

The Great Documents of the Past



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Genealogists are sometimes inclined to overlook records which will help to ferret out important details. Census records are not the end all in discovering ancestors! More importantly (after the census research), court house records should be thoroughly examined at every locale where ancestors ever resided. The place to begin is in the county where the ancestor resided, as well as the adjoining counties. The reason is that boundaries were always expanding or diminishing in order to create new counties. Too, families moved about, with friends and relatives in the vicinity. The group of people who shared a community, farm acreage, or town are suspect as relatives.

Children married neighbors, and that record exists somewhere in the community. Church minute books, graveyards, deed records, minute books, records in the Inferiory Court detailing the maintenance of roads, and so on and so on. And sometimes it is rewarding to read the last will and

testaments of everyone who resided in the community during a certain time-span. That is where real events are discovered.

My most recent find was the discovery that two distant cousins of my ancestor were taken by Indians as slaves, and that the father (after 30 years) lamented that he wished to provide them, should they ever return. One should look twice at a neighbor who purchased items from an estate sale, or witnessed a deed. The adjoining property owners listed in tax digests are noteworthy.

Once all the tidbits of information is gathered, it begins to make sense. The reading of deeds during a prescribed time period is also helpful, especially deeds of gift (to heirs) and Marriage Contracts. Yes, another place to find marriages is in deed records!