

Research

Researching Ancestors: North Carolina and Beyond



WHAT IF THE only thing you know from looking at the census, is that your ancestor was born in North Carolina. What do you do? This is a frequent question I'm asked as a professional genealogist.

The 1850 census was the first census that provided the names of all of those in a household as well as age and birthplace, often being the first clue to where ones ancestors were born.

However, since most state records are held at a county level, it is often difficult to search through the records of over 100 counties in North Carolina.

RULES OF THUMB

Let's talk about some general rules of thumb for how you might typically proceed.

First, learn everything you can about your ancestors and their travels after they left North

Diane L. Richard gives tips on researching North Carolinian ancestors.

Carolina. Too often, there is a gap in what is known between when this person is documented in a local or census record, in say Mississippi, and when they could have entered the state from North Carolina or possibly from an intermediate stop, in say Tennessee. These details are important and will help narrow your search. Sometimes, you may even find a trail of documents that refer to previous locales. Create a timeline with this information.

Second, identify any other individuals, also born in North

Carolina, who seem to be in the same community consistently, especially in the earlier records. Maybe they are extended family or neighbors who, likewise, migrated from the same place at the same time.

Third, when did this person reach majority (typically 21)? If you first find them at 21, it will be hard to document them earlier — children are almost invisible in extant records unless mentioned in wills/estates, etc. On the other hand, I have researched people who were old enough to have had an earlier family somewhere (did they?), or who we subsequently learned had moved around their "new" state quite a bit as boundaries evolved.

Next, look for community-focused biographies both for the target individual and surviving children; they sometimes provide a basic timeline for a family.

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Ask yourself, did the ancestor serve in the military or apply for a pension? These papers sometimes list birth places, siblings, date and place of marriage, surviving children and spouses, etc.

Also, if nothing is learned from the above, determine which counties in the target state had large or changing populations with the same surname — prioritize these and just start researching!

Now, let's look at an example of how I successfully learned where in North Carolina someone's family came from.

THE START

The research objective was to determine the father of John Jackson Boyce, born 20 March 1829 (South Carolina). Some of the initial information provided includes an 1849 marriage in Cass County, Georgia, between AJ Boyce (should be JJ) and Margaret J. Wuzener. An 1860 census in Walker County, Georgia shows his occupation as a blacksmith. It shows that in 1861-64, he served in the Civil War in Bartow County, Georgia as a Private in Co. E, 3rd Confederate Cavalry company blacksmith. The 1870 census was not found, but the 1880 census shows them in Dardanelle, Yell County, Arkansas and their children, nine of them, with birth years.

I also had information from a family Bible and one snippet of family lore, "Family history says that John Jackson Boyce had the following siblings: Lawson Boyce, (1819), Sally and George Boyce, twins(1826), Martel Boyce (1832) and Lola Boyce".

DOING THE RESEARCH

From the Bible information, I had

lots of names, but no places. From the census information, I had some places in South Carolina, Georgia and Arkansas and a reference to North Carolina.

The first two points of research revolved around the census: given the census gaps, I

which is consistent with census entries for JJ where his father is listed as born in North Carolina. His occupation is listed as a blacksmith, the same as JJ in the 1860 census. A subsequent entry for "Ruth" is off, both in name and age, so one wonders if she could

be Lucy, given the month of death is consistent with the Bible entry of when the 2nd wife of John C. Boyce died. They both died in Cass County, Georgia, where JJ married in 1849. We were also able to find an 1850 Census entry in Cass County, Georgia for Lawson Boyce, born about 1819, South Carolina.



Top: 1846 Georgia Map, Samuel Augustus Mitchell

from David Rumsey Collection, www.Rumsey.com.

Bottom: 1850 Mortality Schedule for Cass County, Georgia showing the death of a John C. Boyce, aged 70.

TABLE 2.—Persons who Died during the Year ending 1st June, 1850, in the 12th Decade, 1840-50, in the State of Georgia, enumerated by Mr. J. C. Boyce, aged 70.

AGE OF EVERY PERSON WHO DIED during the Year ending 1st June, 1850, when and Place of Birth in the Time of his Death was in this Family.	SEX	COLOUR	PLACES OF BIRTH, Showing the State, Territory, or Country.	The Month in which the Person Died.	PROFESSION, OCCUPATION, OR TRADE.	INDIGENT, OR CAUSE OF DEATH.	DATE
Sally Boyce	1	W	Georgia	April	Blacksmith	Old age	April 1st 1850
John C. Boyce	70	W	Georgia	April	Blacksmith	Old age	April 1st 1850
John C. Boyce	70	W	Georgia	April	Blacksmith	Old age	April 1st 1850
John C. Boyce	70	W	Georgia	April	Blacksmith	Old age	April 1st 1850

learned more about John Jackson Boyce's life (referred to as JJ). Since John Campbell (John C.) and Lucy Boyce both died in April 1850, before the enumeration started on 1 June 1850, <http://www.census.gov/prod/www/abs/decennial/1850.htm>, I looked at the Mortality Schedule for that census.

I made the discovery of an 1850 Mortality Schedule (Division 12, Cass, Georgia; Roll: T655_7; Page: 73; Line Number: 4).

WHAT IS IMPORTANT ABOUT THIS ENTRY?

Information for John C. Boyce is consistent with the information provided in the Bible as far as name, age and date of death. He was born in North Carolina,

WHAT ELSE IS IMPORTANT ABOUT THIS ENTRY?

Lawson Boyce is consistent with a Bible entry for who might possibly be JJ's sibling. The Bible date of 12 December 1819 for a Lawson Boyce is consistent with the census entry, his birth place is also consistent with JJ's

birth place.

An 1850 Census entry in Cass County, Georgia shows a Josiah Boyce, born in 1808, North Carolina, occupation is blacksmith.

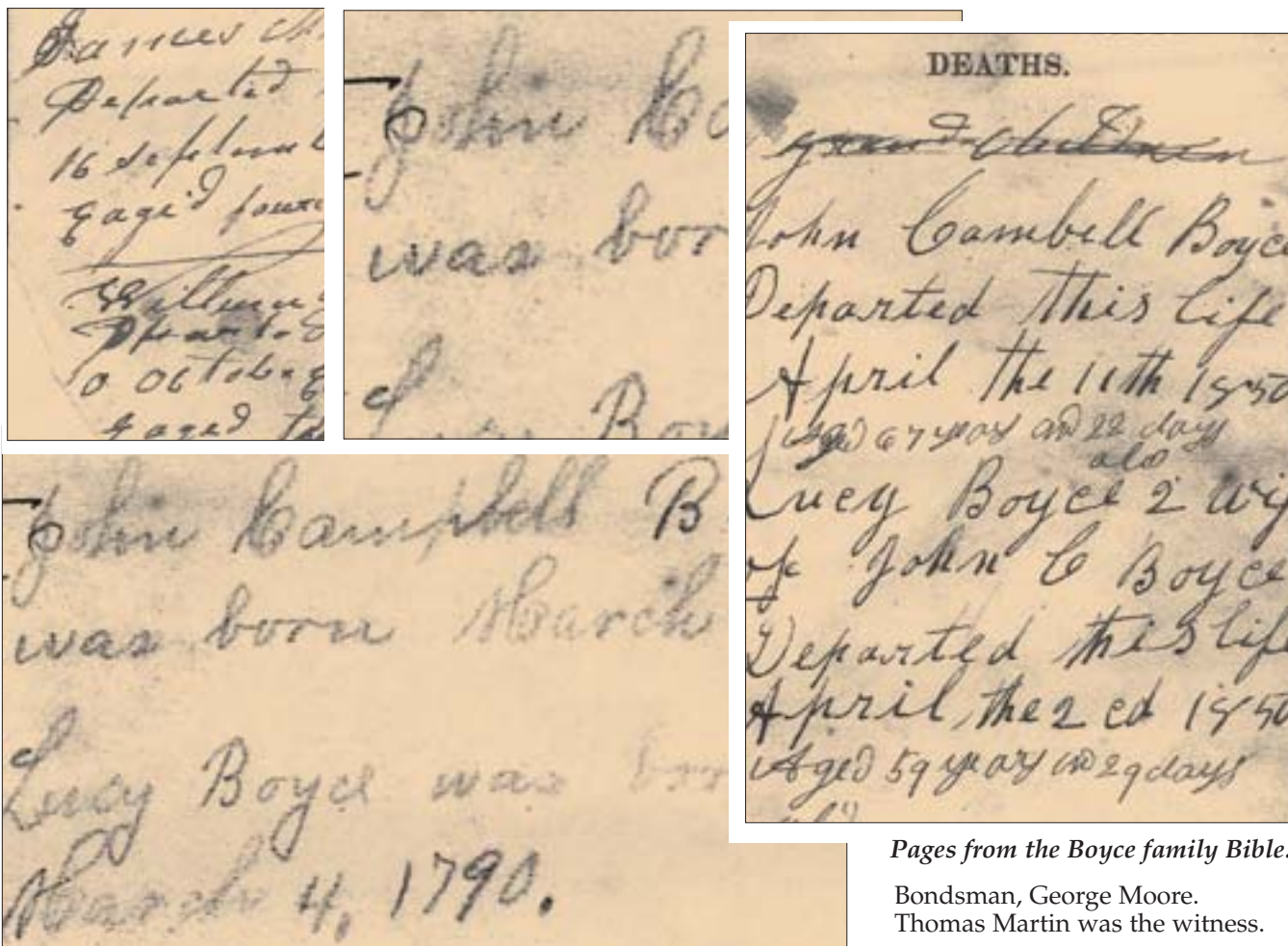
WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

It's another name mentioned in the Bible. The occupation of blacksmith matches that for JJ and John C. Boyce. Josiah, it says, was born in North Carolina, which is consistent with John C. Boyce

I have found information that corroborates entries in the Bible. We have yet thought to connect John C. Boyce to JJ. I still don't know how JJ got from South Carolina to Georgia.

The next thing was to try and

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Pages from the Boyce family Bible.

Bondsman, George Moore.
Thomas Martin was the witness.

learn more about JJ (and John C.) in the Georgia records focusing on Cass County, which was later split into Bartow and Walker counties.

I didn't find much on JJ, though I did find an entry for Walker County, Georgia which seems to corroborate the 1860 census listing — an index to Georgia's 1867-1868 Returns of Qualified Voters and Registration Oath Books (White) shows a Boyce, John J 145:14 (145 is the Walker county code).

WHAT MAKES IT SIGNIFICANT?

This is consistent with the family living in Walker County, Georgia in 1860.

The 1864 Map of northern Georgia shows Walker County just northwest of Cass/Bartow county. This suggests that JJ was fairly mobile and may have already been on the move, which explains why I couldn't find him in the 1870 census. I then decided to look further into Lawson Boyce and

found the 1864 Census for Re-Organizing the Georgia Militia — information for Cherokee County, Georgia from www.ancestry.com.

WHY IS THIS USEFUL?

Lawson is an unusual name and was already found in the 1850 Cass County census. Lawson M. Boyce is stated as being born in Rutherford County, North Carolina!

This was my first clue as to where in North Carolina the Boyce family may come from. Could I now connect someone else or a piece of data from the Bible information to Rutherford County, North Carolina?

I then researched North Carolina marriage bonds at www.ancestry.com, and found these two entries: John C. Boys married Marey Milligan (no date), Rutherford, Bondsman, John Alexander and James Wray. John C. Boys and Lucy Moore, married 1 October 1811, Rutherford,

WHAT IS IMPORTANT ABOUT THESE ENTRIES?

The use of the middle initial C is unique, Boys and Boyce can easily be the same surname. The Bible entry "Lucy Boyce 2nd wife, 1st day October 1811" gives a date identical to that of a marriage bond for John C. Boys marrying a Lucy!

Two Bible entries both have as middle names Milligan — suggesting children born to what looks to be a probable first marriage. James Milligan Boyce, died 16 September 1806 at four weeks old. William Milligan Boyce, died 10 October 1807 at two weeks old.

If the above find hadn't been made, checking the Civil War records would have been the next course of action. Several Boyce's in Georgia appear to have served, all enlisted in Bartow County on the same day, 11 June 1861. James, John, Josiah and W. Boyce, all enlisted per American Civil War Soldiers database at www.ancestry.com

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.com. When combined with an Arkansas Civil War Pensions list that includes a Joe J. Boyce and his wife Mary E. (in Yell county), and his found compiled service record, it suggests that there is more paperwork on at least JJ, if not his probable siblings.

NEXT STEPS

There was more research done after this point, in an attempt to learn more about the Boyce family of Rutherford County, North Carolina and to try to explain the birth of JJ in South Carolina. I tried to determine when the family migrated to Georgia. More of the Bible information was confirmed — most of the grandchildren listed lived in Cass County, Georgia in 1850. Though I found documentation for several purported children of John C. and Lucy (Moore) Boyce — JJ, Lawson, Josiah, Nancy (Boyce) Lankford; other possible children, such as James, Sally, George Washington, Martel Dahan (spelling error?) and Lola (?) remain a mystery. Research into Rutherford County, North Carolina seems to connect the Boyce family with the Miller family and Newberry District in South Carolina.

The Boyce family kept a low profile in extant Rutherford

County, North Carolina records. Many entries for similar Boyce first names have been found in the records along the North Carolina and South Carolina border, have been researched extensively with no definitive connections made.

This case illustrates that it is possible to research an unknown birth place by using what information you have...

Their proximity to the border could explain JJ and Lawson's South Carolina birth place. Milligan researchers have suggested that an Andrew Milligan and brothers migrated from Rutherford County, North Carolina to South Carolina and then to Northeast Georgia; consistent with the Boyce family. No document has yet been found to connect JJ to John C., except the Bible.

CONCLUSION

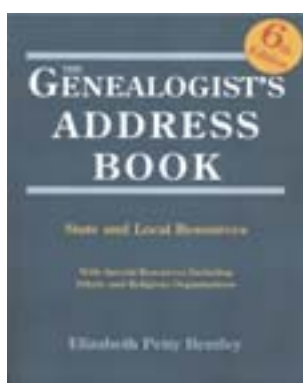
This case did have an advantage in that there is a family Bible that survives, but it still took extensive research to connect the informa-

tion in the Bible to the people listed. There are still relationships, the connection to South Carolina, the birth place and parents of John C. and other details yet to be determined or verified. On the other hand, I was able to identify where in North Carolina the Boyce family seemed to be before they ended up in Georgia and Arkansas, which was the initial research goal.

This case illustrates that it is possible to research an unknown birth place by using what information you have and filling in all possible details on your target person or family by examining the information of "like-surnamed" individuals. These may be extended family members living in a similar locale and born in a comparable time period, in the same place and neighbors who may also share a birthplace and time period.

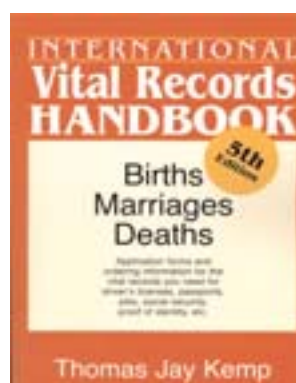
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