The Wikitree.com Help Center

A Family Digging Podcast

Carolyn: Hi Everyone! Welcome back to Family Digging!

Today Paul and I are going to talk about the Wikitree Help Center, which is quickly becoming a great place to go for researching your family tree. For this session, you may wish to first access the Transcript which has a series of links at its end, so you can follow along more easily. To do that, go to familydigging.com and it is under the Transcripts tab on the home page.

Paul: If you are unfamiliar with Wikitree, we can help with that - it is a site where people gather aiming to create one world-wide family tree that is both collaborative and accurate, using both DNA and genealogical resources. There are at least two ways to learn more about Wikitree. Genealogy TV with Connie Knox https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=connie+knox+genealogy+tv (A YouTube channel of excellence) did a video on Wikitree which gives a broad overview, and it is well worth watching. Then, if you want a more in-depth plunge into the world of Wikitree, a member did a series of videos which are very good. Links to those videos can be found under our Videos tag at familydigging.com.

Carolyn: Today, however, we want to concentrate on their Help Center, which is a robust hub for doing genealogical research, among other things. There are two main thrusts - the first on working in Wikitree, which leads to many helps and tutorials. The other is on doing the actual research for the tree. Their emphasis is on free resources.   (A little aside here. Ancestry.com is a fee-based site, but you can access the Library Edition at no cost through your local library (or as a veterans' benefit). During the pandemic Ancestry has allowed for its site to be accessed from home by using your local library membership card. Call your local library to see the current status of that program. At present (September, 2021) the program is expected to last at least through the end of 2021. The library can give you instructions on how to hook up. So between Ancestry and FamilySearch.org, you have two gigantic records repositories to use at no cost; combine that with Wikitree's (also free) Help Center, and you will have some good ways to research and prove the information for each of your family members.)

Paul: Wikitree is different from most other online tree sites. First, you need to cite your sources. In other words, you need to state where you came by the information you are providing on your tree. They want to encourage everyone to provide sources that others can understand and prove for themselves. In that regard,

they have no real restrictions on how you do this, but there are certainly better ways than others.

For instance, just saying "GEDCOM" or "FindAGrave" or "InternetArchive" is not really sufficient for someone else to be able to check out the validity of what you stated. You should be specific, such as "Findagrave.com, Memorial number 122456560 for John Doe, Jr, accessed Sep 19, 2021".

Carolyn: And trust us on this, using "Personal Knowledge" as a source when you aren't living with the person being researched, is not any kind of source. If you were not alive until hundreds of years after the event being researched, then it cannot be personal knowledge. The good news is the Help Center has several ways to help you with your citations, which we will review in a few minutes.

Paul: Wikitree's restrictions start coming into play if you are researching earlier than 1700 AD. At that point you need to be using <u>reliable</u> resources for your tree, not other people's trees or findagrave or an unsourced GEDCOM. Those places can give you hints, but you need to research things for yourself and determine what is reliable, and there is a community at Wikitree to help you do just that. When you get back to 1500 AD, even more restrictions apply, and again, they have resources that are considered reliable that can be used. The Help Center has loads of resources that they consider to be reliable, AND further, they have a list of unreliable

or fraudulent resources with which everyone should become familiar.

Carolyn: I sure wish that I had been shown a list of unreliable sources when I started out searching for my ancestors. It would have saved me a ton of time. Because I was too new to understand how to do genealogical research and who Gustave Anjou was, I relied upon his work and then had to redo eight entire lines of my ancestors to undo the damage. Ask me how pleased I was to have to do that!) Today's researchers are getting a really good (and free) gift in the research area with Wikitree's Help Center.

Medieval Resources are very hard to come by, and often the researcher will need specialized tools to help use them, such as a working knowledge of Latin and other foreign languages so that you can read the documents you find. There are translation helps and tools, glossaries and more to assist you in the goal of creating an accurate tree that can stand up to criticism. This area of Wikitree is growing fast, and they need volunteers to help create and improve it, so if you have resources you think would be useful additions, by all means, be in touch with the Help Center. If you have a question about your research, go to the G2G Forum and ask away.

Paul: Wikitree is a collaborative effort, and part of the way they work is to create "Projects" so volunteers can put their heads together to create knowledge bases for everyone's use. Wikitree has some great projects going on, especially useful for researching older generations, where vital records are scarce or non-existent, and resources for those projects are easy to find in the Help Center.   Again, Wikitree is entirely a volunteer operation (which is how it can be free). They need volunteers in order to keep the growth going. There is plenty of training available for that as well. We are going to look at a couple of the projects in just a moment, so you can see what we mean when we say, "This is good stuff!"

Carolyn: Let's go to the Help Center now.

First, if you sign the Honor Code and become a member of Wikitree, you will have access to many more areas than if you choose not to...just saying. Furthermore, if you do, you eliminate advertisements.   For today, we are not signing in so that everyone on the podcast can participate. So let's first get into Wikitree's Help Center:
https://www.wikitree.com/wiki/Category:WikiTree_Help

You will see three links in the first paragraph: Welcome to Wikitree, How to Use Wikitree, and New Members Tutorials. We recommend that you explore these areas in order to learn about the process, the standards, and the features of working in Wikitree. Just click on the underlined title of your choice.

Below that, you will find 26 Sub-categories. We aren't going to spend much time on the How-To-Wikitree types of pages, nor on their DNA project; today we are going to concentrate on help with your genealogy.

Paul: First stop is Projects: https://www.wikitree.com/wiki/Help:Projects

A project is a group of members organized around a topic, a location, or a volunteer activity. To see the complete list of active projects, go to Category:Projects, underlined in the second paragraph.

Of the functional projects, where most of the how-tos are located, we want to show you the Language page, so click on that, then under Language Glossaries, click on the current list found by clicking on "found here". Each page shows the language translated

from the country of origin into English. Can be very helpful when trying to read records of your ancestors, especially in Europe. Also click on <u>How to Use Translation Tools</u> for a great Latin to English dictionary of words and phrases. Finally, under the Category:Language Resources, locate Genealogy Glossary. Click on that to find a Basic Genealogy Glossary in ten languages. (Yipee!)

The Language Portals area, for the most part, is written only in the language of the place in that portal's title. There are over fifty languages that are used to write Wikitree profiles. If you have language skills in an area that does not already have a glossary, this might be a great volunteer project for you to join.

Carolyn: Back out to Category:Projects again, and choose Geographical Projects. This is where the fun really begins. There are 45 European projects. Each one is unique because each team of contributors is unique. Some are just starting, others are quite well developed. Just for kicks, click onto the Germany Project. The first thing that caught my eye is a list of the members of this team and their interests. Dieter Lewerenz's page is pretty awesome. Just glance through it when you have a chance; there is a wealth of information. And talk about cousin bait! The Project Team pages are also of interest; I really found the Germany Regions Team page very useful as well.

But the best part is the Resources area of each project country. Go to that page in Project:Germany to see a large number of things to keep you learning for several days or weeks. We are most excited that in the German Roots space, there is a list of Reliable

Resources AND Unreliable Resources AND Category:Frauds and Fabrications.

Carolyn: So many people have not a clue as to whether a particular source is accurate. Well, there may be some errors here and there, or new information available after a book was published. But being a reliable source means that for the most part, this source came with solid information. You still need to double check all your secondary sources, but if the book or article is on the list of Reliable Sources, you are in pretty good stead. Likewise, be sure to become familiar with what are Unreliable or Fraudulent sources and don't use them.

Paul: The last area in the Projects Category that we want to look at is Topical Projects, so please choose that one to find 21 Subcategories. We don't have time to pour through these, but we do want to point out the Pre-1700 Projects, which has first - Reliable Sources for Pre-1700 Profiles. Under this area there is also a similar area for pre-1500 sources. This should help many cut out much of the "crappola".

Carolyn: The last stop of the day is Genealogy Helps: https://www.wikitree.com/wiki/Category:Genealogy_Helps

There are 74 Subcategories in this area - many are for various countries, but also types of records and more. Look, for instance, look under Genealogy Tools, and look under US Genealogy Resources, which has subcategories listed by state, type of record, and fourteen more pages of specialized helps. It's good stuff!

 Paul: That's all there is time for today. We hope you enjoyed this podcast, and that you found things that are useful for your genealogy journey. As usual, if you want a copy of the transcript (which contains links to the areas we were discussing), please go to our website https://www.familydigging.com and pull it up under the transcripts side.

Paul and Carolyn: Until next time, Happy Digging.