

# Questions & Answers from GotAncestors?!

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Below are the questions submitted by registrants to this year's Got Ancestors?! seminar held in Grand Rapids Oct. 12 and 13, 2012. We had many answers to these questions; too many to list all here in this article. Some answers are suggested places to look and others are very detailed. Take a look. You may find the answer to your questions! Thanks to all who contributed the Questions and the Answers!

**QUESTION:** Vickey Parker     To narrow the search of common last names, is there a trick one could use?

**ANSWER:** I've found it depends on how badly they wanted to hide in the records. Often you'll find middle initials used regularly which can help distinguish one Jones (and any other common name) from another. Spelling of given names on my JONES line was unusual. Samuell was always spelled double 'el'. There were other common signs that I had the right family - unusual given names. Of course my JONES line wanted to be found. I am working on a SMITH line that wasn't so considerate and I'm stuck in New York on that one.

For on-line searches limit scope to time period and place; search for uncommon collateral (related) person e.g. "Isaac" in Dutchess County, New York got me to his brother "John King" and others in the family in a census. In 1880, "Eliza" King with children "Harry" and "Jo" got me from Rhode Island to Maine where her husband was absent from the household - out to sea as it turns out.

Search Using: First Name only; county, city; age or age range; spouse; Time Period

**QUESTION:** Sue Irvine             Where would I find records (1745-1812) for a Quaker who married a non-Quaker in central New York? Assuming no birth records, where would the children be baptized?

**ANSWER:** S. R. offers this suggestion: "Start with Henshaw's Encyclopedia of American Quaker Genealogy. There is an incomplete index of names at [www.swarthmorecollege.edu/library/friends/hazard/](http://www.swarthmorecollege.edu/library/friends/hazard/) for upstate New York Quakers on line. The LDS library has many Quaker records on film if you know what "Meeting" you are looking for (see above link), but I found their catalogue hard to navigate. It was a while ago, it may be better."

S.D. also mentioned this source: "I use the following - <http://goo.gl/eLXEY>. This is the Swarthmore Friends Historical Library, which holds the Records of Quaker Meetings. It's a great source.

Swarthmore College :: Friends Historical Library :: Records of Quaker Meetings at Friends Historical <http://www.swarthmore.edu>. Friends Historical Library (FHL) is an official depository for the records of many North American yearly meetings of the Society of Friends. Its holdings include over 3700 linear feet of original archives: membership books, minutes, and other original records. FHL also holds over 2500 reels of micro...

QUESTION: Sally Akehi        My great aunt, born 1894 in Iowa, raised in Allegan MI, also married there, but left her Husband & baby in 1915 and went...somewhere!! Chicago, we think. We know maiden name, 1st married name, but NOT 2nd married name! What resources do we have for IL with searchable field for maiden name?? How to break thru this brick wall??

ANSWER: The current statewide index ends in 1910. You can check the Cook County marriage records for your great aunt at [www.cookcountygenealogy.com](http://www.cookcountygenealogy.com). Their database has marriage license information up thru 1961. Try searching for her at FamilySearch.org as well. They have two statewide databases with marriage records up to 1935. They don't have many records indexed, but you never know, you might get lucky.

QUESTION: Mary Alt Does the Allen County Library have confederate soldier records from the Civil War

ANSWER: The Genealogy Center website has an outstanding online catalog you can search at <http://www.genealogycenter.org>. A search for civil war confederate results in over 2,000 titles! Some are regimental histories; others involve individual soldiers. If you add the word records in the search, you can narrow it down to about 350 titles.

QUESTION: Betty Snow        What are resources are there for researching people who came to the US via Canada?

For example, Philip Geib served under Custer in the Civil War. I do not know who his parents were. I also do not know whether they also migrated from Germany to Canada. He was not in the 1860 US Census and not in the subsequent Canadian census. He was in the previous Canadian census living as a teenager in a family with a different surname. (I suspect the wife in that family was his relative.) He was born in Germany (sometimes indicated as Prussia). He, however, immigrated before Canada was keeping records of immigrants. I also don't know whether there would be records in the early 1860s for people moving from Canada to the US, probably Michigan. If there are, where and what are they?

ANSWER: I found that my ancestor, Cyrus MEREDITH, came to Michigan before 1863 because he registered for the Civil War draft in June of that year. Here he is with some of his brothers & a cousin from the U.S., Civil War Draft Registrations @ [ancestry.com](http://ancestry.com).

- ◆ Meredith, Cyrus, age 28, farmer, married, b. Canada
- ◆ Meredith, Abram, age 30, farmer, unmarried, b. Canada
- ◆ Meredith, William, age 30, farmer, married
- ◆ Meredith, Charles, 22, farmer, unmarried

Intention records. Cyrus MEREDITH's father was William. They were from Grimsby Twp, Lincoln Co, Ontario. He filed his Intention to become a Citizen of the United States, "renouncing forever all allegiance and fidelity to the Queen of Britain and Ireland. This he signed August 10, 1861 at Sanilac Circuit Court in Lexington as "William Merredeth," witnessed by Samuel Burgess, clerk.

If you can find a name in this index, you can get Naturalization records - for Michigan...

<http://goo.gl/fI3TZ>

Canada research; Depends on when and where you're looking, Quebec, Ontario, or elsewhere. Ontario, the Maritimes and the West is difficult before confederation (1867) outside of the French. Ancestry.world, available at GRPL, has census and registrations of vital records, including some before confederation. The downtown branch has some published resources, e.g. The History of Simcoe County, etc. The Drouin Collection through Ancestry has many records, not all Catholic. The library also has several published series on early French settlers. There are also publications on "Empire Loyalists" who left the US. Unfortunately, 19th century immigration in Ontario is best documented in land records, and it takes a trip.

QUESTION: Patti Faist            My ancestor came from Norfolk, England about 1838 and settled near Cleveland. I have not found him on any passenger ship lists. Could he have come into Canada first? How common was this and what routes am I missing?

QUESTION: Brenda Geselman            I would like to know more about how to research and find out how my ancestor came to America 2 years before Ellis Island. Where can I find his papers?

ANSWERS (for both the above questions):

Less than 10% of passengers were recorded before late 1800s. Also, there were many ports of entry, Baltimore, Philadelphia, St. Louis, etc. Castle Garden was the largest on the east coast early on and Ellis Island was only NYC ships. To find the port, look at migration patterns, especially of ethnic group. Many of the Germans who ended up in Ohio came by way of the Mississippi, etc. You may find information in county or area histories. This underscores the importance of learning about ethnic groups - the migration patterns are key.

A list of possible records to search:

- ◆ St Albans List
- ◆ Genforum Cuyahoga
- ◆ Census – neighbours
- ◆ Church Records
- ◆ Death Record
- ◆ Marriage Record
- ◆ GenWeb
- ◆ Register of Deeds
- ◆ Voter Lists
- ◆ Newspaper
- ◆ Siblings
- ◆ Probate Records

There is a website for Castle Garden, which preceded Ellis Island. Otherwise, try passenger lists online. If he was naturalized , look for naturalization records in the state(s) where he lived.

QUESTION: George Bayard What is the best way African Americans can trace the link back to Africa?

ANSWERS: According to some of the episodes of "Who Do You Think You Are?" and Professor Henry Gates' program "Finding Your Roots", some success has been found using DNA research methods. Here's a great explanation how that works <http://www.africanancestry.com/using-dna.html>

- ◆ Oral Histories
- ◆ Check underground railroad sources
- ◆ Check "master" list (not fully explained)
- ◆ Check Coloured Census

QUESTION: George Bayard How can I change the official census records if I find a mistake?

ANSWER: You can't correct a census. It's a government document. You can correct a transcription. There is a button to push on Ancestry and then you enter the correction with your reasoning for it. It takes a while for it to appear as they triple check your information. (You could be mistaken too) I haven't tried Family Search or Heritage Quest.

"Wouldn't it be nice if you could correct the official census records like you can with county vital records? Unfortunately, you can't change the official census record. The US Government never created a system to correct mistakes. They will be there forever. However, you can help other researchers find people in the census at Ancestry.com by adding alternate information into their database. To add alternate information, go to the image of the census pages that was indexed incorrectly (or had incorrect information on the census.) Look for a table of names, ages, etc. called Ancestry Index below the image. If you don't see this table it is hidden. To show the table, click on the short gray bar within the tan area just below the image. The index should open below the image. Click on the person you would like to change. A new window will open where you can type in your alternate information. Click submit and you're done! FamilySearch is working on a similar system to add alternate information into their database as well."

QUESTION: Kay Kiel I can't find parents in 1940 Census in Michigan. Why? Is there some place else to look?

ANSWER: The indexing is still new. If you can't find your parents at the Ancestry.com 1940 census, try the one at FamilySearch.org. Different teams of indexers did these indexes and individual names may have been transcribed differently.

Suggestion 2 - assume that if you can't find someone that the indexing is the problem. Avoid the last name by using first name, birth date, and likely relationships of others in the household. It has worked for me, but I also knew the county to search.

If you know that your parents were in a particular place, such as Grand Rapids, in 1940 try using a City Directory to find neighbors, then search the census for a neighbor. Your parents may be in the census but missed on the index.

QUESTION: Dale Darling Quebec census and vital records--1800 to 1860. Vermont town records.

ANSWER: The Drouin Collection! The Drouin Collection is a huge set of microfilms of Quebec records (and other French Catholic areas in Canada) containing mainly baptisms, marriages and burials. You can access the Drouin Collection online at Ancestry.com. Ancestry.com has indexed the records, which makes that fairly easy to search. Most of the records will be in French. The Allen County Public Library also has a complete set of the microfilms. The films are organized by location, then by date.

Another source for vital record information, land grants and census extracts is a database run by the National Archives of Quebec. The web address is <http://recherche-c.voicimafamille.info/ecis.jsp>. Click on the Quebec flag, type a name in the search field and click search.

For a list of other websites to search for Quebec records go to [www.genealogysearch.org/canada/quebec.html](http://www.genealogysearch.org/canada/quebec.html)."

The Drouin Collection is on Ancestry.com, too.

QUESTION: Claudette Darling Some of my ancestors lived in Indiana during the 1870's (between census years). How can I find them? Does Indiana have a State Census or are there county censuses for that time period?

That's a tough one. It does not appear many state census records exist for Indiana. I'd try this site: <http://www.censusfinder.com/indiana.htm>. Each county has a list of local census (if they exist) as well as gazetteers, farm directories, atlas subscriber lists and that sort. If you know a local area, contact a library there and ask for the reference librarian for additional records that aren't online.

Another recommendation is to check out the Genealogy Center at the Allen County Public Library for alternate sources in that time period.

- ◆ County Censuses
- ◆ City Directories
- ◆ Look in a book for state resources

QUESTION: Denise Fedko What kind of documentation is available and how do I find it for ancestors living in New England in the 1700's and early 1800's?

ANSWER: First place to look is the "Mass. Town Records before 1850" series. If you have access to the [americanancestors.org](http://americanancestors.org) website (like at the GRPL) you can search all available records at once. A membership to New England Genealogical Historic Society (they run the site) is well worth the cost and you can access from home.

If you find a Massachusetts-born person in a Michigan 19th century census, but don't know where in Massachusetts to look for records, try "An index of pioneers from Massachusetts to the West: especially the state of Michigan" (Google eBook).

Tons of sources. Easiest are published town and county vital statistics, both at our library and more at the Allen County library. The GRPL has a membership with the New England Historical and

Genealogical Society, an excellent source and free at the library. "The Great Migration" project by the NEHGS involved publishing all they have on the earliest immigrants to the continent. The first part was a three-volume set called The Great Migration Begins, documenting those who are mentioned at all between 1620 and 1630, even if they died, didn't stay, or are a mystery. After that they have progressed through the 1630's with volumes organized alphabetically. You'd have to check Allen County library catalogue to get the latest. The series isn't finished yet but I believe it will end with 1640. You should be careful and proceed backwards very carefully to make sure their connection is accurate. In other words, don't start with The Great Migration.

QUESTION: Judy Dood        How do I find out about a club in Grand Rapids called H.O.H. in the early to mid-1900s. It is not listed in the city directories, as they did not have their own building.

ANSWERS: Try State of Michigan resources, possibly under a non-profit/business registration.

- ◆ History books/pamphlets
- ◆ Ethnic/geographical/church
- ◆ Church records for Kent Co.

QUESTION: Mary Bernthal    Following mid-19th to early 20th century immigration to the major port cities, many of ancestors made boat journeys via the Great Lakes to Michigan and the Ohio River to Ohio and Indiana. Are there any passenger manifests or other resources available for these passages?

ANSWERS: Google; Search PERSI for Ohio River travel history to possibly identify resources that might be lists or leads to more information. Looking in to industries travelling these routes might offer more clues.

QUESTION: Erma Shaw        1) How to locate ancestors that seem to be missing off two years of census reports, but is included on years before and years after? 2) How to determine the maiden name of female family members i.e my great grandmother Caroline Medley in MS ? 3) How to determine the date of death?

1. May have went to work or live with another family member; or people who can't spell put info down; Look for neighbours from the census you do know; browse area
2. Death – a - Consider historical period, b – Obit of a relative, c – Find a Grave, Check close cemeteries
3. PLACES TO FIND A FEMALE'S MAIDEN OR MARRIED NAME  
Following provided by: Shirley M. De Boer CGSM
  - A. Beginning in 1850 U. S. census, watch for given names and other surnames in the same house-hold or next door; these are clues for daughter-in-law, mother, mother-in-law, sister, and father-in-law. (First census that identities relationship is 1880)
  - B. Church records: baptism, marriage, burial. Search PERSI, the PERiodical Source Index by surname and/or place name (location). There may be a number of pages of church records in a journal, but only the name of the church and location will be indexed in PERSI.
  - C. Diaries, letters and/or manuscript collections. Don't forget to "Google" the location and inquire!
  - D. Grantor land records when property is sold; search for an estate settlement.
  - E. Death records that include the female, that of her husband, children, parents, brothers and sisters. Birth records, especially Family History Library (FHL) films (all U.S) and marriage applications and/or marriage records.

- F. Newspapers: in addition to obituaries, use social columns, announcements, personal notices, etc.
- G. Civil War pension records and widow's pension applications often contain a copy of the marriage record or written information concerning the date and place. They also include children's names and birthdates as well as the death date/record of soldier, his wife and possibly other wives.
- H. Tombstones carry maiden and married names; visit the cemetery in person if you can.
- I. Photographs often carry information on the back and sometimes the photographer gives a place.
- J. Mothers, daughters and sisters were the letter writers; collateral relatives may have copies.
- K. State libraries and archives; are easily reached on the Internet.
- L. Emigration papers from former country, ship manifests, immigration/naturalization papers, U.S.

QUESTION: Ruth Waybrant - I have 2 old bibles (1700s & 1800s) plus hundreds of letters from the 1800s & early 1900s. How can I find the best place to donate these materials where they will be preserved AND available for others to use easily?

ANSWERS:

- ◆ Keeping the items together in a group and trying to find the MOST appropriate place
- ◆ Checking the finding aids for an institution and seeing if they care for things and have similar items
- ◆ Does place have climate control?
- ◆ Free access for accessing the materials?
- ◆ Consider the above for digitizing also
- ◆ Local Historical Societies?
- ◆ Libraries – eg Allen County Public Library

QUESTION: Patricia Hornbeck          Sources in England & Ireland to find people.

ANSWERS:

- ◆ Origins.net (website)
- ◆ <http://www.google.co.uk/>
- ◆ Ancestry.com
- ◆ FamilySearch
- ◆ Local Govt and Cities in Ancestors' hometown

QUESTION: Judy Wilson          Why can't I find my family in the 1870 Census?

ANSWERS: The surname may have been missed or mis-spelled in the index. You might be searching in the wrong location. You might not be using Soundex. You might be entering too much information in the Advanced Search. Try using less information or doing a wildcard search - or - you might be not entering enough information.