To those seeking a productive way to spend a Saturday afternoon in the dead of winter, the Surry County Genealogy Association has a suggestion:

Attend a free family history and genealogy swap meet scheduled Saturday at Mount Airy Museum of Regional History. It will be held from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. on the third floor of the museum on North Main Street.

After being held sporadically over the years, the genealogy swap meet was conducted in 2015. It now is planned for the second year in a row on the final Saturday in January, after a big turnout the last time — apparently fueled by a renewed interest among the public in family history.

“Last year, we had so many people there,” Esther Johnson, president of the Surry County Genealogy Association, said of the bustling activity at the museum. Tables were set up all over the third floor, filled with published family histories, laptop computers and more.

As was the case last year, Don Edmonds, a member of the group, will have a computer there offering free access to the Ancestry.com Internet site, a key source for genealogical information .

A copying machine will be available on-site.

“But the big thing is, everybody is invited,” Johnson said. “This is a fun time for everyone.”

Novice? No problem

The event is geared both toward those who’ve never even gotten started researching their roots and veteran genealogists who might be seeking a key bit of information to connect a family

line.

In addition to the hard-copy and digital resources available, many at last year's family history and genealogy swap meet said they appreciated the opportunity it offered to interact with others and exchange information. In at least one case, two strangers there realized they were related.

Anyone connected with a history or genealogy group is invited to come and set up for the swap meet and advertise their group. They may sell books, maps and other materials from those groups.

Authors also are invited to come and put out their books to sell.

Those attending are asked to bring and display their genealogy information so everyone can make connections and find new family facts, Johnson added.

"If you have never done genealogy, don't worry — come and see if someone else has done the research of your family."

Such an event is important to the mission of the Surry County Genealogy Association, according to Johnson, a charter member of the group that will celebrate its 35th birthday in May.

The association was formed in 1981 with the help of Carlos Surratt, a late longtime official of Surry Community College and noted local historian, to help people trace their family roots and learn about ancestors, preserve records and gain knowledge about the history of this area.

"It is up to us to know and write and tell the truth about our families," Johnson said.