Using Social Media Networking Platforms and DNA Matches to Find Living Connections - a Case Study

Annette Adams
March 2022

Overcoming research obstacles may require a review and return to foundational research principles, as well as new strategies. Reviewing old evidence with new questions may highlight previously missed details. When looking at primary sources or original sources, glean all pertinent information from any and all documents possible. Watch for inferred references, and even negative evidence.

To keep track of all observable details, create and keep a research log on your computer. This working log will be easier to search than using paper. The [FamilySearch Research Wiki](#) provides numerous articles on various topics, including how to create a research log, what to expect from key records, and more.

The objective of this presentation is to demonstrate basic FAN Club research, review DNA matches, and connect through Social Media Networking Platforms. Please see links for more information:

1. **FAN Club or Cluster Research**
   Is a research method used to take other family members, associates, and neighbors (who were either related to, or resided near, or worked with the ancestor into consideration. This type of research requires paying attention to different individuals and figuring out how they might be related, and what their connections might be, so that any records not found on our ancestor, but found on one of the FAN members, may yield results that will clearly identify our person, to help us overcome our research obstacles.

2. **DNA - Matches and Tools**
   DNA test results combined with traditional research methods can yield genealogical breakthroughs. Various companies offer basic DNA kits to discover possible relative matches. When using DNA test results it is very important to understand which DNA test provides which types of results. Different companies offer unique tools to calculate familial relationships either in percentages or by centimorgans. The most popular and readily available atDNA tests or autosomal tests are offered by 23andMe, AncestryDNA, Family Tree DNA, Living DNA, and MyHeritage DNA. Each of these companies uses a different reference group to compare DNA samples to. Be sure to consider uploading DNA kits to multiple databases, if you have a particularly difficult genealogy obstacle. It is really

important to remember, that within a family tree, people may be genealogically related, that is, they descend from the same ancestors, but the descendants may NOT be genetically related, since recombination occurs, and what DNA is passed on. A good basic read on this topic is Blaine T. Bettingers FamilyTree "Guide to DNA Testing and Genetic Genealogy," Second Edition.Consider using the DNA Painter tools to calculate relationships.

3. **Social Media Networking**
   When genealogical results yield familial relationships from public records and obituaries, the descendants of those related individuals may be contacted to invite them to contribute more information about past family members. DNA matches may also be contacted through the very company that provided the DNA test kit. Please remember, some DNA results may be surprising, and possibly unwelcome. Consider also that some contributors may be new to the platform and may need assistance in learning how to better use it to communicate with newly found family members.

Some Sites Used for this Presentation:

Cyndi's List of Genealogy Sites on the Internet
Research Methodology FAN Club or Cluster Research

Describe the Records on a Research Log
Introduction:
Step 1. Identify What you Know
Step 2. Decide what you want to Learn
Step 3. Select Records to Search
Step 4. Obtain and Search the Records
Step 5. Use the Information

Ask the following questions:

Why was the document made? When was this document made? Is the registration date the same as the event date? What information can be expected from this type of document? Who are the people listed on this document? What types of records may tell me more about these people? Have I conducted reasonably exhaustive research on all individuals on this document? Are there any location clues?

Record Collections:

East Prussia Specific:

[AGOFF or Arbeitsgemeinschaft Ostdeutscher Familienforscher](#)
The above link lands on the East- and West Prussia specific home page. Here one may find research groups, contacts, projects, links, registration offices, protestant and Catholic churches, Jewish communities, collections, sources and more. The site is in German, it can be translated if using Google Chrome. The page includes a clickable map of East and West Prussia.

Ancestry.com: [Eastern Prussian Provinces, Germany [Poland], Selected Civil Vitals, 1874-1945](#)
This collection can be searched by name, date, and place, if known. Two key search features allow searching by Kreis, Date, as in the year, and vital record type, as in Birth (Geburt), Marriage (Heirat), and Death (Tod). When searching Ancestry, note that some collections are housed by archive rather than by location, or in German research by Kreis. Conduct a basic search to see if locations might be housed in key archives.

[Archion.de](#)
This subscription site for Protestant church records can be searched for various provinces in Germany. The site can be translated to English, and one may preview church locations for availability. One must check back regularly, because new information is being added.

[New York, U.S., Arriving Passenger and Crew Lists (including Castle Garden and Ellis Island), 1820-1957](#)

Ancestry.com provides the following information concerning these incredible arrival lists. **Castle Garden** served as a processing station for immigrants from 1855 to 1890. Likewise, **Ellis Island** served as a processing station for immigrants from 1892 to 1954. This database includes both the Castle Garden and Ellis Island passenger lists, as well as other processing stations that were used through the years. The following information may be included in the index. Always check the original document.

- Given name
- Surname
- Age
- Gender
- Arrival date
- Port of arrival
- Port of departure
- Ship name

Note: Individuals arriving after 1906 will provide more information on the lists. Be sure to check if there is a second page. Information included after 1906 will be where the person was traveling to, and who the contact in the home country was at that time. Check other ports of arrival.

Pennsylvania, U.S., Arriving Passenger and Crew Lists, 1800-1962
This database is an index to the passenger lists of ships arriving from foreign ports at the port of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, from 1800-1962.

New Orleans, Louisiana, U.S., Passenger Lists, 1813-1963
Check out these New Orleans passenger lists to discover when your ancestors eased into the Big Easy.

Baltimore, Maryland, U.S., Passenger Lists, 1820-1964

The FamilySearch Research wiki has an excellent article on the Hamburg Passenger Lists and how to best research them and what to expect.

Hamburg Passenger Lists, Handwritten Indexes, 1855-1934

Hamburg Passenger Lists, 1850-1934 (in German)
These passenger lists from Hamburg are technically disembarkation lists indicating as many as 5 million people who left from Hamburg from various parts of Europe, either via a direct or an indirect route to different ports over the course of the years mentioned. The shipping company did not run from 1914 through 1919 . These online searchable lists can be accessed at Ancestry.com.

Meyers Gazetteer or *Meyers Orts- und Verkehrs-lexikon des deutschen Reichs*
This is an excellent online gazetteer for Prussian research which will include parts of modern-day Poland, Russia, (Eastern provinces) and France, (Alsace Lorraine region).

Surname Distribution Maps List
This is an amazing research tool for two reasons, the first being that one may see where certain names are most concentrated within certain areas. The data has come either from phone books or in one case from the German WWI Casualty list. The link directs you to a list of multiple countries. Please remember, some surnames may have "daughtered out" or may be from a different region, and landed in this new location due to forced migrations.