

FamilySearch.org Family Tree

What is Family Tree?

Family Tree is a set of linked genealogies compiled by the Latter Day Saints from various sources. This is the largest set of linked genealogies in the world. The primary database was derived from LDS church records. Added were additional genealogies submitted by the general public over many years, in a few precursor, computer-oriented systems such as Ancestral File and Pedigree Resource File.

Also added to the system were many historical records extracted from films at the Family History Library in Salt Lake City. These were originally not linked, but many have now been incorporated into the linked trees.

Beginning in the 21st century, the files became editable by LDS members at first, then by the public at large. The church created a new website to do this, <https://new.FamilySearch.org>. The website was not part of the general website for historical research because the creators knew there were many lessons to learn before finalizing the system. Last year, the church created a mirror of the data in new.familysearch.org and incorporated it into their new system within the main website at <https://FamilySearch.org>, as "Family Tree". Since that time, modifications to the data in new.FamilySearch.org were automatically updated into the new system, *but not necessarily the other direction*. That is, that data modified in Family Tree does not always get modified in the older system. The older system is scheduled to be retired as soon as they are confident the new system is performing as needed.

Who has access to Family Tree?

All persons have access to Family Tree once they are signed into <https://FamilySearch.org>. If you are not signed in, clicking on the link will ask you to sign in or register.

How do you tell if you have access?

If you already have a user name and password issued by FamilySearch, you go to the main website: <https://FamilySearch.org>, and click in the upper right-hand corner "Sign In".

If you have not yet registered, go to the same place. There is a link there; "Create a New Account".

You must provide an e-mail account to register. This is a security precaution to prevent accounts by fictitious persons. Within hours of creating a new account, you will receive an e-mail confirming your new username.

Next to the logo for FamilySearch there is a link to "Family Tree". Clicking the mouse button on this link takes you to a linked pedigree chart with your name at the center. If this is your first access as a non-member, there will be no one connected to you. Latter Day Saints members will see their tree as it was in new.FamilySearch.org.

Who may edit entries in Family Tree?

Family Tree is done in a wiki format. Everyone who has access has the ability to modify the data. That said, it is important to remember that data should not be modified except to improve it.

Adding additional data is not so restricted. Let's see an example. I have grandfather's name as Maurice, pronounced "Morris". If I find him existing in the system as "Morris", I should change the datum to "Maurice" as his birth record indicates. "Morris" should then be added as an alternate name.

If I were to find him as "Maurice Morris", I should again alter the record to improve it.

If my record says he was born in Los Angeles, California, and the existing record says Glendale, Los Angeles, California, I should NOT alter the original. The original is better than my record. If you are not sure which is the better datum, do not change the original until you can say *why* it is better than what was there before

With the exception of names, only the best data submitted will be displayed. In the case of names, you may add alternatives, rather than replacing existing data. This enables your distant relatives to find the same relative in the system if they only have a different spelling.

I submitted GEDCOMs to Salt Lake. Is it in Family Tree?

The Ancestral File was added to Family Tree. Early submissions to the Pedigree Resource File were also added, but there was a cut-off date. Recent submissions to the Pedigree Resource File are available under the main page of FamilySearch.org. You must click the link to "Genealogies".

If your data did not get added, you may still add it one-person-at-a-time to Family Tree. There is no provision to add via GEDCOM because of so much duplication.

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from Home Page

Can I submit photographs to Family Tree?

FamilySearch is now testing a system where photos can be attached to persons in the tree.

It is not yet fully tested, and at this time it is only open to LDS members. You will notice as you view any person's details in Family Tree, there is an icon next to each name, colored to indicate sex. For anyone connected to a photo, this icon will be replaced by a portrait, cut from the photo. The submitter controls the cropping of the portrait.



Maurice Joseph Keffer  [View Tree](#)

KFPG-RZK
22 February 1910 – 3 August 1982

[Details](#) [Photos](#) 0

from Details Page

When I click on a name, the pop-up box gives me an option to View Tree or View Person. What does what?

Clicking on “View Tree” moves that person to the main position on the tree, thus to the left side of the pedigree. Clicking on “View Person” takes you to a details page. From this page you can see all of the data attached to this person. Beneath the vital records are relationship boxes. On the left side are relationship boxes for each marriage, stacked above one another. On the right side are boxes for that person within his parent’s household(s). It is not uncommon to see more than one set of parent boxes, again stacked. This may be because there are different people attributing different parents, because the same parents have not yet been merged, or because there are relationships to other parents such as step-parents, foster parents or adopted parents.

How do I edit existing data?

Once you have gone to the person’s detail page by clicking on “View person”, You would click on the datum you wish to improve or add. The existing datum will show new links to; Edit, Delete, Close. Delete does not show on the Name data, because you cannot leave a record without something in the name field. Clicking on Edit allows you to change the existing field. Whenever you edit existing data you are asked to explain the “Reason this information is Correct”. It is not necessary to complete this field, but it is courteous. Some contributors may be offended that you edit their data without justification. The wiki system works best when we endeavor to observe such courtesies.



Your explanation may cite the source it came from. Sourcing is very important to the quality of the database. There is a further paragraph on sourcing later and a great deal of effort was made to make it easy to source each bit of datum.

Editing relationships is less straightforward. If you want to edit the relationship of a couple, there is a button to click to Edit Relationship. But, if you want to change the relationship of a child to his parents, you must hover the mouse over the name of the child. Then the link should appear to Edit Relationship. (This should be on the right side of the screen. If the child is listed only on the left side of the screen, you need to first go to that person, so he is listed on both sides)
As an example, a child is listed with two sets of parents. Both list his mother, but one is actually a stepfather that adopted the child. You may edit the relationship to the parents where there is a stepfather. Then you may choose to edit the relationship type to either the father or the mother. Under both sections for father

and mother, appears the word “biological”. Clicking on this allows you to change it to Adopted, Step or Guardian.

Does the system retain previous data?

Yes, every change is documented in a history of the data field. Even though only the most recent datum is displayed you may search the history after clicking on the data field. Whenever you click on the “History” link there, you’ll also see a “Restore” button. If your data has been changed, or you think the original was better, you may restore the field to a previous state. Again, you are asked to provide reasoning for the change. On the rare occasions when users get into a “Restore” battle, the church reserves the right to intervene and remove the ability to edit it further without going through them.

Recent Changes for Birth X

Information	Details	
Birth Changed 3 October 2012 by jameskeffer1	Birth 22 February 1910 Montgomery, Kanawha, West Virginia, United States Reason This Information Is Correct Property tax statement from Kanawha County for Agnes Dalton Keffer shows their residence was in Kanawha, rather than Fayette County.	Current
Birth Changed 3 October 2012 by jameskeffer1	Birth 22 February 1910 Montgomery, Kanawha, West Virginia, United States	Restore
Birth Added 29 April 2012 by FamilySearch	Birth 22 FEB 1910 Montgomery, West Virginia	Restore

Can I go directly to a person without following the tree from myself?

Yes. There is a search function to allow you to find anyone by name or by their record number.

The system also keeps a history of the people you have previously visited. So you may be able to go to a person you have previously visited by looking at your history.



Can I tell if someone edits my submission?

There is a “Watch List” to have the system send you e-mail when edits are made to someone you have added to your watch list. From the person’s details page, just below your name in the upper right hand corner is a star icon for “Watch”, and a silhouette icon for “History”, if you want to see the recent visits.

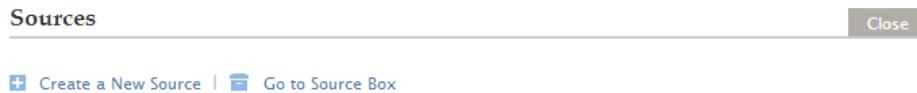
Can I give other data not in the Vital Records section?

Just below the Vital Records section is an “Other Information” section. There are many standard events or facts you can choose from, or you can create a custom event or fact to share important data.

Notes and sources?

The system for adding sources in the Family Tree is much improved over the old system. There is a way to quickly add sources from the Historical Records, by adding the record to your “Source Box”, then attaching the source to the individual within Family Tree. I like to have two tabs open at the same time with Historical Records in one and Family Tree in another.

There is also a link to “Create a New Source”. This is designed to add sources from other than the FamilySearch system. You may provide a web address to help others find the source directly. Within the “Describe the Record” box, you can quote the content of the source you are citing.



You can also tag specific events with their sources, so someone can see exactly where the information came from. See the graphic in the paragraph above about editing.

The FamilySearch technical people intend to import the older notes and sources from <https://new.FamilySearch.org>, but this has not yet happened.

At this time, they seem to be discouraging notes, as such. As mentioned before, you may add custom events and facts, so much can be documented this way. There is also a specific way to handle disagreements over data. You may add “Discussions” to an individual if your data differs from the existing record, but you are not confident that is better than the original.

As an example, let's say you find someone attached to parents, who was born before their marriage. You might want to flag this with a discussion saying you suspect he was actually a nephew, whose parents died, and giving those details. If you cannot actually document this, you shouldn't change the present assignment (which was based on census records). Using the “Discussions” helps others find the connections you may not have been able to find, without being discourteous to the original submitter.

Where can I find additional documentation?

There are videos available to the public teaching how to use the Family Tree. After signing in to <https://FamilySearch.org> click on the help tab. The first section lists resource on Family Tree.



from Home Page

Family Tree

- [See all Family Tree training materials \(manuals, videos, etc.\)](#)
- [Gaining Access to the FamilySearch Family Tree](#)

from the Help Page

The Orange County Family History Center has a binder behind the counter on “Using the FamilySearch Family Tree”. Any patron may ask to see the documentation.

This provides valuable information on wiki etiquette, and how to handle abuses of the system.