Getting Started Part 4: Using Record Hints

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INTRODUCTION:

Online genealogy programs and databases, like *Ancestry* and *FamilySearch*, have recently instituted a digital feature called "hints" to aid family historians in their genealogical research as they strive to discover forgotten records, and make personal connections to their families with the help of modern technology. These valuable hints are generated by artificial intelligence and software that evaluates genealogical details (names, ages, locations, etc.) and identifies potential ancestral links.

While database "hints" are a highly reliable resource that effectively helps researchers find family data and documents, it can be challenging to build accurate family trees if not carefully utilized. *Using Records Hints,* a 2025 RootsTech presentation, teaches beginning genealogists how to harness the power of AI to document their family history by exploring the "hints" feature on genealogical databases and offering tips for maximizing its effectiveness.

What are Hints?

- Records matched by a computer (AI) to a person.
- Check all records before attaching.
- Ask yourself-
    - Is it the correct family, location and date?

How to Find Hints on FamilySearch--

- Click on your FamilySearch Tree (it should automatically be in landscape view).
- Click on the down arrow LANDSCAPE (top right) and select FAN CHART.
- From there, go to your fan chart options and select RESEARCH HELPS.
- Your FamilySearch Tree will categorize your ancestors into three different colors.
- Click on the ancestors colored blue.
    - These are your family members who have research helps attached to their profile.
- You can also find record hints on the FamilySearch Home page.
    - Go to the main sign in page and scroll down to the box labeled RECORD HINTS.

A Hints Case Study---

- Always check FamilySearch profiles for record hint suggestions. You can do this by going to the DETAILS section of a ancestor's profile and looking to the right of the screen. RESEARCH HELP will provide you with blue colored records hinting that new information may have been found!
- If there is a record hint attached to a profile, you can view the record by clicking on VIEW RECORD.

- Review the image, copy, and/or citation of the attached record hint to verify whether or not the record belongs to your ancestor.
- Make sure dates, names, and locations accurately line up to previously existing family history information/records.
- If the record is a match, click ATTATCH TO TREE. If the record is not a match, you can dismiss the record. Make sure to always leave a reason for dismissing genealogical information so other research are not confused.

Using FS FamilyTree Mobile App Tasks-
- Open your FS Family Tree Mobile App.
- Click on TASKS in the bottom menu bar.
- From there, switch from ALL to HINTS.
- Click on an ancestor who appears under the hints tasks.
- Once you are on your ancestor's profile, click the light blue hints icon displayed next to their profile picture.
- There, you can view each of the record hints that are attached to their name. View each of the records and their images before attaching or dismissing.

Reminder---
- Always carefully examine the historical records suggested in Hints before attaching them to your ancestor.
- Hints is not a perfect AI tool- it can make mistakes.
- Think of it more as a research aid or suggestion.
- Make sure to view/read the record before attaching it to determine that it is accurately documenting your ancestor's life.
- Your feedback on negative matches teaches the computer not to match those parameters again.

FamilySearch Reasons for a Hint not to be a match---
- Names do not match.
- Places do not match.
- Dates do not match.
- Relatives do not match.
- I can't tell if it's a match.
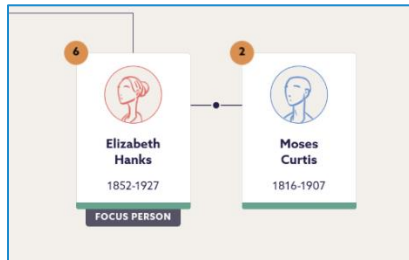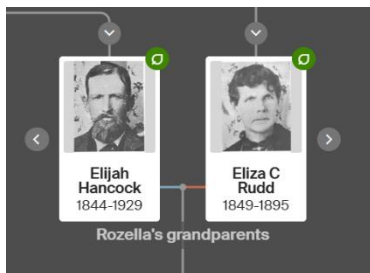- The source is a duplicate.

Ancestry Hints- Green Leaf

- Create a profile for your person in a tree on Ancestry.
- Let AI search for records and return later to view the results.
- You may discover records you hadn't thought of searching for.
- Work from the known to the unknown.
- Compare all information to determine if record is a match to your   family
- Use records suggested by website after you confirm a record match.

My Heritage Hints—Brown Circle

- My Heritage has icons for record matches and smart matches.
- Green circle – smart match to people on other member's trees.
- Brown circle – record matches.
- Remember to compare record to other information.
- Work from the known to the unknown.
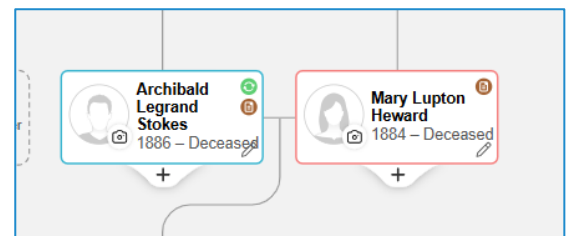
FindMyPast Hints—Brown Circle

- Each hint circle gives a number of hints.
- Work from known to unknown.
- Compare family information to make sure it's a match.

Summary of Methodology

- Work from known to unknown to build family information.
- Build trees on all available websites and let the computer find the records for you.
- Compare information- Ask does the information match people, location, place, etc and make sense?
- Always look at record image. Not all information on a record is indexed.
- Use suggested record hints on FamilySearch and Ancestry.