

How Did I Not Know about NUMIDENT?

By Thomas MacEntee

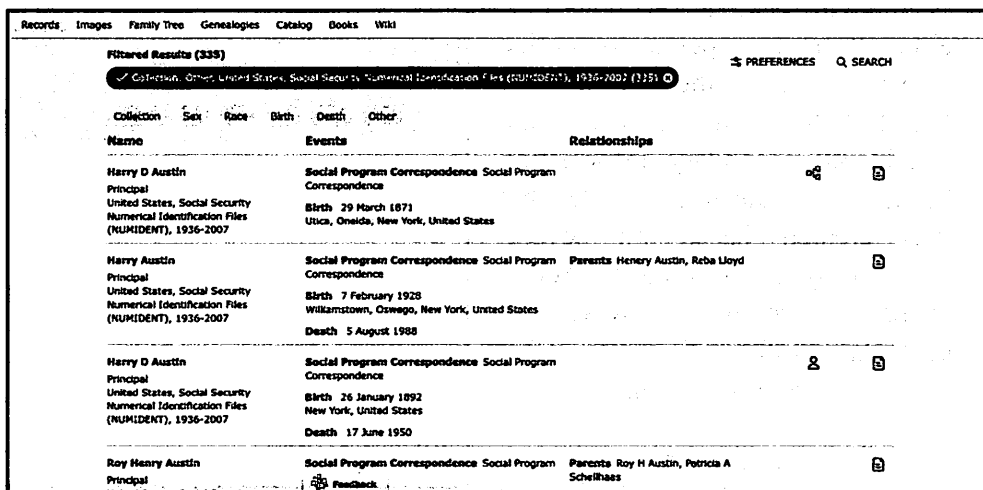
Have you ever caught a post on Facebook or other social media platforms about a genealogy resource you have never heard about? And you tell yourself, “Oh, I need to check that out!” or “Let me put that on my to-do list” and you never follow up?

I am *urging* you to take a look at United States, Social Security Numerical Identification Files, 1936-2007 aka NUMIDENT on FamilySearch.

According to the FamilySearch Wiki, “The Social Security Administration created these records to track the earnings of US workers and determine benefit entitlements. The publishable index only contains information for deceased individuals and was gathered from all three record types in the collection: applications, deaths, and claims. Each compiled record includes fields for the name of the deceased, social security number, parents’ names, gender, birth city and state or country, birth date, and death date.”

Source: United States, Social Security Numerical Identification Files (NUMIDENT) — FamilySearch Historical Records (accessed 20 March 2023).

Before entering your search information, keep in mind that the date range is 1936-2007. So, for my mother who passed in 2015, there will not be any record. For this article, I searched for my great-great uncle, Harry D. Austin, who was the brother of my great-grandfather John Ralph Austin (1896-1976) and was born in Lowville, N.Y.



The Events column shows “Social Program Correspondence” at the top of the list for a Harry D. Austin born in Lowville, N.Y. I clicked on the name Harry D. Austin and the details of the record appeared.

The results provided me with the exact birth date and exact death date. Remember that this is classified as *secondary* information because it was pulled from a variety of original documents and placed in an index. But I used these as clues for further research.

Each record includes fields for:

- name of the deceased
- social security number
- parents’ names
- gender
- birth city
- birth state or country
- birth date
- death date

A great way to expand your research is to look at the right-hand sidebar for the records under “Similar Records” and view them on the FamilySearch site.

Tip No. 1

Search Broad, Not Narrow

I always start with a broad search on most records databases. In this case I used the surname Austin and the location Lowville. While my great-great uncle’s given name was, in fact, Harry, and it was not a nickname, I can never be sure what form of a given name was used when completing a Social Security application.

Once the results appear, scroll through to look for a match. If there are too many records then try adding a given name, or better yet, use the wildcard feature (*) as in Har* instead of Harry. Remember, in most cases you need at least three characters of text and the asterisk symbol to leverage the power of a wildcard search.

Tip No. 2

Remember: This Is Secondary Information

I always tell my followers, “Consider the source!” when working with information found

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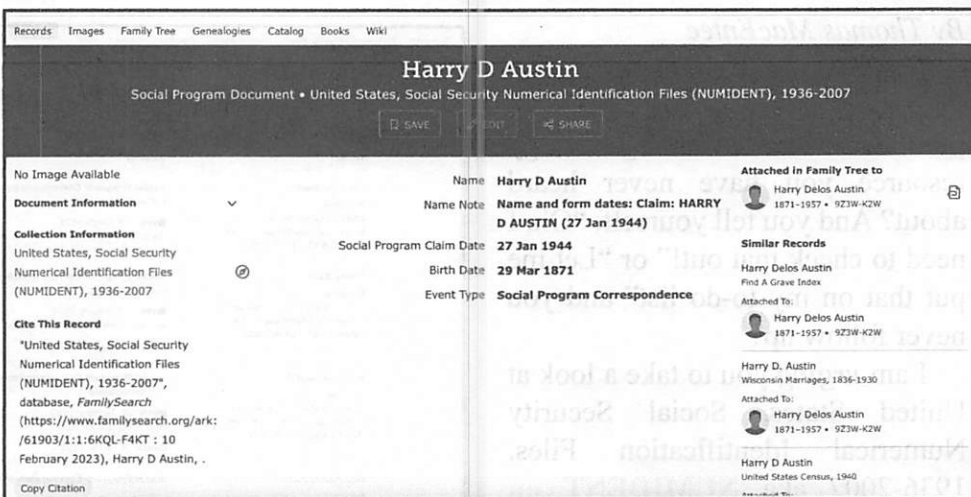
either through in-person or online research. In the case of NUMIDENT, the records are considered secondary information because the database is an index that was created based on several different types of records. While primary information is always best, secondary information can offer clues for further research.

Tip No. 3

Cite Your Sources

FamilySearch conveniently provides a source citation in the left sidebar under the heading Cite This Record. You can click the Copy Citation button and place the text in your research log or your genealogy software.

The citation for Harry D. Austin reads as "United States, Social Security Numerical Identification Files (NUMIDENT), 1936-2007," database, FamilySearch (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:6KMT-S526>: 10



February 2023), Harry D Austin.

Conclusion

The United States, Social Security Numerical Identification Files database is an excellent resource for genealogy and family history researchers who need more information than what the oft-used Social Security Death Index provides. Keep in mind that while it often provides exact birth and death information, the source is still considered secondary information. Use the data as clues for further

research.

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Editor's note: If you search NUMIDENT and find an ancestor, please tell us so we can include the news in a future issue of Relatively Speaking. Send your find to newsletter@smcgs.org.

Membership Update

As of March 16, San Mateo County Genealogical Society's total membership was 187 active members — 126 paying members and 61 life members.

We don't take your membership for granted! Each one of you is very important to us. We love to hear from you and see you when we can. Your participation in our programs helps us encourage speakers to share their expertise with us. Those who volunteer are deeply appreciated. Please renew when your notice arrives in your email.

If you have any questions regarding your membership, please email us at president@smcgs.org.

Welcome Our Newest Members to SMC GS

- Molly McGettigan Arthur
- Lynette Bates
- Pamela Brigham
- Geoff Brosseau
- Ken Fisher
- Debbie Ghiglieri
- Michele Landolfi
- Kerry Langstaff
- Kathleen Shannon
- Pamela Storm
- Mary Lynn Wilson