

## Exploring Indexed Records on Family Search

### PP 1 What are indexed records? What's an index?

We've all used the index at the back of a book to look up the page/s for the subject we're interested in. Or we've consulted the card catalog to locate the book/books we're looking for. I worked in the children's room of the public library when I was in high school. Schoolchildren would come in, looking for books on some subject they needed to learn and write about for their classes; teachers, especially kindergarten and primary grades, would ask for picture books illustrating some subject. My job was to send them to the card catalog, maybe show them how to look up a subject, author, or title, write down the call number, and I'd then direct them to the area where those books were shelved. I became so familiar with the old Dewey decimal system that I could skip the card catalog.

It seems everybody means something different when they talk about indexes and index cards. And too many people get off the tour bus before the tour is over.

I learned that records indexing is vital to businesses, and many indexing services advertise on the internet, emphasizing the importance of systematic indexing by specialists like themselves: "Armstrong Archives will classify and tag each document using 'search' terms to help ease the navigation process . . . The indexing process cuts down on search time and puts the appropriate documents in your hands when you need them most." (Armstrong Archives.com)

One definition I found online (Indexbusters.com): "The main purpose of genealogical indexing is to help people find all kinds of information about people, including personal data and their family relationships. They (indexes) exist so that the person who's searching for such information doesn't have to dig through original source material and archives."

The person who wrote that was clearly not a genealogist. Sometimes we use indexes to locate, put our hands on, and dig through that original source material.

Steve Yarbrough sent me an article from the [January/February 2016 Family Tree Magazine](#),

“Using an Index to Get the Original Genealogy Record.”

It summarizes a process that includes some of the steps I’ll be covering today.

I still haven’t found a clear definition of “indexed record,” just lots of examples, but the point is—if you have a copy or citation of a document has been indexed somewhere, and if you can find and you can consult that index for more information, you might eventually be able to work your way to the original. You just need to be thorough, patient, diligent, organized and flexible.

Indexed records and indexes themselves can be your friend, if you can define what they are and understand how to use them. Let’s look at three examples:

1. I have a copy of a document and want to know whether it was official and accurate about when and where my paternal grandparents were married.
2. Sandra Hall has the date and place of her great-grandfather’s naturalization, but she wants to find where the original documents—declaration of intention and petition for naturalization—reside and how to access them.
3. John Looby has a list of indexes, or books that he has found cited in his research, and wanted to know where he could find them and how to access them.

### The Search for my grandparents’ marriage record

(Where and when) Were my father’s parents married?

**PP2** My father was born in September 1907 in Portland, Multnomah County, Oregon

His Father: Carl Friedrich Steinkemeier, aka Fred C. Meyer

b. January 1879, Westphalen, Prussia/Germany

1900 (June 18) U.S. Census: Dilley, Washington County, Oregon  
(single, living with mother and siblings)

His Mother: May Bell, aka Mrs. F.C. Meyer

b. Wisconsin, likely early 1880s

**PP3** Some years ago, in my searching on Ancestry—maybe I got a leaf/hint? Or it was on somebody else's tree?—I “learned” that they were married in December 1900.

I tracked back and found that I got this document from something called GFO/Genealogical Forum of Oregon. This was before I knew the importance of documenting my documents; I still don't know what led me to GFO. But I had followed the directions on the GFO website for ordering a copy online, and GFO emailed me the information, including an image of the marriage certificate.

I was happy to get this information, but also skeptical; I was uncertain whether this was valid and reliable information. Those don't look like original signatures. Are they copied from an original document?

**PP4** So 6 weeks ago, when I volunteered to lead this discussion about “Indexed Records,” I started the search again, looking for original (government-certified) marriage document/s in 1900-1907, starting in Multnomah County

Family Search>Catalog:

Place: US, OR, Multnomah

Keyword: Marriage

Available: Any

**PP5** Three results; chose most likely: 1855-1984, held by County Archives

Result: "Index to Marriage Record"

list with camera (Format: browse images online)

Chose 1875-1902

I scrolled down to narrow the time frame, to Oct 1898-Dec 31,1902:  
920 Images x 41 entries on each!

Each of the marriage entries were recorded on 2 pp, so really 460 x  
41 ~19,000.

But if I start with 1900 (Image #772), from there to the end is only  
200 images, so  $100 \times 41 = 4,100$

**PP 6-7** BUT: Can go directly to Dec 15, 1900 (Image # 812)

I checked the other two results: both were in the wrong time frame and did  
not include 1900.

**PP8** I also checked for official government records: Multnomah County  
Archives, Secretary of State  
(<https://sos.oregon.gov/archives/Pages/order.aspx>) and ordered a copy;  
just received, that's a duplicate of certificate earlier received from GFO.

I've since learned that GFO is comparable to a state archive and is cited as a  
repository for historical state records. GFO has created a searchable  
database, available as a spreadsheet PDF, with most of the information  
contained in the Index to Marriage Record.

**PP 9** Repository information

Marriages (1855-1911):

<http://gfo.org/resources/indexes/vital-records/multnomah-county-marriages.html>

Also (1855-1919): <http://gfo.org/resources/indexes/vital-records/multnomah-county-marriages.html>

**PP10** Both links lead to the same searchable PDF file, with columns headed Groom's Surname, Groom's Given Name, Bride's Surname, Bride's given name, Marriage or License Year, Vol, and Page

When I searched the file, the result was:

Bell Mary Steinkemeir F 1900 13 385 (May listed as Mary and as Groom, Fred as Bride, his surname misspelled)

So, I'm satisfied that I have accurate, official information about my grandparents' marriage. I've been thorough, patient, diligent, organized and flexible.

### Sandy's quest for original naturalization documents

When I asked the group for examples of indexed records, Sandra Hall sent me a copy of an index card she found on Family Search—documenting the naturalization of her great-great grandfather, Robert George Booth, on Oct 8, 1872:

<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:QGR1-CGZ9>

**PP11** As far as Sandy has been able to find out, he was born in 1842 in Ireland, and arrived in America in 1856.

**PP 12-13** Sandy wanted to know where to find the file holding the information that led to his Naturalization and becoming a citizen on 08 Oct 1872, and how to obtain copies of all the documents in it.

Also : What fees might be involved? How long will this take? Those documents might include an application, declaration of intent, petition, oath of allegiance, et c. that could give me clues on his ancestry as well as witness names that would support Sandy's FAN searches on him.

I clicked on the hyperlink and got this information about the card:

- PP14** 1. “New York, County Naturalization Records, 1791-1980,” database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:QGR1-CGZ9> : 2 March 2021), Robert G Booth, 1872;
2. citing Naturalization, New York, United States, citing multiple County Clerk offices of New York;
3. FHL microfilm 005376077.

A quick online search for “FHL microfilm” led me to the Family Search catalog to find what films are available to view. I entered the microfilm number and got three options. **PP15** One of them led to confirmation of the October 8 date, and the witness, but we still have to find the actual petition—I think we’re getting close.

**PP16** As an aside, it appears that virtually all FHL (now Family Search Library, or FSL) microfilm is available only in Salt Lake City, unless it is viewable online.

**Note:** Even though film ordering stopped for all FamilySearch centers in 2017, you can continue to order films for use at the FamilySearch Library in Salt Lake City, Utah.

**Note:** Due to the rapidly diminishing supply of microfilm, the ability to request copies of microfilms from the Granite Mountain Record Vault to be viewed in the FamilySearch Library will no longer be available after Saturday, July 15, 2023.

We are currently working on alternate methods of access for microfilmed records that cannot be released to the public online. We apologize for the inconvenience and appreciate your patience as we develop these alternative options.

Getting back to Sandy’s research, here’s what I’ve learned about the US naturalization process:

First, naturalization was a two-step process, beginning at two years or more after arrival: a “declaration of intention” (first papers); and at least three years later a “petition for naturalization” (second papers), so there will be a time period of five years or more where we might find original documents.

The two steps did not have to take place in the same court, especially for veterans, which the back of the card told us Robert George Booth was.

Second, before 1906, citizenship could be granted by a municipal, county, or state court, as well as federal courts. Since 1906, it has been limited to federal courts only.

Second, New York courts are divided by region, New York City usually designated in the Southern District. And there are archival records held separately for district, circuit, and superior courts, while most Federal Court records are at the National Archives (NARA). So, Sandy's great-grandfather could have applied to a number of different courts. Fortunately, the index card specifies "Superior Court, New York County." BUT its Family Search citation information refers to "multiple County Clerk offices."

**PP 17-18** So, we're looking in the NY County Superior Court for:  
(first papers) Declaration of intention 1869 or before, possibly anytime between 1858 and 1869; and  
(second papers) Petition for naturalization before or early in 1872

Now we have to find where the naturalization files for the time period 1858-1872 are currently held—starting with a search for "historical documents" in the offices of the New York County Clerk of the Superior Court, and also New York County and State Archives, and possibly New York Historical Societies. Once we find the location, we can check their website for ordering information or call and ask about obtaining copies, fees, etc.

Our first step will be to go back to the other two of the three options that came up for that FHL microfilm number. And we'll have to remember to be thorough, patient, diligent, organized and flexible.

Now let's look at our third and final example of "Indexed Records."

John Looby's query about "index" publications

**PP 19** John sent me a list of indexes (or books?) that he has found cited in his research; he wanted to know where he could find these indexes and how to access them.

*"Index to Boston Passenger Lists, 1899-1940"*

*"British Columbia, Canada, Death Index, 1872-1990"*

*"England & Wales, Christening Index, 1530-1980 "*

*" Ireland, Civil Registration Marriages Index, 1845-1958 "*

**PP 20** I looked first on WorldCat, and I found all except the British Christening Index listed as available at the Family Search Library in Salt Lake City, and **\*\*YAY!\*\*** accessible online through Family Search.

I tried one of them and got a Search box. I entered a random name and found a ship's manifest listing arrival date and other information.

When I simply googled (via yahoo) "Index to Boston Passenger Lists, 1899-1940", that led me to [Massachusetts, Boston Passenger Lists, 1891-1943 - FamilySearch Historical Records](#). I clicked on "Access the Records", and I got a search box. I just entered a random name, and I got to a ship's manifest listing arrival date and other information, just as on Family Search.

Now John can look up the people he's interested in. I advised him to be thorough, patient, diligent, organized and flexible.

**PP 21** Some final thoughts:

Exploring indexed records, whatever form they take, can be fun and well worth the effort.

All you have to do is be thorough, patient, diligent, organized, and flexible.

Don't get off the bus before the tour is over.

Questions?