

## Family Tree Searcher

<http://www.familytreesearcher.com/> We added a link to this site April 07, 2002. We have had a link from them for some time. I have finally made the time to review this site. Here is how the creator of this site describes it: "Enter your ancestor information just once to search family trees at multiple online genealogy databases. This free service will create optimal searches based on your ancestry. This site also includes hints for searching family history online." The site features an on line tour to teach new users how it works. I took the tour to be able to rate it for this review. There are quite a few graphics, so be patient if you have a dial-up account, like me. There are eight pages in the tour. The tour includes helpful general advice that is useful for internet or library research. The tour only show screenshots of the regular service, so you have to open a second window to enter the information, as you follow the tour. This could be cumbersome to those that are not comfortable working with multiple windows. This is one of the benefits of windowing features of graphical operating systems, so it did not stop me from continuing. I entered the son of my latest known Hamilton ancestor to see what comes up. The site recommends entering an ancestor later than a grandparent for whom you know the names of the parents, for more accuracy. In my case, this was my great-great-grandfather, Franklin Pierce Hamilton born 1852, son of Isaac and Abigail Martin, wife of Mary Pearl Hill. The site allows you to specify dates of birth and death and to specify the accuracy from exact, within two years, five years, ten years, or twenty years. There is also a place to enter the first and last names of both parents and a spouse. There is no place for middle names. Once the information is entered, you click the "SAVE" button in a menu at the top of the screen. This is clearly explained in instructions at the bottom of the page. Once you click "save" it saves the information and prepares the searches of various internet genealogy sites. After the save process is complete, you see the individual's information at the top of the screen, and the information on the available searches below. This is where page two of the tutorial starts. It has links for those that may have trouble because they use AOL, CompuServe, older browsers, or Netscape. I used Internet Explorer 6 on WindowsXP Home and had no trouble. Each page of the tour is slow on a dial up connection, since there is a graphic showing what each step of using the service. Page three of the tour directs you to do the common sense thing and read the text that explains what to do with the search feature for each genealogy site. Page four explains that there is a button to bring up More Hints for each search site. These hints are how to reduce the search results to a manageable number, or find data when none is retrieved with the default setting. Page five has an explanation and graphics to show how to search on one of the possible search sites. Page six explains that to enter another ancestor one clicks the NEW button. This is obvious from the page where the information and search occurs. Page seven shows that the other individuals entered show on the left of the screen as a clickable link. So one simply clicks the individual's name to prepare that information for searching any of the available search sites. Again, this is quite obvious from the way the screen looks. Anyone that has used a web browser should be able to figure this site out without the tour. There are plenty of on-screen instructions. The tour ends with instructions on where to start on your next visit to the site, MySearch. It also points out the link to the FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions) page. You can also go back and review any of the pages on the tour that you desire. The FAQ page deals mostly with what to do when the site does not work, but there are a couple of hints on how to use genealogy searches on the internet. The MySearch page has a wealth of information. At the top is a greeting with the date of the last visit. It also has links to many popular genealogy sites, and genealogy news. There are also links on the left-side of the page to other genealogy sites, and to other pages on the family tree searcher site. Click the link to Active Searches and see the information entered earlier. There is a definitions page of both computer and genealogy terms. One helpful one is about cookies: "cookie 1. A small piece of text stored in a file on the user's machine. This site uses a cookie to store the information about ancestors and which web sites have been searched for those ancestors. This cookie does not store any information about the person using this site." The one drawback to using this site is that you MUST allow cookies, and if the cookie is lost, you must re-enter the information. This should not be a security concern to anyone, since you can be very restrictive on what cookies are allowed on your PC with the newer browsers. I was surprised by one pop-up on the site, but it was very informative. It offers to help tailor your searches based on questions you answer. When you click the more information button, it takes you to <http://www.genealogy-search-advice.com/?> which says it is "free advice for custom searches." This site opens up a whole new avenue, that warrants further investigation. A quick glance appears to be promising. However, I wonder what the catch is to "free." I later discovered that this pop-up comes up every time you leave the FamilyTreeSearcher site. Even though it is a "free" site, it does have advertising for the genealogy community. This is something that all internet users are used to, so it is only a minor inconvenience. When you are ready to search on your chosen ancestor, each search button opens a new window. Each search engine is defaulted to the selection that should give the best results for the way the data is organized at that site. You can always modify it. The advice from the Active Searches page is to use the default on the first search. I tried that and this is what I found: The search engines are listed alphabetically, with Ancestry.com first. When the search results came up, I had to register by entering my first and last name and email address. One should be prepared to get lots of email when one does this. I bit the bullet, and did it. The default produced several results, but no matches for my ancestor. A second window at Ancestry.com opened to their search page. I filled it out, and still had no results. I tried the next search engine, Computerized Ancestor, which I had not heard of before. This site appeared to have the right information about my g-g-grandfather, but his wife was born in a different place than my information indicates. This site charges for more information than what you see on the screen. I was not sure this was the right person, and could not easily tell from the freely available information, so I decided to pass. Next was Everton's, I had not heard of this one, either. This site requires you to register as a guest when you first use it. It does not require your name, but it does require your phone number, and email address. Once you are registered, it gives a page that shows all the benefits of the free service, and invites you to join for one or more years to the full service. There is a link at the top of the page to choose to search. It had information, but of course it was in the paid member area, and it was

\$28.00. It did not give me enough information to tell if it had anything I did not already know, so I went on. This site does have several databases that are free to search. FamilySearch came next. Surprisingly, no matches here with the defaults. I will have to investigate this one further. FamilyTreeMaker.com or Genealogy.com was the next choice. This resulted in all kinds of matches, but it provides a place for middle names to reduce the search to a manageable load. GenCircles followed. I had not heard of this one. No Match. GENDEX came next. There was lots to wade through, even when the search is narrowed. It shows all individuals that are related to the ones you have searched for. This site will take time and patience for users to wade through the data. GeneaNet was another I did not know. This site will send an email alert to any new data related to a search, if desired. This is a free service. It generates a lot of information that needs further refinement by country, date range, and region. It only searches by surname, so there is a lot of superfluous information. If you are not sure of an ancestor's location at a given time, this might help locate them. Kindred Konnections® (MyTrees.com) was next. This produced no information on my ancestor. Next was the Social Security Death Index at RootsWeb®. This would do me no good, since this individual died before social security. Finally, came WorldConnect® at RootsWeb®; most of the entries resembled earlier finds at some of the fee-based sites, still nothing on my ancestor. I did not want to give up, so I tried another ancestor. This bore fruit, so I got side-tracked from writing this article. {A couple of hours later...} The ancestor I found is one that one researcher appears to have gotten a name for a town in Scotland mangled, and put it in Ireland. Unfortunately, most internet information perpetuates this. In this case the error occurred before the internet, but the net makes it easier to get the wrong information to everyone. What I found in my own little search, is that if you find a connection this way, you can find other researchers and find a jumping-off point. Some stick to proofs and documentation, and others take what they download off the internet as fact. The main thing is to follow up claims made on the internet, and see if there is a source citation. If there is, find that source and verify it. This will insure that you have a well-documented family tree that will help future generations know their family history. One helpful feature mentioned on the main page is "[this service] allows you to save up to ten ancestors for repeated searching." This is very helpful when trying to keep track of all the online information that is available from multiple sites. I now have four ancestors saved and for three of them managed to find out more than I already knew. All I managed to learn on my Hamilton line is re-confirm that I am at a dead end. However, on one line I have added 3 more generations back to England in 1670. Now I have to confirm the information I found. Overall this site is easy to use and very valuable. It provides a quick and easy way to try and get past an end-of-line ancestor. However, as with all genealogical information, it still requires verification of sources and conclusions. I recommend this site to any researcher who wants to locate other researchers on the same line. This web site should be in the toolbox of every genealogist using the web. Written by: Lawrence M. Hamilton, Jr., HNGS webmaster. Used by permission. © 2002, all rights reserved.