



Common Surnames: Finding Your Smiths

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What Makes Your Ancestor Unique?

Create a profile for your ancestor. Include:

- Names (given, middle, and nicknames)
- Birth date and place (plus ages at the time of events)
- Residences (any place you know he or she lived)
- Parents' names, family structure, friends, neighbors, associates, sponsors, witnesses, etc.
- Anomalies
- Occupations, also names of businesses, partners, etc.
- Vital event dates (birth, marriage, death, immigration). Estimate dates where necessary, and include places and other relevant details.
- Spouse(s) and identifying details about them
- Children and identifying details about them
- Siblings and identifying details about them
- Religious affiliation and membership in churches or synagogues
- Related surnames (in-laws, variant spellings used by other family members, etc.)

Where to Find Information

Record Sources: Censuses

- Find birthplace on federal censuses of children, beginning in 1880
- Be sure locate adult siblings in the census
- Do whole family research. On paper, your ancestor as an individual may look like someone else with the same name, but his family unit as a whole will be unique.

Record Sources: City Directories

- Ancestry.com has a large collection of city directories. Coverage varies depending on location. (U.S. City Directories) Directories allow you to track your ancestors year to year, using occupation and residence.
- Check libraries to see where directories are available. Larger libraries with genealogical collections often include directories for nearby areas and the Family History Library and its satellite branches also have good coverage.
- Use index cards or spreadsheets to sort entries. In spreadsheets, include fields for:
 - Year; last name; first name; occupation; address - house number; address - street name; directory publisher. Create a back-up of the file before sorting.
 - Sort by: a) occupation; b) street name; c) house number



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Record Combinations

Create timelines listing all the records and events you've found and estimate dates based on what you know. Cite sources so you can easily go back to records to resolve conflicts.

Timeline

1814-1815
Kelly, James – born in Ireland
 1880 US Census data, age 65=b. 1815¹
 Death cert. age 82 in 1896=b. 1814²

ca. 1817
Kelly, Mary A.
 1860 Census, age 43, born in Ireland³

ca. 1817-25
 Kelly family emigrates from Ireland
 Estimated from birth dates and places of Mary and Jane found on noted U.S. Census records. Also, from James Kelly death certificate in 1896-- been in country for 75 years = 1821.⁴

6 Jun 1819 (or c. 1822 or 1825)
Kelly, Jane
 Death ctf. 10 January 1882 she was 62 years, 7 months, 4 days; = 1819⁵
 1870 census, age 48, born NY=1822⁶
 1880 census, age 55, born NY=1825⁷

Create charts

This chart projects estimated ages in census years.

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P
1	Name (Birth year and age)	1786	1786	1786	1786	1789	1786									
2	James Kelly	1786	1786	1786	1786	1789	1786									
3	age	34	44	54	64	65	74									
4	Bridget Kelly	1788	1788	1788	1788	1788										
5	age	32	42	52	62	62	72									
6	James Kelly	1813	1813	1813	1813	1813	1813		1813		1813	1815				
7	age	7	17	27	37	37	47		57		67	65				
8	Mary Ann Kelly (Doherty)	1815	1815	1815	1815		1815		1815	1817						
9	age	5	15	25	35		45		55	53						
10	Jane Kelly (Pechin)	1819	1819	1819	1819		1819	1816	1819	1822	1819	1825				
11	age	1	11	21	31		41	43	51	48	61	55				
12	Catherine Kelly (Tobin)	b.1824	1824	1824												
13	age	0	6	16												
14	Elizabeth Kelly	b.1826	1826	1826	1826	1824	1826		1826		1826	1826				
15	age		4	14	24	26	34		44		54	54				
16	Cornelius Kelly		1830	1830												
17	age		0	10	20											

Create a working tree online or in software.

- Working trees can help you keep track of your ancestor and those who are similar.
- Use trees to organize records you've sorted out for families so you can reference them as you continue your research.

Searching with What You've Found

Use details you've gathered in online searches

- Look at search forms and how details can be added to narrow your search.
- Estimate dates using information on your timeline.
- Use date ranges where they're available. (On Ancestry.com you can select +/- 1, 2, 5 or 10 years to focus your search on a particular time frame.)
- Include event locations
- Where possible, searching collections directly will allow you to focus on the records you need, and the search forms are often customized to better search the content within.