



Genealogy Research Using The Trifecta Strategy

What is the “Trifecta” Strategy?

Coined by Constance Knox, owner of Genealogy TV, it’s a detailed strategy that uses three research sources, in three different ways, to maximize research results. This is great for helping to break down genealogical brick walls or finding most every record available online for a given ancestor.

What does the word “Trifecta” mean? If you Google it, it means...

“tri·fect·a”

“a bet in which the person betting forecasts the first three finishers in a race in the correct order. a run of three wins or grand events.”

The word “Trifecta” also has the Latin and Greek word “Tri”, meaning three. We’re going to use the power of three, to place a bet, that you can come up with a “Trifecta” like result in new evidence for your family history research.

The Power of Three

What is three to the third power or 3^3 ?

How can 3^3 relate to genealogy research? In math, what is three to the power of three (3^3)? It’s 27. $3 \times 3 = 9 \times 3 = 27$.

We’re going to take our research question and triple the resources and triple each again... strategically.

The Goal

The goal is to hopefully **come up with at least 27 different facts** using the “Trifecta Strategy.” Even if you don’t hit that goal, I bet you can come up with new facts and evidence you didn’t have before. Even one new fact may be the pot of gold! If you hit 27 new facts, you can claim “Trifecta!”



Let's Get Started

Step One - Research Question

This starts with your research question. Who do you want to know more about, that you don't already have a lot of information? This person is your "**Target Ancestor.**"

Step Two - Compile What You Already Have

List all the information you already have on hand before beginning this research. We're going to research three different services in three different ways.

This works best when researching an ancestor that you already can pinpoint an event, place, and date together. For example when and where a person was born... or when and where a person died. Some piece of information and a location is best, even an estimated date range can work.

Research 3³ - Three Resources, Three Different Ways

In short, you're going to search three different online resources by **location, target ancestors name** and the **FAN Club**. (FAN Club = Friends, Associates, and Neighbors, a term coined by Elizabeth Shown Mills).

You're going to research on **Ancestry.com, FamilySearch.org** and the **Third Location is your Choice**, which ever makes sense for your research question.

Free Research:

Ancestry: Even if you don't have an account on Ancestry, you can search under a guest account or a free trial.

Here is a video about [How To Research Your Family Tree for Free](#).

Here is a [14 Day Free Trial at Ancestry](#), if you need one.

Even with a free "guest" account (as opposed to a free trial) you can search the free database on Ancestry.com. You may find references to documents behind the paywall that you may not be able to access under a free account, but you'll want to make note of them during this process for future reference.



In fact all services have free options to explore:

[Inside Scoop at FamilySearch website tour video](#). FamilySearch is always free.

[FindMyPast Video](#)

[MyHeritage Free Information](#)

Why do it this way? To show you the power of three and not to rely on one service for all of your research... and that by doing so can dramatically increase your results.. Just like 3 to the third power is 27.

The Third Search Location - You can replace one of the three search locations with another, but I recommend sticking with **Ancestry**, **FamilySearch** and **MyHeritage** or **FindMyPast** to start.

Here is a list of other choices for the third research location. Choose the largest repository that makes sense for your research question.

- National Archives in the country you're researching.
- State Archives
- FamilyTreeDNA
- Archives.com
- Find A Grave
- Billion Graves
- Google (Books, Search, YouTube, websites)

Bonus Ideas

- Newspapers.com
- GenealogyBank.com
- NewspaperArchives.com
- ChroniclingAmerica
- Genie

Three Ways to Research on Each of the Three Resources

Starting with the first Resource (Ancestry) you're going to search three ways.

By Location

By Name

By Closest FAN Club Members

Location Location Location

Start each search at the three resources by **researching the location first!** Especially if the location of your “Target Ancestor” (the one you’re researching) is a new location to you.

By starting with location first, you get a better understanding of where the location is geographically, what kind of records are available on each resource, and what era the records are available online. You’ll want to do this location search at all three resources because every resource has different records.

Questions to ask yourself when researching the locations.

- **Evidence of Birth, Marriage, and Death Records** - Where are they held and what time frames do they exist?
- **What county, state, country was this at the time my ancestor was there?** In other words, did the borders change?
- **What was happening in history** at the time my ancestor was there?

Tip: When searching any location on any service, as you type the name of the location an autofill will pop up with the location name. You want to choose the correct location name from the autofill list for better search results.

What’s in a Name?

The second task at each of the three research services is to search by name in three different ways. Think of three different ways your Target Ancestors name may have been spelled. You’ll search all three ways.

FAN Club

Thanks to Elizabeth Shown Mills (creator of the FAN method of research) we have the FAN Club to look for. FAN is an acronym for Friends, Associates, and Neighbors. As you search all three of your resources, you’re on the look out for FAN club members associated or related to your Target Ancestor. You’ll make a note of them as you go.



Ancestry.com

At Ancestry Search:

- 1) From the Profile or Tree
- 2) From the Card Catalog
- 3) Search > All Collections

I recommend searching all three ways as you will get different results for each search.

Ancestry Search by Target Ancestor Profile - Simple search by clicking the search. Click on Records & Categories in the upper right for targeted results. Also consider turning off Smart Filtering if you're not finding what you expect.

Ancestry Search by Card Catalog - At the top of the screen click Search > Card Catalog. On the left side column choose your location (country, state, county if you know it) and date range (if needed). View records for your Target Ancestor.

At the Card Catalog you're looking for **location information**. Search using filters by **location, keyword** (of your location) **and or era**. Sometimes searching too close (say filtering to the county level) will net small results. Back up and search to the state level for more results.

Ancestry Search by All Collections - Top Tab Search > All Collections.

You want to type your Target Ancestors Name and at least one event date and location that you know.

Tips:

- Use middle initials not their full name at first.
- Don't let Ancestry fill in the blanks from your ancestors profile or remove extra details to maximize results.
- If too many results, add more information.
- Try using initials, nicknames or other name variations.
- Hover over record, right click and "open in new tab" to preserve your original list.
- Look at the Suggested Record box on the right side when viewing a record.
- Play with filters on the left side to get different results.
- Two screens open at the same time helps. One with your Target Ancestor and the other for searching. Two monitors is even better!
- Edit Search and Add Keywords that you know are specific to your ancestor.
- Filter on the left side of search results for specific categories like, Court, Land Wills, or Newspapers & Periodicals.



FamilySearch.org

Research at FamilySearch.org

- 1) FamilySearch Wiki for Location
- 2) Family Tree for the Target Ancestor & FAN Club
- 3) Records for the Target Ancestor & FAN Club

If new to FamilySearch, create an account, it's free and easy. They don't send you spam and never ask you for anything.

FamilySearch Wiki

Go to the **Search** tab, drop down to **Wiki**. Here you'll search for the location. Drill into the map titles for each area.

For example, click on the word North America, United States, State, and County...to learn more about the area you're researching.

Take notice of when the area was founded and when records are available. Note where the county courthouse is or state archives.

On the left column note the types of records you can learn more about.

Scroll down to see all that is there and bookmark this as a resource for future reference.

Tip: For small rural areas, look in the gazetteers for where they are located.

FamilySearch Family Tree

Click on the Search tab at the top of the screen and choose Family Tree. Type in your Target Ancestor. If not found, add them if you can.

If your ancestor is in the tree, choose his/her name.

Review the Sources First

Review the Tree

Look for records not already found on Ancestry.

Look for duplicates of the same person

Look for collaborations with others.

Family Tree Record Search

Go to the Search tab, then Records.



Manually type your ancestors name and a location (depending on what you know).

Tip: Spell out locations properly, including the State. Spell out North Carolina instead of NC.

Bonus Tip: Search the FamilySearch Genealogies. Go to Search, drop down to Genealogies. Scroll down and filter by your research location.

MyHeritage.com (Possible Third Choice)

Research at MyHeritage

- 1) **MyHeritage for Location**
- 2) **Family Tree for the Target Ancestor**
- 3) **Records for the Target Ancestor**

MyHeritage Location

Go to the Research Tab (upper right) choose Collection Catalog. Histories, Memories & Biographies might have location information. Success here depends on where you are researching.

MyHeritage Family Tree for Your Target Ancestor

Go to Research > Family Trees

MyHeritage Records

Go to the Research Tab, then Research All Records.

Note: Without a subscription you will only be able to see what is possible, but not the actual records or trees.

FindMyPast.com (Another Possible Third Choice)

FindMyPast by Location click on **Search** then **A-Z Record Sets** (on the right side).

Then filter by location to see what they have.

Note: FindMyPast has unique record sets from England, Wales, Scotland, Ireland and is home of the famous 1939 Register for British & Irish Families.



FindMyPast Family Tree?

FindMyPast does not allow for researching other member trees at this time nor do they have a world tree like FamilySearch.

Go straight to the records.

However, if you have uploaded your tree for free by using a Gedcom file ([Video here on how to upload your tree to FindMyPast for Free](#)) then search your Target Ancestor from the tree.

FindMyPast by Records by Name

Go to the Search Tab, choose Search All Records. Search by name and place. Here I recommend you drill only to the state level at first.

Final Thoughts

Online records online are updated everyday. You may want to repeat this process every few months if you're not finding the answer to your research question. Also, you don't have to stop at just three resources, continue looking everywhere!

This may take some time. The Trifecta Strategy is designed to keep you on a methodical strategic research path.

It is my hope that working through this process at least once, gives you a new thought process on how to research in ways you had not considered before.

Whether you can claim "Trifecta" (27 new facts) or not, the real goal is to find new information and or solve your research question!

"It's time for you to go find your ancestors... so until next time... keep on climbing your family tree!"

Connie Knox
Genealogy TV