HeritageQuest Online: Search Tips

HeritageQuest Online is now powered by Ancestry.com! This guide will provide insight into the content, features, and functionality of the NEW HeritageQuest Online.

| Search this Guide | Search |

About   Content   Search Tips   Tools   Browse Options   Sample Searches   Maps   Additional Materials

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Truncation and Wildcard Symbols

* The asterisk is a wildcard that matches zero or more characters. For example, a search on **'Sam*'** will bring back results that include **'Sam', 'Samantha', 'Samuel'**, etc. You can also search alternate spellings with the asterisk (*), which represents 0 to 5 unknown characters. The query **Johann*** will search for **Johann** and **Johannes**. A query for **Smel*er** will search for **Smeltzer** and **Smelzer**, among others. Note: You cannot use an asterisk as the first, second, or third character of a search term.

? The question mark acts as a single-character wildcard. For example, a search on **'Eli?abeth'** will bring back results that include **'Elisabeth'** or **'Elizabeth'**. Note: You *cannot* use a question mark as the first character of a search term.

NOTE: Using these symbols in combination is also an acceptable pratice. For example, a search for **Eli?a*** will return hits for Eliza, Elisa, Elizabet, Elisabet, Elizabeth, and Elisabeth, as well as Elijah, Elimar, etc.

Keyword Searching

The *Keyword* field can be used to search for any word you would expect to be found in the database you are searching. This can include things such as an occupation or a location. You are able to only search for keywords. Keep in mind that if you enter more than one term you will need to use quotation marks to ensure an exact phrase search, such as *"The Great War."* If you choose to combine a name with a keyword and the database finds a match for the name, but not the keyword, it will not provide the results for you.

The *Keyword* field can be found on the following search pages:

- U.S. Federal Census
- Books Collection
- Revolutionary War era records
- Freedman's Bank records

Exact & Similar Matching Options

Exact matching options are seen on the **Census, Books, Revolutionary War, and Freedman's Bank** collection search pages. As you type information into a search field you will see a checkbox and the word *Exact* display below the field. Tick the box or click *Exact* to see more matching options.

Each search field has different matching criteria:

- **First & Middle Name**
  - *Exact* - retrieves results the exactly match the data entered in the search field
  - *Sounds like* - retrieves results that match exactly <u>and</u> those that are similar phonetic matches
  - *Similar* - retrieves results that match exactly <u>and</u> those that have a similar spelling or meaning
  - *Initials* - retrieves results that match exactly <u>and</u> those that include initials that match the first letter of the first name (and the middle name, if entered).
- **Last Name**
  - *Exact* - retrieves results the exactly match the data entered in the search field
  - *Sounds like* - retrieves results that match exactly <u>and</u> those that are similar phonetic matches
  - *Similar* - retrieves results that match exactly <u>and</u> those that have a similar spelling or meaning
  - *Soundex* - Soundex is a common algorithm used to generate alternate spellings of a surname. If you choose this option, any record that contains one of the Soundex variations for a surname might appear in your results.

The above name fields are also seen in the *Add Family Member* sections of many search pages.

- **Year**
  - Exact to
    - This year
    - +/- 1 year
    - +/- 2 years
    - +/- 5 years
    - +/- 10 years
- **Location**
  - Exact to
    - This place
    - County
    - County and adjacent counties
    - State
    - State and adjacent states
    - Country
- The following fields have an Exact match checkbox and no other options. Check the box to use this limit.
  - Keyword
  - Publication Title
  - Race / Nationality

<u>NOTE</u>: Click the "About these settings" link in any Exact match menu to read more about the available options for that field.

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