

Using Ancestry Library Edition to find members of your family tree

Use this database to:

- Trace your family history
- Locate original documents relating to your ancestors
- Search census records for the US, Canada, England and other countries

About this database:

The Ancestry database includes over 4000 lists or directories ranging in size from the one name in the US Army Indian Campaign Service Records Index to the US Phone and Address Directories with 862 million names. In total there are 5 billion names dating from 1300. Key collections include the US census, Social Security Death Index, passenger lists and immigration records. Some of these records include the original handwritten documents. Ancestry also provides forms, charts, historical images, maps and family histories.

Searching the database:

At the [home page](#), there are three groups of databases to choose from. Most people will want to start with the default *Historical Records* search. This search includes records from the US Census, immigration documents, Social Security, and vital records from the US, United Kingdom and Canada. Type in the name and whatever information about birth and death you know or can reasonably guess. If the *Exact Matches Only* box is checked then the results are summarized by type of record (e.g. census, immigration, military or vital records) and then by individual database (e.g. 1920 US Census). [If you have not chosen *Exact Matches Only*, then you may narrow the results by choosing a database listed on the left of the page.] Click on a specific database to see a list of people ranked by relevancy to your search names. The number of hits will depend on how much information you provide the search engine. Click on an individual name (or run your mouse over the source) to see the historical record for that person. Some databases will provide the option of viewing the original handwritten document.

Searching Tips

- The search will retrieve names with your exact spelling as the default. “Unclick” the *Exact matches only* box to allow close matches. Note that subsequent searches will remain inexact until you click the *Exact matches* box again.
- Search information and ranking priorities vary with different databases.
- Click on *Refine your search* to add such items as spouse, country of origin, or year of immigration.
- If you are having trouble interpreting a census record, try printing a sample (blank) form first.
- Some databases allow a *Soundex* search which will retrieve names with a similar spelling.
- The more databases that are searched at a time, the more generic the search criteria; choose a specific database for the most complete search form.
- To see what records are available for a particular state or country, click on the *Search* tab at the Ancestry home page.
- Look for a *View Image* option or magnifying glass icon to see a photograph of the original document. *View Record* gets you to a printed version of the document.
- Information about individuals from the US Census does not become available for 72 years. The 1940 Census will be made public in 2012.
- Unknown letters can be replaced by “wildcard” characters “?” (for one unknown letter) or “*” (for 1 to 5 letters). For example *Sm?th* would find both Smith and Smyth.

Sample Searches

Question: I’d like any information at all about my great grandfather Jacob Single. I think he was from Yorkshire, England.

Search procedure: With the *Exact Matches Only* box checked, type *Jacob* and *Single* into the name boxes. Choose *England* and then *Yorkshire* from the pull-down menus. The results show only one English census record with a Jacob Single. Click on that database and then on *View Record* to see all the information. You’re in luck—you found your great grandfather’s whole family!

Question: I don’t know anything about my grandmother’s side of the family. Her name was Ellen Lister. She was probably born in the 1910s.

Search procedure: At the home page, click on the *Search* tab at the top of the page. Choose *Advanced Search* from the *Search Resources* box at right. This will allow you to add a number of details to your search (e.g. spouse, parents, keywords, residence and +/- ranges for birth, death and marriage.) Insert the names and try a date range of 1915 +/- 5 years. With *Exact Search*, there are seven Ellen Listers listed. (Note that you will only find **Anna** Ellen Lister if you uncheck the *Exact Matches*.) Locate the correct one by looking at the region of the country or household members, etc. The census is an ideal starting place for your search because the rest of your grandmother’s family will likely be listed—with their ages.

Question: I think my great-great-grandfather Arza Bartholomew died in the Civil War. Can I find out?

Search procedure: At the Ancestry home page, type in *Arza Bartholomew* and choose *United States* for country. At the list of results, notice the *Narrow your search* box on the left of the screen. Click on *Military*. Records show when he enlisted, when he died and where he was buried.

Similar Databases

[HeritageQuest](#) is another database provided by Wellesley Free Library. HeritageQuest provides access to over 24,000 family histories, 6500 genealogical periodicals and, like Ancestry, the US Census. Home access is available for Wellesley residents.

Home Access

This database is only available in the Library. Ancestry.com markets individual subscriptions on a monthly or annual basis.

Please note: If your search is not successful, it's possible that a new search with different terms or a different database will yield better results. Please ask a Reference Librarian for help.