

How to Find People You Don't Even Know Exist

The key to accurate family history research and accuracy when preparing names for temple work relies on us using all the documents related to our relatives. It is these very documents that can allow us to move both backward and forward in generations to find names of both direct ancestors and other relatives. However, we must thoroughly read these documents, because they often contain names and hints that may not be found in indices or extracted documents.

Let's start with the censuses:

The U.S. censuses from 1790-1840 only contain the names of the heads of households. They do list the number of other individuals living in that household, but do not list them by name.

- a. We can find possibly related individuals by looking at the neighbors. Relatives often lived close to one another, so look on the pages before and after the page on which your ancestor or relative is listed.
- b. Keep track of the number of individuals on these censuses. They can provide an understanding of how many people were in that household. These may include a wife, children, other relatives, or servants.
- c. The British censuses from 1790-1830. Only provide the names of the heads of households.
- d. The British census for England and Wales begins listing all individuals living in a particular residence beginning in 1841. They are listed by relationship beginning in 1851.
- e. The U.S. census begins listing all members in a household starting in 1850 and continuing through 1870. It is not until 1880 that all members of the household are listed by relationship. Note: The 1890 census was largely destroyed by fire and is incomplete.
- f. The U.S. 1900 and 1910 censuses list the total number of children a woman had, and how many were living and how many were deceased at the time of enumeration. The British Census only does this in 1911. This can help you in searching for missing children.
- g. Note: The last U.S. census currently available is 1950. The last British census available is 1921. If you want to search that census, you will need to read it in FindMyPast.com, and it will cost you to do so. The 1931 census was destroyed during WW2, and there was no 1941 census conducted due to the war. However, there is the 1939 England and Wales Register, taken after England's entry into WW2 that lists individuals living in a household, but not by relationship.

Another way to find unknown individuals, particularly children, is by doing a surname search. You can enter a surname into the search engine, add the parents' names, and then give a date range and location. This is available in FamilySearch, Ancestry.com, and FindMyPast and I promise you that it can be revelatory. For example, on the 1900 census, my third great-grandmother indicated that she had had 15 children, with nine still living. I found the missing six children, though it took me a lot of effort. You may find the following:

- a. baptismal records
- b. birth records
- c. death records

d. burial records (these may include the parents' names)

Military records can also be a valuable resource, but the information you get from them can differ from one time period to another. Military pension records are much more useful, because they often list family members and their relationship. These often include birth and marriage dates. You want to be sure to read each page. I had the great luck of finding a photo of a relative on the very last page of a long military record.

Naturalization records, like military records, are a goldmine of information. But again, it depends on when citizenship was applied for. These records can contain place and dates of birth, names of family members, and date of immigration.

Immigration records can also include family members traveling together, and usually include the ages of the individuals. They may list the citizenship of the individuals, but not always.

Other records. Other records can include valuable information that help you substantiate information you have gathered or can help you identify new family members. These include:

- a. addresses (think city directories)
- b. tax records
- c. voter registration and other voting records
- d. school records
- e. arrest and prison records
- f. poorhouse records
- g. newspaper articles

In closing, I would like to give an example of a very important record I came across that led me to discover lost ancestors and an entire branch of my family. This is a transcription I made of a document I found on Ancestry.com of a record from St. Martin in the Fields Poor Law Records, Westminster, Middlesex County, England.

It provides the following: Dischargd 15 Feby 1821 Names: Trout Abraham Times admitted: 2 Age: 41 Ward: 28 Dischd 15 Feby 1821 Names: Trout Hepzibah Times admitted: 2 Age: 31 Ward: 2 Dd with Husband Names: Trout Eliza Times admitted: 2 Age: 9 1/4 Ward: Gs Dd with Father & Mother Bound apprentice to Philip Pear Brush Maker No 18 Hamilton Row Battle Bridge 21 June 1821 Names: Trout Ann Times admitted: 2 Age: 8 1/4 Ward: GS Dischd 5 Oct 1820 to Ann Slego her Grandmother by order of the Board Names: Trout Elizth Times admitted: 2 Age: 3 Ward: 8 Discharged: Sent to the Infant Poor House Highwood Hill 20 November 1820 Returned 20 April 1821

I would recommend that you do not stop at the 'extracted' information on a record. If you have the opportunity to view the actual document, do so. It will take you time and sometimes effort (especially with older scripts), but it will pay off in the end.