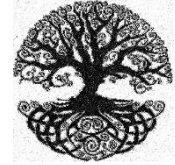


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Lost and Found: Locating Ancestral Origins with Fan Club and DNA

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*I don't think one can do much genealogy well without including the Friends & Family, Associates, and Neighbors – your ancestors' FAN club – in your research. Unless you are extremely lucky, when trying to do Irish research, I don't think many people can do Irish research **at all** without using FAN club principles.*

BCG Standards for Researching

Chapter 3 of *Genealogy Standards* sets forth some best practices for planning genealogical research:¹

- **Standard #10 – Effective research questions** – Questions should be sufficiently broad to be answerable. For this particular case I wanted to know where in Ireland Bartley Roddy came from. Eventually I hope to research the family further in Ireland, but for an ancestor born in the 1830s who emigrated in the 1850s, “Ireland” is not sufficiently specific to lead to records. Knowing a bit more is essential – a townland would be ideal, but may be too specific – a parish, or perhaps even a county would be helpful. My question is broad enough that I should be able to come up with some type of answer.
- **Standard #12 – Broad context** – Broad context considers historical boundaries, migration routes, historical events, religious background, and other things which might impact the research. With Bartley Roddy “The Great Hunger” caused by the devastating failure of the potato crop provides a reason and a likely timeframe for his emigration. Bartley was not alone - an estimate two million Irish people emigrated as a result of the famine – and likely traveled with or

¹ Board for Certification of Genealogists, *Genealogy Standards*, 2nd ed., revised (Nashville, Tenn.: Ancestry, 2021), 11–15.

followed on the heels of family and friends making the same journey for the same reason.

- **Standard #14 – Topical breadth** – sources to consult for answers to the research question include ones naming the subject and his relatives, neighbors and associates, again focusing on the history, religion, social customs and other factors for the subject and larger social group.
- **Standard #17 – Extent** – research should be “reasonably exhaustive” and sufficiently broad, likely extending beyond the person in question.

Additional standards from chapter 3 address reasoning from evidence.²

- **Standard #40 – Evidence mining** – pay attention to every bit of evidence, even details that might seem insignificant. For example a year of immigration or a length of marriage might be the clue that leads to another telling record.
- **Standard #41 – Evidence Scope** – again, genealogists should collect evidence from records naming not only the subject of the research, but also possible associates.
- **Standard #44 – Evidence reliability** – this standard recognizes that even unreliable evidence may lead to useful clues.

Bartley Roddy case study resources and strategies

Census Neighbors

Pay attention to the neighbors. For Bartley Roddy, the 1870 census in Union Township, Madison County, Ohio, showed Anthony Foody enumerated within the group of known Roddy relatives. In 1860, Michael Dunigan was enumerated immediately before the Roddy family in Stokes Township, Madison County, Ohio, and identified a birthplace of “Ireland.” Pay close attention to those census neighbors +/- 3-5 pages from your ancestors who came from the same place as your ancestor. Research them like you would if they were your direct ancestor. Every. Single. Record. Trace them and their children backwards and forward.

The other Roddys near Bartley, including Patrick in whose house Barley lived in 1860, required full research for everyone and their children, looking at all the records I would normally search for with a direct ancestor.

Cemetery Neighbors

Anna Roddy was buried near Bartley Roddy, and her gravestone showed a birth close to his. *FindAGrave* does not identify cemetery neighbors, so you may have to visit the

² Board for Certification of Genealogists, *Genealogy Standards*, 2nd ed., revised (Nashville, Tenn.: Ancestry, 2021), 23–29.

cemetery yourself, hire someone to map nearby graves, reach out to the cemetery for plot lists, pay particular attention to similar gravestones, or simply research all the burials in a cemetery with a given surname or other similar characteristics. The proximity of Bartley and Anna's graves, the similarity of their birth years, and the common surname made me get Anna's death certificate, where I found the same parents.

County Histories

Where county histories are available, search for all known FAN club members. But also research any person whose place of origin is the same as yours – everyone from Ireland, from your ancestor's county, from your ancestor's parish or townland if those are mentioned in the biographical sketches. Your ancestor might not be included in a county history, or data about him might not provide details such as a specific place of origin. But entries for members of your ancestors FAN club who are from the same general place, say "Ireland," might have more specific information of their origins, such as a date of immigration or a county or parish. Those places are a starting point of where to begin your research for your ancestor.

DNA Connections

Search all your DNA connections for your known family connections – particularly county and parish. I have yet to be able to tie my brother-in-law to Bartley Mullen and Bridget Cavanaugh from Bunnyconnellan, Kilgarvin Parish, County Mayo. But Bartley Roddy's info places him near Ballina, Co. Mayo; his Roddy "cousins" Michael and Bridget (Burke) Roddy came from Mayo and Sligo, respectively, right in the same area. Elimination of all other lines in my husband's ancestry that did not come from Mayo or Sligo, leaves the Roddy ancestors as the near-certain source of the DNA connection with the matches.

TakeAways

- Start with your person of interest
- Move on to known family
- Progress to possible family
- Pull in the neighbors – treat them as if they were family
- Spelling variants – consider sound-alike variants, and handwriting/printed text/mis-transcribed or mis-OCRed variants
- Changing borders – what was the place called when the event happened?
- Look at contemporaneous maps, not modern maps
- Look in multiple collections for useful records
- Periodically review your research in light of new tools

- Listen to the ancestors – they want to be found

General Resources for FAN club research

- Elizabeth Shown Mills, “FAN + GPS + DNA: The Problem-Solvers Great Trifecta,” *Legacy Family Tree Webinars* (<https://familytreewebinars.com/webinar/fan-gps-dna-the-problem-solvers-great-trifecta/>)
- , “QuickLesson 11: Identity Problems & the FAN Principle,” *Evidence Explained*, (<https://www.evidenceexplained.com/index.php/content/quicklesson-11-identity-problems-fan-principle>)
- Christy Fillerup, “The Cousin Next Door: Using the FAN Club Principle,” *Legacy Tree Genealogists* (<https://www.legacytree.com/blog/cousin-next-door-using-fan-club-principle>)
- Judy G. Russell, “The Mysteries of Immigrant Abraham Shechter,” *The Legal Genealogist* (<https://www.legalgenealogist.com/2012/02/14/the-mysteries-of-immigrant-abraham-shechter/>)
- Mary Kircher Roddy, “Finding Jane Graham’s Parents: Using Clusters and Records in Three Countries,” *Legacy Family Tree Webinars* (<https://familytreewebinars.com/webinar/finding-jane-grahams-parents-using-clusters-and-records-in-three-countries>)
- , “The Hub of the Wheel: How Tracing a Brother with no Children Connected Ten Siblings (a 2022 Reisinger lecture),” *Legacy Family Tree Webinars* (<https://familytreewebinars.com/webinar/the-hub-of-the-wheel-how-tracing-a-brother-with-no-children-connected-ten-siblings>)
- , “Using FANs to Blow a Family Home,” *The Septs*, vol. 45, no. 2, p. 38–41.