

Breaking Down Brick Walls: Strategies for Success

Bringing it all together: Using Family, Associates, and Neighbors to Draw a Conclusion

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Examine the F.A.N.:

1. Family Members-
 - a. Those with the same surname
 - b. Others too: In-Laws, Cousins, Grandparents, Great-Grandparents, and step-siblings
2. Associates-
 - a. Persons: politics, religion, education, and occupation
 - b. Places: place of birth or death
3. Neighbors-
 - a. Persons who share the same address
 - b. Persons from the same neighborhood, town, or county
 - c. Same cemetery plot or neighboring church pews

Remember to set limits, to stay organized, and to trust your research. Since cluster research can go on forever, it is important to set realistic boundaries when designing your research plan.

Clearly State Objective

Be clear in your objective- be cognizant of others who will read your research summary. Does your objective cover all the known information? Do you need to include background information?

- What is your genealogical question?
- Include information about
 - Primary Individual (Date/Place of Birth and Date/Place of Death- if known)
 - Primary individual's Spouse (Date/Place of Birth and Date/Place of Death- if known)
 - The names of the Primary Individual's Parents

Recognize Earlier Scholarship

Provide a short synopsis of the genealogical scholarship that has been published on this family or topic. Be sure to check some of the most popular genealogical journals and registers, as well as older lineage society applications.

Finding Aids:

- Anderson, Robert Charles, *The Great Migration Begins: Immigrants to New England, 1620-1633* (3 vols., Boston: NEHGS, 1995); *The Great Migration: Immigrants to New England 1634-1635* (7 vols. to date; Boston, NEHGS, 1999-2011); *The Great Migration Directory* (Boston: NEHGS, 2015). These volumes include sketches of all known immigrants to New England from 1620-1640.

Anderson not only utilizes the scholarship of the last hundred years, but also looks again at original records to provide a fresh, detailed, documented and insightful look at the Great Migration figures and their families.

- Hollick, Martin E., *New Englanders in the 1600s: A Guide to Genealogical Research Published Between 1980 and 2010* (expanded edition; Boston: NEHGS, 2012) An extension of the work done by Clarence Almon Torrey that covers the most recent scholarship published from 1980 to 2010.
- Torrey, Clarence Almon, *New England Marriages Prior to 1700* (12 vol. manuscript; 1962) Torrey spent years combing the NEHGS library's book and manuscript collection, to compile this annotated list of approximately 38,000 marriages of New Englanders that occurred prior to 1700.
- Colket, Meredith B., *Founders of Early American Families: Emigrants from Europe, 1607-1657* (revised edition; Cleveland, Ohio: General Court of the Order of Founders and Patriots, 1985) - This book is an alphabetical, annotated list of all known immigrants to what is now the east coast of the United States within the first fifty years of English settlement, beginning with the establishment of Jamestown in 1607. While it includes many early New York (New Netherlands), Maryland and Virginia settlers, the vast majority of the entries are for New Englanders. For each entry the reader is given sufficient information to determine whether this is a person or family of interest, including exact or approximate date of arrival, place of origin, place(s) of residence, date of death if known, occupation/offices held, and then a very brief citation to the best or most recent genealogical treatment of the individual or family in question.

Genealogical and Historical Periodicals:

- *The New England Historical and Genealogical Register*, vol. 1- (1847-) From its beginning the *Register* has been the most scholarly and important genealogical journal on both the New England and the national level, thanks to many decades of consistently high-quality editorship. Its hallmarks are compiled genealogies (for up to five generations) of colonial New England families, English origins articles, transcriptions of original records, and methodological articles.
- *The American Genealogist*, vol. 1- (1922-) Begun by Donald Lines Jacobus as the *New Haven Genealogical Magazine* (changing to the present title in 1932), *TAG*, as it is known, devotes the majority of its space to high-quality, problem-solving articles that focus primarily on New England families.
- *The New York Genealogical and Biographical Record*, vol. 1- (1869-) Although the *Record* concentrates on the early families of Long Island, New York City and the lower Hudson River valley, a goodly number of these families had New England origins or connections, so the *Record* should always be checked.
- *The New England Quarterly*, vol. 1- (1928-) is primarily an historical and literary magazine. It is useful for background and context, and may contain articles of interest in certain instances.
- *The Connecticut Nutmegger* has been the "journal of record" of the Connecticut Society of Genealogists, Inc. for 40 years.



Provide a Research Summary

Provide a detailed analysis of the documents that you were able to locate that are relevant to your research objective. Do not include arbitrary records- this will only confound your argument.

Address Anomalies

- Missing records
- Numerous Individuals with the same name
- Incorrect Information on a record or an incorrect published genealogy
- Present this information honestly
 - Do not distort or underplay a record

Suggest Other Possibilities

- Cover all your bases, Even if unlikely
- Does your conclusion jive with historical, geographical, and religious facts
- Conflating two persons? Creating two persons?

Draw a Conclusion

Like the clearly stated objective, your conclusion should also be succinct and organized. Do not provide any new information in the conclusion- just the facts as presented in the research summary.

Include a Genealogical Summary

Register-style

The basic building block of *Register* style is the family sketch, which treats a couple and their children in a standardized way. With a numbering system that organizes the data and clarifies who is who, each main person has a distinct number.

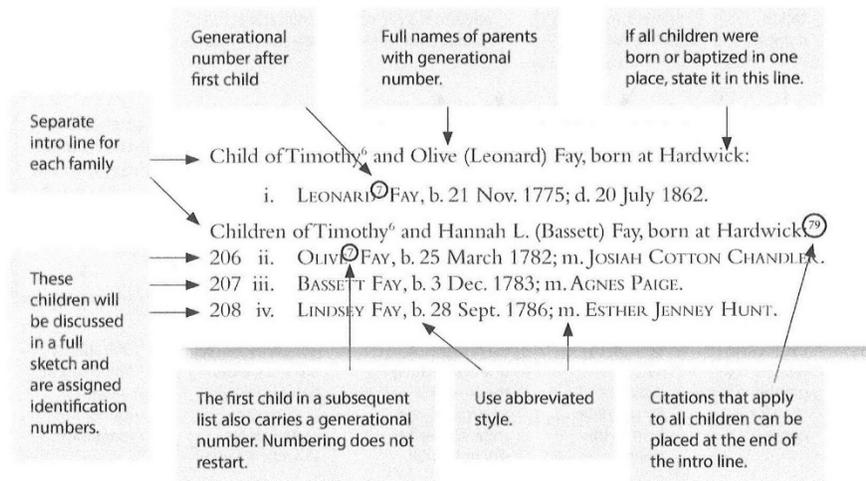


Figure 2.3. Sample child list, *Register* style.

Samples from Stratton and Hoff, *NEHGS Guide to Genealogical Writing*, 15-16

You can download the *Register*-style template at <https://www.americanancestors.org/education/learning-resources/download#writing>.

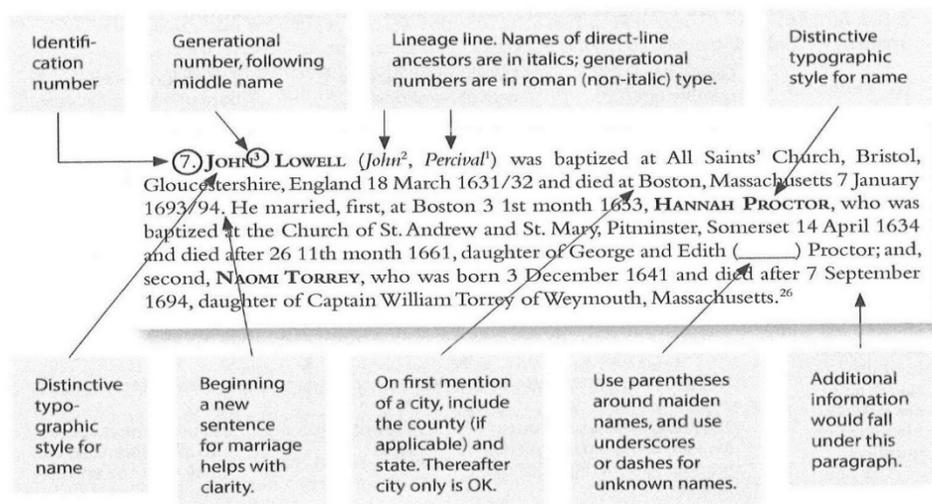


Figure 2.2 Sample main entry, *Register* style.

NEHGS Resources

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

Portable Genealogist: Building a Genealogical Sketch

Portable Genealogist: Genealogical Numbering

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).

Other Resources

The Chicago Manual of Style, 16th ed. (Available in print or online at www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/).

The bible of the book-publishing industry, “CMS” will help you with everything from capitalization to punctuation to reference style to guidelines for book production.

Elizabeth Shown Mills, *Evidence! Citation and Analysis for the Family Historian* (Baltimore: Genealogical Pub. Co., 1997) and *Evidence Explained: Citing History Sources from Artifacts to Cyberspace* (Baltimore: Genealogical Pub. Co., 2007). Comprehensive guides to citing genealogical works.

Cyndi’s List, “Writing Your Family’s History,” www.CyndisList.com/writing. The ever-helpful Cyndi’s List provides a number of links in such categories as Publishers, Publishing Online, Books, Diaries & Letters, Oral History & Interviews, Photographs & Memories.

Stories to Tell, <http://www.storiestotellbooks.com/blog>. This blog provides all kinds of tips on including narrative into your genealogy.