



# THE PROBLEM WITH PORTERS: MEN OF THE SAME NAME

Rebecca Whitman Koford, CG®, CGL<sup>SM</sup>  
rwk.genealogy@gmail.com



## Ancestral Identifiers

Identifying the differences between men of the same name is a challenge. We must remove the ambiguity of their currently known identity with thorough research and by resolving conflicts. Basic identifiers that help distinguish between men of the same name are included in the list below. With these we can place each man in context of his own family and compare and contrast with other men.

- Location
- Occupation (including military service)
- Social & economic status
- Handwriting & literacy
- Family & community
- Religion

## Community – Records - Methodology

To best identify men (or women) of the same name from one another, we combine these three tools in our overall approach to finding and analyzing records. **Researching men of the same name takes more effort, for the simple reason that if you have two, three, or six men of the same name, you have that many more people to research.** Be patient and pay attention to details.



## Community

Ancestors are more than names and dates, they are also identified as part of their community. Look at the records of your ancestors' family, friends, and even enemies, to discover additional facts. Your ancestor's name may not be in the index, but it could be in the record created for someone else. Review more about researching with the F.A.N. Principle, including in your research the ancestors' Friends, Associates, and Neighbors (Bibliography, 8).

## Records

Pursue a variety of records to find your ancestor. Educate yourself about records that you were previously unfamiliar with. Look through online catalogs of the state archive, state historical society, or local historical society or other repositories for those unique records only available onsite. Find out which records may be inaccessible online and make a plan to obtain them (email, mail, phone, hire another researcher in the area, or travel). Take time for the tedious: searching land, court, probate, military, or unindexed newspaper records, for example, will take more effort but are often very informative.

## Methodology

Use tools that give you the ability to analyze the data you are collecting from different angles. Effective use of these can improve your research strategy and focus. Utilize research logs, tables, and search laws and history to give context to your ancestors' lives. Familiarize yourself with the [Genealogical Proof Standard](#) (described at the [Board for Certification® website](#)). Points 3 and 4 discuss thorough analysis & correlation and the resolution of conflicting evidence. Point 5 covers one of the most underused methods and one of the most useful: writing.

## Tips for Analysis

- Compare dates & locations carefully – use tables and lists
- Confirm all facts – believe no unsourced fact
- Verify sources and look for missed information in those records
- **Read. Every. Word.**
- Identify and resolve conflicts
- Compare and contrast facts in writing
- Challenge yourself: could personal bias cloud your analysis, or are you open to new theories based on evidence found

## **Writing: The Most Powerful Tool**

**Write always. Write as you go.** Start writing in your research logs and in compiled tables and timelines. Write a narrative about the proof you have discovered and the evidence that backs it up. Start writing about your ancestor, the research, and why you think you have or have not solved a point. It does not need to be formal at first, pretend you are telling the story of your research to a friend and modify it later. Write it out, with source citations to identify where the evidence and information come from. The process of writing to explain your theories and findings will open your eyes. You may find connections, discover holes, and see how to resolve conflicts more clearly.

# Bibliography

## Identity & General Research Topics

1. Board for Certification of Genealogists. *Genealogy Standards, 50th Anniversary Edition*. Nashville: Ancestry.com and Turner Publishing Co., 2014.
2. *Citing Records in the National Archives of the United States*, General Information Leaflet 17. National Archives and Records Administration, Archives.gov, <https://www.archives.gov/files/publications/general-info-leaflets/17-citing-records.pdf>
3. "Correspondence and Other Writings of Six Major Shapers of the United States..." *Founders Online*, National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/>.
4. "Genealogical Proof Standard (GPS)," Ethics and Standards, *Board for Certification of Genealogists*®, <https://bcgcertification.org/ethics-standards/>.
5. Jones, Thomas W., Ph.D., CG, CGL, FASG, FNGS, FUGA. *Mastering Genealogical Proof*. Arlington, Virginia: National Genealogical Society, 2013.
6. \_\_\_\_\_. "Merging Identities Properly: Jonathan Tucker Demonstrates the Technique," *National Genealogical Society Quarterly*, 88:2 (June 2000), 111-21.
7. Lennon, Rachal Mills, M.A., CG. "Jonathan Turner – More Than A Name: A Carolina Case Study in Dissecting Records," *National Genealogical Society Quarterly*, 97 (March 2009): 17-28. Winner of the *NGS Quarterly* Award of Excellence; available at <http://www.findingsouthernancestors.com/work-samples>.
8. Mills, Elizabeth Shown, CG, CGL, FASG, FNGS, FUGA. *QuickSheet: The Historical Biographer's Guide to Cluster Research* (the FAN Principle). Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co., 2012.

## Military Sources for the Revolutionary War

9. Bockstruck, Lloyd DeWitt, MA, MS, and Luebking, Sandra Hargreaves, FUGA. "Military Records," Chapter 11 in *The Source: A Guidebook to American Genealogy*, by Loretto Dennis Szucs and Sandra Hargreaves Luebking, Third Edition. Provo, UT: Ancestry Publishing, 2006, page 897.
10. Bockstruck, Lloyd DeWitt, MA, MS, FNGS. "Revolutionary War Bounty Land Grants: Reasons for Issuing Bounty Land Grants." *Genealogy.com, Developing Your Research Skills*, [http://www.genealogy.com/articles/research/24\\_land.html](http://www.genealogy.com/articles/research/24_land.html)
11. \_\_\_\_\_. *Revolutionary War Pensions Awarded by State Governments 1775-1874, the General and Federal Governments Prior to 1814, and by Private Acts of Congress to 1905*. Baltimore, MD: Genealogical Publishing Co., 2011.
12. *Military Service Records: A Select Catalog of National Archives Microfilm Publications*. Washington, D.C.: National Archives Trust Fund Board, 1985. [http://www.genealogycenter.info/nara/microfilmguides/search\\_naramilitary.php](http://www.genealogycenter.info/nara/microfilmguides/search_naramilitary.php)
13. Pendell, Lucille H. & Bethel, Elizabeth. *Preliminary Inventory of the Records of the Adjutant General's Office*. Originally published as Preliminary Inventory 17, The National Archives of the United States, 1949. Republished Westminster, Maryland: Heritage Books, 2007. Edition from 1949 at [http://www.genealogycenter.info/nara/preliminventories/search\\_narapi17.php](http://www.genealogycenter.info/nara/preliminventories/search_narapi17.php)

14. "Pension Roll of 1835: The Indexed Edition." US War Department. *GoogleBooks*, <https://books.google.com>
15. Plante, Trevor K. "An Overview of Records at the National Archives Relating to Military Service." *Prologue Magazine*, Fall 2002, Vol. 34, No. 3, National Archives and Records Administration (NARA).  
<http://www.archives.gov/publications/prologue/2002/fall/military-records-overview.html>
16. Pretchel-Cluskens, Claire. "Follow the Money: Tracking Revolutionary War Army Pension Payments." *Prologue Magazine*, Winter 2008, Vol. 40, No. 4, NARA.  
<https://www.archives.gov/publications/prologue/2008/winter/follow-money.html>
17. \_\_\_\_\_. "For Love and Money: Pension Laws Affecting Widows of Military Veterans." *NGS Magazine*, January-March 2016, Vol. 42, no. 1.  
<https://twelvekey.files.wordpress.com/2016/02/ngsmagazine2016-01.pdf>
18. *Revolutionary Pensioners: A Transcript of the Pension List of the United States for 1813*. U.S. Secretary of War. Washington, D.C.: A. And G. Way Printers, 1813, reprinted Baltimore, MD: Southern Book Co., 1953. Digital images, Hathi Trust Digital Library,  
<https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/008722914>.
19. "Revolutionary War Military Abstract Card File" series 13.50 and "Militia Officers Index Cards, 1775-1800" series 13.36, Archives Records Information Access System (ARIAS), *Pennsylvania State Archives*, <http://www.digitalarchives.state.pa.us/archive.asp>.
20. "Revolutionary War Pension and Bounty-Land-Warrant Application Files," National Archives Microfilm Publication Pamphlet Describing M804. Washington, D.C.: NARA, 1974. Digital at <https://www.archives.gov/files/research/microfilm/m804.pdf>. See pages 1 – 25.
21. Rose, Christine, CG, CGL, FASG. *Military Pension Laws, 1776-1858: From the journals of the Continental Congress and the United States Statutes-at-Large*. San Jose, CA: CR Publications, 2001.
22. Schamel, Charles E. "Untapped Resources: Private Claims and Private Legislation in the Records of the U.S. Congress." *Prologue*, NARA, Vol. 27, no. 1 (Spring 1995), <https://www.archives.gov/publications/prologue/1995/spring/private-claims-1.html>.
23. Scott, Craig R., CG. *The "Lost" Pensions, Settled Accounts of the Act of 6 April 1838*. Berwyn Heights, MD: Heritage Books, 2013.
24. Sherman, William F. and Scott, Craig R., CG. *Records of the Accounting Officers of the Department of the Treasury, Inventory 14 (Revised)*. Westminster, MD: Heritage Books, 2010.
25. Waite, Edward F. "Veteran's Pensions: The Law and Its Administration from the Revolutionary War to the Civil War." *VCU Libraries*, Social History Project, original article from *Harper's Weekly* (Vol. 86, issue 512, January 1893),  
<https://socialwelfare.library.vcu.edu/social-security/veterans-pensions-early-history/>

*The words Certified Genealogist and its acronym, CG, are a registered certification mark, and the designations Certified Genealogical Lecturer and its acronym, CGL, are service marks of the Board for Certification of Genealogists®, used under license by board certificants after periodic evaluation.*