

14 NOV 2000

Present:

Debbie Skaggs
Kim & Geoff McLean (and the Lib)
Jane Gibeault
Laurene Melgey
Jack Rajotte
Susan Benjamin
Pat Hamilton
Mary Messerschmidt

Sue Benjamin opened the meeting with a discussion about how to clean most gravestones. She noted that this procedure was inappropriate for sandstone gravestones as they are too fragile.

Utensils needed:

toothbrush
bucket for water
spray bottle
plastic brush
plastic scraper.

Dipping the brush into the water, you scrub, wait, and then brush off the mold and mildew (from the top of the stone to the bottom). She likened it to scrubbing a floor. Use the toothbrush for those hard to reach places.

A photo hint: flash a mirror onto the headstone, when taking a photo, to keep out the shadows. Jack suggested doing this before 11:00 AM while the sun is still low in the sky.

Jack Rajotte opened his presentation by telling us how to get rust off of old metal items. Using a vibro etcher (one of those gadgets that you use to etch your name onto things), touch the etcher to the rusty item and move it around. The rust will "jump" off of the item. If necessary, follow by cleaning it up with a wire brush and seal

the item with a flat paint or clear sealer.

He noted that if we focus on Colonial archeology (1700-1800's), we could also supplement our finds by researching the records. It's harder to find records to substantiate Native American artifacts. Foundations, for instance, might be documented on land records, old maps, etc. Two early maps of the counties in CT are the Baker Map (184) and the Debars (DeBeres?) Map (1868). The Baker Map has houses with the name of the owners. The Debars Map is a topographical map and shows the roads that might be in there. Using the census records, he pointed out that you could often find the property owners. Make sure to look at their neighbors, 10-15 above and below your ancestor. His great great Grandparents got married because they lived down the road from each other so it's important to see who the neighbors were.

Depending on how many people lived on a piece of land will determine how much stuff you might find. Nails, ceramics and glassware can all date the era of the family. There was discussion about where they threw their trash. Initially, they threw it out their front or back door, then as time progressed, they moved it further away from the house. Jack suggested checking downhill from the house and over the first wall for buried trash heaps.

He and Susan talked a little about the Samuel Huntington House in Canterbury where they have participated in a dig. They found wooden pegs (to make shoes), straw (for baskets) and pins with applied heads. An interesting tidbit included the fact that shutters were to keep the furniture and rugs from fading as our ancestors used vibrant colors in decorating. Old wallpaper and tell the color schemes. Look in old closets where the original paper might still be found. Jack mentioned that Samuel Huntington was really the First President because he was President of the Continental Congress.

Jack distributed Census forms and reminded folks to look at the Census Index first, if one is

available. It saves a lot of time. Try a variety of spellings too. City Directories are also a handy way to look up one's ancestors in a particular vicinity. Land records are great but cumbersome to look through page by page.

Susan distributed a box of items that she found while digging around her property. Geoff talked about the possibility of photographing the cemeteries in the area, making a CD, and then selling the CDs to raise money for the Library or the Club. Following a question and answer session, the meeting was adjourned at 8:15.

Respectfully submitted,
Laurene Melgey