Merging Principles in the Shared Family Tree

MERGING DUPLICATE PEOPLE
The FamilySearch Family Tree contains many duplicate individuals. Some data may pertain to the same person and should be merged. Other data may pertain to a person with a similar name but represents an entirely different person. These should NOT be merged and need to be marked as Not a Match.

Before merging records, consider the following:

- Review family relationships, reason statements, sources, and discussions on the person’s page.
- Know what pieces of information are already well documented and explained.
- Keep notes as you work through the merging process.
- If possible, refer to a well-documented genealogical database, book, or other resource.

POSSIBLE DUPLICATES
The system will display the number of Possible Duplicates under the Tools menu on the right side of the person page. This is also displayed under Research Help.

If the system does not find a duplicate, but you know there is one, copy the ID number of the person you wish to merge and use the Merge By ID feature.

Clicking either of these will bring up the merging duplicates screen.

MERGE BY ID
Enter or paste the ID number of the possible duplicate person into the box.

The system will then compare the two names side by side in the same way it does if it did find a duplicate.
If you are certain that the possible duplicate found by the system is NOT the same person, click on Not a Match. Otherwise, click on Review Merge to see the two names compared side by side. During the merging process, you will decide which information from the name on the left will merge into the name on the right and the name on the left side will be archived.

As you compare the two names, the best data should be on the surviving person on the right side. You simply click Replace to move data from the left to the right. (Note that you can Switch Positions of the people at the top of the screen.) Simply ignoring the left side item is the same as clicking Reject. If you move information by mistake, you can click Undo.

At the bottom of the screen you can click BACK, NOT A MATCH or YES CONTINUE.
In this example we can see multiple duplicates in this family. You must work through them one at a time. It often works best to start with the parents and then merge the children one at a time.

For this example we will use the last child in the first family, Dennis Whately. The system has found a possible duplicate.
When we click on the possible duplicates to be merged, both names are brought up for comparison.

There is a three-step process to complete the merge.

Step 1. Are these people a possible match? Compare the information for the two people. If they appear to be the same person, click **YES CONTINUE**.
Step 2. Compare, determine, then select the information you want to save about the person. Information can be moved from left to right by clicking on REPLACE.

When you are satisfied with the information retained on the surviving person on the right, click CONTINUE.
Step 3. asks you to confirm your changes, add a reason statement for the merge, and then finish the merge by clicking Finish Merge.

When a merge is completed, the system asks you to complete a Reason Statement explaining why you performed the merge.

Note that FamilySearch is now providing some sample reason statements that may apply. You can just click and ADD the statement. To better understand what are appropriate Reason Statements, click Learn More.

The merge is now complete. You can now confirm the accuracy of the details of other family members and merge other family members as needed.

If the duplicate person (on the left) has spouses, children, or parents that are the same as the person on the right, BUT THEY HAVE DIFFERENT ID NUMBERS, then they are likely duplicates and will also need to be merged. Move their names and information to the person on the right or they will be unconnected in the system after the merge.

Following the merge, you will then need to compare and merge those people as needed.
UNMERGE OR RESTORE A PERSON

If two individuals were merged incorrectly, it is possible to undo the merge.

Go to Latest Changes on the right side of the person page. Click on Show All.

After opening the Show All, if no changes have been made since the merge occurred, the merge can be undone by clicking Unmerge.

If changes have been made to the person's information, you must Restore the archived person. The Unmerge option is not available. Click on the Deleted Person and open their person page, where you will find the option to Restore Person.
INDIVIDUALS THAT CANNOT BE MERGED

- The gender of one person is male and the gender of the other person is female.
- The data indicates one person is alive and the other is deceased.
- Both people in the database were created from membership records of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.
- One of the people has restrictions that would prevent it from being changed.
- If FamilySearch identifies possible duplicates that cannot be merged, a message appears beneath the possible duplicates indicating these persons cannot be merged.

POSSIBLE DUPLICATE AND MERGING TIPS

- Before starting a merge, know what information is correct. If possible, have documents to support the data.
- The person on the right is the primary person. This person (and ID number) will remain. The person on the left will be archived (or deleted) after a merge.
- If you are not sure of dates or relationships, CANCEL THE MERGE and DO RESEARCH! Do not assume. When in doubt, do not merge.
- Be sure to check attached sources.
- View the relationships connected with the individuals you are considering for merging. (You may also want to compare with relationships in other trees such as Ancestry.com).
- Be careful when merging and only merge individuals that you know are duplicates. If there are no dates or places to identify the person, he or she is probably not a duplicate and should not be merged.
- Within a family, resolve duplicate parents before resolving duplicate spouses and children.
- The Possible Duplicates tool may not find any duplicates. You may then need to use the Merge by ID feature.
- To make sure there are no duplicates, click on the Find button at the top of the page and do a manual search. If a duplicate appears, copy the ID number, go back to the Possible Duplicates tool, and choose Merge by ID. Type in the ID number and click Continue. That duplicate record will appear, ready to be merged.