

How to Use FamilySearch Labs Full Text Search to Find New Family History Records – Beta

(rev. 5-1-24)

[VIDEO LINK](#)

FamilySearch announced at Rootstech 2024 a new feature called “Full text search” which is currently an experiment in beta. It has provided stunning results.

I heard that 60% of records at FamilySearch are not easily found. Well, this is a huge leap forward in finding those records.

In short, what this does is it reads the typed or handwritten documents and then transcribes the document so that it is searchable. This will be huge for unindexed records or records that have minimal indexing.

Records are being added every day. As of this update, here is what is available.

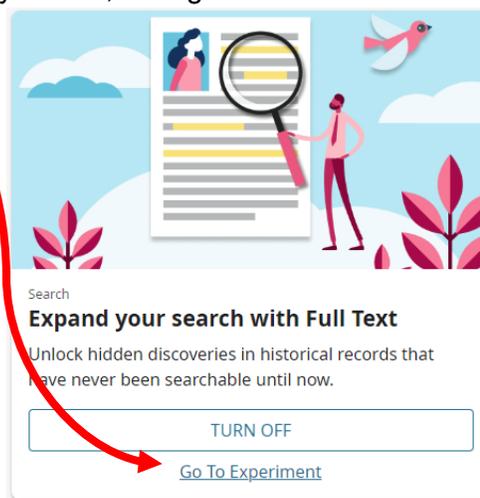
1. U.S. Land and Probate Records 1630-1975
2. Mexico, Notarial Records, 1600-1909
3. US Plantation Records ca. 1700s-1865
4. Victoria, Australia Probates 1853-1976
5. Auckland, New Zealand Wills and Probates 1834-1997

BOOKMARK THIS LINK - To give it a try, sign into FamilySearch, then go to <https://www.familysearch.org/labs/>. Once there go to the box that says on “Expand your search with full text” and click Try It. If you are returning, click on Go to Experiment.

Be sure to [bookmark this link](#) because you can't always find it on the FamilySearch homepage. It was on the lower right column, but moves around.

In the search box use quotes for phrases like “last will and testament” if you are looking for probate records. Add a plus symbol to add names or multiple names that you might think are in the document.

Reminder: At the time that this content was created only US Land and Probate Records and Mexico Notary Records are available.



Search & Filtering

Use filters to narrow your results. Here I just used the keyword and name fields that resulted in 68+ million records.

Results (68,592,900)

Record Year Record Type Record Place Collection

Cabell, West Virginia, United States Deed Book 1831

...& Delivered Tynhus McGinnis @ in the presence of Cabell County Court Clerks Office May 28th 1831 . This ...
 ...Keaton was this day presented to me the Clerk of Cabell County Court and was duly acknowledged by the said ...
 ...and thirty one between Samuel Furguson Senr of the County of Cabell and State | of Virginia of the one part...
 ...all and singular the goods and and of him the said Samuel Furguson to have one to hold the said piece or ...

MORE

Keyword Matches (35)

Q, SEARCH

Keywords
Cabell County, Virginia

Add Ancestor Information
Name
"Samuel Ferguson"

Let's narrow the results by using the place filter instead and remove the place from the keyword field. I also removed the quotation marks around his name.

Filter by Record Place

Selected Filter

United States of America (68,470,925) Virginia (1,474,186) Cabell (4)

CANCEL APPLY

Keywords

Add Ancestor Information
Name
Samuel Ferguson

The result is 9,254 records. I could filter more but, in this case, the very first record appears to be my ancestors as it names **Samuel, his wife Mary, and his son "Samuel Ferguson the younger."**

Filtered Results (9,254)

Record Place: United States of America, West Virginia, Cabell (9,254)

Record Year Record Type Record Place Collection

Cabell, West Virginia, United States Deed Book 1813

244 the said Thomas Ferguson, nor his heirs or assigns, In witness whereof they the said Samuel Ferguson ...
 ...of Cabell & State of Virginia the one part, and Samuel Ferguson the younger, ...
 ...to hold, with all its appurtenance, are the said Samuel Ferguson you for audience and assigns forever, and ...
 ...audience and assigns forever, and they the said Samuel Ferguson and ary his wife for the Wild . CULATE ...

MORE

Keyword Matches (23)

Q, SEARCH

Keywords

Add Ancestor Information
Name
Samuel Ferguson

Another benefit of this new search engine is it can read some of the font that has faded, as shown below. The transcript is still a little funky as it repeats the surnames more often than in the actual record, but it is a **huge help in researching unindexed records.**

Cabell. Deed Books 1809-1819

Image 130 of 673

SOURCE BOX ATTACH TO TREE

now also to read, with an appearance, are the said Samuel Ferguson Ferguson Ferguson you for audience and assigns forever, and they the said Samuel Ferguson Ferguson Ferguson in any no wish for the Wild. CULATE CLERKS OFFICES and agree to and with the said Samuel Ferguson Ferguson Ferguson the younger, that the land hereby conveyed unto the said Samuel Ferguson Ferguson Ferguson and Mary his wife, and if further expressed and understood by the parties to these presents, that in case that at any time hereafter the aforesaid line should be taken away by some better title than the said Samuel Ferguson Ferguson Ferguson have or claim some Ferguson Ferguson Ferguson and Mary his wife nor their heirs, were neither of them, shall be some time for any such way of length that to shall they any the aforesaid consideration, nor any a in witness whereof they the said Samuel Ferguson Ferguson Ferguson Ferguson and Mary your Signet sealed & delivered in the City of Lexington, Virginia, on the 14th day of August 1813, the said Samuel Ferguson Ferguson Ferguson above writing present of John James Spivey, Clerk of the Court held for Cabell County on Tuesday 2nd March, 1813. Deed of bargain, Letter Mary his wife, of the parts mutual versus the young the other part, was acknowledged by the said Samuel Ferguson Ferguson Ferguson to have the prior examination of the said with knowledge in right of power in the premises. (John Weave Weave Weave)

Here you can see that I used the **name field** and the **+** symbol to find **Benjamin Garrett and his wife Sarah**. This result (below) also shows that it is filtered by **record type “legal”** and **Place “Wayne County, West Virginia, USA.”**

Filtered Results (2,752) Q SEARCH

Record Type: Legal (2,752) Record Place: United States of America, West Virginia, Wayne (2,752)

Record Year Record Type Record Place Collection

Wayne, West Virginia, United States Deed Book 1848

...into this 12 day of February, 1848, between **Benjamin Garrett** and **Sarah**, his wife, of the first part, and ...

...set our hands and seals in the presents of us . **Benjamin Garrett** (Seal) **Sarah Garrett** (Seal) Wayne ...

...the State of Virginia, do hereby certify fy that **Sarah Garrett**, the wife of **Benjamin Garrett**, parties to a ...

...into this 12 th day of Febuary, 1848, between **Benjamin Garrett** and **Sarah**, his wife, of the first part and ...

Keywords

Add Ancestor Information

Name

Benjamin Garrett + Sarah

Keyword Search

Use **Keywords** to find **words** and **phrases** that might **match the document** you seek. For example, “Last will and testament” if you are looking for wills. “Deed” if you are looking for property records or “Deed of Trust”. You never know what you might find.

Wildcards

Use the ***** to search for various spellings. For example, **if we are searching the name Johnson try using an asterisk instead of the o in son**, i.e., **Johns*n**. This Johnson family was from Denmark, and they spelled their surname **Jensen in the old country**. In this case to capture both possible spellings, I would use **J*ns*n** to give different search results.

The wildcard ***** **means it could be several characters** that are wildcard characters and to search for any grouping of characters within those parameters given. For example, often the month of February is misspelled or abbreviated. One might use **Feb*** to catch searches with February (current spelling), Feb^y (old school way of abbreviating the month in documents), Febuary (misspelled), etc.

The **wildcard ? means it could be a single character** and to search for all variations of that single character.

Here I used a **? instead of an e in Madsen** knowing that it might be spelled Madson with an **o**. While there were a lot of results, the top result was my Christopher and Laura Madsen ancestors.

Results (68,550,221) Q SEARCH

Record Year Record Type Record Place Collection

Albany, Wyoming, United States Deed 1902

...Dresents, That J. A. F Whitman grantor of the **County of Albany** State of **Wyoming** for and in consideration of...

...convey and warrant to Pauline Gavitt | interest in **County of Albany** State of **Wyoming** one Eight | the ...

...DEED RECORD 187 WARRANTY DEED RECORD . | **Christopher Madsen** and STATE OF **WYOMING** . **County of Albany** . S. ...

...Heskey Iknow Ell Den By these Dresents . That **Christopher Madsen** and **Laura Madsen** his wife grantors of ...

MORE

Keyword Matches (47)

Keywords

Christopher Mads?n Albany County, Wyoming

Add Ancestor Information

Name

Also know that these keyword wildcards and modifiers can be used on most search engines at many websites.

Modifiers to Keyword Search

You can use **+**, **AND**, **OR**, to refine your search. For example, you can use the phrase **"11th Day of July 1853"** + **"Benjamin Garrett"** to make sure the search includes both the phrase and the ancestors name. I used quotes around the ancestors name in this example to make sure that the results included exactly Benjamin and Garrett together. I found the record I was looking for.

Clicking on the document header (in blue) provides the document and a full AI transcript highlighting all of the text that matched the search criteria.

While the full AI Text Transcript is not perfect, it is a huge time-saver when transcribing the records. Simply **click the copy transcript icon and paste it into your transcription document**. I use Word and then review and clean up where the AI transcript didn't get the transcription quite right. [Here](#) is the above document if you wish to see it.

Make sure to **CAPTURE THE IMAGE** and **paste it at the end of your transcription document** with a **SOURCE CITATION!**

Here I used the modifier **OR** to look for two counties (Chester and Montgomery) in Pennsylvania. It resulted in records for names of Booth in both counties (below).

Chester, Pennsylvania, United States Deed Book 1768

Between William Booth of Aston Township in the County of Chester and Province of Pennsylvania Yeoman of the...
 ...Hale Graham Regr one of the Justices & e for the County of Chester came the above named William Booth & ...
 ...shall come I John Morton Esqr High Sheriff of the County | of Chester in the Province of Pennsylvania Inds ...
 ...Reign issued out of the Court of Common pleas for Chester County aforesaid on a judgment attained in the ...

MORE Keyword Matches (24)

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, United States Deed 1878

... | the said Edward Olmsted and Henrietta Chauncey Booth Trustees | aforesaid in Law, Equity or otherwise ...
 ...the said Edward Olmsted and Henrietta Chauncey Booth have not | heretofore done or committed or Wittingly ...
 ...and Annie his wife Jacob . Paxson of Montgomery County State of Pennsylvania and | Eliza A . Paxson his ...
 ... | Eliza A . Paxson his wife Samuel H . Dickey of Chester | County State of Pennsylvania and unne Decrey | ...

MORE Keyword Matches (34)

Chester, Pennsylvania, United States Deed Book 1866

...In full | Witness present - Abel Darlington Charles Booth | Chester County ss . On the fourteenth day of ...
 ...Eli R. Isett of the Township of Upper Providence County of Montgomery and State | aforesaid of the other ...
 ...Prizer @ Catharine Hauke, Davis Hanse | Mary @ Chester County ss, On the sixth day of April Anno Domini ...
 ...of the Township of London Grove in the County of | Charles Dinger Chester and State of Pennsylvania and ...

MORE Keyword Matches (24)

Keywords: Chester County OR Montgomery County, Pennsylvania
 Add Ancestor Information
 Name: Charles Booth

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

More Options (Ancestors Name)

Find Results with Full-Text Search

Unlock hidden discoveries in historical records that have never been searchable till now. Only two collections are currently available to browse with additional collections being added soon. More information below.

Start your search
 Enter a keyword to begin.
 US Land and Probate Records and Mexico Notary Records are currently the only available collections to browse.

Keywords:

[SEARCH](#) [MORE OPTIONS](#)

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

Click the **“More Options”** button to try searching by your **ancestors name**. It never hurts to search both ways.

Note: Sadly, I found two enslaved 12-year-old girls in a “Deed of Trust.” This might be another strategy if you are looking for enslaved ancestors by using the keywords “Deed” + the enslavers name if you know it.

Another idea might be to search the county and the enslaved persons first name as often found in probate and property records.

Start your search
 Enter a keyword to begin.
 US Land and Probate Records and Mexico Notary Records are currently the only available collections to browse.

Keywords:

Add Ancestor Information
 Name:

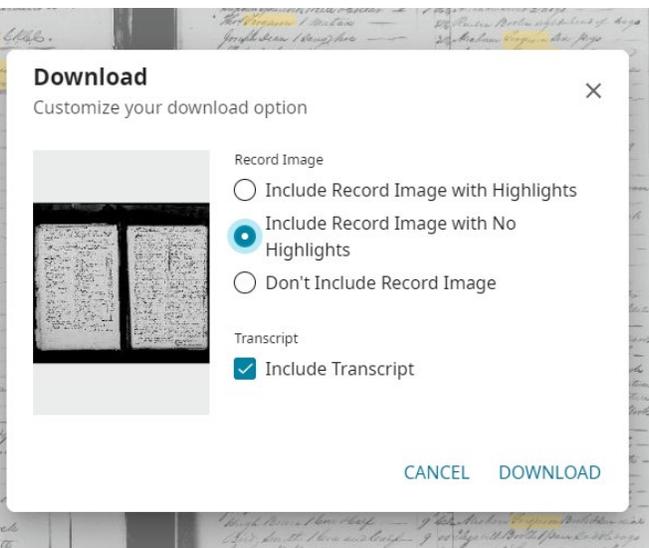
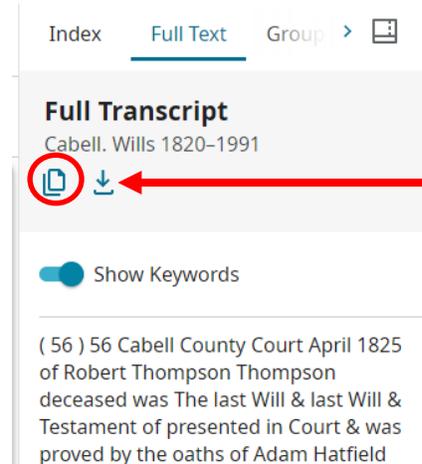
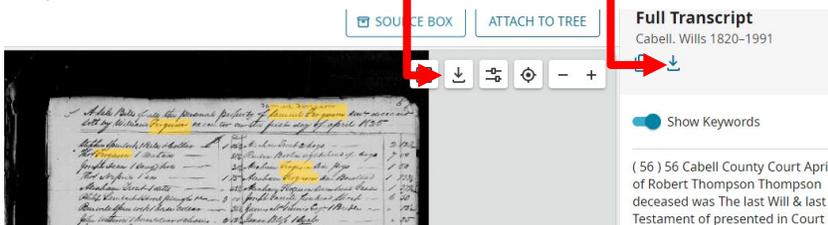
[SEARCH](#) [FEWER OPTIONS](#)

Saving the Record

Once you find a record you wish to save, there are a few things you can do.

One is to **copy the transcription** (even though it is not perfect). To do so use the **copy icon** instead of copying and pasting the entire transcript.

The other task is to **download the image**. You can do so with either one of the the **download arrows**. The **blue arrow** gives you options.



Download Options (blue arrow)

For **download options**, choose the **blue arrow** and save it to your computer in your ancestors file.

Using the blue arrow option shown here will **download a PDF version with the image and transcription as it was on the website (errors and all)**.

If you want to edit the transcription to fix the errors, use the **Copy Transcription Icon** and **paste it** into your



document software for editing (such as Word or Google Docs).

Turning **off** the “**Include Transcript**” option **will download the image in a PDF without the transcription**. There does not seem to be an option to download an image file such as a JPG.

If you wish to have a JPG image of the document, try the black arrow download icon, sometimes this comes down as a PDF. If so, I suggest you use the Snipping Tool (Windows) or Snagit or similar on a Mac.

Attaching the Record to Your Tree

Lastly, you can **add this record to your ancestor in the FamilySearch tree**.

You can also add this record as a URL **weblink in your Ancestry tree** (On Ancestry, ancestors profile, center column, add+, weblink).

To **add the record to your ancestor in the FamilySearch tree**, click on **Attach to Tree** at the top right side of the screen.

Constance Knox

SOURCE BOX ATTACH TO TREE

Index Full Te

Ferguson 1 Bible
Ferguson Fergu
Samuel T Clark C
William Ferguson
Whiplaw 2 75 Ab
Books - Mary Ferg
Cows - - 100 San
Anoff bottles - " C
One Cow - 8 124 T
Ferguson One B
Ferguson Fergu
Samuel Fergusc

Add details about the record.

Scrolling down on this right side screen, open the **"View Image Group Metadata"** and then scrolling down more, you might find a source **citation to copy** and modify if needed. **Note the image and page numbers before leaving this page!**

Describe the record you have found.
Source Title (Required)
Bill of Goods for Deceased Samuel Ferg

Notes (Optional)
Samuel Ferguson died 12 Feb 1825.
This record is from May of 1825
showing items sold to son William
Ferguson.

Describe what is in this record.

Add to Source Box

View image group metadata
This metadata will not be included in the source.
Copy any important data into the Notes field.

HIDE

Image Group Contents
Cabell
Wills 1820-1991

Details

At the bottom of the page click **Next**.

Next, you'll need to **search for the person in the FamilySearch tree** or find their **FamilySearch ID**. You may need to open your FamilySearch tree in another tab to find it.

If you have opened your ancestor in a new tab, click the ID number to copy it.



Samuel Ferguson

3 March 1744 - 12 February 1825 LKQZ-CGG

Then return to the “**Attach to Tree**” menu to paste the ID and click the search icon. Then **Next** at the bottom of the screen. If anyone else is named in the document, you can add them at this time. It will automatically show you family that is attached to the ID number as a convenience. **Next**. Then **give a reason** and **submit**. This document is not added to your ancestor in the FamilySearch tree. You can go to their profile to verify in the sources tab.

Attach To Tree ✕

Step 2 of 4

Select a person to attach this source to.
Choose from the list of people you recently viewed in Family Tree, or search for a specific person using his or her Person ID.

Person ID

✕ 🔍

Samuel Ferguson
1744-1825 • LKQZ-CGG

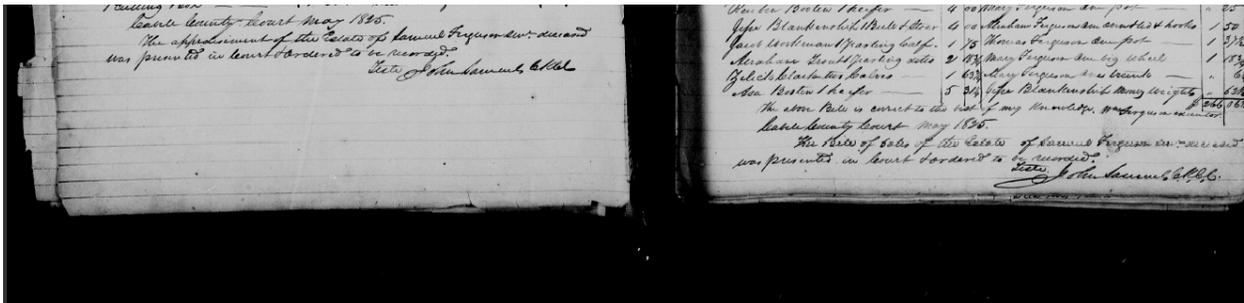
Tips:

When you download the image with transcription, it **does not come down with a source citation**, currently.

Adding a Source to your Transcription Document

If you go to that same ancestor on FamilySearch and find the source you just attached, you can copy the source citation and weblink into your documents and research notes. Easy-Peasy!

If you have a PDF reader that allows you to edit the PDF, you can add a source citation or hyperlink to the PDF copy you downloaded and then save. I use Adobe Acrobat Pro DC to do this.



Web Page (Link to the Record)

<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:9392-CS97-PC?view=explore>

Where The Record Is Found (Citation)

"West Virginia Will Books, 1756-1971," database with images, FamilySearch (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:9392-CS97-PC?cc=1909099&wc=Q8BW-MX9%3A179687401%2C179754001>) : 22 June 2016), Cabell > Will book, v. 001 1820-1848 > image 30 of 434; citing Jackson County Clerk, West Virginia.

Enjoy and Happy Researching!