

## Your Genealogy Work-Around!



buckle

Sometimes all that we need is a few good ideas (or clues) as to where to search next. Many complaints evolve around undiscovered marriage records and estates (or wills). Yet there are "work arounds" for all genealogy issues.

While one cannot always complete the puzzle, they can form the surrounding pieces. Picture an incomplete farm house, then search for the barns, roads, fences, wells, trees, flowers, etc. The farm house represents

the family itself, while the surrounding areas complete the neighborhood structure with friends, relatives and community affairs.

Actually, it is the neighborhood which is so revealing of the family tree. Local churches and graveyards identify the neighbors and in-laws that you could not find in the marriage records. Most States did not require marriages to be filed at the court house until after 1900. That means that those which do appear (before 1900) represent but a small sampling of what "should be." Small farms were building their homes upon virgin lands.

The neighbors were few and far between. Who else would the daughters marry, unless they traveled some distance to visit other relatives? Clues do exist. The secret is familiarizing oneself with the surrounding puzzle pieces. This type of familiarity can begin by carefully reading all of the tombstones in the old section of church graveyards, even photographing them for later reference.

The names which appear in the old section also appear on the deed records of that county. They are buying and selling land; and, importantly, witnessing deeds and other transactions of the ancestors. How much land did these guys own, and whose names were on the farms? The tax digest is also helpful because it helps to clarify adjoining properties, and whether or not one is a "junior" or "senior." When the father died, his farm lands were divided between the sons.

Up until the time of his death, however, the tax digest list exact acreages. Later, after the property is divided, odd amounts of acreage were listed by the sons, and you can count off the acreage from the original plot. If the death occurred prior to the 1850 census before the names of children were recorded, this method is an alternative to locating other heirs. The old-timers did not always write a last will and testament. Instead, they divided their property between the children prior to death in the form of "Deeds of Gift."

If the widow remarried, the deeds could turn up a Marriage Contract which provides even more details concerning the disposition of the estate, and, relationships. All estate records should be examined carefully.

That is, wills, inventories, sales, annual returns, appraisements, guardianships, bonds and receipts. None of these items are in one place in the probate court. The reason is that such documents were written in the book of the clerk as they were filed of record. Thus, once the last will and testament is found, a scan of the next several probate books is indicated.

During the examination of the estate records, it is also important to take note of the names of witnesses and purchasers of items from the estate sale. If you have a relic which was passed down through the families, the inventory is the place to search for its origin.

As is pictured above, this buckle was found by relic hunters at an old home place in Hillsborough, North Carolina. If you find the old home place, perhaps it would be wise to dig. Just saying.