

The Past Under our Feet



sunken well

The past is under our feet in the dusty layers of soil. The discovery of the age depends upon the depth of the soil. A visit to local cemeteries reveal that fact. People were buried with personal items. And somewhere nearby was the site of the old home place. I once visited an farm house where old newspapers publishing local and National news of a forgotten era was tacked onto the inner walls for insulation. There was a worn path leading to an old broken-down well.

No doubt personal items got spilled into the well. Perhaps a button, shoe or eyeglasses. And in the woods was an out-house. Any degree of diggings would fork up more evidence of the family who resided there.

As the search continues, the genealogist becomes the knowledgeable historian and archaeologist studying human activity through the recovery and analysis of material culture. The archaeological record consists of artifacts, architecture, biofacts or ecofacts, and cultural landscapes. Underneath buildings, houses and parking lots lies the rubbish of the past. Just as treasure hunters search creeks, lakes and sea beds for evidence of sunken ships, the genealogist documents the past with facts, names, dates, places and events. It makes for a more interesting story.