

# Genealogy Basics – More on Using Ancestry’s Public Member Trees

By Joe Petrie

## BACKGROUND:

This article focuses both on navigation to an individual’s Ancestry’s Public Member Tree records and on how I select vital information to gather and to verify for the individual from one or many Public Member Trees. Also, the article focuses on how I verify the gathered information using Ancestry Library.

The article is a follow-on to two of my Genealogy Basic documents in cbgen.org’s Records/Research named: “Genealogy Basics – How to use Ancestry Public Member Trees as a Resource” and “Genealogy Basics - Cautious Using Ancestry’s Public Member Tree.”

In the first article, I focused on how navigate to the Public Member Tree (henceforth PMT) record(s). Because of software changes in Ancestry that brings one PMT record to the forefront of the Search Results screen, the first article is inconsistent with the current software. The article needed updating. Also, the first PMT record on the Results screen may be the only PMT record. The software identifies when there are others. In addition, when there are many PMTs, the software appears to randomly display one PMT.

In the second document, I advised users to be wary of the information in Ancestry’s PMTs because much of it is unverified. In the article, using 20 PMTs for my grandfather, Edmund E Petrie, I indicated that most contributors used my early data (without attribution) that was erroneous. It was not until grandfather’s death record was published in the Nova Scotia Vital Statistics Web Site, <https://www.novascotiagenealogy.com>, that I discovered my error. I was to blame because I asked a cousin not to share my research especially my parents’ information. She put it in a PMT record that appears to be the unattributed source for almost all other of grandfather Petrie’s PMTs.

## INTRODUCTION:

There were a number of items that precipitated the article. First, just after the first release of the current Ancestry software, I had a conversation with peer genealogists at a Friday evening meeting at the Friends of Irish Research in Brockton MA about the software. I contended that Ancestry had erred by displaying **one** PMT record (with a note when there were similar trees) followed by the remainder of the results of the search from other Ancestry files. Obviously, if there was no PMT record retrieved, there was no record to be displayed. I’ll admit that I even I suggested the PMT records be ignored. The current results software seems to randomly display one of the many PMTs for the individual.

Second, after some use of the PMT records, in a seminar I indicated that PMT records can provide clues.

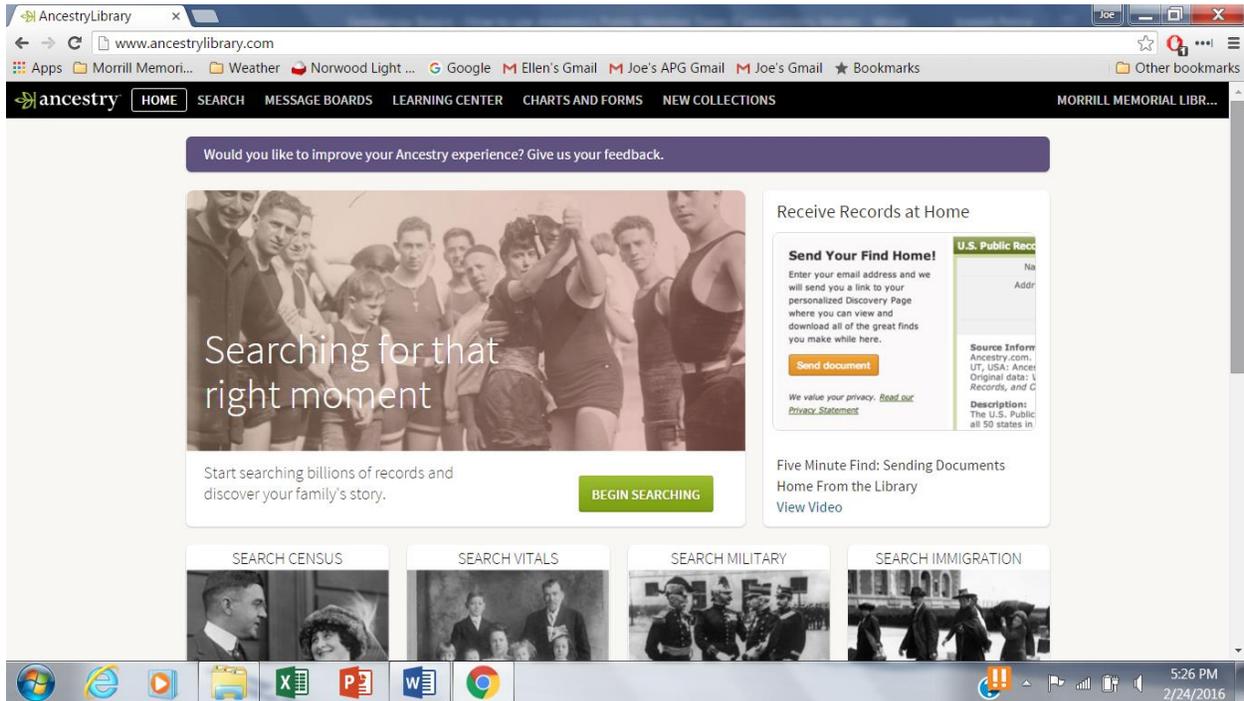
Now, after considerable use of PMT records on a 12 generation Boutilier Modified Register Report that is in process, I have concluded that PMT records can be a terrific resource for folks like me who want to find records that can be quickly verified. Please note that the Boutilier record that I selected for the starting point of this article challenged my statement of records being quickly validated. Her father died when she was a baby. Only one Canadian Census listed her. I was lucky to find her in a Census in Ancestry. Her surname was misspelled. She immigrated to New Hampshire as a teenager with her mother, stepfather (who was not a Boutilier) and step-siblings. Finally, there are not a lot of New Hampshire databases on Ancestry. For the records that I’ll enter in my database, I’ll search FamilySearch and other internet resources for verification

In this article, I spend time on documenting the process I use to verify information using Ancestry. Why? As a member of the Association of Professional Genealogists, I try to verify the information twice. In PMTs, I find that the verification success keys are: Attachments and Sources. I am very pleased when a Search Results screen shows a record or records with more than one Attachment and one Source. The likelihood for quick verification increases when there are many Attachments and Sources. Unfortunately, for the individual that I selected for this article. there is only PMT with multiple Attachments and Sources.

One PMT with many sources and Attachments is a good news story. The bad news is that there are a couple of Attachments in that PMT that should not have been linked to the Date of Birth. Neither had a full date of birth. More on that later.

## NAVIGATION:

The following screen print is from the Ancestry Library Home page. Please note that Ancestry Library usage is courtesy of my home town's Morrill Memorial Library where I volunteer. Specifically, I lecture and conduct individual consultations. In addition, my wife and I are members of the Friends of the Morrill Library. All of my genealogy activities are listed on the last page of the article. All are volunteer activities. I do not charge or accept fees. I accept donations for the Friends of Irish Research.



The next print screen shows that I selected the Search Tab on the Home Page. The drop down shows a number of categories that can be selected. I selected All Categories because I expected a paucity of vital records for the selected individual. (I knew from Bob Hegerich's World Connect web site that he mother had died in New Hampshire.)

[AncestryLibrary](#) | [www.ancestrylibrary.com](#) | Apps | Morrill Memori... | Weather | Norwood Light ... | Google | Ellen's Gmail | Joe's APG Gmail | Joe's Gmail | ★ Bookmarks | Other bookmarks

**ancestry** | HOME | SEARCH | MESSAGE BOARDS | LEARNING CENTER | CHARTS AND FORMS | NEW COLLECTIONS | MORRILL MEMORIAL LIBR...

Improve your Ancestry experience? Give us your feedback.

All Categories  
 Census & Voter Lists  
 Birth, Marriage & Death  
 Military  
 Immigration & Travel  
 Card Catalog

...ing for that right moment  
 Start searching billions of records and discover your family's story. **BEGIN SEARCHING**

**Receive Records at Home**  
**Send Your Find Home!**  
 Enter your email address and we will send you a link to your personalized Discovery Page where you can view and download all of the great finds you make while here.  
[Send document](#)  
 We value your privacy. [Read our Privacy Statement](#)

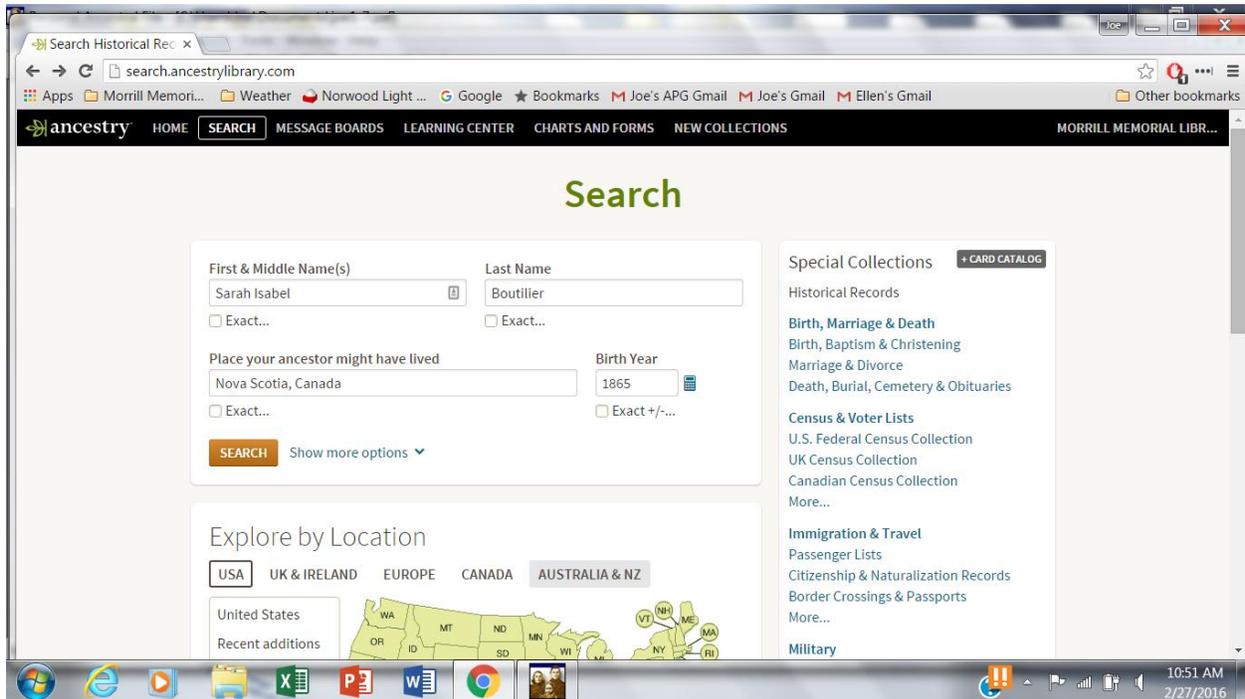
**U.S. Public Records**  
 Name  
 Address  
 Source Information: Ancestry.com, UT, USA: Ancestry.com  
 Original data: U.S. Public Records, and C  
 Description: The U.S. Public Records, all 50 states in

Five Minute Find: Sending Documents  
 Home From the Library  
 View Video

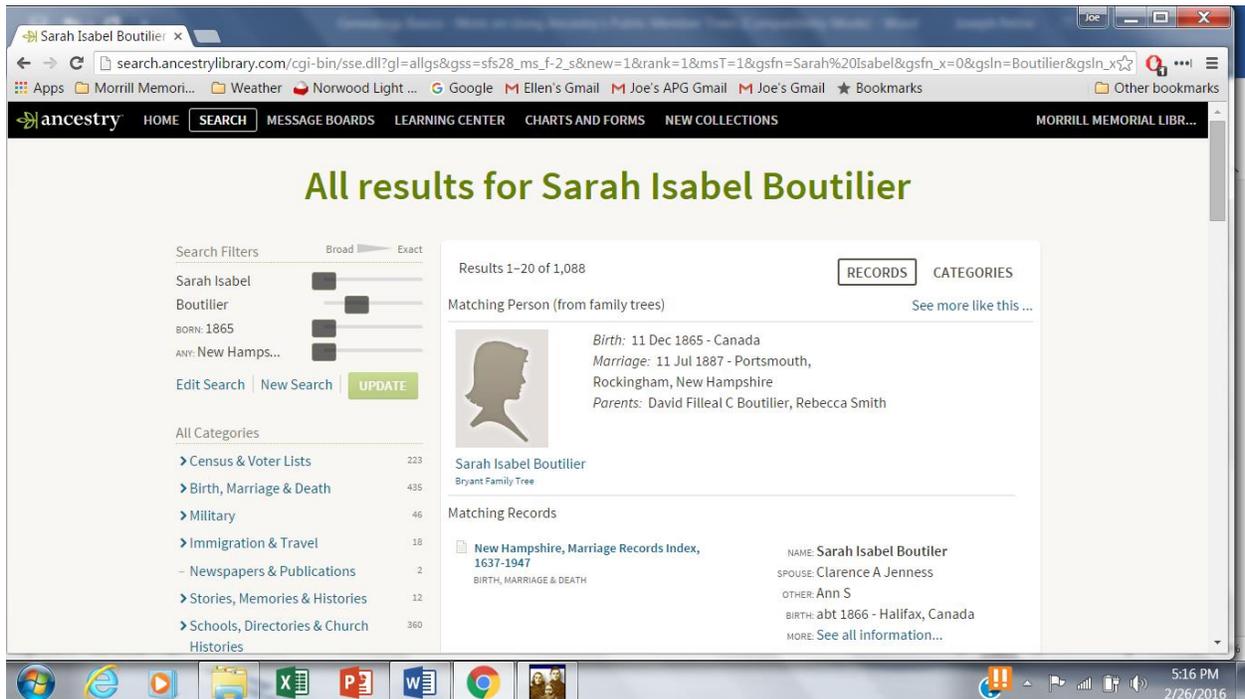
SEARCH CENSUS | SEARCH VITALS | SEARCH MILITARY | SEARCH IMMIGRATION

Windows Taskbar: 5:27 PM 2/24/2016

The Individual's Search screen is shown below. I entered Sarah Isabel Boutilier born in Nova Scotia in 1865. She is the only daughter of Rebecca Smith and David Filleal Boutilier. Supposedly, David and Rebecca had up to 3 children before David passed away. Sarah is the only child of David's that I found. She was a teenager when her mother and step-father moved the family to New Hampshire. I found her in one Canadian Census with a misspelled surname. (I expected her to be in two Censuses.)



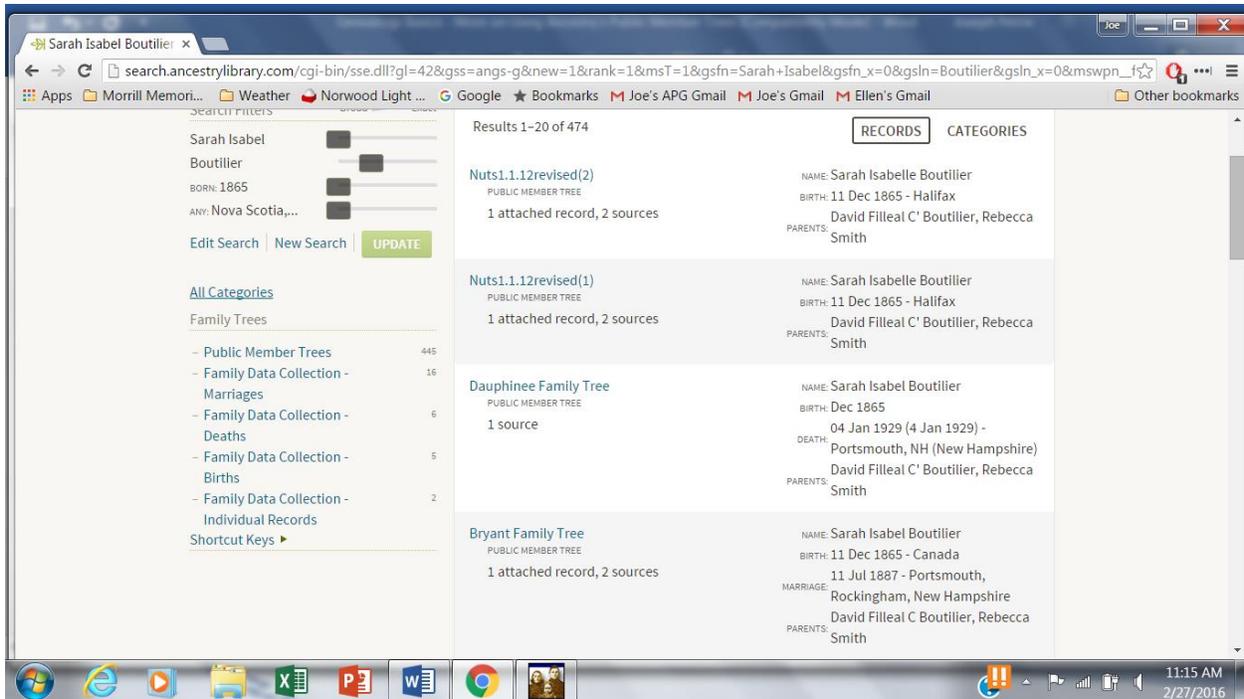
The Result screen follows. Please note that the record at the bottom of the screen is from a New Hampshire database. That surprised me because I expected mostly Canadian records.



The first result that is displayed on the Results screen is always a PMT – if one exists. It is the item that has a border. The ones immediately under the image or photo on the left is a link to the detailed FACTS in the PMT. In this case it is only to the Bryant Family PMT. (There were lots more PMTs.)

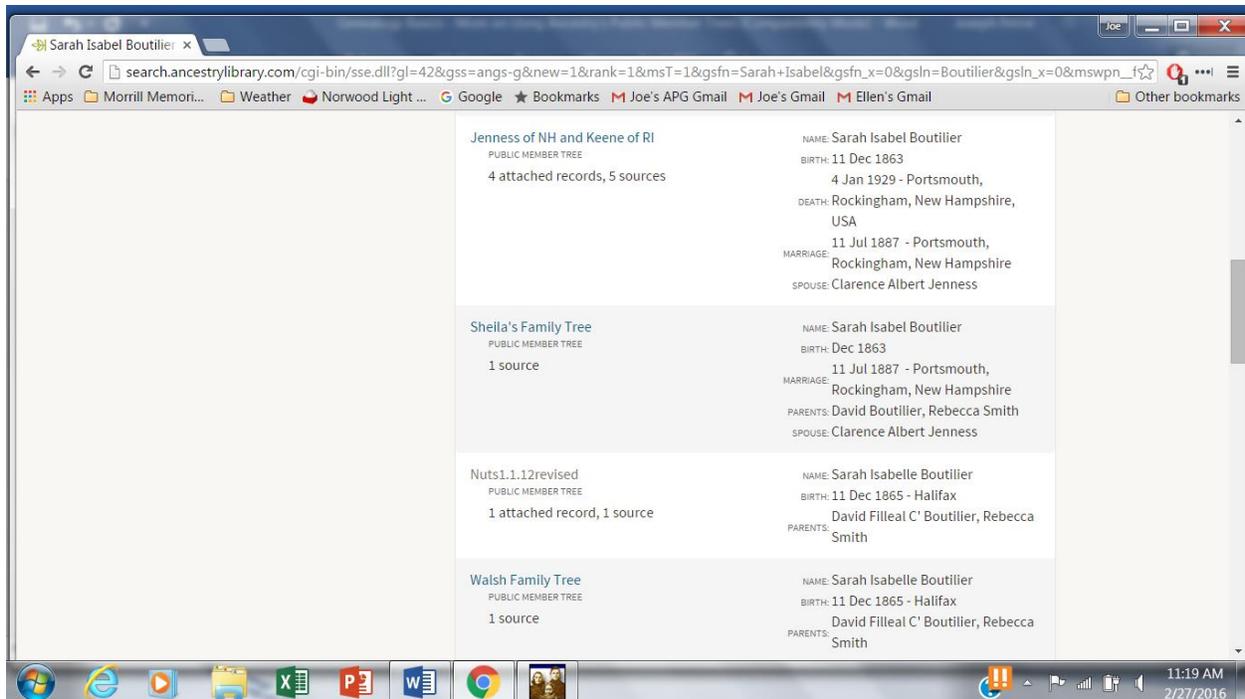
At the top right side of the border (under the RECORDS and CATEGORIES buttons there is a link labelled “See more like this...” The link is displayed when there is at least one other PMT. The link displays a few PMTs. Each PMT is hyperlinked. **From the above summary on the immediate right of the image of the Bryant PMT, I learned that Sarah Isobelle was married. I verified that she was married twice and had 4 female children – three by the first husband. Three had children. One never married.**

The following screen is the first set of over 10 linked PMTs, including the Bryant Family PMT.



**From the third result, the Dauphinee PMT, I learned Rebecca Smith, Boutillier, Trueman’s Date of Death. I verified it after I determined that Rebecca’s second husband was Thomas J Trueman. (Believe me it took more time than I estimated.)** The clue was Sarah Isabell’s only Canadian Census record that I found – the one with misspelled surname. As an aside, there are no records for Isabell’s parents, children, step-father and step-siblings in the Nova Scotia Genealogy web site (novascotiagenealogy.com).

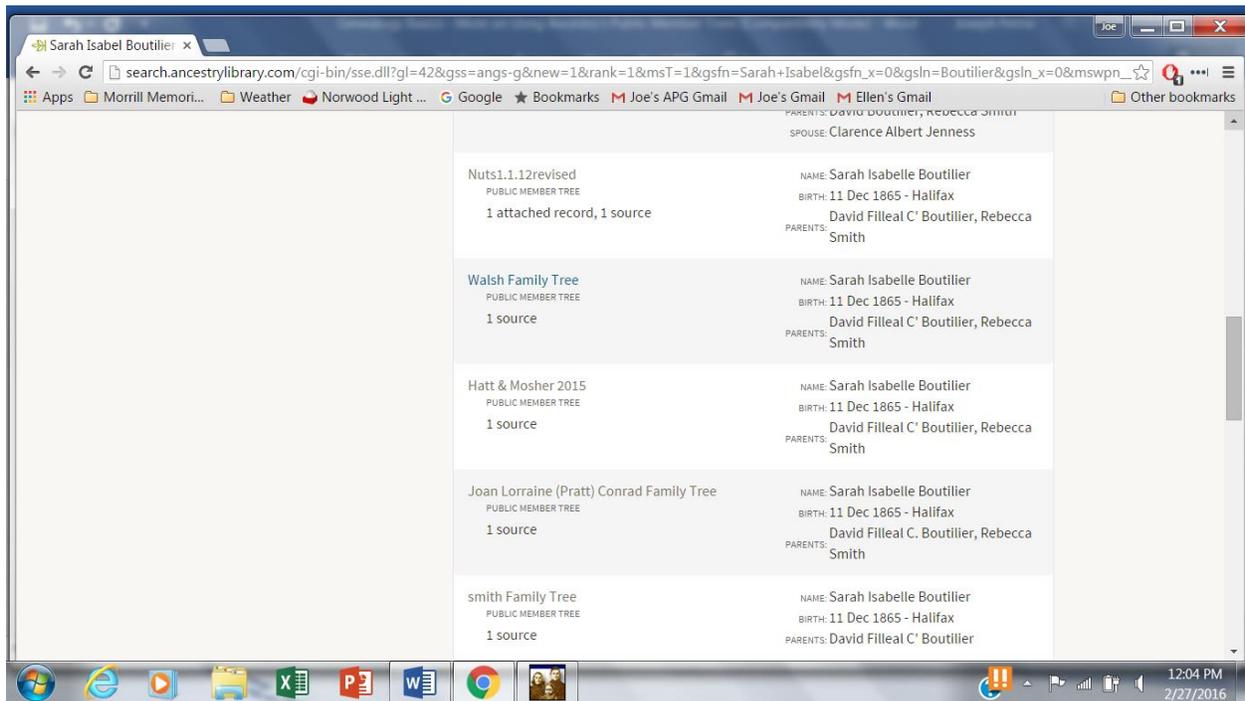
The following screen print is the second set of three PMT screen prints.



The first item on the above screen print, the Jenness NH and Keefe RI PMT, listed Sarah's spouse as Clarence A Jenness. **I verified the marriage record in the PMT Attachment.** Because Isobelle's first husband married and died between the US 1880 and 1900 Censuses and because Sarah Isobelle remarried before the Census of 1900, her three Jenness daughters were listed in their step-father's household. By clicking on the PMT record's Fact Format, I found John A Coleman, Sarah Isobelle's second husband. **I also verified the marriage record in the PMT Attachment.**

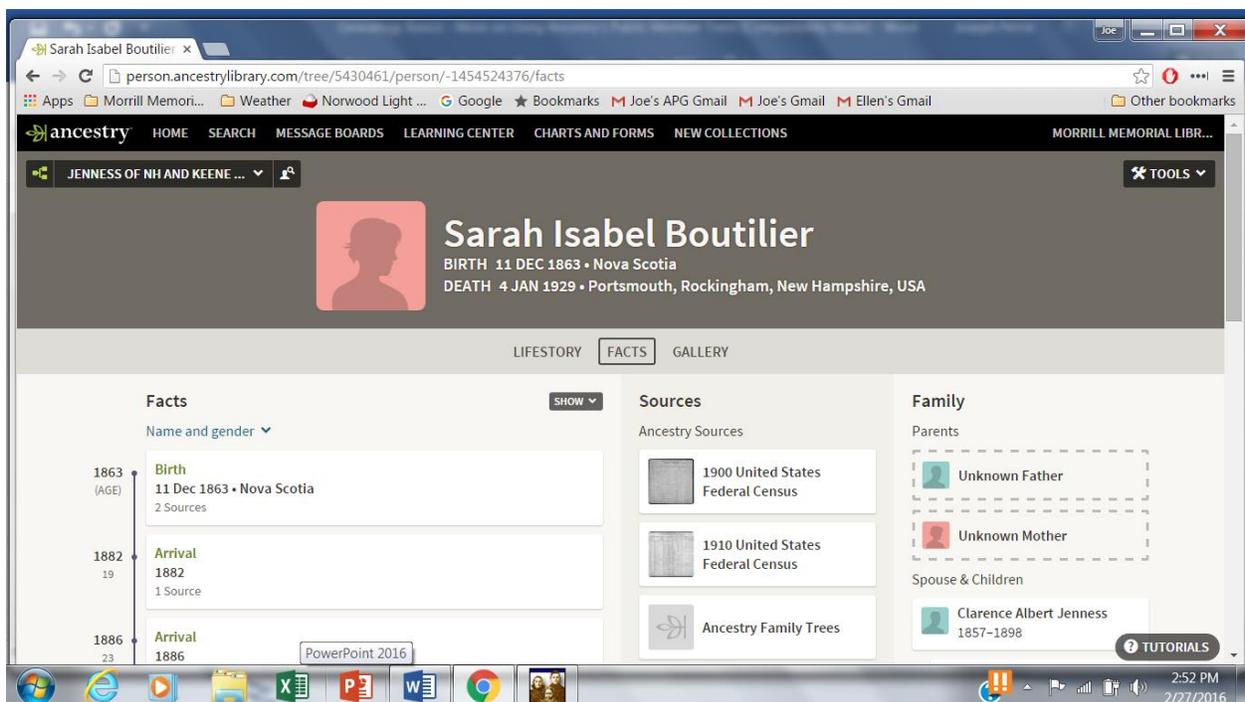
Please note that the Jenness NH and Keefe RI PMT showed 4 Attached Records and 5 Sources. (The other PMTs mostly had either 1 Source or 1 Source and 1 Attachment.) I reviewed all of the Sources and Attachments. Most were Ancestry Public Member Trees without attribution.

The following screen print is the last of the PMTs for Sarah Isabel Boutillier

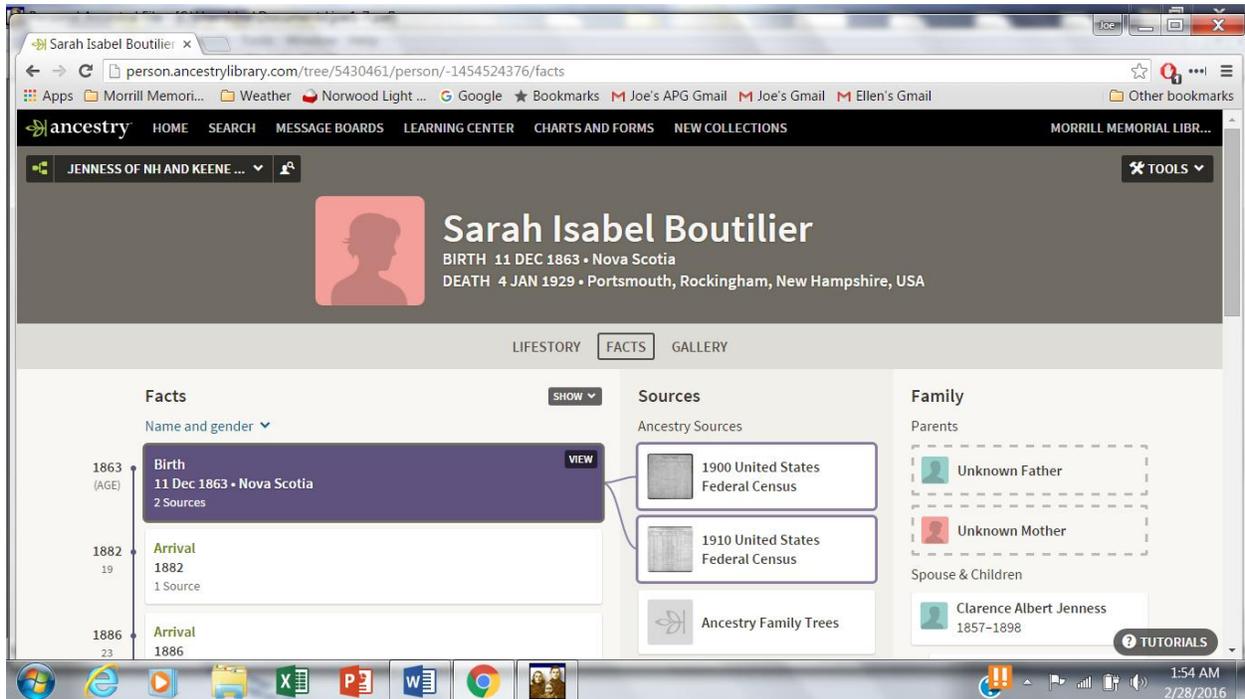


Please note that the remainder of this document focuses on the Jenness of NH and Keefe of RI PMT. Why? It was the only one with Attachments with verifiable data. For example, two of the attachments are New Hampshire marriage records for Sarah Isabel's two marriages. Also, the PMT record lists her two husbands, her 4 children etc. **My compliments to the author!**

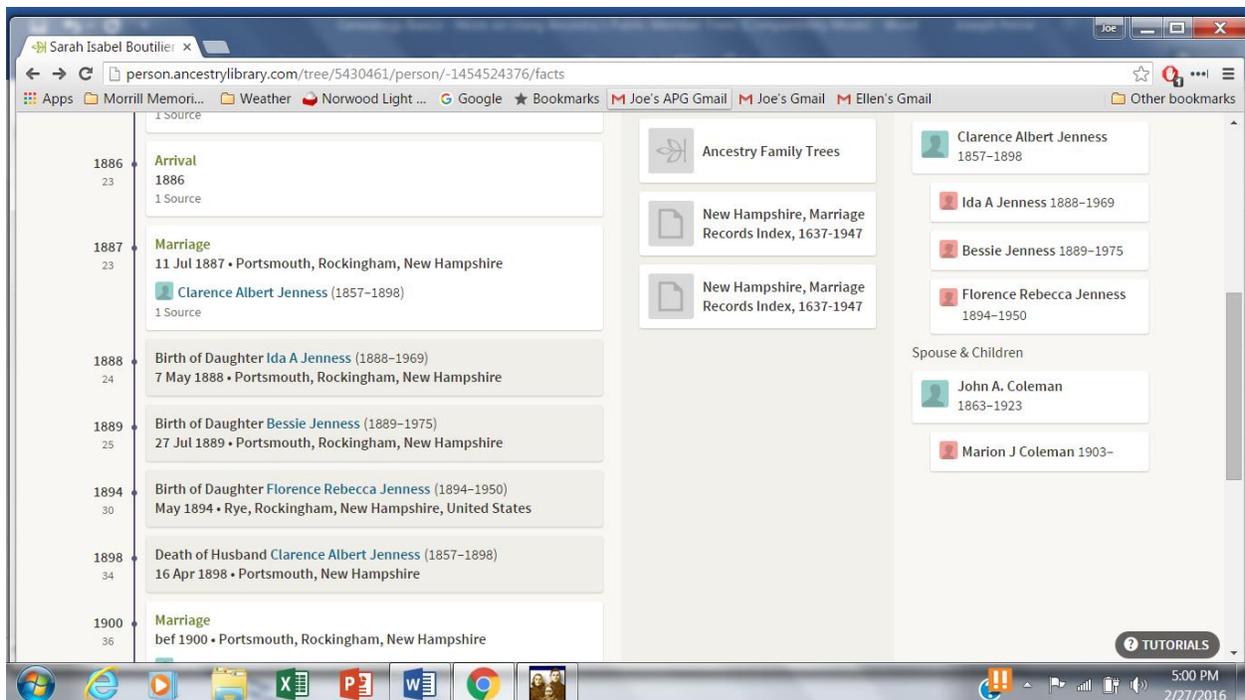
The following screen print is a result of clicking on the linked Jenness of NH and Keefe of RI PMT file name. The format of screen print is FACTS. FACTS is the default format. The user can read the LIFE STORY by clicking on the LIFE STORY button. GALLERY shows images. My experience is that GALLERY usually is empty.



The individual's facts, a vertical quasi-timeline on the left, identify where there is a source. Clicking on a fact with a source, shows the link to the specific source. For example, in the following screen print, I clicked on Birth and the software linked to the two Census records. Both Census records list John A Coleman as the head of the household. Sarah Isabel was a widow with three children when she married John.



In the following print screen of the bottom of the screen, Sarah Isabel's 2 husbands and her four children are itemized on the right under Family. The list includes years of birth and death. Each record is linked to another PMT. Clicking on the link's image showed detailed information in the FACTS format. It shows that two of the Jenness daughters (Bessie and Florence) married. Bessie had children.



One final comment on the Jenness of NH and Keefe of RI PMT's genealogy vitals: Bob Hegerich's World Connect database has a Date of Birth of 11 December 1863 for Sarah Isabell Boutilier Jenness Coleman. Neither of the two US Census Attachments on the Jenness of NH and Keefe of RI PMT really shows a full date of birth. In the 1900 Census for John A Coleman's family, Sarah Isabel's date of birth was in a Month and Year format and not in the Month, Day and Year format. The 1910 Census for John A Coleman's family did not have a date. It had an age. The link of the birth to attached documents from the Birtk FACT was unnecessary.

Finally, two of Sarah Isabell's four daughters (Bessie Jenness and Marion Coleman) had children. I am gathering information for them from a set of Jenness of NH and Keefe of RI PMTs. Eventually, I'll verify the information and add records to my database. I deliberately did not include the children's records and vitals in this article because none of the records were not verified.

#

Your corrections, comments and suggestions are appreciated. Please Email me at [joe-apg@norwoodlight.com](mailto:joe-apg@norwoodlight.com).

Joseph F. Petrie, AB (Economics and Business – St. Anselm College)  
MA (Economics – Boston College)

Founding Member, Friends of Irish Research (FIR)

Member, Cape Breton Genealogy and Historical Association (CBGHA)

Member, Family History Society of Newfoundland and Labrador (FHSNL)

Member, New England Historic Genealogical Society (NEHGS)

Member, Association of Professional Genealogists (APG)

Research Correspondent, Cape Breton Genealogy and Historical Association (CBGHA)

Member, Friends of Morrill Memorial Library, Norwood, MA

Resident Genealogy Volunteer, Morrill Memorial Library, Norwood, MA