

How to Recognize Your Ancestor

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Description: This class discusses how to know you found the right person. It will explain using the Genealogical Proof Standard.

Steps for deciding if you have the right person include:

1. Ask your self questions like the following:
 - Was the time of the event within the lifetime of your ancestor?
 - Is the age of the possible matching person right?
 - Are the names and the ages of children, associated with the possible match person consistent with what is known about your ancestor's children.
 - If there is a spouse listed in the records on the possible match, does it match your ancestor's spouse? If not could it be another marriage?
 - Are the economic conditions of this person consistent with the known family history?
 - Do other family members, associates and neighbors of your ancestor appear in records with the possible match person?
 - Does the possible match person live in the same place your ancestor lived? If not check a map and boundary line changes to determine if it is reasonable for your ancestor to have been there at that time.
 - Are the possible match person and your ancestor's affiliated with the same church?

2. Make a time line of known facts about your ancestor and the possible match person.
 - Include information from their FAN club (family, associates, and neighbors) by asking:
 - “Who are the family, associates and neighbors?”
 - What did they do together?
 - When did they get together?
 - Where did they meet together?
 - Why did they associate with each other?
 - Also include: property purchases, military service, and of course births, marriages and deaths.
 - Consider mentioning what was happening in the community and how those events may have affected your ancestor.
 - On your time line, include other people named in documents you find for each date and event.
 - Briefly give the source of your information.”(FamilySearch.org Research Wiki article, “How to Recognize Your United States Ancestor”)

Then compare the two time lines. Suggestions for making a time line are:

- Use a word processor or spreadsheet program to list data chronologically.
- Use a genealogical data management program to create a report that works as a time line.
- Details page of Family Tree can substitute for a time line. Use both the Vital Information section and the Other Information Section.

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Example time line made with a word processing program.

1800 **William Jarrill listed on Burke County North Carolina Census.**
1 male to 10; 2 males 16-26; 1 male 45+; 1 female to 10; 2 females 10-16;
3 females 16-26; 1 female 26-45; 1 female 45+¹²

2 April 1801 **William Fitzgerald, sells land in Burke County, North Carolina to Thomas Coleman.**
Fitzgerald, William to Thomas Coleman for 50 acres dated 2 April 1801
proved by William White; January Sessions 1805.¹³

1810 **William Fitzgerald listed on the Floyd County, Kentucky Census.**
6 males to 10; 2 males 10-16; 1 male 45+; 3 females to 10; 1 female 10-16; 3 female

15 Jan 1812 **Bond regis**
Lazrous D
Bond dated
marriage sh

4 Jun 1812 **Carrell Jer**

Timeline (Chronology) List for Andrew Jackson Adkins

Age	Date	Event
0	28 Jun 1876	Birth: Eldridge, Elliott County, Kentucky, United States
4	1880	Census: Elliott County, Kentucky, United States
21	12 Jul 1897	Marriage: Cora Alice ADKINS
24	1900	Census: Elliott County, Kentucky, United States

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Vital Information

[Open Details](#)

Name
Andrew Jackson Adkins

Gender
Male

Birth
28 Jun 1876
Eldridge, Elliott Co., KY

Christening
[+ Add](#)

Death
19 Aug 1966
Isonville, Elliott Co., KY

Burial
Adkins Cemetery, Newcombe, Elliott Co., KY

Other Information

[Open Details](#) | [+ Add](#)

Alternate Name
Birth Name
Andrew Jackson

Custom Event
Draft Record
WW1
12 Sep 1918
Elliott Co., Kentucky, United States

census
1880
Martinsburg, Elliott Co., Kentucky, United States

census
1900
Newcomb, Elliott Co., Kentucky, United States

census
1910
Elliott Co., Kentucky, United States

census
1920
Newcomb, Elliott Co., Kentucky, United States

census
1930
Elliott Co., Kentucky, United States

Details page from Family Tree

3. Create analysis charts for both your ancestor and the possible match person. Include what the records suggest about both. Examples shown below:

Example taken from FamilySearch "How to Recognize Your United States Ancestor"

MY ANCESTOR Analysis Chart for My Ancestor: Samuel Richman/Richmond (name)

What Do I Know About My Ancestor?	Analysis and Conclusions
<p>1. Biographical encyclopedia says the father of Samuel Richman/Richmond was Isaac Richman and that they lived in Woodstown, Salem Co., NJ.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Look for records associating Samuel Richman/Richmond with Isaac Richman in Woodstown, Salem Co., NJ. • Samuel Richman/Richmond may have been a Methodist because there is a Methodist hymnal in our family artifacts. • Check Woodstown and Salem City Methodist church records.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Samuel Richman/Richmond and his brother lived in Salem City, Salem Co., NJ and were shoemakers, according to the 1850 census. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If the family did come from Woodstown, they must have moved to Salem City at some point.

Example taken from FamilySearch "How to Recognize Your United States Ancestor"

POSSIBLE MATCH Analysis Chart for a Single Record: Samuel Richman and others (name of person) Woodstown Methodist Church Records, Salem Co., NJ (name of record)

What Do I Know About the Possible Match?	Analysis and Conclusions
<p>1. This Samuel Richman and family members were Methodist.</p>	<p>1. Confirms what I suspected from the Methodist hymnal in our family artifacts.</p>
<p>2. This Samuel Richman "removed" from the Methodist Church in Woodstown, Salem Co., NJ in April, 1842.</p>	<p>2. Samuel Richman moved somewhere else. Where?</p>
<p>3. Samuel Richman, Sybilla Richman, Isaac Richman and Jonathan Richman were all attending the Woodstown Methodist Church between April, 1839 and April, 1842.</p>	<p>3. I know from our family Bible record that Sybilla Richman was the mother of Samuel Richman, and Isaac Richman was the father of Jonathan Richman. Also, I know from the 1850 census that Samuel Richmond and Jonathan Richmond were living together in Salem, Salem Co., NJ. Finding these people together in this church record points to these people being a family.</p>
<p>4. Samuel and Jonathan Richman both left the Woodstown Methodist Church in 1841 and 1842.</p>	<p>4. It is very possible that the Samuel Richmond, shoemaker, and Jonathan Richmond, shoemaker, in the 1850 census in Salem, Salem Co., NJ were these same two people and were brothers.</p>

Then compare the two analysis charts.

If at this point you can not decide whether the possible match person is your ancestor look for additional sources of information.

If you think the possible match person is your ancestor the ultimate test is done by applying a tool professional researchers use, called the “Genealogical Proof Standard.” What is it? It is “Guidelines for building solid cases that includes the following steps:

1. “Conduct a reasonably exhaustive search among a variety of records.
2. “Determine the class for each piece of information within the record, i.e., whether it is:
 - “Direct or Indirect evidence
 - “Original or Derivative source
 - “Primary or Secondary information
3. “Weigh each piece of data, keeping in mind WHO furnished the information, and WHY.
4. “Evidence must all point in the same direction. If there is an opposing bit of evidence, its relevance to the question must be negated, or refuted.
5. “If evidence all points in the same direction, and no other reasonable conclusion can be reached, then the case has passed the GPS standard and is considered solid.
6. “Write up the conclusion. Include an explanation of any opposing evidence and how it was resolved. Include citations,” (*Genealogical Proof Standard, Building a Solid Case* by Christine Rose, pg. 18.).

When should you use the GPS process? When you do not have sufficient primary information, original sources, or direct evidence without conflicting information to prove your case.

Case Study Notes:
