

HOW TO DO GENEALOGY RESEARCH

WHERE DO I BEGIN?

Genealogy is investigative journalism

Genealogy is piecing together little bits of information that write the story of your personal big picture.

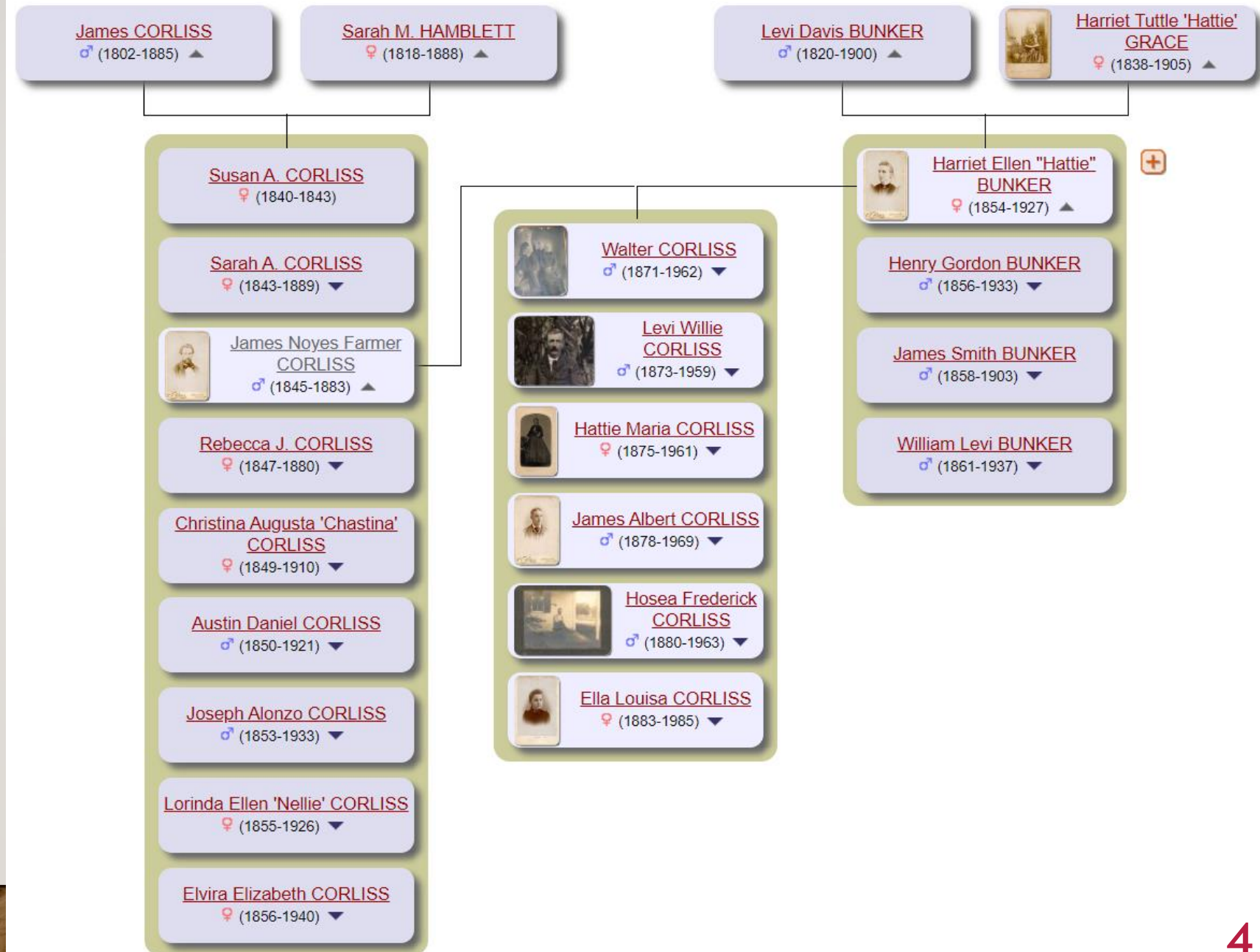
It's a huge topic. It includes everything humans do, and the records that document it. Those topics include:

- DNA
- Genetic genealogy for medical and criminal purposes
- Photo preservation
- Records organization and retention
- Immigration
- Naturalization
- Deeds
- Probate (Last Will)
- Software and web apps
- Royal ancestry
- Skip tracing
- Adoptee records
- Gravestone cleaning and rubbings

And more!

How to become an investigative journalist

- Start with yourself
- Document the whole family
- How to keep what you find
- What records are out there
- Confirm it's the right record
- Names and dates are tough
- Use sources you trust
- Record everything as you find it



Where to begin? Talk to your family.

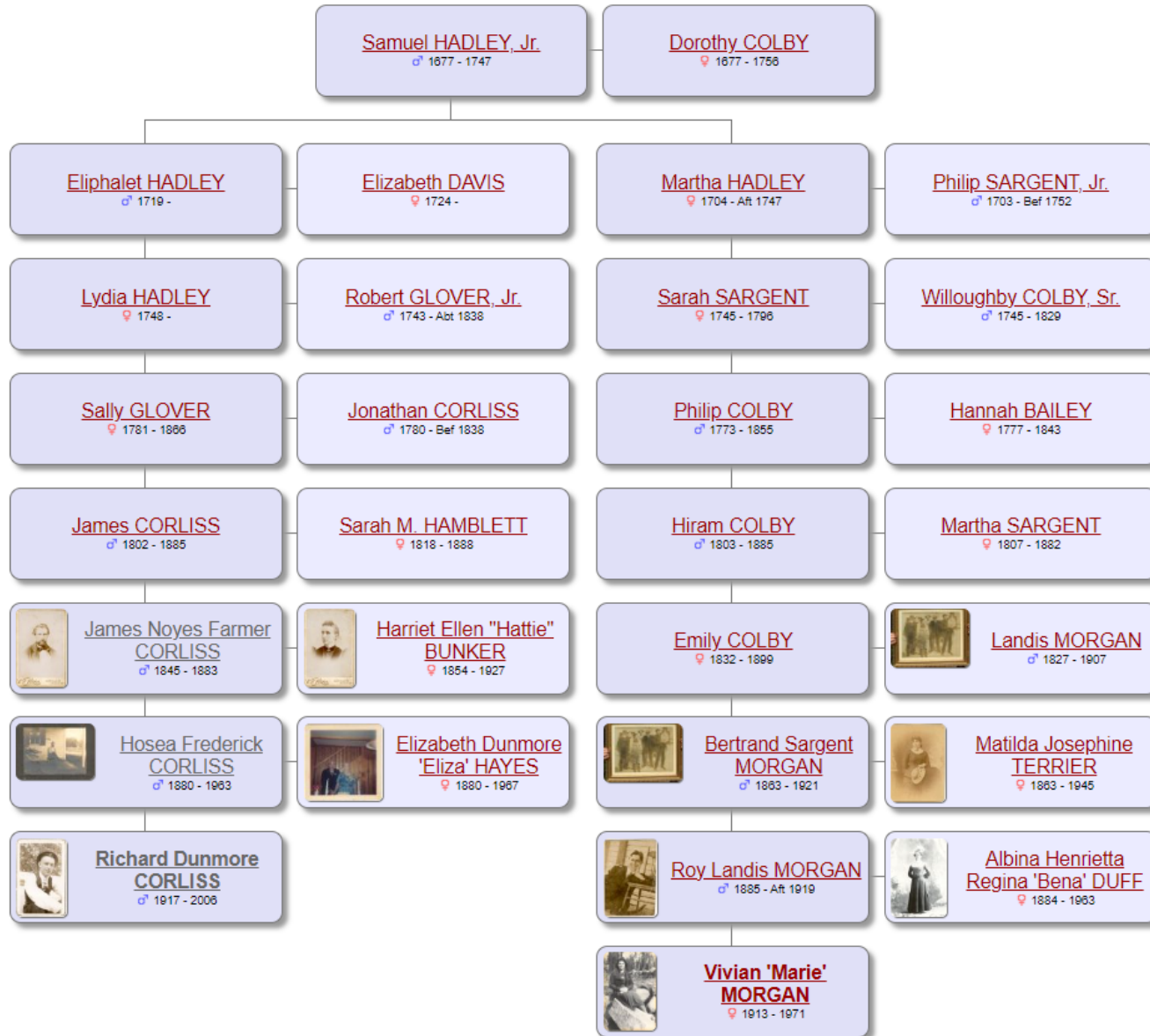
- Write down, tape, or videotape all the family stories. Do this now, while they're still here.
- Stimulate the conversation. "Grandpa always wore the same belt buckle." "I remember big blue roses on the bedroom wallpaper." "Uncle Ben played the piano." It will spark memories.
- Story details may have morphed a bit down through generations. Aunt Minnie's memory isn't quite as clear anymore. Still, those stories point the direction where you'll find more details.
- Scan or copy the family Bible, farm journal, family history, funeral cards, newspaper clippings, receipts, etc.
- Scan or copy your family's photos. You may not know who they are right now, but in time, you will.
- Take photos of framed wall pictures, antique furniture, house, farm equipment, etc. That old school bell may have been rung by your 3rd-great grandmother when she taught school.
- Pay attention to repeats. Question why one particular name was carried down through generations.



Research the whole family—not just your grandparents

Documenting the entire family can be your best research help.

- You found a death record for five-year old Hannah. But your grandmother Hannah married and had children. Now you know you're missing the birth record of another daughter named Hannah, and your grandmother wasn't age 10 at marriage, or age 50 when her last child was born.
- Hannah's parents disappear from the records. Her brother Isaac moved to Vermont, and you find them in the same cemetery with Isaac.
- Her sister Susannah disappears from the records. You find their brother Moses in an Ohio census record, living with his widowed sister named Sukey.
- Their brother Joseph had no surviving children. His Last Will leaves his estate to his siblings' children, listing all his siblings, and names all his nieces and nephews, and where they live.



Later, you discover that your spouse has the same great-grandparents as Susannah's husband.

You've already documented Susannah's ancestry, so just connect the lines.

Instant ancestry! (Not really. You'd already done half the work.)

Now you can figure out how closely you two are related.

Everyone is your cousin somehow.

It just takes research to know how distant that relationship is.

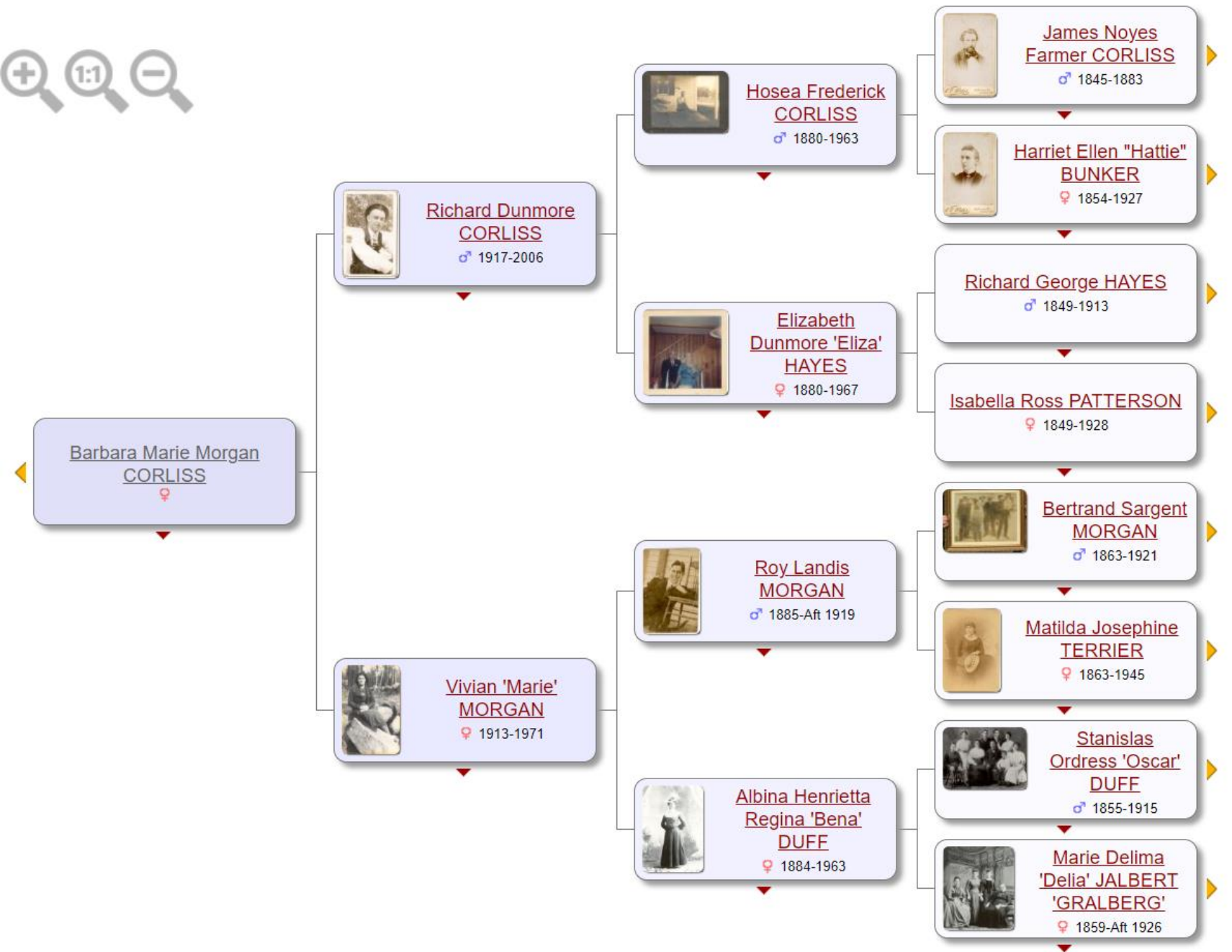


How to organize what you find

In the beginning, paper works.

Start with yourself.

Draw a pedigree chart with the information you know.



A Family Group Sheet provides space for more details.

FAMILY GROUP SHEET

Husband's Full Name										Family Group ID#			
Spelling Variations													
Photo	Date	Day	Month	Year	Code	City / Twnshp	County / Province	State / Country	Health / Misc / Info				
	Born												
	Married												
	Died												
	Buried												
Occupation						Other Marriages							
Church						Date Chm / Bapt			Located				
Military						Unit			Years Served				
Father's Full Name						Mother's Full Maiden Name							
Wife's Full Maiden Name										Family Group ID#			
Spelling Variations													
Photo	Date	Day	Month	Year	Code	City / Twnshp	County / Province	State / Country	Health / Misc / Info				
	Born												
	Married												
	Died												
	Buried												
Occupation						Other Marriages							
Church						Date Chm / Bapt			Located				
Military						Unit			Years Served				
Father's Full Name						Mother's Full Maiden Name							
Children (in Birth Order)	Sex	Date	Day	Month	Year	Code	City/ Twnshp.	County/ Prov.	State/Country	Photo			
1		Born											
		Married											
Spouse		Died											
		Buried											
Spouse		Occupation											
		Church								Located			
Spouse		Military								Unit		Years Served	
		Misc / Info										No. of Children	
2		Born											
		Married											
Spouse		Died											
		Buried											
Spouse		Occupation											
		Church								Located			
Spouse		Military								Unit		Years Served	
		Misc / Info										No. of Children	
3		Born											
		Married											

Paper will work until you have dozens with the same name

- Cousins both named John. Born same year. Both marry a woman named Mary. Both live in the same town.
- Connect John to the wrong Mary, and their children's ancestry is wrong.

You'll be re-writing those family group sheets and pedigree charts.

Computers make this so much easier.

If you connected the wrong John and Mary, just unlink and re-connect them.

#	Last Name, Given Name(s) ▲	Person ID	Born/Christened ▼	Location
1	CORLISS, John	I422	b. 4 Mar 1647/48	Haverhill, Essex County, Massachusetts P
2	CORLISS, John Jr.	I147	b. 14 Mar 1685/6	Haverhill, Essex County, Massachusetts P
3	CORLISS, John III	I4023	b. 12 Sep 1715	Haverhill, Essex County, Massachusetts P
4	CORLISS, John Moore	I3101	b. 30 May 1736	Methuen, Essex County, Massachusetts P
5	CORLISS, John Swaddock	I2539	c. Sep 1740	Haverhill, Essex County, Massachusetts P
6	CORLISS, John IV	I512	b. 8 May 1747	Haverhill, Essex County, Massachusetts P
7	CORLISS, John	I731	b. 11 Mar 1752	Norwich, New London County, Connecticut P
8	CORLISS, John	I1026	b. 25 Mar 1761	Haverhill, Essex County, Massachusetts P
9	CORLISS, John	I2691	b. 5 Dec 1763	Weare, Hillsborough County, New Hampshire P
10	CORLISS, John Moore Jr.	I3231	b. 2 Dec 1765	Salem, Rockingham County, New Hampshire P
11	CORLISS, John	I1530	b. 31 Mar 1768	Salem, Rockingham County, New Hampshire P
12	CORLISS, John	I1998	b. 6 Nov 1768	Weare, Hillsborough County, New Hampshire P
13	CORLISS, John Ladd	I8276	b. 19 Apr 1774	Dracut, Middlesex County, Massachusetts P
14	CORLISS, John	I2911	b. 25 Jul 1774	Sandwich, Carroll County, New Hampshire P
15	CORLISS, John V	I552	b. 28 Mar 1775	Haverhill, Grafton County, New Hampshire P
16	CORLISS, John	I2555	b. Abt 1777	Alexandria, Grafton County, New Hampshire P
17	CORLISS, John Bliss	I974	b. 21 Oct 1782	Somers, Tolland County, Connecticut P
18	CORLISS, John Moore	I3245	b. 24 Mar 1786	Orford, Grafton County, New Hampshire P
19	CORLISS, Deacon John	I1039	b. 6 Sep 1786	Windham, Rockingham County, New Hampshire P
20	CORLISS, John	I132558	b. 3 Apr 1787	Alexandria, Grafton County, New Hampshire P
21	CORLISS, John	I3206	b. 11 Apr 1787	Salem, Rockingham County, New Hampshire P
22	CORLISS, John	I1889	b. 17 Sep 1787	Rockingham, Rockingham County, New Hampshire P
23	CORLISS, Capt. John	I2020	c. 20 Sep 1790	Yarmouth, Cumberland County, Maine P
24	CORLISS, John Jr.	I1447	b. 3 Nov 1792	Haverhill, Essex County, Massachusetts P
25	CORLISS, John Grusha	I92415	b. 28 Jan 1797	Bow, Merrimack County, New Hampshire P
26	CORLISS, John Lawrence	I2400	c. 24 Nov 1798	Yarmouth, Cumberland County, Maine P
27	CORLISS, John Jr.	I2334	b. 27 Feb 1799	Hopkinton, Merrimack County, New Hampshire P
28	CORLISS, John	I2726	b. 30 Jul 1799	Weare, Hillsborough County, New Hampshire P
29	CORLISS, John Baron	I2874	b. 24 Sep 1799	Bradford, Orange County, Vermont P
30	CORLISS, John	I573	b. 9 Jan 1800	Washington County, New York P
31	CORLISS, John VI	I574	b. 12 Feb 1801	Washington County, New York P
32	CORLISS, John	I2595	b. 13 Aug 1804	Haverhill, Essex County, Massachusetts P
33	CORLISS, John Cotton	I2961	b. 7 May 1811	
34	CORLISS, John Moore	I85305	b. 2 Jun 1811	Orange, Grafton County, New Hampshire P
35	CORLISS, John Ladd Jr.	I62070	b. Abt 1812	Haverhill, Grafton County, New Hampshire P
36	CORLISS, John Sherburn	I3380	b. 12 Oct 1812	Alexandria, Grafton County, New Hampshire P

There's good genealogy programs available for your home PC

Prices range from free to over \$100.

Some are designed to track medical or criminal history.

Some for professionals: historians, social workers, public health, anthropologists.

Most home-use genealogy programs are only for PC's.

Mac Family Tree is available for Mac computers.

Some are web apps: The Next Generation of Genealogy Sitebuilding, Ancestry.com.

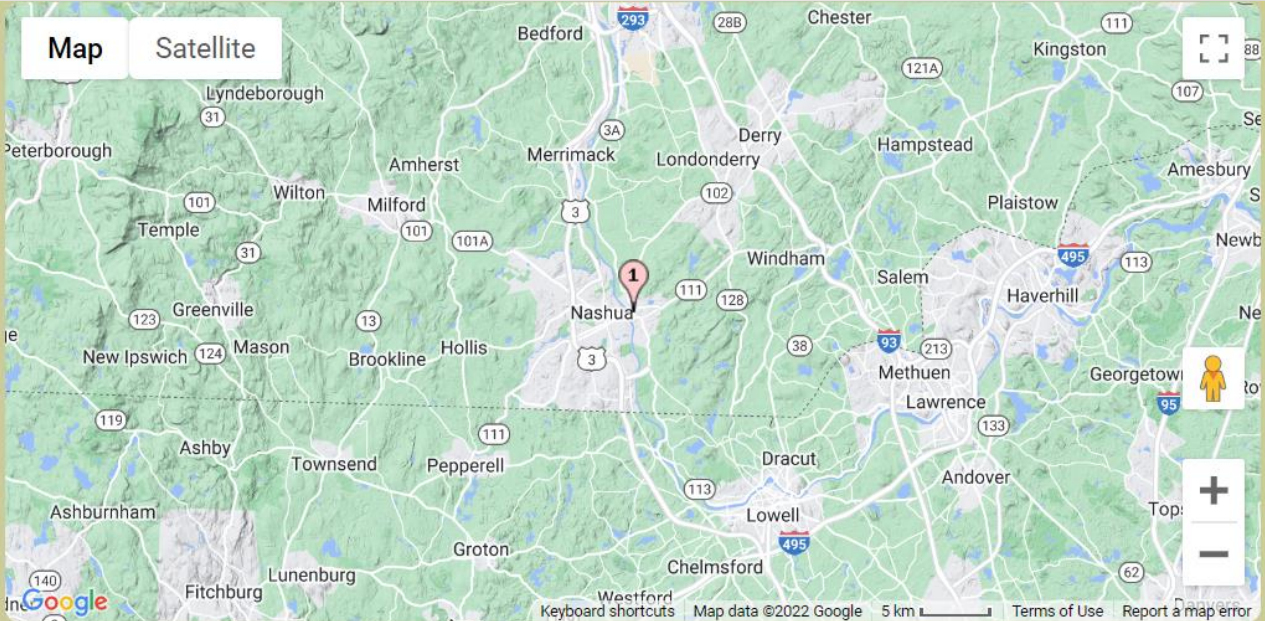
- Ancestry.com
- My Heritage
- Family Tree Builder
- Roots Magic
- Legacy Family Tree
- Family Historian
- Legacy 9
- Family Tree Heritage
- Ancestral Quest
- Mac Family Tree
- GenoPro





Some have additional features


They will all do the basics

- Organize names, dates, locations, relationships
- Print charts and reports
- Store pictures, audio and video recording, scans
- Export/import with other genealogy programs (GedCOM)

- Maps
- Enables multiple users
- Highlights historical people
- Downloads directly from other websites (caution!)
- Tracks DNA
- Allow for same-sex marriages



1	Born - 3 Jan 1845 - Hudson, Hillsborough County, New Hampshire	
1	Married - 1 Dec 1869 - Hudson, Hillsborough County, New Hampshire	
1	Died - 4 Aug 1883 - Hudson, Hillsborough County, New Hampshire	
1	Buried - - Hudson, Hillsborough County, New Hampshire	

 = [Link to Google Earth](#)

You can transfer (some of) your history between programs

- GedCom (GEnealogical Data COMmunication) is a file format to exchange (export, import) genealogy data between different programs.
- Developed by the LDS church. It's become the standard, and used by practically every genealogy program.
- GedCom will transfer basic details (names, dates, etc.)
- It may—or may not—move other fields (like notes) or anything linked (pictures, PDF's).

So where are the records? Learn the area's history.

Every area of human habitation has (and sometimes, doesn't have) their own way of keeping records

- The world over, it's governments and societies (religious, historical, etc.) that decide if records are important—whether to toss, or keep, and what to keep.
- When you know the history of that area and period, you'll know whether and what records may exist.
- When was the area settled? Was it ever abandoned and re-settled?
- New frontier settlements may have no early vital records.
- Many colonial settlements split into more towns.
- Town, county, and state borders changed.
- Town names changed.

- Missing or gaps in records happen when there's no record keepers (no government or church), by natural disaster (fire, flood, earthquake), or social upheaval (war, famine, regime change).
- People migrated. Initially, American and Canadian colonies settled along "water highways" (seacoast and major rivers) from Maine to Florida.
- Successive generations migrated inland. North and west New England in the 1700's. West of there in the 1800's.
- Tories during the American Revolution went to Canada. Successive generations migrated back to the states or western Canada.
- Some states didn't require vital records for generations (New York).
- Some towns (Hallowell, Maine) created vital records for everyone in town, regardless of where the birth, marriage, or death occurred.
- Occupations can help determine location. Typically, farmers stayed in one area. Millmen (loggers) moved their families to the job site. Mariners left their family on land. Businessmen moved wherever opportunity was ripe.

- Published genealogies, town histories, church histories.
Be careful here.
- Wills (county probate office)
- Deeds (county registry of deeds)
- Cemeteries
- Newspapers
- Maritime records
- Military records
- Immigration and emigration
- Ship manifests
- Naturalizations
- Bank records
- Census records
- Personal histories, farm journals, business journals
- Local libraries and historical societies
- And more!

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Is this the right record?

- Occupations help identification. A farmer in one census probably isn't a physician ten years later.
- Marriage dates help confirm parents.
- Birth place may not be accurate.
- Documenting the whole family helps find missing children, or gestational impossibilities.
- Don't settle for what looks right. Write down what's on each record. Compare that with other records to confirm each detail.

Form 13-4
DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE-BUREAU OF THE CENSUS
FIFTEENTH CENSUS OF THE UNITED STATES: 1930
POPULATION SCHEDULE

State Massachusetts Incorporated place Billerica Town (part)
County Middlesex Ward of city _____ Block No. _____
Township or other division of county Billerica Town (part)
Unincorporated place North Billerica (part)
Enumeration District No. 9-190 Superintendent's District No. 5

Enumeration by date on April 1, 1930 Charles R. Dudley

LINE	AGE	SEX	NAME	RELATION	DATE OF BIRTH	PLACE OF BIRTH	EDUCATION	MOTHER TONGUE OR NATIVE LANGUAGE OF FOREIGN BORN	CITIZENSHIP, ETC.	OCCUPATION AND INDUSTRY	EMPLOYMENT	VETERANS	MARRIAGE		
													DATE	PLACE	
60	19	M	Maloney, Ella J.	Wife	1874	Massachusetts									
61	11	F	Maloney, Ella J.	Daughter	1895	Massachusetts									
62	11	F	Maloney, Ella J.	Daughter	1895	Massachusetts									
63	11	F	Maloney, Ella J.	Daughter	1895	Massachusetts									
64	11	F	Maloney, Ella J.	Daughter	1895	Massachusetts									
65	11	F	Maloney, Ella J.	Daughter	1895	Massachusetts									
66	11	F	Maloney, Ella J.	Daughter	1895	Massachusetts									
67	11	F	Maloney, Ella J.	Daughter	1895	Massachusetts									
68	11	F	Maloney, Ella J.	Daughter	1895	Massachusetts									
69	11	F	Maloney, Ella J.	Daughter	1895	Massachusetts									
70	11	F	Maloney, Ella J.	Daughter	1895	Massachusetts									
71	11	F	Maloney, Ella J.	Daughter	1895	Massachusetts									
72	11	F	Maloney, Ella J.	Daughter	1895	Massachusetts									
73	11	F	Maloney, Ella J.	Daughter	1895	Massachusetts									
74	11	F	Maloney, Ella J.	Daughter	1895	Massachusetts									
75	11	F	Maloney, Ella J.	Daughter	1895	Massachusetts									
76	11	F	Maloney, Ella J.	Daughter	1895	Massachusetts									
77	11	F	Maloney, Ella J.	Daughter	1895	Massachusetts									
78	11	F	Maloney, Ella J.	Daughter	1895	Massachusetts									
79	11	F	Maloney, Ella J.	Daughter	1895	Massachusetts									
80	11	F	Maloney, Ella J.	Daughter	1895	Massachusetts									
81	11	F	Maloney, Ella J.	Daughter	1895	Massachusetts									
82	11	F	Maloney, Ella J.	Daughter	1895	Massachusetts									
83	11	F	Maloney, Ella J.	Daughter	1895	Massachusetts									
84	11	F	Maloney, Ella J.	Daughter	1895	Massachusetts									
85	11	F	Maloney, Ella J.	Daughter	1895	Massachusetts									
86	11	F	Maloney, Ella J.	Daughter	1895	Massachusetts									
87	11	F	Maloney, Ella J.	Daughter	1895	Massachusetts									
88	11	F	Maloney, Ella J.	Daughter	1895	Massachusetts									
89	11	F	Maloney, Ella J.	Daughter	1895	Massachusetts									
90	11	F	Maloney, Ella J.	Daughter	1895	Massachusetts									
91	11	F	Maloney, Ella J.	Daughter	1895	Massachusetts									
92	11	F	Maloney, Ella J.	Daughter	1895	Massachusetts									
93	11	F	Maloney, Ella J.	Daughter	1895	Massachusetts									
94	11	F	Maloney, Ella J.	Daughter	1895	Massachusetts									
95	11	F	Maloney, Ella J.	Daughter	1895	Massachusetts									
96	11	F	Maloney, Ella J.	Daughter	1895	Massachusetts									
97	11	F	Maloney, Ella J.	Daughter	1895	Massachusetts									
98	11	F	Maloney, Ella J.	Daughter	1895	Massachusetts									
99	11	F	Maloney, Ella J.	Daughter	1895	Massachusetts									
100	11	F	Maloney, Ella J.	Daughter	1895	Massachusetts									

ABBREVIATIONS TO BE USED IN COLUMNS INDICATED:
C-1-Child, 2-Infant, 3-Adult, 4-Deceased, 5-Unknown, 6-Not stated, 7-Not recorded, 8-Not reported, 9-Not shown, 10-Not filled, 11-Not marked, 12-Not numbered, 13-Not numbered, 14-Not numbered, 15-Not numbered, 16-Not numbered, 17-Not numbered, 18-Not numbered, 19-Not numbered, 20-Not numbered, 21-Not numbered, 22-Not numbered, 23-Not numbered, 24-Not numbered, 25-Not numbered, 26-Not numbered, 27-Not numbered, 28-Not numbered, 29-Not numbered, 30-Not numbered, 31-Not numbered, 32-Not numbered, 33-Not numbered, 34-Not numbered, 35-Not numbered, 36-Not numbered, 37-Not numbered, 38-Not numbered, 39-Not numbered, 40-Not numbered, 41-Not numbered, 42-Not numbered, 43-Not numbered, 44-Not numbered, 45-Not numbered, 46-Not numbered, 47-Not numbered, 48-Not numbered, 49-Not numbered, 50-Not numbered, 51-Not numbered, 52-Not numbered, 53-Not numbered, 54-Not numbered, 55-Not numbered, 56-Not numbered, 57-Not numbered, 58-Not numbered, 59-Not numbered, 60-Not numbered, 61-Not numbered, 62-Not numbered, 63-Not numbered, 64-Not numbered, 65-Not numbered, 66-Not numbered, 67-Not numbered, 68-Not numbered, 69-Not numbered, 70-Not numbered, 71-Not numbered, 72-Not numbered, 73-Not numbered, 74-Not numbered, 75-Not numbered, 76-Not numbered, 77-Not numbered, 78-Not numbered, 79-Not numbered, 80-Not numbered, 81-Not numbered, 82-Not numbered, 83-Not numbered, 84-Not numbered, 85-Not numbered, 86-Not numbered, 87-Not numbered, 88-Not numbered, 89-Not numbered, 90-Not numbered, 91-Not numbered, 92-Not numbered, 93-Not numbered, 94-Not numbered, 95-Not numbered, 96-Not numbered, 97-Not numbered, 98-Not numbered, 99-Not numbered, 100-Not numbered.

Names can be tough

- “Jr.” isn’t what it used to be. In colonial days, it was the younger person of the same name in the same community.
- Not all women kept their married name after divorce or death of a spouse. Sometimes they reassumed an earlier one.
- Children can assume a step- or adoptive-parent’s name, and sometimes alternating the use of either (such as vital record using birth name, but death record or obituary using the other).
- Infrequently, people in colonial records used an alias: “William Jones alias Spencer.”
- French and Scots countries used “dit” names, which are a family alias.
- Nicknames: “Hitty” for Mehitable; “Sally” for Sarah; “Nellie” for Mary Ellen; “Hattie” for Harriet; “Lizzie” or “Eliza” for Elizabeth; “Lottie” for Charlotte; “Nabby” for Abigail; etc. Or, named Charles William at birth, called “Chuck” all through life, and “Bill” is carved on his gravestone.
- Abbreviations: “Geo” for George; “Thos” for Thomas; “Nath’l” or “Nathan” can be Nathaniel. Search engines don’t always catch those.

Old dates are tough

- Julius Caesar implemented the first calendar in 46 B.C., called the Julian calendar. In 1582, Pope Gregory's mathematicians created the Gregorian Calendar. This was to correct the actual time it takes for the earth to circle the sun. This was principally accomplished by spacing leap years differently.
- The Gregorian calendar dropped 10 days from the Julian calendar.
- Most Catholic countries adopted the Gregorian calendar pretty quick. England's King Henry VIII split with the Church of Rome in 1534, so most English countries didn't adopt the Gregorian calendar until 1752.
- By then, the difference was 11 days.
- But the Gregorian also calendar changed the first day of the year from March 25th to January 1st. A date written before 1752 as "the 1st month" or "1 : [year]" would be March, not January.
- To simplify (and specifically for dates between January and March), dates prior to 1752 were written as double dates (1750/51) to show (and are sometimes called) Old Style (OS) and New Style (NS) dates.

Use sources you trust

- Documents written as close to the original event are usually the most accurate.
- Vital records are best, although the oldest ones have been re-written through time.
- Research the author. Do they cite their sources? Is this their first-hand experience?
- There are known frauds! Gustave Anjou (1863-1942), and known by other aliases, a convicted forger and self-professed genealogist. Anjou prepared hundreds of fraudulent pedigrees. These were exposed decades later, and by then, his fabrications had multiplied.

Name	James N. Carliss		
Place of Death	Hudson		
Date of Death	Aug. 4, 1883		
Age: Years,	38	Months,	7
Days,			
Place of Birth	Hudson, N.H.		
Sex	M.	Color	W.
	Married, Single, Widowed, or Divorced, Married		
Occupation	Farmer		
Cause of Death	Killed by locomotive on Nashua & R. Railroad		
Place of Burial			
Name of Father	James Carliss		
Name of Mother	Sarah M. Hamblett		
Birthplace of Father	Hudson		
Birthplace of Mother	Hudson		
Occupation of Father	Farmer		
Name and Address of Physician (or other person) reporting said Death	Selectmen to James B. Merrill		
Reported from	Hudson, N.H. (Town Clerk)		

THE STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE.


OFFICE OF REGISTRAR OF VITAL STATISTICS.

I hereby certify that the above death record is an exact copy of the return made to the State according to law.

Irving A. Watson
Registrar of Vital Statistics.

Write it all down

- Read the whole record: vital record, deed, will, etc.
- Handwriting (or cursive) OCR is now used. It makes mistakes.
- Write down what's on the record as it appears. Compare this with other records. This will confirm dates, places, and spellings (names, birth places, parent names, etc.).
- Cite the source of each detail. This saves enormous time when you trust where you found that detail. You won't need to go find it again (and again).



James Noyes Farmer CORLISS

♂ 1845 - 1883 (38 years)

[Print](#) [Bookmark](#)

[Individual](#) [Ancestors](#) [Descendants](#) [Relationship](#) [Timeline](#) [Family](#)

[GEDCOM](#) [Edit](#)

[Personal Information](#) | [Media](#) | [Notes](#) | [Sources](#) | [Event Map](#) | [All](#) | [PDF](#)

Name	James Noyes Farmer CORLISS	
Born	3 Jan 1845	Hudson, Hillsborough County, New Hampshire P
	◦ Birth recorded in family bible.	
Gender	Male	
Died	4 Aug 1883	Hudson, Hillsborough County, New Hampshire P [2]
	◦ The death record of James N. Corliss cites age 38 years 7 months, married, occupation Farmer, born Hudson, New Hampshire, son of James Corliss, occupation Farmer, and Sarah M. Hamblett, both born Hudson. Cause of death is "killed by locomotive on Nashua & R. Railroad." [1]	
Buried	Abt 6 Aug 1883	Westview Cemetery, Hudson, Hillsborough County, New Hampshire P
	◦ gravestone marked with "Co F #1 N.H. H.A."	
Person ID	I1552	FamilyWorld
Last Modified	2 Apr 2020 Edit	

Source:

[1] website: <https://www.familysearch.org/>. New Hampshire Death Records, 1654-1947

[2] HudsonNHVR, Nash, Gerald Q., Sandra J. Martinson, Roland A. Marchand, (Heritage Books, Inc.), ISBN 0-7884-0799-6.

In summary

- Write it all down.
- Be as accurate as possible.
- Write your story! Stories breathe life back to family and communities.
- People and societies protect and preserve old journals. These records describe the life we can only imagine today—their families, friends, occupations, accomplishments, houses, farms, schools, church, who survived or died on that westward journey by covered wagon.
- Leave a journal for your family. **That gift is an enduring treasure.**

Webster Historical Society

<https://WebsterHistoricalSociety.org>

<https://Webster-NH.net>

Webster1860@gmail.com

Questions?

Barbara Corliss

Corliss1753@gmail.com

603-545-5874