

# Genealogy Boot Camp

## *Session #5: Bringing It All Together: Making Your Case and Drawing Conclusions*

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### **FAN/Cluster Research**

FAN (Friends, Associates, and Neighbors) research or cluster research employs your ancestor's social network to proceed with genealogical research. Researching associates and neighbors not only provides context for your ancestors' lives and helps break down brick walls, it can also aid in determining migration patterns, uncovering details about military service, studying maternal lines, and learning about immigrant origins.

### **Building the Network**

To begin a FAN/cluster research project, think first about the extended family, then known associates and neighbors. If needed, proceed with research on associates of associates. Networks to consider are:

- **Religious** – pastors/ministers/priests/rabbis; witnesses to your family's religious events; godparents; church organizations
- **Educational** – people that graduated with your ancestor; participants in the same school activities; friends that signed your ancestor's yearbook; teachers/professors in the field; colleagues that published with an ancestor
- **Occupational** – individuals with the same trade or profession who lived near your ancestor; employers and institutions where your ancestor worked; trade/labor unions; history of industry in your ancestor's town
- **Social** – fraternal organizations; athletic clubs; genealogical/family/heritage organizations; hobbies; hunting clubs; individuals named in letters or autograph albums; individuals named alongside your ancestor in the newspaper's society column
- **Political** – political organizations and affiliations
- **Neighborhood** – individuals residing at neighboring addresses or on the same street; individuals enumerated before or after on the census; abutters named in deeds; adjacent owners on property maps
- **Place/Migration**



## Consider Place and Migration

A place-based or migration-based FAN/cluster research project is built around a group of families that lived in the same area for an extended period of time or a group of families that migrated from one place to another around the same time.

Gazetteers (geographic dictionaries or directories) and local history books are resources that detail the history of a place and how it is changed over time and can be useful in determining settlement, neighborhood makeup, and migration patterns. Many historic gazetteers and local history books have been digitized and made available online at sites such as:

- Google Books (<https://books.google.com/>)
- Internet Archive (<https://archive.org/>)
- HathiTrust (<https://www.hathitrust.org/>)
- FamilySearch Digital Book Library (<https://www.familysearch.org/library/books/>)

Maps are another useful tool for both understanding family history. In particular, maps that show property ownership or real estate boundaries can be useful for extracting details about a specific individual and his/her neighbors.

## FAN/Cluster Research Sources

The same sources used for ancestral research are used for FAN/cluster research. Instead of researching your direct ancestor, use your genealogical skills to research members of the networks identified above. Start by anchoring that individual by his/her relationship to your ancestor and identifying what you know about that associate. Develop a research plan to learn more, and carry out your research.

- Census records
- City directories
- Land records
- Maps
- Atlases
- Tax records
- Newspapers
- Societies
- Town records
- Military pensions
- Court records
- Probate records
- Vital records
- Diaries
- Cemeteries
- Church records

For **census records**, analyze the neighborhood, not just the individual. Did everyone come from the same state or country? Did they arrive in the U.S. at the same time? Do they have the same occupation? Same religion?

For **land records**, research the abutters (owners of adjoining properties). These can provide clues to previous ownership of a property, help determine the physical location of a property, provide information about family relationships, and reveal neighbors from a previous residence.

Use **military pensions** to learn more about your ancestor, his military service, and the people with whom he served. Pensions often include affidavits from fellow soldiers. Your ancestor may also have provided an affidavit filed in another soldier's pension. Search for pension files on Fold3.com or order copies from the National Archives and Records Administration.

Examine **diaries** from individuals who lived or worked in the same community as your ancestor. These may be published or unpublished resources and may contain information about events in the community, movements of neighbors, or births/marriages/deaths. Search for diaries at libraries, archives, and historical societies. Use <https://researchworks.oclc.org/archivegrid/> for your search.

For **cemeteries**, look beyond the headstone and examine interment lists or other records created by the cemetery. Not everyone has a headstone, and determining all individuals buried in one lot can help build the extended family/social network.

For **church records**, consider pew rental lists and records of leadership committees or social organizations in addition to baptismal, marriage, and burial records.

## Organize Your Research

Find a method that works for you and stick to it. Your method should: make it easy to collect information, let you compare details at a glance, document where the information came from, and create a timeline for individuals. Use available templates or create one that works for you. Possible organizational tools include:

- Research log
- Supplemental log for specific record types such as land or probate
- Summary table
- A separate tree
- Comparative timeline
- Narrative summary/report

## Online Resources: FAN/Cluster Research

“Creating a Research Plan for Cluster Research,” Lindsay Fulton/NEHGS,

<https://www.americanancestors.org/video-library/creating-research-plan-cluster-research>

“The Cousin Next Door: Using the FAN Club Principle,” LegacyTree,

<https://www.legacytree.com/blog/cousin-next-door-using-fan-club-principle>

“Identity Problems & the FAN Principle,” Evidence Explained,

<https://www.evidenceexplained.com/content/quicklesson-11-identity-problems-fan-principle>

“Cluster Research: Start Your FAN Club,” Genealogy Explained,

<https://www.genealogyexplained.com/research/cluster-fan-club/>

## NEHGS Webinars: Selected Topics

“The ABCs of Using School Records in Family History Research,” David Allen Lambert,

<https://www.americanancestors.org/video-library/abcs-using-school-records-family-history-research>

“Using Occupations to Trace Ancestors,” Ann Lawthers, <https://www.americanancestors.org/video-library/using-occupations-trace-ancestors>

“City and Rural Directories: More Than Just Names,” Rhonda R. McClure,

<https://www.americanancestors.org/video-library/city-and-rural-directories-more-just-names>

“Finding Your Ancestor in American Fraternal Organization Records,” Rhonda R. McClure,

<https://www.americanancestors.org/video-library/finding-your-ancestor-american-fraternal-organization-records>

## Published Resources: Selected Topics

Alicia Crane Williams, *Early New England Families*, 2 vols., Boston: NEHGS, 2015-2019.

<https://shop.americanancestors.org/>

Charles Oscar Paullin, *Atlas of Historical Geography of the United States*, Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1975. (originally published in 1932)

Carrie Eldridge, *An atlas of settlement between the Appalachian Mountains and the Mississippi-Missouri Valleys, 1760-1880*, Chesapeake, Ohio: Carrie Eldridge, 2006.

Carrie Eldridge, *An atlas of German migration and America*, Chesapeake, Ohio: Carrie Eldridge, 2002.

Carrie Eldridge, *An atlas of trails west of the Mississippi River*, Chesapeake, Ohio: Carrie Eldridge, 2001.



- Carrie Eldridge, *An atlas of northern trails westward from New England*, Chesapeake, Ohio: Carrie Eldridge, 2000.
- Carrie Eldridge, *An atlas of southern trails to the Mississippi*, Chesapeake, Ohio: Carrie Eldridge, 1999.
- Carrie Eldridge, *An atlas of Appalachian trails to the Ohio River*, Chesapeake, Ohio: Carrie Eldridge, 1998.
- Cleadie B. Barnett and Elizabeth S. Sewall, *Loyalist Families*, Fredricton, NB: Fredericton Branch of the United Empire Loyalists' Association of Canada, 1983.
- E. Keith Fitzgerald, *Loyalist Lists: Over 2000 Loyalist Names and Families from the Haldimand Papers*, Toronto, Ont.: Ontario Genealogical Society, 1984.
- Frank J. Doherty, *The Settlers of the Beekman Patent*, 9 vols., Pleasant Valley, NY: F.J. Doherty, 1990-2019.
- Guide to Diaries in the R. Stanton Avery Special Collections of the New England Historic Genealogical Society*, Boston: NEHGS, 2008. <https://shop.americanancestors.org/>
- Lois Kimball Mathews Rosenberry, *The expansion of New England; the spread of New England settlement and institutions to the Mississippi River, 1620-1865*, New York: Russell & Russell, 1962.
- Robert Charles Anderson, *The Great Migration Begins: Immigrants to New England, 1620-1633*, 3 vols., Boston: NEHGS, 1995. <https://shop.americanancestors.org/>
- Robert Charles Anderson, *The Great Migration Begins: Immigrants to New England, 1634-1635*, 7 vols., Boston: NEHGS, 1999-2011. <https://shop.americanancestors.org/>