Caring for Your Family Tree
How to Prune and Graft in New Branches

Diana Elder AG®, AGL™

Diana@familylocket.com
https://familylocket.com/

Tree hinting programs and online family trees generate correct **and** incorrect information for your ancestors. Accepting hints and new ancestors without careful analysis can result in adding incorrect details and people to your family tree

Learn to carefully analyze the relationships, dates, and places before adding new sources or ancestors to your tree. Discover methods to separate identities of same-name individuals and ways to keep track of your research findings.

Overview of Family Trees
- One wrong branch in a family tree results in multiple incorrect ancestors.
- Online family trees are easy to build but can be difficult to verify.
  - Collaborative family trees offer the opportunity for anyone to share information.
    - FamilySearch Family Tree
      - "The world's largest online family tree"
      - https://www.familysearch.org/tree/overview
    - Wiki Tree
      - "Together we're growing an accurate single-family tree using DNA and traditional genealogical sources."
      - https://www.wikitree.com/
  - Online Family Trees
    - Ancestry Trees
      - Can be public, private, or private & non-searchable
      - May have multiple family trees, but only one can be connected to a DNA test
      - Ancestry Thrulines uses family trees to provide suggestions for common ancestors for DNA matches
    - MyHeritage
      - Allows users to create family websites with multiple family trees
      - The Theory of Relativity uses family trees to connect DNA matches and provide a path to a common ancestor

- Personal Databases such as Family Tree Maker, RootsMagic, Legacy Family Tree, and Ancestral Quest offer many advantages.
    - Can sync with online trees.
    - Each program has powerful features for reports and research tools.
    - Provide the ability to store information for living relatives – important with DNA connections.
    - Available without internet access.
    - Allows publishing and sharing your tree through GEDCOM files.
    - You have complete control of your data.
- Tree-hinting programs generate good and bad sources for our ancestors
    - Each website uses a unique algorithm for determining hints.
    - The family tree-building websites base their hints on indexed records.
    - Hinting programs use vital facts for an individual, such as birth date, location, and relationships.
    - Tree hinting programs can't correlate complicated evidence to prove relationships or separate people of the same name.

Verifying the Family Tree

- The solution to verifying your family tree is to develop good research habits.
- Start with what is known and document each family tree link using sources and DNA if desired.
- The Genealogy Proof Standard provides a guide for accurately identifying and linking ancestors.[1]
    - Reasonably exhaustive research
    - Source Citations
    - Tests of analysis and correlation
    - Resolution of conflicting evidence
    - Written conclusions

Use The Research Process To Organize And Focus Your Efforts

- **Objective:** create a focus for the project, whether to identify an individual, discover relationships, or learn more about an event or situation.

- **Timeline Analysis** – Review each source and evaluate for source type, information, and evidence.

---

[1] Board for Certification of Genealogy, *Genealogy Standards, 2nd Ed.* (Nashville : Turner Publishing and Ancestry, 2019), 2-3.

- **Sources: any material or person that contains genealogical information**
  - **Original source** – the actual document or image of it: censuses, certificates, ships passenger list, etc.
  - **Derivative source** – indexed or abstracted information created from an original record: indexed marriage collection on FamilySearch, a book listing all the gravesites in a cemetery, an abstract of a will on an online family tree.
  - **Authored source** – an online family tree, a family story, a biographical sketch, a research report, etc.

- **Information: the facts found in the source**
  - **Primary** – firsthand knowledge of the informant
  - **Secondary** - secondhand knowledge of the informant
  - **Undetermined or unknown** – the informant is unknown

- **Evidence: what you pull from the source information to answer your research question**
  - **Direct evidence** clearly states the answer to a research question
  - **Indirect evidence** answers the research question when combined with other evidence
  - **Negative evidence** occurs in the absence of an expected situation

- **Tips on Evidence Analysis**
  - Make evidence linkage bundles of records for the same individual as things become clear.
  - Color-code individuals in the rows of a research log or table to differentiate between people of the same name.

- **Locality Research**

  - Pay attention to locations in the timeline analysis
  - Learn about the area your ancestor lived in and the kind of records available
  - Create a simple locality guide with facts about the history and geography of the area.
  - Include maps and links to websites with helpful information.
  - Learn about the jurisdictions of the locality – the records could be kept on the national, state, county, city/township, or church level.
  - Discover the parent county or county boundary changes.
  - Locate the neighboring counties since records could also be there.
  - The FamilySearch Research Wiki is the best place to start. https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Main_Page
  - Search by location, topic, or click on the map.

- Use the FamilySearch Catalog to see what records for the area might be available online or at the Family History Library. https://www.familysearch.org/catalog/search

- **Research Plan**

  - Create a summary of known facts based on the timeline analysis.
  - Formulate a hypothesis to guide the research.
  - Identify possible sources and a strategy to search them.
  - Ideas to include in a research plan:
    - Look for missing information – search other websites and repositories.
    - Locate original records if only an indexed record has been used.
    - Research the FAN club of the neighbor, Friends, Associates, and Neighbors.

- **Research Log**

  - Track all research in a log and create a source citation the first time a source is searched.
  - Create a research log spreadsheet in Google Docs or Excel.
  - For a free sample research log and template, visit http://familylocket.com/about/

- **Source Citations**

  - Document your research with complete source citations in your research log. Include enough information to lead others to your sources and help you relocate them.
  - Five questions to answer when creating a source citation.
    - Who created the source?
    - What is the source?
    - When was the source created or when did the event happen?
    - Where can you view the source?
    - Where in the database, book, is the specific source?

- **Write Conclusions**

  - Writing a conclusion offers the opportunity to explain the research, resolve conflicts, and provides something tangible to share.
  - Upload a research report with source citations backing up each genealogical fact to online trees.
  - Use the notes feature on Ancestry or personal genealogical databases to write summaries.
  - Write a life sketch on FamilySearch.

Fixing the Tree

- Once you discover mistaken identities or relationships, start by correcting your database first.
- Next, create additional records for people of the same name – unmerging identities – on collaborative and online family trees.
- Add sources to the ancestors to support your conclusions, and upload your research report or proof summary explaining your reasoning.
- Email cousins with incorrect information – offer your research report or proof summary.

For Further Study

Board for Certification of Genealogists, *Genealogy Standards, 2nd ed.* Nashville and New York: Turner Publishing, 2019.

Dyer, Nicole. "Genealogy Evidence Analysis – Free Template and Lucinda Keaton Sample." *Family Locket.* https://familylocket.com/genealogy-evidence-analysis-free-template-and-sample/

Dyer, Nicole, and Diana Elder. "The Research Like a Pro Genealogy Podcast." *FamilyLocket.* https://familylocket.com/the-research-like-a-pro-genealogy-podcast/

Elder, Diana. "Put it in a Table: Understanding and Organizing Research Findings." *Family Locket.* https://familylocket.com/put-it-in-a-table-understanding-and-organizing-research-findings/

Elder, Diana, and Nicole Dyer. *Research Like a Pro: A Genealogist's Guide.* FamilyLocket Genealogists. 2018.

Elder, Diana. "Create Your Own Research Guide." *Family Locket.* https://familylocket.com/create-your-own-research-guide/

Elder, Diana. "Source Citations: The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly." *Family Locket.* http://familylocket.com/source-citations-the-good-the-bad-and-the-ugly/.

Elder, Diana. "Research Like a Pro, Part 2: Analyze Your Sources." *Family Locket.* https://familylocket.com/research-like-a-pro-part-2-analyze-your-sources/

Elder, Diana. "Track Your Family with a Timeline." *Family Locket.* https://familylocket.com/track-your-family-with-a-timeline/

Elder, Diana. "Original or Derivative Sources: What's the Big Deal?" *Family Locket.* https://familylocket.com/original-or-derivative-sources-whats-the-big-deal/

Jones, Thomas W. *Mastering Genealogical Proof*. Arlington, Virginia: National Genealogical Society, 2013.

Jones, Thomas W. *Mastering Genealogical Documentation*. Arlington, Virginia: National Genealogical Society, 2017.

Mills, Elizabeth Shown. *Evidence? Citation & Analysis for the Family Historian.* Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co., 1997; revised, 20th printing, 2014.

Mills, Elizabeth Shown. "QuickLesson 17: The Evidence Analysis Process Model,*" Evidence Explained: Historical Analysis, Citation & Source Usage* (https://www.evidenceexplained.com/content/quicklesson-17-evidence-analysis-process-map