

# Researching Upstate New York

## *Class 5: Strategies for Success in New York: Case Studies*

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### **General Considerations**

- You may not find one “smoking-gun” record
- You may need to rely on several records to build a case
- Some records may be less reliable than others
- “A” may lead to “B,” which might lead to “C” and then back to “A” (or more)
- May have several working theories

TIP: Stay organized! Keep track of what records you’ve already checked (whether they yield results or not) and keep good documentation on the allied families and clusters you are researching,

### **Using Onomastic Evidence**

- Some cultures may have defined naming patterns, while others may be less rigid
- Surnames as first names or less common first names can be clues of earlier kinships and origins
- It can be circumstantial evidence, but can be a starting point or provide a working theory

TIP: Naming patterns are not always a guarantee of kinship.

#### Case Study: Jonathan Pinney of Dutchess County, New York and Plymouth, Vermont

C. C. Child, “Identifying the Parents of Jonathan Pinney (ca. 1754-1812) of Guilford and Plymouth, Vermont,” *Register* 163 (2009):100-01

### **Determining maternity when a father has two wives**

- A man may be married to two women with the same first name, two sisters, or even (rarely) women who have the same full name!
- Create a complete timeline with probate, land records, military, pensions, or any possible record
- Follow leads on family members of the male subject and both of his wives

#### Case Study: Rogers family of Orleans County, New York

C. C. Child, “George Rogers of Norwich and Lebanon, Conn., Conway and Whatley, Mass., and his Two Wives, Margaret Caswell and Ann Brewster: A New Francis Eaton Line,” *Mayflower Descendant* 53 (2004): 19-28

## **“Esoteric” records not necessarily in New York**

Answers to New York mysteries may not be found in New York records themselves. When no family connections can be found from probate or deed research, consider researching outside the box.

### Case Study: Franklin family of western New York

C.C. Child and J. Kelsey Jones, “Family of John and Esther (Daggett) Franklin: A John Billington Line,” *Mayflower Descendant* 60 (2011): 158-178

C.C. Child, “The Miller Sisters,” VitaBrevis.AmericanAncestors.org, 27 March 2017

## **Separating people of the same name in the same community**

- Even when records are abundant, kinship linkages may be problematic
- Records in colonial period and early nineteenth century are often not as detailed as we want
- Try to get additional records when a family name may be too common to rely on a vital record alone

## **Other Challenges:**

- Earlier marriages of both parties
- Reliance on readily available vital records indices when lesser-known town collections may exist
- Probate or land records are found, but still do not state the needed information

TIP: Do not assume a female’s name at marriage is her birth surname.

TIP: You can have a documented birth, marriage, and death date and the lineage can be wrong; the reverse can also be true.

## **How DNA might help:**

### Case Study: Esther (Dyer) Flanders of Braintree, Vermont

Michael Sean Dunn, “The Parents of Esther (Dyer) Flanders (1790-1876) of Braintree, Vermont and Livingston County, New York: A Matrilineal Priscilla Mullins Descent,” *Mayflower Descendant*, 66 (2018): 23-48

C. C. Child and Michael Sean Dunn, “A Mayflower mtDNA Study: Matrilineal Descents of Priscilla Mullins Alden,” *American Ancestors* 19: 1 (Spring 2018):56-57