How Did You Find That?
Ten Things You Didn't Know About Record Searching On

ancestry®

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Prerequisites

- Have an Ancestry account at **www.ancestry.com**.
- Have a pedigree chart with a few generations.

When you research, you must determine what you want to know. Do you want to know everything about a newly discovered ancestor, or are you searching for that specific detail in your ancestor's life, like the date of their marriage or the year they died? Asking these questions to yourself guides your approach to how you search.

1. SEARCHING FROM ANCESTRY SEARCH HOME PAGE.
   Did you know that there are more records on Ancestry than what appears in a general search result from the Ancestry home page?
   - The Ancestry Search Home Page is found under the SEARCH tab at the top of the screen by #1. Select the SHOW MORE OPTIONS button to add more search parameters to your query by #2.

2. EXPLORING FROM ANCESTRY SEARCH HOME PAGE.
   Now, with more options for entering birth, death, and marriage dates and places by #1, gender and race by #2, and collection focus by #3, we can successfully find the desired information about an ancestor.
   Tips:
   - These facts are most useful in a search: name, birthdate, location, and relatives' names.
   - Try to include at least one date in your search. Dates are used to estimate a possible lifespan. For example, if you enter a birthdate of 1800, the search results would not include someone who was married in 1750 or someone who died in 1935.
   - If you are not confident about a certain fact, try guessing. Even rough estimates can help.

3. EXPLORING FROM ANCESTRY SEARCH HOME PAGE.
   Never assume that the date of an event, such as your ancestor's birth date, is the same across all source documents. So, always allow for several years of variance when searching.
   - By #1, click the EXACT +/- button, and a drop-down menu will appear.
   - Select the desired variance in years by #2.
   - Additionally, do not presume to know the location of an event. In this example, I chose Chatham County, Georgia, ensuring the standardized spelling and location were selected. Then I clicked on the EXACT TO box by #3.
   - In the drop-down menu, select this County and Adjacent Counties by #4. If only the state were known, bordering states could also be searched. Keep in mind that the boundaries and neighboring states are currently defined and not historical boundaries. Make sure you are aware of historical boundaries for the time and place desired.

4. EXPLORING FROM ANCESTRY SEARCH HOME PAGE.

   Tips for Searching:
   - PARENT SEARCH: If your ancestor had a name that could be easily misspelled or you are looking for all the children of a specific couple, try a parent search from the Search Home Page. Leaving the first and last names blank. By #1, add the parents' names but leave the mother's maiden name. The search results will then include all children's vital records where these specific parents have been named.
   - WILDCARD SEARCH: Because names in historical records are sometimes misspelled or abbreviated, searching for spelling variations can help you find records you may otherwise miss. Try a wildcard search to see variations in spelling of an ancestor's name. Wild cards are special symbols used in searches to represent unknown letters in a word. Ancestry uses the asterisk (*) and the question mark (?) as wild cards.
     - If you did not know, for example, whether a certain first name was spelled "Nielson" or "Nielsen," you could search by substituting a letter in the name with a wildcard, such as "Niels?n" by #2.
     - The * represents zero to five characters, while the ? represents one character. Wild cards do not work with Soundex matches. When searching with wild cards, at least the first or last character must not be a wild card, and all searches containing wild cards must contain at least three non-wildcard letters.
     - For example, by #3, though searching ***ohnson** and **Johnso*** would work, ***ohnso*** would not, and while ***ill** would work, ***ll** would not. Wild cards can be used in various ways.
   - LAST NAME-ONLY SEARCH: If your ancestor had a frequently misspelled first name, you could try a last name-only search by #4. This works best if you include a specific event's county and time frame.

5. EXPLORE BY LOCATION.
   Sometimes, the best search results come from searching in a specific locality or a collection specific to a place. Find the ALL COLLECTIONS option in the SEARCH drop-down menu by #1.
   - Scroll down to the middle of the Search Home page and find the EXPLORE BY LOCATION section by #2.
   - Choose the U.S. state from the map by #3, in the list by #4, or switch to another country by #5.
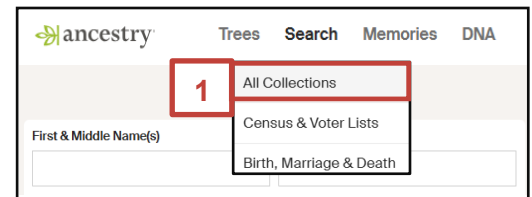
6. EXPLORE BY LOCATION (CONTINUED).
   - A list of locality-specific record collections is within the specific state or country. Note the names of the collections by #1 and the number of records within that collection by #2.
   - Narrow even further to a county within that country by #3.
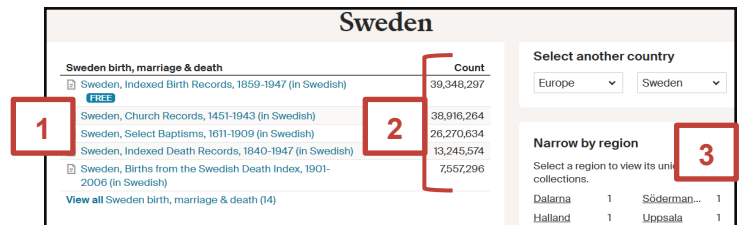
7. SEARCH HOME PAGE – JUMP BACK IN.
   - When wanting to return to a previously viewed collection, find the list on the Search Home Page in the Jump Back In section by #1.
   - If the desired collection you previously viewed is not included in this list, you can view your recent activity by clicking the VIEW ALL button by #2.
   - By #3 is the list of the collections that have been used recently.
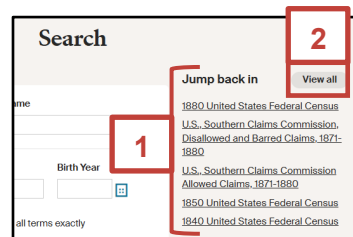
8. EXPLORE BY COLLECTION.
   To search for a specific type of record (vital record, census record, newspaper, etc.), it is best to narrow the search to that particular category.
   - Find the desired type of record from the Search Home Page by #1.
   - To see more categories click on the VIEW ALL button by #2.
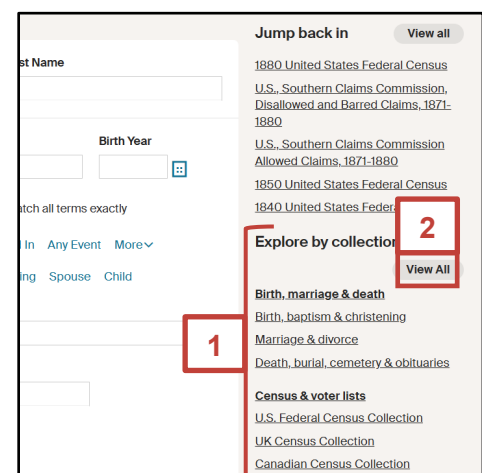
9. EXPLORE BY COLLECTION.
   - The same categories found on the Search home page by #1 can be accessed from the search drop-down menu by #2.
   - In the drop-down menu, choose the desired type of record by #3.
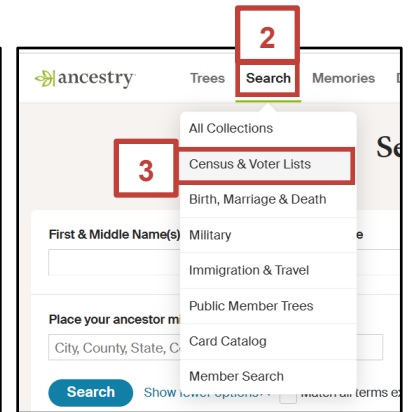
10. FILTERING THE SEARCH RESULTS SCREEN.
   Top Section: The search results will appear after you enter your information from the SEARCH home page. There are many components to the SEARCH RESULTS screen. This is the top half of the search screen. We need to understand how to use and manipulate each feature.
   - By #1, it shows the data you entered for a specific ancestor.
   - To edit these search parameters, click the pencil icon by #2 or adjust the sliders by #3 to indicate a more broad or exact date range or place range. The farther to the right you move a slider, the more closely a record must match the information you entered. Hover over each notch in a slider to see a tooltip explaining the setting. Try searching with the sliders at different positions to see how it changes your results. **Note:** This filtering does not alter any data in your tree; it only alters what the search engine uses to find records relating to your ancestors.
   - To study what information other researchers have about your ancestors, you can search in public member trees. Currently, only one tree is shown by #4.
   - Select BROWSE MORE LIKE THIS by #5 to see trees that may contain details about your ancestors.
   - In this example by #6, there are 39,815 possible records that could reference your ancestor or someone with a like name. This would be an overwhelming task to search through each one. These strategies I discuss today can help you find a smaller pool of more relevant results.
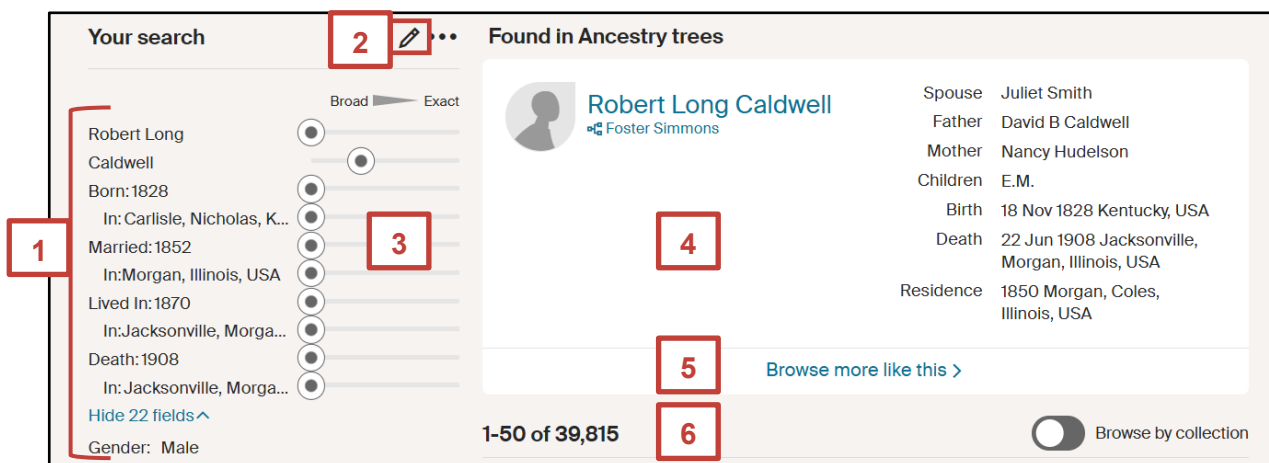
11. FILTERING THE SEARCH RESULTS – MIDDLE SECTION.
   - Select the desired country from the drop-down menu by #1 to focus your search results by country.
   - If you have subscribed to Ancestry Pro Tools, you can have the filtering option to see unviewed results only by clicking the box by #2. Learn more about Pro Tools at **https://support.ancestry.com/s/article/Ancestry-Pro-Tools-Membership**
   - The list of records you have already discovered and attached to this ancestor in your tree is by #3. To revisit these previously attached records, click on any of the collection names to open that specific record.
   - By number #4, select to activate or deactivate Smart Filtering. This is also only available through a Pro Tools subscription. Smart Filtering removes results you have already saved for the person, the hints you have ignored for this person, and hides collections where a single person will seldom appear in more than one record, such as birth records, census reports, and death records.
   - For example, imagine you have already saved these three records to your tree for Sam Smith: New York, Birth Index, 1891–1902; 1910 United States Federal Census; U.S., Social Security Death Index, 1935–2014. Smart Filtering will remove all other records from those three collections from your person search for Sam Smith. People are born and die only once, and they are usually recorded only once during a census. Because of this, you are unlikely to make more discoveries in these collections, so the records are removed from your search results.
   - If you have already viewed a record, it will be tagged as SEEN and the collection title will change to purple and not blue by #5.
   - By #6, in this example, the *Illinois, U.S. Compiled Marriages* record collection for Robert Caldwell has not been examined yet and is also found in the Hints tab on a person's profile page.

12. FILTERING THE SEARCH RESULTS SCREEN – BOTTOM SECTION.
   - On the left side of your screen, after the edit search parameters section, are the filters that can be applied to narrow down search results. Each filter option can be opened to a menu revealing more data points to filter.
   - For example, by #1, you can narrow down specific years of census results you wish to examine. Select the desired decade from the list by #2.
   - To find a certain type of vital record, click on the birth, marriage, and death category by #3, then pick the preferred type of vital record results by #4.
   - Another filtering feature is choosing what century by #5, then within the century, select the decade.

13. EXPLORE THE ANCESTRY CARD CATALOG.
Searching in the Card Catalog allows you to quickly access records from specific collections, locations, and time periods. It is most useful when you are looking for a certain record and want to search within a particular database.
- Access the Card Catalog from the Search drop-down menu by #1. The Card Catalog is a searchable listing of all Ancestry's record collections.
- The list of records can be sorted by collection title, date updated, date added, and record count by #2.
- Sorting by date added will show the collections that have been recently added by #3.
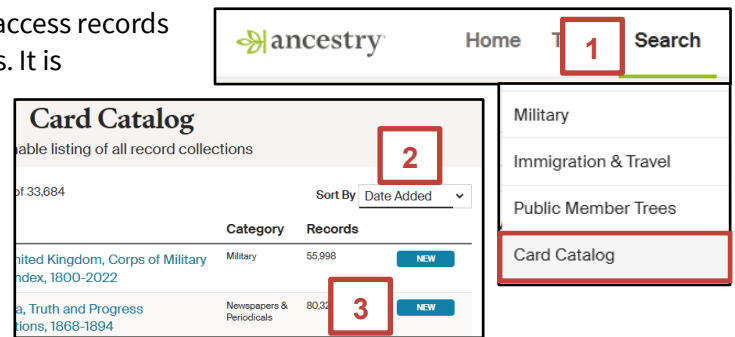
14. EXPLORE THE ANCESTRY CARD CATALOG.
- On the Card Catalog page, look in the top-left corner for the Title and Keyword(s) fields by #1. If you know the name (or part of the name) of the collection you want to search, type it into the Title field.
- Use the Keywords field to search by associated terms; for example, the keyword "census" will bring up electoral registers too. Entering more than one term in the Keywords field narrows your results. If you do not know the collection name, enter terms into the Keywords field that are likely to be in the title, such as "North Carolina Land Grants."
- Narrow your search results using the filters on the left side of the page by #2. Each filter will remove results from your search that do not match your selected filter.
- You can use more than one filter at once; if you limit your results to military records, you can filter by location and date.
- When filtering by location, selecting a region will produce a list of smaller areas within that region. For example, after choosing the United Kingdom from the Filter By Location list, you will see a list of smaller locations, and after clicking one of those, you will see a list of counties. Select a decade or language from the lists on the left to filter by date or language.
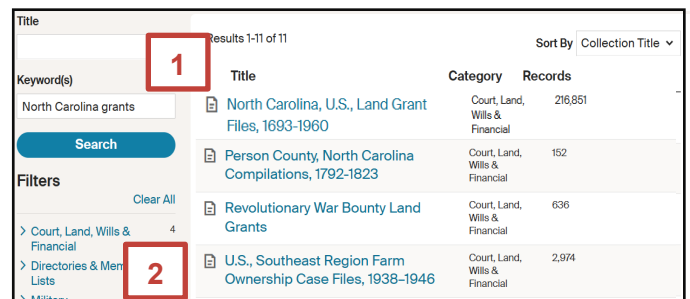
15. SEARCH FROM THE ANCESTOR'S PROFILE PAGE.
The benefit is that you do not have to type any information into the search boxes, like on the Search home page.
- Click on the SEARCH ON ANCESTRY button by #1. The results will be filtered using the techniques we already discussed.

16. SEARCH IN PUBLIC MEMBER TREES.
- Other researchers may have access to documents or photos that we have not yet discovered, or they have the only physical copy. Search in Ancestry's Public Member trees in two ways. The first is to see if any photos or documents are found using the Hints tab by #1, then observe those that come from public member trees in the list of hints. In this example by #2 is a death certificate for my ancestor.
- The second way of accessing documents and photos from Public Member Trees is to Search on Ancestry by #3. In the Search results, by #4-6, there may be stories, newspaper articles, and photos of your ancestors.
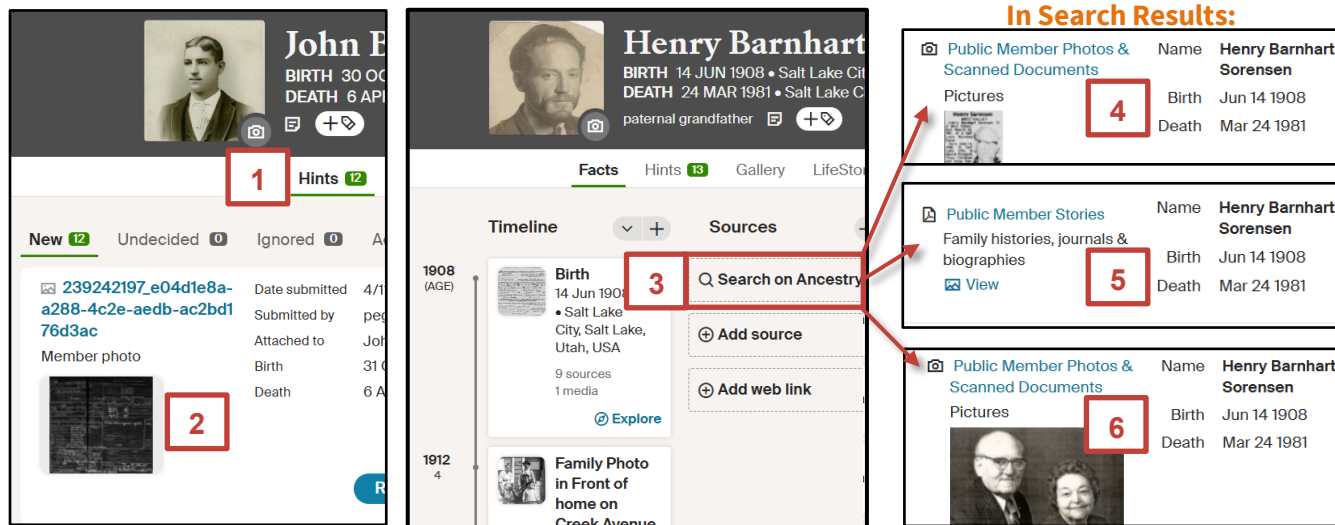
17. SEARCH PUBLIC MEMBER TREES – ACCESS MULTIPLE WAYS.

Another way to access PUBLIC MEMBER TREES is to select it from the Search drop-down menu by #1. Enter your ancestor's name in the search fields by #2. Related data collections are found just to the right of the Public Member Trees search fields. You can search in the PUBLIC MEMBER TREE PHOTOS AND SCANNED DOCUMENTS collection by #3.
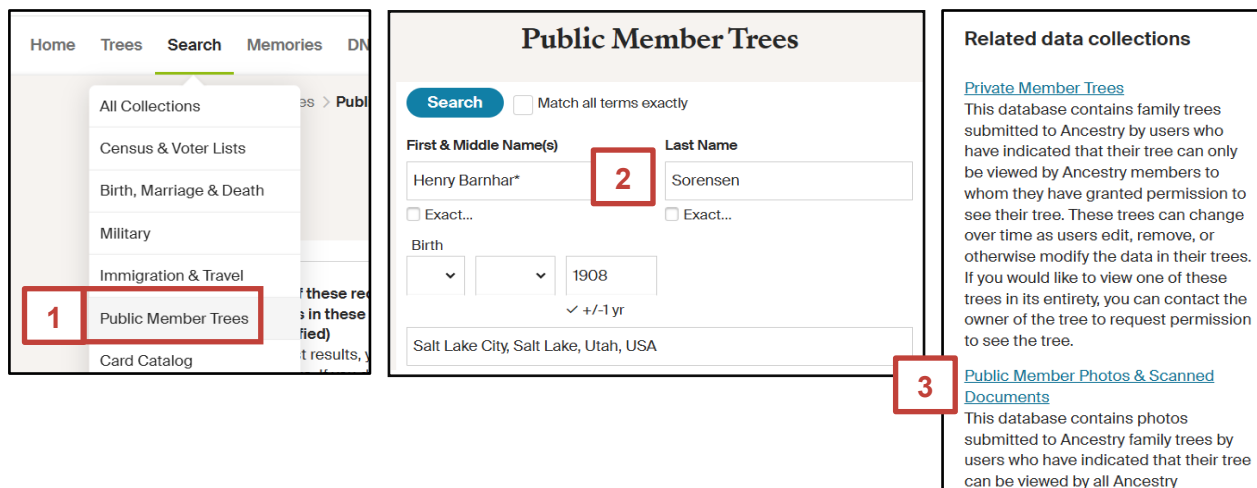
18. USE DROP-DOWN MENUS FOR ADDITIONAL RECORDS.

- First, find an indexed record in the desired collection. You may have to search for a John Smith in a specific time and place to get to the right record set. For example, when I searched for Thomas Harris and found his will, I also wanted to search for other probate records that may reference him.
- Click on the name of the record set by #1, and a drop-down menu will appear.
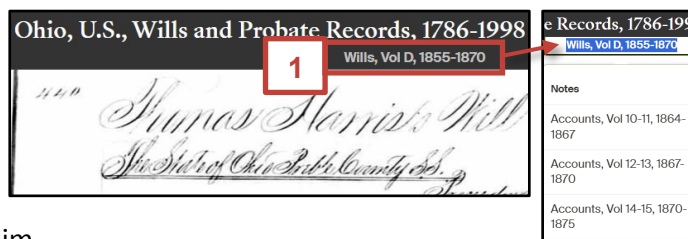
19. START WITH AN INDEXED IMAGE…

Sometimes, we just do not find what we want in indexed records. It could be that the person's name is listed incorrectly on the image, or the desired year of the event is not part of the record collection.

- To see the range of a certain record set, click on the year of the event in the Image view screen by #1. A drop-down menu appears where you can select an alternate year or determine the years included in the record set.

- By #2, the county and state (or country) can also be altered in the Image viewer. So, by looking at the different years available in Los Angeles City Directories, I can determine if any are missing or not included within a record set.
- I can also select my state, county, and year by #3. In this example, I can look for John Bernard Kamm in the alphabetic directory for that specific year and learn that his name was spelled incorrectly or that the directory was not published for a given year.
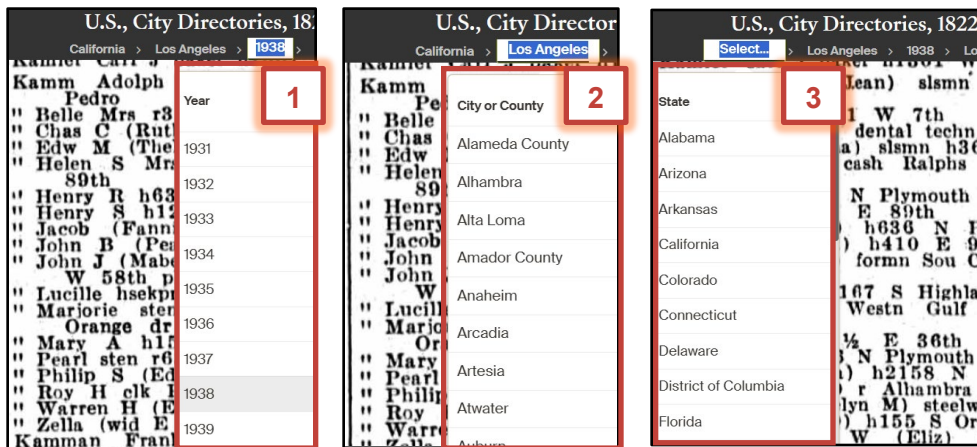

20. ACCESSING UNINDEXED BROWSABLE RECORD SETS.
- In the drop-down menus, record sets may not have been indexed and will not appear in a search for an indexed record.
- When searching in the drop-down menus for a record set by #1, look to the bottom of the page and notice if there is a people icon like by #2.
- If the person icon is present, this record has been indexed. By clicking on the person icon, the names of the indexed people will appear at the bottom of the screen by #3.
- In another record set by #4, scroll down to the bottom of the page and note that the person icon is greyed out by #5. This means that this record has not been indexed and will not appear in a search for an indexed record.
- **Tip:** it is common for each record set to have a filmed index at the beginning or end of each scanned book by #6.
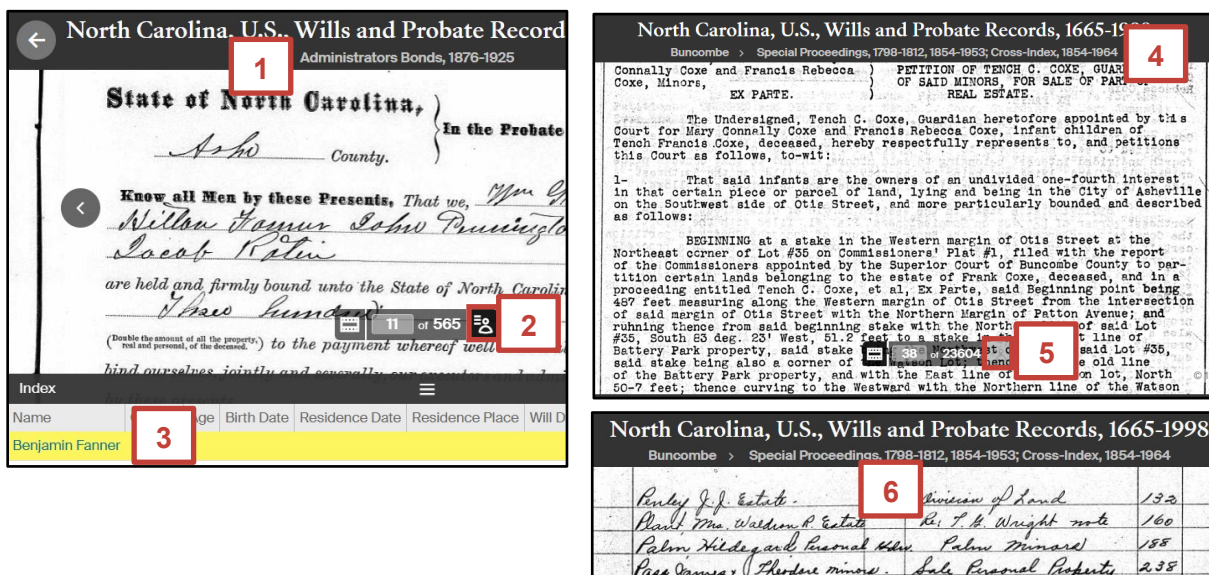
21. EXPLORE COLLECTIONS BY ETHNICITY.
- Many record sets on Ancestry are specific to an ethnicity. To access those collections, click the SEARCH button in the menu bar and select ALL COLLECTIONS by #1.
- Then scroll down on the Search Home Page to the bottom right of the screen to SPECIAL COLLECTIONS by #2.
- If the ethnic collection is not listed here, click the VIEW ALL IN CARD CATALOG button by #3.
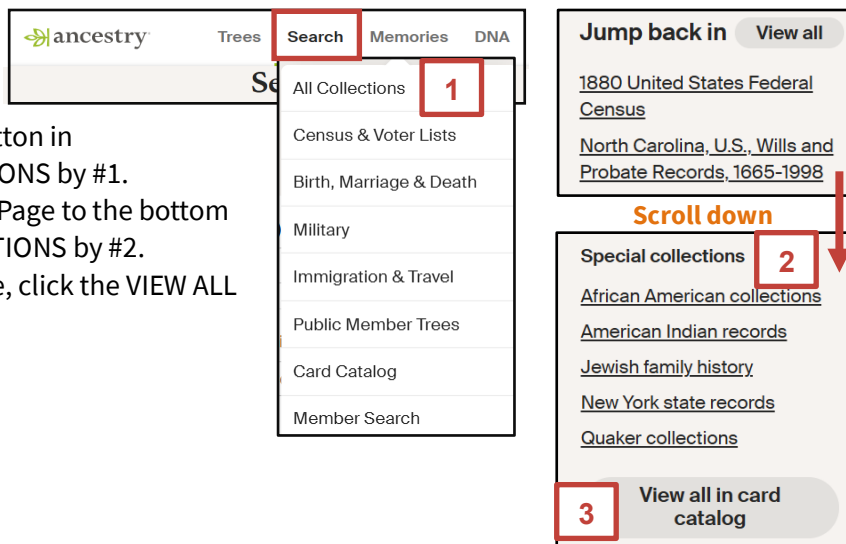
22. EXPLORE COLLECTIONS BY ETHNICITY (CONTINUED).
- In a Card Catalog Keyword search, enter the desired ethnicity and the type of record you seek by #1.
- There are record sets specific to different ethnic groups, such as African-American, Native American, Irish, Scottish, Scotch-Irish, Jewish, and Scandinavian (Swedish, Danish, and Norwegian).

23. USING THE FILMSTRIP – SEE THE NEXT SECTION OF THE FILM.
- How often have you found a family in a census record or other document that appears to be the last page in the record collection, but it seems there is likely more to be continued on the next page?
- For example, by #1 is a husband and wife listed as the last household on the census page by #1.
- By #2, observe that this is "page 4 of 4."
- Click on the filmstrip icon by #3, and the filmstrip will be shown at the bottom of the screen.
- By #4, see the green outline around the last page of the record set.
- By #5, click on the next film's first page to see the continuation of the household.
- Now we find by #6 the couple's son, Julius.
- Note that the page numbers have changed by #7 to display "page 1 of 2."
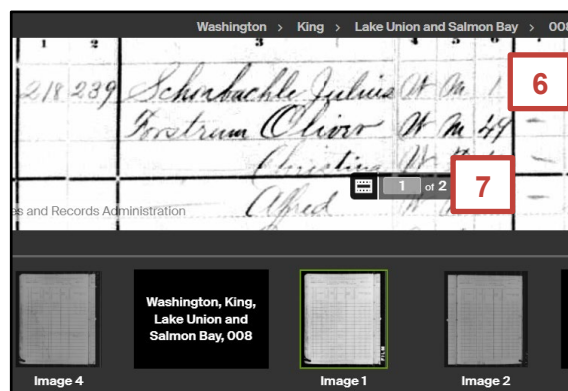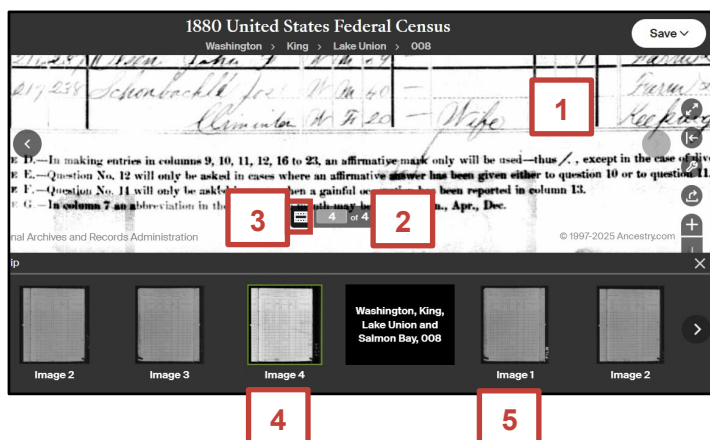
24. Using All Access Membership Get Subscriptions to: Fold3, Newspapers.com, Find a Grave, etc. **https://www.ancestry.com/offers/subscribe** . You can use your Ancestry username and password to sign in on all three websites, then save records directly to your Ancestry family tree.

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