A genealogy swap meet this weekend helped many folks progress with their family histories. “We’re making a small dent,” said Elder Billie King, of Mount Airy. Hosted by the Surry County Genealogical Association, the event was held Saturday at the Mount Airy Museum of Regional History. King brought information about several of her family members who had worked at the North Carolina Granite Corp. “They helped make and mold that rock,” she said.The granite quarry, a cornerstone of local history, served as a focal point for the third-annual swap meet.

Anyone with any family ties to the quarry was asked to attend as a special guest. “You can see a name of a person on a census record and see they worked there,” said Esther Johnson, president of the local association and event organizer. “This puts a face with those people.” At the swap meet, vendors set up booths with genealogical information to share from their own family trees as well as items such as books or maps. When working on genealogy, “You always have dead ends,” Johnson said. “Places like this might have all that information you’re fighting for.”

By about noon, the crowd had started to pick up at the meet on the museum’s third floor. Sandy Ayers and her son, Matthew Holder, of Reidsville, spent some time at the Patrick County Historical Society’s table, where she was provided with information about joining the Daughters of the American Revolution. “Tracing my family tree I discovered a great-grandfather that was in the Revolutionary War,” she said. “I’m trying to connect the roots.” Ayers said that the swap meet Saturday was her sixth and that she enjoys genealogy. “I know I enjoy it,” Holder added. “I enjoy helping my mom.” Jancie Poplin, of Mount Airy, sat at a table with Mary McGhee, of Pilot Mountian. Poplin sat out a list of last names on a placard in front of a computer. “I’m offering help if anybody has these last names in their family,” she said. Because those names appeared in her own family tree, it might help somebody find new information about their own. “I’ve had several people stop by,” she said. “I’ve got notes I’m going to follow up with later.” Poplin said she’s been involved with the Surry Genealogical Association since about 2010. “I love this,” she said. “This is my number one hobby and pastime.” Swap meets provide the opportunity for fellowship, she said, and to interact with those who share the same interest – some of whom may turn out to be family. “I’m hoping to find long-lost relatives,” Poplin said. “A lot of my family members are dying out. This gives me hope I can reconnect and make new friends.”

In a different area, Winnie Banner, of Mount Airy, had embarked on a similar mission. “I’m the only one left in my family,” she said. “I’m trying to find out about my grandfather. He used to work at the quarry years ago and I didn’t know too much about him.” Banner worked with Cheryl Mosely, a member of the genealogical association, to find some new information. Mosely was stationed at a table set up with computers connected to Ancestry.com, where those experienced with the program could help those just starting. They discovered a couple of

interesting tidbits, including that Banner's grandfather's mother had been named "Pokey." Mosely noted that the Surry County Genealogical Association's website has been recently revamped. "We've totally redone it so it's easily accessible now," she said. "We've got a lot of information on there," that may be of use to those researching in Surry County.

A six-week introductory genealogy course, also led by the genealogical association, will kickoff at the museum next week. "We love doing events like this," said museum director Matthew Edwards. "Part of our big picture mission is to collect and preserve local history. Events like this really help us achieve that goal on an institutional level but also for individuals and families." History and genealogy are intertwined and can't be separated, Edwards noted. "I guess they can be," he said, "but then it's just names."