Researching Enslaved Ancestors in Georgia

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Presentation Description:

This presentation provides a methodological approach that family historians and genealogists may use to find their Georgia-based enslaved ancestors in historical records. The presenter will briefly introduce the audience to an abbreviated timeline of slavery in the state of Georgia. The process requires that a target ancestor be identified, and the following research questions are answered:

1) Was the target ancestor enslaved?
2) If enslaved, who was their enslaver(s)?

The presenter will then walk the audience through several case studies that demonstrates the outlined process for finding enslaved ancestors.

What is the FAN club?

FAN (Friends, Associates, and Neighbors) is a concept coined by Elizabeth Shown Mills.   Another term for FAN is cluster research. This is where you research not only your target person, but also a group of people that you may be able to follow through history. This method is especially useful in cases where an individual target person cannot be located.

To apply FAN to researching an enslaved person, first identify a target person. You will use this target person to create a target group. Instead of researching only the target person, research the target group, which may ultimately help you answer your research question on the target person.

How is FAN applied to enslavement research?

- Choose a target person and research question.
- Identify target person's known family.
- Identify target person's associates.
- Identify target person's neighbors.
- Create a target group.
- Research the target group in documentation to answer your research question.

Before you get started in enslavement research, consider these points:

- Do not start your genealogy journey starting in the enslavement period.
- Conduct exhaustive genealogy research from 1950 backward to 1870.
- Know that the formerly enslaved did not always take their slaveholder's surnames.
- Understand family groups and FANs.
- Identify family naming patterns.
- Understand that finding enslaved ancestors will require extensive research of the slaveholders' records

Develop Research Goals:

- **What?** Trace a Target Ancestor to their enslavement
- **How?** Use Target Ancestor's FAN, Cluster or Community research methodology
- **Where?** Locate your ancestor in the enslaver's documentation

Implement the Research Process for Finding Enslaved Ancestors:

- Extrapolate FAN from Completed Family Genealogy Through 1870
  - Choose a target ancestor (unique name, majority age during slavery, found on 1870 census)
  - Identify groups of people who may have been enslaved
  - Determine naming conventions in family
  - Determine Research people with same surname.
  - Identify people with the same place of birth or parents in the same place of birth.
  - Identify people who speak same language.
- Look for Evidence of the Enslaver in Civil War and Post-Civil War Records
  - Look for Target ancestor, FAN, planters in key records such as State censuses, Voter registrations, Freedmen's Bureau, Freedman's Bank, Southern Claims, US Colored Troops, Land deeds.
  - Review maps; recreate the community.
  - Peruse newspapers.
  - Inspect court records.
- Find Enslaved FAN in Enslaver's Records pre-1865
  - Examine wills, inventories, probates, court documents.
  - Analyze family papers and diaries.
  - Evaluate mortgages, bill of sale, business transactions.
  - Inspect church records including birth and baptismal records.
  - Review Insurance documentations.
  - Study ship manifests.
  - Read period Newspapers.

Abbreviated List of Resources:

Ancestry.com. *"U.S., Interviews with Former Slaves, 1936-1938"* (https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/1944/ accessed 21 Jan 2022)

Ancestry.com; 1850 U.S. Federal Census – Population Schedules

Ancestry.com; 1860 U.S. Federal Census – Population Schedules

Ancestry.com; 1870 U.S. Federal Census – Population Schedules

Ancestry.com; 1880 U.S. Federal Census – Population Schedules

Ancestry.com; 1850 U.S. Federal Census – Slave Schedules

Ancestry.com; 1860 U.S. Federal Census – Slave Schedules

Ancestry.com. *"U.S., Southern Claims Commission Allowed Claims, 1871-1880"*(https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/1217/ accessed 21 Jan 2023)

Ancestry.com. *"Georgia, U.S., Wills and Probate Records, 1742-1992"* https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/8635/ accessed 21 Jan 2023)

Cooper, Jean L. Compiler, *"A Genealogical index to the guides of the microfilm edition of records of Antebellum southern plantations from the Revolution through the Civil War"* *https://www.familysearch.org/search/catalog/1403851?availability=Family%20History%20Library* accessed 21 Jan 2023)

Dlas.uncg.edu [Digital Library on American Slavery], *"Race and Slavery Petitions"* http://dlas.uncg.edu/petitions/ accessed 21 Jan 2023)

Familysearch.org "Quick Guide to African American Records" (https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/Quick_Guide_to_African_American_Records accessed 22 Jan 2023)

Familysearch.org. "Georgia, United States Genealogy" (https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/Georgia,_United_States_Genealogy accessed 21 Jan 2023)

Familysearch.org. *"African American Slavery and Bondage"* (https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/African_American_Slavery_and_Bondage accessed 2023)

Familysearch.org. *"Georgia Probate Records, 1742-1990,"* (https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/1999178 accessed 21 Jan 2023)

Fields, Tara D. Compiler, *"A Brief Timeline of Georgia Laws Relating to Slaves, Nominal Slaves and Free Persons of Color"* (http://www.glynngen.com/enslavement/slavelaw.htm accessed 21 Jan 2023)

Georgiaarchives.org. *"Primary Sources that Document Enslaved and Free Persons of Color"* (https://www.georgiaarchives.org/online_exhibits/enslaved_and_free_persons accessed 22 Jan 2023)

Georgiaarchives.org. "*Slave Laws of Georgia 1755-1860"* (https://www.georgiaarchives.org/assets/documents/Slave_Laws_of_Georgia_1755-1860.pdf accessed 21 Jan 2022)

Paterson, David E. *"Georgia 's Slave Population in Legal Records, An Introduction to Courthouse Resources"* (https://www.afrigeneas.com/library/slaves_georgia.html accessed 21 Jan 2023)

Theyhadnames.net. *"A sortable spreadsheet with 3889 references to African American members of the Midway Church, 1756-1864"* (https://theyhadnames.net/midway-church-records/ accessed 21 Jan 2023)

Youtube.com. "How to Trace Your Ancestors as Slaves" (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7k-jbncWiq0 accessed 22 Jan 2023)

Youtube.com "Genealogy Garage: Finding American Slave Ancestors" (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_XX56eZ19HQaccessed 22 Jan 2023)