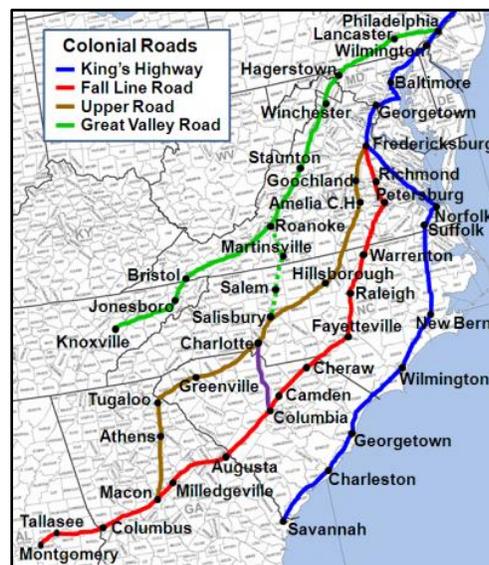


Research Strategies in the Southern United States

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1. Research in the Southern United States has its challenges but also its advantages. Record loss, constant migration, rural areas, illiteracy, and lack of records keep many from researching their families.

2. Migration patterns. After the Revolutionary War and several land treaties the United States was opened up for western expansion. Families started migrating to these new lands in search of cheap land. People from certain areas in the south would migrate along established roads and trails. Word would spread of these roads and trails in towns and counties and many people from the same areas would travel together to these new lands. Revolutionary War and War of 1812 pensions and bounty lands also provided the means for this western expansion. Knowing these migration routes can help understand why your ancestor moved to an area and where they may have moved from.



3. This is a map of record loss in the United States. As you can see the bulk of record loss is in the Southeast portion of the United States.



4. Challenges in Research.
 - The Southern United States was primarily agrarian for the last 200 years.
 - Many settlers were farmers who were illiterate and lived away from cities or churches that recorded vital records.
 - It could require a day or more to travel to a county courthouse, or even a church, so many events, particularly birth and deaths, were never recorded. Unless you were in a large city you will likely not see birth or death records until about 1900.
 - It is all about the land. Detailed deeds, property, and tax and court records were kept to document land ownership.

5. Record Loss does not mean that every record is destroyed. In fact, most counties that have been designated as having record loss still have many available records. Understand the different types of probate, tax, land and court documents available and look at everything that is left for clues to your ancestors.

County Level records

- Marriage
- Birth
- Tax lists
- Probate
- Land and Property
- Court minutes/orders
- County Histories
- Newspapers
- Land ownership maps

Federal level records:

- Military Service and Pension records
- Bounty land patents
- Homesteads
- Passenger lists
- Naturalization
- Census

State level records

- Confederate military
- Death
- Land patents
- Land Lotteries/Land runs

6. Check FamilySearch Wiki for record availability and record loss. Then check the Family History Library catalog to see what records are available at the Family History Library.
7. Get to know your ancestor's FAN club. FAN stands for friends, associates and neighbors. Make a list of the people you see interacting with your ancestor and seek out their records. Sometimes they can even be sued to help identify your ancestors or discover new information.
8. Understand Boundary Changes. As more and more people moved west and the western frontier became more populated the need to have smaller jurisdictions was necessary. County boundaries were frequently changing. This becomes important if you need to understand nearby counties in conducting research. Nearby counties back in the early 1800s might not be nearby counties today. Or a person may have lived in one place all their lives, but because of boundary changes may have lived in many different counties. A website called www.mapofus.org shows every state in the United States and how it has changed over time.
9. When tracing a person back in time, first learn everything about them more recently in time. Gather census and vital records for them and then gather their children's vital records that might reveal their birthplaces.
10. Find compiled records first instead of going straight to microfilm records. This could save time and also show quickly how many people there were with that same name in the county.
11. Census records before 1850 in the United States do not name every person in the household, but rather only the head of house. Each person in the household is marked with a tally mark for their age and gender. Remember that not everyone in the household had to be related and the oldest male in the household was not always the head of house.

Make a chart of the parents and children in the household in census records after 1850. Now compare ages and gender with censuses before 1850 to find a possible match. Notice neighbors that are living near your ancestor in later years. Are the same family groups living in the same area, to ensure you are looking at the same family?

12. Study deeds for your ancestor in the county that they resided. Notice all the people in a deed not just the buyer and seller. The witnesses are usually neighbors or family members. Cross reference these witnesses with the neighbors on the census.
13. To trace a family back in censuses before 1850, compare each year with the previous or subsequent years. Do the ages of the parents and children align with what is known about the family? If not you may not have the correct family.
14. Taking the leap to find your ancestor in another state may mean doing a general search in all the state in indexed census records, tax lists or marriage records. Can any couple or any person be found with your ancestor's name? Are there multiples of the same name? Each person you discover needs to be researched and then narrowed based on those results.
15. When census records cannot provide the desired migration, many states in the south have tax lists that trace a person from place to place. Understanding the tax laws in each state can help identify when a person might appear on the tax lists or be removed from the tax list. For example, a son might appear on tax lists when he turned 21. This allows an estimated year of birth. Or your ancestor may disappear from tax lists which might mean he died or moved away. Since sons that turned 21 may still be living at home, finding several men by the same name together on a tax list could indicate they lived near or with one another. Be careful to study how the tax list was recorded. Is it alphabetized by surname and first name or just loosely alphabetized by the first letter of the surname.

Tax lists usually show how much land a person owned. How much land a person owned could be an indication that they were newly married, well established or aged. The more land they owned typically meant they were older. If they didn't own land they could be younger or very old. Comparing these tax lists with census records for the same time frame can give you estimated ages of these ancestors.

16. Deeds can also state relationships and refer to previous residences or other residences where your ancestor may still own property. Deeds may provide the name of a man's wife, who originally owned the land, descriptions of the land, proximity to a water source, and neighbors whose land bordered the land where your ancestor lived. Pay attention to all of these clues. If there were several men by the same name in the same county your ancestor may be the one that lived near "Muddy River" and not by "Flat Creek."

Legal terms such as giving the land to someone for the "love and affection they have shown me" is a legal term and indicates a family relationship.

17. Probate records and deeds are the primary records used by genealogists in conducting southern research. Tax lists and military records are a close second. Probate records are not just wills. Understand the different types of probate records: wills, guardianships, inventories, estate sales, division of estate, etc All of these records hold clues to kinship and documenting family groups.
18. Before the Revolutionary War and for some years after English traditions in the transfer of an estate were still the custom of the day. The Law of Primogeniture is the right by law or custom, of the first born legitimate son to inherit his parent's entire estate. It was not uncommon for only one son to be named in a will. When only one son is named in a will don't assume that the deceased only had one child. Compare

with census records, tax lists and possibly guardianship records to learn how many children the deceased actually had. Not every deceased person had a will. That is when the other types of probate records become very important. Time did not allow for a complete explanation of probate records, however the FamilySearch wiki has excellent articles about the different types of probate records.

19. Military records. The Revolutionary, War of 1812 and Civil War produced records that are vital for us learning more about our ancestors. The south was greatly impacted by these wars, especially the Civil War. Assume that at least one member of the family may have joined in the efforts on the Union or the Confederate Army. If your male ancestor was about 18 years or older at the onset of the Civil war check for their service. Many bordering states between the north and the south had both Union and Confederate troops. Ancestry (https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/nps_civilwarsoldiers) or the Soldiers and Sailors Database (<https://www.nps.gov/civilwar/soldiers-and-sailors-database.htm>) hold indexes of service.

20. If a soldier was in the Union army they could apply for a pension immediately following the Civil War if they were an invalid (called an Invalid Pension) or when they died their widow could apply for a Widow's pension. A Pension index card is available on Ancestry or Fold3 that shows when they were awarded these pensions. A widow's filing date followed her husband's death and is an indication of when they died. This card is only an index to the pension file held at the National Archives.

NAME OF SOLDIER: Franklin Joel				
NAME OF DEPENDENT: Widow Franklin Ann				
SERVICE: Co. 33. 9th Mo. Inf.				
DATE OF FILING:	CLASS:	APPLICATION NO.	CERTIFICATE NO.	STATE FROM WHICH FILED.
1863 Aug. 3	Invalid.	29902	438337	
1875 Mar. 11	Widow.	610223	426825	Mo.
	Minor.			
ATTORNEY:				
REMARKS:				

<https://www.archives.gov/veterans/military-service-records/pre-ww-1-records#natf86>.

21. Confederate pensions were offered by each southern state and held on the state level and not the federal level as Union Army Pensions. Many of these pension records have been scanned and are on Ancestry, FamilySearch and state archives.

22. Note the company, regiment and type of unit the soldier was assigned to. The FamilySearch wiki has attached to most southern counties the Union and Confederate units that were formed in that county. Each regiment also has a page and where each company was formed. If the person who served was enlisted in a county not near the county where your ancestor is known to have resided it is not likely your ancestor.

33rd Regiment, Missouri Infantry (Union)

Companies in this Regiment with the Counties of Origin

Men often enlisted in a company recruited in the counties where they lived though not always. After many battles, companies might be combined because so many men were killed or wounded. However if you are unsure which company your ancestor was in, try the company recruited in his county first.

Company A - Captain William Blake, Captain Stephen J. Burnett, Captain George W. Van Beck - Sedalia, [[Pettis County, Missouri Genealogy|Pettis County], Missouri

Company B - Captain John G. Hudson, Captain James J. Patton - Jefferson City, [[Cole County, Missouri Genealogy|Cole County], Missouri

Company C - Captain Alexander J. Campbell - St. Louis, St. Louis County, Missouri

Company D - Captain Henry H. Knowlton, Captain William J. McKee - Louisiana, Pike County, Missouri

23. Service Records can be comprehensive or be sparse. Depending on the form used some provide a birthplace and physical description of the soldier, date of death, battles they participated in or if they were injured.

24. 1890 Veteran's schedules were mostly for Union soldiers and are available for most Southern States and counties. If an Civil war soldier lived to 1890 check in their county for service. These Veteran's schedules list the company and unit they were assigned to and when they enlisted and were mustered out of service. (These are available through Ancestry and FamilySearch)

1890 Veterans Schedules for Joel Franklin												
Missouri > Pettis > Flat Creek												
Joel Franklin	✓	Pri	A	33	Mo	Sept	11	Aug	1862	5	Jan	1863
James M. Allcorn	✓	Pf	=	1 st	Jan	1861	=	=	1861	=	=	1861
									186			186

25. Pension files themselves can be 1-100s of pages long and can provided a wealth of personal and family information especially if the soldier was an invalid. The invalid pension application included affidavits of people who knew the soldier before the war and could testify of his health before and after the war. Usually these were close neighbors or family members. A widow's pension might include marriage records, birth dates and places of the soldier and the widow and a list of their dependent children.