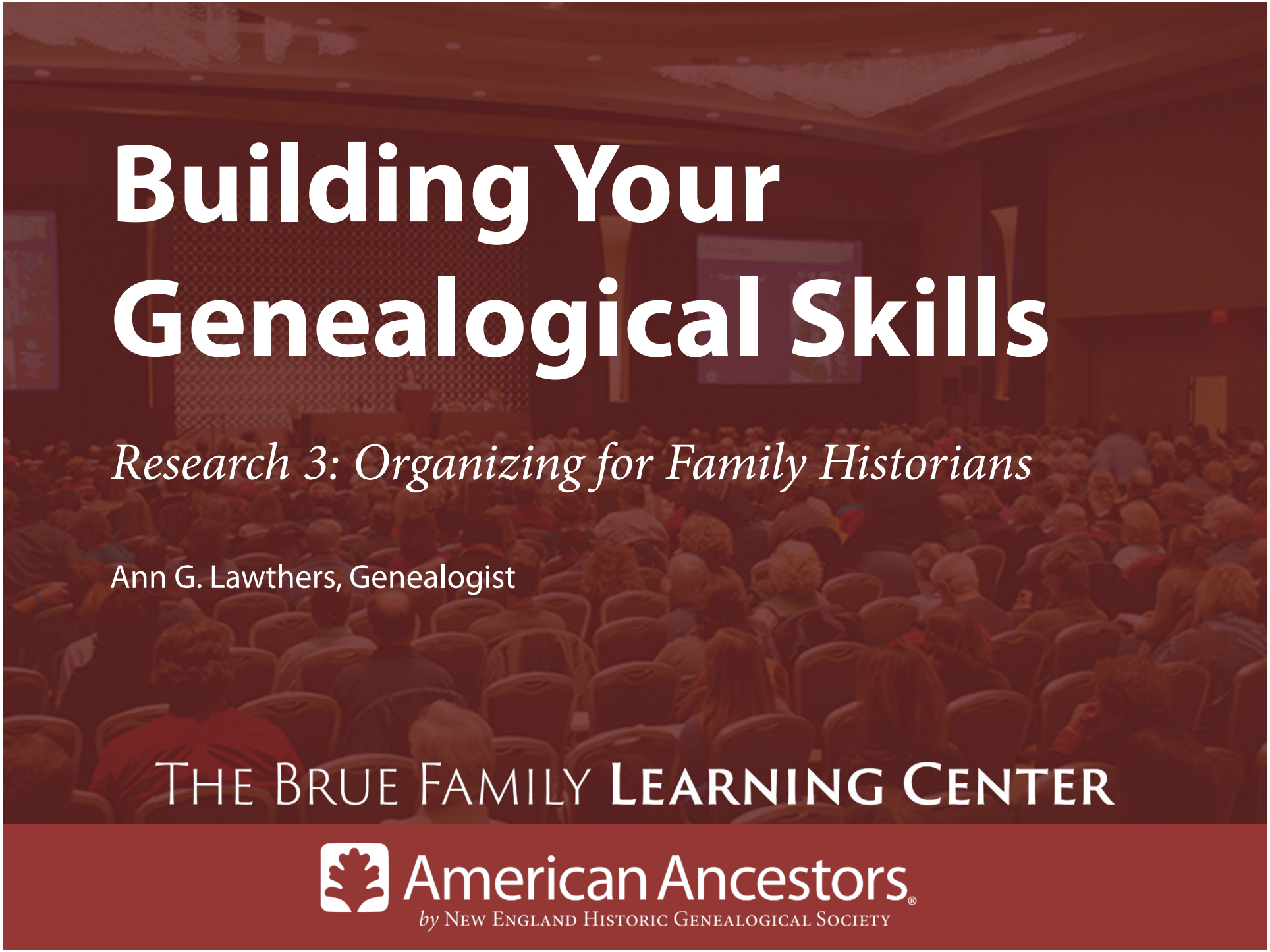


Building Your Genealogical Skills

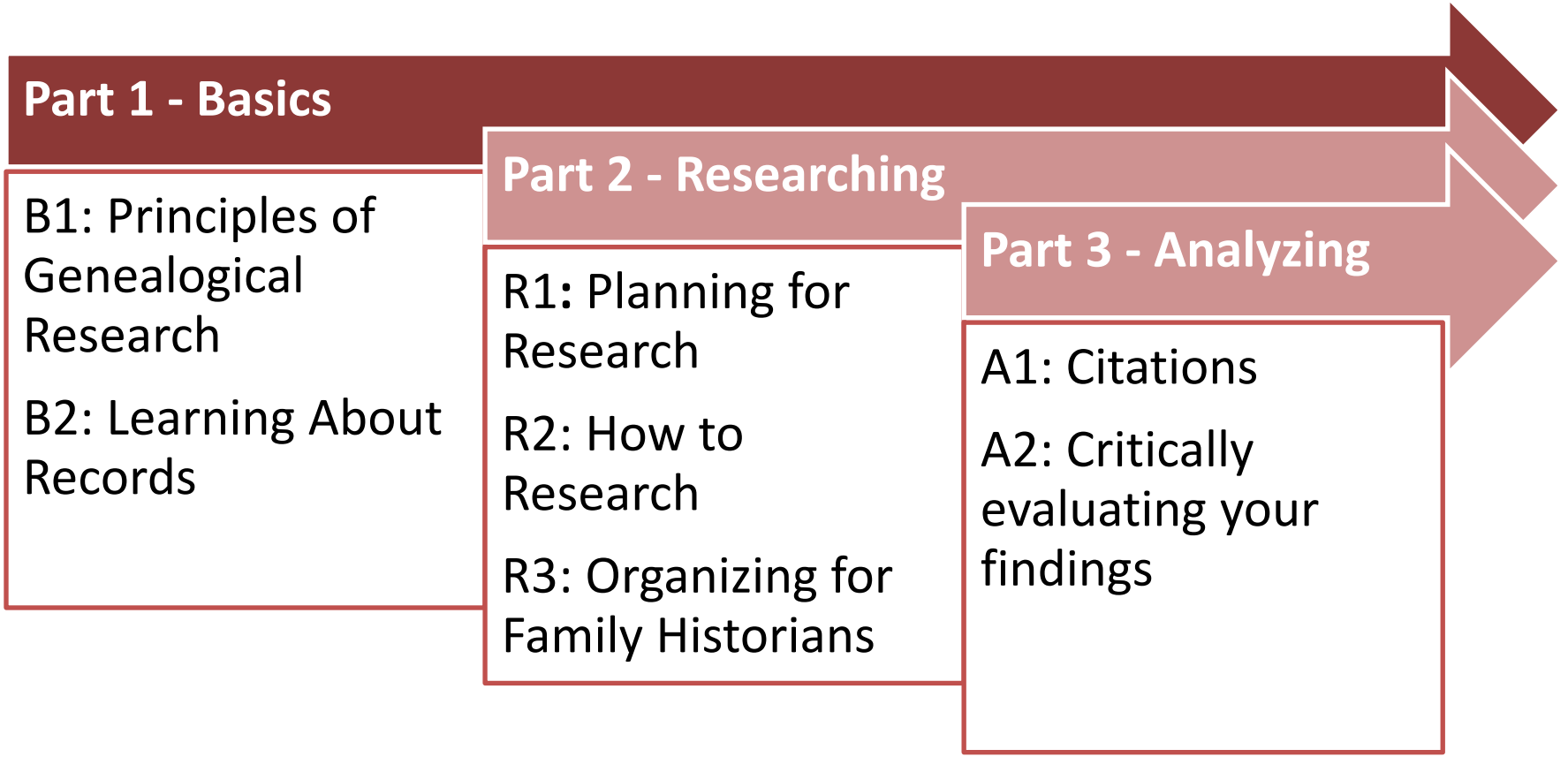
Research 3: Organizing for Family Historians

Ann G. Lawthers, Genealogist

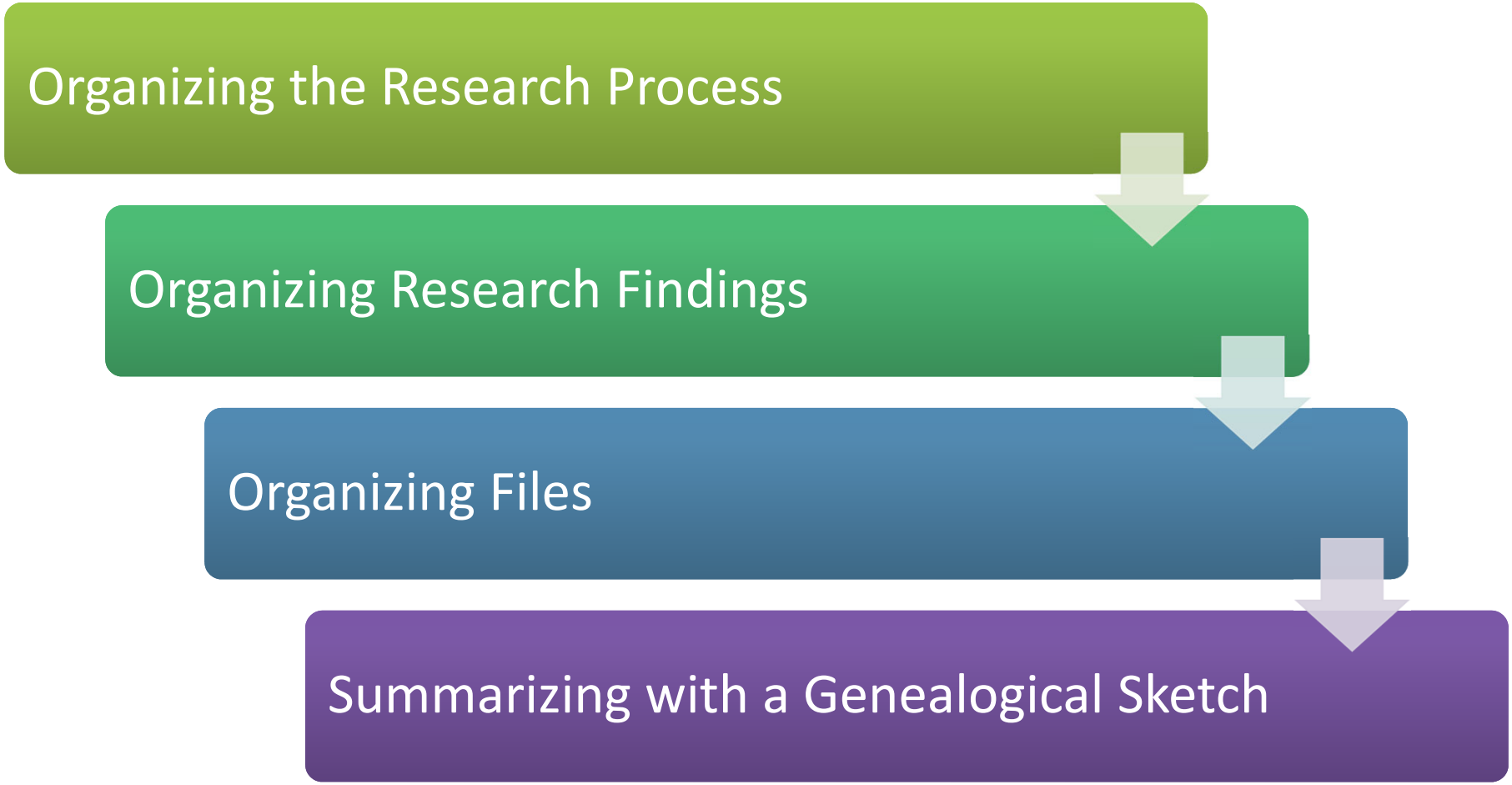
THE BRUE FAMILY LEARNING CENTER

American Ancestors®
by New England Historic Genealogical Society

Course Overview

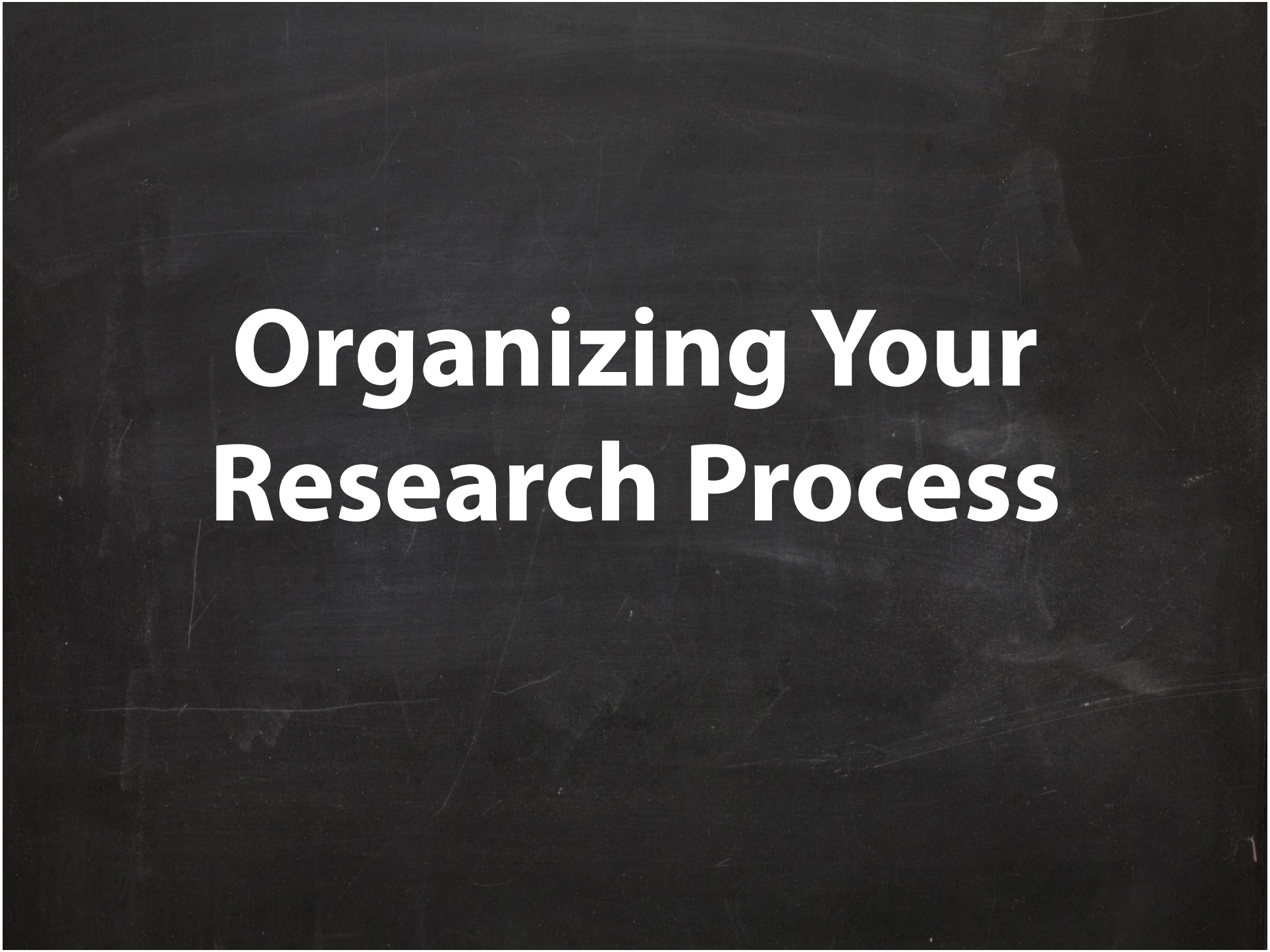


Module Roadmap



KIS: Rule #1 for Organizing

- KIS – "Keep it simple"
  - Make it easy to do the right thing
- Organizing Your
  - Research Process
  - Findings
  - Files
  - Summary


Organizing Your
Research Process

Reminder – Use the Basic Tools!

- Research Plan
- Research Log

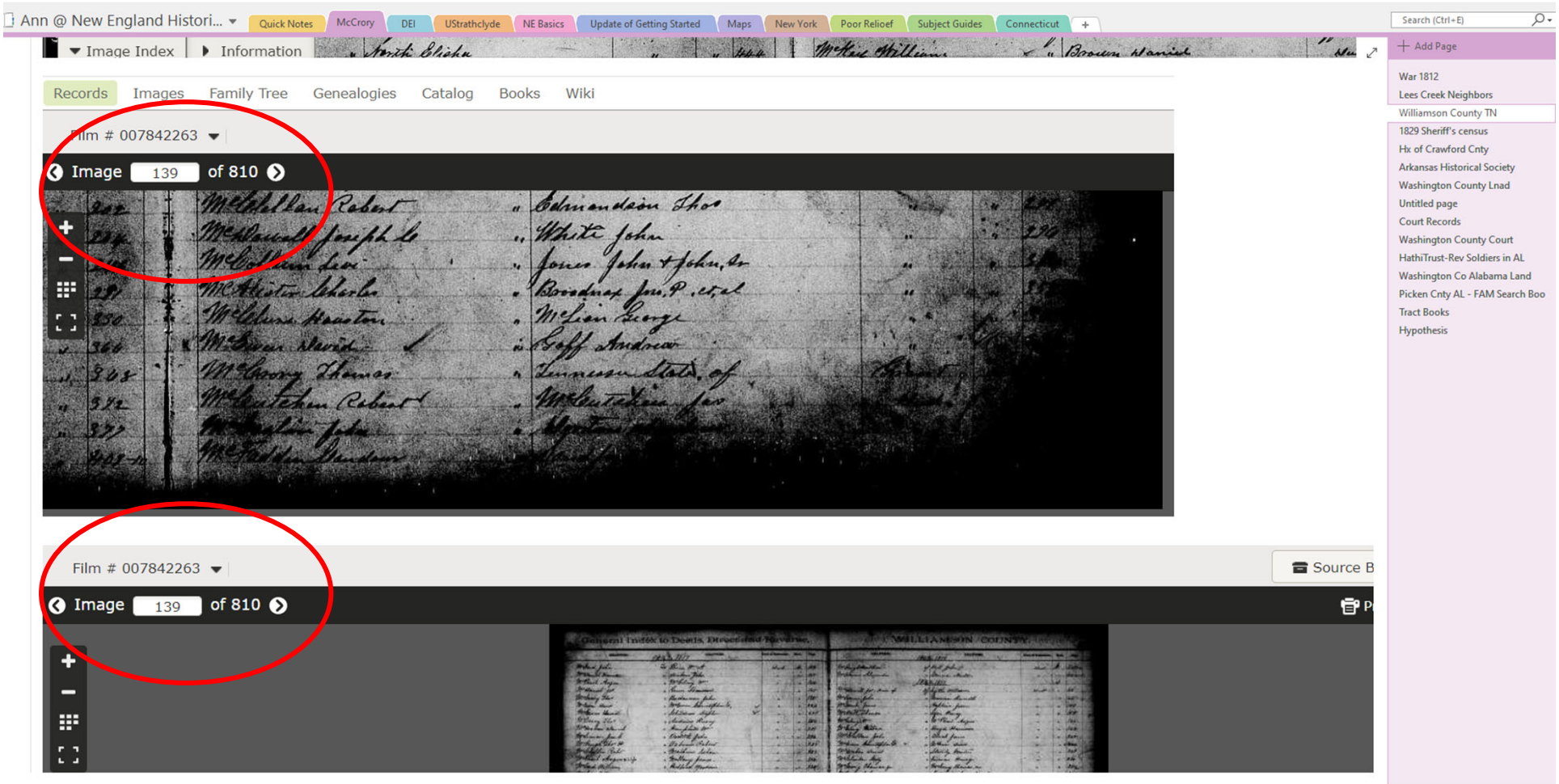
Tasks Lists and To-Dos

- Suggestion 1: Keep a dedicated research notebook
- Suggestion 2: Use a word processing program, spreadsheet or database program
- Suggestion 3: Use your genealogy software program's task lists, etc.

Evernote or OneNote

- **Note:** A single item stored in Evernote or OneNote software
- **Notebook:**
  - Evernote – a collection of notes, stacks of notebooks
  - OneNote – a collection of sections, pages, notes
- **Tags:** Descriptive topic words, e.g.
  - Probate
  - Connecticut
  - Patrick Higgins
  - Birth records

One Note Parking Spot



Organizing Your
Findings

Reminder – Use the Basic Tools!

- Pedigree chart
- Family Group sheet

What to Do With "Orphan" Documents?

- Paper:
  - File in a folder under something like "work in progress" or "holding file" or "ongoing research"
- Digital
  - Folder with "holding" or similar name
    - Subfolders by surname
  - Excel sheet
    - Three columns
      - Surname
      - Citation and document link
      - Why important – track your thought process!!!

Organizing Your Files

Paper Versus Digital Organization

- Use a system you can maintain. There is no one "right" way to organize. It has to work for you.
- Consistency is key
- Leave a "paper" trail
- Write down your organizing decisions

Rhonda R. McClure, *Portable Genealogist: Organizing your Research*, (Boston, MA: NEHGS, 2013)

FamilySearch.org Tips

- Do NOT change your old files to a new note keeping system all at once.
  - Start slowly with just the one family you are researching right now.
  - Wait to organize the file of another family until you start research on that family.

https://familysearch.org/wiki/en/Organizing_Your_Files

File Naming

Who, What, Where, When

- HummerJacob-deed-EmmitsburgMD-1810
- LawthersNancy-gravemarker-GreenvillePA-2022
- HomerFred-Will-p1-Cleveland-1903
- HigginsJohn1844-death-ModorrahIRE-1925
- CrottyJames-census-EastchesterNY-1900

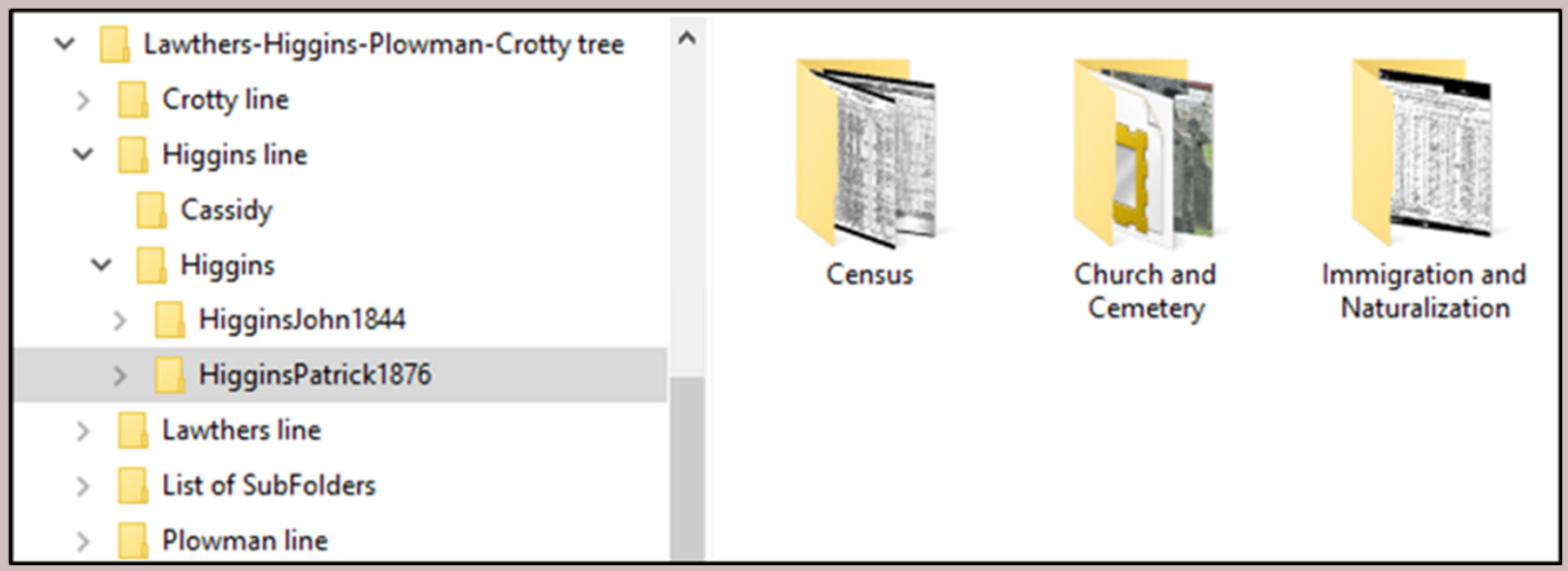
Files Exist in Folders

- Folder Structure
  - **Top Level:** "Genealogy Files" or perhaps the name of your family tree.
  - **Next Level:** Major lines for your family, e.g., Lawthers line, Higgins line, Plowman line Crotty line
  - **Third Level:** Within each major branch there will be a surname folder for the surnames you have researched.

Fourth Level – Record Types

- Vitals
- Church and Cemetery
- Census
- Military
- Newspaper
- Immigration and Citizenship
- Land
- Probate

Digital File Structure

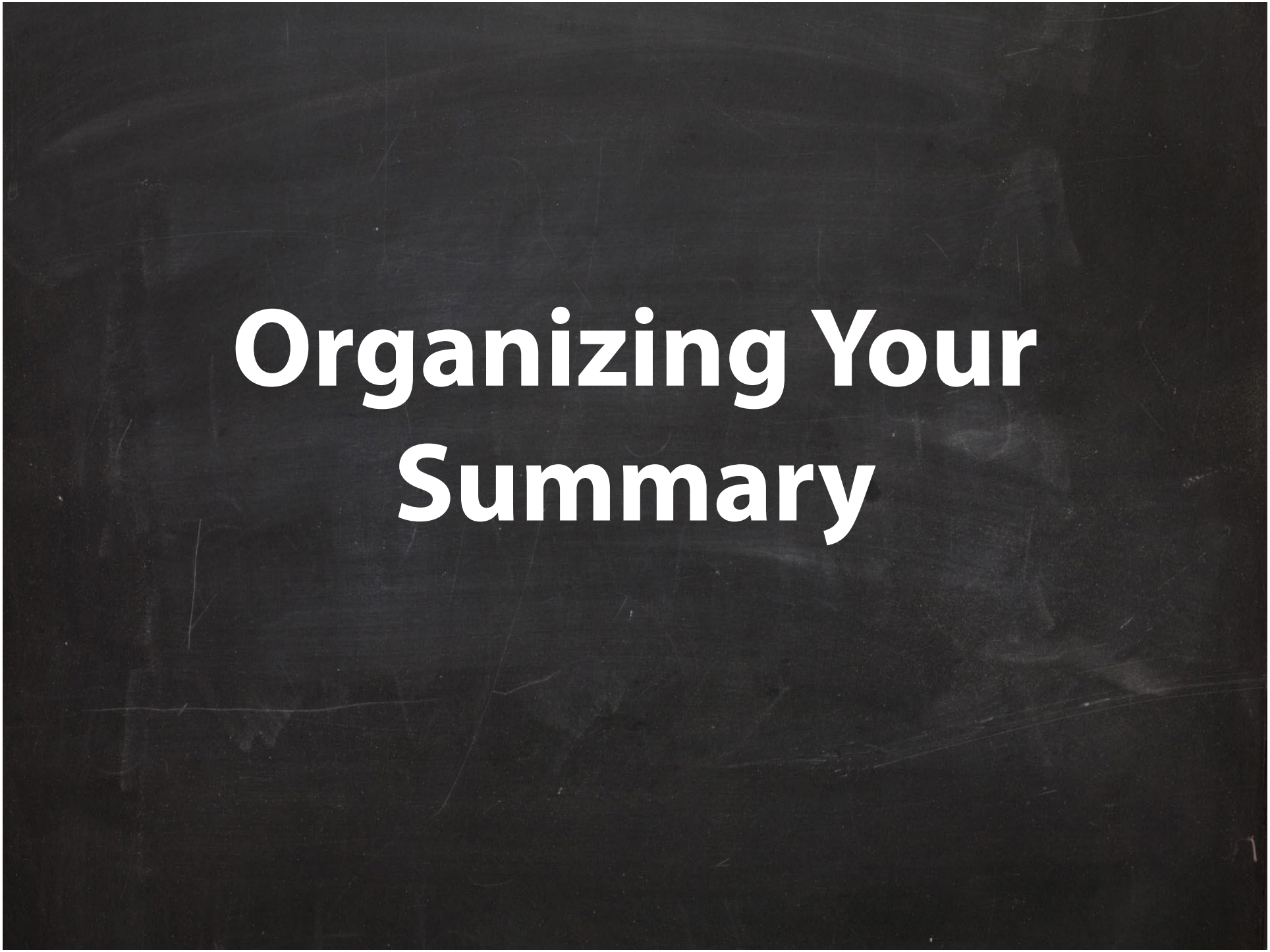


Paper Choices

- Option 1: One folder per person
- Option 2: One folder per couple
  - Individual stays with birth family until marriage
  - Family group sheet
  - Photocopies of records with source citations
- Option 3: Binders

Paper System
Color Coding

- Mary Hill created the system
- Organize according to the five-generation chart
  - Father's father's line is BLUE
  - Father's mother's line is GREEN
  - Mother's father's line is RED
  - Mother's mother's line is YELLOW
- Start by sorting your "stuff" into four groups/piles/boxes based on grandparent surnames


Organizing Your
Summary

The Genealogical Sketch

- Beginning: Vital information about a couple in the following order
  - Place of birth/baptism and birth/baptism date(s)
  - Place of death/burial and death/burial date(s)
  - Place of marriage and marriage date
- Middle:
  - Narrative about the family
- End: List of couple's children and their dates
- People are numbered

Genealogical Numbering Systems

- Why bother?
  - You need to be able to use compiled genealogies
  - If you write your history for family, you will need to use a system to organize the presentation
- Numbering systems
  - Ahnentafel
  - Register
  - NGSQ/Modified Register

Ahnentafel

- Starts with a person and works back – see pedigree chart
- Males always even number, females always odd number
  - Father's number, take the subject's number and double it
  - Mother's number, father + 1
- When using Ahnentafel for genealogical sketches – lists of children are not usually included

American Ancestors
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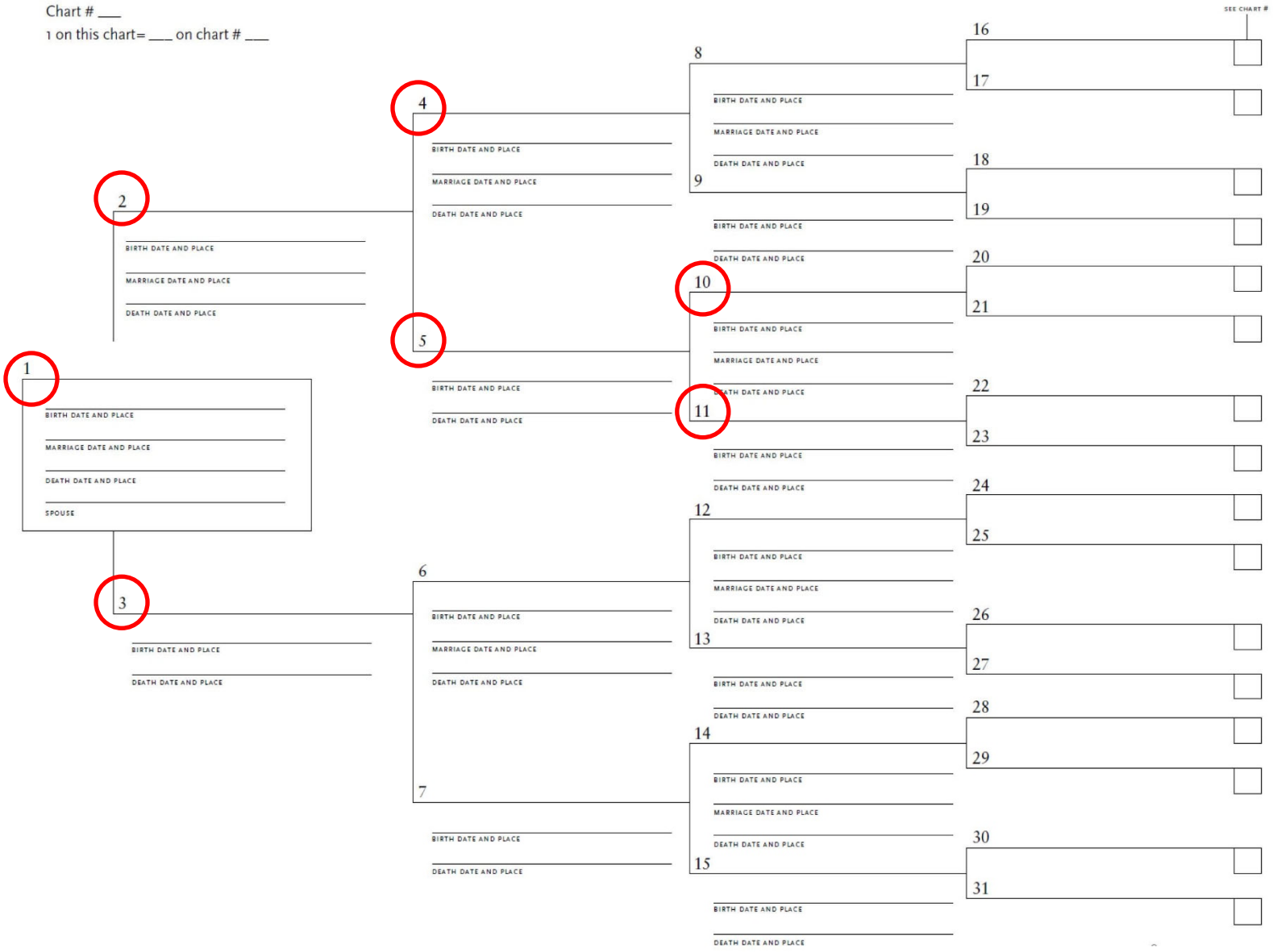
www.AmericanAncestors.org

Chart # ___

1 on this chart= ___ on chart # ___



Ahnentafel Sketch

- Include example from Janice Morgan Seligman So Proudly We Hail, person 12 – Orville Whipple

Register

- Descending numbering system with children assigned numbers if they have their own sketch

Genealogical Summary

1. HENRY[1] DISPAW/DESPER was born say 1618 (assuming marriage at 25), and died in Lynn, Massachusetts, in October 1676.[10] He married in Horsemonden, Kent, 10 April 1643, **HELEN JARRET,** who died probably prior to 1673 when her husband and son Henry, both potters, immigrated to Massachusetts.

Henry Dispaw left a will dated 27 February 1674[/5?], proved 26 June 1677, mentioning sons Henry and Edward. The other children, whose baptisms are shown below, evidently died or remained in England.

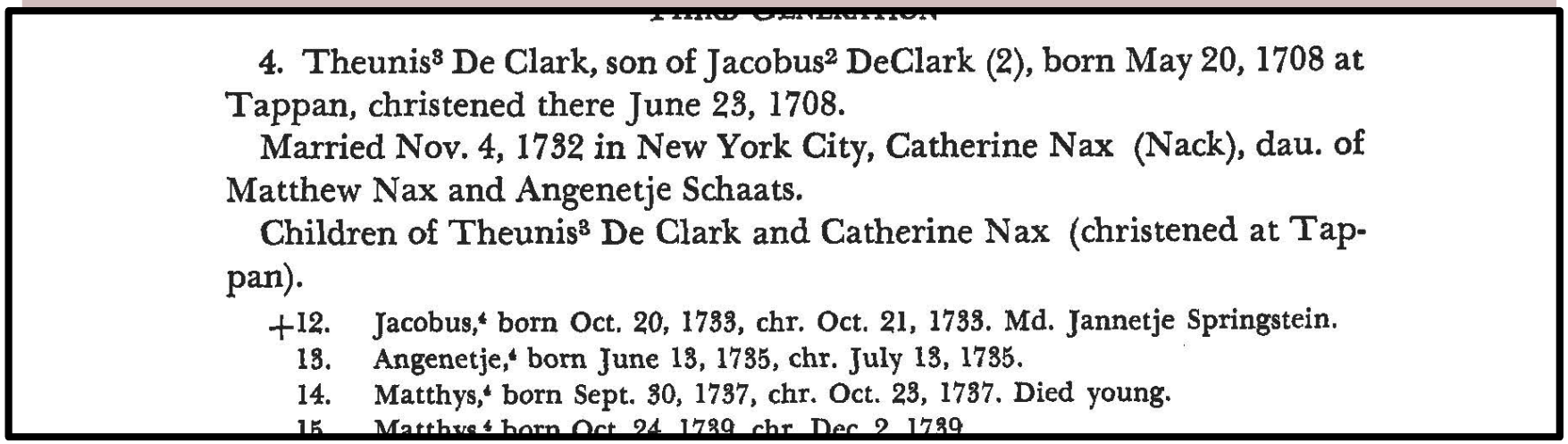
Children of Henry[1] and Helen (Jarret) Dispaw/Desper, all baptisms in Horsemonden:

2. i. HENRY[2] DISPAW, b. ca. 1644; m. (1) _____; (2) CATHERINE _____.
ii. JOAN DISPAW, bp. 13 Sept. 1646.
3. iii. EDWARD DISPAW, bp. 24 March 1649/50; m. SARAH _____.
iv. CHRISTOPHER DISPAW, bp. 7 Feb. 1654.
v. WILLIAM DISPAW, bp. 27 March 1657.

NEHGR, Vol 170: 298

NGSQ (AKA Modified Register)

- Descending numbering system, every child receives a number based on birth order
- Plus signs or asterisks show children with their own sketch



THIRD GENERATION

4. Theunis[3] De Clark, son of Jacobus[2] DeClark (2), born May 20, 1708 at Tappan, christened there June 23, 1708.

Married Nov. 4, 1732 in New York City, Catherine Nax (Nack), dau. of Matthew Nax and Angenetje Schaats.

Children of Theunis[3] De Clark and Catherine Nax (christened at Tappan).

+12. Jacobus,[4] born Oct. 20, 1733, chr. Oct. 21, 1733. Md. Jannetje Springstein.
13. Angenetje,[4] born June 13, 1735, chr. July 13, 1735.
14. Matthys,[4] born Sept. 30, 1737, chr. Oct. 23, 1737. Died young.
15. Matthys[4] born Oct. 24, 1739, chr. Dec. 2, 1739.

NYGBR, Vol 96: 196

Coming Up Next - Module 6 Analysis

NEW ENGLAND HISTORIC GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY

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