The Family History Guide™

Explorer

Family History Newsletter
Issue 5:   September 15, 2016

Welcome to
The Family History Guide
BETA ... your *free* learning, resource, and training center for genealogy.

Introduction | Projects | Countries/Ethnic

In This Issue ...

Introducing the New Beta Site

We'll admit it - this is *big* news. We will be changing the design of the website for The Family History Guide. The new site is in Beta stage, and it is currently under construction. You can see it here:
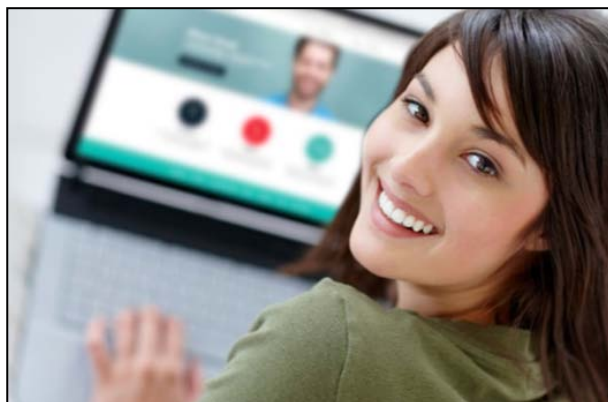
http://www.thefhguide.com/beta/index.html

The Beta period starts Sept. 15 and will run approximately through Nov. 15, 2016. During that time, please take the opportunity to browse the new site and get familiar with the layout and features.

Note that the original website will be fully operational until the Beta period is over. Then it will be retired, and the Beta website will be moved to the regular www.thefhguide.com address.

Why?

You may be wondering why The Family History Guide, a website with visitors in over 140 countries and one of the most popular family history resources anywhere, should be getting a makover. Here are some of the reasons we decided to take this step:

- *Tablets and mobile devices*. More and more family history enthusiasts are accessing the Web via smartphones, tablets, and other mobile devices. They need a design that is "mobile-friendly" - one that uses a single column, larger type, and more vertical scrolling. The new site design accomplishes this.

- *More work space.* The single-column format of the new design means there is more space for QUIKLinks and other items that are a bit cramped in the current web design.

- *Search capabilities.* The current site has a Topics page but no Search tool, due to some code limitations. The new site will have a convenient Search function to replace the Topics page.

- *Contemporary look.* The new design style is more similar in look and feel to sites such as FamilySearch, Ancestry, Findmypast, etc.

What's Unfinished?

The Beta site is under construction, so naturally you'll see some unfinished or placeholder pages here and there. Still, it's far enough along that you can get a good sense of how it works. All pages will be finished by Beta end.

These pages (and a few others) are currently *unfinished*:

- All country pages, including the United States

- About half of the U.S. State pages

- Search feature

- Course Catalog

- Tracker links and Training Tools

- Individual links to the Vault

A Brief Tour

Let's take a quick tour of the new site to see what's different from the current site.

- *Home Page* - The Introduction, Projects, and Training links are at the bottom, in picture form. They are also included in the tabs at the upper right, along with a link to the Children page. The

  | ORIGINAL SITE | Introduction | Projects | Training | Children |

  first tab currently says "Original Site" and goes back to the current site for The Family History Guide, for convenience. That will be replaced with "Home" once the Beta site moves to production.

  The bottom of the page has a blue bar with handy options (also available on other pages).

  | What They're Saying | Newsletter | Brochures | Events | Merit Badge | About Us | Terms of Use |

- *Introduction* - The main difference is that all the Ready, Set, Go topics are now included on this page - just click the links or scroll down to see them. An up-arrow will be added to the page for convenience. Tabs in the upper right also include the Vault.

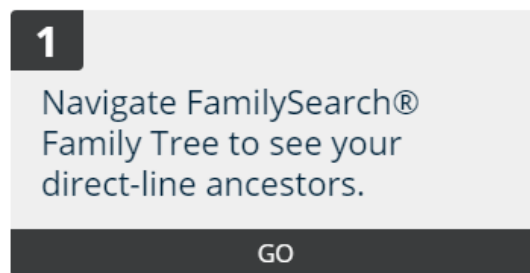 | Home | Introduction | Projects | Children | Training | Vault |

- *Projects* - The red bar contains links to Projects 1-9.

Project 9 is for Countries and Ethnic pages; it replaces the drop-down menu of the current site. In Project 9, notice the lists of areas and countries arranged in groups. The United States link has a list of states next to it, and other countries will have their provinces/states added in a similar way over time.

Let's go inside Project 1: Family Tree. Instead of a collapsible list of Goals, you'll see each Goal in a separate, clickable tile.

Click a tile, and it opens the Goal area with all its content. The familiar article and video icons have been replaced by smaller black versions, but they work the same way.

Notice the up-arrow in the lower-right corner; use it to return to the top of the page.
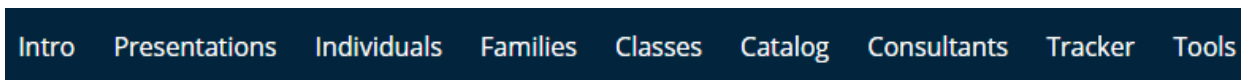
All Projects have similar navigation features as those contained in Project 1: Family Tree.

- *QUIKLinks* - These are under construction, but one example of how they will work is with the counties for U.S. State pages. For example, go to Project 9: Countries and click Alabama. Just above the Project Goals is a small link "AL Counties".

Click it to open a list of counties at the bottom of the page. The general idea is that QUIKLinks will be moved from the narrow left columns of the current web site to the broad, single column in the new design, affording more space and visibility.

- *Training* - The large pictures and left-hand links of the current site have been replaced by links in the dark blue navigation bar. The Course Catalog is coming soon.

Your Feedback

We value your feedback during the Beta schedule. You don't have to register or sign up as a tester; simply send your feedback via messaging on our Facebook page (www.facebook.com/TheFamilyHistoryGuide) or send an email to beta@thefhguide.com.

Below are examples of the type of feedback we are looking for:

- *Usability* - Is the site easy to navigate? What would make it easier? Are the site features easy to find and use?

- *Design* - Is the look and feel attractive, or does it need improvement? Do elements seem consistent from page to page?

- *Accuracy* - Do the finished pages work properly? Are there mistakes or broken links? (Remember that some pages are unfinished, so they will not work as expected yet.)

Thank you! This is an exciting time for The Family History Guide, and we are looking forward to great things. Please spread the word and invite your friends to take a look at the new Beta site and let us know what they think.

Inside the Guide: Information Layering

One of the challenges to new family history enthusiasts (or even to those who've been at it for a while) is the immense volume of information available on the Internet. For example, the popular Cyndi's List site has over 330,000 family history links - and there are more out there. So how do we tame that fire hose of information?

The Family History Guide is built on a system of information layers, to avoid overwhelming users with too much information, too fast. There is a balance of *structure* ("start here, do these steps in order", etc.) and flexibility

Layer Zero: Navigation

Although it's not really an information layer, simple and clear navigation in The Family History Guide (menus, links, etc.) helps you find the areas of information you want to focus on.

Layer One: Goals, Choices, and Steps

Even though they may sound like three layers, these items act together to provide your "top-level" information, or the information you are likely to want to find first. Think of the Steps as the basic nuggets of information, and the Goals and Choices are the pathways to get to them. And there is a "limited choice" strategy in play here - there are only so many Goals per project, so many Choices per Goal, and so many Steps per Choice. This helps channel the information and lighten the load.

Layer Two: Articles and Videos

Sometimes the Steps will provide enough information for what you need to do, but often you'll need to go to the next level. The Family History Guide provides links to industry-leading articles and videos "just in time" - located where you would most likely want to access them. What you learn in these resources can in turn lead you to other paths of discovery.

Layer Three: The Vault

What if you are particularly interested in a certain topic, and you want to know even more about it? That's when the Vault comes in handy. Only the most essential article and video links appear in the main part of The Family History Guide, so the rest of them are carefully organized in the Vault section. It's a great place to explore, and some of the links may very well end up becoming your favorites.

Cross-Connections

The "final frontier" is being able to connect different pieces of information in useful and meaningful ways. Look for a future article in The Family History Guide Explorer newsletter that explains some of the cool information connections that can be made on the website.

On the Horizon

We will be at all Family History Fairs listed below. For details, see the Events link on the website for details (www.thefhguide.com/events.html).

Pavahnt Valley Family History Conference - is on Oct. 15 in Delta UT.

Pikes Peak Family History Conference - is on Nov. 5 in Colorado Springs, CO.

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