

# MILITARY RECORDS

## Getting Started

When researching military records, genealogists may explore various sources to gather information about their ancestors' military service. What records are available will depend on location, era, military conflict, and laws at the time of your ancestor's military service.

A good genealogist will always explore a couple of things:

- 1) The date range of your ancestor was of the fighting age.
- 2) What the history was of the area or region. Wartime or peacetime?
- 3) What the laws or draft requirements were during your ancestors fighting age.

For Example, here are the draft registration requirements during WWII...



ARCHIVES.GOV

## World War II Registration Dates (from

FamilySearch Wiki)

- **First Registration** October 16, 1940: males ages 21 to 35 "within the continental United States"
- **Second Registration** July 1, 1941: males "who had reached 21 since the first registration"
- **Third Registration** February 16, 1942: between the ages of 20 and 45 "who had not previously registered"
- **Fourth Registration** April 27, 1942: between the ages of 45 and 65 "not eligible for military service" This was also known as the "Old Man's Draft."
- **Fifth Registration** June 30, 1942: ages of 18 and 20
- **Sixth Registration** December 10-31, 1942: "those who reached the age of 18 after November 12, 1942"
- **Additional Registration** between November 16 and December 31, 1943: "citizens living abroad between the ages of 18 and 45"



ARCHIVES.GOV



## Census Records

### United States Census

In various U.S. census records, questions pertaining to military service were included during specific years. These questions aimed to gather information about military veterans and their service.

- The **1890 Census** featured a special schedule for "Union Veterans and Widows of Union Veterans," gathering details about veterans' names, ranks, regiments or vessels, enlistment and discharge dates, length of service, and disabilities incurred during service.
- The **1910 Census** asked whether individuals were "survivors of the Union or Confederate Army or Navy."
- The **1930 Census** continued the question about military service, asking if individuals were "veterans of the U.S. military or naval forces mobilized for any war or expedition."
- The **1940 Census** expanded on the military service question, inquiring if individuals were "veterans of the regular U.S. Army, Navy, Marine Corps, or Coast Guard."
- The **1950 Census** asked "If Male (ask each question) Did he ever serve in the U.S. Armed forces during..." WWII, WWI, any other time, including present service.

| VETERANS  |  |                         |                    |
|---|--|-------------------------|--------------------|
| Is this person a veteran of the United States military forces: or the wife, widow, or under 18-year-old child of a veteran? |  |                         |                    |
| If so enter "Yes"   | If child, is veteran-father dead? (Y or N) | War or Military Service | CODE (leave blank) |
| 39  | 40   | 41                      | I                  |

#### Col. 41 WAR OR MILITARY SERVICE:

|   |    |
|---|----|
| World War   | W  |
| Spanish -American War; Philippine Insurrection or Boxer Rebellion   | S  |
| Spanish-American War & World War Regular establishment (Army, Navy or Marine Corps) Peace-Time Service only | SW |
| Other war or expedition   | R  |
|   | Ot |

#### 1940 U.S. CENSUS

## Gather What You Have

Before searching for records gather what you already have on hand. Many times, records, photos, diaries, cemeteries etchings, obituaries and personnel service records that are in your personal archives is the best place to start to look for clues, dates, service branch, and details that will help narrow your search for more records.

COLLECTION BY C.H. KNOX



## Major U.S. Conflicts & Wars

Here is the timeline of major United States military conflicts.

- **American Revolutionary War:** April 19, 1775 – September 3, 1783
- **War of 1812:** June 18, 1812 – February 17, 1815
- **Mexican American War:** April 25, 1846 – February 2, 1848
- **American Civil War:** April 12, 1861 – April 9, 1865
- **Spanish-American War:** April 25, 1898 – August 12, 1898
- **World War I:** April 6, 1917 – November 11, 1918
- **World War II:**
  - September 1, 1939, Hitler invaded Poland. September 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1939, France & Britain declared war on Germany.
  - U.S. - December 7, 1941 (Pearl Harbor) – September 2, 1945
- **Korean War:** June 25, 1950 – July 27, 1953
- **Vietnam War:** November 1, 1955 – April 30, 1975
- **Gulf War:** January 17, 1991 – February 28, 1991
- **War in Afghanistan:** October 7, 2001 – August 31, 2021
- **Iraq War:** March 20, 2003 – December 18, 2011



IMAGE BY C. H. KNOX

Please note that these are the major conflicts, and there have been other minor military actions and interventions throughout U.S. and world history. Understanding the history of the region your ancestors lived, will play a major role in your research strategy.

## Types of Records

Here is a detailed list of records you might look for. Be forewarned, some of these records have not survived due to fire, war, or natural disasters. Also know that you will not find every record type for your ancestors.

### Service Records

These are the most comprehensive military records and contain information about an individual's entire military career. They typically include details such as enlistment date, discharge date, unit assignments, promotions, demotions, and any disciplinary actions.

### Military Unit Histories

These records can provide historical context for the military unit in which an ancestor served. They may include details about campaigns, battles, and notable events the unit participated in.



## Medals and Awards Records

Documents relating to medals and awards received by the ancestor can provide insight into their achievements and valor.

## Draft Registration Cards

Draft registration cards are one of the most commonly found records. They were filled out during various periods of conscription, such as World War I and World War II. They provide valuable information like birth date, place of birth, occupation, and physical description of the individual as well as close family for an emergency contact.

**Keep in mind that just because they filled out a Draft Registration Card does not mean they served in the military.**

1044 Standard Form, 1778-57  
 1044 Standard Form, 1778-57  
 1044 Standard Form, 1778-57

96 Mr. M.P. Stewart, R.T. Warrington, N.C.

FORM APPROVED  
 Budget Bureau No. 33-2012-47

REGISTRATION CARD (Men born on or after July 1, 1924, and on or before December 31, 1924.)  
 (Also for the registration of men as they reach the 18th anniversary of the date of their birth on or after January 1, 1943.)

SERIAL NUMBER 1. NAME (Print) 2. SEX 3. OCCUPATION 4. GRADE OR RANK

W 265 ADHUS BOYD 1916

5. PLACE OF RESIDENCE (Print)  
 619 13th St Newport News Va.

(THE PLACE OF RESIDENCE GIVEN ON LINE 5 ABOVE WILL DETERMINE LOCAL BOARD JURISDICTION; LINE 5 OF REGISTRATION CERTIFICATE WILL BE IDENTICAL)

6. MARITAL STATUS  
 SAME

7. TELEPHONE 8. AGE IN YEARS 9. PLACE OF BIRTH  
 10. DATE OF BIRTH  
 11. NAME AND ADDRESS OF PERSON WHO WILL ALWAYS KNOW YOUR ADDRESS  
 Beatrice Boyd - Warrington, N.C.

12. EMPLOYER'S NAME AND ADDRESS  
 13. PLACE OF EMPLOYMENT OR BUSINESS

I AFFIRM THAT I HAVE VERIFIED ABOVE ANSWERS AND THAT THEY ARE TRUE.

ADHUSBOYD

DSSS Form 1 (Rev. 11-16-42) 416-21800-4 (7228)

Also, always look to the next page as most of these records had at least two pages of information.

REGISTRAR'S REPORT

DESCRIPTION OF REGISTRANT

| RACE             | HEIGHT (APPROX) | WEIGHT (APPROX) | COMPLEXION |
|------------------|-----------------|-----------------|------------|
| White            | 5'6"            | 160             | Yellow     |
| Negro            |                 |                 | Black      |
| Indian           |                 |                 | Dark       |
| Philippine       |                 |                 | Black      |
| Japanese         |                 |                 | Black      |
| Other Occidental |                 |                 | Black      |

Other obvious physical characteristics that will aid in identification.

I certify that my sources are true; that this person registered his real or his last name to him his own agency; that I have witnessed his signature or mark and that all of the sources of which I have knowledge are true, except as follows:

M. D. Benson  
 Registrar for Local Board  
 Newport News, Va.  
 Date of registration January 30, 1913

LOCAL BOARD No. 1  
 NEWPORT NEWS CITY  
 ARMORY  
 NEWPORT NEWS, VIRGINIA

## Pension Records

Pension records offer insights into veterans' post-service lives and can include details about their service, injuries or disabilities, and sometimes family information. Pension applications often require substantial evidence of service and related injuries.

"Invalid" did not mean not valid, it meant a disability.

U.S., Civil War Pension Index: General Index to Pension Files, 1861-1934 for Joel J Samson

Sames, William J. Sandquist, Gustave

(8-21-5)

NAME OF SOLDIER: *Samson, Joel J. (alias)*  
*Samson, Julius J.*

10-2-15 f.c. WIDOW, *Samson, Harriet et.*  
 MINOR,

SERVICE: *E 21 Dis Inf.*

| DATE OF FILING.   | CLASS.          | APPLICATION NO. | CERTIFICATE NO. | STATE FROM WHICH FILED. |
|-------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-------------------------|
| <i>10-2-15</i>    | <i>Invalid,</i> | <i>601436</i>   | <i>789461</i>   | <i>W Va</i>             |
| <i>26 Dec. 7.</i> | <i>Widow,</i>   | <i>1038.096</i> | <i>818142</i>   | <i>W Va</i>             |
|                   | <i>Minor,</i>   |                 |                 |                         |

ANCESTRY.COM

## Casualty Lists and Burial Records

These records list soldiers who were killed, wounded, or went missing in action during conflicts. Burial records may include the location and date of interment.

## Muster Rolls

Muster rolls were used to account for personnel in military units regularly. They can show where and when an individual served and may include remarks about their status or conduct.

## Registers and Enlistment Papers

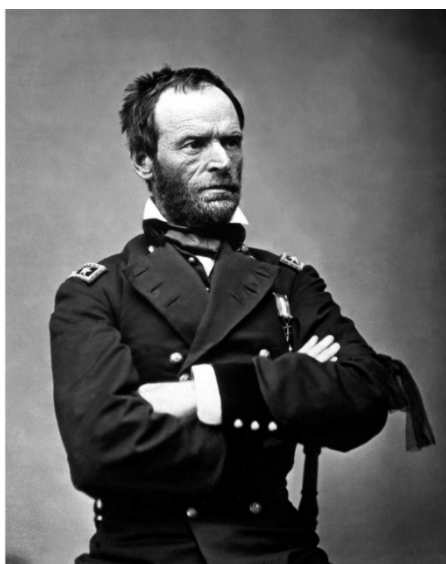
These registers and papers contain information about individuals who enlisted in the military, such as their name, age, place of birth, occupation, and enlistment date.

## Court-Martial Records

If an ancestor faced a court-martial, there may be records detailing the charges, trial, and outcome.



[ARCHIVES.GOV](https://www.archives.gov)



## Photographs and Portraits

Images of ancestors in uniform can be valuable visual records of their military service and provide clues to their military service.

By studying the uniform, patches, buttons, hats, medals, and insignias can all be clues to what to search for in military records.

**WILLIAM T. SHERMAN CA. 1864-65**

**MATHEW BRADY COLLECTION - ANCESTRY**

## Newspaper Clippings

Old newspapers may contain articles mentioning military service or the actions of military units in which an ancestor served.





## Letters and Diaries

Personal correspondence and diaries of soldiers can provide firsthand accounts of their experiences during wartime.



## Prisoner of War Records

If an ancestor was captured as a prisoner of war, there may be records documenting their captivity.



military records that genealogists can access. See links at

**NATIONAL CEMETERY, WILMINGTON, NC IMAGE**  
BY C. H. KNOX

## Military Cemetery Records & Headstone Applications

Information about military cemeteries or memorials where veterans are buried can provide additional details about their service.

## National Archives and Library Collections

National archives and libraries often house a vast collection of

the end of this document.

## Discharge Papers

Also known as separation documents in the United States, these papers record the circumstances of a soldier's release from active duty.

## Unit Newsletters and Publications

Sometimes, military units published newsletters or other publications that can offer insights into the daily lives and activities of their members.

## Medical Records

Medical records can reveal any injuries, illnesses, or disabilities that a soldier experienced during their service.

*Knox John 2621*

| IDENTIFICATION DISCHARGE CERTIFICATE   |  |
|--|--|
| Certificate of Army, Navy, Marine Corps or Coast Guard Officer   |  |
| THE HOLDER   |  |
| is traveling at own expense and is entitled to SPECIAL COACH FARE authorized account;  |  |
| (a) Discharge, or  |  |
| (b) Retirement or release from active duty and not entitled to travel on transportation requests,  |  |
| if presented within 30 days from date of discharge, retirement or release.   |  |
| From   | (Place of discharge, retirement or release)                        |
| <i>Tarboro N.C.</i>  |  |
| To   | (Home or place of enlistment or induction, or place of employment) |
| <i>Sep. C. Ft. Bragg, N.C.</i>   |  |
| <i>26 Dec 1945</i>   |  |
| (Date of discharge, retirement or release)   |  |
| <i>John W. Knox</i>  |  |
| (Signature of certifying officer)  |  |
| (Rank and organization on account of which issued.)  |  |
| Ticket Agent will take up this Certificate, noting thereon form and number of ticket issued, and forward with ticket report to Auditor, stamping back hereof with regular ticket date.   |  |
| Form   | No.  |
| (Description of ticket.)   |  |
| This certificate must be presented to ticket agent to obtain reduced fare ticket.  |  |
| When this certificate is properly executed and presented with officially executed discharge, retirement or release papers, it becomes a specific request of the United States Government that the holder when traveling at own expense, be authorized to purchase a one-way coach ticket at the special reduced fare authorized, account discharge or retirement or release. |  |
| The United States Government will not be responsible for the payment of fare for ticket issued in accordance with this certificate.  |  |

## Service-Related Membership Organizations

Organizations like the American Legion or Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) might have records or information about veterans who were members.

The [Daughters of the American Revolution](#) (DAR) and the [Sons of the American Revolution](#) (SAR) have records that can be searched. Keep in mind that you will want to verify these records just as you would looking at another persons tree on Ancestry.

Remember that the availability and extent of these records can vary depending on the country, conflict, and the particular circumstances of the individual's military service. It is always a good idea to search multiple sources and consult with archives, libraries, and military record repositories to ensure a thorough search for military records in your family history research.

U.S., Sons of the American Revolution Membership Applications, 1889-1970 for Will

The image shows two pages of a Sons of the American Revolution membership application form. The left page is the 'WARRANT OF CITIZENSHIP AND GRANDCHILDREN OF APPLICANT' and the right page is the 'APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP'. The form includes fields for name, date of birth, residence, and military service. It also features a section for 'The following items of substantiation is required' and a section for 'Application examined and approved' with signatures and dates.

## Veterans' Organizations

In some cases, veterans' organizations or local chapters of groups like the American Legion or VFW may have resources or information related to military service.

## Where to Find the Records

The availability and locations of military records can vary depending on the country and the time period of the military service. Here are some general places to start your search for military records

### National Archives and Records Administration (NARA)

In the United States, NARA is the primary repository for military service records. You can request records online through the National Archives website or visit one of their physical locations. [Link to the National Archives Service Records.](#)

### Library and Archives Canada (LAC)

For Canadian military records, you can access Library and Archives Canada's collection online or in person at their facilities. [Collection Search Link.](#)

## The National Archives (UK)

The UK's National Archives holds military service records for British armed forces. They have an extensive online database and physical location in Kew, London. [Link to Discovery National Archives UK.](#)

## Military Personnel Records Centers

Some countries may have specific centers dedicated to military personnel records. For example, the [National Personnel Records Center \(NPRC\) in St. Louis, Missouri](#), is a significant repository of U.S. military records.

## Online Genealogy Platforms

Websites like Ancestry.com, FamilySearch, MyHeritage, and Findmypast offer extensive collections of military records for various countries. Keep in mind that many of these platforms may require a subscription and others require a fee to access.

## Ancestry.com

Ancestry has a vast collection of military records from around the world. If you are a member of Ancestry, start your search from the Ancestors profile, using the search function.

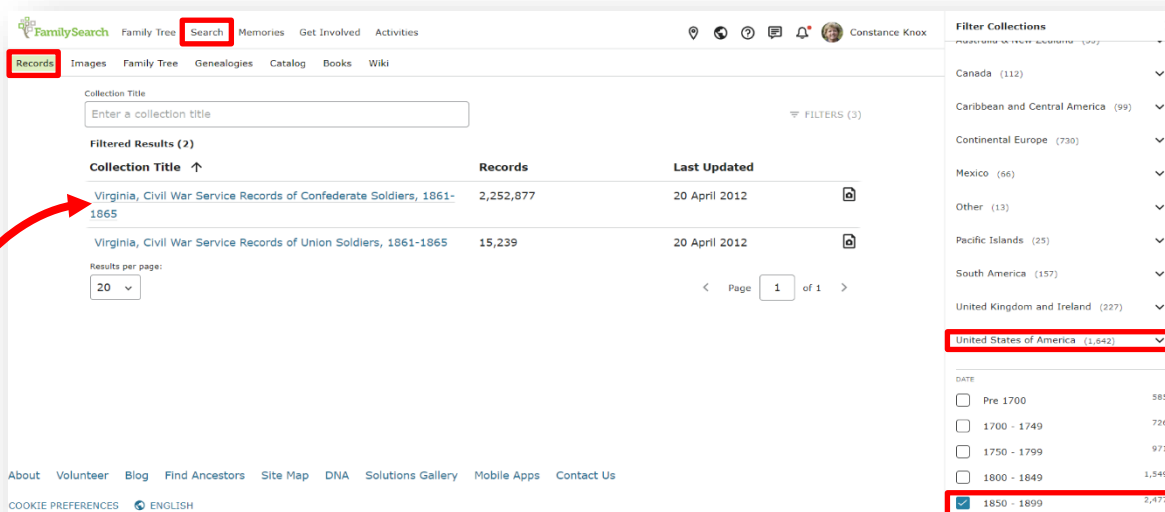
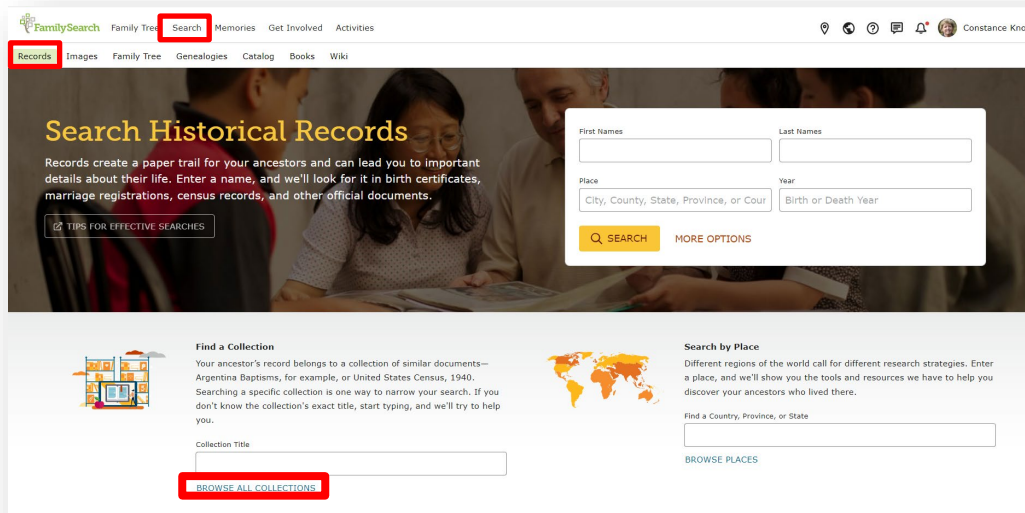
You can also go to the Search tab at the top, drop down to Military and then search all Military records by name and details.

**Ancestry Search Military Records By Name**



## FamilySearch.org

FamilySearch provides access to a collection of military records from around the world. Go to Search (top tab), records, on the bottom click Browse All Collections, on the right filter to Military, scroll down the right side to filter by location and time.



Here I have filtered to Virginia (hiding under United States) and 1850-1899 in an effort to find Civil War records. This will then take you to the collection to search by name.

## Local and State Archives

Some military records might be housed in regional or state-level archives, especially for soldiers who served in state-specific units.

## Military Museums and Libraries

Military museums and libraries may have collections of military records and related documents. They can be particularly useful for unit histories and photos.

## Online Forums and Genealogy Communities

Engaging with online forums and genealogy communities can be helpful in discovering lesser-known sources and tips for military research.



Look for Facebook groups around the subject you are researching. Experts often hangout in these groups and can be helpful when you are getting started.

When searching for military records, it is essential to have as much information as possible about the ancestor's name, birth date, service dates, and the military unit they served in. Records might be organized based on conflicts or time periods, so narrowing down this information can help in locating the correct records.

Additionally, always check the privacy laws and access restrictions related to military records, as some information may be restricted due to privacy concerns.

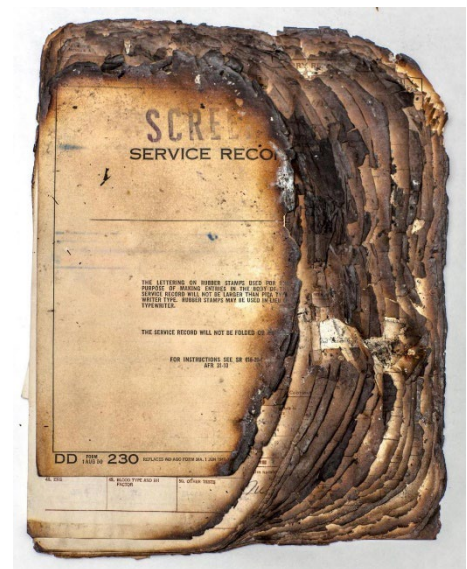
## Some Military Records Destroyed by Fire in St. Louis Record Center in 1973

The following is clipped from an [AP News](#) article –

“In 1973 a fire at the Military Personnel and Records Center (near St. Louis, MO) destroyed many of the army records...”

**“The flames consumed 80% of Army personnel files for people discharged between Nov. 1, 1912, and Jan. 1, 1960.**

**For the Air Force, it is estimated that files for 75% of personnel discharged from Sept. 25, 1947, through Jan. 1, 1964, with names that began after “Hubbard, James,” were lost.**



ARCHIVES.GOV

The OMPF is like a diary of a veteran’s service, containing every duty station, award, promotion and disciplinary action from enlistment to discharge. These OMPFs can also contain items such as telegrams, letters, photographs and testimonials — sometimes hundreds of pages — that might not exist anywhere else.

Some files were lost from every branch of the service. But Army and Air Force records suffered most. To date, the center has partially reconstructed almost 5.5 million records.”

# Membership Organizations

[National Society of the Sons of the American Revolution \(NSSAR\)](#)



enter word or phrase

[Daughters of the American Revolution \(DAR\)](#)

To learn more about each organization and access their websites, you can search for the organization's name using a search engine or visit genealogy-related websites for additional information and resources.

## Other Resources

[United States Military](#)

[Canadian Military](#)

[Australia Military](#)

[National Archives WWI Unofficial Images](#)

[Images from National Archives](#) (Then scroll down)

[Anatomy of a Union Civil War Pension File](#)

[Secrets of a Civil War Pension File](#)

[Bounty Lands for Military Service](#) (National Archives 2 Pages)

[Pre-WWI Pension and Bounty Land Applications](#) (National Archives)

[Information for Requesting Military Information](#)

[Research at the National Archives in St. Louis, MO.](#)

HOME BROWSE SEARCH CREATOR/SUBJECTS MY LIST ABOUT COLLECTIONS

Back to Global Results ☆

Ferguson family genealogical history of Wayne County, West Virginia (early Cabell and Kanawha, Virginia), mainly Samuel and Mary (Jameson) Ferguson (1744-1825) and descendants, also Joel Ferguson (1797-1857) and Daniel Ferguson (1832-1886) and descendants /

FAMILIES FERGUSON MASSIE

Title: Ferguson family genealogical history of Wayne County, West Virginia (early Cabell and Kanawha, Virginia), mainly Samuel and Mary (Jameson) Ferguson (1744-1825) and descendants, also Joel Ferguson (1797-1857) and Daniel Ferguson (1832-1886) and descendants / by Evelyn Booth Massie

Call Nbr: FAMILIES FERGUSON MASSIE

Author-Creator: Massie, Evelyn Booth--1931-

Pub Year: c1985.

Topic Term: Ferguson family

Publisher: Wayne, W. Va. (Rt. 3, Box 3003, Wayne 25570) : E. B. Massie, c1985.

Publish Date: c1985.

Phys Desc: xxviii, 920 p., [1] leaf of plates : ill. ; 24 cm.

URL: https://collections.dar.org/mlDetail.aspx?ID=FAMILIES\_FERGUSON\_MASSIE&biblio&dir=DARLIB

Explore related records

Massie, Evelyn Booth, 1931-  
Ferguson family genealogical history of Wayne County, West Virginia (early Cabell and

Some portions of this handout were created using AI technologies, Google, FamilySearch, Ancestry, the U.S. National Archives and other resources.