

# Genealogy Research Using The Trifecta Strategy

## What is the “Trifecta” Strategy?

Coined by Constance Knox, 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 question.

In our case, for genealogy, we just want the triple crown in results! Right?

## The Power of Three

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

How can we use three to the third power in our genealogy research? In math, what is three to the power of three ( $3^3$ )?

It is twenty-seven.

$$3 \times 3 = 9 \times 3 = 27.$$

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

## The Goal

**The goal is to hopefully produce at least twenty-seven 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!”



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 three to the third power is twenty-seven.

## Get Started



F.A.N. Club = Friends, Associates, and Neighbors... and in our case immediate family.

### Step One - Research Question

This starts with your research question. **Who do you want to know more about** (that you don't already have much 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. Do this in your Target Ancestors Research Notes... in chronological order.**

Note: Keep one Research Notes document per ancestor.

File by Surname, then first name. i.e., "SMITH, Tom – Research Notes"

We are going to research three different services in three ways.

This works best when researching an ancestor that you already can pinpoint an event, place,

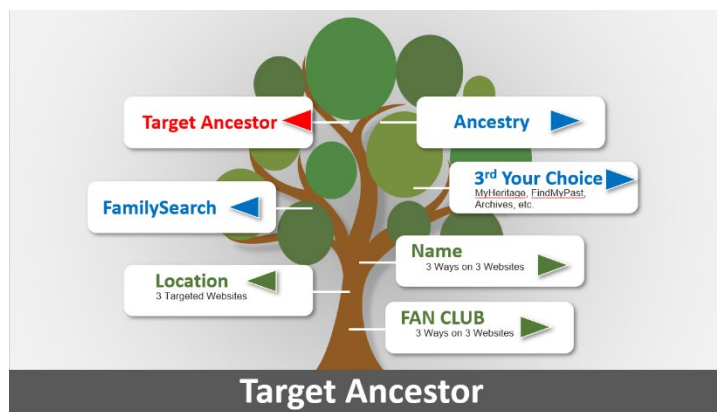
and date together.

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 3<sup>3</sup> - 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 do not 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 on Ancestry](#).

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

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.

**FamilySearch:** At FamilySearch.org, an account is always free. If you don't have an account, you're missing out on an incredible amount of free resources. There is no obligation to sign up.

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

### Other Third Choice Options

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 are researching.
- State Archives
- FamilyTreeDNA

- Archives.com
- Find A Grave
- Billion Graves
- Google (Books, Search, YouTube, websites)

#### BONUS IDEAS

- Newspapers.com
- GenealogyBank.com
- NewspaperArchives.com
- [Chronicling America](#)
- Genie

## Step Three - Three Ways to Research on Each of the Three Resources

### Location Location Location

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

By starting with location first, you will 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 frame 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 is 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 separate ways your Target Ancestors name may have been spelled. You will search all three ways.

### FAN Club

Thanks to Elizabeth Shown Mills (creator of the FAN method of research) we have the F.A.N. Club to look for. F.A.N. is an acronym for Friends, Associates, and Neighbors. As you search all

three of your resources, you are on the lookout for FAN club members associated or related to your Target Ancestor. You will make a note of them as you go.

### 3.1 Ancestry

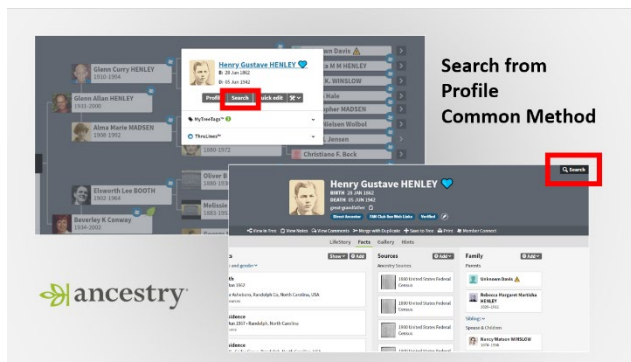
Starting with the first Resource (Ancestry) you're going to search three ways.

- **By Location**
- **By Name**
- **By Closest FAN Club Members**

At Ancestry Search:

- From the Profile or Tree**
- From the Card Catalog**
- Search > All Collections**

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



**Ancestry Search by Target Ancestors Profile** - Simple search by clicking the search.

Click on Records & Categories in the upper right for targeted results. Also, consider turning off Smart Filtering (just says "Active" at the top of search) if you are 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 are 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 are 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/Probate, or Newspapers & Periodicals.

## 3.2 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 is free and easy. They do not send you spam and never ask you for anything.

### FamilySearch Wiki

- Go to the **Search** tab, drop down to **Wiki**. Here you will 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 location was founded and what era 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.

## Step Three Continued - Third Search Options

### 3.3.1 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

Go to Research > Family Trees and search by name.

#### 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.

### 3.3.2 FindMyPast.com (Another Possible Third Choice)

#### FindMyPast Family Tree?

FindMyPast does not allow for researching other member trees currently, nor do they have a world tree like FamilySearch.

Go straight to the records.

- **FindMyPast by Location** click on **Search** then **All Record Sets**.
- 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.

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.

Also, [How to upload your family tree to FindMyPast](#) (article & video).

## 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. Filter on the left if needed.

See more resources at the end of this document.

### 3.3.3 Think Outside the Box

Your third option in this strategy is your choice. What makes sense? Here is a list of possible third options.

- State Archives (If you're not sure, start with this one, it's a good one!)
- Find-A-Grave
- National Archives and Records Administration
- Local Libraries
- Local Genealogical or Historical Societies
- Daughters (or Sons) of the American Revolution
- What makes sense in the country you're researching in?

## REPEAT FOR FAMILY & FAN CLUB

With the original goal in mind, to find more facts and records for the Target Ancestor now you are going to repeat the process for each of the immediate family members and those close F.A.N. club members.

## Worksheets & Handouts

There are three worksheets and handouts for this strategy.

1. This handout.
2. [Trifecta Strategy Research Checklist](#) – Simply check off each location as you search.
3. [Trifecta Research Log and Results](#) – Keep track of your findings and results.



## Final Thoughts

Records online are constantly being updated. You may want to repeat this process every year if you're not finding the answer to your research question. Also, you do not have to stop at just three resources, continue looking everywhere!

This may take time. The Trifecta Strategy is, by design, to keep you on a methodical strategic research path.

It is my hope that working through this process at least once, will help you research in ways you had not considered before.

Get in the habit of looking in at least three locations, searching by name separately from location.

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

## More Resources

### MyHeritage

[MyHeritage Free Account Information](#)

[Family Tree Builder on MyHeritage](#) **Free Software Download** (affiliate)

[DNA Upload](#) FREE

[MyHeritage Free Trial](#) (affiliate)

### FindMyPast

[What you can do for free on FindMyPast](#)