

Record Search Tips: Find Your Family

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July 19, 2019

Link for online viewing

<https://www.familysearch.org/en/blog/record-search-tips>



It is frustrating when we [search for that one record](#) we just know will have the answer to our brick wall family history problem, and we can't find it! Here are some tips to improve your searches and discover those hard-to-find records.

Search by Last Name or Place Only

On the FamilySearch.org home page, you can search for indexed records by clicking or tapping **Search** and choosing **Records** from the drop-down menu.



You are likely familiar with a traditional [search for records](#) using a name and a place and year of an event. But have you tried the following ideas?

Search by last name only

For example, perhaps your ancestor has a digitized birth record available online, but the record was indexed as "Baby Phillips." By searching by last name only, with a county and state for a place of birth and a birth year range of at least 2 years, you may find what you are looking for!

Search by event place and year only

Do you have an ancestor whose name is always being misindexed because it has an unusual spelling? Try searching with no name at all! Search with the name field blank, but add an event county, state, and year range. See the example below:

Search Historical Records

Search for a deceased ancestor in historical records to uncover vital information from their life.

Deceased Ancestor's Name

First Names

Last Names

Search with a life event:

Birth | [Marriage](#) | [Residence](#) | [Death](#) | [Any](#)

Birthplace

Birth Year (Range)

Search with a relationship:

[Spouse](#) | [Parents](#) | [Other Person](#)

Restrict records by:

[Location](#) | [Type](#) | [Batch Number](#) | [Film Number](#)

Country

State or Province

Match all terms exactly



With this kind of search, you will be given a list of all indexed records for your targeted area and birth year range. Then, you can look down the list, and see if anything looks similar to your ancestor's often misspelled name.

Search using a wildcard

You use a wildcard by putting an asterisk (*) in place of a letter or letters. By using a wildcard, you are telling the system there are multiple spelling variations and you would like them all to be considered.

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Deceased Ancestor's Name

First Names

Last Names

Search with a life event:

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Birthplace

Birth Year (Range)

Any Place

Any Year (Range)

Search with a relationship:

[Spouse](#)[Parents](#)[Other Person](#)

Restrict records by:

[Location](#)[Type](#)[Batch Number](#)[Film Number](#)

Country

State or Province

In the example below, the surname "Nimeth" is sometimes spelled "Nemeth" or "Nameth." We could do an individual search with each spelling (which is always a good idea) or we can use a wildcard in place of the "i" in Nimeth. As you will see below, the results list includes different spellings.

Records **Collections**

Search Results from Historical Records

1-20 of 112 Results for Name: **Joe N*meth** Birth Year (Range): **1885 - 1887** Any place: **Lee, Virginia**

Number of results to show:

Name	Events	Relationships	View
Joseph August Nemeth United States World War I Draft Registration Cards, 1917-1918	birth: 18 May 1886, United States draft registration: 1917 / 1918 Rawlins County, Kansas, United States		
Jozsef Nemeth United States Index to Alien Case Files, 1940-2003	birth: 25 March 1887		
Joseph Nemeth United States Index to Alien Case Files, 1940-2003	birth: 14 February 1885		

Search Unindexed Records

When we search FamilySearch records as shown in the examples above, we are searching only those records that have been indexed. But millions more records are available online at FamilySearch.org that have **not** been indexed and can be found only by searching or browsing a record collection image by image. Let's take a look at the following example.

I would like to find vital records for my [Hungarian ancestors](#). Many of those records have not been indexed. I am going to search the catalog to see what records are available. First I click or tap **Search** on the home page, and then I choose **Catalog** from the drop-down menu.

Records

Family Tree

Genealogies

Catalog

Books

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ancestry

MyHeritage findmypast

Previous • Next

On the next screen, I am able to search the catalog by location. My search location is Körmend, Hungary, so I would type in that place-name like this:

Search by:

Place | Surnames | Titles | Author | Subjects | Keywords

Place

Hungary, Vas, Körmend

Search for:

Call Number | Film/Fiche Number

Availability

- Any
- Online
- Family History Center

Search

Reset

Then, I click or tap **Search** in the blue box.

The results list shows three kinds of records collections available for Körmend, Hungary—church records, civil records, and Jewish records. I am going to click **Civil registration**.

Refine your search ▼

Search by:
Place

Hungary, Vas, Körmend

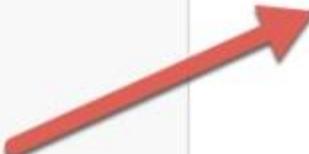
Surnames
Titles
Author
Subjects
Keywords

Search for:
Call Number
Film/Fiche Number

Search Results for FamilySearch Catalog
PRINT Catalog Print List (0)

Part of Hungary, Vas

- ▶ Hungary, Vas, Körmend - Church records (6)
- ▶ Hungary, Vas, Körmend - Civil registration (2)
- ▶ Hungary, Vas, Körmend - Jewish records (1)



A list of civil registration record collections appear, and I can choose to look at any of them. For this example, I will click "Hungary,Vas, Körmend,Civil Registration, 1909-1980."

Refine your search ▼

Search by:
Place

Hungary, Vas, Körmend

Surnames
Titles
Author
Subjects
Keywords

Search for:
Call Number
Film/Fiche Number

Search Results for FamilySearch Catalog

PRINT  Catalog Print List (0)

Part of [Hungary, Vas](#)

- ▶ Hungary, Vas, Körmend - Church records (6)
- ▼ **Hungary, Vas, Körmend - Civil registration (2)**

 [Hungary, Vas, Körmend, Civil Registration, 1909-1980](#)

Author: Vas County Archive (Hungary)

[Állami anyakönyvek, 1895-1975](#)

Author: Körmend (Vas). Anyakönyvi Hivatal;
Szekszárdon a Tolna Megyei Levéltárban

- ▶ Hungary, Vas, Körmend - Jewish records (1)

The next screen shows a description of the record collection. From here, I can see that some of these records have been indexed, but not all of them. For this reason, I want to search or browse through the digitized images record by record.

◀ BACK TO SEARCH RESULTS

PRINT Catalog Print List (0)

Hungary, Vas, Körmend, Civil Registration, 1909-1980

Add to Print List

Authors: Vas County Archive (Hungary) (Repository)
Format: Manuscript/Manuscript on Digital Images
Language: Hungarian
Publication: Salt Lake City, Utah : Digitized by FamilySearch International, 2011
References: (In) Hungary civil registration, 1895-1980 / Csongrád Megye Levéltár

Some records in this collection HAVE been indexed, but not all of them.

Notes

To view digital images of this Hungary Civil Registration, click [here](#). Not available on microfilm.

Digital images of originals housed at the Vas County Archive.

Civil registration of births, marriages, and deaths for Körmend, Vas, Hungary. Text in Hungarian.

View this catalog record in WorldCat for other possible copy locations

Subjects

Locality Subjects

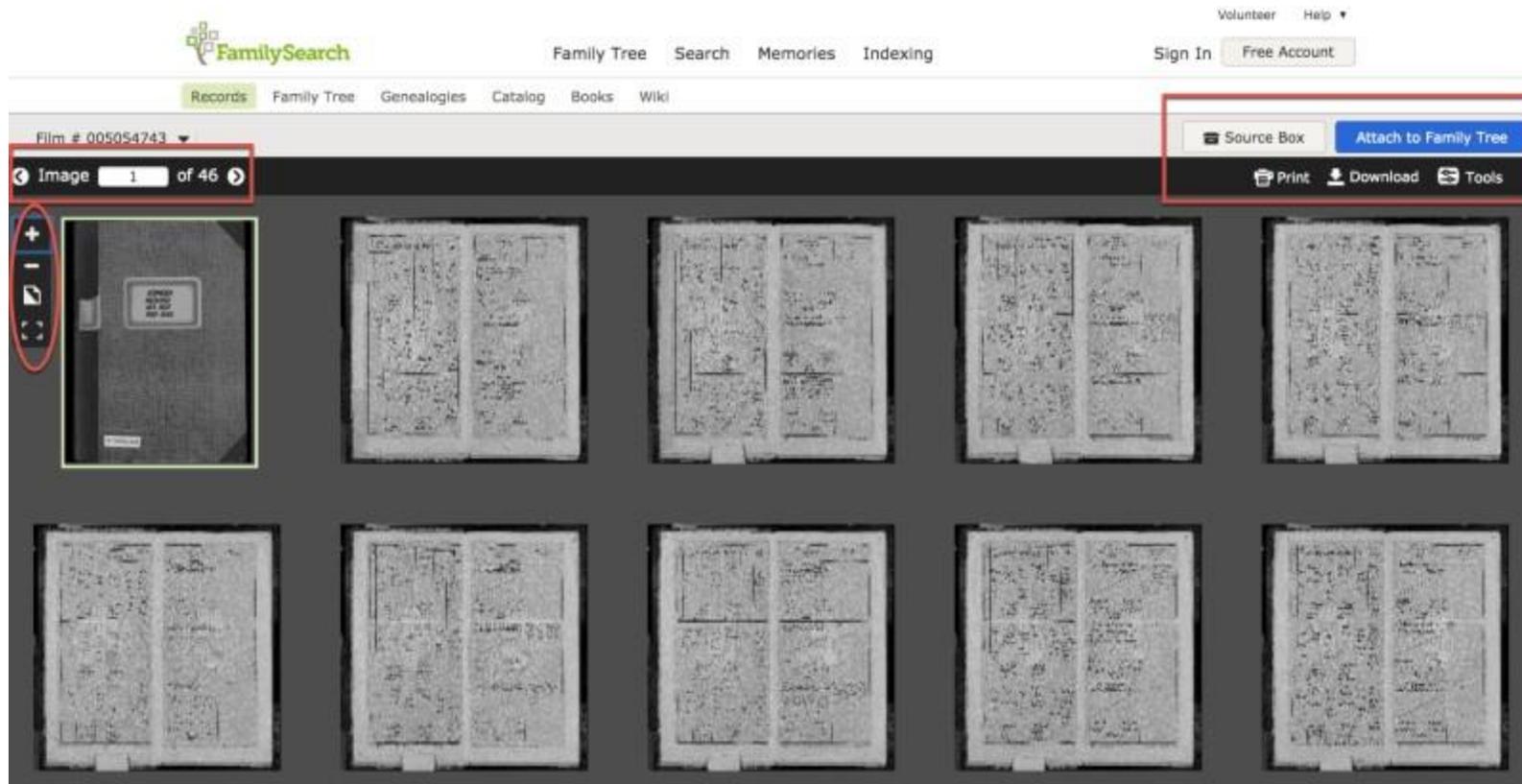
Hungary, Vas, Körmend - Civil registration

Browse all the digitized marriage records for 1950-51 by clicking the camera icon here.

Film/Digital Notes (This family history center has 1 of 1 films/fiche.)

Note	Location	Collection/Shelf	Film	DGS	Format
Marriages, 1950-1951	Granite Mountain Record Vault	International Digital		5054743	

I do that by finding the specific record collection I want in the Film/Digital Notes section and then clicking the **camera icon** at the far right. I am then taken to a digital image viewer screen like the one you see below.



I can click an image to zoom in, and I can click the right arrow key to go from one page to the next. Other helpful tools allow me to save images to my source box, print the image, download an image to my computer or thumb drive, and even attach the record directly to my family tree.

Check Back Often

If your ancestors don't materialize from these searches, all is not lost! Remember that [FamilySearch](https://www.familysearch.org) doesn't have every record out there, but the holdings available on FamilySearch.org are constantly growing. So who knows? Maybe the record offering the key to figuring out your family tree is in the record group coming online tomorrow.

Learn about the FamilySearch Family Tree



TAGS

[How to Use FamilySearch](#)