USING FAMILYSEARCH’S RECORD SEARCH

The FamilySearch site is sponsored by the LDS (Mormon) church. They make the site available to anyone who wishes to use it at no cost. Family is a keystone of the LDS. Tracing ancestors is a mandate for the church. Billions of ancestors are accessible through records that have been microfilmed from all over the world. The project began in 1938 and continues today as the direct digitization of new records. The microfilmed records are currently being digitized, indexed, and placed on the web. This includes millions of microfilms and billions of additional names. There are already 3.5 billion names on the site and 20.6 billion names on the microfilms.

When you go to https://familysearch.org, you will be asked to sign in, creating a user name and password. This is mandatory from 13 December 2017. The site is still free but you will need to do this to gain access. Check this blog entry for a full explanation: https://www.familysearch.org/blog/en/familysearch-signin-benefits/

Every other visit after this you will log in with your user name and password.

This box comes up. To be able to search the records yourself, you need to click on the “Search” option here.
This is where your search begins.

You have six categories you can look at. These include Records, Family Tree, Genealogies, Catalog, Books, and Wiki (articles). This is a microcosm of your broader research beyond this website. Records is a good place to start. Eventually you will broaden your investigation using books, articles (magazines, wikis, and blogs), other peoples' family trees and library catalogs. All are represented here.

Notice that this page allows you to narrow your search using the same type of information as other search sites such as Ancestry. It includes the name of the person (who), a specific event and date (when - and what as well), other family members, and a location (where) and record type.

You can also add additional events and date ranges, as well as additional family members and record types. Batch and film numbers refer specifically to FamilySearch record identifiers and microfilm/fiche numbers. Just click on the links in blue to open them up. Remember, not everything is online. In terms of the FamilySearch databases, there are still have several years’ worth of work to get all LDS micro text indexed, digitized, and online and there is always more being created.
Always check out the full page of a site you are working with. The map to the right is not just decorative. It allows you limit your search to a country. Look below. You can expand your search to include all published collections. If you have a small screen, what you see on the right here, will be on the bottom, under “Search Historical Records.”

When you select a country, you can then see what collections are available for that specific area.

When FamilySearch adds new countries, you see them here first.

I was just going over FamilySearch for my class and discovered the next step had completely changed. This now looks exactly like the Ancestry page. This happened after 17 December 2017, my last update. Go to your country and state or province to see the collections listed there. In this case I’m going to the United States and then I scroll down to Massachusetts from the drop down menu that appears lower on this screen. If I am correct and my ancestors are indeed in my chosen area and time frame, I increase my chances of finding them by narrowing my search. If I began by a very broad search of all records, I will probably get far too many false hits and may miss more relevant material altogether.
In this case I am searching for someone I have had difficulty tracking back to the next generation in the past, Florian Cantin. I know this gentleman married in Fall River in the late 1890s or very early 1900s. Once I get to Massachusetts, then I pick the type of record I am looking for, in this case the offering are Birth, Marriage & Death, so I click on that. The names of relevant record sets appear on the right. I skip putting in dates because my dates straddle the date ranges being offered.

Massachusetts Marriages 1841 – 1910 seems to fit well, so I click on that.

A screen pops up where I can fill in my search terms. I add the relevant information that I know. Then I hit "Search."
The results give me not only the date of the marriage, but I also have the name of his spouse and of both sets of parents. It is easier tracking both people back in time now that I can link them with parents' names. If I do a search putting in only the parents' names, I can also check any other Cantin or Levesque marriages in Fall River. If the same parents are listed, you most likely have found brothers and sisters.

I notice "View" and two choices underneath. When I click on the square…

…the page that comes up provides me with a transcript of part of the original record that has more information. I can also click on a photograph of the original document to check out what the transcriber has done and see if that is even more information included.

Note that FamilySearch now gives you a very quick way to copy this information to the FamilySearch Family Tree. If I am using their family tree, I just click the blue box above the picture of the original record.
Here is the original document. I have the option to see it in "Full Screen", to "Rotate the Image" if I need to, to "Invert the Image" from a positive to a negative for easier reading, to "Download" it, or to "Print" it. It also has a partial transcript that highlights Florian and those around him on the record.

The +/- to the side allows me to enlarge the record so I can actually read it. When I look at the original record, I find additional information. This includes the occupations of the couple, their places of residence before the marriage, what number marriage this is for each, who married them and at what address.

I discover that the marriage took place at 790 South Main Street. I find the 1900 Fall River City Directory at Ancestry.com. (Newton, like many libraries, has an in-house subscription to Ancestry for patrons in the library.) It lists the address of St. Anne’s church as 790 South Main Street. It is listed as a French Catholic Church. (There are a large number of French Canadians living and working in the mills of Fall River at this time.)
It used to be close to impossible to print out a legible copy from Family Search. They have recently added enhancements that at least increase your chances of getting one.

In the upper right hand corner of each document you bring up is a Tools box for working with the image. Adjusting Image allows you to change the brightness and contrast setting to see the document better. Once you have enhanced your image, remember that you can either print it out or download it.

A word to the wise: It always pays to look at the actual image of the original record when it is available. When you are looking at a transcript of an original record or an index, the fact that is has been printed means that someone has looked at the original handwriting and transcribed it. Transcribers make mistakes. In one transcription of this gentleman’s birth record, the transcribed birth date was one day off from what clearly appeared in the original. Often transcribers make mistakes with unfamiliar names. My grandmother’s name was Etna. I have learned to check for Edna when I can’t find her. The name Cavanaugh can be spelled at least 31 ways. In other words, look at the original record image and do your own transcription very, very carefully and very, very exactly.