# The F.A.N. Approach

## *Come Home to New England 2025*

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## What is Cluster Research?

- A research technique used to learn more about an ancestor by examining records left by the ancestor's cluster
- F.A.N. stands for Family, Associates, and Neighbors

## Family

- Think outside of the box of family members within a household
- Search for cousins, grandparents, aunts, uncles, in-laws, step-parents, siblings, etc.

## Reasons to Research Family

- Determine parentage
- Identify maiden names of female ancestors
- Discover origin of immigrant ancestors
- Locate information about an ancestor's birthplace

## Associates

- There are many levels of associates – those with the same political affiliation, belong to the same religious congregation, have similar occupations, students/alumni of same school

## Reasons to Research Associates

- Tracing migrations
- Discovering more about military service
  - Records of soldiers who served with ancestor may give important clues in their affidavits of pension files, war diaries, morning reports, etc.
  - "Adopt the Regiment"
- Study of a particular place or event – associated places can be important
- Investigate maternal lines where there are few records for female ancestors
- Develop a more holistic view of an ancestor

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## Neighbors

- Household neighbors
  - Review the census with neighboring properties
  - Land deeds also include abutting neighbors
- Individuals buried in the same or surrounding cemetery plots
- Pew assignments

## Reasons to Research Neighbors

- Provide clues about migration patterns and earlier origins
- Inform us of our ancestor's immigrant origins
- Supply missing information about our ancestors
- Help us trace women and may reveal maiden names

## Key Resources for Cluster Research

- Cemeteries/Headstones
- Census Records
- Church Records
- City Directories
- County and Local Histories
- Genealogies
- Land and Mortgage Records
- Newspaper Articles/Obituaries
- Pension Records
- Probate Records
- Tax Lists

## Cluster Research Steps

1. Organize your previous research into an annotated research log
2. Look for missing information and identify your goal
3. Who's your F.A.N. club?
4. List the records that will aid in your research
5. Locate the resources
6. Research!
7. Analyze and make your conclusions

TIPS:

- Watch this webinar on organizational tools - https://www.americanancestors.org/video-library/setting-yourself-success-organizational-tools-and-tips-break-down-brick-walls

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- Research templates can be downloaded from https://www.americanancestors.org/tools/research-templates
- Use the F.A.N. Club Spreadsheet to help organize the persons you research

## Resources

### Cluster Analysis and Chain Migration

Cyndi's List, Cluster & Collateral Genealogy, http://www.cyndislist.com/research-methodology/fan-club.

Fulton, Lindsay. "Creating a Research Plan for Cluster Research" webinar. 21 May 2020, at https://www.americanancestors.org/video-library/creating-research-plan-cluster-research.

Mills, Elizabeth Shown, *Quicksheet: The Historical Biographer's Guide to Cluster Research (the FAN principle)*, Baltimore, Maryland, Genealogical Publishing Co, 2012. 5th Floor Stacks, CT85 .M554 2012.

Norris, Michele. "Circumstantial Evidence." Vita Brevis blog. 20 July 2017, at https://vitabrevis.americanancestors.org/2017/07/circumstantial-evidence.

### Migration routes:

19th Century U.S. Canals: An Index of Internet Resource. http://19thcentuscanals.net.mocha3030.mochahost.com/.

Dollarhide, William (and Leland K. Meitzler). American Migration Routes, Part 1: Indian Paths, Post Roads & Wagon Roads. Orting, WA: Family Roots Publishing, 2022.

Dollarhide, William. Map Guide to American Migration Routes, 1735-1815. Bountiful, Utah: Heritage Quest, 1997.

Family Search, "US Migration Trails and Roads," https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/US_Migration_Trails_and_Roads.

Library of Congress, "Native American Trails and Places," https://guides.loc.gov/native-american-spaces/published-sources/trails.

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