
Ten Places to Find FANs

FANs - friends, associates, and neighbors - are the people your ancestors lived, loved, and worked with in their everyday lives. By following their lives, you may open up clues to your ancestors' stories.

1. **Census Records** - It's easy to find your ancestor in a census record and stop. Look at every family at least 2-3 pages before *and* after your family. Look for them in prior and subsequent censuses, too.
2. **Boarders** - Speaking of the censuses, look at the boarders in a home. Prior to the advent of hotels & motels travelers, single persons, tradesmen and laborers would board in a home of a family. Don't dismiss them as unimportant. You wouldn't board a complete stranger. Neither would your ancestor. Research the connection.
3. **Church Records** - Who would you invite to be the Godparent to your child? A close friend, relative or neighbor. Even if you find your ancestor didn't enlist a relative, they may be an old friend from the last place you lived. Follow his trail. Ditto marriage witnesses.
4. **Military Muster Records** - Most pre-20th Century military units were mustered from one community. Brothers, cousins, in-laws, and neighbors all served together. When you look at a muster roll, look for common names that repeat. Look for the soldiers from the same town. Write them down.
5. **Military Pension Records** - In order to qualify for a pension most soldiers or their widows had to show proof of service. This often meant getting testimonials from fellow comrades in arms. Who provided a testimonial? Who was mentioned as serving with your ancestor? Research them.
6. **Immigration Records** - My ancestor, Mike Mannebach, was sponsored by Louis Patry, on his naturalization paperwork, when he applied for US Citizenship. What do you want to bet that Louis came from the same German town that Mike did? He probably knew him from "back home." Can't find Mike's German home? Look for Louis' birth place.
7. **Land Records** - Sometimes a settler needed a co-signer on his loan. Who would co-sign a loan but someone he knew well? Sometimes ancestors owned property together. Again, only an old friend or relative would commit to such a relationship. If you see a name out of the ordinary, research them.
8. **Plot Maps** - Who lived next door? Until the 20th Century, our families lived within a 6-mile radius of their homes. The guy next door could be related or at a minimum he played a significant role in your ancestor's life.
9. **Probate Records** - Guardians, administrators, estate executors are persons your ancestor deeply trusted, and trust is built on familiarity. Don't overlook them.
10. **Cemeteries** - Once you find your ancestor in a cemetery, don't stop there. Who is buried nearby? Even if the last name is different, take a picture, make a note of it.

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