

Cluster Genealogy - Researching Beyond our Direct-Line Ancestors

Collateral Relatives = siblings and close family of our direct-line ancestors

Cluster Genealogy = more distance relatives plus friends, neighbors, co-workers, fellow church or other organization members, and local business people

- Elizabeth Shown Mills popularized the concept of cluster genealogy as our ancestor's **FAN club: Friends or *Family* (*Morgan and Smith*) Associates, and Neighbors**
- Cluster Genealogy Research will: Net more ancestors, help sort out nuclear families, get around brick walls, and tell family stories more completely.

Key Sources:

- State and Federal Census Records
 - Who lived in each household? Is an occupation or other clues noted?
 - Who was living nearby? (Search several households before and after your ancestor's.)
- Plat maps and city directories are great for finding neighbors too.
- Immigration records (Our ancestors probably didn't travel alone.)
- Cemetery records (Who is buried nearby?)
- Church and Vital Records:
 - Baptismal records: Who were the baby's Godparents?
 - Marriage records: Who were the witnesses?
 - Death certificates: Who was the informant?
- Court records (Who were the witnesses?)
- Military records (Who enlisted alongside your ancestor, or who was named in a pension file?)
- Obituaries are a goldmine! (Who was predeceased and who survives? Who officiated at the funeral? Who were the pallbearers? Who are the out-of-town funeral attendees?) Research newspaper wedding and birth announcements too.
- Additional resources to explore Cluster Genealogy:
 - Emily Anne Croom, *The Genealogist's Companion and Sourcebook* (Cincinnati: Betterway Books, 2003).
 - Elizabeth Shown Mills, *Evidence Explained* (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Company, 2009).
 - George G. Morgan and Drew Smith, *Advanced Genealogy Research Techniques* (New York: McGraw-Hill Education, 2014)
 - Marsha Hoffman Rising, *The Family Tree Problem Solver* (Cincinnati: Family Tree Books, 2019).
- Join Facebook Groups associated with your ancestral surnames and geographies.