

You Look Familiar, But...

Contributed by Donna Brock

I often wander into antique stores and find myself instantly drawn to the box that typically says something like "Instant Ancestors - \$2.00 each". And while the chances of finding a relative of mine is practically non-existent, I rifle through anyway, wondering who these people were and how they came to be in this box.

Family and other photos are valuable resources for family historians and others interested in genealogy.



They provide historians and researchers with a visual window to the past, and few things transcend time as well as old photographs do.

Tips for Family Historians

- Enlist your immediate and extended family in the search for pictures. Make it a family project.
- Contact relatives and ask for copies of old family photos with the promise that each family member will get copies of photographs they did not have previously.
- When visiting relatives, ask them to help you identify the people in the pictures, as well as when and where they were taken. It's important to tell the story behind the photograph.
- Talk to older family members. Bring a pad and pen, or better, a tape recorder. You'll find that they'll be thrilled to tell you their stories, and expect to learn a surprise or two.
- Preserve your photos. Use archival quality, acid-free boxes, folders or photo pages.
- Scan your photos and keep backup copies on CD or disks.

Researchers and genealogists know historical societies, local and county libraries can be good sources for photos of where ancestors lived and worked, perhaps even your ancestors themselves! The Hackettstown Historical Society has hundreds of photos of the people and places that shaped the history of our town. Photos capture clothing, architecture, furniture, time-setting clothing and hairstyles, and other priceless details of the past that may be useful to researchers.

Unfortunately, we don't always take the time to properly identify and preserve family photos.

While many of the pictures donated to the Historical Society's collections include names and dates, far too many do not. That's why we need your help. We'll be posting some of those 'orphaned' pictures on our site. If you recognize someone, please send an email to us at information@hackettstownhistory.com.

A picture may be worth a thousand words, but the story behind it is priceless! Don't let your ancestors become some else's instant relative.