

# Discovering a Probable Family Branch

## *through Cluster Research*

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As we embark on our research journeys, we tend to be very focused on our target research subject(s), families or events. We establish our research question and move forward to gather as much information as we can from all varieties of sources.

What we sometimes overlook are the individuals and families that appear in sources relevant to our targeted search who appear as neighbors in census schedules, witnesses or sureties on marriage records, informants on death records, and associates documented in county court and probate records.

It is most advantageous to “widen our net” as we research, to study potential extended family, neighbors and associates. These groups represent our ancestor’s cluster. We must expand our search activity to investigate potential family and associates as diligently as we research our direct and known family lines.

Elizabeth Shown Mills calls this the FAN club – friends, associates and neighbors.

Cluster research strategy involves investigating people who lived close to our families, engaged in business transactions with them, stood as witnesses or informants for them for marriages, estate proceedings and death certificates.

We will explore a case study demonstrating cluster research for one my family lines.

## Hazelwood – Floyd Connection

Richard Hazelwood's first wife was Maria. They resided in Spottsville, Henderson County, Kentucky, documented by the 1870 and 1880 census schedule. Richard was formerly enslaved by the Hazelwood family; however, no direct evidence existed about Maria's background – until cluster research was implemented.

We will explore how recognizing common given names, families living in proximity of each other and repeating surnames that appeared on important sources led to constructing a case for probable family relationships.

A more careful review of relevant 1870 and 1880 census schedules resulted in creation of a summary abstract to enable easier evaluation and analysis.

1870 Henderson Co., KY – Spottsville page 12	1880 Henderson Co., KY – Spottsville pages 600A & 600B
84-79 Richard Hazlewood (37 B) household – Maria (36 B), Joseph (11 B), Phebe (9 B), Virginia (8 months B)	4-4 Len Floyd (25 B) household – Hariet (26 B), Allen (6 B), page 600A
86-81 James Floyd (24 B) household – Rachael (23 B), Samuel (21 B), Daniel (17 M), Leonard (16 M)	6-6 Dan Floyd (26 B) household – Sarah (21 B), Lucy (3 B), Virgie (2 B), Simon 6 months B) Phebe (70 B), page 600A
88-83 John Floyd (26 B) household – Molly (22 M), Phebe (51 M)	13-13 Ric'rd Hazlewood (52 B) household – Maria (42 B), Virgie (7 B), John (14 B), page 600B
	14-14 Jo Hazlewood (22 B) household – Ana (17 B) John Floyd (32 B) household – Molly (27 B)

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## **References**

- Federal census (1850-1930) and slave schedules (1850-1860), Henderson County, Kentucky, *Ancestry.com*.
- Henderson County, Kentucky Colored Marriage Records, photocopies of originals and original copies, Henderson courthouse.
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- Henderson County, Kentucky death certificates, digital images, *Ancestry.com*.
- Daviess County, Kentucky death certificates, digital images, *Ancestry.com*.
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- Henderson County, Kentucky deeds, digital image, *FamilySearch.org*.
- *Find A Grave* burial abstracts; <https://findagrave.com>.