

# Finding Your Common Name Ancestor

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## What is a F.A.N?

Friends. Associates. Neighbors.

## Why are F.A.Ns important?

To help build the life of your ancestor. If you are working with an ancestor who has a common name, building a F.A.N helps establish the right one. If you have a brick wall, building the F.A.N helps break it down. Working in families and knowing their neighbors and friends helps to map out their lives from other records.

## Building a F.A.N:

- Choose an ancestor (working in family is best.)
- Gather the information you already have.  
(preliminary survey)
- Censuses (check previous page and the page after)
  - Census Survey.
- Birth
  - Parents, mother's maiden name.
- Marriage
  - Witnesses, bride and groom, etc.
- Death
  - Parents, mother's maiden name, informant.
- Grave Markers
  - Name, birth year and death year.  
Sometimes has other information children,  
spouse. Other family members are buried  
next to them.
- Sexton Records/Cemetery Records
- City Directories
  - House address, neighbors.
- County Histories
  - Family's name, neighbors, missing  
children.
- Land Record
  - Grantor, grantee, neighbors.
- Military records

- Nearest relatives, employer, home address, work location.
- Probate Records
  - Executors, children, associates, spouse.
- Church Records
  - Witnesses, parents' name, location.
- Newspapers
  - Obituaries, marriage announcements, death announcement, birth announcement, stories, who's visiting, etc.

As you are looking for your ancestor, look at the people surrounding them. The F.A.N can lead to more information about your ancestors. When you are researching your ancestors, do it in family groups. The primary ancestor may be a brick wall but working with the F.A.N and in family groups may break the wall.

While working with records use a spread sheet to write down the neighbors from the census. This will help visually see their names. With plat maps and land deeds always refer to the spreadsheet to continue to help with neighbors. Neighbors can be listed on other records. For example, as witnesses or Executives. Use the spreadsheet as another tool, especially when working with common names.

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