Searching for the Past: How to Trace Your Family Tree

An Honors Project (HONRS 499)

by

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Sheryl Swingley

Thesis Advisor

Ball State University

Muncie, Indiana

July, 1992
Purpose of Project

There are so many things that can be learned by studying the past. Through the study of past peoples we learn what life was like before we were born -- what people enjoyed, how they met, things they did and mistakes they made. The search for the past is more meaningful when it involves a search for your own family roots.

There is a vast difference between tracing your family roots and doing your family history. A family history is a story about the events and lives of members of your family. It is an in depth look at life. It takes a lot of time to gather the information for a family history and often limits the information to those who are still alive.

Tracing your family roots, known as genealogy, is a narrower look at your family. It contains only basic information such as names, birth dates, marriage dates, death dates and locations of these events. Information can be gathered from living relatives as well as the many public records available about ancestors. The process is not as hard as believed. Doing genealogy should not be frightening.

The longer you wait, the harder it is to trace your family tree. The time to start is now.
You do not have to be an expert genealogist or experienced researcher to do this work. There are many resources and people who make the work easier.

In doing research for this topic, I discovered that there is no easy guide available to beginners. Some books are very difficult to understand unless you are a practiced genealogist. It is important to have a step-by-step guide in order to get started.

This project is a do-it-yourself guide for beginners who want to trace their family tree. Along with the guide is a sample questionnaire which can be sent to members of the family to gather basic background information about the family. Also included is an example of a family genealogy in progress and copies of the forms to get started.
MY OWN GENEALOGY
Instructions for Personal Genealogy Folder

The pages of this workbook were designed by Rebecca Niles at Ball State University and were created in Aldus Pagemaker. Feel free to copy them as you see fit. I encourage you to make copies for your family and friends.

To supplement this workbook, you may want to place it in a three-ring binder with sheets for pictures of people and events in your family.

Reasons to do family genealogy

If you have five children and they have five children, who also have five children, for 16 generations, there would be 869 billion descendants in 500 years, not counting in-laws.

It is your responsibility to keep a perfect record of your family. The longer you wait, the harder it is to start.

The time to start is NOW!!!!!
You can identify your ancestors by following these three steps:

1. **Fill out a Pedigree Chart**
   Begin with what you already know.
   - Full Name
   - Date of Birth
   - Place of Birth
   - Date of Marriage
   - Name of Spouse
   - Date of Death
   - Place of Death

   After your form is complete, you will know how all of your ancestors are related!

2. **Fill out a Family Group Sheet**
   The Family Group Sheet ties the family together with more information. It allows you to see all the information about the whole family.
   Be sure to include:
   - Children in order of birth
   - Other spouses

   Create a new family group record for each husband and wife on your pedigree chart.

3. **Look for more information**
   - Full Names
   - Christening dates and places
   - Names of children's spouses
Sources of Information

**Vital Records**

- Birth certificates
- Marriage certificates
- Death certificates
- Divorce decrees
- Tax records
- Deeds of trust
- Property titles
- Mortgage certificates
- Baptism records
- Christening records
- Confirmation records
- City directories
- Census records

**Location**

- State or county agencies
- State or county agencies
- State or county agencies
- County courthouse
- County courthouse
- County courthouse
- County courthouse
- County courthouse
- County courthouse
- Church records
- Church records
- Church records
- Public library
- University or public library or borrowed from National Archives regional branches
- National Archives (need full name, war and state enlisted)
- Federal Records Center (need full name, date of birth and county of birth)

**Home Records**

- Family Bible - contains information on
  - births
  - deaths
  - marriages
  - baptisms
- Deeds
- Insurance policies
- School records
- Military records
- Church records
- Baby books
- Photo albums
- Scrapbooks
- Home movies
Where can I go to find the information I need?

The first place to go is family members. Parents and grandparents can give information about themselves and about their relatives. You may not get everything you need, but you can often get names and birthdates.

Many families keep copies of birth, marriage and death certificates. They may also have journals, letters, scrapbooks and obituaries of past family members.

Government records are a good source of information. They have birth, marriage and death records, census records, copies of wills and cemetery records. Much of this information is available on microfilm or fiche.

Family registries are available in some locations as well as the International Genealogical Index.

Begin by recording your OWN life!!!
FOUR GENERATIONS OF MY FAMILY

My brothers are:  
My name is:  
My sisters are:  

My father is:  
My mother is:  

My grandfather is:  
My grandmother is:  

Great grandfather:  
Great grandmother:  

Great grandfather:  
Great grandmother:  

Great grandfather:  
Great grandmother:  

Great grandfather:  
Great grandmother:  

Great grandfather:  
Great grandmother:
My Life History

My name is ____________________________ My birth date is ______________________ (mo) (day) (year)

I was born at ________________________ ______________________
(place) (time)

Special circumstances surrounding my birth

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

I was the ________ of ________ children born to my parents.

My father’s name is ______________________________

My mother’s name is ______________________________ (maiden)

I have ________ sisters and ________ brothers. (list names starting with the oldest)

1. ________________________________
2. ________________________________
3. ________________________________
4. ________________________________
5. ________________________________
6. ________________________________
7. ________________________________
8. ________________________________
9. ________________________________
10. ________________________________
My Father

My father's name is ___________________________ His birth date is ___________________________

He was born at ________________________________________

His father's name was ___________________________

His mother's name was ___________________________

Some memories of my father
_________________________________________________
_________________________________________________
_________________________________________________
_________________________________________________
_________________________________________________

My Mother

My mother's name is ___________________________ Her birth date is ___________________________

She was born at ________________________________________

Her father's name was ___________________________

Her mother's name was ___________________________

Some memories of my mother
_________________________________________________
_________________________________________________
_________________________________________________
_________________________________________________
_________________________________________________
My Education

I started school at age __ at ___________ Elementary School in ________________

My favorite teachers were ____________________________________________

My best friends were ________________________________________________

Some of my memories are _____________________________________________

Other elementary schools I attended ________________________________

I attended _________________ Junior High/Middle School in ________________

My favorite teachers were ____________________________________________

My best friends were ________________________________________________

Some of my memories are _____________________________________________

Other junior high/middle schools I attended ______________________________
My Education

I attended __________________ High School in ____________________________

I graduated on ____________ My GPA ________ My Major ________________

School colors __________________ School mascot ______________________

My best friends were ______________________________________________

My favorite teachers were __________________________________________

Some of my memories are __________________________________________

I was in these extra-curricular activities ______________________________

I received these awards and recognition ________________________________

Prom and graduation memories _______________________________________

Other high schools I attended _________________________________________
My Education

College

<table>
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<tr>
<th>College Name</th>
<th>Major</th>
<th>Degree</th>
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Activities

Additional activities

Other educational opportunities (trade school, special courses)

Military Experience

I served in the _______ from ______ to ______

My highest rank was _______ My basic training was at _______

Highlights

Highlights

Highlights
Courtship and Marriage

I met my spouse ______________________ at _______________________

We met on ______________________ I was age ______ and he/she was ______

We met like this _______________________ ______________________________________

Our first date was ______________________

We were engaged on ______________________

The question was "popped" like this ______________________

We were married on ________________ at ______________________

Our attendants were ______________________

Some special wedding memories ____________________________________________

Our honeymoon was at ______________________

Some honeymoon memories ________________________________________________

Our first home was at ______________________
Our Family

Our children are

__________________________ born___________ at__________________________

__________________________ born___________ at__________________________

__________________________ born___________ at__________________________

__________________________ born___________ at__________________________

__________________________ born___________ at__________________________

__________________________ born___________ at__________________________

__________________________ born___________ at__________________________

Information about our children

_____________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

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_____________________________________________________________________
On the Move

Places we have lived

Occupations

Jobs I have held

Miscellaneous
Who can I write to get the information I need?

Federal Records Center
East Point, Georgia 30044

The Genealogical Society of the
Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints
50 East North Temple Street
Salt Lake City, Utah 84150
• check to see if there is a branch library in your area

Military Service Records in the
National Archives of the United States
National Archives
Washington, D.C. 20408

National Genealogical Society
1921 Sunderland Place N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20036

National Society of the Daughters
of the American Revolution
1776 D Street N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20006
Bibliography


Family History Questionnaire

1. Name ____________________________ (last) ____________________________ (First) ____________________________ (Middle) ____________________________ (Maiden)

2. Date of Birth ____________________________ (mo) ____________________________ (day) ____________________________ (yr)
   
   Place of Birth ____________________________ (city) ____________________________ (state) ____________________________ (county)
   
   Where were you born? ______ hospital ______ at home ______ other

3. Religious preference ____________________________

4. At what age did you first attend school? ______

5. Highest level of education ____________________________

6. List people who resided in your household when you were a child:
   
   ____ father
   ____ mother
   ____ brother
   ____ sister
   ____ grandparent
   ____ other relatives
   ____ border
   ____ other nonrelatives

7. Date of marriage ____________________________ (mo) ____________________________ (day) ____________________________ (yr)
   
   Name of spouse ____________________________

   Place of marriage ____________________________

8. Number of children ________ (list in order of birth)
   
   Name ____________________________ Date of birth ____________________________
   ____________________________ ____________________________
   ____________________________ ____________________________
   ____________________________ ____________________________
   ____________________________ ____________________________
   ____________________________ ____________________________
   ____________________________ ____________________________
   ____________________________ ____________________________

9. If you have immigrant ancestors, where did they come from (country and city or town if possible), approximately when did they arrive in America, and where did they first settle (city and state)?
   
   Mother's side ____________________________
   ____________________________
   ____________________________

   Father's side ____________________________
   ____________________________
   ____________________________
10. Other than through marriage, have you or any of your ancestors changed your last name? _____ Original name ____________________________
New name ____________________________

11. Which of your ancestors or relatives are you named after?
first name ____________________________ middle name ____________________________

12. Can you relate any stories about the history of your first or last name? ____________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________

13. Please supply the following information about your spouse.
Date of birth ____________________________
(mo) (day) (yr)

Place of birth ____________________________
(city) (state) (county)

Religious preference ____________________________

Highest level of education ____________________________

If your spouse has immigrant ancestors, where did they come from, when did they arrive, and where did they settle?
Mother's side ____________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________

Father's side ____________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________

Full name of spouse's parents
Father ____________________________ Mother ____________________________
Please supply the following information for your parents and grandparents.

Mother:
1. Name ________________________________
   (last) (first) (middle) (maiden)
   Date of birth ____________________________
   (mo) (day) (yr)
   Place of birth ____________________________
   (city) (state) (county)
2. Age at death ______ Date of death ______
   (mo) (day) (yr)
   Place of death ____________________________
   (city) (state) (county)
3. Religious preference ____________________
4. Highest level of education ____________________
5. Number of children ______

Father:
1. Name ________________________________
   (last) (first) (middle) (maiden)
   Date of birth ____________________________
   (mo) (day) (yr)
   Place of birth ____________________________
   (city) (state) (county)
2. Age at death ______ Date of death ______
   (mo) (day) (yr)
   Place of death ____________________________
   (city) (state) (county)
3. Religious preference ____________________
4. Highest level of education ____________________
5. Number of children ______
Maternal grandmother:

1. Name ____________________________
   (last) (first) (middle) (maiden)

   Date of birth ______________________
   (mo) (day) (yr)

   Place of birth ______________________
   (city) (state) (county)

2. Age at death ______
   Date of death ______________________
   (mo) (day) (yr)

   Place of death ______________________
   (city) (state) (county)

3. Religious preference ______________________

4. Highest level of education ______________________

5. Number of children ______

Maternal grandfather:

1. Name ____________________________
   (last) (first) (middle) (maiden)

   Date of birth ______________________
   (mo) (day) (yr)

   Place of birth ______________________
   (city) (state) (county)

2. Age at death ______
   Date of death ______________________
   (mo) (day) (yr)

   Place of death ______________________
   (city) (state) (county)

3. Religious preference ______________________

4. Highest level of education ______________________

5. Number of children ______

Paternal grandmother:

1. Name ____________________________
   (last) (first) (middle) (maiden)

   Date of birth ______________________
   (mo) (day) (yr)

   Place of birth ______________________
   (city) (state) (county)
2. Age at death ____ Date of death ____ (mo) (day) (yr)

Place of death ____________________________ ____________________________
(city) (state) (county)

3. Religious preference __________________________________________

4. Highest level of education ________________________________________

5. Number of children ____

Paternal grandfather:

1. Name ____________________________ ____________________________
   (last) (first) (middle) (maiden)

   Date of birth ____________________________ (mo) (day) (yr)

   Place of birth ____________________________ ____________________________
   (city) (state) (county)

2. Age at death ____ Date of death ____ (mo) (day) (yr)

   Place of death ____________________________ ____________________________
   (city) (state) (county)

3. Religious preference __________________________________________

4. Highest level of education ________________________________________

5. Number of children ____

Please supply the same information for any children over 25 and for any ancestors you have information on after your grandparents. Use additional sheets of paper.

Remember: Even a partial history is useful. Do not be frustrated if you cannot supply all the information requested.

Again, thank you for the time you spent filling out this questionnaire. Those who come after us will thank you as well.
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**SOURCES OF INFORMATION**

**OTHER MARRIAGES**
1. Robert Paul Niles
   BORN Oct. 10, 1908
   WHERE Anderson, Ind.
   WHEN MARRIED Dec. 29, 1930
   DIED WHERE
   Rebecca Ann Penry
   NAME OF HUSBAND OR WIFE

2. Richard Larimore Niles
   BORN July 31, 1940
   WHERE Chillicothe, OH
   WHEN MARRIED April 24, 1966
   DIED WHERE

3. Sara Jane Ballard
   BORN Sept. 19, 1941
   WHERE Perrysville, IN
   DIED WHERE

4. George Ewing Niles II
   BORN Sept. 17, 1914
   WHERE New Lebanon, IN
   WHEN MARRIED June 26, 1937
   DIED WHERE

5. Mary Alice Hattery
   BORN WHERE
   WHEN MARRIED
   DIED WHERE

6. Walter Shaw Ballard
   BORN Feb. 10, 1908
   WHERE Plainfield, IN
   WHEN MARRIED July 31, 1937
   DIED WHERE

7. Ekanor Marie Milam
   BORN May 31, 1913
   WHERE Lynhurst, IN
   DIED WHERE

8. Walter Benjamin Niles
   BORN Aug. 10, 1889
   WHERE
   WHEN MARRIED Sept. 1936
   DIED WHERE Phoenix, Ariz.

9. Esther Caroline Smith
   BORN Oct. 6, 1894
   WHERE
   DIED WHERE

10. Horace Jessup Ballard
    BORN WHERE
    WHEN MARRIED
    DIED WHERE

11. Gertrude May Shaw
    BORN WHERE
    WHEN MARRIED
    DIED WHERE

12. Edgar Marion Milam
    BORN Jan. 23, 1891
    WHERE Indianapolis, IN
    WHEN MARRIED Jan. 13, 1940
    DIED WHERE Danville, IN

13. Clara Ethel Smith
    BORN March 24, 1891
    WHERE Cadwell, IL
    DIED Oct. 4, 1985
PEDIGREE CHART

1. Rebecca Ann Penny [Niles]
   BORN Nov. 10, 1869
   WHERE Chattanooga, Tenn.
   WHEN MARRIED Dec. 27, 1960
   DIED WHERE
   NAME OF HUSBAND OR WIFE
   Robert Paul Niles

2. Robert Wayne Penny
   BORN Jan. 22, 1941
   WHERE Marion, Ohio
   WHEN MARRIED June 1, 1942
   DIED WHERE

3. Mary Ann Smith
   BORN Sept. 28, 1945
   WHERE Chattanooga, Tenn.
   DIED WHERE

4. Paul David Penny
   BORN WHEN MARRIED
   WHERE WHERE
   DIED WHERE

5. Doris Luella Thomas
   BORN WHERE
   WHEN MARRIED
   DIED WHERE

6. Earl Thomas Smith
   BORN Feb. 1, 1903
   WHERE Soddy, Tenn.
   WHEN MARRIED Sept. 14, 1922
   DIED WHERE

7. Mary Beatrice Davis
   BORN Nov. 26, 1903
   WHERE Soddy, Tenn.
   DIED WHERE

8. Helen P. Chapman
   BORN Aug. 5, 1905
   WHERE
   WHEN MARRIED
   DIED July 7, 1991

9. Allen Napoleon Smith
   BORN Dec. 14, 1863
   WHERE Chattanooga, Tenn.
   WHEN MARRIED July 19, 1892
   DIED Jan. 16, 1943
   WHERE Soddy, Tenn.

10. Cynthia Isabel Millsaps
    BORN April 17, 1858
    WHERE Harrison, Tenn.
    WHEN MARRIED
    DIED Oct. 9, 1939
    WHERE Soddy, Tenn.

11. William Rufus Davis
    BORN May 15, 1873
    WHERE Sequin, Tenn.
    WHEN MARRIED April 22, 1894
    DIED June 4, 1941
    WHERE Soddy, Tenn.

12. Born Lee
    BORN June 19, 1879
    WHERE Sequin, Tenn.
    DIED Jan. 26, 1945
    WHERE Chattanooga, Tenn.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION
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**HUSBAND** Robert Paul Niles  
Born Oct 10, 1948 Place Anderson, Indiana
Chr. Place  
Marr. Dec 29, 1990 Place Muncie, Indiana  
Died Place  
Bur. Richard Larimore Niles Place  
HUSBAND'S FATHER  
HUSBAND'S OTHER WIVES  
HUSBAND'S MOTHER Sara Jane Ballard

**WIFE** Rebecca Ann Penny  
Born Nov 10, 1949 Place Chattanooga, Tennessee  
Chr. Place  
Died Place  
Bur. Robert Wayne Penny Place  
WIFE'S FATHER  
WIFE'S OTHER HUSBANDS  
WIFE'S MOTHER Mary Ann Smith

**CHILDREN**  
List each child (whether living or dead) in order of birth  
Given Names Surname

**SOURCES OF INFORMATION**

**OTHER MARRIAGES**
**HUSBAND**

- **Name:** Robert Wayne Penny
- **Born:** Jan 25, 1941
- **Place:** Marion, Ohio, Marion County
- **Father:** Paul David Penny
- **Mother:** Doris Luella Thomas
- **Marr.:** July 1, 1962
- **Place:** Silver Springs, Maryland, Montgomery County

**WIFE**

- **Name:** Mary Ann Smith
- **Born:** Sept 28, 1943
- **Place:** Chattanooga, Tennessee, Hamilton County
- **Father:** Earl Thomas Smith
- **Mother:** Mary Beatrice Davis

### CHILDREN

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<td>Rebecca</td>
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<td>10 Nov. 1969</td>
<td>Chattanooga, Hamilton, Tenn</td>
<td>Dec. 29, 1992, Robert Paul Niles</td>
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<td>M</td>
<td>Andrew</td>
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**Sources of Information**

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**Other Marriages**

( )
**HUSBAND**  
Earl Thomas Smith  
Born: Feb. 1, 1903  
Place: Soddy, Tennessee  
Hamilton County

**MARRIED TO**  

died: Sept. 16, 1922  
Place: Soddy, Tennessee  
Hamilton County

**BURIED IN**  
Allen Napoleon Smith  
Place:  

**HUSBAND'S FATHER**  

cynthia isabel millsaps  

**HUSBAND'S MOTHER**  

**OTHER WIVES**  

**WIFE**  
MaryBeatrice Davis  
Born: Nov. 12, 1903  
Place: Daisy, Tennessee  
Hamilton County

**MARRIED TO**  
Place:  

**BURIED IN**  
William Rufus Davis  
Place: __________  

**WIFE'S FATHER**  

toona lee  

**WIFE'S MOTHER**  

**SEX**  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHILDREN</th>
<th>WHEN BORN</th>
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<th>DATE OF FIRST MARRIAGE</th>
<th>WHEN DIED</th>
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<tr>
<td>WIFE'S OTHER HUSBANDS</td>
<td>NAME</td>
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<td>22 Feb. 1924</td>
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<td>F Mary Ann Smith</td>
<td>28 Sept. 1945</td>
<td>Chattanooga</td>
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**SOURCES OF INFORMATION**

**OTHER MARRIAGES**

(Sources and other marriages information are not filled in.)
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<th>CHILDREN</th>
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<td>Rebecca Jean Niles</td>
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<td>Mark Daniel Niles</td>
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**Sources of Information**

**Other Marriages**

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**Family Group Record**

**Husband**: Richard Larimore Niles

- Born: July 31, 1940, Chillicothe, OH, Ross County
- Married: April 24, 1966, Greencastle, IN, Putnam County

**Wife**: Sara Jane Ballard

- Born: Sept. 19, 1941, Greencastle, IN, Putnam County

**Children**

1. Robert Paul Niles
2. Rebecca Jean Niles
3. Mark Daniel Niles

**Burials**

- Husband: George Ewing Niles, Place: Mary
- Wife's Father: Walter Shaw Ballard, Wife's Mother: Eleanor Marie Milam
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHILDREN</th>
<th>WHEN BORN</th>
<th>WHERE BORN</th>
<th>DATE OF FIRST MARRIAGE</th>
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<tr>
<td>BALLARD Philip Lee</td>
<td>26 Apr 1939</td>
<td>Greencastle, Indiana, Putnam County</td>
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<td>Anderson, Roberta</td>
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<td>19 Sept 1941</td>
<td>Greencastle, Indiana, Putnam County</td>
<td>April 24, 1944</td>
<td>Richard Lannore, Niles</td>
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**Sources of Information**

**Other Marriages**
**HUSBAND** George Ewing Niles II  
Born: Sept. 17, 1914  
Place: New Lebanon, IN  
Sullivan County  
**MARRIED:** June 26, 1937  
Place: Bloomington, IN  
**DIED:**  
Place:  

**BURIED:**  
Place:  

**HUSBAND'S FATHER** Walter Benjamin Niles  
**HUSBAND'S MOTHER** Virginia Fay Lowe  
**OTHER WIVES**  

**WIFE** Mary Alice Hattery  
Born:  
Place:  
**MARRIED:**  
Place:  
**DIED:**  
Place:  

**WIFE'S FATHER**  
**WIFE'S MOTHER**  
**OTHER HUSBANDS**  

### CHILDREN

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<th>SEX</th>
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**OTHER MARRIAGES**  

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