

# Writing a Family History Using AI Chat

by James L. Tanner



Many of the images and some content of this presentation were created using artificial intelligence.



Writing a family history can be a difficult and very time-consuming project.

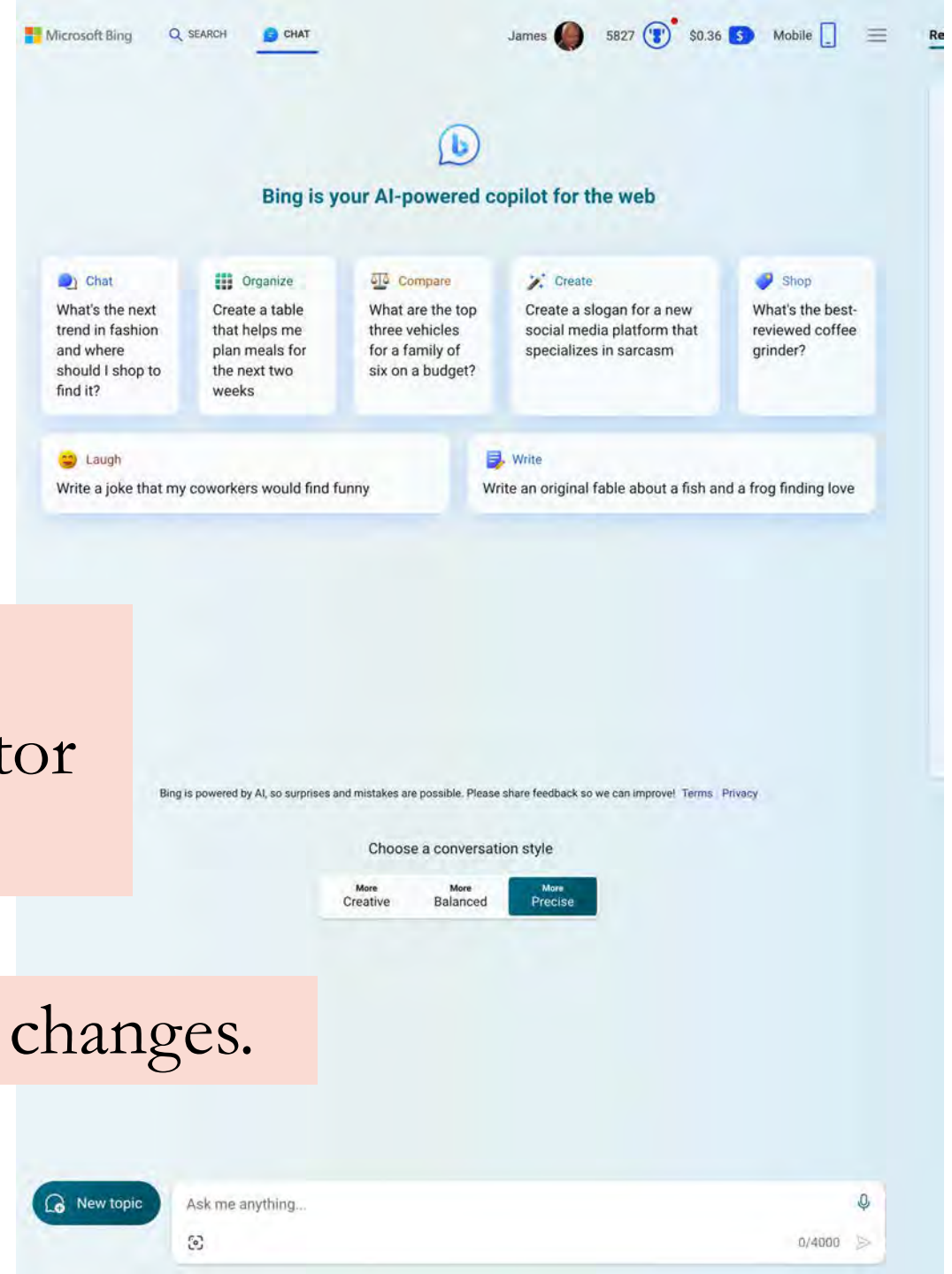


You should consider using artificial intelligence or AI tools for assistance.

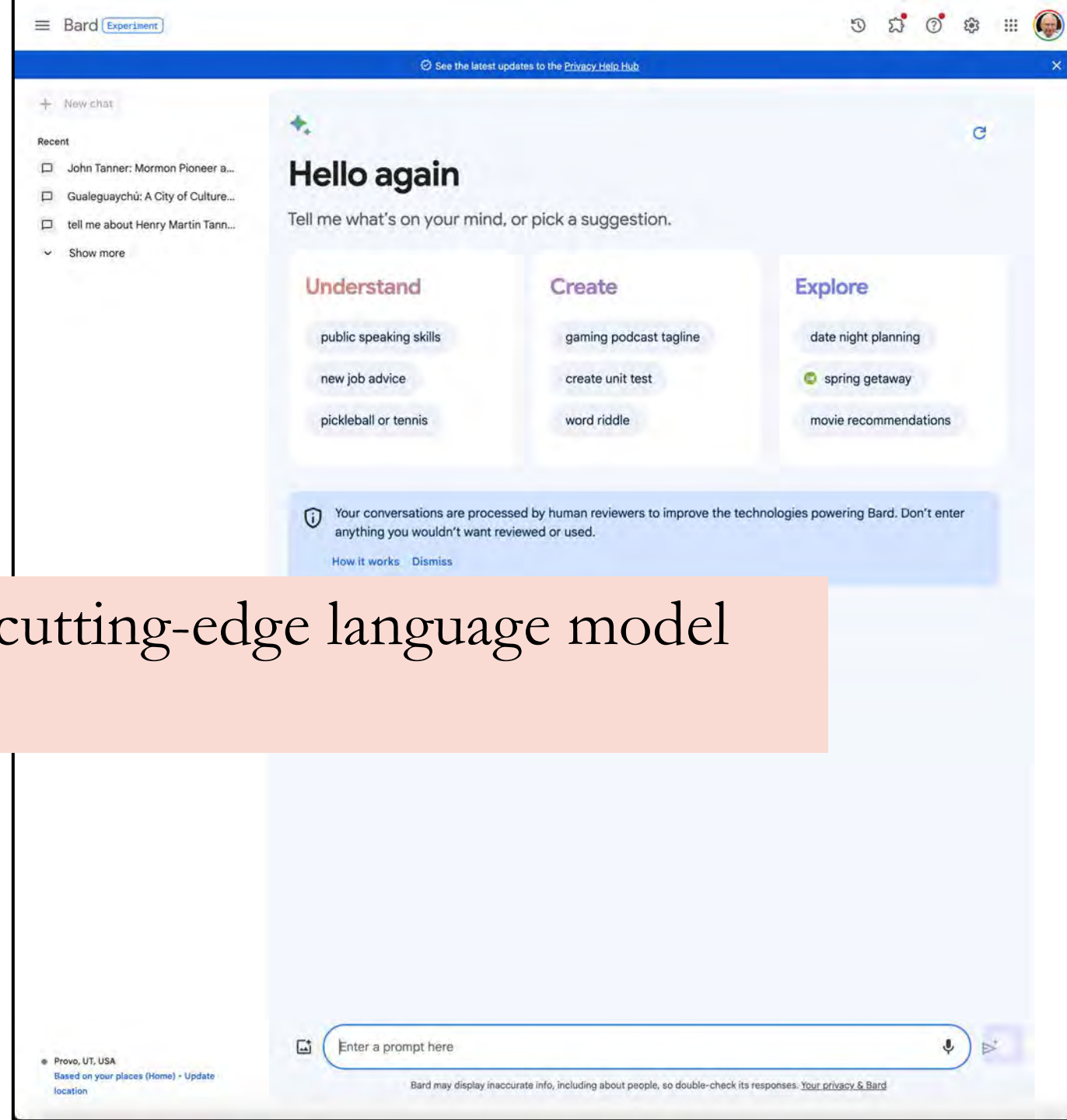
You might be surprised about how much help using Microsoft Copilot, can be for such a project.

Microsoft Copilot uses OpenAI ChatGPT and Microsoft Image Creator uses DALL-E 4.

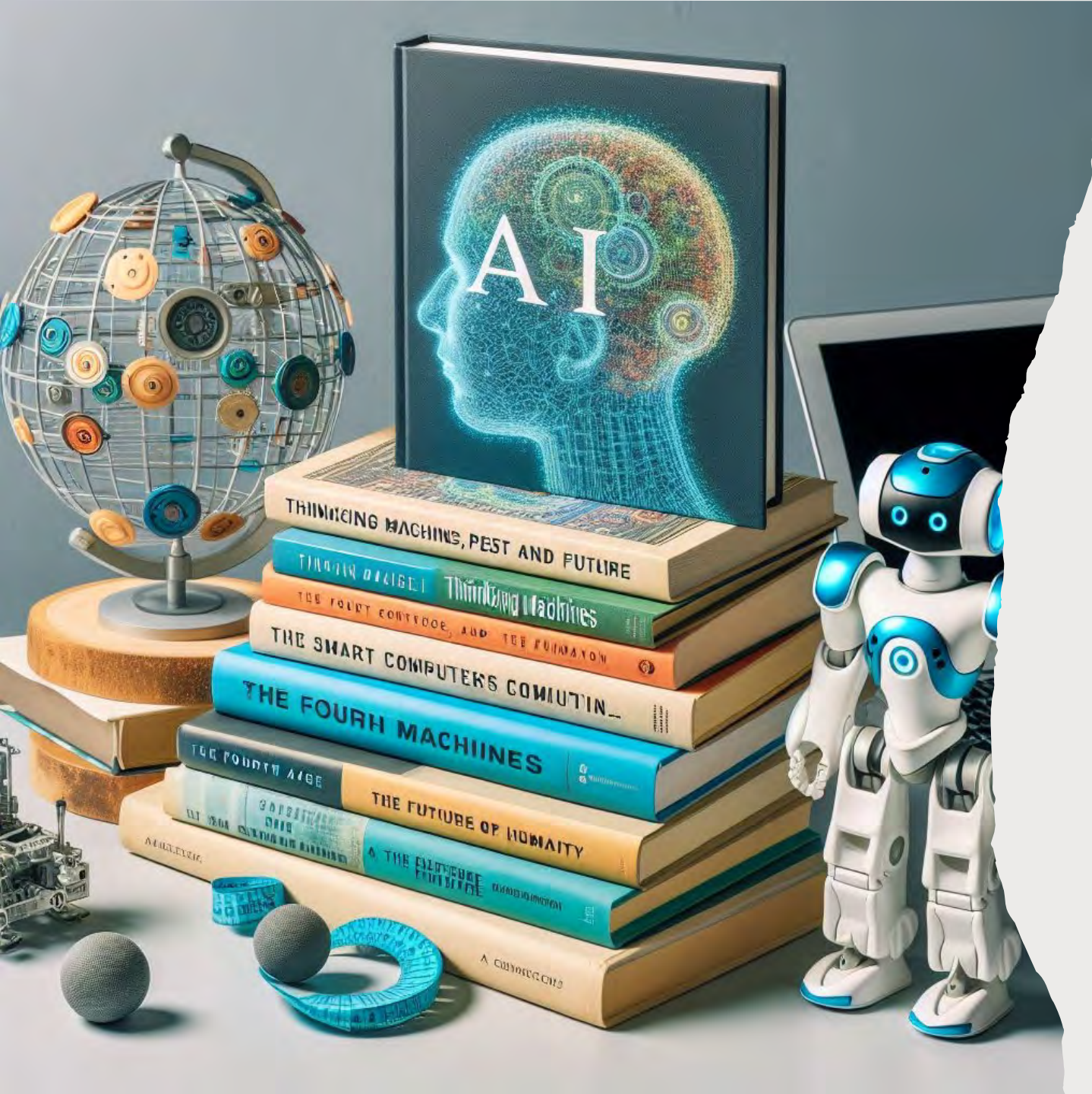
AI is changing every week, so expect changes.



You may also want to use  
Google Bard.



Bard is powered by Gemini, a cutting-edge language model from Google AI.



The information, sentences, or questions that you use with AI tools are called “prompts.” The quality of the output from the AI program relies on the quality of the prompts.

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You are essentially interacting with your computer using words and phrases.



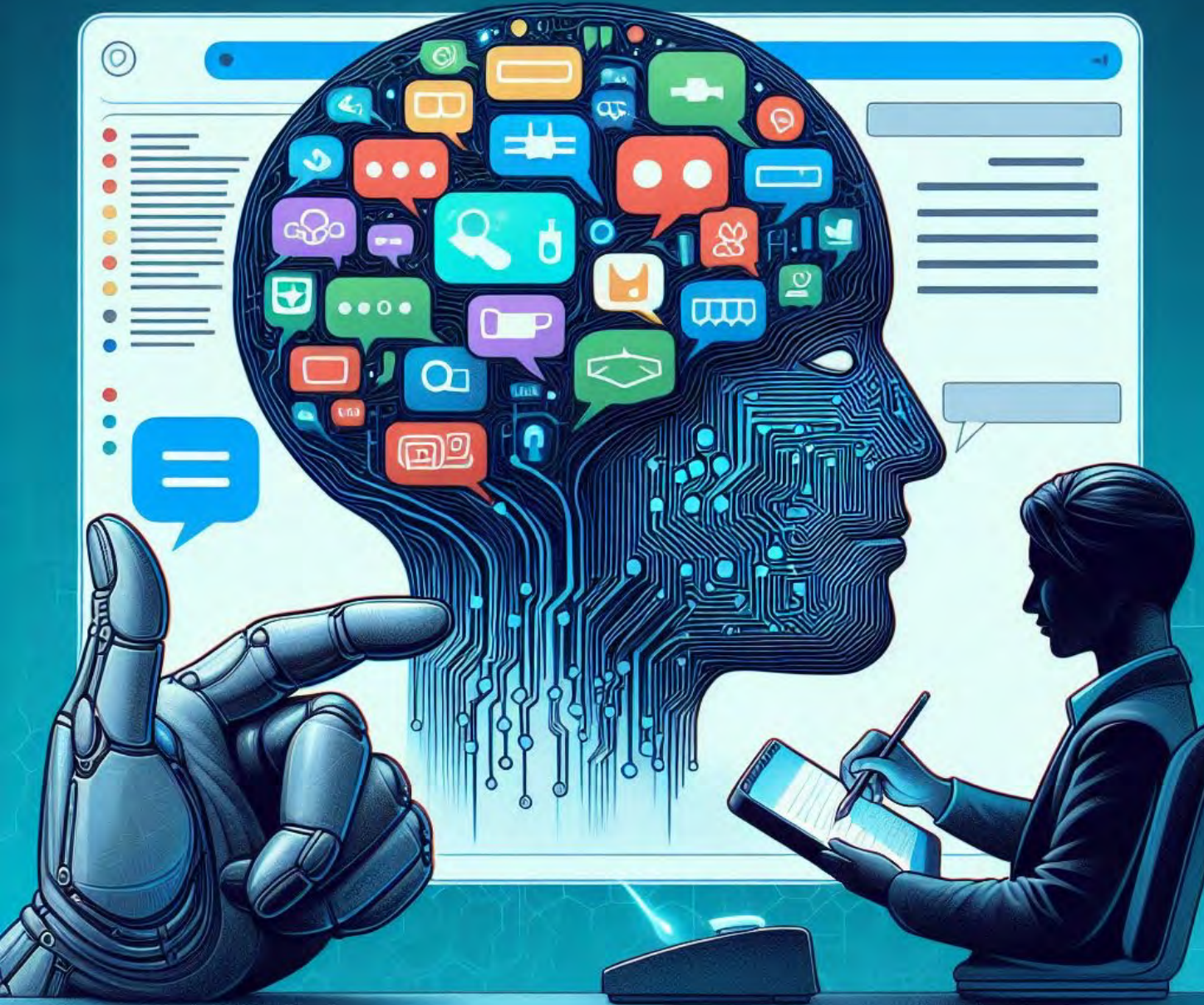
You might  
also get  
frustrated.





Copilot and Bard are essentially searching for information and can give wildly inaccurate responses. Start by requesting information you already know.



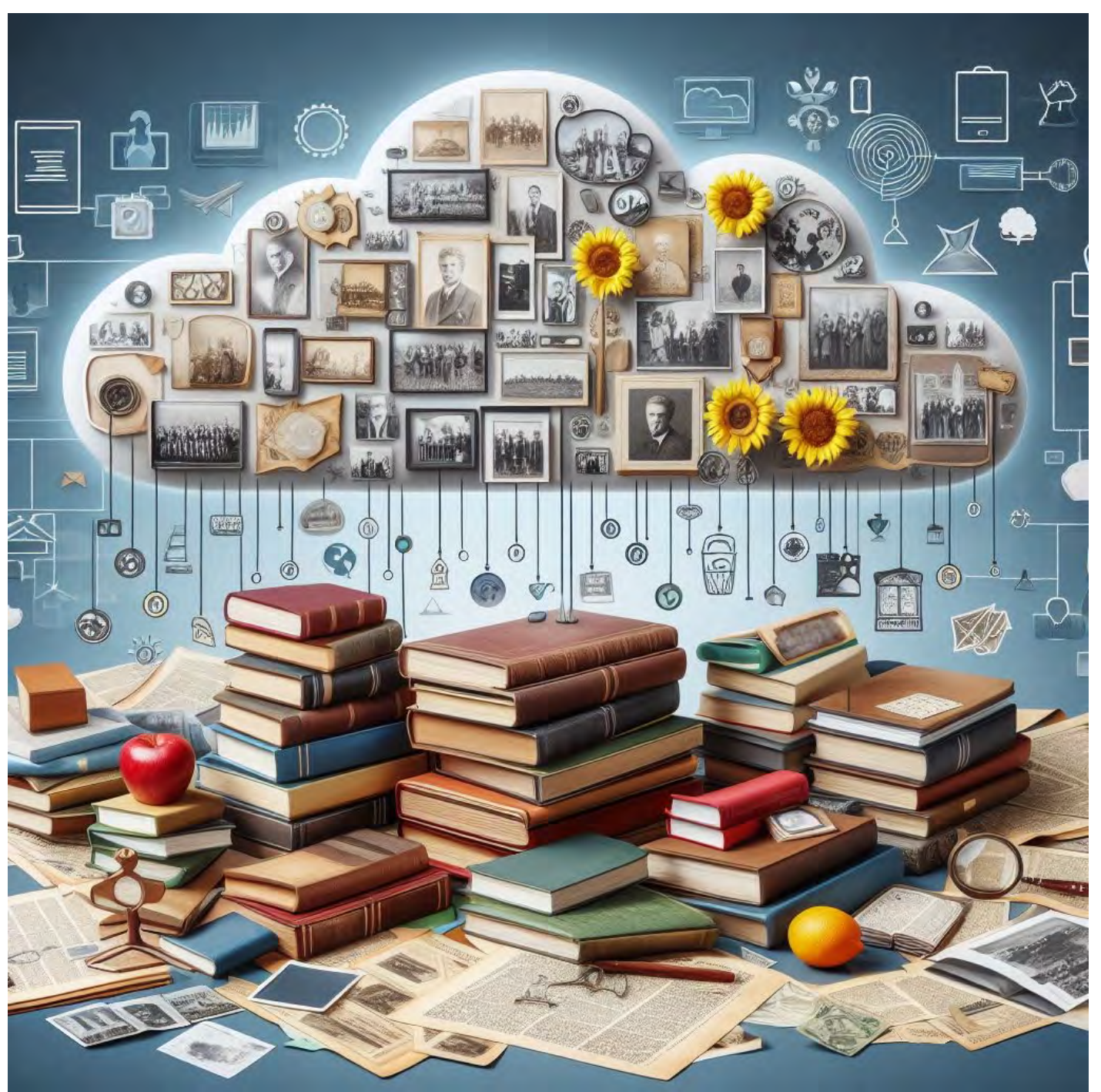


Practice using prompts until you begin to get a feel for how they work.

Here are suggestions for beginning to use prompts for generative AI:

- **Be Specific:** generic prompts like “Write a story” will produce generic results. Adding context and being specific, clear, and concise will help generate more useful outputs.
- **Provide Context:** asking the chatbot to behave as if it were a person, process, or object can be an easy way to start generating better prompts.
- **Define Output Format:** Being specific about the type of output you want will produce better results.
- **Use ‘Do’ and ‘Don’t’:** telling chatbot what you do and don’t want in your response can save time and improve your result.
- **Structure the Prompt:** start by defining its role, give context/input data, then provide the instruction.
- **Use Constraints:** this can help avoid the chatbot meandering away from the instructions into factual inaccuracies.

There are several types of publications that you can use to create a family history.



**Photo Books:** These are simple to create, and their versatility lends them to an array of projects. Since they're based around images, you don't need much accompanying text.

**Narrative Books:** These books might include an ancestor biography, portraying an ancestor's life set within the historical context of the time and place in which he or she lived.

**Family History Book**  
person, working back  
origins.

This list was created by asking Microsoft Copilot “Give me a list of the types of family history books about a person's ancestry.”

**Combination Books:** This option illustrates the ancestors and descendants of one couple, great for anniversaries.

**Ancestral Family History:** This type of book includes a chapter for the couple you start with and additional chapters for each descendant family.

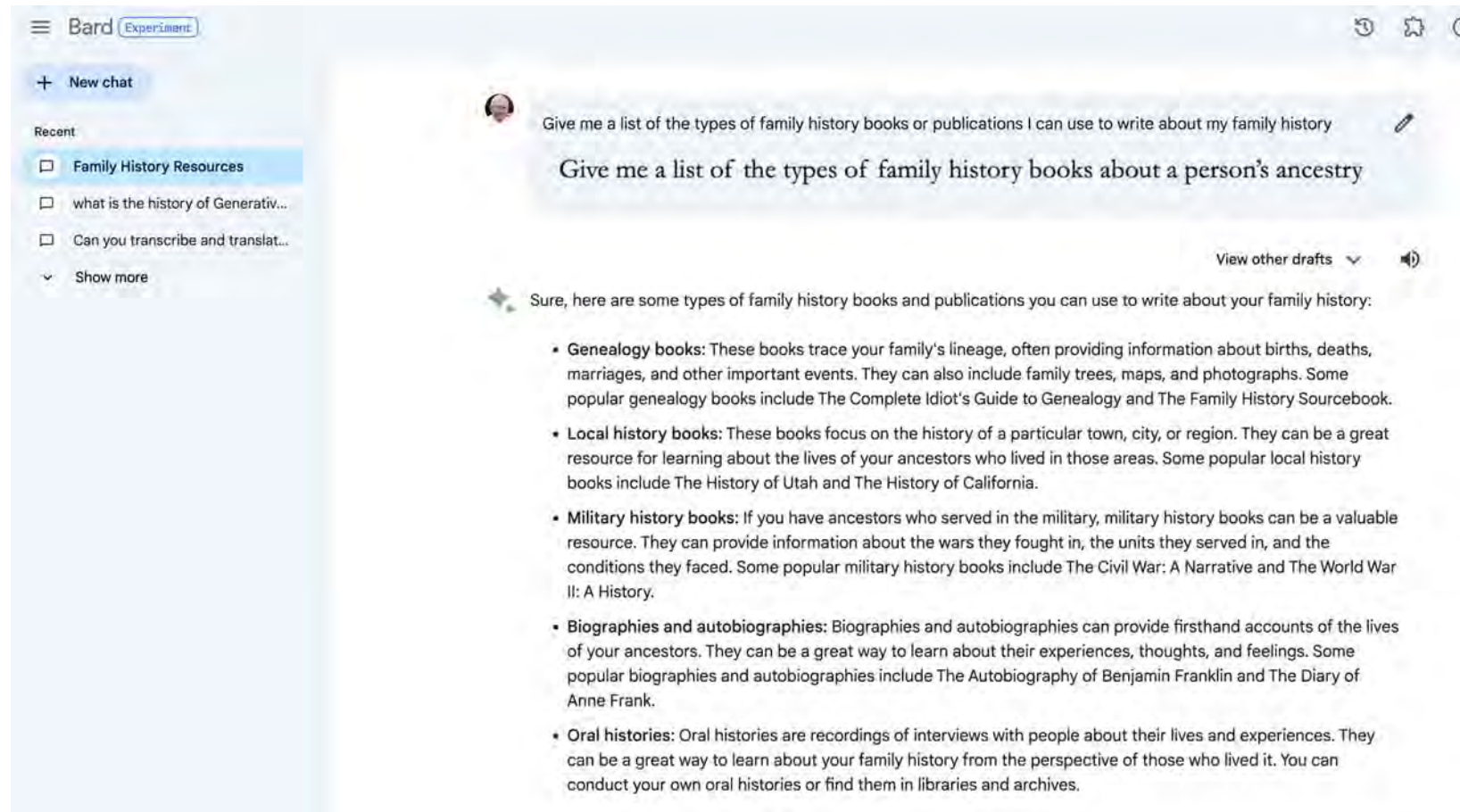
**Collection of Family Traditions and Their Origins:** This book documents family traditions and their origins.

**Newsletters:** These are periodic publications that update family members about recent events, discoveries, and stories.

**Family Organization Books:** These books provide information about family organizations, reunions, and other group activities.

**Posters:** These are visual representations of the family tree or other aspects of the family's history.

The responses you get from both Microsoft Copilot and Google Bard vary over time and depend heavily on the exact words of your prompts.



The screenshot shows the Google Bard chat interface. On the left, there is a sidebar with a menu icon, the name 'Bard' with an 'Experiment' tag, a 'New chat' button, and a 'Recent' list containing 'Family History Resources', 'what is the history of Generativ...', 'Can you transcribe and translat...', and a 'Show more' option. The main chat area shows two prompts: 'Give me a list of the types of family history books or publications I can use to write about my family history' and 'Give me a list of the types of family history books about a person's ancestry'. Below the prompts, there is a response from Bard: 'Sure, here are some types of family history books and publications you can use to write about your family history:'. The response is followed by a bulleted list of four categories: Genealogy books, Local history books, Military history books, and Biographies and autobiographies. Each category includes a brief description and examples of popular books.

Give me a list of the types of family history books or publications I can use to write about my family history

Give me a list of the types of family history books about a person's ancestry

View other drafts

Sure, here are some types of family history books and publications you can use to write about your family history:

- **Genealogy books:** These books trace your family's lineage, often providing information about births, deaths, marriages, and other important events. They can also include family trees, maps, and photographs. Some popular genealogy books include *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Genealogy* and *The Family History Sourcebook*.
- **Local history books:** These books focus on the history of a particular town, city, or region. They can be a great resource for learning about the lives of your ancestors who lived in those areas. Some popular local history books include *The History of Utah* and *The History of California*.
- **Military history books:** If you have ancestors who served in the military, military history books can be a valuable resource. They can provide information about the wars they fought in, the units they served in, and the conditions they faced. Some popular military history books include *The Civil War: A Narrative* and *The World War II: A History*.
- **Biographies and autobiographies:** Biographies and autobiographies can provide firsthand accounts of the lives of your ancestors. They can be a great way to learn about their experiences, thoughts, and feelings. Some popular biographies and autobiographies include *The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin* and *The Diary of Anne Frank*.
- **Oral histories:** Oral histories are recordings of interviews with people about their lives and experiences. They can be a great way to learn about your family history from the perspective of those who lived it. You can conduct your own oral histories or find them in libraries and archives.

The same prompt may give you different responses.

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The type of family history you choose to create will depend on your audience and the kind of story you want to tell.





### About the Digital Library

The Digital Library can connect you to genealogy books containing the stories of your ancestors and lead you to new discoveries.

There are hundreds of thousands of family history books that have been published. Take some time to look at what is available.

### Submit Books

Help the Digital Library grow! FamilySearch welcomes the sharing of digital or physical books such as family histories, yearbooks, biographies, local histories, other genealogical books.

[LEARN HOW TO CONTRIBUTE](#)



## Search

Keyword

# 579036 Search Results

Sort by :

Relevancy

List view

Grid view



Page

1

of 57904



## 579036 Search Results

Sort by :

Relevancy

List view

Grid view



Page

1

of 57904



and biographical sketch of the  
r, Schweigert, Schweiker, Schweikert,  
r, Schwiegert, Swigart, Swiger, Swigert,  
*family*



Both Copilot and Google Bard keep a record of your prompts and responses.

## Recent activity [Plugins](#)

AI Prompts	9:48 AM
John Tanner's Life	Yesterday
John Tanner and His Family	Yesterday
Types of Family History Books	Yesterday
generate an image of a man climbing a h	Yesterday
Logging out of websites on iMac	3 days ago
Information about Czechoslovakia, Slova	4 days ago
generate an image of a forest in winter v	4 days ago
Fastest computer in the world	5 days ago
Unrecorded Quit Claim Deed	5 days ago
generate an image of a man sitting at a	5 days ago
generate an image of a dumpster conta	5 days ago
generate an image of digital record pre	Nov 29, 2023
Catholic parishes in Milan	Nov 29, 2023
Leading causes of death in the US	Nov 29, 2023
generate an image of a barren sandy d	Nov 28, 2023

[See all recent chats](#)

☰ Bard [Experiment](#)

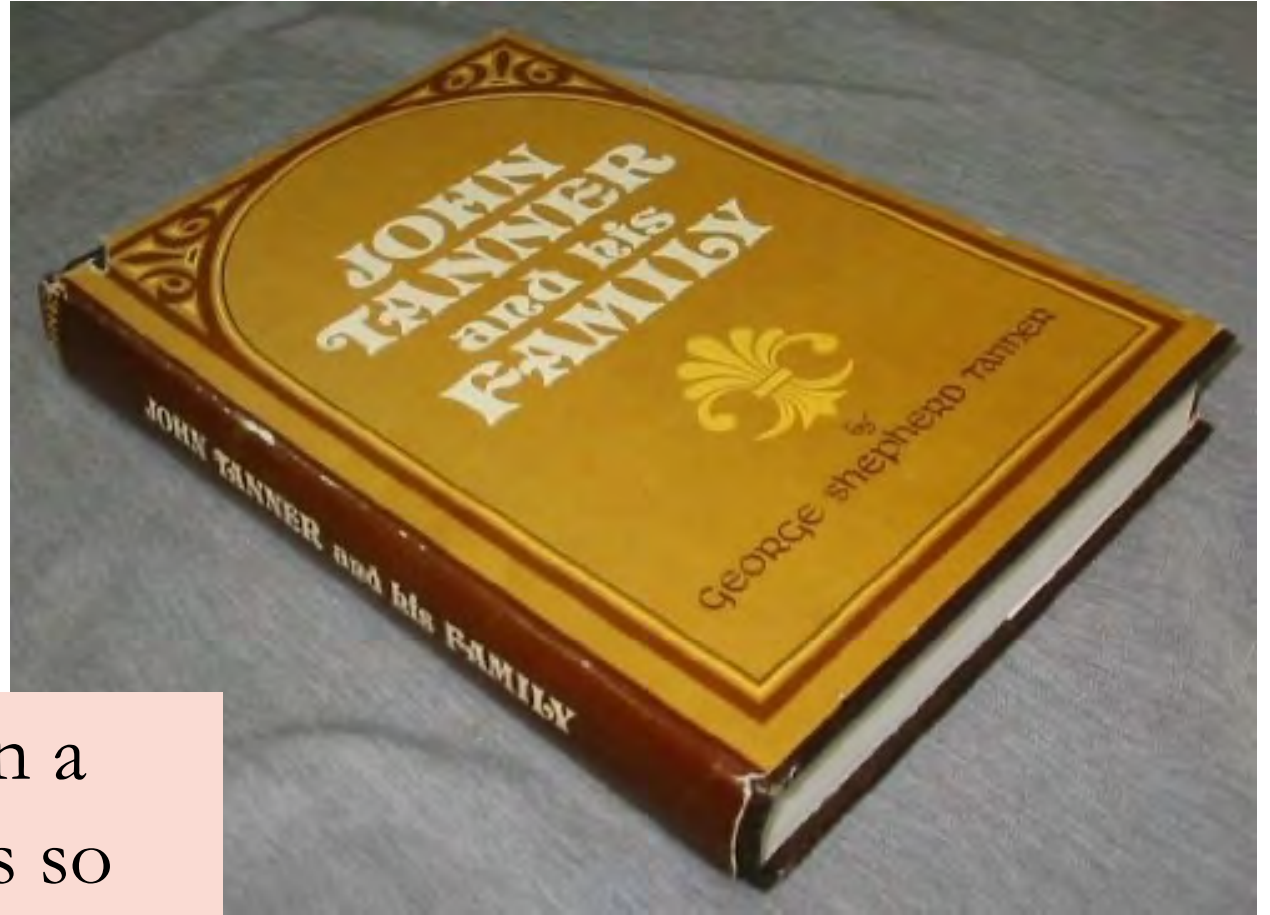
+ New chat

### Recent

- ☐ John Tanner: Mormon Pioneer ...
- ☐ Gualeguaychú: A City of Culture...
- ☐ tell me about Henry Martin Tann...
- ^ Show less
- ☐ tell me about cemetery etiquette

For this presentation, I will focus on writing an ancestral family history or descendancy book by choosing a remote ancestor family and researching the descendants.

You may find that you have chosen a person with too many descendants so focus on a few prominent descendant families.



George S. 1974. *John Tanner and His Family : A Biography of John Tanner of Lake George New York Born August 15, 1778, Hopkinton Rhode Island Died April 13, 1850, at South Cottonwood Utah.* Salt Lake City Utah: John Tanner Family Association.

You may want to ask Microsoft Copilot about the family.

The difference between doing research with AI and an online search for resources, consists in carrying on a conversation with the AI chatbot.

Tell me about John Tanner's life Birth: 15 August 1778  
Hopkinton, Kings, Rhode Island, United States  
Death: 13 April 1850  
South Cottonwood, Great Salt Lake City, Utah Territory, United States

- ✓ Searching for: **John Tanner biography**
- ✓ Generating answers for you...

There are two notable individuals named John Tanner who lived during the same period:

1. **John Tanner (c. 1780 – c. 1846)**, also known by his Ojibwe name Shaw-shaw-wa-ne-ba-se (“The Falcon”), was captured by Odawa Indians as a child after his family had homesteaded on the Ohio River in present-day Kentucky <sup>1</sup>. He grew up among the Odawa and Ojibwe nations, becoming fully acculturated and learning the Saukteaux language <sup>1</sup>. He married an Indian woman, served as a guide for European fur traders, and worked as an interpreter <sup>1</sup>. His story of life with the American Indians was published in 1830 <sup>1</sup>.
2. **John Tanner (August 15, 1778 – April 13, 1850)** was a leading figure in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and a chief financial backer of the Kirtland Temple <sup>2</sup>. Tanner was a native of Rhode Island. He moved to New York when fairly young <sup>2</sup>. Of his 21 children from three successive wives (his first two wives died before he married his next wife), 14 lived to adulthood <sup>2</sup>. Tanner was a Baptist until he joined the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in 1832 <sup>2</sup>. He was baptized by Jared Carter <sup>2</sup>. Ten of his 14 children who lived to adulthood



New topic

Ask me anything...



0/4000



You may also want to use Google Bard. Both Bard and Microsoft Copilot are valuable tools.

The response from Google Bard gives you a beginning outline for a book or article.

The screenshot shows the Google Bard interface. At the top, there's a navigation bar with the Bard logo and 'Experiment' label. Below that, a blue bar contains a link to 'See the latest updates to the Privacy Help Hub'. The main area is divided into a left sidebar and a main chat area. The sidebar shows a 'New chat' button and a 'Recent' list with three items: 'John Tanner: Mormon Pioneer ...', 'Gualeguaychú: A City of Culture...', and 'tell me about Henry Martin Tann...'. The main chat area shows a user prompt: 'Tell me about John Tanner (August 15, 1778, Rhode Island – April 13, 1850 Cottonwood, Utah Territory, United States)'. The response is a structured outline of John Tanner's life, including sections for 'Early life and business:', 'Conversion to Mormonism:', 'Kirtland Temple:', 'Later life:', and 'Legacy:'. At the bottom, there's an input field with the placeholder 'Enter a prompt here' and a location indicator 'Provo, UT, USA'.

See the latest updates to the [Privacy Help Hub](#)

+ New chat

Recent

- John Tanner: Mormon Pioneer ...
- Gualeguaychú: A City of Culture...
- tell me about Henry Martin Tann...
- Show more

Tell me about John Tanner (August 15, 1778, Rhode Island – April 13, 1850 Cottonwood, Utah Territory, United States)

View other drafts

### John Tanner (1778-1850)

John Tanner was a prominent figure in the early history of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS Church) and a key contributor to the building of the Kirtland Temple. Here's a summary of his life:

#### Early life and business:

- Born in Rhode Island on August 15, 1778, to Thankful Tefft Tanner and Joshua Tanner.
- Moved to New York at a young age and became a successful businessman.
- Married three times and had 21 children, of whom 14 survived to adulthood.

#### Conversion to Mormonism:

- Joined the LDS Church in 1832 after being baptized by Jared Carter.
- Became a close confidant of Joseph Smith, the church founder.
- Used his wealth and influence to support the church financially.

#### Kirtland Temple:

- Played a crucial role in the construction of the Kirtland Temple, serving as a major financial backer.
- Donated significant amounts of money and materials for the project.
- Dedicated his time and skills to overseeing the construction process.

#### Later life:

- Moved to Utah Territory with the main body of the church in 1848.
- Continued to be a prominent member of the church community.
- Died in Cottonwood, Utah Territory, on April 13, 1850.

#### Legacy:

- Remembered for his dedication and financial contributions to the LDS Church.
- Notably known for his role in building the Kirtland Temple, a significant landmark in Mormon history.
- Considered a pivotal figure in the early years of the church.

#### Additional information:

- You can find more detailed information about John Tanner on Wikipedia: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John\\_Tanner\\_%28Mormon%29](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Tanner_%28Mormon%29)

Provo, UT, USA  
Based on your places (Home) • Update location

Enter a prompt here

Bard may display inaccurate info, including about people, so double-check its responses. [Your privacy & Bard](#)

You can also ask Microsoft Copilot for an outline of a book about your ancestor.

You will likely get different ideas from the two chatbots.

Give me an outline for a book about the life of my ancestor John Tanner John Tanner's life Birth: 15 August 1778  
Hopkinton, Kings, Rhode Island, United States  
Death: 13 April 1850  
South Cottonwood, Great Salt Lake City, Utah Territory, United States

✓ Generating answers for you...

Sure, here's a high-level outline for a book about the life of John Tanner:

**Title:** "John Tanner: A Pioneer's Journey"

#### 1. Introduction

- Brief overview of John Tanner's life and his significance.
- Introduction to the historical context of his time.

#### 2. Early Life (1778 - 1832)

- Birth and upbringing in Hopkinton, Kings, Rhode Island, United States.
- His life as a Baptist before joining The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

#### 3. Conversion and Commitment (1832 - 1834)

- His encounter with The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.
- His baptism by Jared Carter and the impact on his life.
- Decision to sell his property around Lake George, New York.

#### 4. The Kirtland Temple (1834 - 1836)

- His move to Kirtland, Ohio.
- His significant financial contributions to the construction of the Kirtland Temple.

◦ His interactions with Joseph Smith and other church leaders.

#### 5. West (1836 - 1850)

◦ His journey to the Utah Territory with his family.

◦ His challenges and experiences in South Cottonwood, Great Salt Lake City, Utah Territory.

◦ His leadership and contributions to the early Latter-day Saint community in Utah.

#### 6. Legacy

- The impact of his actions on the Latter-day Saint community.
- His descendants and their contributions to society.
- Reflection on his life and lessons learned.

#### 7. Conclusion

- Summary of John Tanner's life and his influence.
- Closing thoughts on his legacy.

The first step is to check all the facts. This is made easier by footnotes.

Learn more:

1. [en.wikipedia.org](https://en.wikipedia.org)
2. [en.wikipedia.org](https://en.wikipedia.org)
3. [thecanadianencyclopedia.ca](https://thecanadianencyclopedia.ca)
4. [olympics.com](https://olympics.com)
5. [en.wikipedia.org](https://en.wikipedia.org)

John Tanner (August 15, 1778 – April 13, 1850) was a leading figure in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and a chief financial backer of the Kirtland Temple. Tanner was a native of Rhode Island. He moved to New York when fairly young. Of his 21 children from three successive wives (his first two wives died before he married his next wife), 14 lived to adulthood. Tanner was a Baptist until he joined the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in 1832. He was baptized by Jared Carter. Ten of his children who lived to adulthood affiliated with the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Tanner eventually moved to Utah Territory. He settled in Panguitch, Utah Territory where he died in 1850.

Please let me know if you need more information about either of these individuals.

You can also ask questions about the information already provided.

Question to Copilot:

How was John Tanner a financial backer of the Kirtland Temple?

John Tanner (b. August 15, 1778, d. April 13, 1850) was a leading figure in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and a chief financial backer of the Kirtland Temple.



## How was John Tanner a financial backer of the Kirtland Temple?

- ✓ Searching for: **John Tanner financial backer Kirtland Temple**
- ✓ Generating answers for you...

John Tanner played a significant role in the construction of the Kirtland Temple. In late 1834, he sold his property in and around Lake George, New York, which included a hotel <sup>1</sup> <sup>2</sup>. He then moved to Kirtland, Ohio, where in early 1835, he lent money and assumed loans to keep the building of the Kirtland Temple moving forward <sup>1</sup> <sup>2</sup>. When Joseph Smith tried to repay him, he refused any payment, saying they owed him nothing <sup>1</sup> <sup>2</sup>. This generous act of financial backing helped ensure the completion of the Kirtland Temple.

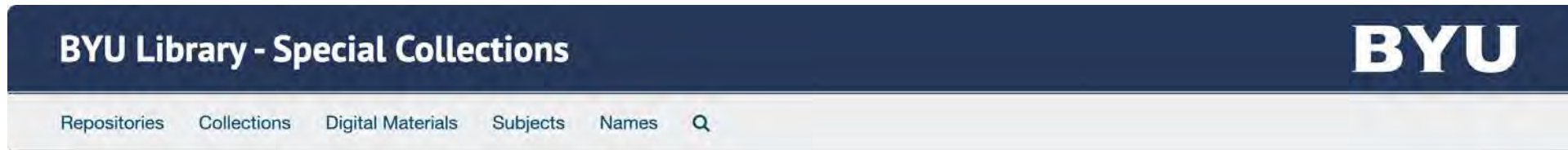
**Learn more:** [1. en.wikipedia.org](#) [2. wikiwand.com](#) [3. archives.lib.byu.edu](#)



2 of 30 ●

You get more information and more footnotes.

Here is a screenshot of one of the footnote links.



## Tanner family

 Family

### Biographical History

The Tanner family synonymous with the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints originated with John Tanner (1778-1850), a successful businessman in New York and part-time Baptist minister who later joined the church and donated all his debts. From his lineage, there came many individuals who played a prominent role in the history of the Church including Francis Marion Lyman.

The Tanner family of Mormon history begins with John Tanner. Born in 1778 to a farming family in Rhode Island. After taking up his father's business after his father's death in 1800, he moved to Greenwich, New York where he married his first wife Tabitha Bentley (who died in 1801) and his second wife Lydia Stewart, had 12 children with her, and soon got his left leg infected after protecting his son from a dog that was going to attack him. In 1818 the family moved to Bolton, NY, where he was able to turn his father's farming business into a successful business while he tried unsuccessfully to find a cure to his infected left leg. This quest for a cure continued until 1832, where he came to the aid of the church by preaching the gospel, he was baptized in Lake George and his leg was miraculously cured of its infection.

After his baptism, John Tanner worked to help build the church in a variety of ways. In 1822 he helped to assist in Zion's Camp, but in December his family moved in Kirtland, OH in the nick of time to assist in the construction of the Kirtland Temple. On top of this, he paid an additional \$43,000 to help fund the temple. He also traveled to the Eastern United States, assisted in helping members of the church in migrating to the West.

When looking at John Tanner's posterity, many of them helped the Church out in many ways. Some served in the Mormon Battalion during the USA's war with Mexico in the 1840s, others of his distant relatives were apostles (Francis Myron Lyman, Richard Roswell Lyman, N. Eldon Tanner), etc.


#### Citation:

FamilySearch, via WWW, August 15, 2016 (John Tanner; b. 1778; d. 1850; life history and history of his posterity including sons Albert and Myron Tanner, his descendants Francis Myron Lyman and Richard Roswell Lyman)

Ensign, via WWW, August 15, 2016 (N. Eldon Tanner's relationship to John Tanner)

### Found in 3 Collections and/or Records:

BYU

Repositories Collections Digital Materials Subjects Names 


#### Additional filters:



Subject

Now you are into original source material.

You can use Microsoft Copilot to expand on topics, correct grammar, find additional information and so forth.

Here is a list of resources generated by Google Bard by asking “give me a list of online resources I can use to write a book about John Tanner (August 15, 1778, Rhode Island – April 13, 1850, Cottonwood, Utah Territory, United States)”


give me a list of online resources I can use to write a book about John Tanner (August 15, 1778, Rhode Island – April 13, 1850 Cottonwood, Utah Territory, United States) 

[View other drafts](#)  

🌟 Online Resources for Writing a Book about John Tanner (1778-1850):


Primary Sources:

- **Joseph Smith Papers:** This website provides access to a vast collection of documents related to Joseph Smith and early Mormon history. It includes letters, diaries, and other writings by John Tanner and other associates of Joseph Smith.




Joseph Smith Papers website

- **Church History Department Archives:** The Church History Department of the LDS Church houses a wealth of primary source materials, including records of church meetings, minutes, and financial documents. These resources may provide valuable insights into John Tanner's activities and contributions to the church.



Church History Department Archi...

- **FamilySearch:** This website offers access to genealogical records, including birth certificates, marriage records, and death certificates. These records can help you verify biographical information about John Tanner and his family.



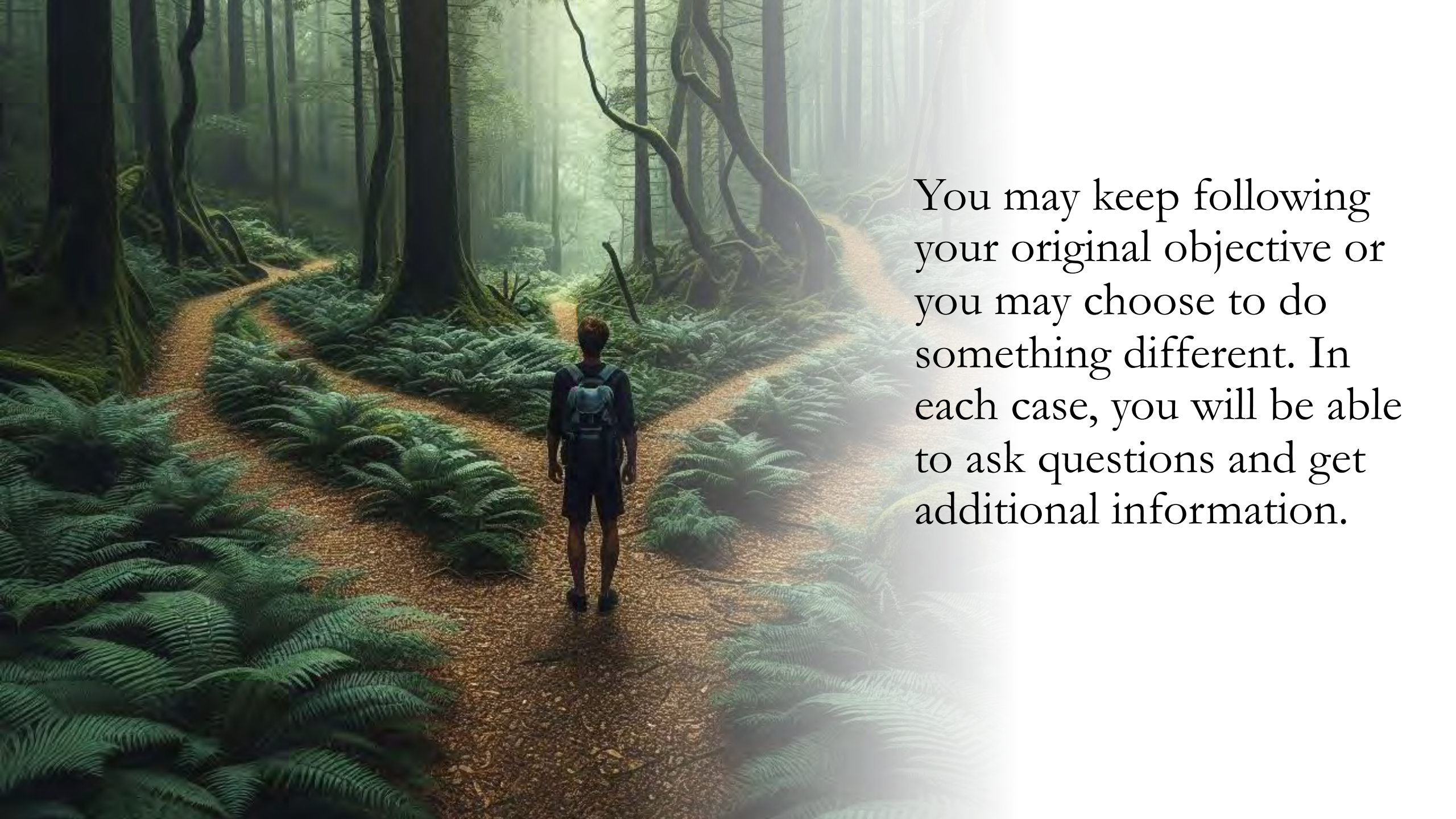
FamilySearch website

Of course, you do not want to reduce any of this to paper; you can use the AI programs to organized your research.

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You can continue to ask questions, make comments requesting a response, ask for summaries of books and articles, ask for more resources, and start organizing the information, all with help from Microsoft Copilot and Google Bard.





You may keep following your original objective or you may choose to do something different. In each case, you will be able to ask questions and get additional information.

Did my examples work because I chose a “famous” person?

Here is what I found for another great-grandfather.

Marinus Christensen was born on 10 June 1863 in Lendum, Torslev, Hjørring, Denmark. There is a record of a Christensen family arriving in New York on 16 July 1866 via the ship Kenilworth. However, the specific details about Marinus Christensen’s life are not readily available in the search results.

For more detailed information, you might want to consider genealogical research. Websites like FamilySearch offer resources for researching family history, including birth records, marriage records, death records, census records, and

The answer is definitely yes. You will always have a more difficult time finding information about ordinary people.

near you.

information about  
please note that  
Search Center

But the information about  
Marinus' :  
Kenilwor

## Hamburg to New York 25 May 1866 - 16 Jul 1866

Ship Name Kenilworth *aka Volant (1853-1864)*

Vessel Type Ship

Departure 25 May 1866 from Hamburg

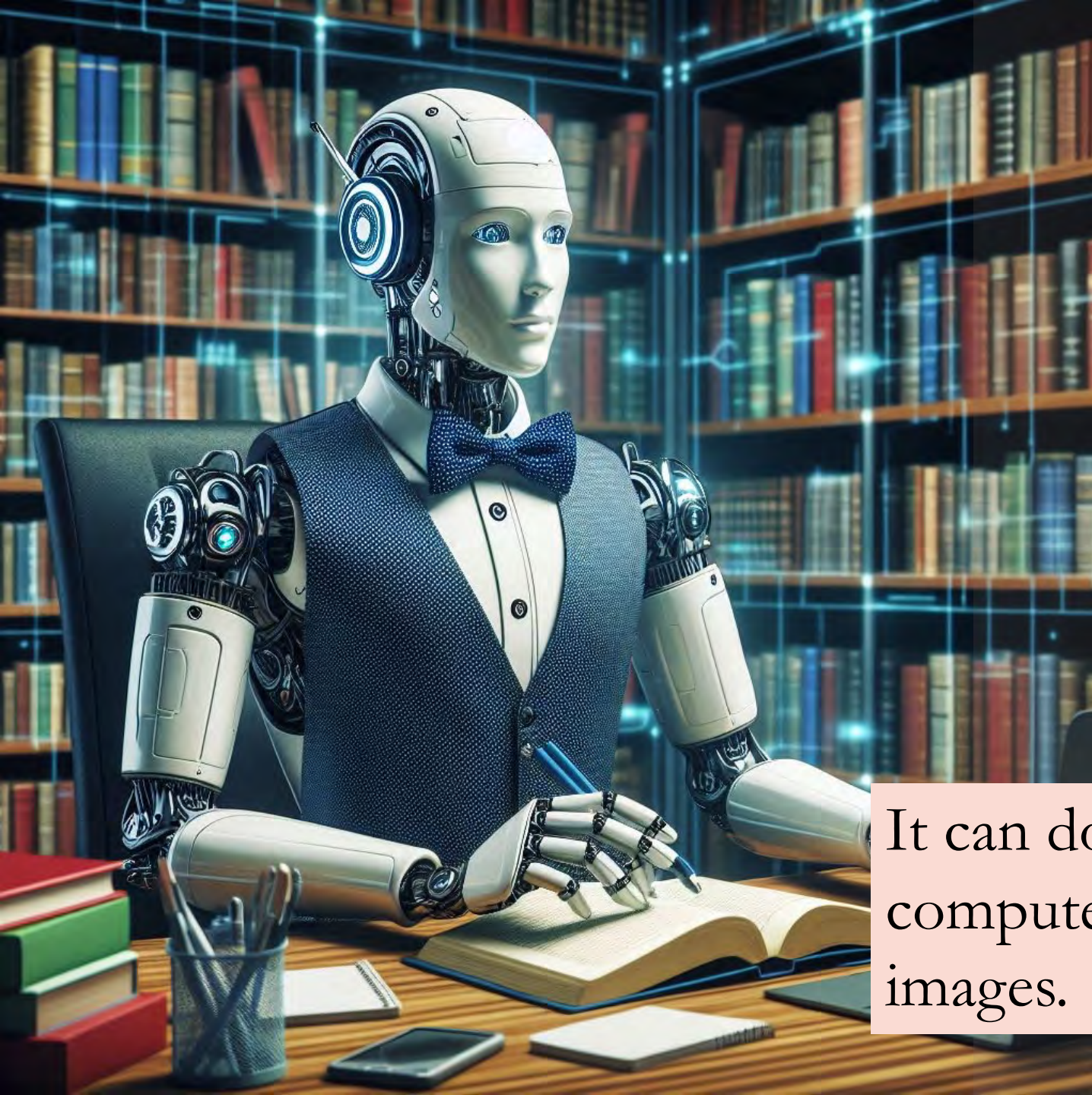
Arrival 16 Jul 1866 at New York

Source SMR, 1866 pp. 1-18; Customs #804 (FHL #175,624) ([source abbreviations](#))

Church Leader Samuel L. Sprague

Christensen, Jens  
Christensen, Karen  
Christensen, Kirsten  
Christensen, Lars Mathias Chr.  
Christensen, Maren Katrine  
Christensen, Marinus





AI chat is not particularly a good genealogy research tool. It is better as an organization and focus tool. This may change tomorrow.

It can do things such as creating computer code and original images.



Use the AI chat tools by asking questions and not relying on them to find specific websites.





Watch for almost constant changes in AI capabilities.

# Thanks for Watching

This is one of my photographs and not AI generated

A wide-angle photograph of a desert landscape. In the foreground, there is reddish-brown soil with scattered green shrubs and small trees. The middle ground features large, layered red rock formations with distinct horizontal strata. The background shows a bright blue sky filled with fluffy white clouds. The overall scene is a typical desert environment.

Thanks for Watching

This image was AI generated