



AGS Ezine

Newsletter of the Arkansas Genealogical Society Vol. 18 No. 3 July 2023

Leisa Horness, editor

Coming Events ---

AGS Conference

Via Zoom

Oct. 14, 2023

www.argensoc.org

Arkansas Scottish Festival

Batesville, AR

Oct. 27-29, 2023

www.arscottishfest.com

Effective Use of Ancestry.Com

by Scott E. Lee

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Here are some tips on how to most effectively use Ancestry.com's website to build your family tree. They have software that uses other people's trees to suggest how to extend your own tree. Possible matches in census records, death certificates, military records and many others are provided as "hints" based on those found in other people's trees.

This is a huge time saver because most of the hints in my experience, are correct. However, you must keep in mind that a few of these hints will be wrong. Remember that these hints are based on examining other people's trees, and some people are more careful than others.

The first hint they provide is frequently "Ancestry Member Trees," which allows you to compare a person in your tree to a matching person in someone else's tree. You can then pull information from the other tree into yours. I strongly recommend never doing this! You will pull other people's mistakes into your tree. Look at the hint, but never, never click the accept button.

Even though "Ancestry Member Trees" is usually the first hint, I recommend delaying that to be the last place you look. The reason is that it may bias you with incorrect information that can cloud your judgment when reviewing source records.

My recommendation is to first look at all the hints except "Ancestry Member Trees". Second, click the search button in the upper right corner to do your own search through the many source records. Finally, after exhausting all other avenues, compare what you found with other trees by clicking the "Ancestry Member Trees" hint.



Effective Use of Ancestry.com (cont.)

By Scott E. Lee

If you see differences between your tree and someone else's tree, don't click the accept button. Instead, look at the source records in the other tree. If you have done your job right, you will frequently have more source records than the other tree. Sometimes the other tree may have few, if any, sources. That is a red flag that the other researcher is not an experienced genealogist, and you should have more faith in your own conclusions than theirs. If they do have sources in their tree, compare their sources with yours to decide which conclusion is correct.

Only add a source to your tree when you are confident it matches the person. Just because the name matches, doesn't mean it is the correct person. For example, if you are looking for the parents of Sam Jones and find a census record hint listing a child with the right name and age, that is not enough. This may be presented as a hint because of a mistake made by someone else. You must find more convincing evidence. Try looking for additional records before adding that census record. You may find Sam's marriage record that lists the names of his parents, or an obituary may give the names of his siblings. Sometimes it is helpful to print several sources on paper and spread them out on your desk to help see the big picture. Highlight important parts with a highlighter. Ask yourself, what evidence do I have that these are the right parents? Remember that a hint is just a hint. Never trust it just because Ancestry presents it as a hint.

When you add a source to your tree, Ancestry automatically fills in dates, places, and relatives, so you don't need to type that information. Most of the time, the transcription is correct and complete, but not always. Especially with blurry images and sloppy handwriting, there may be errors. Even with good handwriting and sharp images, there may be errors or omissions. Always look at the document image and verify it is correct and complete. I frequently find that there is missing information. For example, a marriage license may list the parents of the bride and groom, but they may be missing in the transcription.

Standardize dates and places. A date may be transcribed as "10/15/32", "Oct 15, 1932" or "15 October 1932". If you click in the date field, Ancestry will offer the standardized date, "15 Oct 1932", which matches the standard format used by genealogists. Likewise, clicking the place field will offer a standardized version. If it lists only a state, "USA" will be added. It will also add the county if missing.

Finally, take the AncestryDNA® test. It will help verify that your research is correct. Your DNA results will allow Ancestry to construct a ThruLines® report showing how to relate to your DNA matches. To make this most effective, build your tree down from your ancestors, listing their descendants for as many generations as possible. This is because ThruLines only works if your tree and your DNA match's tree have people in common. Encourage your relatives (immediate family and more distant cousins) to also test.

A summary of my recommendations: Be skeptical of hints. Save "Ancestry Member Trees" hints for last and never click the accept button on it. Only add sources when you are confident of a match. Verify transcriptions with the document's image. Standardize dates and places. Take the DNA test and encourage family members to test.

AGS Conference Speaker Lori Thornton

AGS is pleased to present one of two speakers at our 2023 Fall Conference which will be on October 14 at 9:00 am. It will be free to anyone who registers and will be held via Zoom.



Lori Thornton is a professional genealogist specializing in southern states, (especially North Carolina, Tennessee, and Mississippi) and in religious records. She speaks on genealogical topics at local, regional, and national events. Lori earned a Master of Religious Education degree in 1990 from the Cincinnati Bible Seminary. She earned a Master of Science in Library and Information Science from the University of Kentucky in 1994. During the academic year, she works as a librarian at a liberal arts university.

Lori authored "Research in Mississippi" in the National Genealogical Society's "Research in the States" series. Lori is excited to speak at the Arkansas Genealogical Society conference this year and her topics are:

- *Deep South Roots: Alabama and Mississippi Ancestors*
- *North Carolina Research from The Comfort of Home*

Upcoming “Kitchen Roundtable Talks”

By Mary Jane Baxley

Kitchen Roundtable Talk: Techniques for African American Research

Our inaugural Kitchen Roundtable Talk was well received, and we would like to thank all who participated. The Arkansas Genealogical Society will hold our next session on Tuesday, August 22, at 6:30 PM CDT. Carla Hines Coleman will lead a discussion about techniques for African American research. With the modern blended families of today, this is a field that is of interest to us all.

Each month, we will select a genealogical topic or application and engage in a lively discussion among a group of participants online. This is a wonderful opportunity to meet new friends in the genealogical community and connect with those who have common research interests. Our casual format is welcoming to all.

We eagerly invite our members to suggest topics of interest and encourage volunteers to lead discussions on subjects they are particularly passionate about. It is important to note that this initiative is a work in progress, and we anticipate adjusting based on trial and error. Your participation and feedback are invaluable as we refine our approach.

To secure your spot, please register through the following

link: https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZcodeiuqTwoH9dii4QuH_q3MQFPQXr-vp0n

Thank you,
Mary Jane

Information about “Kitchen Roundtable Talks” topics can be found at this link:

<https://argensoc.org/kitchen/>

AGS Would Like To Hear From You!

The Arkansas Genealogical Society welcomes news, events, and comments, etc. from other genealogical groups within the state or information that is Arkansas related.

Please send your news to us at agscontributions@gmail.com.

So, You Have Arkansas Roots?

Do you know that the largest published collection of Arkansas genealogical material is found in the back files of the Arkansas Family Historian, published four times a year by the Arkansas Genealogical Society?

It began publication in 1962. The back files from 1962-2016 are freely available at the society's website at <https://argensoc.org/afh/>. Each volume or issue features a full name index. Consulting these back files at the beginning of your Arkansas roots journey may facilitate your search for your hard-to-find Arkansas ancestors.

Russell P. Baker, Editor, Arkansas Family Historian

Administrative Stuff

Contributions: If you have news for the Ezine, send it to ezine@argensoc.org – Thanks!

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