Genealogy Website Providing a Free Treasure Trove for Identity Thieves

January 17, 2017 - If you have never heard of a website by the name of familytreenow.com, donâ€™t feel bad. Neither had I until late last week. That's when a family member warned my wife and me about it. After taking a quick look at the site, I realized that it provided a lot of information on individuals that is quite frankly, nobody's business. For ID thieves, it's like finding money on the ground. All they have to do is bend down and pick it up.

Tweet

(function() {
var s = document.createElement('SCRIPT'), s1 = document.getElementsByTagName('SCRIPT')[0];
s.type = 'text/javascript';
s.src = 'http://widgets.digg.com/buttons.js';
s1.parentNode.insertBefore(s, s1);
})();

(function() {
var po = document.createElement('script'); po.type = 'text/javascript'; po.async = true;
po.src = 'https://apis.google.com/js/plusone.js';
var s = document.getElementsByTagName('script')[0]; s.parentNode.insertBefore(po, s);
})();

The website is straight forward. From the front page, you simply search for the first and last name of a person you are interested in and click the "Search" button. On the page that is returned, you'll get a list of people with the name you specified. Depending upon how common the name is, you could get several pages of results, but you can refine the search.

In the upper left corner of the search results page, you can click on "Edit Search." From there you can add middle initials, specify the state of residence and specify a birth year. This will narrow the search results dramatically.

Each of the search results is linked to a profile page. That page will provide you the current address of the person you're researching. It will also show you a list of potential family members and a separate list of people that your subject may be associated with. After looking at the lists for myself and my family members, I can unequivocally state that their results are very accurate.

From my perspective, the information provided is intrusive and poses a threat to both my identity and my privacy. Fortunately, they provide a way to get your information off the site but they don't make finding this opt-out link easy. So here it is: http://www.familytreenow.com/optout

When you click on the link, you'll first have to prove that you are not a "robot" by filling in the CAPTCHA box near the bottom of the page. Once you do that, you'll be asked to search for your profile. Once you find it, click on the link to it and you'll notice a red box on the following page that reads "Opt out this record". Click on that. The next page will tell you that the record will be taken out of their system within 24 hours. But wait! You may not be done yet.

I had three separate profiles on the site with slight variations in my name. Some had middle initials, some didn't. One used the name "Jim" while the other two used "James." You'll need to repeat the procedure for opting out for each of your profiles.

In the case of my wife, she actually had six profiles. Some with her maiden name and some with her married name.

When you are searching, you need to be careful when you refine your search. We found that not all of the records we were looking for had a birth year. We also had a friend opt out. She found that she had records from multiple states. That means you should search on every state in which you have ever lived.

The one positive thing that I will say after going through the opt-out procedures is that the company does follow through on removing records. It took less than two days to have our records removed.

ACCESS is advising all of our readers to opt out. It will only take you a few minutes and may prevent you from becoming a victim of fraud or identity theft.
byJim Malmberg
Note: When posting a comment, please sign-in first if you want a response. If you are not registered, click here. Registration is easy and free.
Follow me on Twitter:

Follow ACCESS