

Intermediate Level: Ancestry Library Edition

Centre County Library

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BEGINNER --- INTERMEDIATE --- ADVANCED ???

What do you already know how to do? What do you want to learn today?

GENERAL ADVICE

Go slowly. Go backwards in time. Focus on answering one question, about one person, at a time. Have a research plan. Use all available resources, not just Ancestry.

Do “reasonably exhaustive research.” You want to minimize the odds that further research would overturn your conclusion. **Evaluate and cite your sources.** Are they original, derivative, or compiled? Is the **information** in them primary or secondary? Which information serves as **evidence** to help answer your question?

Correlate the evidence from all your sources and analyze what it is telling you. **Do not ignore conflicting evidence**, but rather resolve the conflict with additional evidence or careful argumentation. **Write a well-reasoned statement of your conclusion**, with appropriate proof arguments or statements.

EXPLORING THE A.L.E. HOME PAGE

- 1 Search (our focus today). Dropdown menu, or use Search Now / Quick Links.
- 2 Message Boards; 3 Learning Center; 4 Charts and Forms; 5 New Collections .

SOME TIPS & TRICKS for A.L.E.

1. Use *Advanced Search*, or click on a *Collection* to get a customized form.
2. Limit your search to a subset of *relevant collections*, e.g., Immigration & Travel, since a Basic Search may only return matching results from the “most popular” collections.
3. Use *Standardized place names* from the drop-down list (because Ancestry organizes its records this way).
4. *Narrow your search* by using the slider bars and other tools.
5. *Widen your search* using wild cards, when appropriate (* and ?). Note, Ancestry is pretty good at “fuzzy name searching.”
6. Consider searching by *first or last name only*, along with location information, etc. Names are easily mis-heard or mis-transcribed.
7. *Understand the difference* between the record *matches that Ancestry finds* based on your search criteria, and the “*Suggested Records*” that it may show. (These are records that are linked to member's trees that also link to the record you are viewing.)
8. *Family Trees* that Ancestry locates for you should be regarded as “hints” to be verified or followed up. They are likely more valuable if they have links to sources. They may not tell the whole story (e.g., second marriages).
9. *View the image* for any record found, if it is available. There may be more information than was transcribed. Check for accuracy; transcribers are often in a hurry.

10. *Save the image.* Let Ancestry email you a link to the document, for downloading; or print it.
11. *Read and note all the information in a record.* E.g., date of census, name of census enumerator, Post Office, etc.
12. *Read "around" the record:* previous and next pages of a census or passenger list. Who are the neighbors? Does a family extend across more than one page?
13. *Read the "Learn more..." information* about a collection in which a record is found. It may lead you somewhere, or at least help you understand what you've found (or why you haven't found something!).
14. *Learn to "browse" relevant collections.* Not everything that Ancestry has is indexed and "searchable." (Also seek out images of originals at other genealogy websites or in libraries and archives, if Ancestry gives only a transcribed record.)
15. *Keep a tree at home,* on your own computer (backed up!).
16. *Keep notes* of what and how you've searched, and what you've found.
17. *If you didn't find a record you hoped for, think "WHY?"*
 - Have you made use of all the tricks to locate the record on A.L.E.?
 - Is the record not indexed yet?
 - Is the record not digitized yet?
 - Is the record available on a different genealogy site?
 - Is the absence of a record true "negative evidence"?
 - Are you asking the right question?
 - Are your assumptions getting in the way?

SOME EXAMPLE SEARCHES

1. IMMIGRATION & TRAVEL: Carl Brommer, born 1835 in Germany, resided in Detroit and Chicago. He supposedly sailed on the *Sir Isaac Newton* from Hamburg. When?

- *Passenger lists.* What other information is here?
- Broaden search to *All Collections*; Birth record? Death record? Census records?
- *Suggested Records* may appear: follow them up, to find even more!

2. MILITARY: Philip B Nelson, Colorado. Served in WW I: Did he go to France? What was his rank? What branch and organization in the armed forces was he with?

3. CATEGORIES view: Henry Baker in Bucks county, PA. Granted land by William Penn on the Delaware River. When results are shown, switch to Categories > Quaker records.

4. CARD CATALOG search: Indexed Land Ownership Maps: "Guthrie" in Clarion co PA.

5. KEYWORD/CARD CATALOG search: keyword = craft* > Craftperson files. (Example, George Gardner in NJ)

6. "BROWSE" for unindexed information. Find Samuel Rider marriage in Clarion county, PA (1849). There are *non-indexed* pages in the same source. Find other events for him and wife Caroline Guthrie.

7. CENSUS RECORDS, WHY CAN'T I FIND THEM? Working backwards, suppose you have found Joseph & "Dtta" Miller in the 1870 census, Cromwell twp., Huntingdon Co., PA. In the 1860 census, how many kids will be shown? You can't find an 1860 census record for this family. Why?

QUESTIONS (& ANSWERS?)