



# Stock Marks Aren't Just Brands – Use them to Identify People Also!

Diane L. Richard explains how to glean genealogical information from stock mark records

## Introduction

I became fascinated with stock marks (cattle marks, earmarks, brands, flesh marks, etc.) when I was researching a colonial NC family and realized that stock mark records are some of the earliest extant records found in North Carolina. We often associate stock marks and brands with the large cattle ranches in the western states; we do that at our own risk. That said, let's explore stock marks, their role and most importantly for genealogists, where we can find them across the US and Canada.

and certainly not 18th century ones, list explicit relationships and yet these records connect James and Abram Randal to their father Alexander Randal.

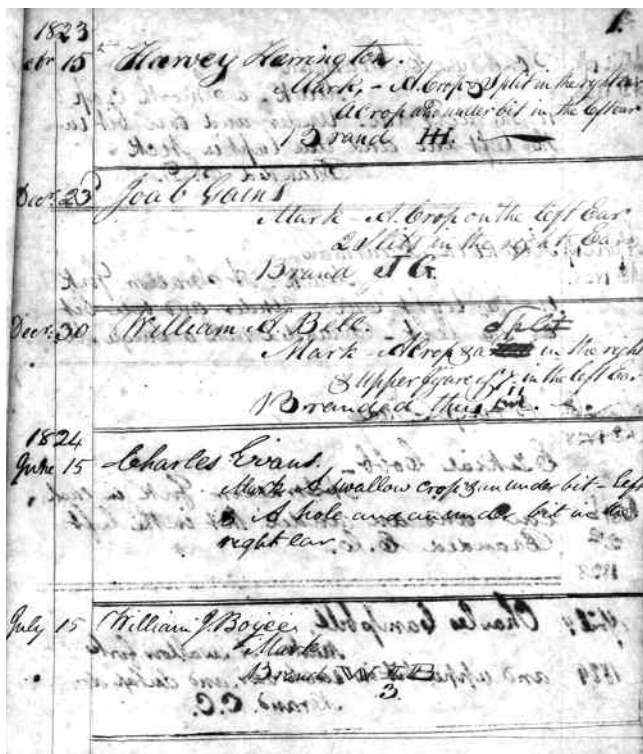
<i>James Randal</i> <i>Long Horns in Brand</i>	<i>February 18<sup>th</sup> 1755</i> A Brand two H's in the right Ear B Horns in the lower over half Moon in Left	
<i>Abram Randal</i> <i>Long Horns</i>	A Brand two H's in the right Ear B Horns in the left	A
<i>John Parker</i>	A Brand two H's in the right Ear B Horns in the left	
<i>John Dunn</i>	<i>May 20<sup>th</sup> 1755</i> A Brand two H's in the right Ear B Horns in the left	
<i>Robert Wright</i>	A Brand two H's in the right Ear B Horns in the left	RO
<i>Joseph Sumner</i>	A Brand two H's in the right Ear B Horns in the left	
<i>Elisha Battle</i>	<i>August 19<sup>th</sup> 1755</i> A Brand two H's in the right Ear B Horns in the left	B
<i>David Curt Coy</i>	A Brand two H's in the right Ear B Horns in the left	DC
<i>Thomas Hall Coy</i>	A Brand two H's in the right Ear B Horns in the left	HL

Example of Edgecombe County (NC) Stock Marks – note the details provided – Date of record, Name, relationship to father (if needed), description of the stock mark and an indication of a brand (if relevant).

Some of the first stock mark ledgers I looked at were for Edgecombe County (NC) for the 1750s (see image). Immediately, I realized the value of these records. Not many records consulted by genealogists,

	L.N. Dist. 36 1807 M.P. Avery Avery Calaveras		L.N. Dist. 44 1807 Ray Anderson Madera Madera
	L.N. Dist. 47 1803 Ann R. Scott Montague San Diego		L.N. Dist. 53 1804 Thos. B. Adam Santa Maria Santa Barbara
	L.N. Dist. 57 1809 J. C. Adams Palm San Diego		L.N. Dist. 7 1800 Henry & Schneider Stockport Humboldt
	L.N. Dist. 38 1808 Mrs. H. H. Jennings College Park Santa		L.N. Dist. 46 1809 A. Laurance Pike Tulare
	L.N. Dist. 43 1803 G. W. Grant Sanger Fresno		L.N. Dist. 49 1806 D. M. Atkins Clements San Joaquin
	L.N. Dist. 57 1810 W. A. Le Roy Dulzura San Diego		L.N. Dist. 5 Henry Vadder Carson Orleans
	L.N. Dist. 3-4-5 1809 Oscar C. Hill McArthur Orleans		L.N. Dist. 48-51 1807 J. B. Armstrong Humboldt Eureka
	L.N. Dist. 45 1809 A. Cushman Agua Riverdale		L.N. Dist. 46 1804 A. Alforno Plymouth Tulare
	L.N. Dist. 47 1803 C. C. Overstreet Sanger Kings		L.N. Dist. 38 1810 Henry L. Cable Plymouth Yuba
	L.N. Dist. 49 1809 G. F. Rhoads Hardsburg Kern		L.N. Dist. 46-47 1806 Mrs. A. Orquid Alhambra Tulare
	L.N. Dist. 43 1808 F. L. Manier Springville Tulare		L.N. Dist. 48 1814 Ann L. Anderson Humboldt Trinity
	L.N. Dist. 43 1808 James Reute Lompoc Santa Barbara		L.N. Dist. 32 1804 W. J. Martin Pascaden Alameda
	L.N. Dist. 53 1807 James Reute Lompoc Santa Barbara		L.N. Dist. 42 1808 Gabriel Allamant San Ardo Monterey
	L.N. Dist. 50 1807 J. F. Wellman Humboldt Riverdale		L.N. Dist. 50 1808 Mrs. A. Brown Livermore Alameda
	L.N. Dist. 49 1801 E. Saunders Red Bluff Tahama		L.N. Dist. 43 1803 Ayerse Brock Tulare Fresno
	L.N. Dist. 32 1803 C. F. Acker Livermore Alameda		L.N. Dist. 6 1802 Anibal Cleary Tulare Trinity
	L.N. Dist. 3 1801 C. E. Oelling Carmel Yuba		L.N. Dist. 57 1809 A. Carrasco Nico San Diego
	L.N. Dist. 7 1807 A. R. Brillant Washington Humboldt		L.N. Dist. 8 1804 A. Christensen Point Arena Merced
	L.N. Dist. 20 1802 E. G. Thompson Oakland Alameda		L.N. Dist. 44 1809 D. F. Pullinger Chancellor Madera
	L.N. Dist. 28 1803 W. C. Dunlap West Point Calaveras		L.N. Dist. 56 1805 Arthur W. Cook Crescent Los Angeles
	L.N. Dist. 10 1804 W. A. Adams Plymouth Alameda		L.N. Dist. 47 1804 A. J. Marjorie Coy Hanford Kings
	L.N. Dist. 44 1807 Chas. W. Eyer Orleans Madera		L.N. Dist. 48 1807 No. Kewick Cattle Savage (Santa)
	L.N. Dist. 29-36 1803 A. H. Scofield Stockport San Joaquin		L.N. Dist. 50 1805 A. H. Purdie Clyden Central Coast
	L.N. Dist. 11 1801 F. P. Alpera Willits Menocchino		L.N. Dist. 4 1808 Y. Adkin Willits Menocchino
	L.N. Dist. 21 1802 W. C. Adams San Joaquin Yuba		L.N. Dist. 43 1807 Archie C. Dean Independence Yuba

California Cattle Brands, 1918, Bureau of Livestock Identification (HathiTrust, <http://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=uc1.b3421321>)



Marks and Brands Example From Escambia (FL), 1823-1890s. (Series L14, State Archives of Florida)

So, all of a sudden, we have two brothers linked to one another and to their father in 1755. A very nice piece of data to have.

### Historical Context As An Example

Unlike today where it would be unlikely to find cattle, horses, pigs, etc. not enclosed behind a stone wall, fence, or some other barrier, in non-cattle ranching states, in earlier times, it was common for stock to freely range.

“Marks and Brands. Until the early twentieth century, North Carolina’s range was open – that is, crops, not livestock, were to be fenced in. Marks and brands were used to prove ownership of the cattle, horse, hogs, sheep, and goats roaming free in the woods. Marks were cuts made in the animals’ ears, varying in location, number, and type – crop, slit, swallow fork, over keel, under keel, poplar leaf, bit slice, circle, and square. Owners normally used several cuts, which in combination constituted the identifying mark ... Brands were generally initials stamped onto animal rumps.

Marks and brands were publicly recorded in order that duplication, confusion, and controversies might be avoided. Parents often recorded marks in the names of their children. Before 1868, their period of greatest use, marks and brands were recorded in county court minutes or volumes assigned to that purpose. After 1868, registers of deeds usually placed them in Record of Marks volumes.”

[Source: North Carolina Research – Genealogy and Local History, 2nd Edition, Helen F.M. Leary, C.G., F.A.S.G., editor, North Carolina Genealogical Society, Raleigh, 1996, pages 292-3]

As with any records, understanding the law helps determine what actions had to be taken and what records had to be created. For NC, we have “An Act to appoint the Marking Horses, Cattle & Hogs & to prevent injuries done by killing, mis-marking, driving away or destroying people’s Stocks” found in *Acts of the North Carolina General Assembly, 1715-1716, Chapter XLII*, <http://docsouth.unc.edu/csr/index.html/document/csr23-0001#p23-57>. More about this law and subsequent laws can be found in *A Manual of the Laws of North Carolina: Arranged Under Distinct Heads in Alphabetical Order: with References from One Head to Another when a Subject is*

## NC-Specific Stock Mark Records

Not all Stock Mark records are online. When researching these records in NC, a quick way to find out which ones survive in county collection records is to research the MARS catalog, <http://mars.archives.ncdcr.gov/>, on the term “stock marks” and look for stand-alone collections [the search also brings up the Minute Docket, Court of Pleas and Quarter sessions records for every county; these records could be relevant and NOT the first place you want to look!]

### A few books of interest include:

- (1) Old Albemarle County, North Carolina, Pasquotank precinct (county) births, marriages, deaths, brands and flesh marks & county claims, 1691-1833, Weynette Parks Haun, 1981
- (2) Early livestock brands of Carteret County, North Carolina, 1768-1849, Sharon Guthrie, 1997
- (3) North Carolina Genealogical Society Journal, Tyrrell Stock Marks (1763+), Volume 42, No 1, 2016
- (4) See online entries found (body of article)

## Examples – Published Volumes

- (1) Princess Anne County, Virginia, list of earmarks and brands, 1691-1778, Michael Schoettle, 2015
- (2) Abstracts of deeds, Marion County, Mississippi, containing deeds, marks and brands, bonds, mortgages, and deeds of gift, E. Russ Williams, 1962
- (3) Cattle marks of Northampton County, Va., 1665-1742, Frank V Walczyk, 1999
- (4) Earmark and brand book, showing all sheep and goat earmarks and brands recorded, and all new marks and brands recorded up to February 12, 1937, comp. by Tom Snell, New Mexico Sheep Sanitary Board
- (5) Livestock brands & marks : an unexpected bayou country history: 1822-1946 pioneer families Terrebonne Parish, Louisiana, Christopher Everette Cenac & Claire Domangue Joller, 2013
- (6) Marks & brands of domestic animals as registered in Knox County, Indiana, 1807-1841, Helen Kackley, 1951
- (7) Marks and brands of Effingham County, Georgia 1790-1908, Norman Vincent Turner, 2002

*Mentioned in Any Other Part of the Book Than Under the Distinct Head where it is Placed*, John Haywood, 1808, Cattle, Horses, and Hogs, pp 56-65, <http://books.google.com/books?id=HIs0AQAAAJ>.

You can learn more about stock marks and related via “Pilgrims, Farmers, and Ranchers: Marks and brands as a Genealogical Source,” Kathleen W. Hinckley, *National Genealogical Society Quarterly* 79 (December 1991):253-67

### Value of These Records

Recognize that early registrations of stock marks might coincide with land grant purchases or other initial land purchases as the listed individuals moved into the neighborhood. And, not just sons are mentioned! In a collection of Tyrrell County (NC) Stock marks from the 1760s, we find entries such as: “Edward Williams Records for his Daughter Elizabeth Williams ^ (Proper mark) a Swallow fork in Right ear & a Slit in the left Ear September the 23rd. 1763, Test Fr. Ward Clr C.” Or what about this entry where a mother is registering a mark for her daughter: “Sept. 19th. 1764, Agnus Routon Records for hir proper mark of her Daughter Jane Routon a Croop in the Right Ear & a Slit in the Left, test Fr. Ward clk.”

Why stop at children when you might also find information about a grandchild, one likely the son of a daughter given the differing surnames! “John Brewer records for the proper mark of William Moore the Grandson of John Hayes a Croop and a half croop in the left Ear & an under Sloope in the right June the xviiiith. 1765, Fr. Ward. Clerk.”

Now let’s look at a few ways you might use to determine the existence of stock marks collections to pursue for your own research.

### Select Online Resources

1 General Internet Search on terms like stock marks, “marks & brands”, earmarks, etc., can reveal gems such as:

- Bertie County NC Cattle Markings 1722-1741, <http://files.usgwarchives.net/nc/bertie/deeds/cattle.txt>
- Stock Marks of Tyrrell County, North Carolina, 1763-1819, [www.ncgenweb.us/tyrrell/STOCK.HTM](http://www.ncgenweb.us/tyrrell/STOCK.HTM)

Stock Marks of Tyrrell County, North Carolina 1763 - 1819	
YEAR	ENTRY EXTRACT
1763	Isaac Meehans Esquire for son Isaac Meehans
1763	Edward Williams for daughter Elizabeth Williams
1763	Edward Williams for son James Williams
1763	Edward Williams for son Thomas Williams
1763	Joseph Alexander for son Samuel Alexander
1763	Robert Davas
1763	Hardy Stallings
1764	Agnus Routon for daughter Elizabeth Routon.

This sample from Stock Marks of Tyrrell County, NC, 1763-1819, [www.ncgenweb.us/tyrrell/STOCK.HTM](http://www.ncgenweb.us/tyrrell/STOCK.HTM), illustrates that Stock Marks don’t just give us information on when a person can be found in a location and they can provide explicit relationships, such as fathers to sons and daughters.


- Finding aids such as Oregon Historical County Records Guide – Coos County Records Inventory, Marks and Brands Records, 1857-1945, <http://arcweb.sos.state.or.us/pages/records/local/county/coos/inv/marks.html> and Douglas County, Marks and Brands Records, 1852-1949, <http://arcweb.sos.state.or.us/pages/records/local/county/douglas/inv/marks.html>
- Levy County Clerk (FL), Historical Marks & Brands, 1865-1907, [www.levyclerk.com/historical-records](http://www.levyclerk.com/historical-records)



- Monroe County (MO), Marks & Brands 1831-1870, [www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~momonroe/marks.htm](http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~momonroe/marks.htm) [Index]
- Sumner County (TN), Stock Marks & Brands, 1837-1869, <http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~we3sumneritesjblcsf/receipts&c3.htm>

**2 Internet Archive**, <http://archive.org> – a rich research for late 19th century and early 20th century information. A search on subject: Livestock Brands yields 24 hits including records from Montana, Alberta Canada, Missouri, Wyoming, Colorado, and more, while a search on subject: Cattle Brands yields 23 hits including records from Texas, Montana, Oregon, Nebraska, and more.

**3 HathiTrust**, [www.hathitrust.org](http://www.hathitrust.org) — similar search terms as for internet Archive – records of California [includes a collection of 22 items under earmarks], Oregon, Washington, Wyoming, Texas, and Iowa.



**Cattle brands.**

**New Title:** [California brand book](#)

**Language(s):** English

**Published:** Sacramento [etc.] Bureau of Livestock Identification.



**Subjects:** [Slaughtering and slaughter-houses](#) > [California](#) > [Periodicals](#), [Cattle brands](#) > [California](#) > [Periodicals](#).

**Note:** Has occasional supplements.

**Physical Description:** v. ill. 20-23 x 30 cm.

**Locate a Print Version:** [Find in a library](#)

**4 JStor**, [www.jstor.org](http://www.jstor.org) – you can access select content for FREE (you can research 3 items on your bookshelf at any time). For example, I found Stock Marks recorded in South Carolina, 1695-1721, A. S. Salley, The South Carolina Historical and Genealogical Magazine, Volume 13, 1912, <https://archive.org/details/jstor-27575337>.

**Stock Marks Recorded in South Carolina, 1695-1721**

A. S. Salley, Jr.  
The South Carolina Historical and Genealogical Magazine  
Vol. 13, No. 3 (Jul., 1912), pp. 126-131

Published by: [South Carolina Historical Society](#)  
Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27575337>  
Page Count: 6

**5 ArchiveGrid**, <http://beta.worldcat.org/archivegrid> – several collections of original material are found such as Decatur County (IN) Stock Marks,


1822, 1871, <http://beta.worldcat.org/archivegrid/collection/data/247135179>. Similarly found records for Utah, Oregon, Montana, Tennessee, California, Wisconsin, and elsewhere.

**ARCHIVEGRID**

**[Records], 1822-1871.**  
Decatur County (Ind.). Stock marks.

Indiana State Library - Manuscripts and Rare Books  
Contact an Archivist or Librarian to learn more about access.

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**Details**  
1 v. bound.

This collection consists of livestock identification marks as recorded by the Decatur County Clerk and Recorder. Gives the name of the owner, description of mark, and after March 8, 1827 records the township of residence.

Decatur County (Ind.). Stock marks. Records. Manuscript Section, Indiana Division, Indiana State Library.

**6 FamilySearch Catalog**, <http://familysearch.org/catalog/search> – select the Keywords option (you can also limit by Place). Entries found for Alabama, North Carolina, Indiana, Missouri, Tennessee, Arkansas, West Virginia, and more.

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Search by: Place Surnames Titles Author Subjects Records

Search for: Call Number Film/Video Number Search these family history collections: Any

Search Results for FamilySearch Catalog

PRINT Catalog Print List (1)

1-13 of 13 results

Decatur County, Alabama stock mark book, 1810-1820	Print List
Author: HATFIELD, HENRY, PMA.	Add
Marriage records, 1868-1901; stay record and stock marks, 1873-1923, 1880-1901	Add
Author: North Carolina. Superior Court (Bladen County); North Carolina. Division of Archives and History	Add
Pike County, Indiana register of stock marks	Add
Author: HALE, CHARLES JAMES; Pike County (Indiana); Recorder	Add
Spikey County, Missouri stock mark register or brand book, 1848-1861 and scale bounty register, 1847-1861	Add
Author: PENDER, JERRY (JERRY WAYNE), 1897-	Add
Stock mark book, 1882-1913	Add
Author: LAWRENCE COUNTY (Tennessee); County Court Clerk	Add

**7** Specific research into the library or archival catalog of choice. All repositories do not have their catalogs online as part of the already mentioned resources. Knowing that the western Canadian counties were/are big on livestock ranching, I checked the Archives of Manitoba where I found – Livestock Branch Brand Registers, 1877-1962, [http://pam.minisisinc.com/scripts/mwimain.dll/144/PAM\\_DESCRIPTION/DESCRIPTION\\_DET\\_REP/REFD+9112?SESSIONSEARCH](http://pam.minisisinc.com/scripts/mwimain.dll/144/PAM_DESCRIPTION/DESCRIPTION_DET_REP/REFD+9112?SESSIONSEARCH), or maybe they lived in Alberta and the files of the Stockmen's Memorial Foundation, Cancelled Brand Files, [www.smf.library.ca/brand.html](http://www.smf.library.ca/brand.html), are relevant. I also checked out the SC ArchCat, Catalog for the South Carolina Archives, <http://rediscov.sc.gov/scar>, where, apparently, records of interest might be the Estrays records, extant for several counties, where “appraisers certifying the valuation and describing the animals as to kind,

marks, brands ...” would provide some information about marks and brands. As a record group NOT found in NC, this was also an important reminder that the information we seek may be found in different records, depending on locale.

As you can see, each place researched brings up a slightly different mix of results in terms of where and when. If you don't find stock marks listed for your locale, keep on looking until you are satisfied that the records are not extant.

## Published Resources

As we all know, NOT all records are available online. Earmarks, brands, stock marks, etc., can also be found in published volumes that you might access via interlibrary loan or via your local library. I suggest you search Worldcat, [www.worldcat.org](http://www.worldcat.org), to see what published works are relevant. See the box for some found relevant books.

## Conclusion

It's easy to associate branding with large cattle, sheep, goat, and other ranches often found west of the Mississippi River. The need for animal

identification has been needed though ever since people have lived near one another and have raised such. As you've seen, even colonial states passed laws regarding the marking of animals as a form of identification. These records can help place individuals, sometimes quite early, in a community. Additionally, it's not unusual for these records to explicitly list family connections by linking sons and daughters to fathers (or mothers) and even grandchildren to a grandparent.

If you don't research extant stock mark records, you just might be missing out on a juicy genealogical resource! ©

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# Internet Genealogy

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