Loops, Dups, andOops, Oh, My!
New FamilySearch and Ancestral Relationships

By Kaylene Williams

You can resolve many incorrect relationships that appear in new FamilySearch. With care, you can avoid creating new mistakes as well.

What types of incorrect relationships are found in new FamilySearch?

- Incorrect parents
- Incorrect spouses
- Child born before parents or in a very different locality
- Looping pedigree – a man and his grandfather have been merged, for example
- Body-snatched records – Two or more people appear on one uncombined record

What can I do to solve these problems?

Separate incorrectly combined records:

- Look at the “Combined Records.”
- See if you can find the offending record and pull it out.
- If two or more people have been combined, try to separate all that have similar characteristics, like the same parents, same spouse, or same locality.
- For example, find all the women with birth dates in 1800 and separate them from those born in 1875.

Work with other relatives who have contributed information:

- Look for e-mail addresses under “Contributors.”
- Make your letter have a positive tone of cooperation.
- Be willing to share what you know, and others may be more likely to share their data. Together we can create something better than either of us alone.

Use the Help Center:

- In Self Help, you can find answers to common questions.
- Use Tutorials.
- Local Assistance will help you find family history consultants and local family history centers.
- Community Assistance will lead to Forums, where other people will post answers to questions you may have.
- Contact FamilySearch will give you a telephone number where you can visit with someone about your problem, or you can send an e-mail, describing the problem you have found.
- When sending an e-mail or calling, be sure to give the names, birth dates, and PID numbers of the people involved. Clearly state the problem. Cite any sources you have that support your case.
How can I avoid creating incorrect relationships?

Merge with Caution:
- Carefully look at the data for the two people you may want to merge. Note marriage dates, also the dates and locations where children were born. Pay attention to information on their parents’ files as well.
- Many people share similar information. Two cousins may have each been named for a beloved grandfather. Some names are popular at a certain locality in a similar time period.
- Don’t forget about the possibility of twins. Two children with similar names and the same birthdate may not be the same people.
- In many cultures if a child died young, the next child of the same gender was given the same name. Don’t give the deceased baby his younger brother’s wife.

Avoid the Body-snatcher Syndrome:
- Not all of your ancestors are found in new FamilySearch.
- If you find someone you think is your ancestor, carefully look at her spouse, parents, and children to be sure they match your ancestor’s relatives as well.
- If you can’t find a clear match, create a new record.

Use GEDCOM files sparingly:
- These files should only contain people who do not already appear in new FamilySearch.
- The ordinance field should not have any data. Watch especially for words like “submitted.” It will prevent anyone else from reserving the ordinance.
- Living people should not be included, except to link deceased people. If they are used, be sure the death and burial fields are completely blank.

The name field should only include names:
- Words like “Do Not Combine” should only appear in the notes field.
- Occupations, titles, punctuation marks, and words like son, daughter, unnamed, or stillborn do not belong in the name field.

Use the “Watch” field to know when a record has been changed.

Use “Discussions” to help other family members understand confusing data. Because this is a public forum, avoid discussing LDS ordinances.

Take advantage of training opportunities:
- Tutorials in the Help Center
- E-learning courses at https://www.familysearch.org/consultant/
- Family History Consultant’s Guide
- At https://training.familysearch.org there is a fictional pedigree you can practice on with no chance of ruining real data.
- Go to http://lds.org. Click on “Serving in the church.” Click on “Family History.”