

A VISIT FROM MILTON

*Grandma knew next to nothing about her relatives, but
I was determined to find out who and where they were.*

By Merle Lester

I was always perplexed to think that my maternal grandmother didn't know her exact birthday or hardly anything about her relatives. Even as a boy, I felt compelled to solve the mystery—probably because my mother would sometimes refer to me as her “little genealogist,” hoping to instill in me a desire to find her long-lost relatives.

What We Knew

Our limited knowledge of Grandma's ancestry included the fact that her father, Albert Page, was born in Chicago and died in Pachuca, Mexico, in 1915. He married a Spanish girl named Juana Avila, even though his family was very much against it. His father had a bakery, a car dealership, a candy store, and other businesses in Chicago that made him a wealthy man. Albert's father felt that Albert could do much better than to marry a poor Spanish girl. So Albert and his new wife fled to Mexico to avoid the scrutiny of his family.

Albert and Juana eventually had eight children, including my grandmother, Dora Jane. Several years later, Albert died. Upon his death, Juana feared that the powerful and wealthy Pages would try to take the children. She burned all documents and pictures that proved her family's relationship to them.

The loss of information made it difficult to know anything about this family line, but throughout the years my mother and aunts searched for relatives. My mother told me that she kept having a dream of this “fine-looking gentleman” who would appear and look at her with a smile as if he were waiting for something.

Searching in Earnest

After serving a mission I married, and then my mother reported to me that she had had the dream a couple more times. I decided that it was time to tackle the challenge of finding her ancestors. I was a novice at doing family history research, but I knew that through faith and prayer, I could receive the divine help I needed.

I began my search at the local family history center, looking for Albert's wealthy Chicago father, whose name I thought was Edgar Page. I had no success. The next night I went to the university library and copied the Page family names out of various editions of the Chicago phone book. Still no success.

After fasting with my wife, I went back to search at the family history center. The assistant suggested I look in the





ANSWERING QUESTIONS

What should I do if I have family name cards but can't finish the ordinances?

Sometimes circumstances make it difficult to finish the temple work for the family names you've gathered. Perhaps you have so many family name cards that you feel you cannot complete the ordinances in a reasonable time. Consider asking family or ward members to help finish the work. Another option is to release your family names to the temple through FamilySearch.org. On the "Temple" page, select the names you would like to release and click Unreserve. Your family names will become part of the temple file and be made available to other patrons so they can complete the ordinances. (To avoid possible duplication of ordinances, dispose of the cards for any family names you have released to the temple.)

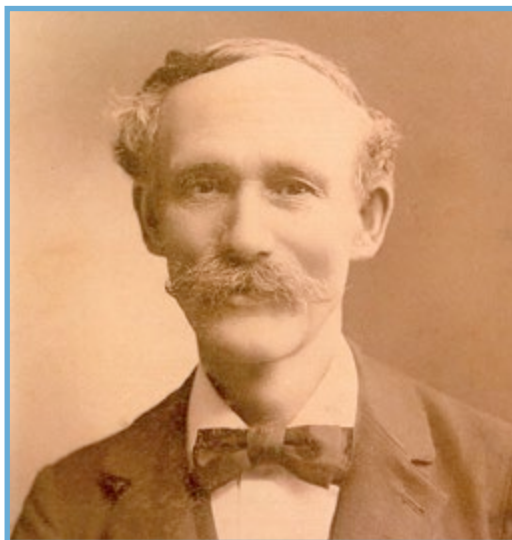
1880 Cook County, Illinois, census. I ordered the A–L film but received the M–Z film instead. I decided to view the film anyway, and as I scrolled through the names, I came across a Milton E. Page. He and his wife had five children: Milton, Walter, Willie, Laura, and Albert. I thought how strange it was that four of these names matched up with the names of Grandma's siblings.

Further Discoveries

Suddenly hopeful, I called Grandma. I asked her if the name Milton E. Page sounded familiar. She said, "Yes, that is my brother's name." Of course, I knew it wasn't her brother listed on the census. Then she remembered that her father said he had named all of his children after his own siblings. Tears began to run down my cheeks. We had found them!

After talking to Grandma, I started looking through my notes and couldn't find anything. I finally looked in my Chicago phone lists, where I came upon the name Milton E. Page Jr. I immediately called the number. The elderly lady who answered the phone turned out to be the daughter of Milton E. Page Jr., who was deceased. I told her I thought I was a relative and asked her to tell me about her grandfather.

She went through the family one by one. Finally she said, "There was one uncle who went down to Mexico with his family." As soon as she said that, I knew we were related. I began to cry. I told her the uncle she mentioned was my great-grandfather Albert. She



This photo of Milton E. Page was found in the family Bible of Brother Lester's relative.

could hardly believe it. She said as a little girl she had written to her cousins in Mexico. Then she added, "I never knew why I kept

Daddy's name in the phone book for over fifty years, until now. I just always felt that I should." The phone book was the link I had needed.

The End of the Search

I spent several hours on the phone listening to stories and taking notes. I finally asked her if I could come and visit. Hesitantly, she said yes. Two weeks later I was on the road with my mother, wife, and daughter.

Our hostess was genial, but she was evasive when we asked for additional information. Her story kept changing regarding the whereabouts of a family Bible. On the fourth night, she must have realized we were not after money, and she pointed to the Bible on the bookshelf.

As I opened the family Bible, a picture fell out and my mother picked it up. She immediately began to sob. It was the man in her dreams: my great-great-grandfather Milton Edwin Page, Albert's father.

With the documentation from the family Bible, we were able to go to the Ogden Utah Temple and complete the ordinances for 42 people. The Lord had been working to bring their history to light long before I was born. At last, my grandma and the rest of my family knew about her relatives, with the help of the Lord and a visit from Milton. ■

The author lives in Wyoming, USA.

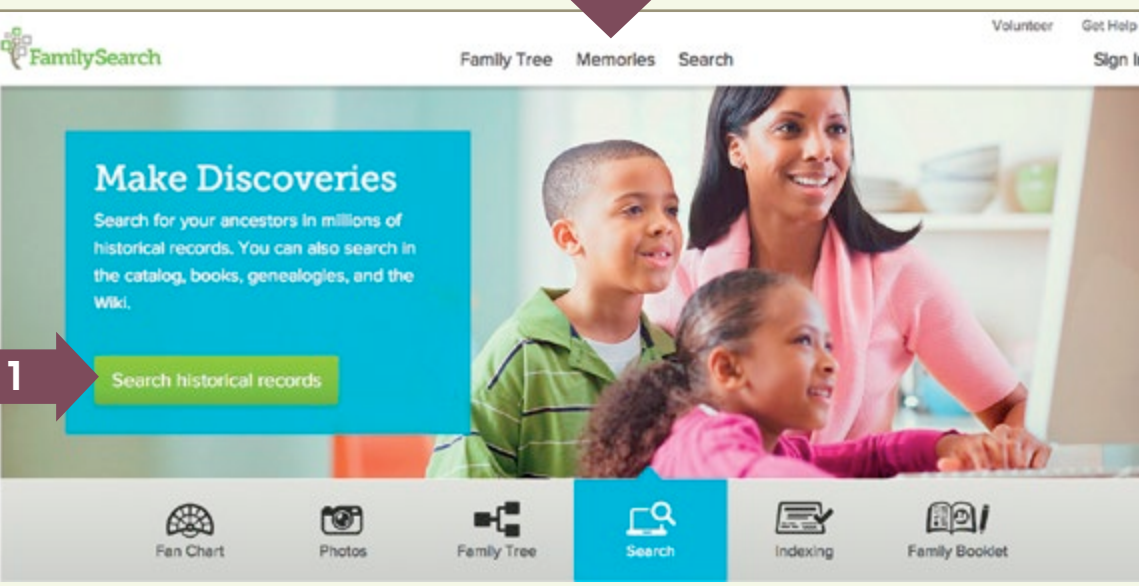
FROM DUSTY FILES TO DIGITAL TOOLS

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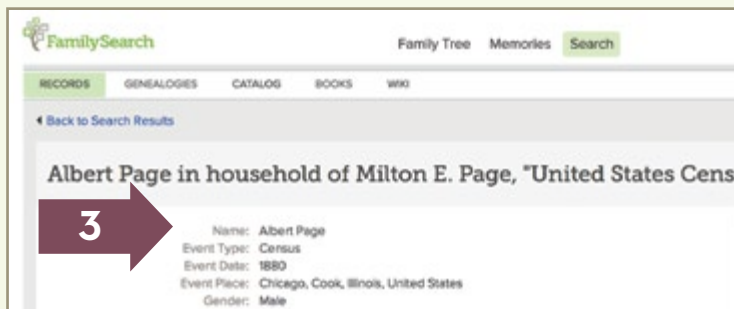
Go to "Memories" to share photos, stories, and other information with your family.

2

For help in getting started with your family history, start with what you know, then go to the pull-down menu "Get Help" for information.



Locate original census records and other information at familysearch.org/search.



At right, a simple Google search found the candy company owned by Brother Lester's ancestors and historical information about the company. It also turned up a source listing the names, birth dates, birth and death places, and relationships of three generations of Milton's family.

4

Chicago's Sweet Candy History - Page 12 - Google Books Result
books.google.com/books?isbn=0738593826
 Leslie Goddard - 2012 - Business & Economics
 Milton E. Page & Co., considered "the leading confectionery house in the West" in 1869, made more than 400 varieties of candy. As this advertisement shows, ...

When Merle Lester began the search for his ancestors in 2002, many records were not available online. Today, numerous records and family history information are available through FamilySearch.org (see no. 1 above).

To begin your own family history search, try watching some of the training videos accessed through the "Get Help" menu at FamilySearch.org (see no. 2 above). Check out the "Research Wiki" to learn how to research areas where your ancestors lived.

More and more sources are being digitized, making it possible to get information about ancestors from census records, birth and death records, military registrations, and so on. Locate these records at familysearch.org/search (see no. 3 above). The search page includes links to records, genealogies, the FamilySearch catalog, and books.

Today, Internet search engines such as Google, Yahoo, or Bing provide clues to your family's past (see no. 4 above). See what happens when you type an

ancestor's name (with perhaps a city where the ancestor lived) into one of these search engines.

Volunteers have extracted more than two billion names worldwide from scanned documents. You can help the indexing project by going to familysearch.org/indexing.

You can connect with relatives and share photos, stories, and other information at FamilySearch.org. Go to the "Memories" section of the site to learn more (see no. 5 above).