

# THE IMPORTANCE OF COLLATERAL RESEARCH

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**I. INTRODUCTION:** If your direct ancestral line stops and you think you cannot go on, collateral research, often called clustering, may resolve the problem. Collateral relatives share the same ancestry but not always the same direct line of descent. Researching those relatives, along with those that lived and worked within the same community could add new dimension to your genealogy and family history. Two synonyms for collateral are parallel and auxiliary. Discussion includes collateral research both parallel and auxiliary, familiar documents, and DNA.

Do not confuse collateral/cluster research with collateral/conflicting evidence. Collateral evidence contradicts other evidence while collateral/cluster research uses other than direct ancestors hoping they lead to back to the direct line.

**II. WHAT IS COLLATERAL RESEARCH?**

Blood relatives, i.e. siblings, cousins, aunts, uncles, grandparents,  
In-laws, male lines, friends, neighbors, business associates, church members

**III. WHY RESEARCH INDIRECT RELATIONSHIPS?**

Dead-ends, disproving an ancestral line, name similarities  
Family history, whole family genealogy  
Women – maiden names

**IV. DOCUMENTS/DOCUMENTATION**

Family interviews, diaries, yearbooks,  
Census, directories, newspapers, religious records  
Obituaries, cemetery records, death certificates  
Bibles, fraternal organizations, Land, geography, migration patterns  
Military, pensions, DNA

**V. TIPS:**

Re-evaluate - re-analyze – re-read – re-verify everything  
Use the Genealogical Proof Standard (GPS)  
View research as a body of work, a unit not each piece individually

**Meriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, 10<sup>th</sup> ed, 1999**, defines Collateral as “Serving to support or reinforce” or “belonging to the same ancestral stock but not in a direct line of descent; AND Indirect as...”deviating from a direct line or course...or...proof of a proposition...by demonstration that its negation leads to a[n]...contradiction.”<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Random House Webster's College Dictionary*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., New York: Random House, 1999,

## GLOSSARY OF TERMS

**Affinity:** Relationship established through marriage, such as that between a husband and his wife's family or between the wife and her husband's family. It is not uncommon to refer to this relationship as "kin" or "kinship" or "kinfolk."

**Collateral Relative:** Persons not in a direct line or descent but with a common ancestor

**Consanguinity:** The relationship among descendants from a common ancestor

**Endogamy:** Marriage within a tribe, social group, close community over a long period of time.

**FAN Theory:** Family, Associates, Neighbors

**Lineal relationship:** Persons descended from a common ancestor within the same line (parent, grandparent, etc.)

**Removed:** Distance in degree of relationship. That is, a person descended from a common ancestor but separated (removed) by a different number of generations.

Example: a cousin **once removed** is from your parent's generation. Compare that with a "full" cousin which is one that has a common ancestor and within the same generation.

## GLOSSARY OF OLD TITLES – BEWARE!

**Brother:** Could mean a full, half, step, or adopted brother, even a brother-in-law OR someone in the same church.

**Cousin:** Often used for a nephew or uncle

**Freeholder:** A farmer

**Gentlemen:** We think of him as a courteous, considerate person. Taken from England to colonial America, it is a person that has the right to bear a coat of arms, yet ranked below a nobleman. The obvious counterpart is Gentlewoman. Another definition stems from the 19<sup>th</sup> century when it could mean someone that retired from business, a term which may be seen in city directories in place of the occupation

**Junior/Senior:** Not necessarily father and son or mother and daughter. It could refer to two people of the same family, with the same name to distinguish one from the other. Example: two cousins with the name John, one four years older than the other. Hence the older was "senior" and the younger was "junior."

**Mr./Mrs.:** Titles reserved for persons of a high social position. Mister, as you would guess, most likely evolved from the word Master and Mrs. From Mistress.

**Natural:** Usually used to denote an illegitimate child but in earlier time could also mean ANY children, legitimate or otherwise.

**Nephew/Niece:** Surprise! Nephew often referred to a grandson/daughter. Nepos is Latin for grandson, nephew, descendant; Neptis is Latin for granddaughter.

**Now Wife:** "My now wife" is a common term in a man's will. Do not let this convince you into thinking the man had a previous wife. It could just mean that when the will was written, he was married.

**Yeoman:** Yes, this is a rank in the U.S. Navy. But taken from England to Colonial America, it more likely meant a man owning a small estate. Example: a freeholder of land whose status is under that of a gentleman.

**DNA: FINDING COLLATERALS??** DNA analysis locates collateral ancestors all the time. It correlates with traditional documentary research and assists with sound, reasoned, genealogical conclusions.

**Genetic ancestry testing** uses DNA to go “deep” into ones ancestry. Genetic genealogy combines all the resources available, vital records, oral histories, and DNA. In other words, it is an additional “tool” in the genealogist’s toolbox.

There are three types of tests genealogists can use:

**Y–DNA, (Y-Chromosome):** Follows male line; excellent for surname searches it tests the Y chromosome which is passed from father to son, along, in most cases, with the surname. Only men can test for this, because only men have a Y chromosome,

**Mitochondrial (mtDNA)** Follows maternal line for everyone it is passed from mothers to both genders of her children, but only passed on by females. Males carry their mother’s mitochondrial DNA (mtDNA) but they don’t pass it on.

**Autosomal (atDNA):** [Chromosomes 1-22] Available to everyone; can track *recent* ethnicity and looks at all inherited lines. it tests the rest of the DNA provided by both parents on the 23 chromosomes, not just two direct lines, as with Y-line and mitochondrial DNA.

#### **Genealogical Proof Standard:**

1. Thorough searching of the sources
2. Complete and accurate citations
3. Analyzing the sources and correlation of sources and information to assess as reliable evidence and answering the research questions
4. Conflict resolution between evidence and possible answers
5. Written report/statement/narrative of findings, conclusions, and source citations\*<sup>2</sup>

#### **Some websites – some paid, some free**

Ancestry.com

chroniclingamerica.loc.gov - Library of Congress

Cyndi’s List: <http://www.cyndislist.com>. General index and website resources available

Family Search: <https://familysearch.org>

Findmypast.com

Genealogybank.com

International Society of Genetic Genealogy: <http://isogg.org>

Myheritage.com

Newspapers.com

Oral History Association – [www.oralhistory.org](http://www.oralhistory.org)

National Genealogical Society: [www.ngsgenealogy.org](http://www.ngsgenealogy.org)

Southern California Genealogical Society: [www.scsgenealogy.com](http://www.scsgenealogy.com)

These and others can also be found on Facebook and their other social media outlets.

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<sup>2</sup> Thomas W. Jones, *Mastering Genealogical Proof*. National Genealogical Society, Special Topics Series, No. 107. (Arlington, Virginia: The Society, 2013), 3.

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**National Union Catalog (NUCMC) –**

([Ancestry.com](http://Ancestry.com)/[FamilySearch.org](http://FamilySearch.org)/[cyndislist.com](http://cyndislist.com)/Library of Congress)

**Periodical Source Index (PERSI)** "...the largest subject index to genealogy and local history periodical articles in the world... "Ask a Genealogy Librarian" Service, Historical Genealogy Department, Allen County Public Library, Fort Wayne, Indiana, 2010. (Allen County PL/Findmypast)