

Census Searching Strategies in Heritage Quest

Introduction

It won't take you very long, once you log onto Heritage Quest, to realize that it can be quite frustrating to find the people you're looking for. Type in a name and you get a "not found." Far be it from me to criticize those who transcribe/index for a living, it can't be easy to read illegible handwriting, unfamiliar names and poor-quality census pages, not to mention names that the enumerator goofed up. I've been working in Heritage Quest for many months now and only a few family members still elude me. There will always be some who just don't want to be found.

If you're new to Heritage Quest, you might have some questions. After login, click "Search Census" from the main HQ screen. Now you'll see a box with 3 tabs: Basic Search, Advanced Search and Find By Page Number. I'll cover Basic and Advanced search strategies below. "Find By Page Number" is useful if you found your person once but need to get back to it again. It is also useful if you already know the page number, say because you found it on Ancestry, or maybe you found your person in the 1880 index at www.familysearch.org and want to pull it up in HQ. Most census pages have multiple page numbers on them, some handwritten, some stamped. HQ uses the stamped numbers. I don't think Ancestry does. So if you or someone else has located the image on Ancestry, look for the page number in the upper right corner. If you're looking at page B, go back to page A and get the stamped number. I think familysearch.org uses the stamped numbers, too. Choose the "Find By Page Number" tab and you'll be presented with a drop-down box that is pretty self-explanatory. The National Archives uses a system of "Series" numbers (the census year), "Roll" numbers (for each microfilm roll within that series) and "Page" numbers. Choose your series, type in your roll and page numbers. Click "Search." There are usually duplicate page numbers within each roll, so if the first image that is displayed is not the one you want, click the right arrow in the "Image" box and cycle through them until you find it. What's the difference between the "Image" box and the "Page" box? Use the Page arrows when you're browsing, there's a set at the top of the page and another set at the bottom. Very thoughtful, cuts down on a lot of scrolling. OK, so you've located your image. What now? I'll cover downloading and printing at the end of this tutorial.

Search Strategy Number One: First note the shaded list on the left of the Search screen. It tells you which census years are searchable. Click "What's New" to see their progress, if any, in 1930. Use the advanced search. The basic search just doesn't cut it unless you're looking for a one-of-a-kind name and even then the census taker probably misspelled it. Start with a search of the name with the spelling as you know it. Choose a census year. If you know where they should have been living then, choose the state from the drop-down list, type in the county name (in our case, "Grant" without the quotes). At this point, you can click the search button and see if you get lucky. Were you lucky? Congratulations! Oh, you got the dreaded "not found" or a list that doesn't include the person you're looking for? Read on...

Strategy Number Two: A bit of cunning and determination is needed now. Write down every variant spelling of the first and last name that you can think of. Repeat step one with each of those spellings. Still not there? Go to step three...

Strategy Number Three: Forget the surname. Search on first name. Be aware of the HQ limitations: Only 1,000 names can be displayed. If you're looking for everyone named "John" in the whole county, you probably are going to exceed that number. So let's narrow down the search a bit. If you don't have any idea what town they might have been in, leave the location box blank and use the drop-down lists to specify the person's general age, sex and race if necessary. I'd do them one at a time and see if I could get in under 1,000.

Strategy Number Four: That still didn't work? Try searching location by location. One caveat: HQ gives you a "Browse" button to locate the location, but they made it so much harder than it needs to be. Location names are riddled with misspellings, abbreviations and groupings that vary from year to year. When you browse for them, you have no way to tell what state they're in (like there are never any duplicate town names in the whole United States) and you can't tell what year they're for. So I'm giving you a list of those locations by year. Forget the browse location button. It stinks.

| <u>Grant County, Wisconsin</u> | | |
|---------------------------------------|------------------------|---------------------------------|
| <u>Year</u> | <u>Location</u> | <u>Comments</u> |
| 1840 | East Division | Not Searchable, Browseable Only |
| | West Division | |
| 1850 | 24-Dist | Not Searchable, Browseable Only |
| | Fennimore | |
| | Harrison | |
| | Hazel Green | |
| | Highland | |
| | Jamestown | |
| | Lima | |
| | Paris | |
| | Platteville | |
| | Smeltzen Grove | !! Misspelling Alert !! |
| | Wingville | |

| <u>Grant County, Wisconsin</u> | | |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| <u>Year</u> | <u>Location</u> | <u>Comments</u> |
| 1860 | Beetown | |
| | Blue Rvr | !! Abbreviation Alert !! |
| | Boscobel | |
| | Cassville | |
| | Clifton | |
| | Ellenbord | !! Misspelling Alert !! |
| | Fennimore | |
| | Glen Haven | |
| | Harrison Twp | |
| | Hazel Green | |
| | Hickory Grove | |
| | Jamestown | |
| | Lancaster | |
| | Liberty | |
| | Lima | |
| | Little Grant | |
| | Marion | |
| | Millville | |
| | Muscoda | |
| | Paris Twp | |
| | Patch Grove | |
| | Patch Grove & Wyalusing | |
| | Plattville | !! Misspelling Alert !! |
| | Potosi | |
| | Potosi Twp | |
| | Smelser | |
| | Smelzer Grove | !! Misspelling Alert !! |
| | Tafton | |
| | Tafton & Millville | |
| | Waterloo | |
| | Waterstown | !! Misspelling Alert !! |
| | Wingville | |
| | Wyalusing | |

| <u>Grant County, Wisconsin</u> | | |
|---------------------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------|
| <u>Year</u> | <u>Location</u> | <u>Comments</u> |
| 1870 | Beetown | |
| | Bloomington | |
| | Blue Rvr | !! Abbreviation Alert !! |
| | Boscobel | |
| | Cassville | |
| | Clifton | |
| | Ellenbor | |
| | Fennimore | |
| | Glen Haven | |
| | Harrison | |
| | Hazel Green | |
| | Hickory Grove | |
| | Jamestown | |
| | Lancaster | |
| | Liberty | |
| | Lima | |
| | Little Grant | |
| | Marion | |
| | Millville | |
| | Mt Hope | !! Abbreviation Alert !! |
| | Muscoda | |
| | Paris | |
| | Patch Grove | |
| | Platteville | |
| | Potosi | |
| | Smelser | |
| | Waterloo | |
| | Watterstown | |
| | Wingville | |
| | Woodman | |
| | Wyalusing | |

| <u>Grant County, Wisconsin</u> | | |
|---------------------------------------|------------------------|--|
| <u>Year</u> | <u>Location</u> | <u>Comments</u> |
| 1880 | Beetown | Not Searchable, Browseable Only (go use the free index at www.familysearch.org) |
| | Bloomington | |
| | Boscobel | |
| | Burton; Waterloo | |
| | Cassville | |
| | Castle Rock | |
| | Clifton | |
| | Cuba; Smelser | |
| | Ellenboro | |
| | Fennimore | |
| | Georgetown; Smelser | |
| | Glen Haven | |
| | Harrison | |
| | Hazel Green | |
| | Hickory Grove | |
| | Jamestown | |
| | Lancaster | |
| | Liberty | |
| | Lima | |
| | Marion | |
| | Millville | |
| | Montfort; Watters | |
| | Mount Hope | |
| | Mount Ida | |
| | Muscoda | |
| | North Andover | |
| | Paris | |
| | Patch Grove | |
| | Patosi; British Hollow | !! Misspelling Alert !! |
| | Platteville | |
| | Poorhouse; Lancaster | |
| | Potosi | |
| | Smelser | |
| | Washburn; Lima | |
| | Waterloo | |
| | Watters | |
| | Wingville; Watters | |
| | Woodman | |
| | Wyalusing; Woodman | |

| <u>Grant County, Wisconsin</u> | | |
|---------------------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------|
| <u>Year</u> | <u>Location</u> | <u>Comments</u> |
| 1900 | Beetown | |
| | Bloomington | |
| | Boscobel | |
| | Cassville | |
| | Castle Rock | |
| | Clifton | |
| | Ellenboro | |
| | Fennimore | |
| | Glen Haven | |
| | Harrison | |
| | Hazel Green | |
| | Hickory Grove | |
| | Jamestown | |
| | Lancaster | |
| | Liberty | |
| | Lima | |
| | Little Grant | |
| | Marion | |
| | Millville | |
| | Mt Hope | !! Abbreviation Alert !! |
| | Mt Ida | !! Abbreviation Alert !! |
| | Muscoda | |
| | Paris Twp | |
| | Patch Grove | |
| | Platteville | |
| | Potosi | |
| | Smelser | |
| | Waterloo | |
| | Watterstown | |
| | Wingville | |
| | Woodman | |
| | Wyalusing | |

| Grant County, Wisconsin | | |
|--------------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------|
| <u>Year</u> | <u>Location</u> | <u>Comments</u> |
| 1910 | 1-WD Lancaster | |
| | 1-WD Platteville | |
| | 2-WD Platteville | |
| | 3-WD Lancaster | !! Misspelling Alert !! |
| | 3-WD Platteville | |
| | 4-WD Lancaster | !! Misspelling Alert !! |
| | 4-WD Platteville | |
| | Beetown Twp | |
| | Bloomington | |
| | Boscobel | |
| | Cassville | |
| | Castle Rock | |
| | Clifton | |
| | Cuba | |
| | Ellenboro Twp | |
| | Fennimore | |
| | Glen Haven | |
| | Glen Haven Twp | |
| | Harrison | |
| | Hazel Green | |
| | Hickory Grove | |
| | Jamestown | |
| | Jamestowner | !! Misspelling Alert !! |
| | Liberty | |
| | Lima Twp | |
| | Little Grant | |
| | Marion | |
| | Millville | |
| | Monfort | !! Misspelling Alert !! |
| | Mount Hope | |
| | Mount Ida | |
| | Muscoda | |
| | North Lancaster Tw | !! Abbreviation Alert !! |
| | Paris Twp | |
| | Patch Grove | |
| | Platteville Twp | |
| | Potosi | |
| | Smelser | |
| | South Lancaster | |
| | Waterloo | |
| | Watterstown | |
| | Wingville | |
| | Woodman | |
| | Wyalusing | |

| Grant County, Wisconsin | | |
|--------------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------|
| <u>Year</u> | <u>Location</u> | <u>Comments</u> |
| 1920 | 1-WD; Boscobel | |
| | 1-WD; Fennimore | |
| | 1-WD; Lancaster | |
| | 1-WD; Platteville | |
| | 2-WD; Boscobel | |
| | 2-WD; Fennimore | |
| | 2-WD; Lancaster | |
| | 2-WD; Platteville | |
| | 3-WD; Boscobel | |
| | 3-WD; Fennimore | |
| | 3-WD; Lancaster | |
| | 3-WD; Platteville | |
| | 4-WD; Boscobel | |
| | 4-WD; Fennimore | |
| | 4-WD; Lancaster | |
| | 4-WD; Platteville | |
| | Bee | !! Abbreviation Alert !! |
| | Bloomington | |
| | Blue Rvr; Watters | !! Abbreviation Alert !! |
| | Boscobel | |
| | Cassville | |
| | Castle Rock | |
| | Clifton | |
| | Cuba; Smelers | !! Misspelling Alert !! |
| | Ellenboro | |
| | Fennimore | |
| | Fennimore; Glen Haven | |
| | Harrison | |
| | Hazel Green | |
| | Hickory Grove | |
| | James | !! Abbreviation Alert !! |
| | Lancaster | |
| | Liberty | |
| | Lima | |
| | Little Grant | |
| | Livingston | |
| | Marion | |
| | Millville | |
| | Montfort; Wingville | |
| | Mt Hope | !! Abbreviation Alert !! |
| | Mt Ida | !! Abbreviation Alert !! |
| | Muscoda | |
| | Paris | |
| | Patch Grove | |
| | Platteville | |
| | Potosi | |

| | | |
|--------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------|
| | S Lancaster | !! Abbreviation Alert !! |
| 1920 cont'd. | S Lancaster; Grant County Asyl | !! Abbreviation Alert !! |
| | Saint Clara Academy | |
| | Smelser | |
| | Waterloo | |
| | Woodman | |
| | Wyalusing | |

| Grant County, Wisconsin | | |
|--------------------------------|------------------------|------------------------------------|
| <u>Year</u> | <u>Location</u> | <u>Comments</u> |
| 1930 | 1-WD Platteville | Not Searchable, Browseable Only |
| | 2-WD Platteville | |
| | 3-WD Platteville | |
| | 4-WD Platteville | |
| | 5-WD Platteville | |
| | 6-WD Platteville | |
| | 7-WD Platteville | |
| | 8-WD Platteville | |
| | Bagley Village | |
| | Beetown Town | |
| | Bloomington Town | |
| | Blue Rvr Village | |
| | Boscobel | |
| | Boscobel City | |
| | Cassville Village | |
| | Castle Rock Town | |
| | Clifton Town | |
| | Co Asylum | |
| | Co Home | |
| | Cuba City | |
| | Ellenboro Town | |
| | Fennimore | |
| | Fennimore City | |
| | Glen Haven Town | |
| | Harrison Town | |
| | Hazel Green Town | |
| | Hazel Green Village | |
| | Hickory Grove Town | |
| | Jamestown Town | |
| | Lancaster City | |
| | Liberty Town | |
| | Lima Town | |
| | Little Grant Town | |
| | Livingston Village | |
| | Marion | |

| | | |
|--------------|-------------------------------|--|
| | Millville | |
| | Montfort | |
| 1930 cont'd. | Mt Hope | |
| | Mt Hope Town | |
| | Mt Ida | |
| | Muscoda | |
| | Muscoda Twp | |
| | N Lancaster Twp | |
| | Paris Twp | |
| | Patch Grove | |
| | Patch Grove Twp | |
| | Platteville Twp | |
| | Potosi | |
| | Potosi Twp | |
| | S Lancaster Twp | |
| | Smelser Twp | |
| | St Clara Academy & Convent | |
| | Waterloo Twp | |
| | Watterstown Twp | |
| | Wingville Twp | |
| | Woodman | |
| | Woodman Twp | |
| | Wyalusing Twp | |

Strategy Number Five: Try adding "birthplace" to your search criteria. This time I will suggest that you give the "browse" button a try so that you can get an idea of what your choices are. Of course if you're thinking "Germany" and the census taker wrote "Prussia" you won't find your person this way. With experience, you won't need to use this much.

Strategy Number Six: Still nothing, huh? Try leaving first and last name blank. As in step three, you'll want to narrow the rest of your search criteria to get in under that 1,000 record limit. What you'll see now are the names that are indexed with question marks in place of letters the indexer couldn't make out. Are you getting an understanding now of why step one didn't work? HQ does not give us the ability to search with wildcards or with soundex.

The intrepid ancestor sleuth will try various combinations of strategy steps before moving on to the next person on her list. Now notice I didn't say "before giving up." I've searched the daylights out of a name and come up with nothing, but went back the next day or the next week and found it. Never give up.

Downloading and Printing

If you want to keep a copy of your image on your own computer, click the "Download" button. HQ will ask if you want to save as PDF or TIFF. Your choice. I like PDF because I can share the files with others easily. If you don't care to clutter up your hard drive with the gazillions of images you're going to have because you're so good at searching now, you can click the Print button. There are online instructions for enlarging the images before printing. If you want to conserve ink (hey, who doesn't? that stuff's expensive) you'll need a method of cropping off the black border that seems to be around every image except 1930 (by the time the scanning people got to 1930 they finally figured out that it would be a good idea to crop the images for us.) Of course, you'll have to download the image to do this. For PDFs, you can use the snapshot tool (looks like a camera) in Adobe Reader. For TIFFs, you'll need a graphics editing program. If you don't have one on your computer, I recommend "Irfanview" a free download at www.irfanview.com (Windows only). And if you decide to keep all your images, I'm telling you now you'd better come up with a good method of organizing them all. Set up folders by surname or by location, offload them to CDs, whatever works for you. I name each image with the name of head of household, the census year and the county and file them by surname. If I think I might not remember what state they're in (like if some lone wolf left the homestead and moved to Alaska where no other family members were) I'll add that to my file name.

Final Thoughts

I discovered another HQ limitation that I have reported to Pro Quest. Whether they fix it or not remains to be seen. Have you noticed on the census image screen that there's a "Go to" box? That's for jumping around when you're browsing. There is a 4-digit limitation in that box. If you have the misfortune to be looking for family in 1930 Seattle, you'll find that there are 13,708 pages. You can only jump to page 9,999. To get to the last 3,709 pages, you have to keep clicking that right arrow. Not my idea of a good time. And if you get interrupted or have a power failure when you finally get to page 13,700, you'll have to start over. Most big cities (that I've seen) are broken down into manageable units by ward or enumeration district. That's what they need to do with Seattle.

If you can afford it, or have a convenient library that offers it to patrons for free, it's beneficial to use Ancestry.com in tandem with HQ. Sometimes the Ancestry images are better, sometimes HQ's are. The indexes are different, so if you can't find someone on one, you might find them on the other.

Last but not least: read the online help! A very useful guide can be found when you click "Help?" (top of screen), then "Back to Table of Contents," then "Learn More About the Census" under the heading "Overview."

I hope this tutorial has been helpful. If it hasn't answered all your questions, I suggest you sign up for the Godfrey Library mailing list (you don't have to be a library member to subscribe) where the focus is, of course, on the library's online offerings, but there is a lot of conversation about Heritage Quest. Go to:

http://lists.rootsweb.com/index/other/Internet_Help/GODFREY-LIBRARY-HELP.html

and follow the directions for subscribing (and while you're at it, make sure you understand how to unsubscribe). You can also search/browse the list archives from this screen.

Happy Hunting!

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