# Finding Your Elusive Female Ancestors Utilizing DNA and Searching her FAN Club

**By Julie Stoddard, MSc, AG®**
See [ConnectTheBranch.com](ConnectTheBranch.com) for a copy of the slides.

## Why are women harder to find in the records?

- Under English common law, which many early U.S. colonies adopted, married women were covered under the legal status of their husbands. Because the men took care of many of the legal matters, the women were not always mentioned in the records.
- If a married woman was mentioned in the records, for most of her life this would be under her married name, so it is harder to document her maiden name.
- Widows, divorced women, and single women had their own legal status and may be easier to find.
- The legal rights which varied for women over the years include the custody of their children, inheritance, voting rights, entering into contracts or going to court, and citizenship.

## Interweave these three strategies to successfully find records for women:

1. Search relevant records
2. Search her FAN club
3. Utilize DNA evidence

## Recap: "Finding Your Elusive Female Ancestors" and records most likely to name women:

Records are listed in general order of priority, starting with the records most likely to be successful due to 1) record content and 2) ease of access.

**Best records to search first:**
- Vital Records
- Census Records
- Family Trees
- Cemetery Records
- Probate Records
- Social Security
- DNA Testing

**Best records to search second:**

- Obituaries
- Land Records
- Military Records
- Newspapers
- Perform a Google Search
- Church records
- City Directories
- Local and County Histories
- Immigration or Naturalization records
- Bible Records
- Court Records

**Other resources for researching women:**

Carmack, Sharon DeBartolo. *Genealogist's Guide to Discovering Your Female Ancestors: Special Strategies for Uncovering Hard-to-Find Information about Your Female Lineage.* Betterway, 1998.

Cyndi's List. "Female Ancestors." https://cyndislist.com/female/.

Salmon, Marylynn. *Women and the Law of Property in Early America*. Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1992.

Schaefer, Christina K. *The Hidden Half of the Family: A Sourcebook for Women's Genealogy*. Baltimore, MD: Genealogical Pub., 2006.

# Using DNA to Identify your Female Ancestors

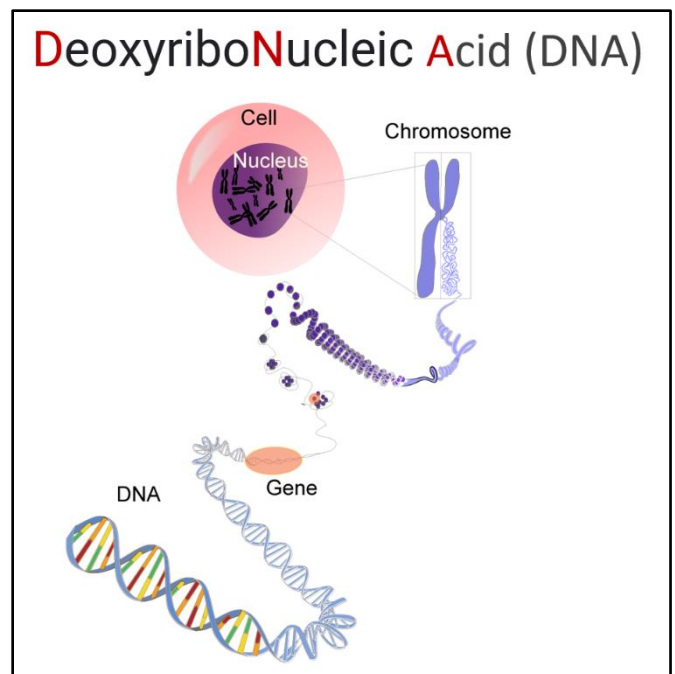## Resources for Understanding DNA

**Websites & Blogs:**

- DNA Explained by Roberta Estes
- The Genetic Genealogist by Blaine Bettinger
- Your DNA Guide by Diahan Southard
- International Society of Genetic Genealogy Wiki

**DNA Classes and Webinars:**

- RootsTech
- Legacy Family Tree Webinars
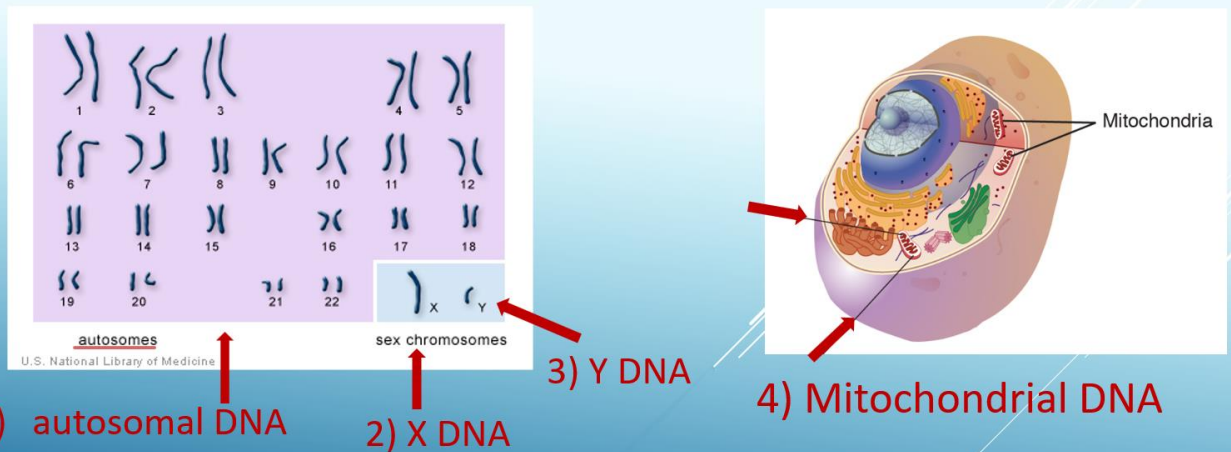
**Julie's "Beginning DNA" handout and slides:**
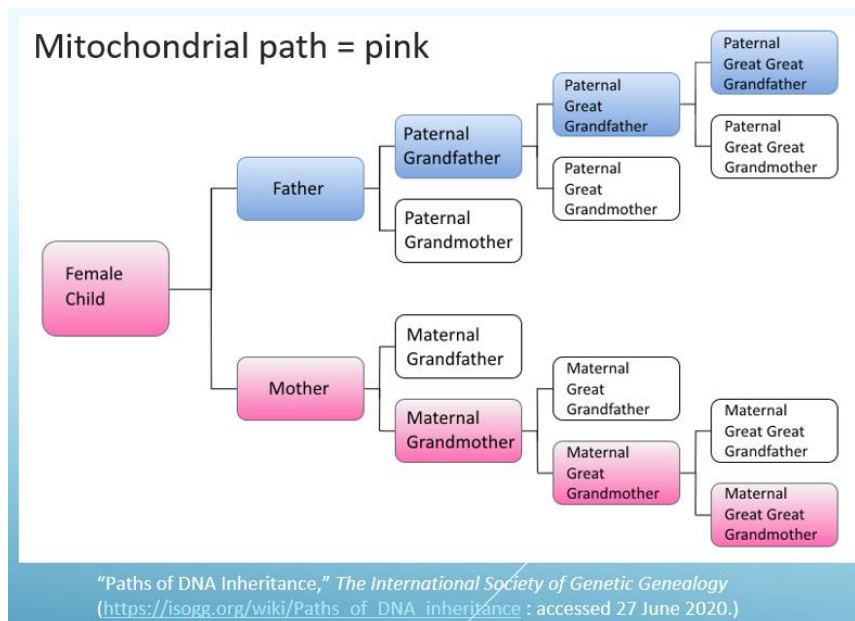
ConnectTheBranch.com/presentations

## DNA Inheritance

- There are four types of DNA tests: autosomal DNA, mitochondrial DNA, Y-DNA, and X-DNA. Each type of DNA has a unique inheritance pattern and can be used to research women.
- The most common DNA test is atDNA, ex. Ancestry or MyHeritage.



Four types of DNA, each with a unique inheritance pattern

1) autosomal DNA
2) X DNA
3) Y DNA
4) Mitochondrial DNA

Credit: https://medlineplus.gov/genetics/understanding/basics/howmanychromosomes/

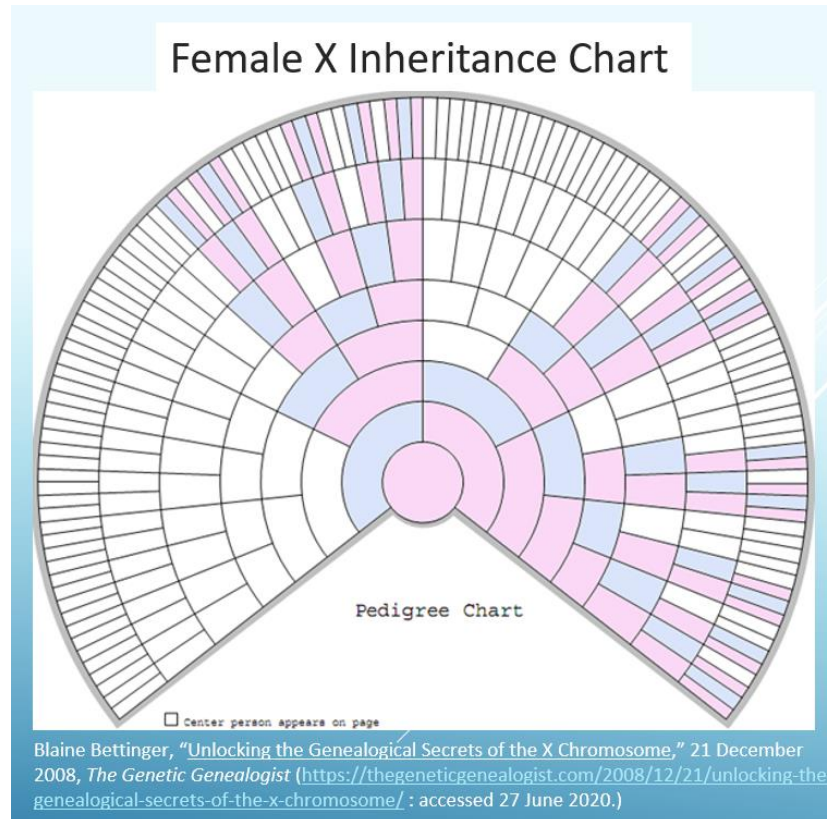Credit: https://www.genome.gov/genetics-glossary/Mitochondria

## Mitochondrial DNA Inheritance

- A mother passes mitochondrial DNA to all her children, but only daughters pass it on.
- The closeness of DNA matches is based on how many mutations occurred.
- Target test female-to-female lines of descent to research various lines.



Mitochondrial path = pink

"Paths of DNA Inheritance," *The International Society of Genetic Genealogy* (https://isogg.org/wiki/Paths_of_DNA_inheritance : accessed 27 June 2020.)

## X-DNA Inheritance

- Women inherit the X chromosome from both parents.
- Males only inherit the X chromosome from their mother.
- The unique inheritance path can be helpful in solving research problems.
- The X cM counts are different than autosomal cM counts.



Female X Inheritance Chart

Blaine Bettinger, "Unlocking the Genealogical Secrets of the X Chromosome," 21 December 2008, *The Genetic Genealogist* (https://thegeneticgenealogist.com/2008/12/21/unlocking-the-genealogical-secrets-of-the-x-chromosome/ : accessed 27 June 2020.)
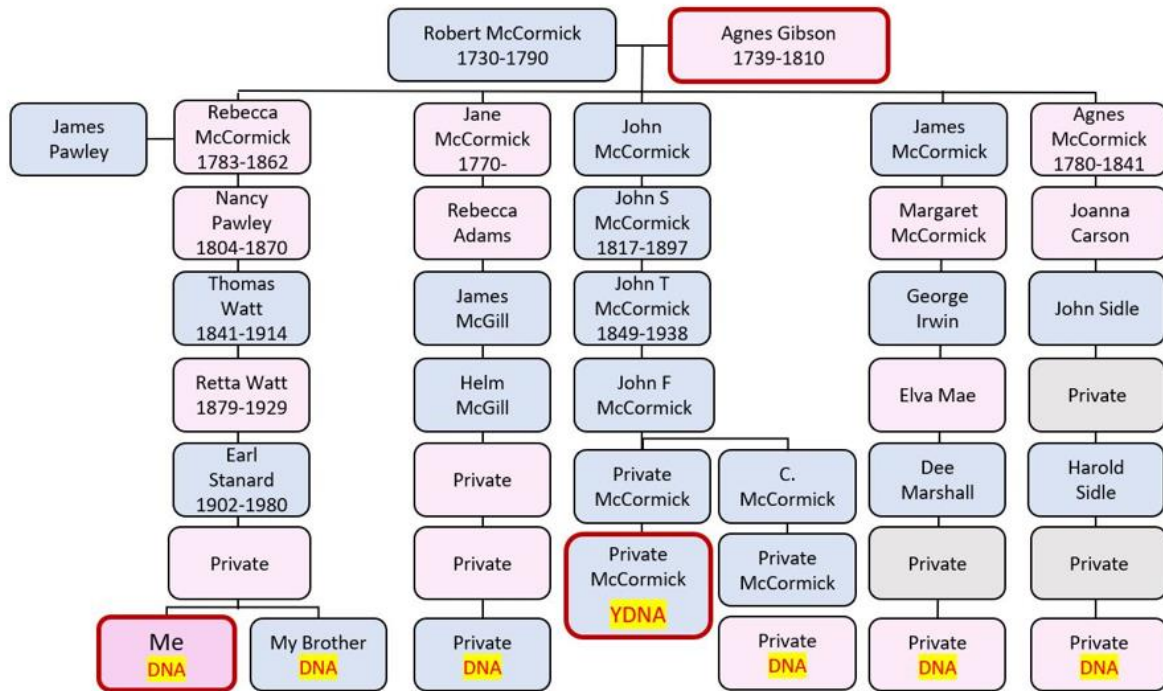
## Y-DNA Inheritance

- Only males inherit the Y chromosome
- Find a male-to-male line of descent to test.
- Especially helpful in distant genealogical brick walls.
- Research closest Y-DNA matches (fewest mutations) to lead to more records to identify both men and women.
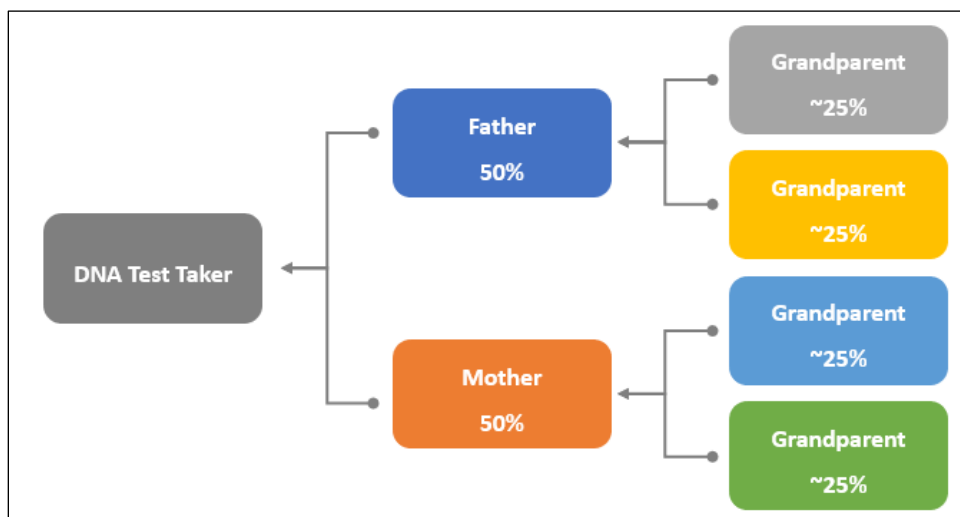
# Y-DNA Testing Candidate

## The Family of Robert McCormick & Agnes Gibson



## Autosomal Inheritance

- Humans have two copies of each chromosome – one from the father and one from the mother.
- The autosomal chromosomes undergo *recombination* during meiosis, meaning there is an exchange of DNA segments between the maternal and paternal copies of the chromosomes.

*Chromosomes exchange segments during meiosis in a process called recombination.*
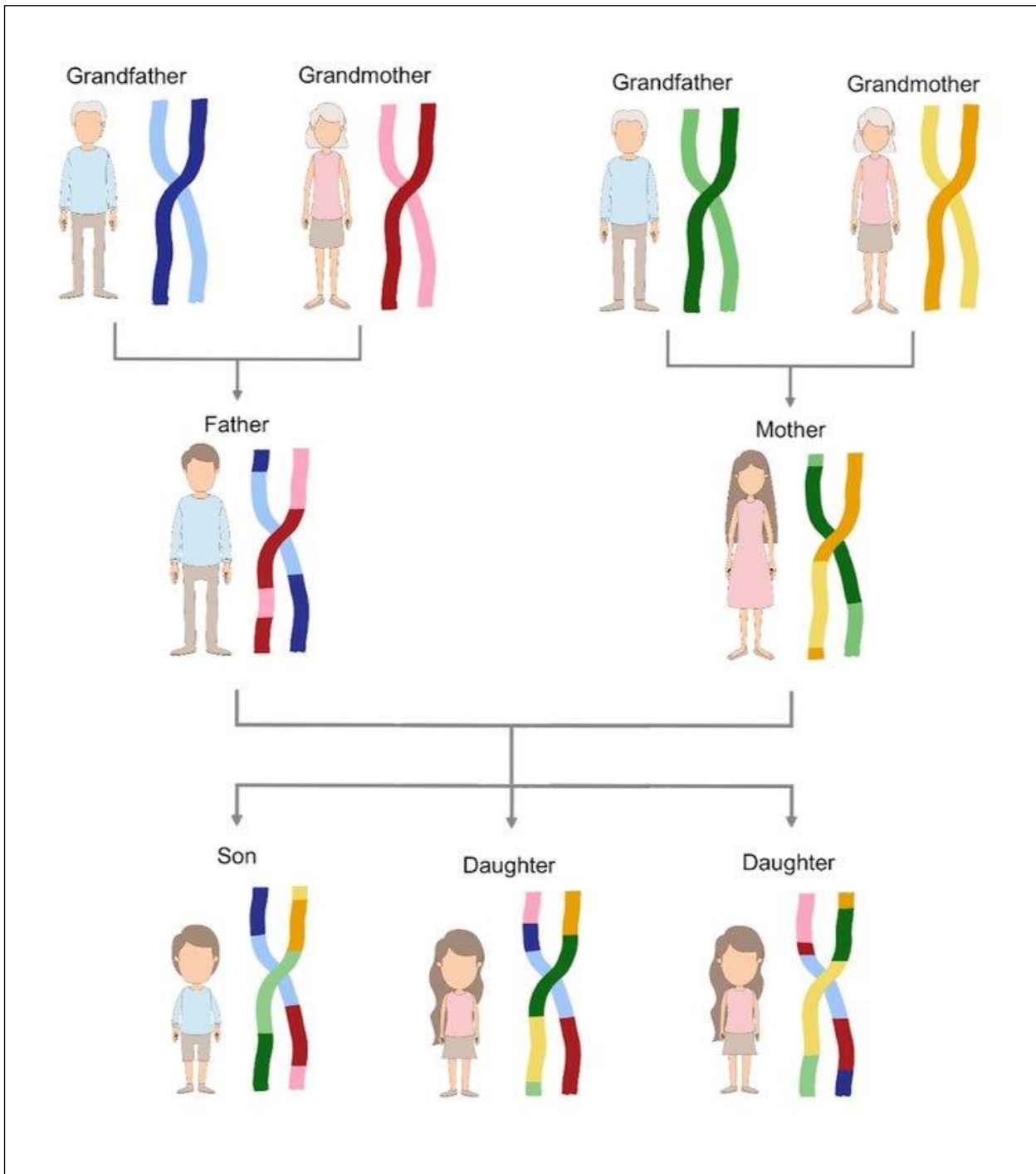


Each person inherits DNA from all four grandparents, but due to recombination, they do not receive an exact 25% from each grandparent. The more generations you go back, the higher the chance is that you will not share autosomal DNA with all your 3rd cousins, 4th cousins, etc.

# Autosomal DNA Testing Comparison Chart

Transfer your autosomal DNA to other databases that allow it to find more matches.

| Company | AncestryDNA | 23andMe | MyHeritage | Family Tree DNA |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Type of DNA test** | Autosomal | Autosomal X-DNA | Autosomal | Autosomal X-DNA Y-DNA Mitochondrial |
| **People with atDNA tests** (March 2023) | 23,000,000 people | 13,400,000 people | 6,800,000 people | 1,520,000 people |
| **Upload DNA from other companies?** | No | No | Yes | Yes |

Information from https://isogg.org/wiki/Autosomal_DNA_testing_comparison_chart

## Principles behind autosomal DNA evidence

1. DNA Evidence Principle #1: The more cM a person shares with a DNA match, the closer the relationship is.
   a. The Shared cM Project on DNA Painter shows possible relationships.

# The Shared cM Project on DNAPainter[1]

- The Shared cM Project tool estimates relationships between two DNA matches based on the number of shared centimorgans in the match.
  - The number below the title of the relationship represents the average number of cM shared for the given relationship.
  - The two numbers below the average represent the range of possible shared centimorgans for a particular relationship.
- Enter the number of cM you share with a match into the top box.
- The Shared cM Tool highlights the possible relationships.

DNA PAINTER  Tools  Help  Subscribe                                    Blog   Sign in

## The Shared cM Project 4.0 tool v4
Read more about the tool and this update

**March 2020**

Blaine T. Bettinger
www.thegeneticgenealogist.com
More about this project
CC 4.0 Attribution License
Interactive version v4 by Jonny Perl at DNA Painter
Click here to contribute data to the shared cM project
Last updated 26th March 2020

**Filter**

Enter the total number of cM for your match here:

[        ] ⇕        reset

or enter %

Then any relationships that fit will stand out below
Click here for a shareable link to the cM amount above

**How to read this chart**

Relationship
Average
Range
(low to high;
99th percentile)

**Important**
- For relationships more distant than Half 2C, the averages were determined only for relationships in which DNA was shared.
- The more distant a relationship, the more likely it is that you won't share DNA at all (read more)
- These statistics do not cater for pedigree collapse or endogamy

**Most distant common ancestors**
Assuming no pedigree collapse or endogamy, and that you're related in just one way, the furthest back you might need to go to find common ancestors for a match of 244cM is 3rd-Great-Grandparent level or generation 6 on your pedigree chart.
*The connection may be closer.*

Relationship probabilities (based on stats from The DNA Geek)
New: View these relationships in a tree

**Other versions**
Beta with updated probabilities
With editable boxes
Shared cM 3.0 (2017) version

New Click on any relationship to view a histogram

Read more about cousin relationships

| | | | | | | | | Great-Great-Great-Grandparent | GGGG Aunt / Uncle | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| | | | | | | | Great-Great-Grandparent | GGG Aunt / Uncle | | |
| Half GG-Aunt / Uncle 208 103 – 284 | | Great-Grandparent 887 485 – 1486 | | | | | | Great-Great-Aunt / Uncle 420 186 – 713 | 1C3R 117 25 – 238 | 2C3R 51 0 – 154 | Other Relationships |
| Half 1C2R 125 16 – 269 | Half Great-Aunt / Uncle 431 184 – 668 | Grandparent 1754 984 – 2462 | | | | | Great-Aunt / Uncle 850 330 – 1467 | 1C2R 221 33 – 471 | 2C2R 71 0 – 244 | 3C2R 36 0 – 166 | 6C 18 0 – 71 |
| Half 2C1R 66 0 – 190 | Half 1C1R 224 62 – 469 | Half Aunt / Uncle 871 492 – 1315 | Parent 3485 2376 – 3720 | | | Aunt / Uncle 1741 1201 – 2282 | 1C1R 433 102 – 980 | 2C1R 122 14 – 353 | 3C1R 48 0 – 192 | 4C1R 28 0 – 126 | 6C1R 15 0 – 56 |
| Half 3C 48 0 – 168 | Half 2C 120 10 – 325 | Half 1C 449 156 – 979 | Half Sibling 1759 1160 – 2436 | Sibling 2613 1613 – 3488 | SELF | 1C 866 396 – 1397 | 2C 229 41 – 592 | 3C 73 0 – 234 | 4C 35 0 – 139 | 5C 25 0 – 117 | 6C2R 13 0 – 45 |
| Half 3C1R 37 0 – 139 | Half 2C1R 66 0 – 190 | Half 1C1R 224 62 – 469 | Half Niece / Nephew 871 492 – 1315 | Niece / Nephew 1740 1201 – 2282 | Child 3487 2376 – 3720 | 1C1R 433 102 – 980 | 2C1R 122 14 – 353 | 3C1R 48 0 – 192 | 4C1R 28 0 – 126 | 5C1R 21 0 – 80 | 7C 14 0 – 57 |

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Finding Your Elusive Female Ancestors – DNA & FAN Club

**DNA Evidence Principle #2:** A genetic network is also called a DNA Shared Match Group.
- The evidence is that they share a Most Recent Common Ancestor (MRCA).
- The larger the genetic network, the stronger the evidence.
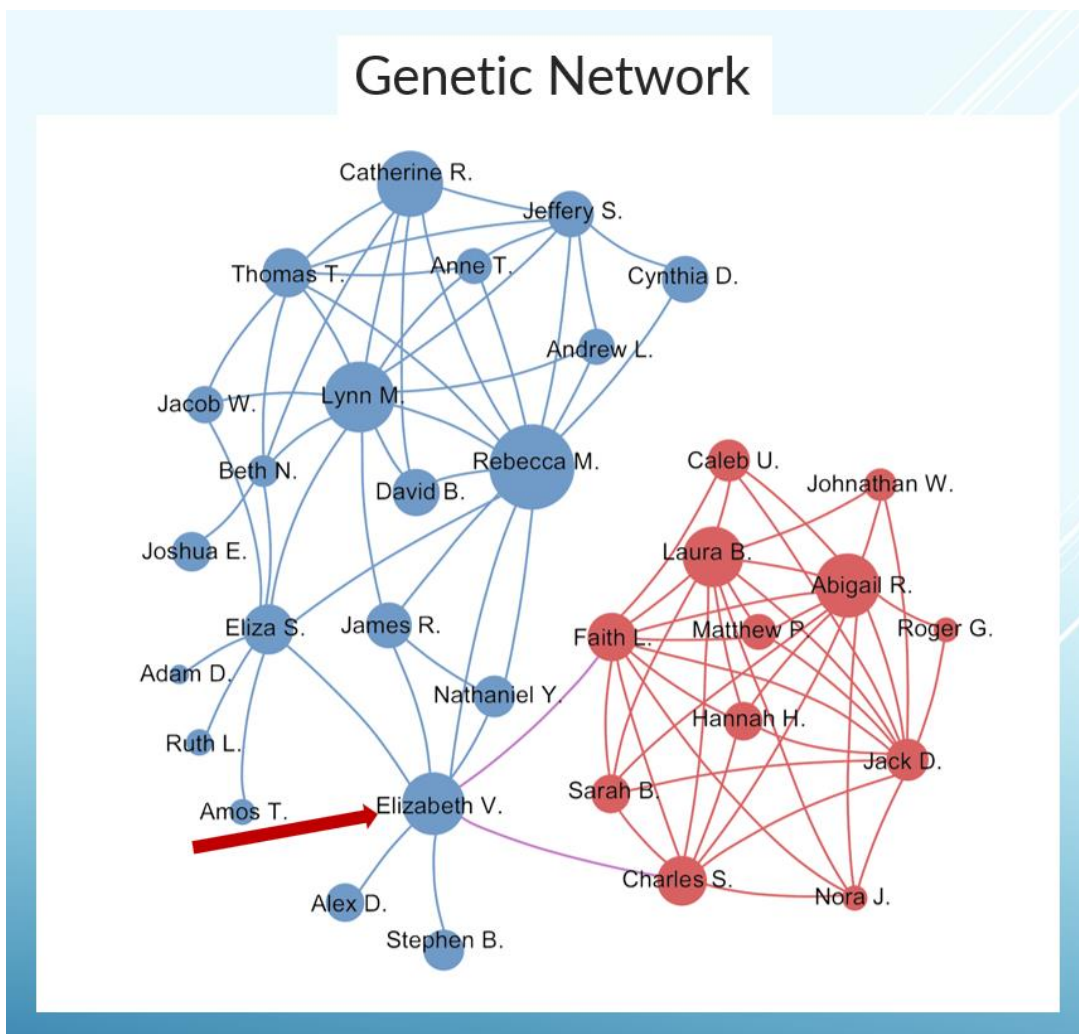


Genetic Network

- A DNA Shared Match Group or Genetic Network can also be displayed this way.
- The Most Recent Common Ancestor (MRCA) has been identified for this Shared Match Group.
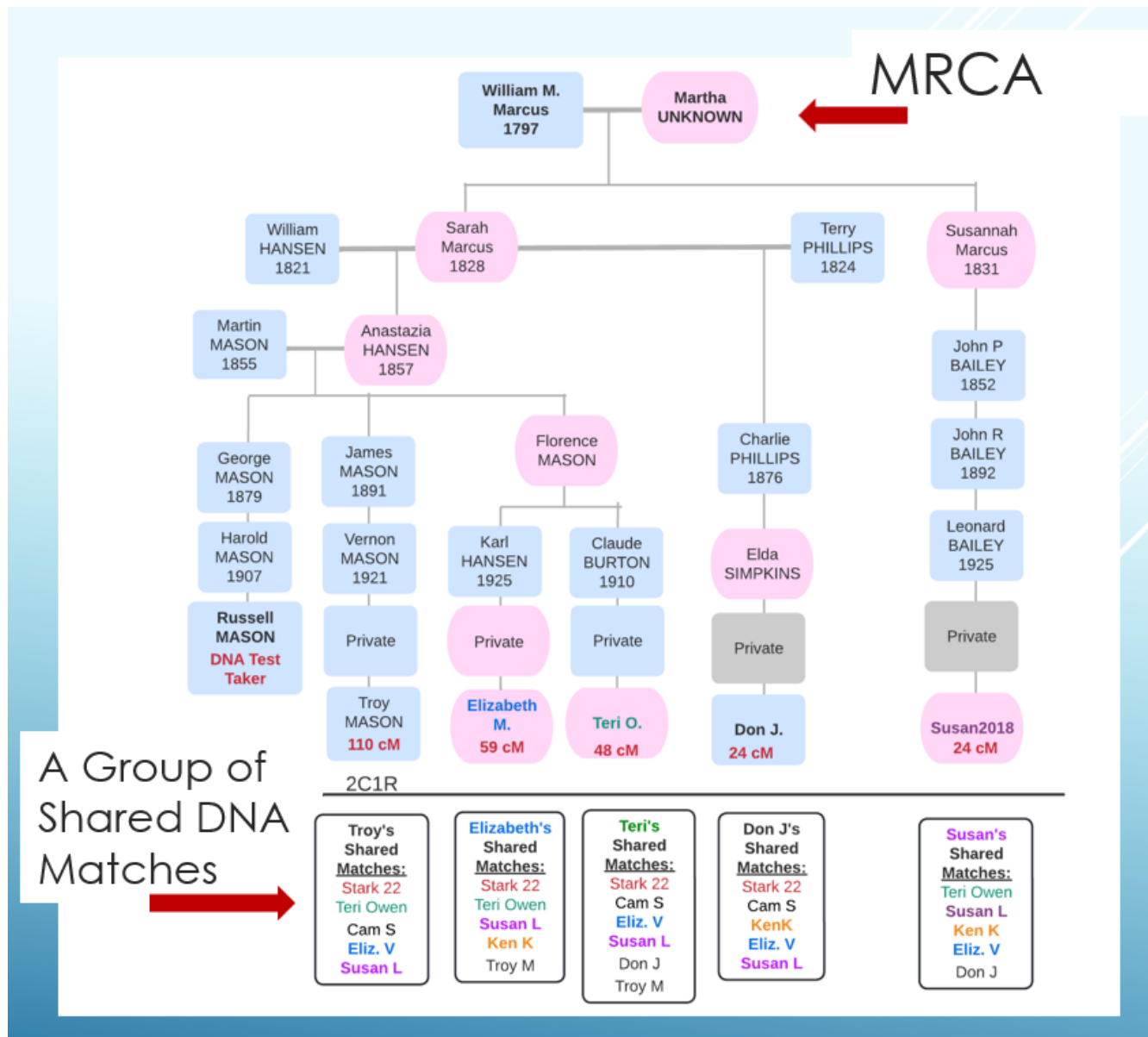
**What you should come away with:** 5 DNA strategies to find more records/evidence.

- **Proving a hypothesis for a maiden name:** search your DNA match list for those with that maiden name in their trees.
- **An unknown maiden name:** Ancestry's ThruLines or MyHeritage's Theory of Family Relativity can suggest the maiden name for an ancestor.
- **Not certain if documents found relate to your ancestor:** confirm the records with DNA matches who descend from siblings in that family.
- **An unknown parent/ancestor:** building up trees for a Shared Match Group can lead to records or locations to focus on first.
- **An unknown parent/ancestor:** The Most Recent Common Ancestor of a Shared Match Group could be the unknown ancestor.

# DNA Strategy #2

**An unknown maiden name:**
Ancestry's ThruLines or
MyHeritage's Theory of
Family Relativity can suggest
the maiden name for an
ancestor.

Remember they both
suggest <u>possible</u> relationships
– verify everything!
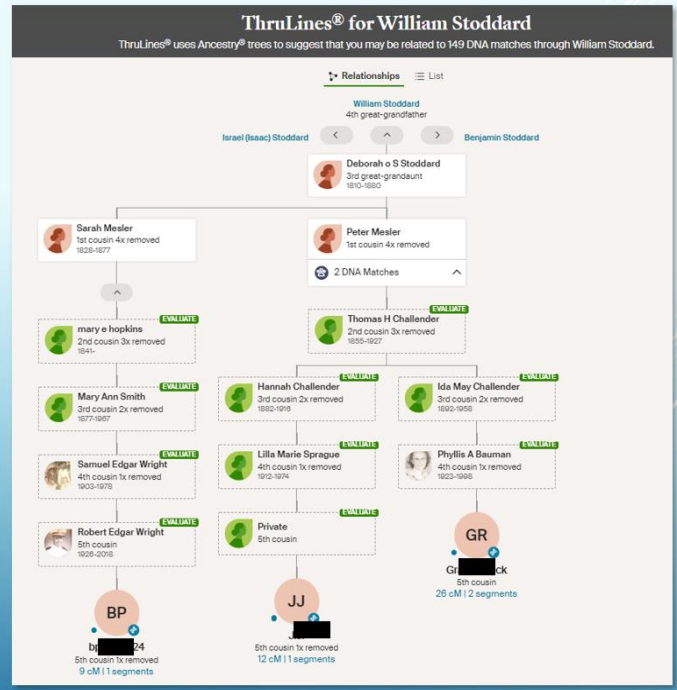


# DNA Strategy #3

**Not certain if
documents found for
a family relate to your
ancestor:** confirm the
records with DNA
matches who
descend from siblings
in that family.

Documents confirmed
everyone but Anna.
DNA confirmed Anna.
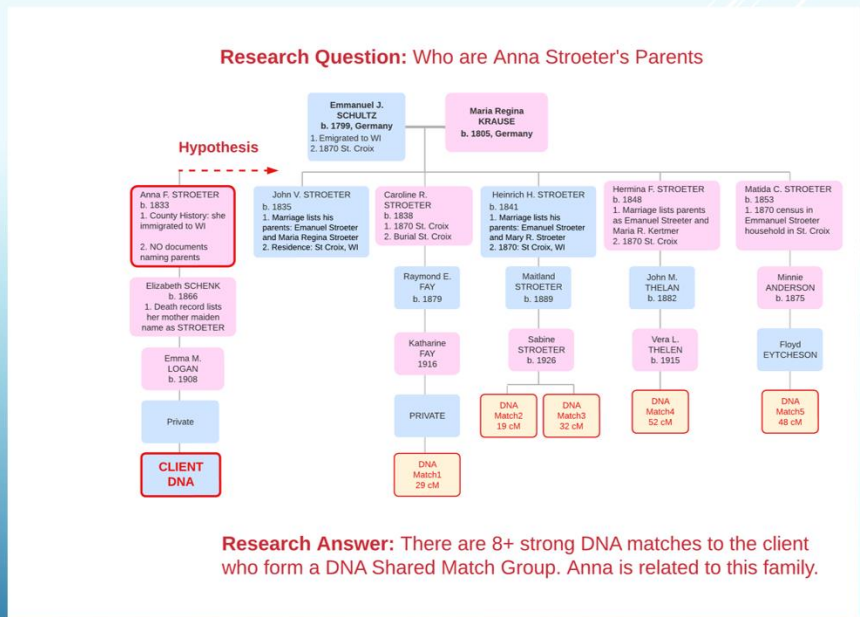
# DNA Strategy #4

**An unknown parent/ancestor:** building up trees for a Shared Match Group can lead to records or locations to focus research on first.

Watch for unique surnames or locations.
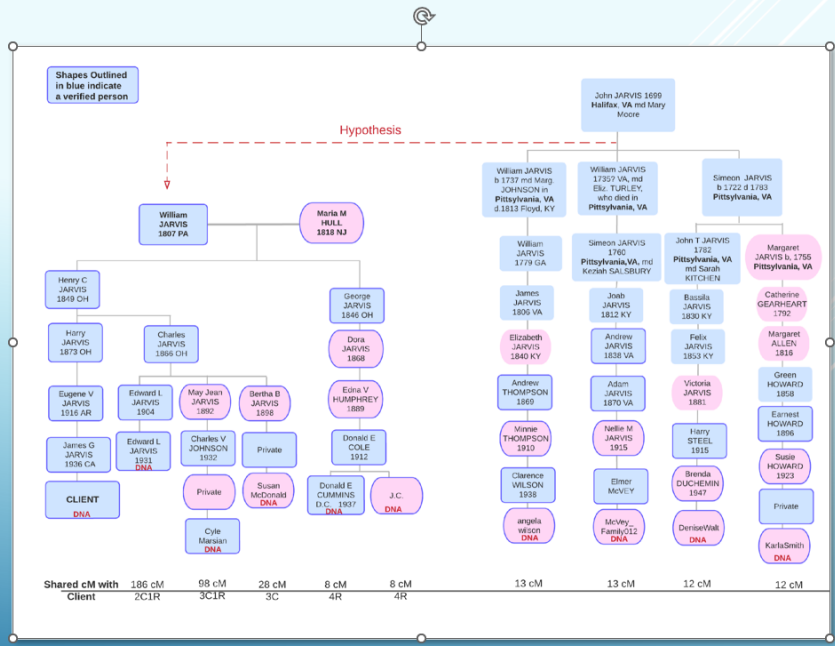


# DNA Strategy #5

**An unknown parent/ancestor:** The Most Recent Common Ancestor of a Shared Match Group could be the unknown ancestor.

Documents found for Susannah Marcus named her parents.

DNA can lead to more documents to research!
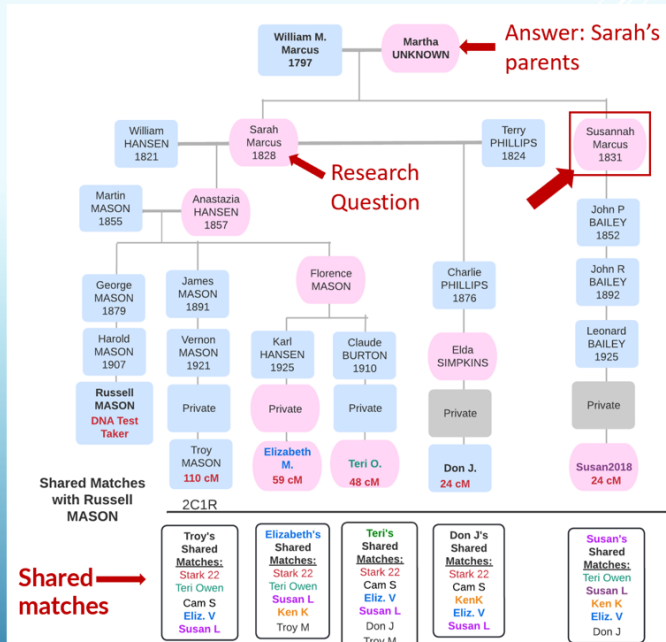
## FAN Club Introduction

When researching ancestors who lived in earlier time periods or regions with few records, the lack of records can create a brick wall in the research. This necessitates expanding the research to the cluster of people connected with the ancestor: immediate and extended family members, friends, associates, and neighbors, also known as the ancestor's FAN Club.

Cluster research pieces together additional records and evidence that can overcome the brick wall. Cluster research leads the researcher to additional documents which may name the ancestor or provide indirect evidence that can overcome the brick wall. This article addresses when to use cluster research, who is in the ancestor's cluster, how to organize the findings, and the steps for cluster research.

## Identifying Members of an Ancestor's Cluster

Anyone named in the ancestor's records is part of his or her cluster. "Family" in the FAN acronym is composed of three groups of people: immediate family, extended family, and others with the same or similar surname who lived in the same area. The ancestor's immediate family consists of spouses, children, and stepchildren. Researching the extended family starts with the ancestor's parents, siblings, in-laws, grandparents, aunts, uncles, and step-relatives, and expands from there. DNA research can help identify more members of the immediate or extended family.

Other families with the same or a similar surname who lived near the ancestor may be relatives, especially when the surname is not common. Start with people with the same surname who lived in the same area of the town or county. Before extending the surname search further out, research the ancestor's immediate and extended family members, associates, and neighbors. Begin the surname study in census, vital, probate, and land records, and then widen the search to other records available for that region and time period, like city directories and tax lists.

"Associates" in the FAN Club interacted with the ancestor but are not identified as relatives. Examples of associates include witnesses at a wedding, informants for a death certificate, and executors and others listed in probate records, such as debtors. Other associates include signers of affidavits for military pension or bounty land applications, coworkers, and individuals doing business in land records, militia groups, immigration records, church records, or court documents. Two reasons justify the effort spent researching associates:

1.  They may turn out to be family members
2.  They may provide context and indirect evidence which uniquely identifies the ancestor.

FAN Club "Neighbors" lived near the ancestor. Census schedules, city directories, tax records, and land records may name the ancestor's neighbors. Due to the high number of possible neighbors for each ancestor, focus on close or known neighbors first.

# Organizing Cluster Research Findings

The amount of research that needs to be tracked increases significantly when it extends beyond a person's immediate family. Keep records organized and searchable to make cluster research more manageable and effective. Two important organizational tools for tracking cluster research are a research log and the ancestor's timeline.

### Research Logs

Use a research log to record the names and details in each record found as well as all searches performed, . Keeping a log saves time in the long run, especially when it is digital and searchable. Research logs are more workable when they are narrow in scope, such as for an immediate family.

Record all details in the research log: occupations, military service, signature, physical features, locations, other individuals (FAN Club) named in a record. List any clues that could identify an ancestor's economic standing, including the amount of land owned or taxes owed, to help confirm his or her identity in other records.

View original records when possible. They can reveal other details to distinguish the ancestor, such as signatures or the original order of a list. When a list is alphabetized, the community context is lost. For example, tax lists or petitions may have been compiled by neighborhoods, cemetery records may show family plots, and ship lists can reveal people traveling together. Community context is especially important for cluster research.

| Research Goal (Family): Robert McCormick & Agnes Gibson | | | Locality: Penn's Valley, Centre, Pennsylvania |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Date** | **Repository/ Call #** | **Source Description** | **Results/Comments** |
| 4 January 2014 | Ancestry | 1790 U.S. Census of Northumberland County, Pennsylvania, population schedule, p. 96, digital image, *Ancestry* (https://ancestry.com : accessed 4 January 2014), entry for Agness McCormick. (Link) | **1790 Northumberland, Agness McCormick**<br>Free White Males 16+: 1<br>Free White Males under 16: 3<br>Free White Females: 4<br>**George McCormick**<br>Free White Males 16+: 2<br>Free White Males under 16: 2<br>Free White Females: 4 |
| 4 February 2014 | The Newberry Library | "Atlas of Historical County Boundaries," *The Newberry Library* (https://www.newberry.org : accessed 4 February 2014. (Link) | 1772 - Northumberland County formed<br>1789 Mifflin County from Northumberland<br>1800 Centre County from Mifflin and Northumberland |
| 5 June 2014 | Archive.org | John Blair Linn, History of Centre and Clinton Counties, Pennsylvania (Philadelphia: Louis H. Everts, 1883.) 19; digital images, *Archive.org* (https://archive.org : accessed 5 June 2014.) (Link) | **1774 Potter Township**<br>George McCormick, but no Robert<br>**1778 Potter Twp**<br>The following names, being additional residents of Potter Township: Robert McCormick, 100 acres, 10 improved, 2 horses, 2 cattle.<br>Single Men: John McCormick & Samuel McCormick |
| 6 May 2014 | Fold3 | "List of Soldiers who served as Rangers on the Frontiers. 1778-1783," digital image, *Fold3* (http://www.fold3.com : accessed 6 May 2014), Pennsylvania Archives, Series 3, Vol. 23, p. 340, entry for Robert McCormick. (Link) | **Pennsylvania Frontier Rangers, Northumberland County**<br>Under the heading of Henry Bowman, Capt.<br>Robt McCormick, George McCormick, Arch'd Allison, John Watt, James Watt, Alex Gibson |

Create a folder for FAN Club research inside the ancestor's research folder. As a new research log is created for a FAN Club individual or family being researched, save that research log in the FAN Club folder. If a family tie is found between the ancestor and a member of the FAN Club, a new "individual" folder should be created under the relevant "surname" folder so that the log may be moved.



**Folder Levels:** Alphabet>Surnames>Individuals (females under maiden name)

**Individual File Label:** surname, given name, (birth year), year of event, event
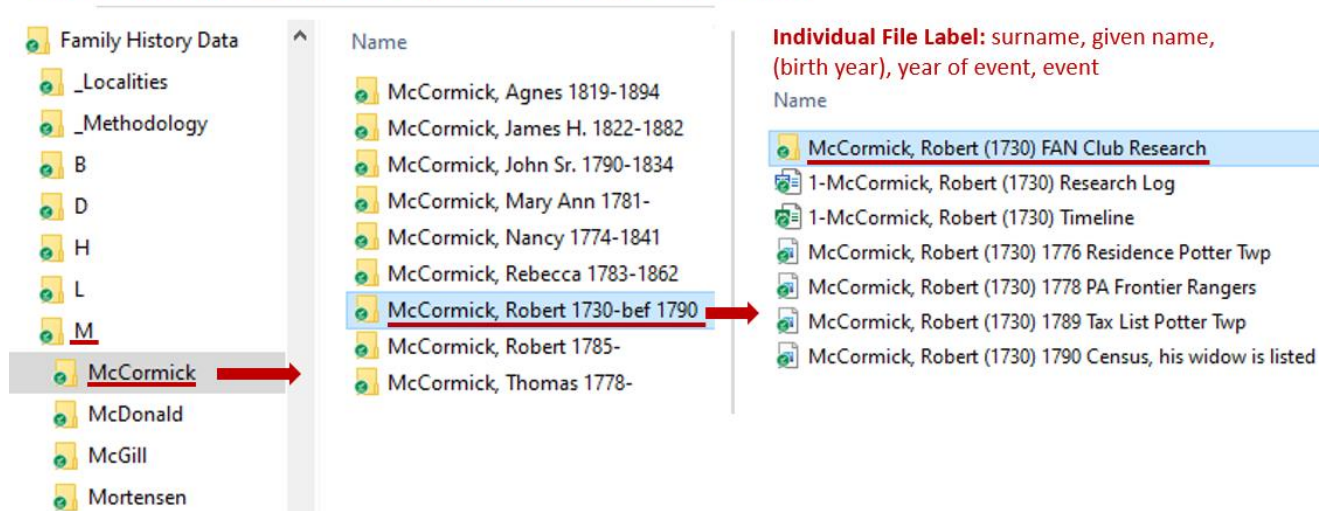
## Timelines

Chronological timelines summarize the research recorded in the logs and are especially critical for cluster research. Creating a timeline in Microsoft Excel (or other spreadsheet software) facilitates the analysis of expansive amounts of information and allows sorting on multiple columns. Excel's search function can highlight all individuals with the same name.

Before starting cluster research, create a timeline to note all events and details in the ancestor's life. Include information for extended family, associates, and neighbors by adding four columns to the spreadsheet: Known Extended Family, Possible Extended Family, Associates & Neighbors, and Role in Document. (See figure 3.) To maintain the ability to sort each column, avoid creating merged cells. When someone in the ancestor's FAN Club is identified as an extended family member or has a significant number of records, create a separate research log and timeline for that individual.

| | Year | State | County | Township | EVENT | Immediate Family of Robert & | Known Extended Family | Possible Extended Family | Associates & Neighbors | Role in Document | Source |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | | | **Family, Associates, and Neighbors** | | | | |
| 4 | 1772 | PA | Northumb. | | Northumberland County Formed | | | | | | "Atlas of Historical County Boundaries," The Newberry Library (https://www.newberry.org/ : accessed 4 February 2014. |
| 5 | 1773 | PA | Northumb. | Penn's Creek | Land deed | | | George McCormick (Robert's brother?) buys 1,059 acres land - Penns Crk Valley from Reuben Haines | | Grantee | Pennsylvania. Northumberland County. "Deeds, 1770-1866; index, 1772-1914," 3 April 1773, entry for George McCormick, FHL microfilm 961190, p. 198, Family History Library, Salt Lake, UT. |
| 6 | 1774 | PA | Northumb. | Potter Twp. | Potter Township Created | | | | | | John Blair Linn, *History of Centre and Clinton Counties, Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia: Louis H. Everts, 1883.) 19; digital images, *Archive.org* (https://archive.org : accessed June 2014.) |
| 7 | 1778 | PA | Northumb. | Potter Twp. | 1778 Tax list of Potter Township | Robert 100 Acres, 20 improved | | George McCormick Samuel McCormick John McCormick (singlemen) | John Watt in 1786 James Watt in 1787 | Tax payer | John Blair Linn, *History of Centre and Clinton Counties, Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia: Louis H. Everts, 1883.) 19; digital images, *Archive.org* (https://archive.org : accessed June 2014.) |
| 8 | 1778 | PA | Northumb. | | Pennsylvania Frontier Rangers | Robert McCormick in Capt. Henry Bowman's Company | | George McCormick Alex. Gibson Both in same company as Robert | John Watt, same company James Watt | Soldier | "List of Soldiers who served as Rangers on the Frontiers. 1778-1783," digital image, *Fold3* (http://www.fold3.com : accessed 6 May 2014), Pennsylvania Archives, Series 3, Vol. 23, p. 340, entry for Robert McCormick. |
| 9 | 1790 | PA | Northumb. | | 1790 US Census | Agness McCormick 1 M over 16 3 M under 16 4 females | | George McCormick John McCormick James Gibson, | James Watt John Watt Hugh Watt | Neighbor | 1790 U.S. Census of Northumberland County, Pennsylvania, population schedule, p. 96, digital image, *Ancestry* (https://ancestry.com : accessed 4 January 2014), entry for Agness |
| 10 | 1793 | PA | Northumb. | Haines | 1793 Tax List | Agnes McCormick, index only | Thomas Pauly Jonathan Adams | George McCormick, 150 acres in 1790 | | Tax payer | John Blair Linn, *History of Centre and Clinton Counties, Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia: Louis H. Everts, 1883.) 19; digital images, *Archive.org* (https://archive.org : accessed June 2014.) |

Timeline of Robert McCormick, who married Agnes Gibson

# The Cluster Research Process

Cluster research is an iterative process, meaning researchers need to cycle through repeated steps and refine the research plan as research unfolds and leads to new records with new information. As genealogists gain more experience with researching the FAN Club, knowing how extensively to apply a step and when to cycle back through the steps becomes more intuitive.

## Step 1: Understand the locations where the ancestor lived

Study the locations and jurisdictions where the ancestor lived and learn what records are available for that time period. The FamilySearch Research Wiki is a helpful place to start. Understand the county boundaries of the location by using the Newberry Library's "Atlas of Historical County Boundaries." If the ancestor lived there before the boundary changed, search in the parent county. Sometimes duplicate records were made for the new county. Search online using the terms "historical maps" and the location to obtain additional information about the area. County histories may identify the places of worship within a reasonable proximity to the ancestor.

## Step 2: Add persons named in the ancestor's records to the timeline

Begin at the top of the timeline and add family members, associates, and close neighbors named in the ancestor's records. Include all details that may serve as unique identifiers for

the FAN individuals, such as their role in the document, occupation, literacy, and economic indicators. Include a theory for each person's relationship with the ancestor: uncle, friend, church member. Family naming patterns can provide indirect evidence. A middle name could be a mother's maiden name, or a pattern of names could match a possible extended family. For records that include neighbors—censuses, city directories, tax records, land records—start with adding just the names of known associates, rather than large numbers of neighbors, to the ancestor's timeline.

## Step 3: Prioritize the research order of family, associates, and neighbors in the timeline

Prioritize the research list based on how frequently individuals appear in the ancestor's timeline and how strongly connected their roles are. For example, a witness at a wedding is more likely to be related than the judge who married the couple. Consider if the information is reliable. An extended family listed in an unsourced family tree might not be accurate.

After the immediate family, the extended family should be the next FAN Club priority because their records are likely to mention the ancestor's unknown relatives. Next, list the associates and neighbors the ancestor had frequent interactions with, such as a neighbor who shows up in a census in Virginia and then Kentucky. This individual could be a relative, a close friend, or a member of the same church or ethnic group.

As cluster research produces new records with new names to consider, search the records that name neighbors for the new names. If the initial iteration of cluster research fails to answer the research question, add to the list of neighbors by recording around fifteen families listed on each side of the ancestor in census or other records of the neighborhood.

## Prioritized List of Robert & Agnes McCormick's FAN Club

| Name of FAN Club member | Named in Which Records | Role in Record | Relationship/ Association, if any |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. George McCormick | 1778 Tax List Potter Twp., PA | Taxpayer in same township | Possible brother to Robert |
| | 1778 Pennsylvania Rangers | Soldier in the same company | |
| | 1789 List of Residents in Potter Twp. | Resident in same township | |
| | 1790 U.S. Census Northumberland County, PA | Neighbor, two pages later | |
| 2. Thomas Pauley | 1793 Tax List Haines Twp., PA | Taxpayer in same township | Possible father-in-law to Robert's daughter, Rebecca McCormick, who married James Pauley and then Erastus Cowdery |
| | 1801 Tax List for Haines Twp., PA | Taxpayer in same township [Also James Pauley] | |
| 3. John Watt | 1778 Tax List Potter Twp., PA | Taxpayer in same township | Possible relative of Rebecca McCormick's daughter, Nancy |
| | 1789 Tax List for Potter Twp., PA | Taxpayer in same township | |

## Step 4: Research the prioritized list and revise the priorities as evidence is analyzed

Research starting at the top of the prioritized list and record direct and indirect evidence in the FAN Club research log for that individual. Re-analyze the frequency and strength of connections based on new records and adjust the prioritized list accordingly. The following examples demonstrate cluster research methodology.
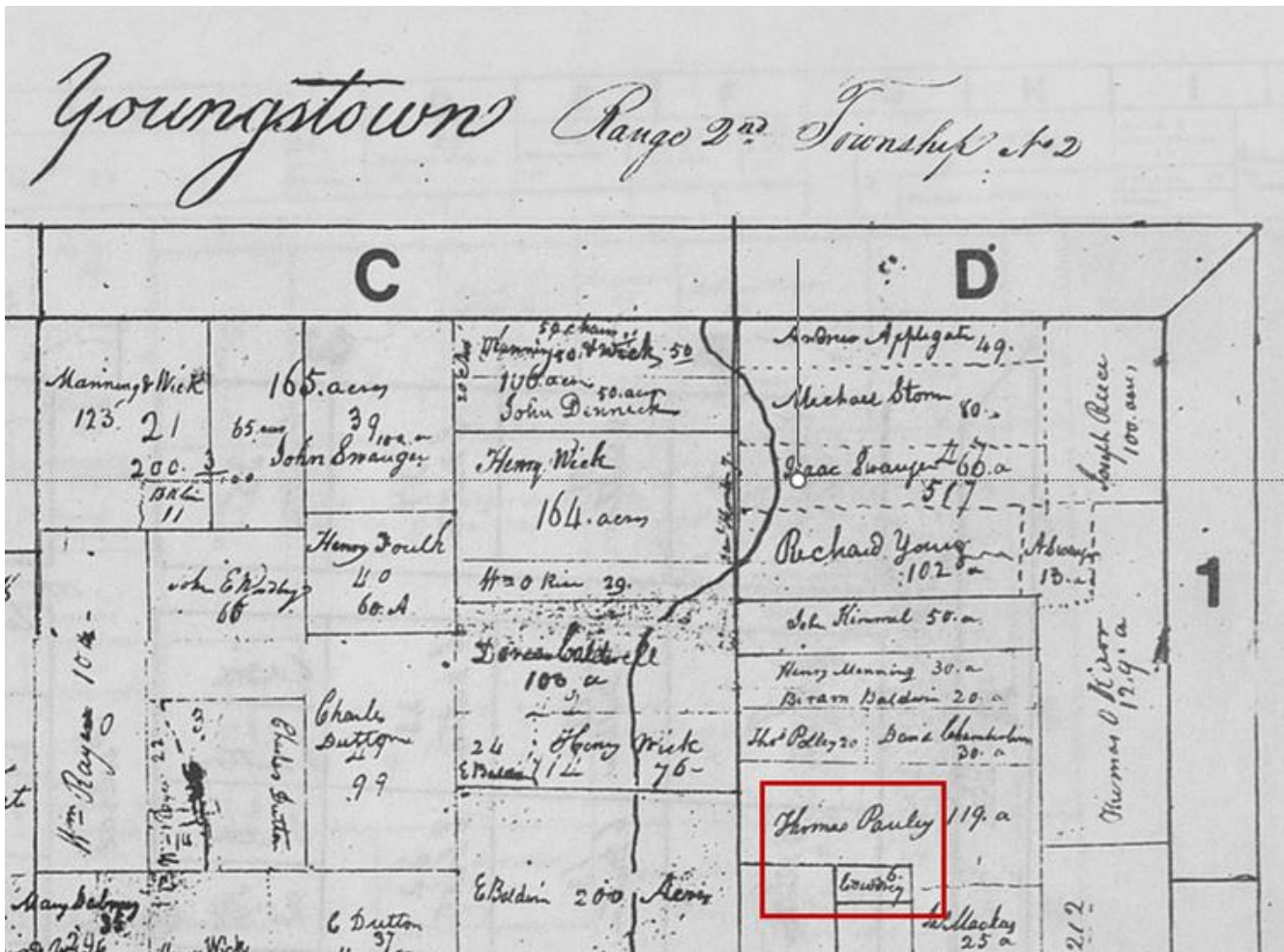
## Examples of FAN Club research to identify a maiden name

1. In an ancestor's census household, research people with a different surname.
2. Check censuses for nearby families with a female age 15-29 with the right first name. Did she disappear from the census about the time of marriage?
3. If a land deed is for a small amount of money or a token (ear of corn) from someone with a different surname, that may have been a member of his wife's family.
4. Cemetery records that show plot layouts can provide FAN names because family members were often buried near each other.
5. If a woman was single or widowed, a male relative may have appeared for her in court as a witness or in another role.

**Research Question:** An 1844 will in Pulaski County, KY, for Samuel Combest lists his wife as Sarah. **Who were Sarah's parents?**

- Pulaski County1803 tax list: Samuel Combest and **John Dick** both lived on Fishing Creek.

- Pulaski County 1841 pension file: **Margaret** Dick, widow of **John** Dick, lists Sarah's birth in 1778 in Chester County, South Carolina.

- *The Descendants of Samuel Combest* states that Samuel lived in Pulaski County, but was born in Chester County, South Carolina.

Samuel and Sarah Combest had ten children. Three of them were named as follows:
- **John** Combest
- **Margaret** Combest
- Samuel **Dick** Combest
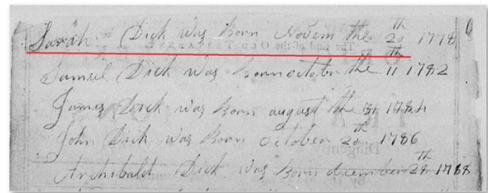
When considered alone, the above items of information do not prove that Sally Combest's maiden name was Dick. Researching Sarah's FAN Club, however, identified records that contain indirect evidence of her maiden name.

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FAN Club Summary

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The nature of research women brings most researchers to a part of their pedigree that lacks the records needed to prove the next relationship. Researching an women's cluster of family, friends, associates, and neighbors leads to additional records with new evidence. Applying cluster genealogy techniques in an iterative research process unlocks the path to discovering missing ancestors.

**Conclusion:** By researching the correct records, utilizing DNA research and searching the FAN Club, you will find success in finding your elusive female ancestors!



Interweave three strategies to successfully find records for women:
1. Search the correct records
2. Utilize DNA evidence
3. Research her FAN Club