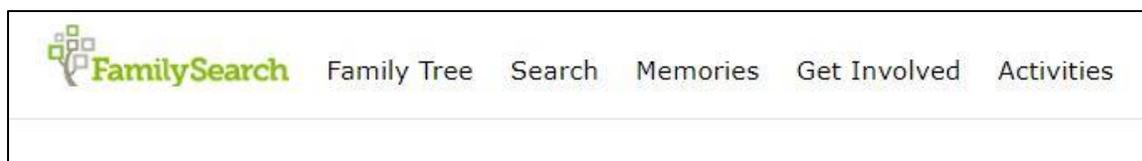# Exploring FamilySearch

Main website: www.familysearch.org

Main Menu

The FamilySearch home page has the following menu options:

- Family Tree

  This menu provides access to the family tree functions. Note that FamilySearch is based on the concept of one global family tree. Any information you contribute gets added to the global tree. If someone else feels they have a piece of 'your' genealogy puzzle, they can add to (or change) the information your submitted originally. It is NOT a private tree under your control.

- Search

  This menu has options for searching the records and the catalog. The research wiki is also listed under this menu option. It is probably the menu you will use the most.

- Memories

  This menu has options that allow you to share information (stories, photos) about your ancestors.

- Get Involved

  For those of you interested in volunteer opportunities, this menu provides links to indexing projects and data review projects (1950 census).

- Activities

  This menu has links to various activities for all family members. Some examples: All About Me, Record My Story, Compare A Face, Picture My Heritage.

When you select an option from one of the menus, a secondary menu is displayed. For example, if you go to the *Search* menu and select *Records*, all of the options under the *Search* menu are now displayed as clickable links across the screen (Records, Images, Family Tree, Genealogies, Catalog, Books, Wiki). This makes it very easy to choose another option from that same Search menu.

Searching the Records

https://www.familysearch.org/search/
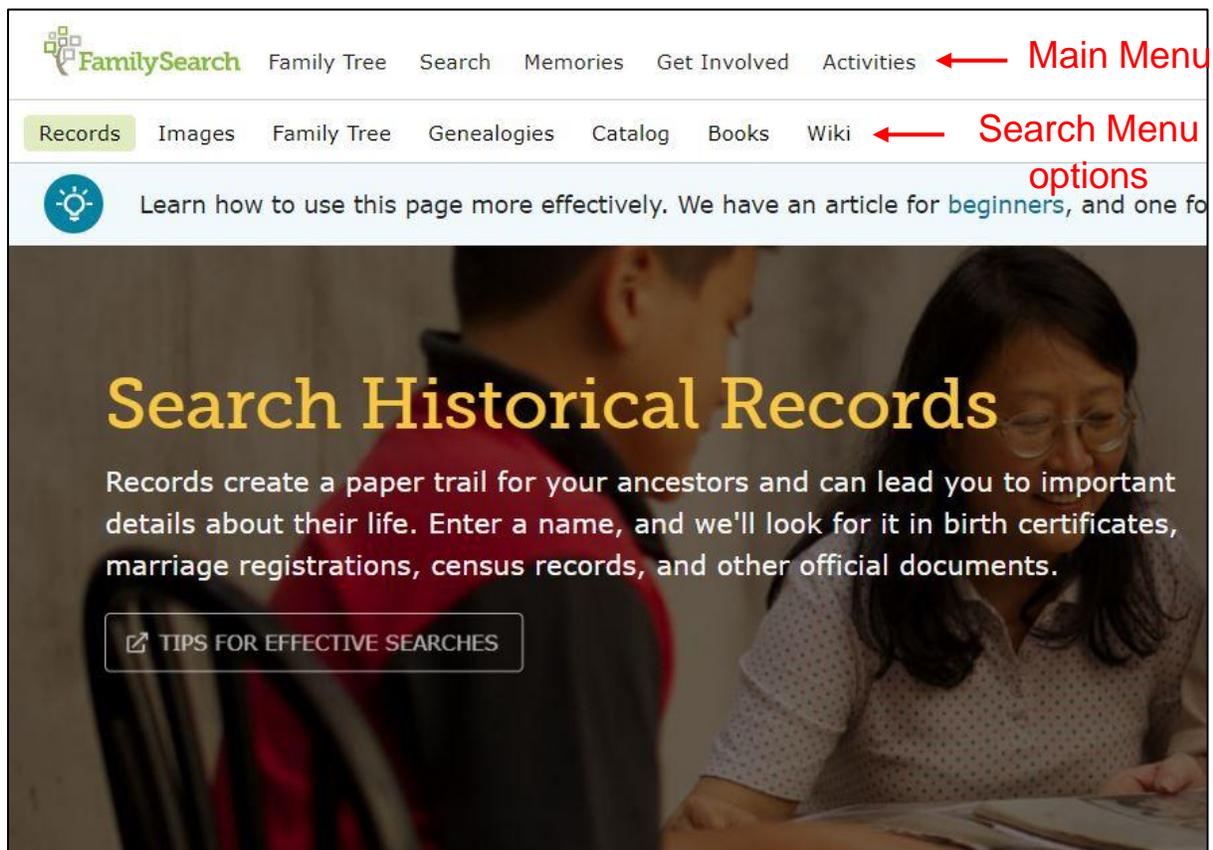
Go to the *Search* menu (top of screen) and select *Records* to display the Search Records page. The following image shows search results for James Edward (exact match) Renton with Leeds, Yorkshire specified for place:

Some tips to keep in mind:

- You can use an * as a wildcard character in your searches. R*nt*n for example would display Renton, Rintan, Rainturn.

- Exact searches: If you check the 'exact match' box (to the right of each search criteria field) you will only see the results that will have been indexed using those exact terms.

- You can further filter your results by select the event filters at the top of your results screen. It is sometimes helpful to click the *Collection* filter and view your results based on a particular record collection. Any applied filters will be displayed in blue above your results. To remove a filter, click the X beside the filter name.

- Clicking the document symbol (to the right of each displayed result) displays the record details and (if available) the image. Clicking the person's name in the results list brings up a detail data pane on the right side of the screen with all the record details. You can use navigation arrows at the top of the entry to page forward and back through all the results.

- Clicking the blue *Search* link (magnifying glass, located above your search results) displays the search criteria panel. You can add additional criteria and update your search results based on the new information entered.
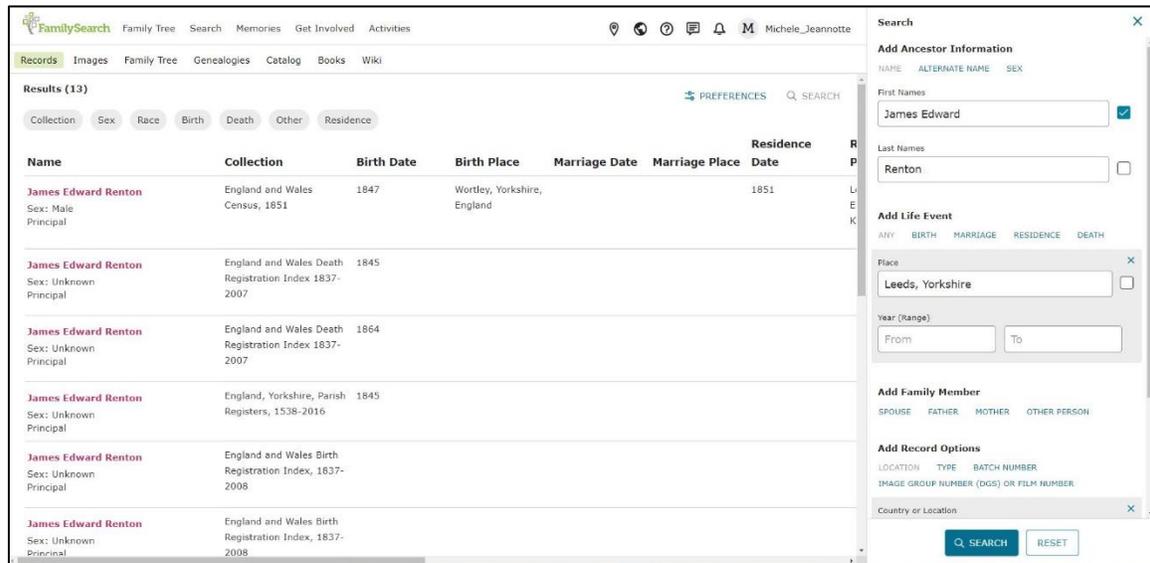
- Clicking the blue *Preferences* link (located above the Search results, to the left of the magnifying glass) enables you to change your results display to a datasheet format (similar to Excel spreadsheet). From this panel, you can download your results (Export Results button, bottom of Preferences panel) for further analysis.
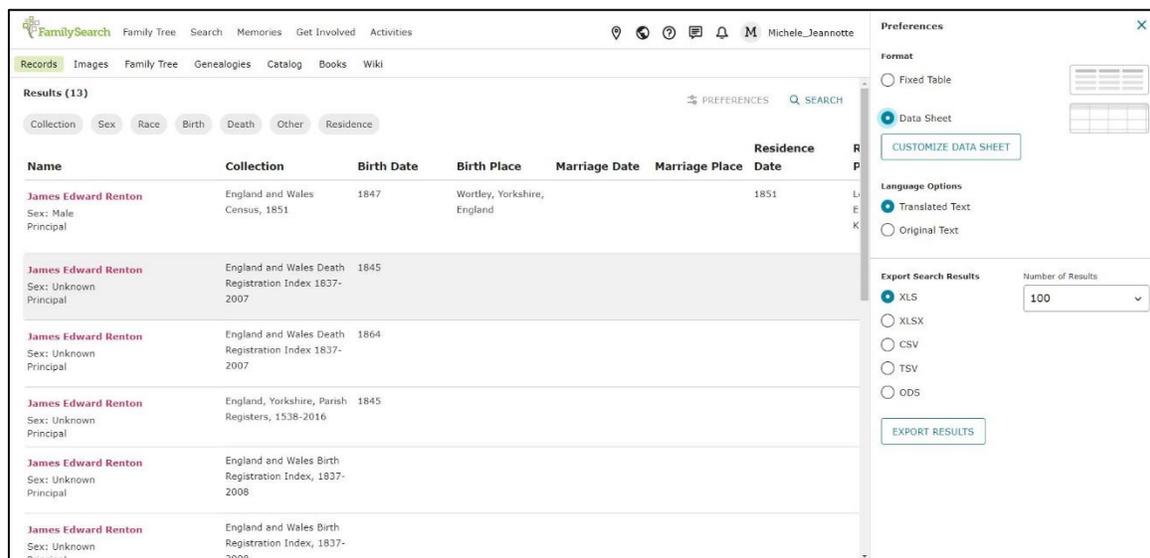
Searching the Catalog
https://www.familysearch.org/search/catalog

Go to the *Search* menu (top of screen) and select *Catalog* to display the FamilySearch Catalog page. You can search by place, keyword, subject and surname. You can also search by film, microfiche or DGS (image) number.

As the following example shows, you can combine search terms. I specified a place search of Leeds in Yorkshire (England, Yorkshire, Leeds) and further limited the results by adding a keyword search of Cemeteries.

Did you know …

- Doing a Keyword search for a place will generally give different results than a Place search. This has to do with how the catalog entries are indexed and which data fields are actually looked at for each type of search. For that reason, it's a good idea to do both Place and Keyword searches when you are trying to locate films for a particular place.

- Camera icon (no key) means you can view the film images on your computer, at home.

- Camera icon with key means that particular resource has restrictions. Sometimes the films are restricted to viewing at a Family History or Affiliate Library. Sometimes you can view the resource from home, but you can't download or print the image. It is still worth clicking the 'camera with key' icon, as you can't tell what type of restriction exists. You may be able to view the image, but not print it.

- Many of the parish register films can only be viewed from a FamilySearch or affiliate library. Often, the restrictions are based on contract arrangements between FamilySearch and the different record owners (archive offices, etc.). It's worth noting that, years ago, when some of these contracts were set up, the average person did not own a film reader, so viewing microfilm at a Family History library would have been a very reasonable arrangement.

- A magnifying glass indicates that there is an online index for that resource. Clicking the magnifying glass will display the film contents, along with a search screen. Note that the index may not cover all of the items in that film, so it is still worth reviewing the film itself if you do not find your ancestor listed.

- It is not enough to know the film number. You need to know which item on that film contains the records. One film for example may have copies of 7 different parish registers. Each is numbered, indicating the order they will appear on the film.

- Use the thumbnails feature to browse the film, looking for the numbered start / end pages for each new set of records. Double clicking a thumbnail will display that image.

- When you are viewing a film, you can type an image number into the image number box (top left of the screen) and press Enter to go to that image directly. You can also use the right / left navigation arrows to move from one image to the next.

The Hidden Extras

FamilySearch Site Map
https://www.familysearch.org/site-map

The site map provides an alternate menu structure for accessing key components of the website. Scroll to the bottom of your screen on any FamilySearch website page and click the *Site Map* link (bottom left).

You will now see a screen with many clickable links. Select the Family History Library link to display the library home page menu bar. This contains links to many services (lookup form, research help) and learning resources (free courses, research wiki).

Learning Resources Page
https://www.familysearch.org/en/family-history-library/learning-resources

This page contains links to all online classes, webinars, RootsTech videos and the FamilySearch research wiki (online help). Note: You will need to scroll down the Learning Resources page to view the links to these resources.
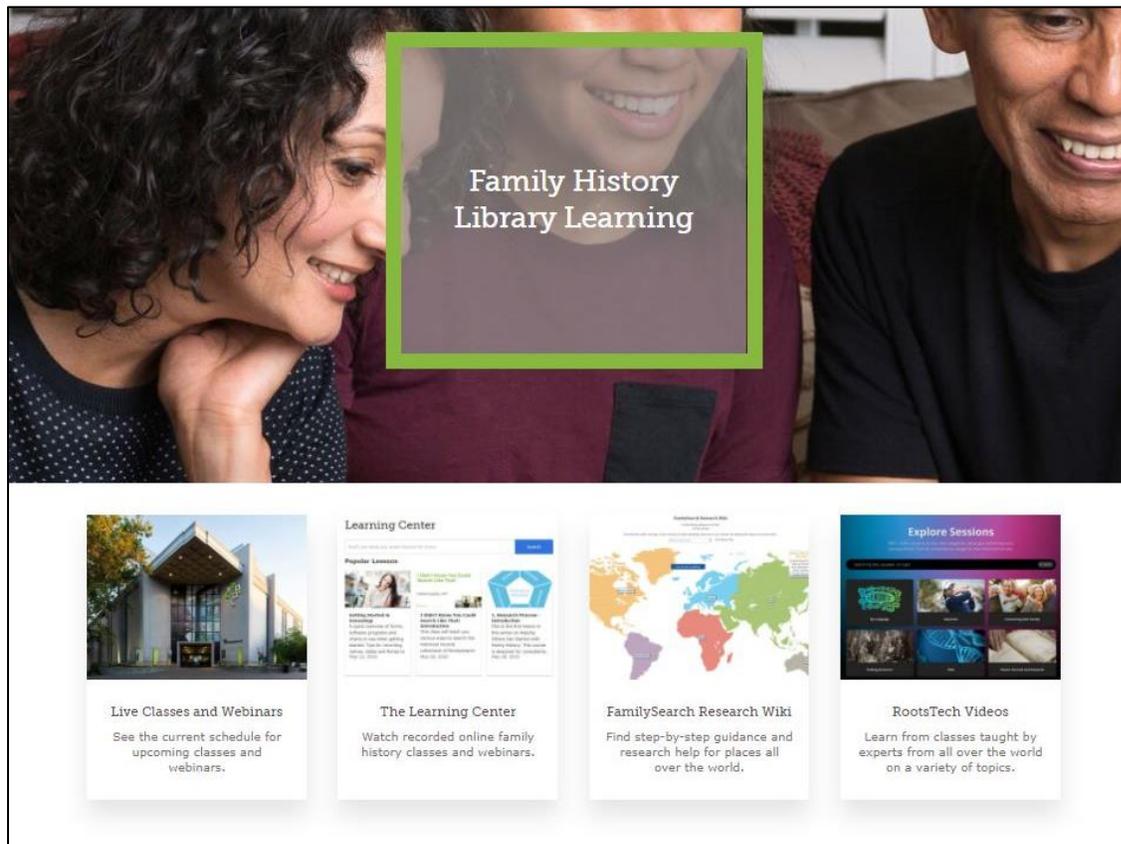
You can also access the resources directly, using the links listed below.

- Live Classes and Webinars:
  https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/Family_History_Library_Classes_and_Webinars#Upcoming_Webinars

  All Classes and Webinars:
  https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/Classes_in_the_Learning_Center

- The Learning Center:
  https://www.familysearch.org/en/help/helpcenter/learning-center

- RootsTech Conference homepage:
  https://www.familysearch.org/rootstech/home

  Click the *On Demand* link (top of the screen) to access RootsTech sessions for the past 4 years.

- FamilySearch Research Wiki:
  https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/Main_Page

The research wiki is the FamilySearch version of Wikipedia. There are information pages for places (countries, towns, parishes, states, etc.) with all kinds of links to record sources. There are also subject / topic information pages on all aspects of genealogy research. To access the information, type your search term into the search field (magnifying glass) and press enter to see a list of results.

The research wiki has additional links in a Table of Contents display on the left side of the screen. One of the links (Family History Library) takes you to the Family History Library menus, where you can access the Library Services (Lookup Request form) and Learning Resources (free courses).

Library Services Page
https://www.familysearch.org/en/family-history-library/library-services

This page contains links to information pages on services offered by the Family History library. This includes scanning and media conversion services, research help (20 minute zoom meeting) and the records lookup service.

You can either select the particular service from the Services menu (top of the Family History Library Services page), or scroll down to see clickable images for each of the service categories.

- Research Help:
  https://www.familysearch.org/en/family-history-library/research-help

- Record Lookup Service:
  https://www.familysearch.org/en/family-history-library/record-lookup-service

To display the *Remote Access Services Request* form (Lookup Request form), scroll to the bottom of the *Record Lookup Service* page and click the green *Request Lookup* button. The *Exploring FamilySearch* video on my YouTube channel demonstrates how to fill in the form.

Additional Resources

There are a lot of RootsTech videos as well as FamilySearch classes and webinars covering all aspects of the FamilySearch website. FamilySearch offers the following free course that covers various ways to search historical records and the catalog:

I Didn't Know You Could Search Like That
https://www.familysearch.org/en/help/helpcenter/lessons/i-didnt-know-you-could-search-like-that-familysearch-catalog

My YouTube channel (Genealogy: Ties to the Past) also has several FamilySearch videos, including the recording of this *Exploring FamilySearch* presentation. Links to any handouts will be in the video description, immediately below the video itself.

Contact Information

If you have any questions or comments, feel free to contact me!

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YouTube: Genealogy: Ties to the Past
https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCiOvzfCLwMe8oWA7s-3O7zA