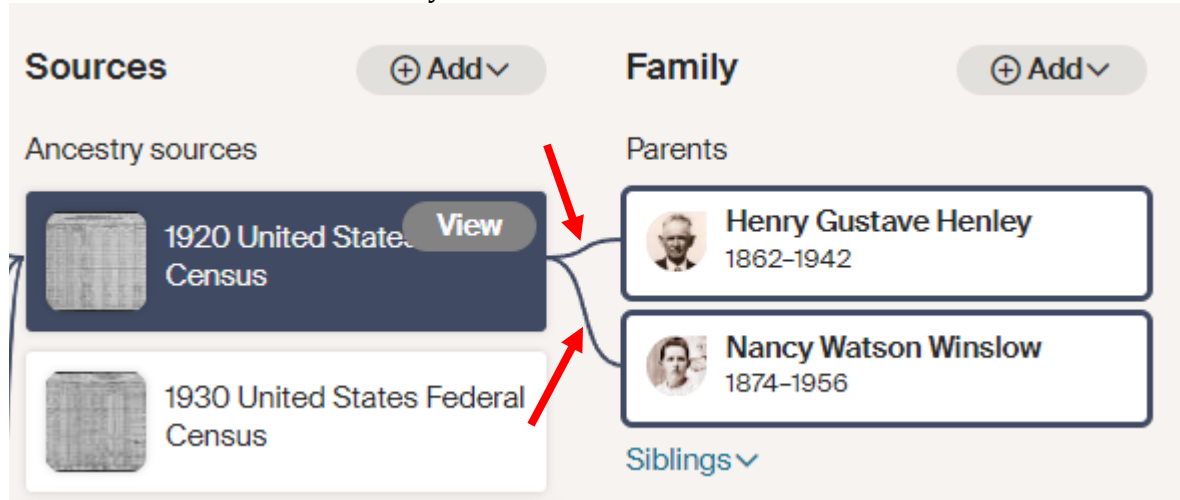
If you have not already, you can set the home person as yourself in the tree to help you get reoriented if you get lost in the tree. To do that:

- Click on the title of your tree in the upper left corner.
- Settings
- On the right side, set the home person as yourself.

12 CLEAN UP DUPLICATE SOURCES/RECORDS (OPTIONAL)

12.1 VERIFY THE LINKS TO FAMILY IN RECORDS (RIGHT SIDE COLUMN)

Start with Parents, Spouse, then Children. Do the records name other family members? Do they draw from the source to the family?



Not all records will tie to the family on the right side. It's a known issue at Ancestry.

Census records and newspaper articles (like wedding announcements and obituaries) often will draw if the family members on the right-side column (when the source is clicked) if the names were indexed. Not all records have all people indexed. For example, a marriage record will likely not have the witnesses indexed.

In other words, if the record is indexed and is attached to the family members, it's possible to see the links between records to the family in the right column. When that happens, you'll often find a line that draws to them (when clicking on the source), if the family member also has that record in their profile. It's complicated. Don't worry too much about the lines drawing to family members.

12.2 UNVERIFIED FAMILY

If you're not sure about a connection you can choose (or not) to disconnect them, but weblink them back to the possible connected ancestor. This will help keep track of them.

You might also put a hyperlink to the floating ancestor or branch in your research notes. You know me, I'm big on research notes.

Some keep a separate list of floaters or unverified disconnected people in there trees.

Alternatively, you can mark them with a variety of tree tags previously mentioned.

13 RECAP

13.1 LEFT TO RIGHT & TOP TO BOTTOM

As you work from left to right, top to bottom... Verify each Parent/Child relationship in the pedigree chart using quality records.

- Use Ancestry's MyTreeTags™ to mark each ancestor as verified.
- Use Emojis if you want to see a visual in the tree.
- It's up to you if you want to clean up every record as you go. For me, I do the clean up when I'm working in the Research Phase.

13.2 WORK THE PROCESS

Instead of starting over, just verify, clean up, and disconnect those who are not verified (if you choose). Work the direct ancestor lines left to right, top to bottom, marking them as verified as you go.

14 MISSION COMPLETE

Now you have verified your tree, it's time to decide on your next research question. You're in a much more confident position knowing that your tree is verified to your satisfaction.

Nicely Done!

The Reward of a Thing Well Done is Having Done It!

Ralph Waldo Emerson