

Finding Origins: Cluster Research in Practice

Class 1: Ancestors on the Move

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****Before starting this class, please watch one (or both) of these free webinars:** (available here: <https://www.americanancestors.org/education/learning-resources/watch>)

- Creating a Research Plan: Tips from NEHGS Research Services
- Creating a Research Plan for Cluster Research

Step #1- Organize your previous research into an annotated research log

Use an annotated research log to record data. Blank templates can be found at American Ancestors- <https://www.americanancestors.org/tools/research-templates>

Step #2- Look for missing information and identify your goal

Once you have organized your previous research, you must then determine what information is lacking. Define what you are looking for, such as:

- Birth date/place
 - Marriage date/place
 - Death date/place
 - Maiden name
 - Military service
 - Parent's names
 - Parent's place of birth
 - Immigration year
 - Naturalization status
 - Sibling's names
 - Children's names
- Next, determine what individuals or families intrigue you the most? Remember- it is best to tackle one line at a time.
 - Create a list of questions or objectives to research. Include these objectives on your research log, even before you begin your research.

Step #3- Who's your F.A.N club?

Locating FAMILY (F) in Records- What to Note

Cemetery Records

- Individuals buried around your ancestor
- Information on burial cards

Census Records

- All persons enumerated in a household
- Birthplaces
- Other households of the same surname living in the same town/county
- Similar profession

Church Records

- Religious affiliation
- Admission to church
- Witnesses of baptisms/marriages

City Directories

- Other households of the same surname living on the same street/town/city
- Individuals with similar professions (skilled work)

Local Histories/Genealogies

- List of early/prominent settlers
 - When they came to the area
- Individuals with similar origins
- Individuals with similar vital and genealogical information

Land Records

- Frequent land transactions between the same individuals
- Frequent use of same witnesses
- Large amount of land sold for little money
- The phrase “in consideration of love and affection”

Naturalization Records

- Individuals with a similar birthplace or surname
- Individuals with a similar occupation
- Same Address
- Familiar witnesses

Newspaper Articles/Obituaries

- Obituaries can provide information on next of kin
- Society section
 - Individuals visiting family members
 - Participants in a wedding ceremony

Probate Records

- Wills listing heirs or administrators
- Division of Estate may list heirs, though no relationship may be listed
- All records in a probate file are important, including debts and credits

Town Records

- Other individuals or families who arrived in an area around the same time
- Individuals and families with the same surname

Locating ASSOCIATES (A) in Records: What to note

Religious

- Pastors/ministers/priests/rabbis, etc. who serve in your ancestor's parish/congregation
- Witness to religious family events
- Godparents included on baptismal, confirmation, marriage, and burial records
- Individuals and families belonging to the same church organization

Educational

- People who graduated in the same class
- Participants in the same sports or clubs
- Friends that signed your ancestor's yearbook
- Teachers or professors in their field at the time they attended
- Colleagues that published with an ancestor

Occupational

- Individuals with similar professions (skilled work)
- Employees and owners of the institutions where your ancestor worked
- Labor Unions or Workmen's Organizations your ancestor supported

Social

- Individuals belonging to the same:
 - Fraternal organizations
 - Genealogical organizations
 - Hobbies and/or hunting organizations

Political

- Political organizations your ancestor supported
- Tribal affiliations
- Loyalists (during American Revolution)

Place and/or migration

- Did your family reside in the same place for several generations? What other families did as well?
- Did your family migrate somewhere? What other families made the same migration?

Locating NEIGHBORS (N) in records- What to note

Military Pensions

- Affidavits of fellow soldiers
- Search for your ancestor, as they may have provided an affidavit for another soldier
- Witnesses providing testimony

Town Records

- Other individuals or families who arrived in town at the same time
- Other included on a list of proprietors
- Plot maps may identify your ancestor and reveal neighbors

Diaries and Day Books

- Your ancestor may not be named, but you will learn more about the community
- Often include birth, marriage, and death information for those of the town (and surrounding towns)
- Biographical information of residents
- Movements of neighbors
- Notable events

Church Records

- Pew rentals and church seating plans
- Admission lists or parish membership
- Nearby cemetery or burial plots in the church cemetery

Probate Records

It is very important to examine all documents and determine the relationship between your ancestor and these individuals.

- Who was the administrator?
- Who was the bondsman?
- Who were the estate appraisers?
- Who witnessed the will?
- Which individuals appear on multiple occasions?

Step #4- List records that will aid in your research

List records that will aid in your research-

- Census (Federal and State)
- Vital Records (Birth, Marriage, Death)
- Church Records
- Land Records (Federal, State, County)
- Court Records (Probate, Civil, Criminal)
- Newspapers (obits, wedding notices)
- Naturalization records or Passenger Lists
- City Directories

A helpful chart identifying these records be found at American Ancestors-

<https://www.americanancestors.org/education/learning-resources/read/getting-started>

Find resources in repositories and online-

- Check both the online and physical holdings

- Contact historical societies, lineage societies, local libraries, genealogical societies, colleges and university archives, federal and state archives, town halls, etc. A great resource for manuscript collections can be found at ArchiveGrid: <https://beta.worldcat.org/archivegrid/>

Map out your plan of action: Use an Annotated Research Log to keep an organized list of the resources that you checked or the resources that you plan to check:

<https://www.americanancestors.org/tools/research-templates>

Step #5- Locate the resources

Educate yourself-

- Digitized Books:
 - <https://www.hathitrust.org/>
 - <https://books.google.com/>
 - <https://archive.org/index.php>
 - <https://openlibrary.org/>
 - <https://books.familysearch.org>
 - <http://library.si.edu/digital-library>
- Guide books:
 - Rhonda R. McClure, ed., [*Genealogist's Handbook for New England Research*, 6th ed.](#) (Boston: NEHGS, 2012)
 - *Red Book: American State, County, and Town Sources*, 3rd ed. (Ancestry Publishing, 2004)
 - *The Source: A Guidebook to American Genealogy*, 3rd ed. (Ancestry Publishing, 2006)
 - *New York Family History Research Guide and Gazetteer*, 1st ed. (New York Genealogical and Biographical Society, 2015)
- Portable Genealogists
 - [Immigration to the U.S.](#)
 - [U.S. Naturalization](#)
 - [NY State Census](#)
 - [MA State Census](#)
 - [Using the Federal Census: 1790-1840](#)
 - [Using the Federal Census: 1850-1940](#)
 - [Organizing your Research](#)
 - [Problem Solving in Irish Research](#)
 - [17th Century New England Research](#)
 - [Using DNA in Genealogy](#)
 - [African American Resources](#)
 - [Applying to Lineage Societies](#)
 - [Building a Genealogical Sketch](#)
 - [Genealogical Numbering](#)
 - [Editorial Stylesheet](#)
 - [Reference Notes](#)
 - [Indexing](#)
- Research Guides: <https://www.americanancestors.org/tools/research-guides>
- Family Search Wiki: https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Main_Page
- NEHGS webinars
 - Upcoming- <http://www.americanancestors.org/Education/Online-Classes/>
 - Archived- <https://www.americanancestors.org/video-library>

Step #6- Research

Perform the research as defined in your plan. Remember, the research plan is fluid, not absolute.

- Return to your original research plan to locate any holes or missed opportunities
- Be patient and open to alternative record groups and/or people of interest. For example, you may find more Family, Associates, and/or Neighbors of your ancestor (known as the FAN) once you start the research process:

Step #7- Analyze and Draw your Conclusions

Write it down! Update your annotated research log with your notes and conclusions. If a longer explanation is required, consider using these resources:

NEHGS Resources

Writing and Publishing Guide, <https://www.americanancestors.org/education/learning-resources/read/writing-publishing>

Portable Genealogist Compilation: Writing, This easy-to-use compilation includes seven guides to help with your genealogical writing: *Building a Genealogical Sketch*, *Genealogical Numbering*, *Editorial Stylesheet*, *Reference Notes*, *Indexing*, and *Compiling a Bibliography*, plus *Applying to Lineage Societies*.

Robert Charles Anderson, *Elements of Genealogical Analysis: How to maximize Your Research Using the Great Migration Study Project Method*, (Boston, Massachusetts: New England Historic Genealogical Society, 2014)

Penelope L. Stratton and Henry B. Hoff, *NEHGS Guide to Genealogical Writing* (Boston: NEHGS, 2014)