



THE BIRMINGHAM GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY

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www.bgsal.org

<http://birminghamgenealogy.wordpress.com/>

THE PIONEER TRAILS NEWSLETTER

JUNE 2019

General Meeting for June: The Birmingham Genealogical Society will meet at 2:00 p.m. on **Saturday, June 23rd** on the fourth floor of the Birmingham Public Library (in the Computer Lab next to the Arrington Auditorium). The Board of Directors will meet at 1:00 p.m. in the same room.

Please join us as **Tonya Chandler**, owner of **Southern Roots Genealogical Services**, presents "Using the 'FAN' Club to Break Down Brick Walls: A Case Study in Discovering a Father-Son Relationship." Also known as "cluster research," the FAN club method is useful in finding evidence of relationships where no direct records may exist. Lack of direct records often turn into brick walls for researchers but broadening our research scope can reveal hidden relationships. This talk will share tips and tricks for examining the "hidden" information in often-overlooked records to show how one father-son relationship was discovered despite lack of direct evidence. Tonya has a Master's degree in Historical Archaeology with a Certificate in Historic Preservation from the University of West Florida. Her specialties include historical and genealogical research in the Southern states, Southeastern Native Americans, early 19th century Alabama, and historic properties. **Please join us!**

Research & Genealogical Tips

© Michael John Neill, "Genealogy Tip of the Day,"

<http://genealogytipoftheday.com/>, TIPDATE

Probate May Not Mention All Property: In some locations during some time periods, probate files may not mention all property owned by the deceased. This is more likely to be the case if the deceased owned real estate and did not mention it in his will or did not even leave a last will and testament. If you have good reason to believe the deceased owned real property on his or her death, search land records to determine what happened to the property. If there is a land record for the person's property created after their death, it will not list them as the grantor—the heirs will be listed. For this reason, search the grantor index for these records using all the names of the deceased's heirs. Deeds are usually only indexed in the grantor index once and any of the heirs could be the name under which the land record is indexed. Property tax records may also help in determining what happened to a deceased person's real property. Of course, the probate is the first place to look, but don't only look there.

The past is not dead. It isn't even past. --William Faulkner

Scott A. Martin, BGS Newsletter Editor

Cluster and Collateral Research to Find Ancestors

Submitted by Vanessa Wieland, 26 July 2018

https://www.familytreemagazine.com/articles/genealogy_research_strategies/cluster-collateral-research-find-ancestors/

We all have times when traditional genealogy research methods yield nothing but brick wall after brick wall. It's at this point that you have to step back and take a different approach. That's when cluster and collateral research comes into play. Based on the core principle that people lived and migrated in packs, this blueprint is designed to track down your ancestors laterally, through the people they interacted with on a regular basis.

Cluster and Collateral Research: Cast a Wide Net

Collateral research involves searching through the records of indirect relations to your ancestor. These people are blood relatives to the ancestor you're researching, but not your direct ancestor. Instead, collateral research focuses on siblings, aunts, cousins, uncles, and other lines that branch out from farther from the trunk of your tree.

Your ancestors did not live in a vacuum. They went to school, work, church, block parties and other events. This is where cluster research comes into play. Cluster research involves the non-relatives in your ancestor's circle, mostly focused on friends and neighbors. These are the people your ancestors interacted with that probably won't make the family tree, but who are still important to your understanding of your ancestors.

How Does Cluster and Collateral Research Work?

Say you're researching your great-great-grandmother; only you are not turning up any information on her – not a single record under her maiden or married name! You've researched all of your great-grandfather's records for any clues, but you're coming up empty. Go far enough back in your family tree, and we all have these types of brick walls.

However, you know your great-grandfather had a brother, so the next logical step is to research his records. And before you know it, you've turned up her name in his birth certificate in a specific town. You now have a name and you can pinpoint her location at the time of his birth. Better yet, as you keep digging, you discover a journal entry that includes mention of your ancestor. Perhaps you stumble across an old wedding photo in which they were best man or maid of honor.

You've just done collateral research and demonstrated the first benefit: finding evidence of your direct ancestors in the records of an indirect relative. What's more, cluster and collateral research also provides an opportunity to experience our ancestors through the eyes of the people who knew them.

Emerging Patterns

Researching family and friends can reveal patterns that you won't notice if you keep a narrow focus only on your direct ancestors. Naming patterns or physical traits might emerge, such as several members of the family being left-handed or sharing an eye color. Other patterns might include occupations, military service, religion, or even reveal social status, class or education level.

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You'll also discover that some ancestors traveled together, or joined friends and neighbors who migrated earlier. Traveling and settling in a new place together with old friends and family provided a sense of security and familiarity. In many places, there is a predominance of people from the same region. When you've lost an ancestor, check in the places where they most likely would have traveled to based on their ethnicity, language and culture.

Of course, sometimes, there's overlap between the two. If you look at the names on a census, you might discover that your ancestor married the girl next door. Some names will show up again and again, especially if several generations of your family grew up in the same neighborhood.

The lines between friends and family can become blurred. "Uncle" Charlie might not be blood-related at all, but he's at every party and family gathering, and perhaps Aunt Linda had the same roommate or renter for years.

When to Expand Your Search

Here are some specific instances when cluster and collateral research can really help:

- you're unable to identify the next generation back
- you don't know much about a direct ancestor's family
- when you want to know more biographical details of someone's life
- you are trying to trace female, adopted-in, adopted-out or other difficult-to-trace ancestors
- research before 1850 (especially in the U.S.) and for immigrant generations
- there are mysteries of identity, kinship or events you want to solve
- you've lost track of the family during a period of time and want to find them again (follow migration patterns)

Finally, it can help when you want to confirm whether a record belongs to your ancestor or someone else of the same name.



ALABAMA CONFEDERATE PENSIONS

Robert Davis, MA, MEd, Senior Professor of History, Wallace State College

Each of the former Confederate States of America and the states of Kentucky, Missouri, and Oklahoma eventually gave pensions to their respective resident Confederate veterans and widows of veterans. When a veteran or widow lived in a state not giving Confederate pensions, usually the state from which the veteran had served provided the pension. The years that pensions began, the amounts paid, and the legal mechanisms for granting pensions varied widely from state to state, as shown in Desmond Walls Allen, *Where to Write for Confederate Pension Records* (1991; copy in our Confederate pensions vertical file) and James C. Neagles, *Confederate Research Sources* (1986).

Pensions for Confederate veterans and widows based on poverty or just service generally began in the late 1800s. Alabama, South Carolina, Tennessee, and possibly some of the other states also gave pensions to former black servants who served in the Confederate forces. See the Black Confederate Soldiers Website: <http://blackconfederatesoldiers.com/alabama-state-records.html>

Most if not all, of Alabama's Confederate pension records are on Ancestry.com or Ancestrylibrary.com. To check all of these records requires the user to go to "New Collections," then type in "Alabama, Confederate Pension and Service Records, 1862-1947." From within that selection, the user then chooses "Browse this collection" for what looks promising. Below, many of these records are discussed.

Alabama's pensions represent the best of the records generated by a state Confederate pension program. They illustrate the value of documents beyond just basic pension files, for research on Alabama citizens and other people across the country.

As with the other states granting Confederate pensions, Alabama's records are state government records and must be sought in the state—not the federal—archives. Alabama's basic Confederate pension files are in alphabetical order and cross-referenced by the names of the widows. A typical file includes the veteran's unit and dates of service, as well as residence at the time that he or his widow applied for a pension.

Additional information may include details of birth, marriage, property, and health of the applicant. Alabama began granting various forms of veteran's benefits, especially for disabled soldiers, almost as soon as the war ended but passed a general pension bill only in 1899. In 1920, widow pensioners had to complete a detailed personal questionnaire, now found in their files, which included such information as the names of their respective fathers. We have these pension files on microfilm.

Alabama's pension files do contain a great deal of information but records created in conjunction with the pensions provide even more. The Alabama Department of Archives and History has a card catalog, which we have on microfilm, that indexes the state's pensions, original cards even include, for some veterans, lists of Civil War battles in which they served, information apparently provided from questionnaires now lost. This card catalog documents Confederate service for hundreds of men for whom no records of service survive at the National Archives.

The above card catalog also indexes the 1907, 1921, and 1927 state censuses of Confederate pensioners. The 1907 census, arranged by county and is in our collection in book form, provides each veteran

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pensioner's county of birth, date of birth, and military service. The 1921 census, arranged by regiment, asks the same questions but also asked each veteran pensioner for the place of birth and residence at the time of marriage of his wife (although not her name). Each veteran also had to provide the names of his respective children, their places of residence, and occupations. The 1927 census of Confederate widow pensioners asked each woman for specific information on her marriage. We have the 1921 and 1927 censuses on microfilm and the 1927 questionnaires of the widows are on the website Ancestrylibrary.com.

Information from these pension files and related censuses thus extends far beyond Alabama. Information that a veteran gave in Alabama also frequently relates to siblings, even in other states. For example, if a veteran residing in Alabama gave his birth as Camden District, South Carolina on July 2, 1842, that suggests Camden District as the place of birth for younger and even older brothers and sisters, as well as where to look for their parents in Federal censuses.

The Alabama Department of Archives and History also has records of pension payments, 1899-1915, 1920-1925, 1927-1928, 1930, and later, a way of estimating when a pensioner died by when he or she no longer received pension payments. It also has special records of rejected pension applications, 1919-1938 and applications for artificial limbs, 1865-1900.

The Alabama Department of Archives and History has on microfilm Parents of Confederate Soldiers, 1861-1865 A-Z; widows of Confederate soldiers A-T; administrators of confederate soldiers A-W; miscellaneous family relationships with Confederate soldiers; Negroes in the Confederate Army; Mountain Creek Soldiers Home headstones A-W.

PROBLEMS WITH ALABAMA CONFEDERATE PENSION FILES

Sometimes pensions are out of alphabetical order on the microfilm of the Alabama Confederate pensions, a problem solved by using the pension files online at ancestry.

A board in each respective Alabama county reviewed pension applications. If a board rejected an application, the application was not sent to Montgomery and the application is not in the microfilm. If such a rejected claim survives, it exists in the respective county records such as in the Blount County Archives in the courthouse in Oneonta.

The state of Alabama gave old age pensions prior to the creation of Social Security Insurance. The names of those persons appear in the same county pension register books as the Confederate veterans. (No other records of those old age pension files are known to survive.)

No records are known to survive of the Confederate Orphans Home at Tuskegee, Alabama although the children there are listed on the 1870 federal census (pp. 30-32) and the 1880 census (p. 67) of Macon County. The Alabama Department of Archives has various lists of soldiers in its Confederate veterans and widows farm but no single comprehensive list.

Similar records exist in other Confederate pensions states for benefits to veterans of the Civil War and their widows. For information on what may exist for your ancestor contact the state archives for the state from which he served or for where he or his widow resided after the war.

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Wallace State Community College (Hanceville) has on microfilm the Confederate pension files for Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, Oklahoma, and Tennessee and the printed indexes for the pensions for Arkansas, Florida, Missouri, Oklahoma, Tennessee, and Texas. The pensions for Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Virginia are online from their respective state archives.

Indexes to Federal service pension records, which is also available on Ancestry.com. Copies of federal pensions should be sought from the National Archives and Records Administration.

Do you have a golden nugget to share?



**If you have broken through a brick wall
or have genealogical news to share,
please share & forward to the newsletter editor,
Scott Martin - BEVEL67@aol.com**



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