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Creating and Using Fields

by [Jan McClintock](#)

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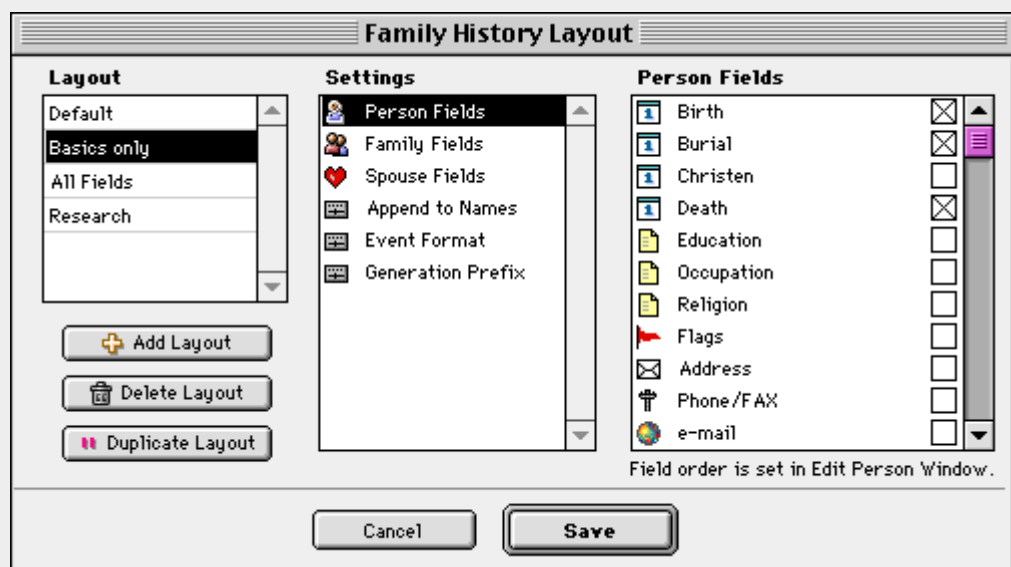
You can create up to 100 Notes fields per person and as many Event and Fact fields in Reunion as you like. The most important decisions in using Reunion involve the use of **fields**. Before getting into the mechanics of creating fields, here are a few things to think about first.

Beware over-specialization

Before going wild here, remember that creating reports and charts as well as sharing your data with others gets more complicated the more distinctly your data is recorded. Each time you use a specialty field, you are separating more data from the basic genealogical fields of name, birth, marriage, death, and notes that all genealogy software has in common.

So? Well, one possible problem will be using GEDCOM files for sharing your data. Read about GEDCOM files in [this article](#), and in the electronic manual. GEDCOM Tags for fields that you use or create are not always supported by other genealogical software. That means that the data you have in these fields will be either ignored or trashed by other software when it imports your GEDCOM file.

Another side effect of specialty fields is choosing which data gets reported. The more fields you have available, the more choices you must make and the more space the data takes up in a report or chart. You use the Layout windows for both reports and charts to choose which fields are used. Use the **Layout -> Define Layouts** menu choice from any report or chart window to open this window.



Here is an example of an overloaded chart box. Not only is it hard to understand, but there is so much data here that people might just ignore the whole thing.

<p>Harry Bine ROSENGRANT, Grandfather, 40, M birth. 30 Sep 1881, Clinton Twp, Wyoming Co, PA death. 24 Oct 1966, Abington, Montgomery Co, PA brp. Starkville Cemetery, Wyoming Co, PA edu. Tunnel Hill School, Starkville, PA, 1899 occ. Railroad; Carpenter; USMC & Minnie Myrtle BERRY, Grandmother, 41, F birth. 1882, Dover, Morris Co, NJ death. 1967 brp. Starkville Cemetery, Wyoming Co, PA occ. Housewife m. 17 Jul 1899, Tunkhannock, Wyoming Co, PA</p>
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What About the Data?

Say you have some data from city directories, and you're trying to decide where to put it. Here are a few questions to ask each time you enter data.

1) What type of data is it?

Is this an event or a fact? City directories are always dated, and these dates, although usually no more specific than a year, are important to the use of the data (see 2 below). Therefore, this data is a series of Events. However, before you jump to conclusions and start creating City Directory Events, read on...

Remember that with a **Fact**, the dates are usually insignificant. For instance, a man's occupation (his life's work or career) is a fact (it may cover his entire adult life), but his employment with a certain company is an event (he was employed for a specific time period). Another example: a man's nationality is a Fact, but his naturalization is an Event. Similarly, the cause of death is a fact, but the burial is an event; and the religion is a fact, but the confirmation is an event, etc.

2) What does this data do for your research?

City directory data establishes that a person or a family lived at a certain address at least sometime during the year the directory was published, and it also usually lists the occupation of each person. Under varied circumstances, this data could be construed as an event, a source, a fact, or material for a notes field.

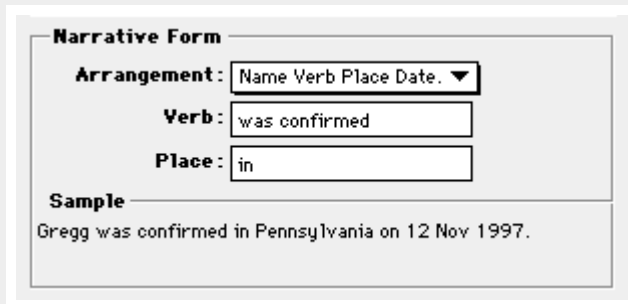
3) How are you going to use this data?

You will probably use this data to help find more information about this person or family. It's not exactly riveting story material by itself or in a list. However, it can lead you to other data, like the nearest church where you can look for membership info, or to the place of employment where job records might be found.

Overall, most Reunion users will use Events, Facts, and Notes fields for two purposes: creating reports and charts, and analyzing your genealogical data.

Reports and Charts

You may decide to enter some of your data into separate, specific fields in order to use Reunion's report capabilities in the course of sharing your data. If you open the **Options -> Define -> Person Fields** window, you'll see the "Narrative Form" information in the right half of the window. This is where you tell Reunion how to word your reports. Reunion uses this format with the actual data to make neat-looking and neat-reading reports, just the way you want:



Narrative Form

Arrangement : Name Verb Place Date. ▼

Verb : was confirmed

Place : in

Sample

Gregg was confirmed in Pennsylvania on 12 Nov 1997.

Obviously, some information will not lend itself well to Event **or** Fact fields, because of limited space and the way they are used. By entering that data in a Notes field, you can compose it in free-form text for easy reading.

Analyzing Your Data

Some fields in your family file will probably be used for your own research and analysis of that family, and won't be shared with other people. For instance, the contents of a Census event field won't be interesting reading for a non-genealogist, and certainly an Interest Level flag field won't mean much to anyone except you. Instead, these fields are used by you in the course of your research. Recording this data in Reunion allows you to compare this data to the other information on this person or family -- for genealogical analysis. To that end, you would use the searching, listing, and sorting features of Reunion. For instance, using **Find -> Anything**, you could conceivably look for everyone who was listed in a city directory during 1890.

If you added the data to a **Notes** field instead, you could still search on the text of the note, but you would have to create a **report** from the list window to see the entire contents, since a **list view** will not contain the entire text. Note fields are also free-form text, meaning you would have room to enter the entire data found in the directory, line by line - this is a distinct advantage for some types of data. Each note field can hold up to 64,000 characters; that's quite a few pages of text - roughly 16 (8.5x11") pages in size 10 font.

Here is an example of using different fields with the city directory data.

1) Notes: I would store the actual data in a Notes field, maybe called "Research" if other data is entered there, or more specifically, "City Directory." Here, Edward SMITH is the only person mentioned in the directory, so this Notes field is under his name.

Edit Person

Edward Delmer SMITH Person ID: 469

CITY DIRECTORIES:

1908, Polk's Scranton City Directory, p.45, "Smith, Edward D lab r 1029 Columbia Av" **118**

1909, Polk's Scranton City Directory, p.69, "Smith, Edward foreman r 1029 Columbia Av" **118**

1911, William's Directory of Scranton, p.102, "Smith, Edward D., foreman Wilk's Dairy, 454 Thurmont" **119**

Check Scranton birth and death indexes through GRSNP.

Wilk's Dairy operated from at least 1901 until at least 1923; Hampton Ave & Frye Rd, Green Ridge

2) Event: when you use this data to make conclusions, like "Edward and Maggie Smith lived at 1029 Columbia Avenue in Scranton at least from 1908 to 1909," enter that in a Residence Event field, if you are using one (here it is used in a Family Events field).

Edit Family

Edward Delmer SMITH & Margaret A. FULLMAN Family ID: 333

Type	Date	Place	Memo
Residence	1908-1909	1029 Columbia Ave, Scranton, Lackawanna Co, PA	

3) Finally, the Source for this data is the city directory:

Edit Source (118)

Scranton City Directories, published by R.L. Polk & Co., Times Bldg, Scranton 1892-1923; copied from the originals at the Lackawanna Historical Society, Scranton, PA, May 1994.

Timing is not Everything

The best time to decide which fields to use and to add is before you spend hours, days, or weeks entering your data. However, all is not lost if you've already done it. Careful use of the Move feature in **Delete/Move Fields** [[Help -> Search for Help, "Delete move fields"](#)] can get your data just where you want it. Remember that this feature moves ALL of the data from one field to another. If there is already some data in the field to which you are moving information, then the moved data will be appended (added at the end). If you want to move only part of the data from one field to another, you'll have to cut and paste.

Mechanics

To modify a preformatted field or to create a new field, choose **Options -> Define -> Person/Family Fields**. Each tabbed window (Events, Facts, Notes, Flags) will offer a slightly different set of options, but the basic uses are the same. Make sure to check the list of preformatted fields first, to avoid unnecessary work and possible duplication of fields. If the field you need isn't preformatted, simply click the **Add** button, and type in the name of your new field.

Abbreviations

The abbreviations apply to the **title of the fields**. You can enter any abbreviations you wish, for preformatted fields or for newly-created fields. The **Long** abbreviation will be used in Person and Family Group Sheets.

Spouses		
1	Edward Delmer SMITH	
Birth	Nov 1878	Morris Co, NJ
Death	5 Jun 1943	Scranton, Lackawanna Co, PA; Hahneman Hospital
Burial	7 Jun 1943	Shady Hill Cemetery, Clarks Summit, Lackawanna Co, PA
Father		

The **Short** abbreviation will be used in charts.

Edward Delmer SMITH
 birth. Nov 1878
 bp. Morris Co, NJ
 death. 5 Jun 1943
 dp. Scranton, Lackawanna Co, PA; Hahneman Hospital
 burial. 7 Jun 1943
 brp. Shady Hill Cemetery, Clarks Summit, Lackawanna Co, PA
 edu. Middlemarch Grade School; 8th Grade
 occ. Stone Cutter
 rel. Methodist Episcopal

Narrative Form

Here is where you tell Reunion how to word this field in reports. This applies only to narrative reports— those which create sentences and paragraphs, like the Register Report and the Ahnentafel Report.

If you change the **Arrangement** of words, you may have to also change the capitalization and order of the Verb and the Place. For instance, the Narrative Form default arrangement for the Christen Event is "Verb Date Place." The is reported like the sample, "Christened on 12 November 1997 in Pennsylvania." If you changed the arrangement to "Name Verb Place Date," the sample reads, "Gregg Christened in Pennsylvania on 12 November 1997." You will have to change the verb to start with a lower-case letter for this to read correctly. You can also change or add words to meet your specifications, for instance, "was christened" instead of "christened."

GEDCOM Tags

You can alter or add your own GEDCOM tag to any fields, but don't have false expectations of using mercenary tags in any real-world situations. If you know that the field you are using will never be shared or you will never have reason to export it using the GEDCOM standard, don't bother with the GEDCOM tag at all. Again, the documentation at the above GEDCOM web site will be useful when faced with a non-standard field type.

Active Fields

Active fields are listed in **Add** pop-up menus when you are in an Edit window. Check [this article](#) for more details. [**Even if you are a beginner, the article may answer some questions**]

Examples and Ideas

I am posting a separate page with some examples and ideas for fields in Reunion. I welcome additions to this list, and I'm sure each of you has some good ones! Please **send them to me and I will add them to this page**.

[Field Examples and Ideas Page](#)

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