



# STANISLAUS RESEARCHER

March 2007

## March Meeting

March is our month for rediscovery. Speaking will be Teresa Grieshaber from the Stanislaus County Library. Her talk will be on what resources we can find at the library and how to access them. She is one of the most knowledgeable librarians at the library and will be a great source of information. Teresa has worked on her own genealogy and knows exactly what is needed and how to get it. We are very happy Teresa has agreed to share her knowledge and experiences. With Teresa answering your questions, you should get a new outlook on what is available to you. Come pick her brain!!!



## January Meeting

On Tuesday, February 20, we celebrated Mardi Gras with a Souper-Supper and Super speakers. Vicky Wolff organized the meal, while Bev Graham organized the speakers. We met at the Trinity United Presbyterian Church, because Geneva was feeding the homeless that evening and we had to move. Bev Graham decorated the hall, and many members wore the colors of Mardi Gras, gold, green and purple. What a festive sight! There were a number of willing helpers, Cleda Lane, Bev Johnson, Theo Schock and Dorothy Winke to name a few.

But the big attraction was the steaming hot soup. Bev Graham brought a large cauldron of Clam Chowder; Vicky had prepared Corn Chowder and Taco Soup; and Millie Starr brought Minestrone. Breadsticks were made by Janet Lancaster and Helen LeMond and rolls were provided by Bev Johnson. In addition there were crackers and salad. To top it off, Bev Graham brought cupcakes with icing of the traditional colors of green and purple. Modesto Police Chief Roy Wasden and Assistant Chief Mike Hardin came and **cont.pg 22**

### CALENDAR

#### March

Board Meeting	Mar 12
General Meeting	Mar 20
Arkansas Study Group	Mar 12
Writing Group	Mar 15

#### April

Board Meeting	Apr 9
General Meeting	Apr 17
Arkansas Study Group	Apr 9
Writing Group	Apr 19

**MARCH MEETING**

**7:00 PM March 20, 2007**  
Geneva Presbyterian Church  
1229 E. Fairmont Avenue, Modesto, CA  
Teresa Grieshaber speaking about  
the Stanislaus Co. Library

joined us for supper. They showed a video of the history of the Modesto Police Department and both Chief Wasden and Chief Hardin spoke, giving as much information as possible about the records of the police department and how to access them. They gave lots of good information about the Department in general and answered lots of questions.

Thanks to all who contributed to this fun evening and to all who attended. We received lots of suggestions for the future. But no, sorry, we are not having corned beef and cabbage for March!

### **History of Mardi Gras**

By Milly Starr

The foundation of Mardi Gras was started long before the French. Some historians see a relationship to the ancient fertility rituals performed to welcome the coming of Spring, a time of rebirth. One possible early version of the Mardi Gras festival was the Lupercalia. This was a celebration around mid-February in Rome. The early Church leaders diverted the pagan practices toward a more Christian focus.

In Christian communities around the world, the 40 days preceding Easter comprise Lent, the season of prayer and fasting observed by the Roman Catholic Church and other Christian denominations during the 40 days and 7 Sundays before Easter Sunday. It begins with Ash Wednesday, the day many Catholics go to church to receive the sign of the cross marked in ash on their foreheads, its purpose being to remind them of their own mortality. For much of the country, the day before Lent is just another Tuesday, but in New Orleans this particular Tuesday represents the last gasp of revelry before a period of austerity. In practical terms, it presents an opportunity to use up all of the grease and fat in the kitchen before Lent.

Easter can be on any Sunday from March 23 to April 25, since the exact day is set to coincide with the first Sunday after the full moon following the Spring Equinox. Mardi Gras occurs on any Tuesday from February 3 through March 9. The Gregorian calendar, setup by the Catholic Church, determines the exact day for Mardi Gras.

The celebration started in New Orleans around the seventeenth century when the city was founded. They named the site Point du Mardi Gras in recognition of the major French holiday happening on that day, March 3. The late 1700's, saw pre-Lenten balls and fetes in the infant New Orleans. The name Mardi Gras means Fat Tuesday in French.

The masked balls continued until the Spanish government took over and banned the events. The ban even continued after New Orleans became an American city in 1803. Eventually, the predominant Creole population revitalized the balls by 1823. Within the next four years, street masking was legalized.

The early Mardi Gras consisted of citizens wearing masks on foot, in carriages, and on horseback. The first documented parade in 1837 was made of costumed revelers. The Carnival season eventually became so wild that the authorities banned street masking by the late 1830's. This was an attempt to control the civil disorder arising from this annual celebration. By the 1840's, a strong desire to ban all public celebrations was growing. Luckily, six young men from Mobile saved Mardi Gras. These men had been members of the Cowbellians, a group that performed New Years Eve parades in Mobile since 1831.

The six men established the Mystick Krewe of Comus, which put together the first New Orleans Carnival parade on the evening of Mardi Gras in 1857. The parade consisted of two mule-driven floats. This promoted others to join in on this new addition to Mardi Gras. Unfortunately, the Civil War caused the celebration to lose some of its magic and public observance. The magic returned along with several other new krewes after the war.

## Locating Information about Your Veteran

By Doris Demet

In a recent Rootsweb News letter, reference was made to a storage warehouse fire that destroyed many military records of surviving WWII veterans (<http://ftp.rootsweb.com/pub/review/2007/0214.txt>). It wasn't just their records that were destroyed, but others too; those who served right up until the fire.

However, there are other places people can find information and build not only their genealogy, but the National Archive records which were lost. I have at least fifteen WWII veterans and three WWI who survived the War and I have found more information on each--I actually started out not knowing half of them were veterans. I have submitted the information to the National Archives to help rebuild their records.

The following are steps to help find information on any veteran who is now deceased. (A living veteran can request his/her information from the normal agencies.)

1) Death Records--Most death records include whether or not the individual served in the armed forces. This and the age of the person will give you an idea of when he/she served--the average age of entry into any branch of service is eighteen to twenty (average only) for when the draft was instated. The age was a little older at other times.

2) Obituaries--Many obituaries will provide information on a relative who served in the armed forces--or at least hint at it.

3) Headstone-Cemetery Records--One thing our qualifying military members can receive is a free military headstone. Check headstones to see if they note any information about your family member's military record. If so contact the cemetery office--they could have even more information because they help order the headstones most of the time. They just might have kept a copy of the "Proof of Service." If this is true then there is a branch of the government where this headstone was ordered from: [http://www.cem.va.gov/hm\\_hm.asp](http://www.cem.va.gov/hm_hm.asp). BE BOLD. Write or call. Ask questions about the headstone and what proof was submitted for the headstone to be issued and whether you can have a copy of the proof.

4) County Court House Records--Go to the county court house where your veteran was living when he/she enlisted or drafted, as well as to the county where he/she resided after war or peace time service. Many local county court houses encouraged veterans to register their discharge papers, also known after WWII as DD214 forms. That way they would have a safe place to find a copy when they needed one for employment or for veteran benefits such as housing loans, burial benefits, and more. Discharge papers are full of information!

5) Local Contacts--Don't forget about contacts at the local level where your family member lived after his/her service. Contact the local American Legion or VFW (Veteran of Foreign Wars) Organization. They might have some additional information if your veteran joined their organization.

5) Local Newspapers--Check the local newspapers from when your family served--local newspapers would and still do print the names of those who have locally joined the service and include the branch, promotions in rank, awards or medals issued, where those awards are located, the service number, and a mailing address for friends and family to write to the service member (especially true during war time). Sometimes local papers even include a photo!

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Many small and large newspapers are on microfilm and you can usually get access to them through interlibrary loan--check with your library for help. Since I live in another state than all of my family I have been doing this from a small town library, so you can too! If you have to, locate a state library where your family lived, see if they have the newspapers on microfilm, and armed with the information, go to your local librarian.

6) Local Histories--Some communities have a local history naming many of their veterans. It's worth a look.

7) National Archives--Even though they say most of their records were destroyed, this does not mean all were. You can see what the National Archives do have by visiting their website and following their instructions. Fill out their forms with as much information as you can fill out, but remember you don't have to have all of it either (<http://www.archives.gov/genealogy/military/>).

8) Regional Veterans Administration Office (VA)--The last step I have found VERY HELPFUL after I have already gotten as much information as possible is to contact your regional Veterans Administration Office (VA). You can find this in your local phone book, in the front "Federal Government Pages." There is usually an 800/toll-free number. Or, you can use this website to locate the one nearest you no matter where in the U.S your veteran enlisted or where he was discharged. (<http://www1.va.gov/directory/guide/home.asp?isFlash=1>).

Now contact your regional VA Office and find out the mailing address to their "Freedom of Information Officer/Administrator" (FOIA). Write to the regional center closest to you and put Attn: FOIA. You will want to write a letter requesting copies of any and all VA files. Please note that VA files are not a military file, but a veterans administration file. Include the following information, if available:

- a) Your relationship to the veteran--son, grandson, grandfather, grandmother, etc.
- b) Veteran's full name
- c) Veteran's date and place of birth--write all you know even if you only have partial information
- d) Veteran's date and place of death--again, include all you know, even if incomplete
- e) Veteran's branch of service and when or about when he/she served, even if in the states. Even something like "Army WWII" or "Navy Korean Conflict" is better than nothing
- f) Veteran's service number and/or Social Security Number
- g) Your name, address, and signature

Now the wait. On average this takes usually 90 to 120 days. Remember not every veteran has a VA file, but a lot do. If you don't hear from the VA after 120 days, contact them and ask about your request. They do get busy and the FOIA is a volunteer.

If there is a record it can consist of just a discharge form (great information) and a burial request for a flag; or it can be jammed full of information, such as enlistment papers, discharge papers, and vital records on the veteran and his wife and children. Each file is different, so keep that in mind when requesting them. Also, note the VA file is free!

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21 February 2007, Vol. 10, No. 8.  
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## Queries for January, 2007

by Charlie Tieman

We started out the new year with considerable activity, seven new queries in January. A couple of these are interesting because they refer to names and places we all are familiar with. The first asks about the family of Clarence Roberts who had a farm on Blue Gum Ave. It turns out on looking at land records in the County Clerk's office that the original buyers of the 40 acres in 1902 were Clarence's brothers, Alfred F. Roberts of Iowa and Henry Roberts of Wisconsin. This land was part of a large tract of 1740 acres once owned by Eben Wood, from which the area gets its name of Wood Colony. It is part of our history that huge parcels like this were accumulated at little cost when it was first used for dry land farming of wheat, but after the promise of irrigation became a reality, the land was split into small lots and sold for big gains by developers. In this case, the subdividers were Albert B. Shoemake and Oramil McHenry. Clarence Roberts had a son and two daughters, Ruth and Margaret, but no grandchildren. Margaret married someone named Hale and was a local librarian for over 20 years. Unfortunately, I've found no one who remembers much about Margaret and we ended this query still not knowing the fate of either daughter.

Another email came from a fellow asking about the family of a Franklin Coffee who had a daughter born in Oakdale in 1904. He suspected this was Franklin Stockard Coffee, born here in 1873, son of Alfred Jefferson Coffee. This was a difficult question because this Franklin went by both given names, moved around a lot, and was married twice. Also, the Coffee family here was a big one. It is very appropriate that Coffee Rd has that name, because so many Coffees lived there, at the upper end near Sylvan Rd. Although our local history books don't neglect the Coffees, our old records of marriages and deaths mention many Coffees who have not been identified. We could use a good history of the local Coffee family.

The rest of the January queries were not as interesting. One person requested the marriage record for David Holland in 1911, and obits were requested for Mary Meyer (1981), William and Nanna Fisher (1964, 1958), and Ray Towe (1966).

There also was a request for help in locating the owner of a Turlock High School class ring which had been found. We weren't of any help on that one, but the owner was eventually identified.

## Spring Seminar

Christine Rose, the Nationally known genealogist, author and lecturer will be the speaker for our Spring Seminar. She was elected Fellow, American Society of Genealogists and was the recipient of the prestigious Donald Lines Jacobus award for two genealogy books. A long time columnist for the FGS *Forum*, Christine is well known as a lecturer at national and regional conferences and at the National Institute of Historical Research in Washington, D.C. She is also the founder of the Rose Family Association and has been the editor of its *Bulletin* since its inception.

Please join us **Saturday, April 21, 2007** at the **McHenry Museum Auditorium, 1402 I Street, Modesto, CA**. The doors will open at 8:45 and Christine will start at 9:00 AM. Limited seating is available, so send your money now. Details: Janet Lancaster at 209 529-9021

## Dress In California

A San Francisco editor tells this story about the prevailing taste for finery among the California ladies; There is perhaps no place in the world where ladies dress so richly as in California, and the every day costume of a lady in San Francisco is quite equal to a special "get up" for a promenade in that wonderful thoroughfare, the Broadway of the Gothanites. The good old fashioned ten cent calicoes that our grandmothers used to wear, which were made up on economical principles and not to run to waist (sic), are here scarcely ever seen; "lost though not to sight, are to memory dear." In those good old days a dress three yards in circumference was considered sufficiently ample --but now it takes more materials to dress a lady than to envelope a respectable mummy. We have not passed anything in our streets, time out of mind, but silk and satin; how rich and pleasant it sounds as it rustles past--so luxurious and refined! Yesterday, as we were plodding in sober-reflection toward our sanctum, a lady came out of a store and moved gracefully in from us; her figure was elegant; a rich China silk swept the pavement and the cigar stamps, a splendid Canton crape shawl enveloped her shoulders, a hand encased in a white kid hung gracefully over one arm, a French embroidered handkerchief emitted an odor of "Jockey Club." Our curiosity to see the face of the fair proprietress of these dry goods was intense; we walked faster, got before her, dropped our walking stick, stooped to pick it up, and as we gained our upright position the face met our--Shade of departed romance! It was our washerwoman, Sally, a regrettable "collard peusen" of the fast water.

From the *Rossville Weekly Sentinel*, Rossville, Ohio, Tuesday Morning, November 15, 1852

This article was directly below that of one about my latest research project, *General Otho Hinton*. I thought it might be of interest to some of our NORCAL readers. Copied as written. (Author unknown)

## Success Using Deeds

By Cindy Robertson, Millington, Tennessee

I had been searching for my SMITH family for more than 20 years in Bedford County, Tennessee. I made a one-day trip down to the county in which, according to the population schedule and agriculture schedule of the federal census, they had owned several hundred acres of land. Short on time, I ran into the courthouse and had copies made of records of all transactions involving my George or Martha SMITH. Afterwards I returned to the motel but felt as if I was missing something right in front of me within the deeds. I went through each one, writing down the amount of land, the boundaries, to whom it was sold, for how much, and the dates, but there were still no clues. Then I noticed on the last page of one of the deeds it had been notarized in Washington County, Arkansas. I looked at another one and saw it had been notarized in Woodruff County, Arkansas. There was my clue. They were no longer in Tennessee; they had moved to Arkansas. That was why I couldn't find them buried anywhere or find any remaining family in the Bedford County, Tennessee area.

I ran out to the car and retrieved my atlas to locate the Arkansas counties. Woodruff County was only about an hour or two from my home in Memphis, Tennessee. I went there and found the graves of my George and Martha SMITH and several of their children. I met another of their descendants and I now have an Arkansas cousin.

I hope this helps someone realize the information in land deeds is priceless -- but you have to read it!

## A Family History Overhaul

By [Carrie A. Moore](#) Deseret Morning News January, 2007

Whether your LDS ancestors pulled a handcart across the Plains or you have no affiliation with The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, there's a wealth of information being processed for placement on the Internet that can tie you to your family tree — free.

Thousands of Latter-day Saints know something about their ancestry because they've long been taught to know who their progenitors are. But relatively few know all of what's now available to help fill out their family tree, including archives which chronicle the early history of the LDS Church in exacting — and often personal — detail.

And with a complete overhaul of the church's [FamilySearch.org](#) Web site planned for the months ahead, even those who have no experience researching family history will be able to "do something meaningful without having to learn anything prior," according to Steve W. Anderson, online marketing manager for the church's Family History department.

New online tools will allow novices to log on and — with a few mouse clicks — pull up their family tree, with details about ancestors, of any faith or none, that are part of the database. "You'll be able to attach images or photos to it, or something like a timeline of events. It will have all kind of things to make it a much richer resource." Users will have their own login, allowing them to add information about living people to their family tree if they so choose, though that information will not be available for others to view in order to maintain privacy. Anderson said there is some concern about the accuracy of allowing people to simply add information, but "if someone disagrees with your account of it, there will be an opportunity to put additional information or opinion there." In addition to the redesigned Web site, the church is pushing forward with a digitizing project that will eventually allow the images of such information as census records, birth, death, marriage, tax and land records — now contained on its 2.4 million rolls of microfilm — to not only be placed online, but to be indexed in order to allow nearly instant access.

The project is estimated to take from five to 15 years to complete. After that anyone looking for access to literally billions of individual documents will be able to search for them in minutes online. In the past, the only way to access those records was to order a copy of the microfilm through the mail. "We're trying to make the information much more accessible and also much more meaningful," Anderson said. "The Web has made us all a little attention-challenged, yet we all flock to it. All we're doing here with online programs and databases puts us right at the doorstep of a mountain of significant change."

The church is currently working with thousands of volunteers worldwide to help index the digitized records — many of them through state and local genealogical societies. Public access to selected records which have been both digitized and indexed is anticipated "fairly soon — definitely by next year," he said.

Family History communications and planning manager Paul Nauta said the indexing technology is "coming along nicely" at this point, and managers will begin testing the indexing internally through church groups and with selected genealogical societies nationally who have volunteers now working to index records that their memberships find valuable.

Curt Witcher, with the Indiana Genealogical Society, is one of two people overseeing volunteers who are indexing all Indiana marriage records from 1820 to 1957 for the digitized images the LDS Church has. He heard about the indexing project at a national

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conference and asked his society to participate.

Volunteers range from beginners to experienced researchers, he said, because the workload has been processed into manageable bits — meaning volunteers can spend only 30 minutes at any one time and feel a sense of accomplishment.

He said it's difficult to estimate how long it will take to index millions of records covering a 150-year span, but he's estimating it will be 36 months. As enthusiasm builds, "it wouldn't surprise me if it took less than half that time," he said.

Errors are bound to occur, but should be caught because the system is designed so every record is entered twice — by two different people working independently of each other. If one record disagrees with the other, an arbitrator will decide which one is correct.

Amy Johnson Crowe with the Ohio Genealogical Society said the church approached her group more than two years ago about volunteering, even before the project began. They've been working on an index for Ohio tax records already digitized by the church since December. She dubbed the project "mind-boggling," saying when people hear about it, "they usually want to get involved. It's so incredible from what we thought was possible only a couple of years ago. ... There is a lot of excitement about this."

As online access grows exponentially, information about early Latter-day Saints — and details of their lives that may otherwise have been lost — is readily available, some of it online.

For example, the Mormon Pioneer Overland Travel database can be found at [lds.org](http://lds.org) under the "church history" tab, and provides names, dates and even journal entries about Latter-day Saints who came by wagon team or handcart to the Salt Lake Valley, as well as a complete list of sources — some of them full-text.

While the church's Family History Library is known worldwide, the less-frequently-used Church History Library, now housed inside the east wing on the main floor of the Church Office Building, offers information not available elsewhere. Holdings in the Church History Library have grown so large a 250,000-square-foot building is now under construction east of the Conference Center to house them all, along with administrative offices. Construction is on target to be completed next year, but Thompson said it likely would not be ready for public use until 2008.

Anderson said the combined initiative to expand public access to ancestral information is "huge. Together they represent probably the most significant changes in family history work ever undertaken."

### **We All Need A Tree**

I hired a plumber to help me restore an old farmhouse, and after he had just finished a rough first day on the job: a flat tire made him lose an hour of work, his electric drill quit and his ancient one ton truck refused to start, I took him home. While I drove him home, he sat in stony silence. On arriving, he invited me in to meet his family. As we walked toward the front door, he paused briefly at a small tree, touching the tips of the branches with both hands. When opening the door he underwent an amazing transformation.. His face was wreathed in smiles and he hugged his two small children and gave his wife a kiss.

Afterward he walked me to the car. We passed the tree and my curiosity got the better of me. I asked him about what I had seen him do earlier. "Oh, that's my trouble tree," he replied "I know I can't help having troubles on the job, but one thing's for sure, those troubles don't belong in the house with my wife and the children... So I just hang them up on the tree every night when I come home and ask God to take care of them. Then in the morning I pick them up again." "Funny thing is," he smiled, "when I come out in the morning to pick 'em up, there aren't nearly as many as I remember hanging up the night before."

**Welcome****New & Returning Members**

***We have 203 members as of  
February 23!***

We wish to welcome all new members for the year 2007. We hope you have found our society helpful, knowledgeable, and resourceful.

We look forward to welcoming many more new members in the year 2007.

**NEW MEMBERS:**

#958 Valyrie Gillespie	Turlock, CA
#959 Evelyn McFadon	Modesto, CA
#960 Alex Znoj	Greenville, TX

**RETURNING MEMBERS:**

#177 Eve Ringhoff	Modesto, CA
#461 Caroline Lemas	Merced, CA

If there are **any** corrections, changes in your telephone number, mailing address, or e-mail address **please** send information to Maybelle Allen: telephone (209) 523-0593 e-mail [rmallen213@sbcglobal.net](mailto:rmallen213@sbcglobal.net), or write to GSSC, PO Box A, Modesto, CA 95352-3660; Attn. Maybelle.

**Membership dues:**

\$20.00 single membership

\$27.50 Family membership

Newsletter subscription included with both memberships.

**The General Meeting is at Geneva  
Presbyterian Church, 1229 E. Fairmont,  
Modesto, CA**

**7:00 PM on the 3rd Tuesday, except in  
July and December**

**GSSC Web Page**

[Http://www.cagenweb.com/stanislaus/  
gssc.html](http://www.cagenweb.com/stanislaus/gssc.html)

**HAVE YOU CHANGED YOUR EMAIL  
ADDRESS? IN THE LAST 6 MONTHS?  
THE LAST YEAR? IF SO, PLEASE,  
EMAIL CHANGES TO**

>[gssc@worldnet.att.net](mailto:gssc@worldnet.att.net) <. On the subject line just put 'updating email address.' If your name is not included in your email address, **please, please**, put it in the body of the email. If you'd do it the day you receive your newsletter, it'd be greatly appreciated.

Thank You

**GSSC Web Page**

[Http://www.cagenweb.com/stanislaus/  
gssc.html](http://www.cagenweb.com/stanislaus/gssc.html)

**Eastern Canada**

Some records say my gr-gr-grandfather was born in Eastern Canada. How do I figure out which province they mean?

First look again at the records. Do they say Eastern Canada or Canada East? Many Americans read Canada East and mistakenly think their ancestor was born in the Maritime provinces on the Atlantic Coast. The province of Quebec was formerly known as Lower Canada and Canada East. Ontario was formerly known as Upper Canada and Canada West. The upper and lower in these names refer to the locations of provinces on the St. Lawrence River. Ontario is at the head of the river while Quebec follows the lower part of the river to the Gulf of St. Lawrence.

David Allen Lambert

'The Online Genealogist'





G.S.S.C. CA.  
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*Deadline for the STANISLAUS RESEARCHER is  
the Society Board Meeting, second Monday of each month*

**THE STANISLAUS RESEARCHER MAKES EVERY EFFORT  
TO PROVIDE ONLY VERIFIED INFORMATION, HOWEVER,  
WE ASSUME NO RESPONSIBILITY FOR ERRORS**