



Genealogy Is Changing... Don't Get Left Behind

John Beaumont



Presentation Images Created Using ChatGPT

WHAT WE WILL COVER TODAY



Thoughts about Gen-AI & Genealogy



Common AI Mistakes & Pitfalls



Working With Gen-AI

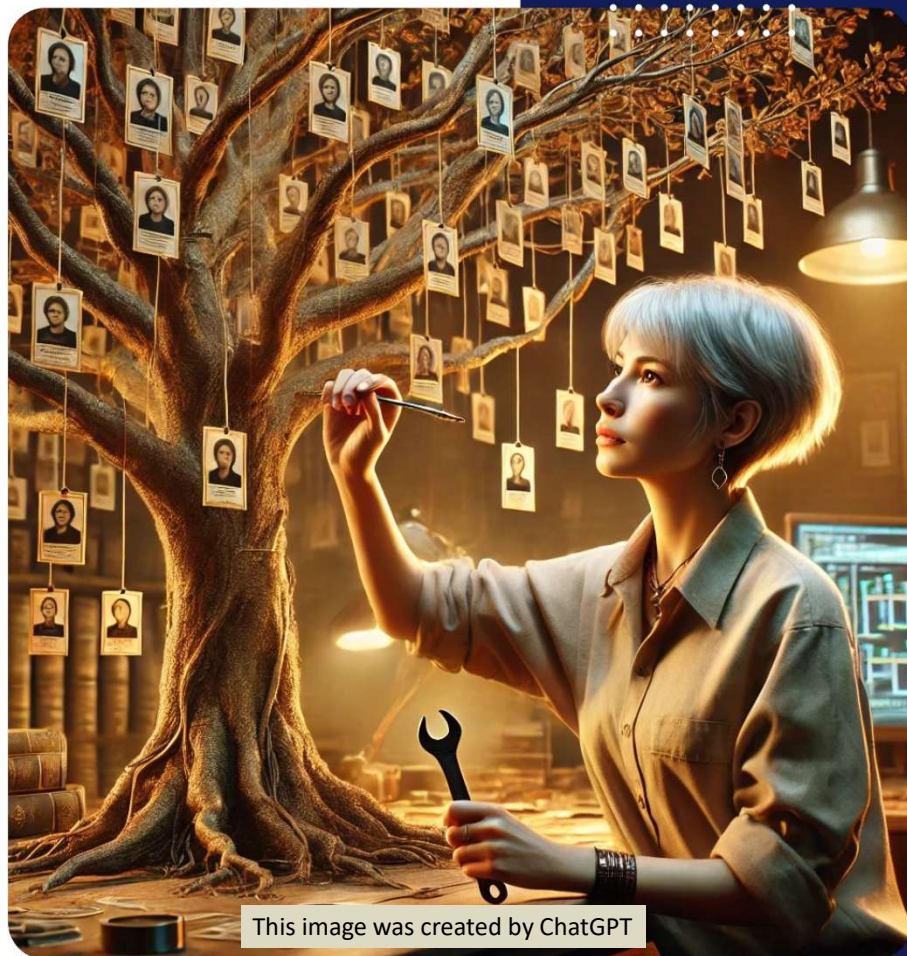


AI Vision in Action



Summary & Questions





This image was created by ChatGPT

Thoughts about Gen-AI & Genealogy



The Second Great Leap: From **Remote** to **Assisted** Research



Physical → **Remote** → **Assisted**

- Genealogy has evolved in leaps, and we're now entering a new phase.

Remote [internet] research changed everything.

- We gained access to digitized records, searchable databases, and instant access to documents.

Now, Gen-AI marks a new leap:

- Tools like ChatGPT help with brainstorming, summarizing, transcribing, and guiding research steps.

However, remember that Gen-AI is not a source.

- It's a research partner, not a substitute for records or reasoning.

WHY GENEALOGISTS SHOULD USE GEN-AI

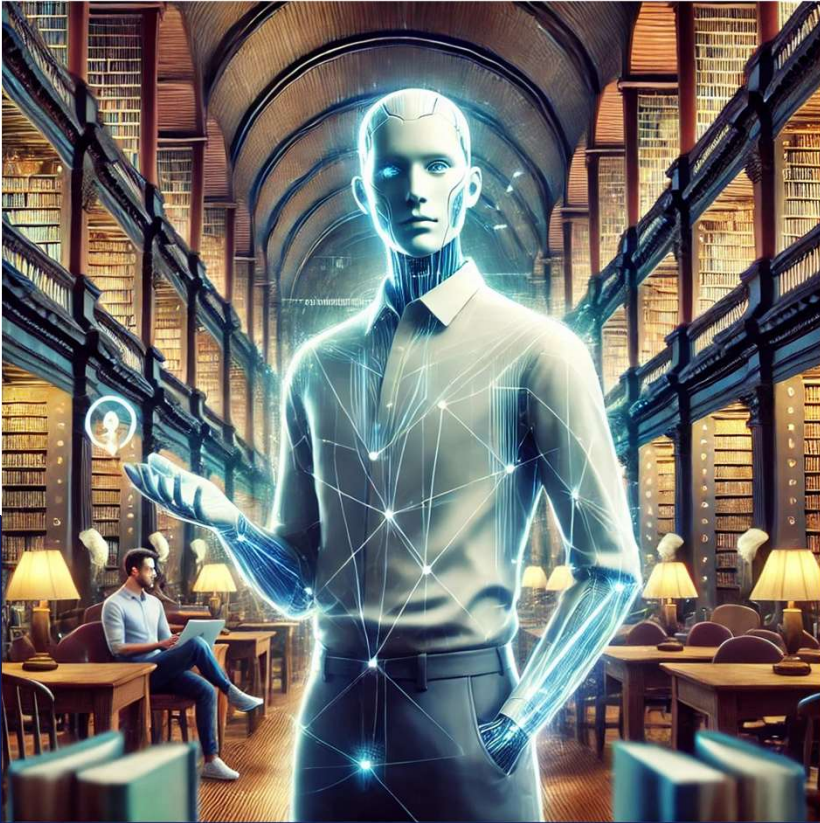
It's new, it's controversial...
and there aren't many "rules" yet.

But Gen-AI can be a powerful
research assistant
to help us explore family history
faster and deeper.



Gen-AI Can Seem Almost Human

With Some Obvious Human Type Flaws



He'll make up an answer if he doesn't know.



She gives different answers to the same question.

If You Can Text, You're Ready for ChatGPT

If you've ever:

Sent a text message,

"Googled" a question

Used Facebook or social media

Then you already have the skills to use ChatGPT.

It's just like messaging a very helpful friend

One who's always there to assist, explain, brainstorm, and more.



This image was created by ChatGPT

Using Gen-AI

The image shows a screenshot of the ChatGPT web interface. The top navigation bar includes the OpenAI logo, 'ChatGPT' with a dropdown arrow, and a 'Get Plus' button. A sidebar on the left contains 'New Chat', 'Search', and 'Image Library'. The main chat area features a 'Prompt Area' containing the text 'What's on the agenda today?'. Below the prompt is an input field with a plus sign and the text 'Ask anything'. To the right of the input field are icons for voice mode (a microphone) and dictation mode (a vertical bar with a dot). Annotations with yellow arrows point to these elements: 'Temporary Chat' points to a refresh icon in the top right; 'Add Documents' points to the plus sign in the input field; 'Voice Mode - Dictate Mode' points to the microphone and dictation icons. In the bottom left corner, there is a blue rounded rectangle with a dashed border containing the text 'ChatGPT' and 'chat.openai.com'. A small 'JB' icon is visible in the bottom left corner.

ChatGPT ⌵ ⚡ Get Plus

Temporary Chat

Prompt Area

What's on the agenda today?

+ Ask anything

Add Documents

Voice Mode - Dictate Mode

ChatGPT
chat.openai.com

JB

Lots of models



perplexity



Claude

Gemini



COPILOT



ChatGPT



This image was created by ChatGPT



Grok

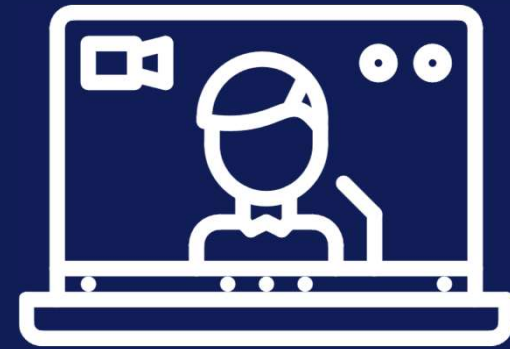
This image was created by ChatGPT

They will give different results



This image was created by ChatGPT

Common AI Mistakes & Pitfalls



Common AI Mistakes

General Pitfalls When Using ChatGPT (Gen-AI)

Believing Everything It Says

Sounds confident but may be **flat-out wrong**.

Mistaking Fluency for Accuracy

A well-written answer doesn't mean a **correct answer**.

It Will Justify Wrong Info with Fake Citations

If it cites a book or article, **verify it exists**.

Thinking, It's a Search Engine

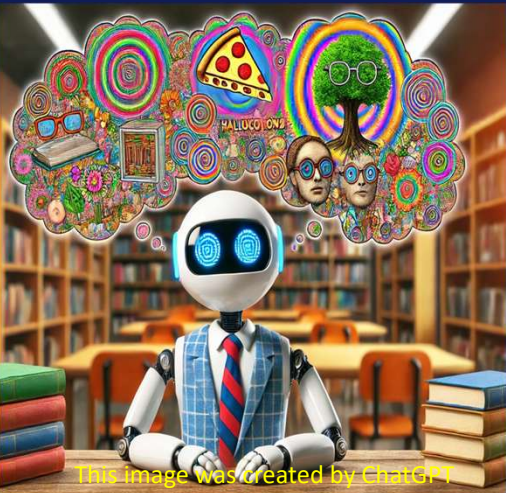
It generates responses, not search results.

Getting Different Results from the Same Question

It generates each answer, so **answers vary each time**.

Not Treating It as a Conversation

Ask follow-ups, clarify, rephrase - **you're in charge**.



Pitfalls for Genealogists

When Using Gen-AI for Family History

Not a Source — Just a Guide

It can suggest sources but is not itself one.

Fabricates Records or Sources

It may name books or documents that don't exist.

Fake images are spreading.

If you see a photo of your GG-Grandfather, it could be a fake.

Results May Be Outdated or Incomplete

Especially on recent digitization or collections.

Bias Creeps In From All Sides

AI reflects bias from training, personalization, and chat flow.

“Fluffy” and Overwritten Narratives

It may over-explain or add irrelevant filler.



This image was created by ChatGPT





This image was created by ChatGPT



Working with Gen-AI

What Happens Next

- 1 Prompt examples**
How genealogists can use ChatGPT
-  **ChatGPT demonstrations**
We'll watch the conversations unfold
-  **Prompt tips**
Best practices along the way

Note: The handout includes the prompts but not the live conversations.

This image was created by ChatGPT



Prompts For Genealogists #1

Advise

I believe my relative was born in Orton, Westmorland, about 1790. I have found him in the 1841 census for the area. What are the next steps to find his birth information?

THE PROMPT

The Prompt can be in plain English, just the way you would talk to another person

THE RESPONSE

Great start finding your relative in the 1841 census — that gives you a foothold in time and place. Here's a step-by-step guide to locating his birth information in or around Orton, Westmorland, circa 1790:

Step 1: Review the 1841 Census Carefully

- Note name spelling variants.
- Ages were rounded down to the nearest 5 years for adults, so a listed age of 50 might mean 50–54.
- Check who is in the household — relationships weren't listed in 1841, but others may be family (e.g., wife, children, siblings).
- Is he listed as "born in county"? That helps confirm local origins.

Step 2: Search Parish Registers for Orton

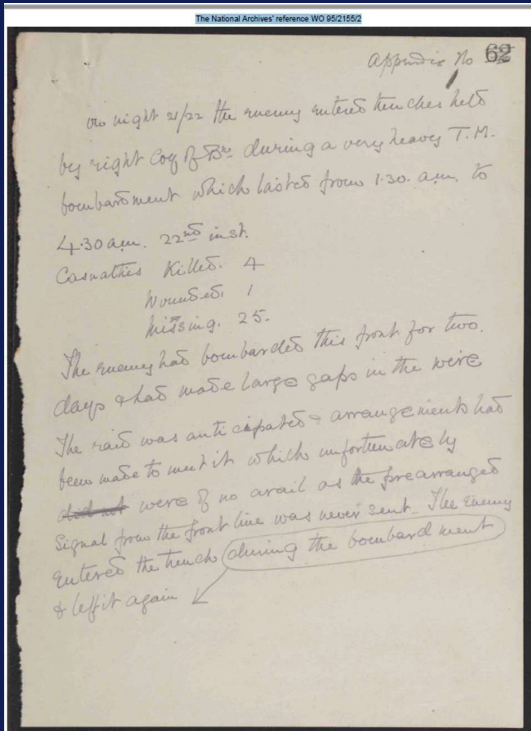
Orton was in Westmorland, part of the historic Church of England parish system. You'll want to search:

- Baptism records from around 1785–1795.
- FamilySearch (free) — index and some images.
- Ancestry / Findmypast — both have indexed and image records for Westmorland.
- Cumbria Archives (Orton is now in Cumbria) — they hold original registers and may offer digital access or lookup services.

Look for:

- Full name (watch for spelling variants).

Prompts For Genealogists #2



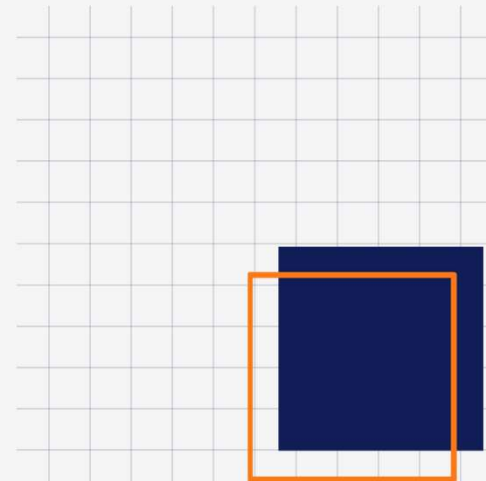
The (UK) National Archives:13 Battalion Northumberland Fusiliers War Diary: WO-95-2155-2_3.pdf (Images 308 - 457); 1915 Sept. - 1917 July; War Diary Pages for 22 Nov 1916 Appendix; Accessed via National Archives, Discovery (www.discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk); August 2020 - John Beaumont

This image was uploaded to ChatGPT

Transcribe and Analyze

I have this document - please **transcribe it and identify** what it is

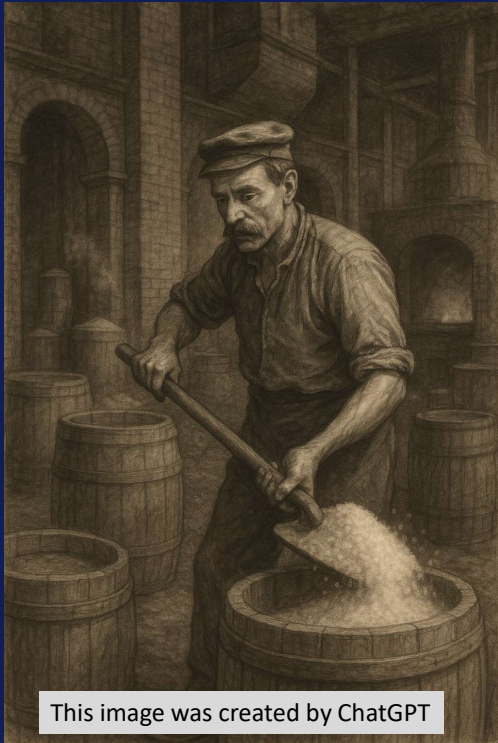
THE PROMPT



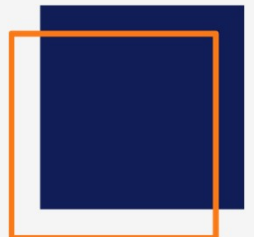
Prompts For Genealogists #3

Provide Historical Context

My 2nd great-grandparents, Charles Beaumont (1853-1918) and Mary Ann Clover (1854-1932), moved from Rickmansworth, Herts, to Greenock, Scotland, around 1875. His first job in Scotland was as a railway porter, followed by a stint as a laborer in a sugar house. They relocated from Greenock to Silvertown in 1891 to work in the local sugar mills. I am investigating how and why they moved. I have never found a marriage certificate, and he is not listed in the 1871 census. **Acting as a genealogist** help me brainstorm a research plan. **You can ask me questions.** **Ask me one question at a time.**



This image was created by ChatGPT



Prompts For Genealogists #5

Summarize a document

Please **summarize** the attached document.

Document [Link](#)

Reconnecting Thomas Beaumont (1808 – 1864) to his family

Objective

Establish which family Thomas Beaumont (1808 – 1864) belonged to

Thomas first appears

It was on the 7th December 1835 that Thomas Beaumont married Selina Cato at the Parish Church of St Mary in Rickmansworth¹. Thomas signed the register with a strong signature, Selina Cato made her mark. The Vicar, Edward Hodgson performed the service. Ann Beaumont and Timothy Rogers were witnesses to the marriage². Timothy Rogers, lived in a copyhold³ house in Rickmansworth town⁴ and was probably a friend of Thomas, perhaps best man. Ann Beaumont, perhaps maid of honor, possibly related in some way to Thomas, also signed with good penmanship⁵. In England, prior to 1837 information in the parish record was limited⁶ so this record does not indicate an occupation or father for Thomas.

No records prior to the marriage

Thomas Beaumont is not an unusual name in England in the early 19th century; indeed, a search of the index for the FHS *England Births and Christening 1538 – 1975* collection for Thomas's possible birth year (based on his marriage date) will show about 150 possibilities. After some detailed analysis of the index there are some potential matches for further investigation. Thomas Beaumont christened on 14 March 1802 to James Beaumont and Mary in Rickmansworth⁷ would appear to be the best candidate for the 1835 marriage, but both Thomas's appear in the 1861 census. After a detailed search of FHS, Parish Records, Bishop Transcripts, wills

¹ England Marriages, 1538–1973; FHL microfilm 1,537,807, image 00505

² England Marriages, 1538–1973; FHL microfilm 1,537,807, image 00505

³ <https://www.britannica.com/topic/copyhold>; "Copyhold, in English law, a form of landholding defined as a holding at the will of the lord according to the custom of the manor", accessed 20 Apr 2020

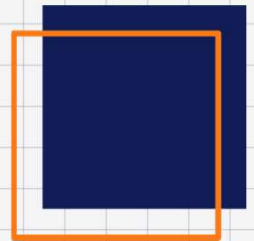
⁴ London, England, UK and London Poll Books; Register of The Electors for the County of Hertford and The Poll taken on the 20th and 21st of December, 1832, for Three Knights of the Shire, Hemel Hempstead District, Rickmansworth, Page 79; Printed by St. Austin and Sons, Booksellers and Stationers etc: 1833; London Metropolitan Archives and Guildhall Library.

⁵ Need a footnote for literacy rates

⁶ Need a note for the change in registers

⁷ England Births and Christening 1538 – 1975; FHL microfilm 155,780,7, batch 103370-8

This image was uploaded to ChatGPT



Prompts For Genealogists #6

Help with a narrative

Please transform this report into a "story" I can share with my family. Please retain my voice, but make this easier to read for someone with little or no genealogical background. I want the story to be interesting and easy to read.

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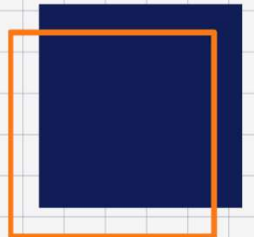
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This image was uploaded to ChatGPT



Prompts For Genealogists #7

Overcoming a brickwall

I have hit a brick wall with my research of James Beaumont – Born approx 1823. These are my notes. I cannot find him earlier than 1841. Please suggest a strategy that I could take to overcome the brick wall.

You can ask me questions. Ask me one question. Formulate your advice based on my answers

FACTS:

Census 1841 – Watford High Street, Watford:

Age given as 15 which would represent any age from 15 to 20. Living with Mr David and Mrs Mary Saunders and their children James & Barnaby. Also at the house is Susan Stacy (aged 15). David is a Butcher and I suspect James is his assistant.

Dec 31st 1843 – Marriage: certificate held(1): (by banns) parish Church of Rickmansworth (CoE)

James Beaumont aged 20/Labourer residence Rickmansworth
Father Thomas Beaumont – Labourer

Ann Harrison aged 19/residence Rickmansworth
Father Thomas Harrison – Labourer

Census 1851:

James Beaumont, Journeyman Butcher aged 24 – birth place Watford

Also Name Age Ann Beaumont 24, George Beaumont 1 Mo James Thomas Beaumont 5
John Henry Beaumont 2, Sarah Ann Beaumont 7 (all born Rickmansworth)

June 29th 1858 – Death certificate held:

Sub-district of Rickmansworth

Aged 34 Journeyman Butcher/Fever

Ellen Beaumont(2) Present at Death:

(1) A J Puddefoot was present at both James Beaumont's & Ann's marriage in 1843 and Thomas Beaumont and Mary Ann Southam marriage in Sarratt in 1822.

(2) Ellen Beaumont (born 1841) was present in Watford in 1861, Ellen is the daughter of Thomas Beaumont & Selina Cato

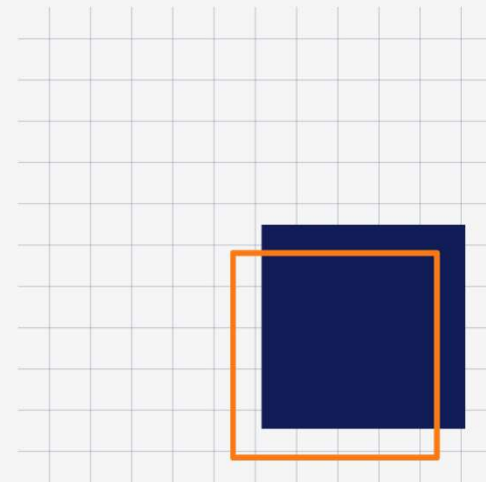
Thomas Beaumont (1811)

Thomas Beaumont Married Selina Cato 7 Dec 1835.

Census Info:

1841 - High Street Watford
Thomas aged 30 Ag Lab (not born in Herts)
Selina aged 30 (not born in Herts)
George aged 5, Ellen aged 5weeks,

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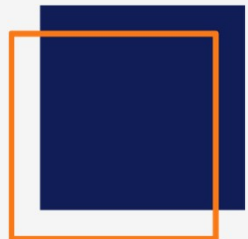


Prompts For Genealogists #8

Create a research plan

I am researching my great-grandfather, Anthony Lopez, who was born around 1860 and immigrated to the U.S. around 1880. We believe he came from Genoa, Italy, but we are uncertain where he landed. He married Alessia Rossi, an Italian woman, in Albany, New York, in 1882. He died in 1920. Given his Spanish surname, I would like to explore whether his name was changed or recorded differently. I want to start with free online resources and later explore paid options and any specialist sites for Italian migration. Help me create a step-by-step research plan to find records of his immigration, naturalization, and origins

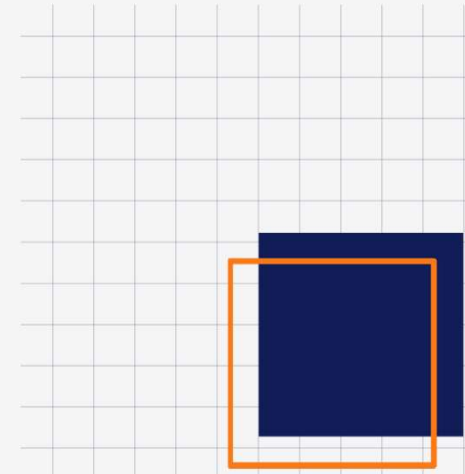
This image was created by ChatGPT



Prompts For Genealogists #9

Check and review work.

I have produced this report for a client. Please check for ambiguities and errors. Please suggest any improvements that could be made to make the report more valuable to the client.



Buckley Research Report Professional Genealogy Research Services

<u>Researcher</u> John Beaumont	<u>Overview</u> ---- has researched the World War One military history of some of her Canadian ancestors and would like to add to that knowledge related to some of her English ancestors.
<u>Client</u> -----	
<u>Effort</u> 30 hours	<u>Information provided</u> David Bloomfield (b. 26 September 1903) was married to Jessie C. Ivermee (b. 5 January 1901) from Hammersmith and Kensington, London, England and was the son of William Henry Bloomfield (b. 24 July 1864) m. Elizabeth Smith (b. 1867). Research is to focus on the siblings of David Bloomfield. Names or number of siblings not provided.
<u>Fee</u> -----	
<u>Question</u> "How were the children of William Henry Bloomfield (b. 24 July 1864) and Elizabeth Smith (b. abt. 1867) impacted by World War One?"	<u>Report Objectives</u> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Confirm the number, names, and approximate birth dates of the children of William Henry Bloomfield and Elizabeth Smith in enough detail to allow investigation into their participation (if any) in World War One2. Carry out reasonably exhaustive research within the timeframe agreed to determine the military participation of the above children.

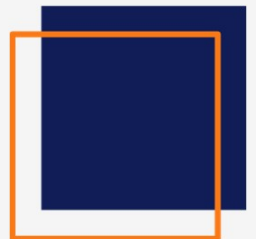
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Prompts For Genealogists #10

DNA questions

We have an unknown parent event for the father of one of our grandfathers, Isaac Brooks Bond, born in 1910 in Chester County, PA . We did DNA testing through Ancestry and found that we have several DNA matches who descend from William Isaac Longman, who was also in Chester County at the time. However, William also had a brother, Patton Longman. As far as we can tell, Patton died without issue. Is there any way to use DNA to tell who the father was?

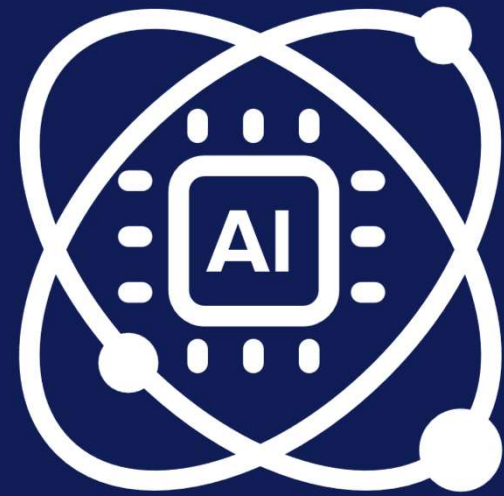


PowerPoint stock image

AI Vision in Action



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AI Vision (#11)

Review and analyze an image

Please review this image and describe the image. In addition to describing the image, please tell me what signage you can identify and give me a list of the different elements



King Edward St. Hull

Postcard from Authors collection



AI Vision (#12)

Create your own image

Please create a Photo-realistic image of Hull, Yorkshire, England, in 1750. Focus on the bustling harbor at the mouth of the River Hull and the River Humber. Include: - Wooden wharf extending into the river - Square-rigged merchant ship moored at the waterfront - Longshoremen loading cargo onto the ship - Ship's captain in a blue woolen coat and a wide-brimmed hat - Workers hauling bundles of pottery, hosiery, and beer. Mix of wooden buildings in the background - large timber-framed import inspection warehouse - Dirt streets with locals, merchants, and sailors. The city of Hull is in the background, with late afternoon golden sunlight casting long shadows and rippling water reflecting the colorful sky. Use warm tones and rich details to capture the essence of Hull docks as a bustling and growing English city.



This image was created by ChatGPT

The image on the left
was created in
September 2025, and
the image on the right
was created in March
2026



This image was created by ChatGPT

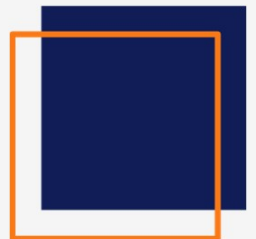
AI Vision #13



Personal Collection

Date and Identify a family photo

Please review the attached photo - tell me as much as you can about it. Please describe your logic for any conclusions you make. You can ask me questions one at a time.



FINAL THOUGHTS

AI Is a Tool, Not a Truth Machine: Use Gen-AI to explore ideas, not to confirm facts. Always validate with original sources. Gen-AI is not a source

Always Fact-Check AI Citations: If AI provides references, verify them. It can (and does) invent books, record sets, and dates.

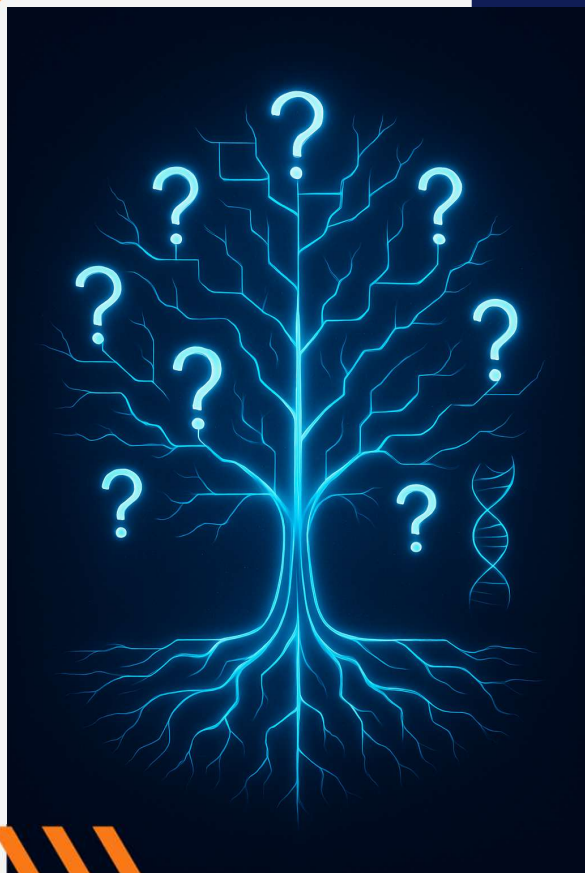
Don't Let AI Replace Your Judgment: AI can offer suggestions, but it lacks context, critical thinking, and even knowledge of the truth.

Bias Is Built In: AI wants to “please you” by giving you the answer it thinks you want, so be aware that AI may reflect assumptions from its training data, your input, personalization, or the flow of conversation

Write Better Prompts, Get Better Results: We did not cover this much today. The quality of output depends on the quality of your input. Be specific, give context, and refine.



ANY QUESTIONS



Final Thoughts: When to Use ChatGPT (and When Not To)

✓ Great for:

- ✓ Summarizing long documents
- ✓ Brainstorming brick walls
- ✓ Acting as your personal editor

⊘ Not great for:

- ⊘ Finding or verifying real records
- ⊘ Error-free results
- ⊘ "Citable" information

Tip: Always Verify ChatGPT's Answers!

My YouTube Channel:

<https://www.youtube.com/@Beaumont-Genealogy/videos>

My Genealogy Website:

<https://www.beaumont-genealogy.com/classes>

My Email:

John.Beaumont@Outlook.com