

THIS DOESN'T LOOK LIKE MY ANCESTOR!

A FAMILYSEARCH WHITE PAPER

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THE CHURCH OF
JESUS CHRIST
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FAMILYSEARCH

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As users explore their ancestry in Family Tree, they may find a person in a family line who does not seem to belong in that family. The information is very different from what the users expect to see. This situation has two main causes:

- The right person is shown in the family line, but that person's record contains errors about the name, birth, or other information. This typically occurs because another user entered the wrong information.
- The wrong person is connected into the family line.

After identifying the problem, users can either:

- Correct the name, dates, and other information about the incorrect ancestor.
- Delete the relationships that connect the incorrect ancestor to a family line and create a new person whose record contains the right information. Then connect that person to all of the correct families.

This white paper discusses how users can identify and solve these problems.

CAUSES AND SOLUTIONS

Users may find an ancestor whose record looks significantly different than what they expected. This occurs because:

- Someone entered incorrect or incomplete information about the person.
- The record is about a completely different person who is linked into the family by mistake.
- The record was incorrectly merged in Family Tree.
- The record was incorrectly combined in new.familysearch.org and moved to Family Tree.

When a user finds an ancestor whose information is very incorrect, the first thing a user should do is determine what is causing the problem. The best way is to examine the ancestor's record and look at the person's parents, ancestors, and descendants.

CORRECT PARENTS, ANCESTORS, AND CHILDREN

If the parents, ancestors, and children are correct, then it is likely that the right person is linked into the family.

The user can simply correct the mistakes to the name, birth, death, and other information. The user should also enter clear reason statements for each change and attach sources.

INCORRECT PARENTS, ANCESTORS, AND CHILDREN

If the person is linked to incorrect parents, ancestors, or children, the problem requires more examination. The solution may simply require the user to delete one or more incorrect relationships.

However, some problems are more complicated, such as:

- Records that were incorrectly merged in Family Tree.
- Records that were incorrectly combined in new.familysearch.org and moved over to Family Tree.

An incorrect merge is corrected by undoing the merge or creating a new record for the other person.

INCORRECTLY MERGED RECORDS IN FAMILY TREE

Some incorrect records contain errors that resulted when the records of two completely different people were merged together. The merge process added incorrect details, sources, spouses, children, parents, and siblings.

To determine whether a bad merge occurred, a user can examine the person's change history. The changes resulting from a merge are marked with a gold-colored box.

The change history also allows users to undo merges. To undo the following merge, a user would click the name **John David Wonderly**, which is located on the right side beneath the label Deleted Person.

19 November 2012 by Brooke Kalene R...	22 November 1793 Reason This Information Is Correct In Genealogy of the Family of Johannes Wunderlich
Merge	
Merge Completed 19 November 2012 by Brooke Kalene R...	Surviving Person John David Wunderlich Reason This Merge Is Correct Same spouse
	Deleted Person John David Wonderly
Source Detached	"United States Census, 1930," Philip C Reid in household of Hy...

Figure 1 The change history of Family Tree, showing a merge

Sometimes after a merge is undone, the list of possible duplicates continues to display the wrong person. This could result in the record being remerged later.

Therefore, the user should indicate that the person is not a match. This prevents others from seeing the potential match and unknowingly re-creating the error. In the following screen shot from Family Tree, the Not a Match feature is located in the lower right corner of the screen.


Possible Duplicates for John David Wunderlich

Person	Events	Parents	Spouse
■ John David Wunderlich 9QPY-18F	birth 22 November 1793 death 27 August 1870	■ Daniel Wunderlich ● Barbara	● Nancy Laman

These people strongly match your person (1 result)

Person	Events	Parents	Spouse
■ John Pratz K26Y-FSZ	birth 17 APR 1798, Carlisle, Cumberland... death 23 Dec 1862, Elmore, Millbrook T...		● Nancy Laman

[Review Merge](#) [Not a Match](#)



INCORRECTLY COMBINED RECORDS FROM NEW.FAMILYSEARCH.ORG

The new.familysearch.org system could contain some people whose records were inappropriately combined. Now the mixed information from new.familysearch.org is displayed in Family Tree as one person.

Identifying Incorrectly Combined Records

To identify a badly combined record from new.familysearch.org, a user can look for these clues:

- The Other Information section of the details contains many alternate names, some of which are completely different from the actual person's name. In the following example from Family Tree, D., Edwin, David, David L., and David Roscow could all be different people whose records were combined into one.

Other Information

[Open Details](#) | [+ Add](#)

Alternate Name
Birth Name
D. Van Wagenen

Birth Name
Edwin Van Wagenen

Birth Name
David Van Wagner or VAN Wagonen

Birth Name
David Van Wagenen

Birth Name
David L Vanwagoner

Birth Name
David Roscoe Van Wagenen

Users should not rely solely on the list of alternate names. Another user may have already deleted these extra names. A user who suspects a badly combined record can search the change history to see if alternate names were deleted.

- The Family Members section contains spouses, children, and parents that do not belong to that person. There may be dozens or more incorrect relationships shown.
- If the badly combined record has not been changed in Family Tree after it was moved from new.familysearch.org, the contributor and last modified date also provide clues:
 - The contributor may be identified as "FamilySearch."
 - The "Last Modified" date is often the current date.

Name
Johann Juergen Brandt

Modified | History
22 May 2012 by FamilySearch

Sources | Tag **0**

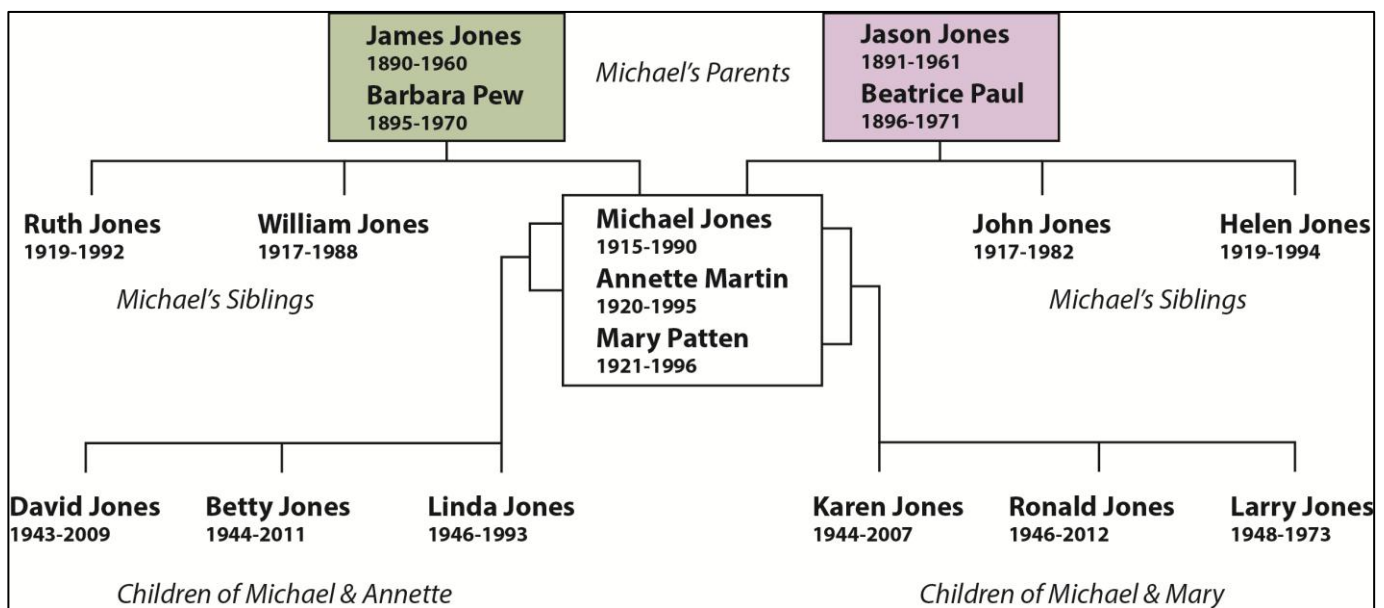
Fixing Incorrectly Combined Records

In new.familysearch.org, users could separate combined records. However, the separate feature seldom corrected all of the errors. In fact, it often caused more errors. Consequently, both the combine and separate features have been turned off in new.familysearch.org.

User should fix these records in Family Tree instead of in new.familysearch.org. To do this, users must create a new record for each person

whose information is mixed up within their own ancestor's record. Users can then move the appropriate names, birth dates, relationships, and other information to the newly created ancestor. This separates the lines.

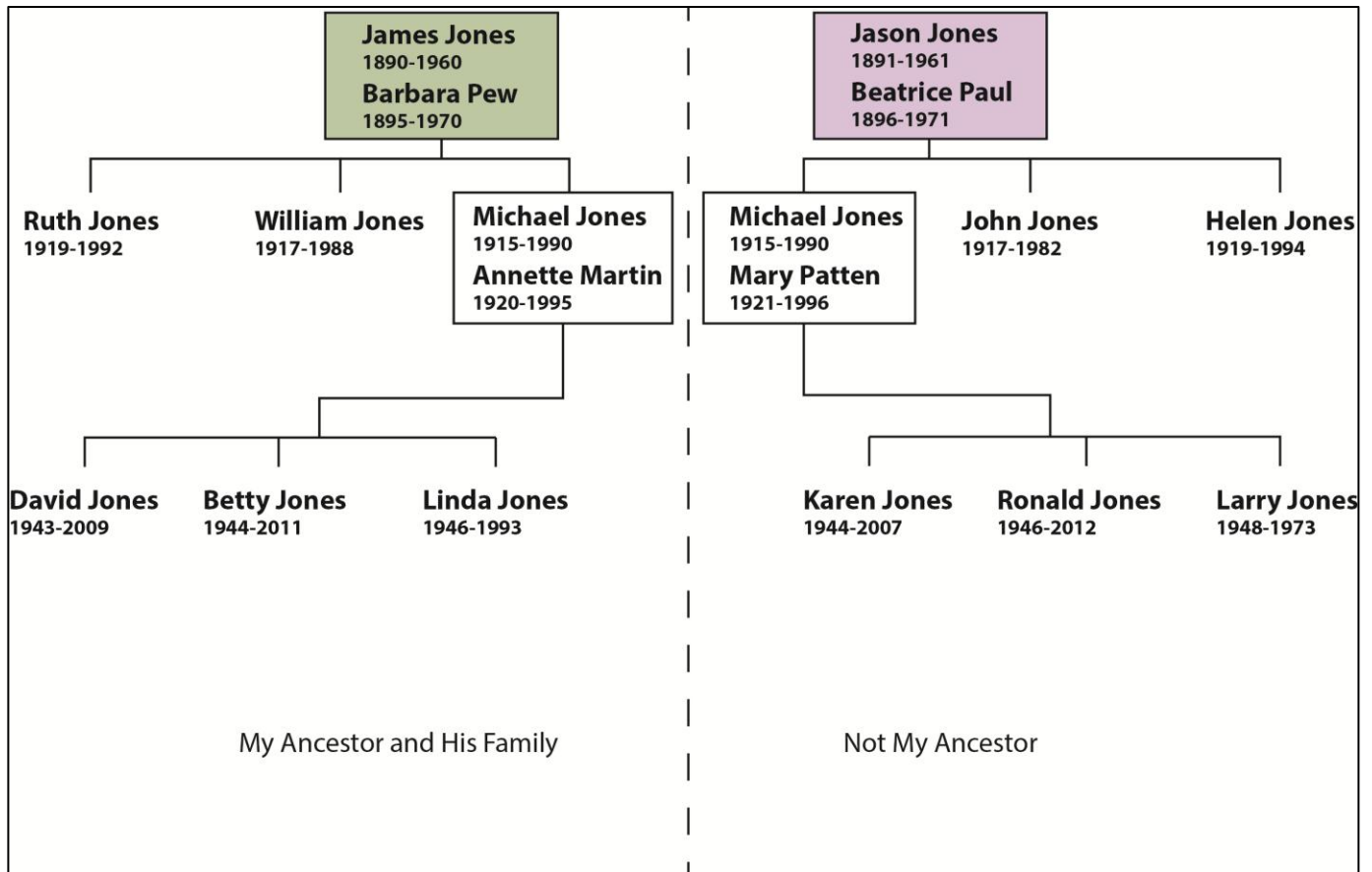
In the following illustration, the records of two different Michael Joneses were combined into one record. The combined record incorrectly shows that Michael has two sets of parents and two spouses.



The next illustration shows that each Michael Jones has a separate record, each with the correct parents, spouse, siblings, and parents.

To make this correction, a user did the following to the record of the Michael Jones who is married to Mary Patten (the record on the left):

- Deleted the relationships to the incorrect father, mother, spouse, and children from the Michael Jones on the left.
- Created a new record for the Michael Jones on the right, and attached the correct father, mother, spouse, and children to it.



Users may find it helpful to go to new.familysearch.org and display the badly combined record. Here, you can more clearly determine what information goes with each person.

To see the combined record, a user can follow these instructions:

1. In Family Tree, use the computer's copy feature to copy the ID number of the person whose record was incorrectly combined. (A user can also write down the number and manually type it into the search field.)
2. Go to new.familysearch.org, and sign in.
3. Find the person:
 - a. Click the **Search** tab.
 - b. Click **Search by Number**.
 - c. In the Person Identifier field, paste the ID number that you copied.
 - d. Click **Search**.
4. In the details panel, click **Combined Record**.

Attaching Sources and Using Reason Statement

In genealogy and family history, the consistent use of sources prevents errors and minimizes contention among researchers working on the same lines.

Any time corrections are made in Family Tree, users should:

- Attach sources to demonstrate the accuracy of the information provided.
- Use reason fields to explain the changes. This reasoning helps prevent improper changes and directs other interested researchers back to the sources.

CONCLUSION

In new.familysearch.org, it was difficult or impossible to correct relationships. This made it impossible to display correct information about a person's ancestors.

In Family Tree, users can correct errors, including incorrect relationships. When users find ancestors whose information seems to be very incorrect, they must examine the relationships to determine whether a badly messed up record should really be two or more different records for different people.

Using Family Tree, users can edit the details and relationships about the people in their tree, making sure the data is the most accurate available, based on current knowledge and sources.

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