

## 2024 Guide to FamilySearch

### [Video Link](#)

### Introduction to FamilySearch.org

FamilySearch, a genealogy and family history platform, stands as a pioneering initiative within the realm of ancestral exploration. Owned and operated by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, FamilySearch.org commenced its mission to connect families across generations in 1894. Rooted in the belief that understanding one's ancestry strengthens individuals and communities, the platform offers free access to an extensive repository of historical records, a collaborative family tree, and tools to preserve cherished family memories. FamilySearch.org's enduring mission remains centered on providing a global platform where individuals worldwide can uncover, preserve, and share their unique family narratives. Note: This guide is for non LDS members. LDS members have a different login.

### Getting a Free Account

Creating an account on FamilySearch is an effortless and cost-free process, allowing users to unlock a treasure trove of genealogical resources. By simply visiting FamilySearch.org, individuals can sign up for an account at no charge, granting them access to a multitude of historical records, family tree-building tools, and collaborative features. The platform's commitment to accessibility means that anyone enthusiastic about delving into their family history can create an account without any financial barriers. Upon registration, users gain the ability to delve into an extensive collection of records, contribute to the one collaborative family tree, and connect with others worldwide—all without incurring any subscription or membership fees. This commitment to free access aligns with FamilySearch's overarching mission of fostering global connections through shared family heritage, ensuring that individuals from all walks of life can explore their lineage.

### Four Main Areas of Focus for Genealogy Research

There are four main areas that we want to focus on for doing genealogy research on FamilySearch.org. Just like any platform, we want to look at the **tree, ancestor profiles, research**, and how to **find records** so that we can further the research to expand our ancestry as far as the paper trail can take us. This is our primary focus for this lesson, **trees, profiles, finding documents, and research**.



[GenealogyTV.org](http://GenealogyTV.org)



[YouTube.com/GenealogyTV](https://YouTube.com/GenealogyTV)

## World Tree

At FamilySearch, you do not have an individual family tree, it is one giant collaborative tree, the world's largest family tree to which everyone contributes.

When you click into your tree, you are looking at yourself on the world collaborative tree, so you are looking just your part of a giant tree.

Think of it as your tree view... your ancestry on FamilySearch is one grain of sand that represents your family history, and it is part of a giant family tree that is the entire beach.



### Advantages

There are advantages and disadvantages to having a world collaborative tree. The advantages are that you are working with other genealogy enthusiasts like yourself to find your family history. These are likely your cousins.

This is an opportunity to reach out to those cousins and discuss the family history. It could be that they have more information that is not uploaded on the family tree.

### Disadvantages

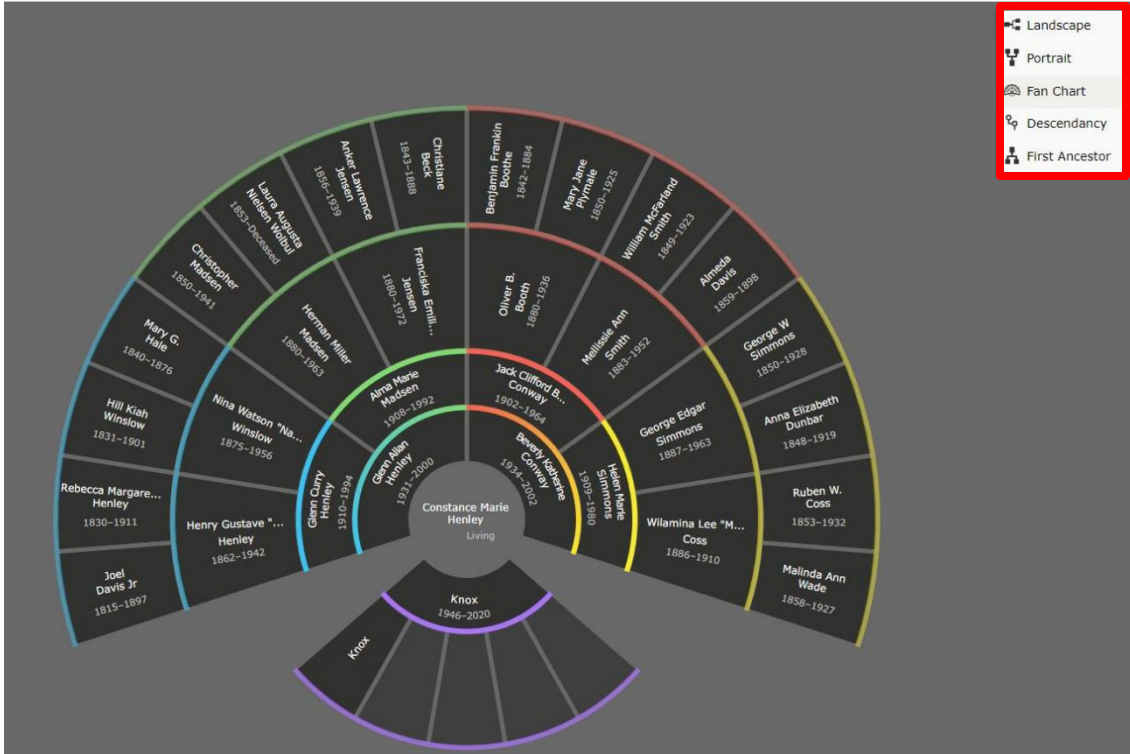
The disadvantages are that some people find it frustrating when they have uploaded information or sources or stories or memories, and others have gone in and changed some of that information because anyone can edit the tree. This is why some people use FamilySearch as a research tool and not as their primary tree.

A word of advice. Keep an open mind. While we may feel strongly that our research is accurate, double check your work. When someone else has changed the data, it could be that we are incorrect in what we believed to be the truth. And always be kind when reaching out to others.

### The Family Tree

From the **top menu**, click **Family Tree** then drop down to **Tree**.

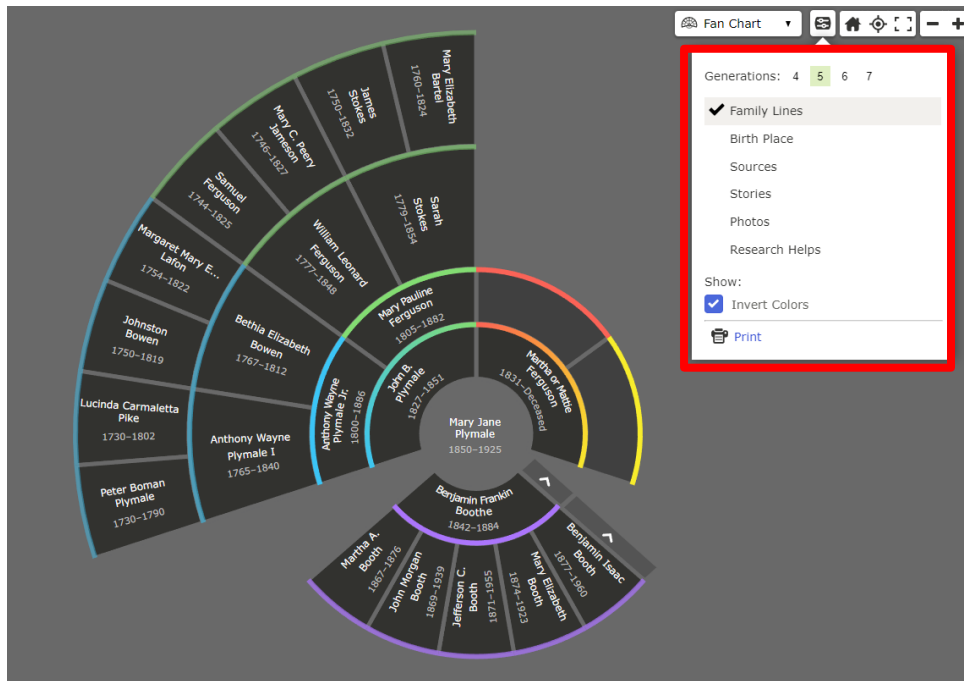
When you first arrive at the tree, you will be presented with a **Fan** view, a **Portrait** (ancestral) view or **Descendancy** view. If you have been there before, you will get the same view you had the last time you were there.



1 Fan View

Use the upper right menus to change views. Options will vary depending on which view you are in. Personally, I like the fan chart the best.

**FILTERS CHANGE VIEWS**



Use the filters to change the view. Below I have changed the filter to show Birth Places. Doing so will colorize the chart and add a location legend. You can also increase the number of generations here.



### Short Cuts

Depending on which chart you are in, try holding the **ALT**, **CTRL**, or **Shift** keys to move around the tree. This does not seem consistent on the different tree views.

**Zoom** – Hold the **Shift** key and scroll the **Mouse Wheel** to **Zoom** in and out on the Descendancy and Portrait views (but not the fan view).

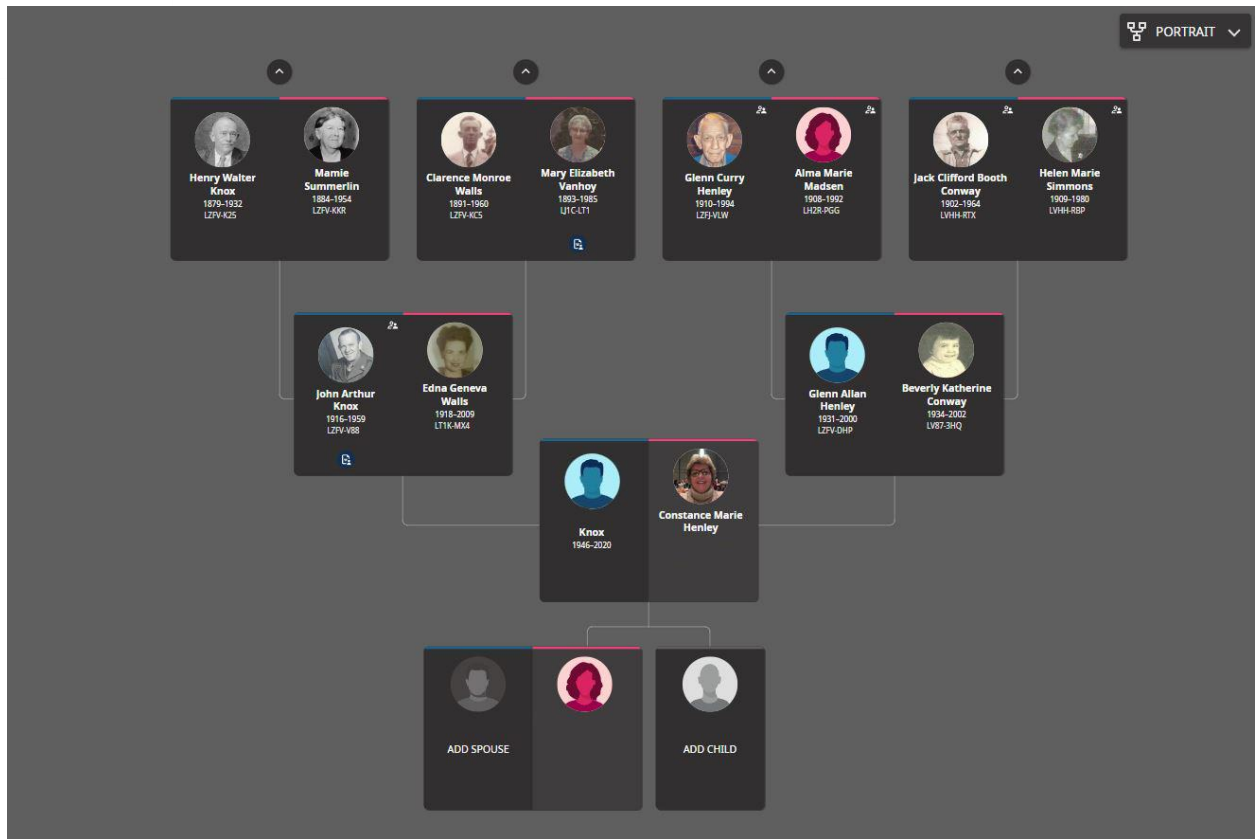
**Tilt Up and Down** – Tilt up and down by holding the **ATL** key (windows) and scroll the **Mouse Wheel** to tilt up and down on the fan chart.

Holding **CNTL** (windows) key zooms to the mouse location.

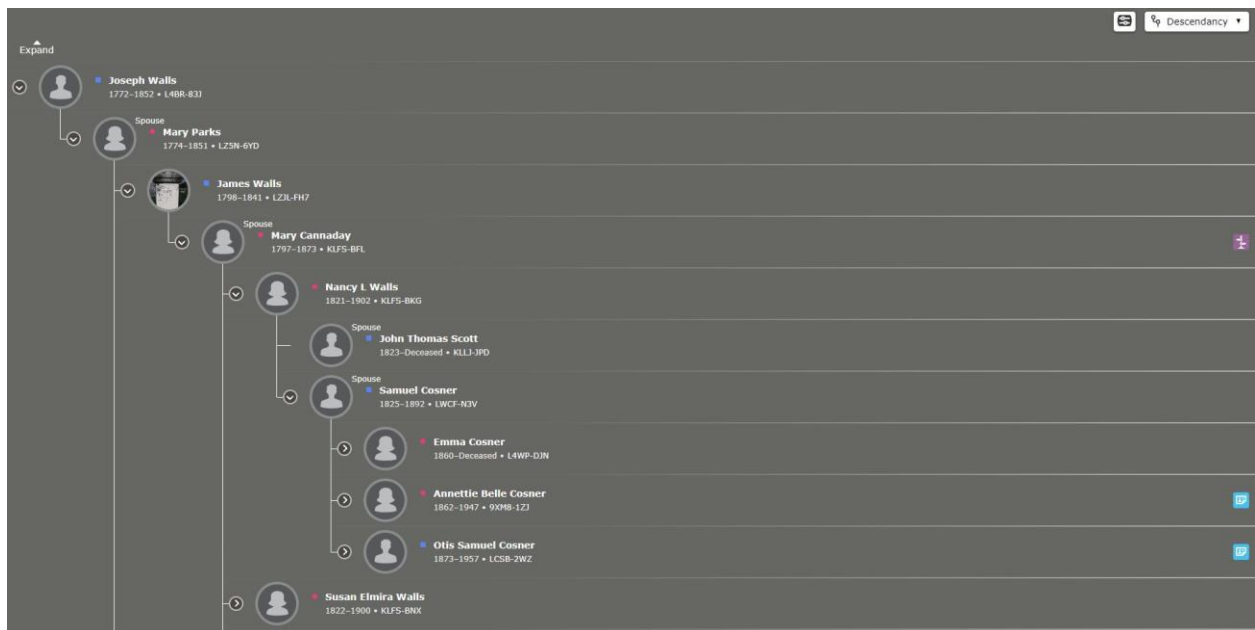
Use the **Home** icon to center yourself on the tree.

### Two Types of Searches

You can search for your ancestor in two different ways. One is from the ancestor profile and the other is just a general search from the search tab on the home page. We will discuss both ways below. I recommend practicing both ways.



2 Portrait (Ancestry) View



3 Descendancy View

## General Search

From the search tab, you can conduct a general search for your ancestors directly from that page.

Click on the **more options** to refine your search. Doing so will allow you to add birth, marriage, residence and death information as well as relationship information such as father, mother and spouse. This may better your results.

**Search Historical Records**  
Records create a paper trail for your ancestors and can lead you to important details about their life. Enter a name, and we'll look for it in birth certificates, marriage registrations, census records, and other official documents.

[TIPS FOR EFFECTIVE SEARCHES](#)

**Find a Collection**  
Your ancestor's record belongs to a collection of similar documents—Argentine Baptisms, for example, or United States Census, 1940. Searching a specific collection is one way to narrow your search. If you don't know the collection's exact title, start typing, and we'll try to help you.

Collection Title:

[BROWSE ALL COLLECTIONS](#)

**Add Ancestor Information**  
NAME ALTERNATE NAME SEX  
First Names:  Last Names:

**Add Life Event**  
ANY BIRTH MARRIAGE RESIDENCE DEATH  
Place:  Year (Range): From  To

**Add Family Member**  
SPOUSE FATHER MOTHER OTHER PERSON

**Add Record Options**  
LOCATION TYPE BATCH NUMBER IMAGE GROUP NUMBER (DGS) OR FILM NUMBER PRINCIPAL  
Country or Location:  State or Province:

Show Exact Search

[Q SEARCH](#) [FEWER OPTIONS](#)

What is a historical record?

4 Search More Options View

Once you have your search results, there are several items to pay attention to on the search results page.

There are **filters across the top**, **edit your search along the side**, and **information within each search**.

**Results (539)** [PREFERENCES](#) [Q SEARCH](#)

Collection Sex Race Birth Marriage Death Other Residence

Name	Events	Relationships
<b>Benjamin Garrett</b> Principal United States Census, 1860	<b>Census</b> 1860 Wayne, Virginia, United States <b>Birth</b> 1777 Virginia, United States	
<b>Benjamin F Garrett</b> Principal Find A Grave Index	<b>Burial</b> Fredericksburg, Virginia, United States <b>Death</b> 3 May 1863	
<b>Benjamin F Garrett</b> Groom Virginia, Vital Records, 1715-1901	<b>Marriage</b> 10 November 1847 Halifax, Virginia, United States	<b>Spouses</b> Maria W Sim*
<b>Benjamin F. Garrett</b> Groom Virginia, Vital Records, 1715-1901	<b>Marriage</b> 9 November 1847 Halifax, Virginia, United States	<b>Spouses</b> Maria W. Sims
<b>Benjamin T. Garrett</b> Principal Virginia Marriages, 1785-1940	<b>Marriage</b> 9 November 1847 Halifax, Virginia, United States	<b>Spouses</b> Maria W. Sims
<b>Benjamin F Garrett</b> Principal United States Census (Slave Schedule), 1860	<b>Census</b> 1860 Banister, Halifax, Virginia, United States	
<b>Benjamin Garrett</b> Principal United States Census, 1810	<b>Census</b> 1810 Shenandoah, Virginia, United States	
<b>Benjamin F Garrett</b> Principal United States Census (Slave	<b>Census</b> 1850 Banister, Halifax, Virginia, United States	

[Feedback](#)

First Names:

Last Names:

**Add Life Event**  
ANY BIRTH MARRIAGE RESIDENCE DEATH  
Place:   
Year (Range): From  To

**Add Family Member**  
SPOUSE FATHER MOTHER OTHER PERSON

**Add Record Options**  
LOCATION TYPE BATCH NUMBER IMAGE GROUP NUMBER (DGS) OR FILM NUMBER PRINCIPAL  
Country or Location:   
State or Province:

[Q SEARCH](#) [RESET](#)

## FHL Number

If you found an FHL (Family History Library) number anywhere, this is where you could add it into the FamilySearch More Options Search tab in order to find that microfilm roll.

The screenshot shows the 'Add Ancestor Information' form on FamilySearch. The form is divided into several sections: 'Add Ancestor Information' (with tabs for NAME, ALTERNATE NAME, SEX), 'Add Life Event' (with tabs for ANY, BIRTH, MARRIAGE, RESIDENCE, DEATH), 'Add Family Member' (with tabs for SPOUSE, FATHER, MOTHER, OTHER PERSON), and 'Add Record Options'. Under 'Add Record Options', there are tabs for LOCATION, TYPE, BATCH NUMBER, and IMAGE GROUP NUMBER (DGS) OR FILM NUMBER. The 'IMAGE GROUP NUMBER (DGS) OR FILM NUMBER' tab is selected, and its input field is highlighted with a red box. Below this field are fields for 'Country or Location' and 'State or Province', a 'Show Exact Search' toggle, and a 'SEARCH' button.

To enter the FHL number you would go to **Image Group Number or Film Number** and enter it there.

Once you have found the microfilm roll, you can search for your ancestor or browse the entire roll. There are advantages to both. In some cases, if your ancestors name was transcribed incorrectly, it may not show in search. Thus, sometimes it is better to browse the entire roll. This is the same strategy used for unindexed records, but that is another discussion for another day.

## Record Review

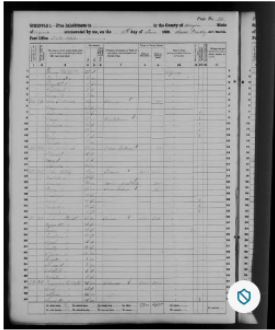
On the record page you will see information that has been abstracted from the record. Here are some tips to get the most out of each record.

- Make note of all the information in your research notes.
- **ALWAYS drill into the image** (if available) to see if there is more that is not indexed.
- **Copy the source citation** and add it as a reference in your research notes (see button).
- Make sure it is attached to the ancestor in the family tree.
- If your tree is on Ancestry, copy the URL and add it as a weblink in the source column on the same ancestor's profile page on Ancestry.
- Add the unique ancestor code to your research notes. It looks something like LHK9-84K. If you searched for that code, you would find Benjamin Garrett Jr.

### Benjamin Garrett

Census • United States Census, 1860

[SAVE](#)
[EDIT](#)
[SHARE](#)



VIEW ORIGINAL DOCUMENT

**Document Information**

**Collection Information**  
United States Census, 1860

**Cite This Record**  
"United States Census, 1860", ,  
*FamilySearch*  
(<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:M411-71H : Thu Oct 05 06:56:58 UTC 2023>), Entry for Benjamin Garrett and Sarah Garrett, 1860.

Copy Citation

Name	Benjamin Garrett
Sex	Male
Age	83 years
Birth Year (Estimated)	1777
Birthplace	Virginia
Race	White
Event Type	Census
Event Date	1860
Event Place	Trouts Hill, Wayne, Virginia, United States
Page Number	30
Affiliate Publication Number	M653
Affiliate Name	The U.S. National Archives and Records Administration (NARA)

**Other People on This Record** OPEN ALL

Sarah Garrett	F	63	Virginia	▼
Alfred Garrett	M	20	Virginia	▼
James D Garrett	M	15	Virginia	▼

**Attached in Family Tree to**

Benjamin Grimes Garrett Jr.  
1776-1865 • LHK9-84K

**Similar Records**

Benja Garnett  
United States Census, 1850

Attached To:

Benjamin Grimes Garrett Jr.  
1776-1865 • LHK9-84K

		<i>Benjamin Garrett</i>	<i>83</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>Virginia</i>	<i>✓</i>	<i>2000</i>	<i>2000</i>	<i>"</i>	
38		<i>Sarah</i>	<i>63</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Virginia</i>				<i>"</i>	
39		<i>Alfred</i>	<i>20</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>Virginia</i>				<i>"</i>	
40		<i>James D</i>	<i>15</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>Virginia</i>				<i>"</i>	



## Copy the Source Citation

FamilySearch makes it easy to **copy the source citation** with one click.


### Cite This Record

"United States Census, 1860", ,  
*FamilySearch*  
 (https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:M411-71H : Thu Oct 05 06:56:58 UTC 2023), Entry for Benjamin Garrett and Sarah Garrett, 1860.

Copy Citation

## Profiles & Searches from Profiles

In the **Profile "Details"** tab, there are two columns of boxes. On the left side is a double wide set of widgets, one for vital records, the other is for other information and below (next page) is the family Information. On the right side provides several different resources.



**Benjamin Grimes Garrett Jr.**  
 21 October 1776 – 21 January 1865 • LHK9-84K

[VIEW TREE](#)
[VIEW RELATIONSHIP](#)
[★ FOLLOWING](#)

About
**Details**
Sources (7)
Collaborate (0)
Memories (4)
Time Line

**Vitals** ^

[Detail View](#)

<p><b>Name</b> • 6 Sources            Benjamin Grimes Garrett Jr.  <small>Last Changed: November 4, 2021 <a href="#">K</a> KirkpatrickChris1</small></p> <p><b>Birth</b> • 4 Sources            21 October 1776            Montgomery, Virginia, United States  <small>Last Changed: February 1, 2018 <a href="#">N</a> Neoma Mahalie Geren</small></p> <p><b>Death</b> • 1 Source            21 January 1865            Wayne, West Virginia, United States  <small>Last Changed: November 4, 2021 <a href="#">K</a> KirkpatrickChris1</small></p>	<p><b>Sex</b> • 4 Sources            Male  <small>Last Changed: November 25, 2014 <a href="#">T</a> TrippSusanAnn2</small></p> <p><b>Christening</b>            + ADD</p> <p><b>Burial</b> • 1 Source            1865  <small>Last Changed: February 1, 2018 <a href="#">N</a> Neoma Mahalie Geren</small></p>
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**Other Information** ^

[Detail View](#)

**Alternate Names** + ADD ALTERNATE NAME

<p><b>Alternate Name</b> • 0 Sources            Birth Name            Benjamin Jr. Garrett  <small>Last Changed: February 6, 2012 <a href="#">C</a> Carole Preston Pursley1</small></p> <p><b>Alternate Name</b> • 0 Sources            Birth Name            Benjamin Garrett Jr.  <small>Last Changed: February 6, 2012 <a href="#">F</a> FamilySearch</small></p> <p><b>Alternate Name</b> • 0 Sources            Birth Name            Benjamin Garrett Jr.  <small>Last Changed: February 6, 2012 <a href="#">U</a> unknown4470317</small></p>	<p><b>Alternate Name</b> • 0 Sources            Birth Name            Benjamin Garrett Jr.  <small>Last Changed: February 6, 2012 <a href="#">U</a> unknown4470317</small></p> <p><b>Alternate Name</b> • 0 Sources            Birth Name            Benjamin Garrett  <small>Last Changed: February 6, 2012 <a href="#">U</a> unknown4470317</small></p> <p><b>Alternate Name</b> • 0 Sources            Birth Name            Benjamin Garret  <small>Last Changed: February 6, 2012 <a href="#">U</a> unknown4470317</small></p>
---	---

**Events** + ADD EVENT

<p><b>Residence</b> • 0 Sources            1850            Wayne county, part of, Wayne, Virginia, United States  <small>Reason:            Names match. Dates match or are close.            Last Changed: October 9, 2019 <a href="#">J</a> JoePayne55</small></p>	<p><b>Custom Event</b> • 0 Sources            Census            1860            [Blank], Wayne, Virginia, USA  <small>Last Changed: August 31, 2022 <a href="#">C</a> ClaudiaElaineTwiss</small></p> <p><b>Custom Event</b> • 0 Sources</p>
--	---

**Research Help (1)** ^

[Possible Missing Child](#)  
There is a gap of 3 or more years between the birth of one child and the next sibling.

[SHOW ALL](#)

**Search Records** ^

- [FamilySearch](#)
- [Ancestry](#)
- [Findmypast](#)
- [MyHeritage](#)
- [Geneanet](#)
- [Filae](#)
- [Google](#)

**Notes** ^

[+ ADD NOTE](#)

[SHOW ALL](#)

**Latest Changes** ^

- June 8, 2023  
[Relationship Deleted](#)  
 By [R](#) reneecavender
- June 8, 2023  
[Relationship Type Added](#)  
 By [R](#) reneecavender
- June 8, 2023  
[Relationship Type Added](#)  
 By [R](#) reneecavender

[SHOW ALL](#)

**Tools** ^

GENEALOGY TV

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**Residence** • 0 Sources  
1860  
Wayne, Virginia, United States  
Last Changed: August 25, 2016 • R • reneecavender

**Will**  
1864  
Wayne, West Virginia, United States  
Reason:  
Names dates location match  
Last Changed: October 10, 2019 • J • JoePayne55

**Facts** + ADD FACT

**Family Members**  
Show All Family Members  
SET PREFERRED

**Spouses and Children**

**Parents and Siblings**

**Marriage**  
1 March 1797  
Cabell, Virginia, United States

**Children (16)**

- John Wilkin Garrett (1802-1888 • 9QR-1HQ)
- George Garrett (1815-1816 • G630-C5V)
- Rebecca Garrett (1817-1891 • L719-337)
- Margaret Garrett (1819-1872 • K2B7-3JX)
- Maryland Garrett (1820-1872 • GQP-864)
- Cynthia Ann Garrett (1821-1903 • 2MB-96V)
- Jane R Garrett (1823-1892 • LVFB-9FZ)
- Polly Garrett (1825-1826 • GQP-KH7)
- Nancy Garrett (1827-1898 • GQP-DLL)
- Benjamin Garrett (1829-1829 • GDS-L18)

**Children (14)**

- Joseph Garrett (1767-1850 • MTJ1-YVX)
- George R Garrett (1773-1851 • MV8R-8YH)
- William Garrett (1773-1825 • KC2X-3L2)
- Benjamin Grimes Garrett Jr. (1776-1865 • LHK9-84K)
- Leroy Garrett (1777-Deceased • LTKY-XXK)
- Zelpha Garrett (1777-1846 • L11Y-XBS)
- Nancy Garrett (1778-1868 • GS12-DGQ)
- John Garrett (1780-1860 • MTP-7CS)
- Joseph Garrett (1780-1838 • GK5W-C8C)
- Judah Garrett (1785-1821 • KCT5-13F)
- Judith Garrett

**My Layout Settings**  
Sources (7)  
What's New?  
Possible Duplicates (0)  
Find Similar People  
Merge By ID  
Report Abuse  
Delete Person  
WHY CANT I DELETE THIS PERSON?  
Print Options

## Editing

Simply use the pencil icon next to any fact to edit this ancestor's profile. Remember that this is a world collaboration, **so make sure you have supporting documentation** for your changes.

## Searching from the Profile

On the right side of the ancestor profile screen (shown on previous page), you will see a search box with various company logos. These are hyperlinks to the search functions on those platforms. You may need a login and or subscription to the other services outside of FamilySearch.

I recommend you right-click those links to open them in a new tab on your browser to preserve your location on FamilySearch.

The Profile “About” Tab is a compilation of everything in this ancestor’s profile at a glance.

**Benjamin Grimes Garrett Jr.**  
21 October 1776 – 21 January 1865 • LHK9-84K

VIEW TREE VIEW RELATIONSHIP FOLLOWING

**About** Details Sources (7) Collaborate (0) Memories (4) Time Line

**Brief Life History of Benjamin Grimes**  
Benjamin Grimes Garrett Jr. was born on 21 October 1776, in Montgomery, Virginia, United States as the son of Benjamin Garrett and Nancy Grimes. He married Sarah Elizabeth Bloss on 1 March 1797, in Cabell, Virginia, United States. They were the parents of at least 7 sons and 9 daughters. He lived in Trout Hill, Wayne, Virginia, United States in 1850 and Wayne, Virginia, United States in 1860. He died on 21 January 1865, in Wayne, West Virginia, United States, at the age of 88.

**Photos and Memories (4)**

**Time Line**

- 1776 Birth • Age 0**  
21 October 1776  
Montgomery, Virginia, United States
- 1797 Marriage • Age 20**  
Sarah Elizabeth Bloss  
1 March 1797  
Cabell, Virginia, United States
- 1802 Birth of Child • Age 25**  
John Wilkin Garrett  
2 April 1802  
Logan, West Virginia, United States
- 1805 Marriage • Age 28**  
Catherine McComas  
about 1805
- 1815 Birth of Child • Age 38**  
George Garrett  
19 July 1815  
Virginia, United States
- 1816 Death of Child • Age 40**  
George Garrett

**Sources (7)**

- Benja Garnett, "United States Census, 1850"
- Benjamin Garrett Jr, "Find A Grave Index"
- Benjamin Garrett, "West Virginia Will Books, 1756-1971"

**Parents and Siblings**

- Benjamin Garrett  
1793-1817 • Male

**Spouse and Children**

**Benjamin Grimes Garrett Jr.**  
1776-1865 • Male

**Sarah Elizabeth Bloss**  
1797-1877 • Female

**Marriage**  
1 March 1797  
Cabell, Virginia, United States

**Children (16)**

- John Wilkin Garrett  
1802-1888 • Male
- George Garrett  
1815-1816 • Male

The “Sources” tab (shown below) is where the real gold is located. This is where you can prove or disprove the facts. Always look for original sources whenever possible (as opposed to indexes or family trees).

**Benjamin Grimes Garrett Jr.**  
21 October 1776 – 21 January 1865 • LHK9-84K

VIEW TREE VIEW RELATIONSHIP FOLLOWING

About Details **Sources (7)** Collaborate (0) Memories (4) Time Line

**Sources (7)**

Detail View + ADD SOURCE

Date	Title	Created
1850	Benja Garnett, "United States Census, 1850"	October 9, 2019 JoePayne55
1860	Benjamin Garrett, "United States Census, 1860"	August 25, 2016 reneecavender
1864	Benjamin Garrett, "West Virginia Will Books, 1756-1971"	October 9, 2019 JoePayne55
1865	Benjamin Garrett, "Find A Grave Index"	May 14, 2015 cMayhugh

VIEW EDIT REVIEW ATTACHMENTS DETACH

**Tags**  
Name Burial Birth Death + ADD TAG

**Source Date**  
1865

**Web Page (Link to the Record)**  
<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:QV99-XDWD>

**Where The Record Is Found (Citation)**  
"Find A Grave Index," database, FamilySearch (https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:QV99-XDWD : 3 July 2020), Benjamin Garrett, 1865; Burial, ; ; citing record ID, Find a Grave, http://www.findagrave.com.

**Indexed Information**

Benjamin Garrett  
Death • Find A Grave Index

Name Benjamin Garrett  
Birth Date 21 Oct 1776  
Death Date 21 Jan 1865  
Event Type Burial  
Event Date 1865  
Event Place Wayne, Wayne, West Virginia, United States of America  
Event Place (Original) Wayne, Wayne, West Virginia, United States of America

View on www.findagrave.com

## Memories

The Memories tab is where you might find images or stories that other members have uploaded.

**Benjamin Grimes Garrett Jr.**  
21 October 1776 - 21 January 1865 • LHK9-84K

VIEW TREE VIEW RELATIONSHIP FOLLOWING

About Details Sources (7) Collaborate (0) **Memories (4)**

ADD MEMORIES

- GARRETT Cemetery**
- GARRETT Benjamin...**
- Will of Benjamin Garrett**
- page 2 Will of Benjamin Garrett**

## Finding Records - Research Wiki

The Research Wiki on FamilySearch is *the best...* most valuable resource offering a wealth of genealogical information, tips, and guidance for researchers.

**“If you ever want to know where to find something, go to the [FamilySearch Research Wiki](#). Once you learn how to use this, you will use it for every search you do.” – Connie Knox**

### Accessing the Research Wiki

You can find the Research Wiki by navigating to the **"Search"** tab on the FamilySearch website and selecting **"Research Wiki"** from the dropdown menu. This leads you to a comprehensive collection of information about where to find each type of record.

### Searching for Information

Use the search bar within the **Research Wiki** to find specific topics, locations, or research methodologies you are interested in exploring. Enter keywords related to your research topic to access relevant articles and guides.

FamilySearch Family Tree Search Memories

Discover Your Story  
**Roottech**  
Registration is

- Records
- Images
- Family Tree
- Genealogies
- Catalog
- Books
- Research Wiki**

What  
abo  
Search b

## Step by Step, Using the Research Wiki

You can use the **Search** tab and drop down to the **Research Wiki**. However, I suggest you just go [here](#) and bookmark this page. You will use it over and over again.

- 1) **Drill by location...** but only to the **state level** (or similar for your country) at first. The reason is that you do not want to miss the state level records. You can drill deeper (county or township) later.
- 2) Click on the **record type** in the **right-side bar** (based on your Research Question). Resist the temptation to click on that shiny blue button that says Online Genealogy Records until later. **We want to be methodical in our research.** For example, if we are looking for an ancestors **Will or Probate** record in the state of **Virginia**, then drill into the **U.S.**, then **Virginia**.
- 3) Then click on the record collection, in this case, Probate Records on the right side.
- 4) Then **search that record collection for your ancestor.**

The screenshot shows the FamilySearch Research Wiki page for Virginia, United States Genealogy. The page is titled "Virginia, United States Genealogy" and features a central "Virginia Wiki Topics" section. This section includes a "Beginning Research" area with links to Guided Research, Research Strategies, and Record Finder. Below this is a "Record Types" section listing various record categories such as Adoption, Bible Records, Biographies, Cemeteries, Census, Church Records, Colonial Records, Correctional Institutions, Court Records, Crime & Punishment, Directories, Education, Emigration & Immigration, Genealogies, Land & Property, Medical Records, Military Records, Naturalization & Citizenship, Newspapers, Obituaries, Occupation & Business Records, Online Genealogy Records, Probate Records, Public Records, Social Organizations, School Records, Taxation, Vital Records, and Voter Records. A red arrow points to the "Probate Records" link in the Record Types list. The page also includes a "Virginia Clickable Map" and a "Virginia Background" section with links to Biography, Church History, Law & Legislation, and Maps.

## Search Functionality

Effectively utilizing the search bar on FamilySearch involves understanding search filters, employing strategic techniques to refine results, and exploring various available record types.

### Search Filters

Begin with the person's full name if known. Use variations or wildcards (\*) for uncertain spellings (e.g., "J\*n Sm\*th" for John Smith or Jon Smyth). Include birth, marriage, death dates or locations if available to narrow down results.

Searching for family members' names can also help find relevant records. Utilize filters to specify the type of records you are seeking, such as census records, birth certificates, military records, and such. Refine searches by specifying a particular place or region associated with the individual or event.

### Refining Search Results

Add as much detail as possible to refine results, including unique identifiers or historical context related to the person or event. If the initial search yields too many results, refine it by adding more details or adjusting filters gradually. Be open to variations in names or dates and use wildcard characters (\*) to account for different spellings or missing information. Carefully review search results, comparing details with what is known about the individual to ensure accuracy.

Keep in mind that “Less is More” sometimes when it comes to searching for records. Try searching just for a place and perhaps a surname only for a given time. For example, searching for the surname “Garrett” in the 1810 U.S. census in Montgomery County, Virginia should give you all Garretts in that area. They are likely to be related, especially if the surname is unusual.

### Exploring Different Record Types

Familiarize yourself with the types of records available in the platform's catalog, from vital records to census data, military records, immigration documents, and more. Use different record categories and filters within the search function to access specific types of records relevant to your research. Pay attention to associated details like names of family members, locations, and dates when viewing individual records, as this information can lead to other relevant records or connections.

## The Memories Section

### Upload and Preserve Memories

Users can directly upload a range of materials like family photos, historical documents, recorded interviews, and more. These items can be organized and tagged to link them with specific individuals or events in the family tree.

### Connecting Memories to the Family Tree

Memories can be linked directly to individuals within the family tree, creating a visual narrative that complements the ancestral records. This linkage allows for a more immersive exploration of family history through visual materials and narratives.

## Collaboration and Sharing

FamilySearch promotes collaboration and sharing among family members and other users. Relatives can contribute their own memories, comment on shared materials, and collectively build a more comprehensive family narrative.

## Indexing

Indexing at FamilySearch is a volunteer-driven effort where individuals transcribe historical records to make them easily accessible. Here is how it operates.

## Volunteer Involvement

FamilySearch relies on volunteers globally. These individuals dedicate their time to transcribing information from scanned historical documents into a digital format.

The screenshot displays the 'Find a Project' interface. On the left, there is a 'Refine Results' sidebar with a search bar, 'ALL' and 'FAVORITES' buttons, and filters for 'Difficulty Level' (Beginning, Intermediate, Advanced) and 'Language' (English). The main area shows 'Search Results (12 Total)' with a 'Sort By: Difficulty' dropdown and 'Batches to Check Out' set to 1. The results list several projects with progress bars for 'Indexed' and 'Reviewed' records.

Project Name	Language	Difficulty	Project Checkout Limit	Indexed (%)	Reviewed (%)
US, California—Naturalization Records, 1903–1991 [Part A]	English	Intermediate	4	26%	15%
US, Connecticut—Naturalization Records, 1841–1945	English	Intermediate	4	85%	53%
US, California—Naturalization Records, 1883–1990 [Part B]	English	Intermediate	4	2%	0%
US, Massachusetts—Naturalization Records, 1790–1946 [Part B]	English	Intermediate	7	30%	22%
US, Mississippi—Naturalization Records, 1906–1958					

Indexing is a great way to practice reading handwritten documents. Give it a try and help out.

## Document Selection

A variety of records, including census data, birth/death certificates, marriage records, military documents, and immigration records, are selected for indexing. These documents are scanned and made available for indexing purposes.

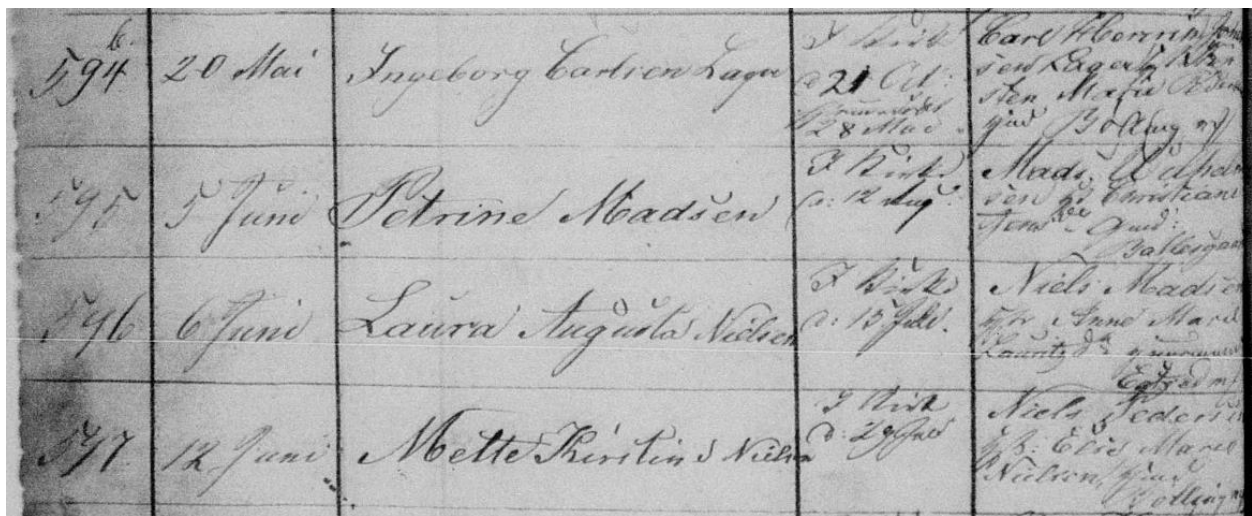
## Transcription Process

Volunteers access scanned documents via the FamilySearch indexing platform. They transcribe details like names, dates, locations, relationships, and other relevant information found in the documents into a standardized digital format.

To help with transcribing handwritten records, go to the **Get Involved** tab and drop down to **Indexing**. It is an easy and a fun way to give back to the genealogical community.

## Handwriting Recognition

FamilySearch does utilize some level of handwriting recognition technology within its indexing system. This technology **aids in the transcription of handwritten historical records** into digital formats. However, the accuracy of the recognition can vary based on the clarity and legibility of the handwriting in the original documents. **Human volunteers often assist in the indexing process to ensure accuracy**, especially when dealing with challenging or illegible handwriting that may not be accurately recognized by automated systems. The combination of technology and human involvement helps to improve the overall accuracy of transcribing handwritten records within FamilySearch.



## 1950 U.S. Census

Recently FamilySearch and Ancestry teamed up together to use Ancestry's new handwriting recognition software to index the 1950 census that was released on April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2022. Ancestry's software was able to index the entire 1950 census in just 9 days. Then the FamilySearch volunteers jumped in and manually verified the indexing that Ancestry in about 30 days and had it completely published by September of that same year.

## Using the Catalog

To access the catalog, navigate to the "Search" section on FamilySearch and select "Catalog." Here, users can search by location, titles, subjects, or keyword. This is more like a library catalog and is different than the Ancestry catalog where you can search record collections. Filters on the left side enable further refinement based on date, place, and other criteria.

## Print List

Make sure you **print your Print List**, as I have learned the hard way that it does not save to your account.



## Icons and Their Meanings



The Camera Icon Indicates that the record collection is available for online viewing, allowing users to browse scanned images of original documents.



This Camera on Paper Icon indicates that there is an image or record to view off the FamilySearch platform, taking you to another website.



The Tree Icon indicates that this person is in the world tree.



The Record Icon indicates that there are record details to view.



The Person Icon indicates that this record might have possible tree matches or that this record has not yet been connected to anyone in the world tree.



View in Source Linker or attached to the ancestor.

- **Microfilm Icon** (not pictured) Denotes records available on microfilm, often requiring access through a FamilySearch affiliate library or the Family History Library's microfilm lending service.

- **Key Icon** (not pictured) Indicates restricted records that might require special access permissions or specific criteria for viewing.

- **Location Pins** (not pictured) Highlight records specific to certain geographical areas, enabling users to filter collections based on relevant locations.

## Overview Tab

### Recent Activity

This section highlights your most recent interactions on FamilySearch, such as searches performed, records viewed, family tree edits, and memories uploaded or tagged.

## Conclusion

Whether you build your family history on FamilySearch or not, it should be a major part of your research strategy. The tools found here are by far some of the best tools in the genealogy industry. Searching the family tree for clues and records may just be the key to unlocking your roadblock in your family history journey.