**CREATING A BLUEPRINT TREE**

A blueprint is typically created whenever an engineer or an architect designs something to build. If you are building your family history research you should be doing the same thing. The blueprint is where the data is created and where the builder goes back to check for errors when the actual item is being built. Nobody changes the blueprint except the original designer.

The expanding number of genealogy programs on the market makes it easy to research your ancestry. Whether you are merely interested in your history or you want to make a hobby of it and Ancestry can easily be that blueprint tree for you.

**Today we will focus on just two programs** :

**A blueprint tree in Ancestry** **and a family tree in FamilySearch.** Having two programs to record in, allows you to build and search at the same time. Your Blueprint tree could be any other program that you may like to download or utilize online, but for me the option was clear, I use Ancestry.com

**Ancestry.com** hosts the world's largest online collection of family history records. More than **20 billion** records have been added to the site over the past two decades, and Ancestry added an average of two million records to its website in just over the last five years.

**FamilySearch.org** has over **4.5 Billion rolls of microfilm** in the granite mountain, on each roll are an average of 300 records. That’s over **One** **Quadrillion, 350 trillion records:** (1,350,000,000,000,000) give or take a few billion here or there.

Secondly, FamilySearch will be the tree that I keep active and online for all family members to help me collaborate together on my family tree whenever someone has photos or documents to add in. But be aware it is a Global Community Tree.

**Upload a Tree**  
If you have already started a tree using a family history software program like Family Tree Maker, Legacy, Rootsmagic that can be your offline Blueprint tree or you can export a GEDCOM file from any of these programs and upload it to Ancestry.com. Some software files can even be uploaded in their original format. Ancestry directly supports the data files from the following software products:  
 ***Family Tree Maker - .ftw Family Tree Maker backup file - .fbk  
 Personal Ancestral File - .paf Family DataBase - .fdb  
 Legacy 3.0 - .leg GEDCOM - .ged  
 Zipped GEDCOM & images - .gedz***Simply locate and select the appropriate family tree file on your hard drive, upload it to Ancestry.com, and they will interpret the file correctly and create your tree. For more detailed instructions on how to upload a tree using GEDCOM or one of the above formats, this article has more details:

**Upload a New Tree to Ancestry.com**

***TIP: Entering Data-*** *As you enter details on your living family members, you may be tempted to withhold birth dates for privacy reasons, but it’s actually better to put them in, even if it’s just a year. When Ancestry.com sees a birth date that is within the last hundred years for a person who does not have a death date listed, it will* ***automatically mask all of that person’s information to everyone except tree owners and editors.*** *If there is no birth date, it won’t trigger the filter that marks that person as private and their name will be returned in search results*

*As you enter people in your tree, Ancestry.com will be searching behind the scenes, looking for records that match the criteria you’ve entered and you’ll begin to see leaves appearing on your tree. These leaves are Hints that Ancestry.com has found a record (or records) that may relate to your ancestor.*

**Adding Records to Your Tree**

When you find a record that relates to your relative, you can attach it to your tree, so that you won’t have to hunt for it again. Ancestry makes it easy to attach records you find on the site to the people in your online tree. Just look for the Save button and then select the appropriate person in your online tree.

For photographs and scanned images of records that you’ve found beyond Ancestry you can add them through a person’s profile page in your tree. They will then show up in your Media Gallery

**Adding Facts to Your Tree** Scanned images of records can be added as events to your timeline. Just click on the link to Add Fact and then enter the details. You can upload scanned images of the record and source citations to each custom event you create. As you continue to add events to the people in your tree, it becomes more than a place to store your information. It becomes a research tool. You can customize entries on the timeline and add additional details you have discovered in the records. Just click on the fact title and you can add details that are relevant to that entry. The timeline allows you to see gaps in your research and look at what records you need to still track down. And best of all, you now have a great way to share all of your hard work with your family, in a rich and compelling family tree.

**Searching from Your Tree** You can conduct searches right from inside your tree, but keep in mind that when you click that Search records link, the search is taking everything it knows about that person from your tree and entering it as search criteria. Sometimes that’s a good thing, but you may also want to tweak that search to do a more targeted search. For example, if you wanted to search for that person as a child, you may want to remove the names of his or her spouses and children, who would not be found in any records that were created that that person was a child. Also edit the residences to focus on one location at a time.

To tighten up your search, click on the edit search link. This will bring up your search form and you can remove people and places that aren’t relevant to the search. For more information on searching Ancestry, see our guide to Search Strategies.

**Connecting with Cousins** There may be other trees on Ancestry that include your ancestor. You can connect with other researchers quickly and easily, and once connected you can follow their progress through Recent Member Connect Activity under the Collaborate tab.

[**https://www.ancestrycdn.com/support/us/2016/11/startingyourtree.pdf**](https://www.ancestrycdn.com/support/us/2016/11/startingyourtree.pdf)

**Finding U.S. Vital Records and Alternative Sources**

***TIP: Vital records*** *— records of births, marriages, divorces, and deaths — are cornerstones of family history research. They provide a framework for our ancestor’s lives, marking the beginning and ending of their lives and family transitions. No doubt about it, they are vital to our research. But civil registrations in the U.S. weren’t kept on a statewide basis for the most part until the 20th century. So how do you know what’s available for the places where your ancestor lived? What’s available online? And where do you turn for alternative sources if your ancestor’s record doesn’t exist? This guide will give you some ideas for where to look.*

**When Did They Start?** Learning when civil registration of vital events began in the state and county where your ancestor lived is an important first step. The Ancestry Wiki is home to Red Book: American State, County, and Town Sources, which provides that information for U.S. states and counties. Once inside Red Book**,** navigate to the state and the county of interest.

**What’s on Ancestry?** Once you’ve determined that civil registrations of vital records are available for the time and place in question, check the Card Catalog or explore collections by location by selecting a state on this map in the lower corner of the Search tab to determine which collections are available on Ancestry.

Once you identify a collection of interest, be sure to read the description, as coverage may vary by county or be partial. And check back often. Ancestry is constantly adding and updating content.

**Seeking Out Alternative Sources** If it turns out your ancestor’s civil registration is not available, there are alternatives. Here are some other records that may provide supporting evidence for birth, marriage, and death dates and places.

***TIP: Births***  *U.S. Census Records. U.S. Federal Censuses for the years 1850-1940 include ages for everyone in the household, which helps you at least close in on a birth year. Additionally, for those years enumerators were instructed to record the age of persons who were born within the census year as fractions (1 month = 1/12, 2 months = 2/12, etc.). The 1900 census asked for the month and year of birth, as well as ages. There are even clues in earlier censuses, 1790-1840. While the age groupings were consistent between 1840 and 1830, the parameters were slightly different in 1820. By comparing which columns an ancestor appears in between 1830 and 1820, you can narrow the time frame to 5 years. In the 1820 census, there are columns for males “between 16 and 18” and again for males “of 16 and under 26.” It’s important to be aware that he’ll be counted twice, once under each category, so be careful not to add an extra teenager. That extra column though allows you to estimate that any males counted in the 16-25 range who are not in the 16-18 field, will have been born roughly between 1795 and 1801 and any in that extra field were born between 1802 and 1804.*

**Finding U.S. Vital Records and Alternative Sources:**

**Marriage and Death Records.** While it’s important to remember that they are not considered primary sources for birth information, marriage and death records often include birth dates and places. Religious records often pre-date civil registration.

**Birth registers and baptism or christening records** will typically include a birth date. For tips on locating and using religious records, download our free guide.

**Newspapers.** Granted, birth announcements didn’t always make it into the newspapers, but you’ll sometimes find mentions in society pages or lists of babies born in a particular hospital.

**Delayed Birth Registration.** Proof of when and where a person was born was required for Social Security or Railroad Retirement and for those who were born prior to civil registration, this meant filing a delayed birth registration. Proof was required, and although the documents won’t be included with the file, details about the proof provided may include clues to their location.

**Social Security Death Index (SSDI).** That birth information that the Social Security Administration collected makes the Social Security Death Index (SSDI) yet another source for birth dates. While 98 percent of the people listed in the SSDI died after 1962, many of them were born before civil registration began.

**Passports.** Likewise, people applying for passports were asked about their age and place of birth. If your ancestors applied for a passport to travel abroad to visit family or just on holiday, check the collection of U.S. Passport Applications, 1795-1925.

**Naturalization Records.** Naturalization records may contain the birth date and places for immigrants. Some naturalization indexes even list birth dates. Ancestry has a growing collection of naturalization records and indexes that may include your ancestor.

**Births at Sea.** Births at sea were often noted in passenger lists, often along with deaths at the end of the manifest. Although you might not find a given name, the infant may be listed with the parents and other family members, or at the end of the manifest with a reference to the parents (a good reminder to explore manifests fully). Note that it’s typical to see them listed only as “infant” with only the last name. [**https://www.ancestrycdn.com/support/us/2016/11/usvitalrecordsandalternatives.pdf**](https://www.ancestrycdn.com/support/us/2016/11/usvitalrecordsandalternatives.pdf)

**Saving Records to your Ancestry Tree** This can also be done when viewing a record image, and is done automatically in the ‘hints’ section when reviewing and adding data to your tree. At first, this seems like a quick and easy way to attach relevant records to people in your tree – and it is. The problem lies in the fact that when you ‘save’ a record this way, you are not really saving it at all. Instead, Ancestry is simply linking that record to the correct fact. For LDS this record is also not really saved into FamilySearch. **Just the link is there.**

**This causes two vital problems: *1. If you decide you want to download your tree as a gedcom and import the data into another family tree program you will not have any copies of these files.***

***2. If you stop subscribing to records on Ancestry, or access records during the a trial subscription and then don’t subscribe, you will no longer have access to these records if they were in a paid database — which most are. This is true even if you currently have a paid subscription that doesn’t cover the record you want to view (such as having a US only subscription when trying to view a record from England). You can read Ancestry’s statement about what happens when you cancel a subscription here.***

If you have been using Ancestry for awhile you may already be aware of this and have taken actions to secure these documents. But it can be surprisingly easy to overlook this fact and be left wondering why you no longer have access to a record you saved to your tree.  
We respect that Ancestry has to support their site by limiting access to records, but we wish this fact was clearer to subscribers.his is true even if you currently have a paid subscription that doesn’t

***The first thing to know is that :***

**You can download records to your own computer for safe keeping.**  
Here’s how to download the records so you’ll have access to them later.  ***1. When viewing the record’s landing page, as seen in the first screen capture above, click on the image to view it.  
2. Now look for the green ‘Save’ button and click on that. There are several options, one of them says ‘Save to Your Computer’ – this is what you want.***

***3. After you select this option Ancestry will likely just download the file to your default download location (usually your ‘downloads’ folder or your desktop). You will now need to find the file and rename it something you will recognize later, since the filename is usually a string of numbers. Once you do that you should move it to a folder on your computer for these files specifically.***

Of course, you can also print files. You should save every single record you attach to your tree on Ancestry and any record you want to view later that you have not attached. Adding records to your ‘Shoebox’ for later review is easy but, again, you will have no access to these files later if you end your subscription.

We recommend that you create a section on your computer for your downloaded records, and then create folders for each surname or line for easy reference later. You can also upload these files manually one by one back in to your tree so that you can view them later in context, since manually uploaded media files continue to be accessible after a subscription ends.

**Backup Your Ancestry Tree Data Too**And while we’re talking about backing up, you should download your Ancestry tree gedcom regularly as well, even though you will still have access to your tree data if you end a subscription. The gedcom does not contain actual images of records you have attached, so it can’t be used to save those, but it is always good to have a backup of your other data. To download this, go to your tree, click the ‘tree pages’ dropdown, select ‘tree settings’ and the look for the green ‘export’ button on the right sidebar of the setting page.

If you are LDS you can load directly from Ancestry to FamilySearch.

But this will need to be done person by person. But you can also transfer all the records to Familysearch.   
  
**Backup All of Your Data Somewhere SAFE**  
We also highly recommend that you backup all of your genealogy data to a second computer, thumb drive, respected online storage site Amazon Cloud, or some other safe location — you don’t want to spend hundreds of hours researching only to lose all of your files. It happens more often than you think.

**What Ancestry now has...**

[**Ancestry.com**](http://www.anrdoezrs.net/click-7303599-10470501?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.ancestry.com) now offers **20 billion online records,** most of which can be searched through the All Collections search box on their pages, as well as through individual collection search boxes. The Ancestry Crash Course covers numerous ways to maximize these search options and avoid pitfalls that limit your ability to uncover records. But today we are going to look at another way to access records on Ancestry.com – records which cannot be found via search at all.

**What? There are records that are not online????**

Many people are unaware of the fact that not all of Ancestry’s records show up in search. A surprising number of collections have not been indexed and are therefore virtually invisible to the everyday user of the site. These **browse-only collections**, as they are known, need to be purposely sought out if you want to take advantage of the records they contain. Some collections have been on Ancestry’s site for years and are still not searchable, while others are new collections that have not yet been indexed. Because searching is such a huge part of modern genealogy research browse-only collections are repeatedly overlooked and underused. Not only are they often hard to find but, even when they are located by an interested researcher, many people shy away because they don’t know how to use these records.  
  
Ignoring these records is a huge mistake, however, since they could contain valuable information about your ancestors.  
Ancestry does not make it particularly hard to find their browse-only collections, but they do make it difficult for a researcher to know which records fall into this browse-only category and, therefore, which records are being excluded from search. To discover browse-only collections we’ll need to visit the Card Catalog we discussed in a previous lesson. To find the Card Catalog you can select it from the dropdown under Search in the top menu. The best way to locate non-searchable collections that may be of interest to you is to search for a location you are researching in.

**https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/list**

Let’s pretend that we are researching an ancestor in Oklahoma in 1890 and see what we can find.  
We’ll start by typing **Oklahoma** in the Title box on the left to see what collections have Oklahoma in the title. Upon searching, Ancestry returns 37 options. As we click through to the collections that seem like a good match we see that each of them can be searched with their own custom search box. We already know what a powerful thing searching individual collections can be and we will definitely want to check these out. But as we move further down the page, and click on a collection that looks promising, we find that **no search box** is presented to us. We’ve stumbled across a browse-only collection!

Going back a page we can see that there is nothing on the Card Catalog search page that denotes that this is a browse-only collection. We don’t find out until we visit the landing page. And, in fact, there is no way to sort for these non-searchable collections in the Card Catalog. (bummer)

But stumbling across one is significant – because we’ve just found a treasure trove of information that would never come up in a search on Ancestry’s site. But the lack of search capabilities will make our job a bit more difficult. Without a search box we’re going to have to dig through these records just like they did in the “old” days.   
Let’s go back to the landing page for this collection and explore how we can view the records. On the right side you will see the Browse This Collection box – as is present on most collections. But now it holds special importance because it is the only way we can access this collection. Each collection offers its own browsing format and this one is by Roll. Some are organized by location, others by date and still others by name or some other system.

Using a resource like this will take additional research on the nature of the collection and how our ancestor may have been included. We may need to use additional outside resources to help us understand how and why it was created, and how to properly use it. A good start on this is to carefully read the descriptions and tips for each collection as provided by Ancestry on the collection landing page. Do as much research as you need to to make sense of the collection and you will almost always be able to make good use of the records.  
  
Luckily, not all browse-only collections are so difficult to navigate – the Nevada Marriages collection as seen below is organized by county and date making it fairly easy to use. When you do find a record you need, you can **save it to someone in your tree, or to your computer or shoebox**, with the green save button in the upper right hand corner. You won’t get the same options you do with an indexed collection once saved, but attaching it your tree as a source is still fairly simple.

If you do not have an Ancestry subscription you might like to read their article about accessing their free collections, or you can read their guide to accessing browse-only collections on FamilySearch for free. **https://familyhistorydaily.com/tips-and-tricks/millions-of-free-records-on-familysearch-cant-be-found-via-search-heres-how-to-access-them/**

**And now where do I store all of this family data that is SAFE?** On FamilySearch your records are always **stored for free**. They are **protected in case of an EMP** They will **never be deleted.** They will **never charge a fee**. But sometimes records on their database become unavailable, as state and foreign governments, who own the originals, decide to start charging for access to these records. What they may leave behind will be only the indexed list of the information found from the original record. But note, that not all the information on the record is always indexed...**So copy, copy , copy everything.**

Save it to your external hard drive, save it to the cloud, save to Familysearch and best of all **PRINT it out.**