

How to Break Through a Brickwall

Tips by Jeannette Holland Austin



Brickwalls can be one big hassle. I dare say that most people probably spend years trying to break it down, analyze a smidgen of facts just to reach a sketchy conclusion. Here is what I do.

Prepare family group sheets for each family.

Establish the origins and similarities through the deed records.

Examine everyone's estate papers...that means, every name on the annual returns and vouchers, the names of the heirs.

Next, is an examination of the marriage records of every county involved. Here is where some surprises usually lie and you discover relationships and who people really were (in the deeds and probate records).

Every person with that surname needs to be accounted for, and following from one census year to the next, This is how you learn where people were moving.

Tax digests contain the years and acreage. Then, at the end of that digest is a list of "defaulters". These are the people who have moved on and give you a good idea as to the year they left the homeplace.

When it gets down to two or three people who cannot be identified, they

become strong suspects, so long as the facts concur (i.e., birth years and places).

Now is the time to examine pension records, whether it be for the civil war or revolutionary war. Pensions provide unexpected family data, like the family bible or depositions of other soldiers who provide interesting facts.

And so on. You get the gist. You must keep a detailed family group sheet so that you can start the elimination process and discover the most likely candidates.