

DGS Newsletter



Date October 2010
Volume 36, Number 4
Issue 296

A publication of the
Dallas Genealogical Society

Inside This Issue:

- 26 President's Column
- 26 New Acquisitions note
- 26 I Lost My Favorite Ancestor
- 27 DGS Newsletter now Electronic
- 27 It is never too late
- 28 J. D. Kerfoot – The forgotten Mayor
- 29 Fighting Misinformation in Online Collections
- 30 NET LINK
- 30 Abraham and Mary Todd Lincoln
- 31 A New Cousin
- 31 Treasurer's report
- 32 DGS Calendar

Dallas Genealogical Society
P.O. Box 12446
Dallas, Texas 75225-0446
www.dallasgenealogy.org

Results of the Vote on Bylaws

The membership present at the October 2nd meeting approved the proposed bylaws with typographical corrections. A motion was made, seconded, and approved to move the fiscal year to coincide with the program year, which will be from September to August.



National Archives and Records Administration Makes Available U.S. Serial Set Digital Collection

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 30, 2010

National Archives and Records Administration Makes Available U.S. Serial Set Digital Collection

Washington, DC... The National Archives and Records Administration will make available the LexisNexis® U.S. Serial Set Digital Collection of US Government publications to the public free of charge in all NARA research rooms nationwide.

The U.S. Serial Set is a collection of U.S. Government publications compiled under directive of the Congress. It contains comprehensive and often detailed information on an extremely wide range of subjects. Its earliest documents date from 1789 and additions are made continually.

The LexisNexis® U.S. Serial Set Digital Collection provides researchers—whether novice or advanced—fast, immediate access to this broad collection of historical congressional information. This digital collection is powerfully indexed, easy to use, and lets researchers search across multiple other collections for more comprehensive results. Researchers can access full-text, original documents from the pages of the original U.S. Serial Set.

This Serial Set is the latest addition to the list of online commercial resources that NARA makes available free of charge to all researchers at its research facilities nationwide. Other free online resources at NARA facilities include Ancestry.com, Footnote.com, JSTOR, ProQuest's Research Library, HeritageQuest, Archive Finder, Digital National Security Archive, and digital New York Times and Washington Post, as well as EBSCO's America: History and Life and Gale's Biography and Genealogy Master Index and Declassified Documents Reference System.

Together, these resources provide free and open access to digitized NARA records as well as contextual information about NARA's holdings.

For more information on these resources, see NARA's Archives Library Information Center at <http://www.archives.gov/research/alic/>. For information on NARA research centers nationwide see <http://www.archives.gov/locations/archival-research.html>.



PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

Janet Khashab, AG

“There’s this American flag, apple pie thing about libraries ... Somehow they have been put in the category of a sacred organization.”

Frank A. Pezzanite, CEO of L.S.S.I. (a private library management company)¹

The Dallas City Council recently felt the full effects of the “American flag, apple pie thing” when it tried to cover a budget shortfall by cutting hours and staff at the Central Library and the various branch libraries. Genealogists, not only in Dallas but also in the surrounding areas and even nationwide, joined Dallas citizens in writing letters and emails to the City Council stating their objections to the drastic reduction in library services which would follow the proposed budget cuts. Many DGS members, living in Dallas or owning property there, also attended the various town hall meetings to voice their concerns. The council members were reminded that the Central Library’s Genealogy Department is a treasured resource which requires good stewardship and cannot be sacrificed for financial expediency.

Unfortunately, the only solution found was to raise property taxes for Dallas residents by a small amount and this was passed by an 8 to 7 vote by the City Council on September 22, 2010. This increase in budget revenues does not keep funding at the Genealogy Department at the 2010 levels, which was already less than 2009 levels; however, the reduction in hours and staff are not as severe as first proposed.

Since its establishment in 1955, the Dallas Genealogical Society has been steadfast in its support of the Genealogy Department of the Central Library in fulfillment of our objectives as stated in our Charter. However, this has not been met with a firm commitment by the city government to maintain this valuable asset. Starting in 1987 the hours and staff of the Central Library have been periodically reduced which has resulted in a gradual deterioration in services. In consideration of this long history of unequal commitment to preserving and fostering the Central Library and its Genealogy Department, I have

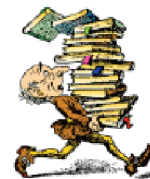
¹ Streitfeld, David, “Outsourcing Fairly Healthy Public Libraries, and Hearing a Roar,” New York Times, September 27, 2010, Section A1, National Edition.

put together the beginnings of a task force which will examine the relationship which DGS has with the Central Library and will make future plans to protect our long-term investment in the Genealogy Department. I will keep the membership informed on the progress of the task force.

In closing, I would like to thank our members and all concerned genealogists everywhere who took time to write to the Dallas City Council in support of the Genealogy Department, which truly belongs to all of us.



NEW ACQUISITIONS



All new books and materials cataloged into the Genealogy Section since the listing in the February newsletter are now included on the DGS website.

Go to www.dallasgenealogy.org to view new publication titles. From the home page select “Resources.” In the Resources box select “Dallas Public Library.” Then in the Dallas Public Library box you will see “Recent Acquisitions.”



I Lost My Favorite Ancestor

Jacob Holland was my earliest documented ancestor. All our family records said so. Our scientist aunt whose word was sacrosanct listed him, his son Richard and Richard’s son David as my direct ancestors. A previously unknown and very distant cousin found me on the internet and gave me the same information. Another cousin sent me a multi-page document of our Holland ancestors. Jacob topped the list.

Jacob’s birth date is unknown. He was in North Carolina by at least 1778 when a land grant to him is recorded in Edgecombe County giving the precise location in metes and bounds. He died in Edgecombe County in 1799 and left a detailed will, listing his children by name, his household furniture, dishes, cooking and eating utensils, cows and calves, horses, hogs, sheep, farm equipment, etc. In other records, I found the names of the neighbors, the names of the sons and daughters of the neighbors who married into his family. I came to know him so well that I could envision his home and his life in rural eastern North Carolina in the last half of the 18th century. I got a copy of his will from the North Carolina Archives. One Christmas I made additional copies and sent them to my children, siblings, to all my

nieces, nephews and known cousins telling them this was the will of our earliest documented Holland ancestor.

Jacob's wife Margaret was listed in the 1800 North Carolina census, but not in the 1810 census. Richard Holland was listed in 1800 in Nash County, which was created from Edgecombe. There was also a Richard Holland about that time in Wake County where I knew Richard's son David eventually lived. I was running into a brick wall trying to learn more about Richard. About that time a cousin in Denver told me she had discovered that Jacob's wife Margaret died in Tennessee and left a will. I found a copy of her will in our own Dallas library and it clearly showed that this was Jacob's wife Margaret. It also mentioned her son Richard who appeared to be in Tennessee also. Records showed Margaret and others in Jacob's family moved to Tennessee about 1810.

The mystery thickened. Would Richard have moved with his mother leaving behind his son David? Did David also move and then return to North Carolina? That didn't seem likely. Did Richard return to North Carolina? Tennessee records indicated he died in Tennessee. Richard just did not fit. And what about the other Richard Hollands – those in Nash and Wake Counties? I was at a total loss.

Then one night as I fumbled around on Ancestry and Holland commentaries on the internet, I came across a statement that Jacob's wife Margaret died in Edgecombe County in 1811. Since I knew from her will that that was not true, I contacted the writer. He, in turn, contacted a Holland researcher who he claimed "knew all" and he confirmed that my assertion was correct and asked to get in touch with me.

This researcher said he had been researching the Holland line for thirty years and told me that if I was descended from Richard Holland, father of David Holland, I was NOT descended from Jacob. He, the researcher, was descended from Jacob and gave me convincing detailed information. He had also done a good bit of research on Richard Holland's line - "my" Richard. While my Richard was not Jacob's son, they were almost certainly related though no one seems to have documented their relationship. I sadly and reluctantly accepted that Jacob Holland was not my direct ancestor.

Later I found in David's Wake County estate records a mention of his ownership of land in Moore County, North Carolina which he stated he inherited from his father, Richard Holland who apparently moved from Wake to Moore County about 1810.

Giving up Jacob was almost like a death in the family. I knew more about his family than almost any of my ancestors. I lamented the loss to so many friends that one of them suggested perhaps I should have a memorial service for him!

Sara Holland McBride

DGS Newsletter is now Electronic

The Dallas Genealogical Society Newsletter is now being delivered in both electronic and printed editions. The electronic newsletter is delivered to your email in PDF format. It is also posted on the DGS website. An email will alert members to the User Name and Password to view and/or download the newsletter.

To receive your DGS newsletter electronically, you must have an email address in your DGS account and you should check "Newsletter" as a Membership Subscription Option.

If you do not have an email address in your DGS account, send your name and the email address you want DGS to use to administrator@dallasgenealogy.org requesting that the information be added to your account.



A modern mother is explaining to her little girl about pictures in the family photo album. "This is the geneticist with your surrogate mother, and here's your sperm donor and your father's clone. This is me holding you when you were just a frozen embryo. The lady with the very troubled look on her face is your aunt. She's the family genealogist."

Liz Thurmond



It is never too late

There must be a relative somewhere in this world. I had thought for many years that I was Heinz-57, a mixture of a little bit of everything. I had always known that I was adopted but never knew who my biological parents were. I was retired for several years now and the time is right.

It all started in early January when I saw an ad in the AARP Magazine that was advertising a nonprofit search firm that would find your birth parents. I clipped the ad, filled out the necessary information and mailed it the next day. Several weeks went by and a reply came back which stated how difficult it would be to find someone's birth parents and it could run into several thousand dollars. So much for the non-profit search!

My sister-in-law found information on the internet from the Texas Department of Health and Vital Statistics in Austin, Texas to request the information from which court my adoption took place. I composed a letter with all the information they had requested and sent it off to Austin along with nine dollars. It took almost three months for the information to come back from Austin, but at last I had the name of the court where my adoption took place.

I called the 96th Judicial District Court in Fort Worth, Tarrant County, Texas, to have the court set a date

for me to appear before the judge. The lady I talked to was very nice. She was the court coordinator for the 96th District Court and would set the date for me to appear before the judge.

I sat in the witness box and explained to the judge my reason why I wanted to know who my birth parents were. I told him that I was adopted at birth, and had been told that my mother had died in childbirth. I was never told anything about her or what her name was. I also explained to the court that everyone in the courtroom knows who their parents are but me. I said that I was 66 years old and I think it's about time. The judge listened to everything I had to say. The first thing he told me was that my mother didn't die in childbirth because she signed the adoption papers a year after I was born. He was holding the papers in his hand waving them at me. He explained to me that it was a closed and private adoption, which meant that an adoption agency was not used. He said that my mother had a reason for this at the time. He told me that he couldn't release the information until a third party, an intermediary, was used to locate any biological relatives. I paid the court a three hundred dollar fee.

The intermediary would call me every so often and let me know the progress of the search. She would tell me things like where my birth mother was born, and she had several sisters and brothers and that she had passed away in 1995. The intermediary located one of my mother's two remaining sisters and I was asked to write a letter to this sister and tell her a little about myself, unsigned, and send it to the intermediary who would in turn forward it to the sister. The reply came back and it wasn't good. In so many words the sister said she would not sign the papers to release the adoption records. I requested to see a copy of the letter. That was a real letdown to be so close yet so far away. The judge would not release the adoption papers.

It was mid-April and I have been at this since January. I didn't know what to do at this point. All summer I thought about this problem and what should I do next? After three months I called the intermediary and asked her what could be done at this point. She said to send a personal letter to the judge and ask him again to release the adoption records.

It was Labor Day weekend and I worked on my letter in my spare time. This letter was my last chance. The letter was at last ready and was mailed Tuesday after Labor Day. A week or so after mailing the letter I would anxiously check my mail with great hope. At the end of the fourth week there was a fat letter in the mail from the 96th Judicial District Court. This letter contained all the adoption records which included the name of my mother. At last I have a name.

Now it was time to go back to the library to do some research. Before I could get started I saw a lady named Jan that I had met six months earlier. Jan was also adopted and had shared the story of how she found the name of her birth mother. I told her of my good fortune. I gave her the information that I had gathered. She went one way and I went the other. After about an hour she called me over to

where she was working at the computer. She had found census information and the place of death in Malden, Missouri. She also posted a query on a message board stating the name of the person I was looking for.

There is only one funeral home in Malden, Missouri. I called the funeral home and told the lady in charge who I was and asked her if she still had the funeral records. She was very nice and read me the information I was looking for over the telephone. I asked if she would send me a copy, and she said she would get it in the mail that day.

Two days later there was a letter from Landiss Funeral Home in Malden, Missouri. The letter contained the death certificate and the funeral home's worksheet used to gather information to post obituaries. The worksheet contained the next of kin: one niece, three nephews, and two sisters and the cities and states where they lived.

I had hit the jackpot! My first contact was with Cousin Judy, who lives in Columbia, Missouri. Just think, I was sixty-seven years old and got to talk to a first cousin that is a blood relative. We exchanged phone numbers and emails. Judy talked to the cousins and organized a get-together in Springfield, Missouri, in December of that year. I met three cousins and one aunt who would be my closest blood kin in the world.

The search took almost a full year, but it was worth it. Some people told me that I would never find out anything about my parents. I would tell them that if you don't look you will only fail. I searched, looked, and was persistent and I won.

As a closing footnote I would like to say that the parents who raised me will always be my Mother and Father.

Joe P. Connelly

<<<<<<<<>>>>>>>>>>>

J. D. Kerfoot **The Forgotten Mayor at Oak Cliff Cemetery**

The Texas State Historical Marker erected in 1985 at the entrance of Oak Cliff Cemetery reads, in part:

Kentucky native William S. Beaty came to Texas during its early days as a Republic and received a grant of 640 acres of land. He and his brother, Josiah, who arrived in 1836, settled along the Trinity River in what is now Dallas County.... In 1846, William Beaty deeded 10 acres of his land for a public burial ground and indicated in the deed that his brother, Josiah, already had been interred on the site.... **Two former Dallas mayors, George Sergeant and George Sprague**, and a son of Gen. Sam Houston, Col. William Rogers Houston, **are buried here**. Oak Cliff Cemetery remains a valuable and historic link to the early settlement of Dallas.

A third mayor of Dallas is also interred at Oak Cliff Cemetery. John David Kerfoot was mayor of Dallas from 1876 to 1877.¹ Kerfoot was born 1 Jul 1835 in Clark County, Virginia.² His parents were Franklin James Kerfoot and Harriet E. Webb.³ He attended the University of Virginia in 1853⁴ and studied law with Hon. Province McCormick in

Virginia.⁵ He came to Texas about 1855. But at the outbreak of the Civil War, he returned to Virginia to serve with Company D, 6th Reg't Virginia Calvary.⁶ He married his cousin, Mary Eliza Carr, daughter of John Carr and Emily S. Kerfoot, on 30 April 1867 in Fauquier County, Virginia.⁷

Returning to Texas, he practiced law. In 1870 he was appointed a Dallas County justice under the Texas Constitution of 1869 and served until 1874.⁸ He ran for mayor in 1875 against William L. Cabell and lost. He was subsequently elected mayor in 1876 and served for one year.⁹ Following his time in public office, he resided in Oak Cliff and was engaged in the insurance and real estate businesses. His wife died in 1891. After suffering a stroke resulting in paralysis in 1895, he moved to his ranch in Tom Green County. He died 31 Mar 1903 in Mullins Crossing, Tom Green County, Texas.¹⁰

John D. Kerfoot and his wife had eight children: Franklin, May, Katherine, Randolph, Virginia, Helen, Ruth, and Emily. Katherine and her husband Hugh Carleton and two of their children are buried along with her parents at Oak Cliff Cemetery. Emily Kerfoot, who died as an infant, is also interred there. The family plot is toward the back of the cemetery on the right side of the main road. How was Mayor Kerfoot missed when the historic marker was created? Perhaps he was mayor too early or not long enough.

Barbara A. Ware

¹ John Slate. "City of Dallas Mayors 1856 to Present." City of Dallas. <http://www.ci.dallas.tx.us/cso/mayors.shtml> accessed 20 Jun 2010

² "John D. Kerfoot." *The Biographical Encyclopedia of Texas*, Southern Publishing Company, New York, 1880, p. 246-247.

³ Dee Ann Buck. *Fauquier County VA Marriage Book 1854-1880*, Vol. 1, Fairfax, Va.: D.A. Buck, 1996, p. 117.

⁴ *Students of the University of Virginia. A Semi-Centennial Catalogue, with Brief Biographical Sketches*. Baltimore: Charles Harvey & Co., 1878

⁵ "John D. Kerfoot." *The Biographical Encyclopedia of Texas*, p. 246-247.

⁶ *Compiled Service Records of Confederate Soldiers Who Served in Organizations Raised Directly by the Confederate Government*, M258. National Archives, Washington, D.C.

⁷ Dee Ann Buck. *Fauquier County VA Marriage Book 1854-1880*, Vol. 1, p. 117.

⁸ Gary Fitzsimmons. "Historical List of Elected Officials, Dallas County, 1846-Present. Partial Listing. Revised February 2010." District Clerk's Office, Dallas, TX.

http://www.dallascounty.org/department/districtclerk/forms/COMBINED_MASTER_FINAL_OFFICIALS_20100429.pdf accessed 20 Jun 2010.

⁹ Philip Lindsley. *A History of Greater Dallas and Vicinity*. The Lewis Publishing Company, Chicago, 1909. p. 99, 112

¹⁰ "Sterling Price Camp." *Dallas Morning News*, 4 May 1903, p. 10, col. 3.

Hospitality Volunteers Needed

DGS Needs You!

We are in need of a couple of volunteers to serve on the Hospitality Committee to help with refreshments in the hospitality area at the general meetings on the 1st Saturday of each month.



If you are interested, please call Patrick McKinney, DGS-Volunteer Coordinator at 214-670-1433 (w) 214-549-4819 (c)

Fighting Misinformation in Online Collections

About 20 years ago, I discovered a flaw in my Moore family lineage that resulted in the wrong lineage being accepted for over 200 years. With the help of a genealogist in England, one of the heralds at the College of Arms, and two family genealogists "on this side of the pond," I was able to find the correct lineage for this particular Moore family. I've been trying to get the corrected lineage "out there" ever since in bits and pieces, but finally got it published in a scholarly journal, *The Pennsylvania Genealogical Magazine*, in 2005¹.

Recently, working on the same Moore lineage, but in a different branch, a collaborative effort corrected another part of the family. In trying to track down the source of the "wrong" information, which came from a database on Ancestry.com, I exchanged emails with the individual, whose database, *US & International Marriage Records, 1560-1900*², was listed as the source of some of the incorrect information.

The description of the database states that it was compiled from family group sheets submitted by researchers. I asked for a specific source of one marriage, and was sent the whole incorrect "Moore of Fawley"³ lineage that I had been trying to beat down for the last 15 years.

I asked that the "Moore of Fawley" be removed from the database and replaced it with the correct information. Ancestry should lead the way in addressing the topic of correcting bogus genealogies. The response I received was to upload a GEDCOM to the WorldConnect project at RootsWeb. I was told that the database or index to it would not be corrected and that any savvy person would not use the index as a source. That is true, but countless family trees on ancestry.com routinely use this database as a source.

Accuracy does not seem to be the byword here! I realize that the vast majority of the family trees on Ancestry are just "copied" from existing data and that's why so few are properly sourced.

I certainly appreciate the vast amounts of genealogical data provided by Ancestry, FamilySearch, and Heritage Quest. It makes research much easier and more convenient to have all of that at our fingertips. But shouldn't there be some controls in place to assure researchers that what they find is sufficiently documented?

Generally speaking, we know we can rely on the accuracy of controlled abstracts of actual records at FamilySearch, unlike the patron-submitted family group sheets. We can rely on the huge databases of actual records (SSDI, censuses, vital records) posted on Ancestry, but the family trees are, for the most part, undocumented hearsay.

¹Terri B. O'Neill. "The Corrected Lineage of Hon. John Moore of South Carolina and Pennsylvania," *The Pennsylvania Genealogical Magazine*, 44 (Fall/Winter 2005), 101-121.

² Yates Publishing. *U.S. and International Marriage Records, 1560-1900* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc, 2004.

³ David Moore Hall, compiler, *Six Centuries of Moores of Fawley*, O.E. Flanhart Printing, Richmond, VA, (1904)

Would it be feasible for Ancestry to guide people into providing real sources for the family trees they post? Isn't it time for proper documentation? The issue was addressed on the national level about 8 years ago. Let's restart the conversation among the genealogical community to at least BEGIN moving in the right direction.

Terri Bradshaw O'Neill



NET LINK

Net Link is a new column of the DGS Newsletter featuring a few helpful Internet resource links. These links are general enough to be useful by a number of individuals, but are not family name specific. Contribute Net Links to the *DGS Newsletter*. E-mail genealogically-useful URLs with a short description to newsletter@dallasgenealogy.org.

Texas Historical Sites Atlas - <http://atlas.thc.state.tx.us/>

This site provides information on Texas State Historical Markers and National Register of Historical Places in Texas and much more. It is a database searchable by county and record type. The records include Historic County Courthouses, National Register Properties, State Archeological Landmarks (Buildings Only), Historical Markers, Cemeteries, Museums, Military Sites, Sawmills, and Neighborhood Surveys. There are advance searches by keyword, county, map address, designation, and site name.



Abraham & Mary Todd Lincoln

This year we are celebrating the 201st anniversary of Abraham Lincoln's birth. Many historians say his presidency is the hinge on which American history is built and his leadership helped mold the United States that we know today.

It's hard to imagine what problems and world-altering decisions our presidents faced in the past, and continue to face today.

Lincoln faced a country divided. Not by party lines but by families... fathers, sons, and brothers fighting against each other.

As we all know, Abraham Lincoln was raised in a one-room log cabin in Kentucky and had very little formal education. Many historians give his mother, Nancy Hanks, credit for encouraging him and giving him the desire to learn.

There have been rumors circulating for years that Thomas Lincoln wasn't his father. Rumors about his paternity began in 1860 during his nomination for president, and there are sixteen individuals who've been said to hold the distinction of being his father.

Nothing has ever been proven, and his real father was a respected member of the community and a successful farmer. After the death of his mother, Sarah Bush, his father

re-married and the family moved to Macon County, Illinois, where he started his climb up the political ladder. Lincoln struggled for a living and education. He worked as a clerk in the village store and slept in its back room. To educate himself, he constantly borrowed books and studied.

On November 4th, 1842, he married Mary Todd and they had four boys. Only one son, Robert, lived to adulthood. It's been said that Lincoln's "ambition was a little engine that knew no rest". He ran for the Senate in 1858, and lost. However, that campaign helped him gain national recognition and two years later he won the Republican nomination for president.

Mary Todd Lincoln was extremely complicated and very controversial. Because she had family who fought for the south, some suspected her of being a southern sympathizer.

The early first ladies weren't less fascinating than the first ladies of today; they just didn't have the news media nipping at them twenty-four hours a day.

Mary and Abraham Lincoln were the first presidential couple to have a child die while living at the White House. Their son, William Wallace, was twelve when he became ill. It's believed he died of typhoid fever from drinking Potomac River water that was pumped into the White House.

Although polls rank Abraham Lincoln near the top of the list of the most competent and respected presidents, poor Mary Todd is always near the bottom of the most admired first ladies. Her preoccupation with money and spending led her into many clashes with the White House staff. The staff called her "The Madam," and the secretaries called her "The Hellcat."

Like Jackie Kennedy, Mary Lincoln was at her husband's side when the assassin struck. It was Good Friday, April 14, 1865. The Lincolns went to Ford Theatre to see "Our American Cousin." Halfway through Act III, John Wilkes Booth shot the president.

Mary Lincoln never recovered from her husband's assassination. The next seventeen years held nothing but sorrow for her. She lost another son a few years after her husband died, and her remaining son had her committed to an institution for the insane.

She was eventually found *eccentric*, not *insane*, and spent her last years in Springfield with her sister. Mary Lincoln died in 1882.

Although there's the beautiful monument and memorial to Abraham Lincoln in Washington D.C., he, Mary Todd, and three of their sons are buried at Oak Ridge Cemetery in Springfield, Illinois.

Washington gave us the vision of a federal union... Jefferson gave us the idea of democracy... Lincoln gave us unification and freedom, and has been revered throughout the world for over one-hundred and fifty years.

He went from log cabin to White House. He saved the Union ... he freed the slaves, and he's the president against whom all others continue to be measured.

If you can prove ancestry to Abraham Lincoln or Mary Ann Todd Lincoln, you are eligible to join The

Hereditary Order Of The Families Of The Presidents And First Ladies of America.

Ancestor names for Abraham Lincoln include:
Hanks, Shipley, Flowers, Salter, Barnard, and Herring.

Ancestor names for Mary Todd include: *Parker and McDowell.*

Shirley Stertz Hawn



A New Cousin

Fifteen or 20 years ago I went back to Northern Wisconsin for a family gathering. While I was there I made copies of a stack of papers that represented the research my aunt had conducted on the Norwegian branch of our family. I stuffed the copies into an envelope and filed them away when I got back home.

About 10 years ago I got the itch again and started to get more organized. I bought my first Genealogy software package and started to organize my information, starting with that stack of papers I got from my aunt.

There have been many wonderful discoveries since then, but one mystery has always been lurking in the background. One of those "dark stories" buried in my aunt's papers was about my uncle (her brother) who had a son in 1936 in a marriage that dissolved almost immediately. Communications between my family and the mother and son quickly ceased.

That stub on the family tree has been one of those on-again, off-again areas of interest. I've chipped away at it now and then, but I have always been dismayed by the scarcity of information and the increasingly long odds of ever being able to bridge the gap of 60+ years.

On New Year's Day, 2008, I was talking to my sister (who lives with my mother in Florida) and she brought up our long-lost cousin again. My mother had a vague memory about their having moved "up East" following the divorce. My sister had been Googling and was convinced that she had found our cousin living in Massachusetts.

You probably don't know my sister, so let me introduce her to you. She swears she can see the ghosts of our father and her first husband walking around her house and claims personal responsibility for diverting a recent hurricane by sprinkling tobacco around the tree in her back yard, so you can probably understand why my first impulse was to tell her how improbable it was that this really was our cousin. But the few facts that her search revealed were compelling so I threw caution to the wind and called him anyway. Nobody answered, so I left a message.

The next day, my wife called me at work and said that somebody had called and left a message for me. When I called our voice mail system and listened to the voice I had no doubt; he sounded exactly like the cousin I have known all my life, his step-brother.

I called him back and confirmed the facts... he really is my cousin, and he has had absolutely no contact with his father's family since his birth 72 years ago. At this point in time it's a little hard to tell who is more shocked by this turn of events.

He does not have a PC or do email, so this has all transpired by phone calls and US mail (and back-channel emails between my sister and cousins), but from what I can tell we are all thrilled.

My sister is like, duh, why didn't you just Google him years ago? I cannot convince her how improbably impossible this all is.

For those of us dealing with the real world of genealogy, I hope that this story reinforces the importance of always gathering (and documenting) all sources of information. But even more importantly, I hope that this convinces us all to never give up... You never know when a series of facts are going to lead to that next great breakthrough.

Tony Hanson



A note from the DGS Treasurer:

Dallas Genealogical Society
2010 Budget Summary

Income:	
Dues	\$20,100
Fundraising	\$22,490
FHL Lending Library	\$6,100
Education	\$1,480
Total	\$50,170

Expenses:	
Operations	\$11,216
Fundraising	\$9,675
FHL Lending Library	\$6,700
Publications	\$4,800
Mailing	\$3,489
Education	\$2,480
Credit Cards	\$1,230
Publicity	\$1,200
Total	\$40,790

Net Income **\$9,380**

*Nov 6, 2010 General Meeting
10:30 a.m.: Social Hour
11:00 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.:
"The New FamilySearch"
Presented by Lynell Moss*

Dallas Genealogical Society
P.O. Box 12446
Dallas, TX 75225-0446

Nonprofit
Organization
U.S. Postage Paid
Dallas, TX
Permit No. 7123

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED



DGS Calendar of Events 2010

Saturday, November 6, 2010 – General Meeting: Social hour begins 10:30 a.m.; General Meeting begins 11:00 a.m.
Lynell Moss – Special Guest Speaker (Topic: “The New FamilySearch”)
First Floor Auditorium

Tuesday, November 16, 2010, 10:00 a.m. – Jewish Genealogy SIG

Saturday, November 20, 2010, 3:00 p.m. – AAGIG

Saturday, December 4, 2010, 2:00 p.m. – MacReunion Group

Saturday, December 11, 2010 – Annual Awards Event: 11:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.
O’Hara Room – 7th floor – lunch may be provided (TBD)

Saturday, December 18, 2010, 3:00 p.m. – AAGIG

All group meetings will be at the J. Erik Jonsson Central Library
1515 Young Street, Dallas, TX 75202

If you need to contact DGS, you can email the particular board member with whom you wish to communicate or you may send an email to info@dallasgenealogy.org or you may leave a voice mail at 1-866-YOU2DGS (1-866-968-2347)