

WIKI IS “WONDER” FULL

2014 Family History Conference Presentation by Carma Lee Ellingson

Wiki is filled with information that will arouse “wonder” at all it contains and can do! Family History Research Wiki, commonly called Wiki, is found in the free LDS family history site FamilySearch.org. On the home page, hover over the word “Search” at the top of the page. A drop-down window appears and the last selection is “Wiki.” Click and the Wiki’s home page opens. There are numerous clickable links on the page that increase understanding of Wiki, what it is and is not, as well as how to use it. Wiki provides millions of bits of information. That information is the result of community effort. Anyone can submit information that is appropriate. In fact, Wiki solicits help; for that is how it has become so “wonder” full!

WIKI IS:

- The ultimate “how to” research site.
- Not a Who site. Wiki is a How, What, and Where searching tool. A place to learn about ways and sources for finding people, analyzing records, and more.
- Is not a place to find a specific person; rather, Wiki leads to sites and databases where people are found.
- Like an encyclopedia with 78,000+ articles about thousands of topics.
- Full of links to sites on the Internet outside of Wiki, including record collections.
- Best searched with Less rather than More. Questions and long statements don’t work when searching. Put 1, 2, or 3 words in the search window for best results.
- Not intuitive when it comes to spelling. Words must be spelled correctly in the search window. And, Wiki is not case sensitive, capitalize or not it doesn’t matter.
- Not a book with a table of contents. Enter a topic or place in the search window and Wiki pulls up related pages or articles.
- Organized by categories. The closest thing to a table of contents is the “Category” section. In the search window type the word *category* followed by a colon and then a topic or place without a space after the word category. For example, category:Arizona, a category page appears which enumerates subcategories, pages, and media within Wiki related to that topic or place.
- Full of record keeping help. Type *Research Forms* in the search window. Open it and discover links to dozens of printable forms to help record and track research.
- Constantly changing. People add to and edit articles on a daily basis.
- Designed to help people with research skills at all levels.

TIPS FOR SEARCHING USING WIKI

1. Think outside the box. Be creative when searching. Do not assume because information was not found looking one way that it cannot be found. Rethink and look again searching with different words and/or word combinations.
2. There is almost always more than one way to find information. Do not be hesitant to click and explore. It may lead to sources that initially did not come to mind.
3. Wiki contains three articles on searching that will increase searching success.
 1. Help:Searching
 2. Help:Search Tips
 3. Help:Advanced Searches in Wiki

SUCCESS STORIES

The following two examples contain step-by-step instructions for searches using Wiki. They are actual experiences relating to family history research. “Walking” through these examples allows one to experience the wonder Wiki can evoke. And it increases understanding of searching methods that will translate into successes with research.

EXAMPLE 1:

A patron at the Mesa FamilySearch Library was trying to locate an ancestor in Utah who died at a young age. She wanted to know why he died so young. His name is JOHN HANDLY DYER. She knew from a family letter that he died in Utah in 1922. She did not know his wife’s name but she knew the initial of her first name was “J.” Using Wiki, here are the steps used to find the information:

1. Type *Utah* in the Wiki search window.
2. Click on the page titled *Utah*. It should be the first one listed.
3. Navigate down the *Utah Topics* section on the left side of the page and click on *Vital Records*. It opens the page titled *Utah Vital Records*.
4. In the *Contents* click on *Utah Birth, Marriage and Death Records Online*
5. Scroll down to *Deaths*. The first link shown is 1904-1956 *Utah Death Certificates*. Click on that link and a Search Collection within FamilySearch will open. This click exits the search from the Wiki portion of FamilySearch.
6. Type *John Handly Dyer* in the search window.
7. Navigate on the search page down to *Search with a life event* and put in *Death*
8. Enter *Utah* as the death place and *1922* as the year and click *Search*. (The search can be done with only the year.)
9. A listing of records will come up. The first one should be his death certificate and it shows a camera next to the title. That means there is a picture of the actual certificate. Always look at pictures. Often they provide additional information beyond that which was indexed (the information transcribed from the original).

From the death certificate the following information can be gleaned: date of birth, state of birth, occupation, name of wife, father and mother plus birthplaces of his parents, and also the cause of death.

EXAMPLE 2:

My ancestor, ANSON CALL, helped colonize several areas after the Latter-day Saints came West. I wondered if there was specific information I could find on his colonizing efforts. I had a copy of his journal and another book written about him. I wanted more information. Using Wiki, here are the steps I took to find the information:

1. I started by searching in Wiki under *LDS Research*. I was not successful so I began “thinking outside the box.”
2. Reasoning that LDS people tend to journal and write family history books, I decided to enter *Family History Books* in the Wiki search window; that resulted in over 12,000 suggested links. Wiki, like most search engines, lists

the links by relevancy. The third link listed was *FamilySearch Wiki: Wiki Project Linking to Books in the BYU Family History Archives*.

In Wiki, and elsewhere, thinking outside the box and being creative are critical when searching. I knew that Anson had many LDS descendants and thought some may have attended BYU, perhaps one even used him as the subject of a Masters thesis.

3. Clicking on the *FamilySearch Wiki Project...* I discovered *BYU Family History Archives* in the first paragraph and clicked on the link.
4. This opened a Wiki page titled: *BYU-FHL Digital Book Collection*.
5. In the first paragraph, last sentence I clicked on *Family History Archives*.
6. ** Be alert! I started to enter Anson Call's name in the search field. Then I noticed the note at the beginning of the page. It said: "All of the books in the Family History Archives at BYU have been moved to Family History Books at FamilySearch.org. Over 36,000 digital books are now available at Family History Books. <http://books.familysearch.org>
7. I clicked on this link then entered *Anson Call* and over 2,800 links appeared.
8. Scrolling down to the fourth item I read: *Anson Call and his contributions toward Latter-day Saint Colonization: a thesis submitted to the faculty of the Division of Religion of Brigham Young University*. It was written by Duane D. Call. Clicking on it I discovered there is a digitized version that can be opened and read. It pays to "think outside the box!"

TAKE THE TIME TO BECOME FAMILIAR WITH WIKI AND SEE FOR YOURSELF HOW "WONDER" FULL WIKI IS!