



# NYSFHC Session Syllabus

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# Expanding Research to Backtrack New Yorkers to New England

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Two case studies demonstrate how searching beyond the person of interest led to establishing the separate origins of two unrelated Revolutionary War veterans who settled in New York with no record of their parents or prior residence.

## **Backtracking has three components**

1. One or more migrating ancestors who settled in a place where they left no record of their parentage and place of origin
2. Targeting one or more migrating ancestors to determine their parentage and place of origin
3. *Proving*—not just *finding*—a migrating ancestor’s parentage and place of origin.

## **Differences between *finding* and *proving***

### *Finding:*

- Means locating information that *tells* the researcher who the migrating ancestor’s parents were and the place or places where the migrating ancestor lived before settling at the destination.
- Requires blind trust that the found information is both correct and a reference to the migrating ancestor and not someone else with the same name.

### *Proving means:*

- Establishing a conclusion about a migrating ancestor’s parentage and origin that critical researchers will agree is correct
- Showing that no other parentage or place of origin could be correct

### *Proving requires:*

- Searching thoroughly for evidence of parentage and origin
- Documenting all potentially relevant evidence
- Assembling the evidence to support hypotheses and testing the evidence and hypotheses
- Resolving conflicts between hypotheses until only one remains supportable
- Explaining and documenting the supportable hypothesis in writing

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### Paradigm for backtracking

- Search thoroughly in and around the place of settlement for all evidence of the migrating ancestors, their associates, and all potential relatives.
- Sift that evidence for clues pointing to the migrating ancestors' parentage, origin, or both.
- Assemble that evidence into testable hypotheses about the migrating ancestors' parents and origin.
- Search thoroughly for evidence of all hypothesized parents and origins, especially evidence in the hypothesized origins that might connect people in the origin with people in the place of settlement.
- Assemble and document all the evidence
- Test the assemblage
- Resolve any and all significant conflicts
- Explain in writing the result and its logical and documentary support.

### The Tucker case study

*Objective:*

- To prove the parents and specific origin of Jonathan Tucker who was enumerated in Cayuga County, New York, in 1800, 1810, and 1820 and died in 1822

*Sources providing evidence of Jonathan's identity, parentage, and origin:*

- *New York sources* included federal censuses, newspapers, probate records, and gravestones.
- *Federal sources* included Jonathan's Revolutionary War pension application file, his compiled military service record, and the final payment papers for his pension.
- *New Hampshire sources* included a 1993 publication, Kingston records of Benjamin Tucker and his family, Hailestown records concerning Jonathan's residency status, Hawk records about Joseph Tucker's family and relatives, and county records concerning Joseph's orphaned same name son.

*Correlation of Jonathan Tucker Evidence*

NEW YORK PENSIONER	HYPOTHESIZED SON OF JOSEPH
Born in 1761–62	Born on 19 March 1763
Had a son Ebenezer	Had a grandfather and uncle Ebenezer
Wife's brother-in-law Henry Tucker, born on 15 October 1769	Brother Henry Tucker born on 25 October 1759
"Belonged to" Kingston, New Hampshire	Had a brother in Kingston, New Hampshire

## The Greenfield case study

### Objective:

- To prove the parents and specific origin of James Greenfield who was born on 25 December 1753, died on 15 January 1812, and was buried in Herkimer County, New York

### Sources providing evidence of James's identity, parents, and origin:

- *New York sources* included gravestones, militia records, tax records, deeds (including sales of leases), estate rental and survey records, church records, and the 1790 and 1800 United States censuses.
- *NSDAR sources* included membership applications and supporting documents.
- *Federal sources* included Revolutionary War pension application files and final payment papers.
- *Connecticut sources* included church records, newspapers, district probate papers, and town vital records.
- *Massachusetts sources* included probate papers, deeds, and marriage records.
- *Rhode Island sources* included court, land, and town records.
- *Other sources* included published family histories, military histories, published record abstracts.

### James Greenfield [Sr.] Timeline

About 1720	Born probably in Newport, Rhode Island (unrecorded)
By 1733	Parental separation and move with mother to Lyme, Connecticut
5 November 1738	Joined the First [Congregational] Church in New London, adjoining Lyme
25 January 1740/1	Married in New London
1742 and 1744/5	Had two children baptized in New London
1746 and 1749	Births of two sons in New London (unrecorded)
By 1749/50	"Went off to the Baptists" (joined the church at Montville)
1750–58	Births of four children, including one named James, in New London (unrecorded)
September 1767	Mentioned in his father's will
29 July 1773	Sold his land in New London
20 November 1773	"Rejected" by the Baptist church at Montville "for the breach of Covenant and Immorallity [sic]"
about 1774	Moved with some of his children to Albany County, New York
1789	Helped found a Baptist Church in Galway, Ballston District, Albany County
1790	Enumerated in Ballston District
through 1801	Attended the Baptist Church in Galway
1801	Died in Galway, since 1791 in Saratoga County, New York

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## The Greenfield case study

(continuing)

*James Greenfield [Jr.] Timeline*

25 December 1753	Born in New London, Connecticut
29 July 1773	His father sold his New London land, apparently preparatory to moving the family elsewhere.
25 December 1774	Married in Albany County, New York
16–24 April 1777	Provided militia service in Albany County
1779	Taxed on thirty acres in southeastern Albany County
3 October 1785	Leased land in Galway, Ballston District, western Albany Co.
1787	Taxed on land in Ballston District
1790	Enumerated in Ballston District
1799–1802	Taxed in Herkimer County, New York
1810	Enumerated in the Town of Russia, Herkimer County
23 January 1812	Died in the Town of Russia

## Resource material and further learning

- Jones, Thomas W. *Mastering Genealogical Proof*. Arlington, Va.: National Genealogical Society, 2013. [A textbook in paperback and Kindle e-book formats with exercises and answers; covers genealogical research planning and execution, documentation, analysis and correlation, resolving conflicting evidence, and writing proof statements, summaries, and arguments].
- . “Reasoning from Evidence.” In Elizabeth Shown Mills, ed. *Professional Genealogy: Preparation, Practice, and Standards*. Baltimore, Md.: Genealogical Publishing Co., 2018.
- Mills, Elizabeth Shown. “Fundamentals of Evidence Analysis.” Chapter 1 in *Evidence Explained: Citing History Sources from Artifacts to Cyberspace*, 3rd edition, revised. Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Company, 2017.
- . “QuickLesson 17: The Evidence Analysis Process Map.” *Evidence Explained: Historical Analysis, Citation & Source Usage*. <https://www.evidenceexplained.com/content/quicklesson-17-evidence-analysis-process-map> : 2020.
- . “QuickLesson 13: Classes of Evidence—Direct, Indirect & Negative.” *Evidence Explained: Historical Analysis, Citation & Source Usage*. <https://www.evidenceexplained.com/content/quicklesson-13-classes-evidence%E2%80%94direct-indirect-negative> : 2020.

## Case-study examples

- Jones, Thomas W. “Merging Identities Properly: Jonathan Tucker Demonstrates the Technique.” *National Genealogical Society Quarterly* 88 (June 2000): 111–21.
- . “Two James Greenfields from New England to New York.” *New York Genealogical and Biographical Record* 147 (October 2016): 245–63.