

STANISLAUS RESEARCHER

Genealogical Society of Stanislaus County

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President's Message

By Beverly Graham

This month our writing group has offered some examples of family history writing. Some offer research techniques, while others are simply biographical. We hope that these short articles will encourage the rest of you to put fingers to keyboard and record the stories of your unique ancestors.

Using On-line and Digital Records

By Joann MacDonald

The way we do research has changed over the years. When I first started researching one had to write a letter and then wait for a response. Microfilm rolls had to be ordered in from Salt Lake City. Most census records were not indexed so one had to read line by line to locate one's family. Some census index books were available locally. They only listed head of household rather than the every name index we are used to today. Now many things are available just by going to the computer. You might say, "I don't have a computer!" Computers are available at the County Library and at the Family History Centers.

When was the last time you checked to see what the historical or genealogical society where your ancestor lived has put on-line? My ancestors settled in San Francisco beginning in the 1850s. I belong to the California Genealogy Society (founded in 1898) and they regularly send out e-mail to tell about records that have been indexed. Last week I was surprised to find a new on-line index, so I entered just my grandfather's last name and got two hits. One was my grandfather's name and the other was for a son of his. For a fee, paid by credit card, I could order probate information on both men. I don't think I will get their full records, but I didn't have any idea that either of them had a probate record. Both records are old so they are in storage and I will probably have to put in a request to have them pulled and wait several days. I will have to wait and see what the mail brings.

April Program

April 21, 2009 7:00 p.m.

GSSC member Theresa Grieshaber, will present a program describing the resources available to us all at the Stanislaus County Library. Theresa is reference librarian there and is frequently spotted in the Special Collections Room.

If you'd like to learn how to find things in the library more efficiently, understand the mysteries of inter-library loans, and find out just exactly why do they keep the door to the Special Collections Room locked, then this is the program for you.

About two months ago I discovered that the State of Missouri had digitized their death records from 1910 to 1957. The website is <http://www.sos.mo.gov/archives/resources/deathcertificates>. I remembered that one of my many “missing” MacDonald ladies from PEI had married a George Briggs and lived in St. Louis, Missouri, according to her father’s obituary. I wondered if maybe I would be lucky and finally locate her. I batted zero. I did find a George Briggs and his wife’s name was Matilda! Could she be my missing Matilda? The digitized death certificate told me he had died at a Catholic Hospital and was buried at a Catholic Cemetery. That was promising since he was of the correct religion. I did a Google search and found out that the cemetery had their records on-line. I checked and found Matilda had not died until 1959! She was not included in the on-line records as they stop in 1957. I then found that the State Historical Society of Missouri had an index of obituaries that appeared in Missouri newspapers. George Briggs appeared in that index. I sent for the obituary and it matched with the death certificate I found on-line. You can only order one obituary at a time. Matilda did not appear in the index but there is a St. Louis newspaper for the time period when she died. I ordered that but was a bit disappointed. She was a dear sister and aunt, but the obituary did not give any names. I can’t prove that this Matilda Briggs is Matilda MacDonald Briggs!

I know that Matilda was married and living in St. Louis, Missouri by the time of the 1910 census. She is the only Matilda with a husband named George Briggs. I have located her on the 1910, 1920, and 1930 censuses. It was a challenge as sometimes her husband was Geo., George E., and G. E. Briggs. The name Briggs was even listed as “Bugg” in one of the on-line census records. One really has to be a detective to find some of these missing ancestors. My next step is to call the reference specialist at the historical society. She might have some suggestions on where else I might look. I might be able to get an informational copy of the death certificate since she died on December 11, 2009. Missouri death records are not put on-line until at least fifty years after the death occurred. I hope her death certificate will give her maiden name and place of birth.

If you haven’t looked recently in the areas where your ancestors lived, have a look. You might be surprised at what you find. Records are being digitized and put on-line at a rapid pace. I highly recommend the magazine *Family Chronicle*. You can get information about it at www.familychronicle.com.

The Day I Almost Died

By Vicky Wolff

I was probably about four years old. I was with my parents at my paternal grandparents’ home in Siletz, Oregon. Everyone was getting dressed, ready to go somewhere in the car. I am not sure where we were going but I do remember that I had on a pretty dress with a coat and wore black patent leather shoes. I was all ready to go but everyone else was still getting ready.

Since I was ready and anxious to go I went out onto the front porch. I knew that I should not get myself dirty or my parents would have a fit. So, being very careful, I got down off the porch and into the yard. I remember just dancing around in my pretty clothes. All of a sudden someone inside the house said, “Come on, let’s get going.” My grandfather said, “I’ll go start the car.” In those days you had to warm the car up before driving away to ensure adequate flow of oil to the engine.

So, when my grandfather got into the car to start it, I got in as well. That’s the last thing I remember. Since I was only about four years old my parents have told me this story over the course of my life.

When everyone else came out to the car my mother found me laying down in the back seat as if I were asleep. But when she looked closer she found me “as white as a sheet” and my “lips were blue.”

Not finding a pulse, my father gave me mouth-to-mouth resuscitation and then had my mother hold me as he got into the driver’s seat and drove to the nearest hospital which was nine miles away, over

a treacherous road to Toledo. We lived about fifteen miles from the ocean so this was a typical winding, sharp hair pin turn road, but my father drove it very fast. Time was of the essence!

As my father drove over this twisty, winding road my mother held me out the window so that I could get as much air as possible into my little lungs. When we arrived at the hospital the doctor told my parents if we had arrived any later I would have been dead.

Because the care was “ready to go,” and because my father drove very fast and my mother held my head out the window on the way to the hospital, I was saved from death by carbon monoxide poisoning. To this day I do not like the smell of gasoline or diesel fuel. I’m sure it is because of that life threatening experience I had as a four year old child.

Putting Flesh on Them Bones

By Joann MacDonald

Where do you find the information to add flesh to the bones of your ancestors? We want to know more than when they were born and when they died. I came across an article about websites worth surfing in the April 2009 issue of *Family Chronicle*. According to the article the Library of Congress has a project on Chronicling America through the National Digital Newspaper Program. Right now you can access a variety of newspapers from 1880 to 1910 for California, Florida, Kentucky, Minnesota, Nebraska, New York, Texas, Utah, Virginia, and Washington D.C. It is an on-going project. The website is www.loc.gov. At the top of the screen click on Digital Newspapers.

It took me a little bit of time to figure out how to get around on this website. At first I was not successful. I gave up. Then in the evening I went back and WOW!!! I put in just the last name of my maternal grandfather, Solvin, who lived in San Francisco. I have tried other newspaper collections before without getting a hit. This time I had six hits! I wasn’t very hopeful but I clicked on the first reference. Well, it told about an attempted burglary at my grandfather’s saloon. I about fell off my chair I was so excited. The article said that he was lame. I had never heard that. My grandfather died long before I was born. I did know that his leg was broken when a ship mast broke and landed on him. It was possible that in the 1890s he was lame from that accident. I sent the article to my sister and cousins. I got the reply, “Yes, Grandpa was lame.” It pays to ask relatives as we all remember things differently. Here is the article from *The Morning Call*, San Francisco, California, March 9, 1892, page 1.

ATTEMPTED BURGLARY

A Montgomery Avenue Saloon-Keeper Frightens Burglars Away.

About 2:30 o’clock yesterday morning Charles Solvin, who keeps a saloon at 14 1/2 Montgomery Avenue, closed up his place for the night and was engaged in washing up when he heard noises at the door. He was soon convinced that burglars were at work, for a key turned in the latch and he could hear three distinct voices in muttered conversation as the men tried to pry open the door.

Solvin, being lame, dared not give any alarm, so contented himself with getting his revolver in readiness. The burglars, finding the door too strong for them, mounted one another’s shoulders and endeavored to force an entrance through the transom. Just then the glass in the transom fell with a crash and Solvin fired a shot from his revolver. The bullet took effect in the door-frame and the fellows took to their heels. The bullet is still imbedded in the frame, and the marks of the burglars’ tolls are to be seen on the door itself. The police did not seem to hear the shot, as Solvin has not even heard of any officer knowing about it or making any inquiries.

Then I realized I really had more hits than six. Six were on a page! I proceeded to read the rest. A computer is not perfect so some of the words they picked up as Solvin were really the word “solving.” It was fantastic what I found: He had belonged to the Improved Order of the Red Men. He was of the

Modoc Tribe and had brought in the greatest number of members and was presented with a life size portrait of himself. Other articles included the birth announcements of two uncles, an aunt and my mother and her twin; an item about some property my grandfather bought; and an obituary for one of my mother's younger brothers. The obituary actually listed all the children, the address of the home where the child was being waked, and the fact that they were going from the home by carriage to the cemetery. The obituary was from *The San Francisco Call*, San Francisco, California, April 16, 1906, page 12, image 12.

Solvin—In this city, April 14, 1960, Theodore, beloved child of Charles and Mary Solvin, and brother of Frank, Selma, Emil, Oscar and Victor Colvin, a native of California, aged 3 years 4 months and 11 days.

I am looking forward to trying some names of other folks and seeing what I can harvest to put some flesh on their bones.

Library News

By Susan Park

Since our program this month will focus on libraries I thought I'd check out some of the library websites that are most useful to genealogists in this area. Everyone could use more time and if you don't want to waste any when you go to a library, do your homework first. Check out the on-line catalogs and print out a list of what books and microfilms you want to see when you get there. Some websites let you put the items on hold. Others allow you to request holds by telephone.

First I tried the Stanislaus County Library at www.stanislauslibrary.org to have a look at the on-line catalog. At the home page the catalog was easy enough to find. It's listed on the left under the heading "Find/Renew Materials." There are two catalog choices and I don't really know the difference between the two. One is called iPac Catalog and the other is ADA Catalog. Typing in "missouri genealogy" in both got me the same list of seventeen books, but I preferred the look of the iPac Catalog. It's easy to find all sorts of genealogy books on this website, but the one thing I couldn't find was a way to create a shelf list of the holdings in the Special Collections Room.

At the Merced County Library I found their on-line searching tool is called ValleyCat. When I first typed in my test phrase "Missouri genealogy" I got over 360 items! Then I realized that ValleyCat searches lots of Valley libraries and when I limited my search to just the Merced library I got a much shorter list of only twenty-eight items. This library's website is www.mercedcountylibrary.org.

Next I tried the library up in Stockton (www.stockton.lib.ca.us) and discovered yet another system for looking up books. I must say, that all are pretty easy to figure out, but each is different looking. Typing in my test phrase again, "missouri genealogy" I found thirty-eight items at the Chavez Branch in downtown Stockton.

After a break (I had to print off some of those neat books I found) I thought I'd check a couple of more libraries. Since we have a trip planned to the Oakland Regional Family History Center later this month, I'm assuming that those researchers have already checked this out. For the rest of you, though, this is an interesting website (www.oaklandfhc.org). In addition to its own catalog, there are pictures to show you what it's like inside, maps and driving instructions, class schedules and sign-up instructions, and much more. The on-line catalog is very easy to use. I typed in my favorite test phrase and got 112 items. I was able to sort the list by format so that all the books were shown first, followed by fiche, then film. Because this is a Regional Family History Center the catalog contains holdings from several other Family History Centers. I could have searched just on Oakland, but I chose to search the entire collection. If you do this, be sure to click the purple "show copies" button to find out exactly where the book or film you want is located. The first item on my list turned out to be in San Francisco.

Even though the two Family History Centers in Modesto don't have their own on-line catalogs, you can still go to www.familysearch.org and search the main Family History Library catalog in Salt Lake City. You might as well do this searching at home so that you can show up at El Vista or Dale Road with your list of films to order. That will save quite a bit of time and you can spend it looking things up on HeritageQuest or Footnote.com or some of the other on-line databases that patrons can use there.

Finally, the Allen County Public Library in Fort Wayne, Indiana also has a website. While it's not close by, some of you may want to plan a trip to do research there some day. The same rules apply. Don't go without doing your homework first. Go to www.acpl.lib.in.us and click on "genealogy" on the left side of the page. The Genealogy Center contains an amazing amount of information and if you aren't checking airline prices to Fort Wayne after you've read through everything, I'm not sure you can really call yourself a genealogist. They have a monthly newsletter that you can sign up for called *Genealogy Gems*. It comes out at the end of each month and contains short articles by Curt Witcher and others, along with schedules of various events, travel schedules and speaking engagements of various librarians, and useful research tips.

Announcements

GSSC Pancake Dinner April 21, 2009

You are cordially invited to a FREE pancake dinner on the night of our general meeting at Trinity United Presbyterian Church on Carver Road. The dinner will start at 5:30 p.m. We will have plenty of pancakes, bacon, sausage, fruit, and condiments, as well as entertainment. You won't want to miss this great time, so mark your calendars now.

Memorial Day Cemetery Help May 23-25, 209

The Genealogical Society of Stanislaus County will once again spend the Memorial Day Weekend at the four adjoining cemeteries on Scenic Avenue, helping the general public to find the graves of their loved ones.

If you have not volunteered for this project before you have missed a great experience. A sign-up sheet will be available at the April general meeting, or you can call Vicky Wolff at 209-529-9430.

If you do plan to help that weekend, please remember to bring your lawn chair, lunch, snack, and something to drink. We are under a cover at the cemetery so we'll be there, rain or shine. If it is raining remember your umbrella as you will be escorting families to gravesites. You might also bring a coat or sweater as it can get cool under the shade.

GSSC Yard Sale June 12-13, 2009

It's that time of year again! It is time to start collecting items for our annual yard sale which will be held at 2025 Vista Dr. in Modesto on June 12th and 13th.

Last year we didn't have the great amount of items we've had in the past, so we hope for more this year. Items we can use include furniture, clothing, electronics, games, books, shoes, DVDs, videos, records, antiques and collectibles, jewelry, knickknacks, and so forth.

We need your unwanted, but gently used items. Please do not put junk in the sale. It belongs in your garbage can. Only usable and salable items will be accepted. NO MAGAZINES. Clothing must be washed and folded or hung on hangers. Electrical appliances must be in good working order.

After the sale, left over items will be sent to local charities such as The Hope Chest, Discovery Shop, Salvation Army, Gospel Mission, etc.

Vicky Wolff is in charge of the yard sale. Call her at 209-529-9430 if you'd like to work at the yard sale or if you have any questions about acceptable donations.

Ora Mae Crane is back in Modesto

Former GSSC member (and board member) Ora Mae Crane has returned to the Modesto area and is residing at the Legends Care Home in northeast Modesto. The address is 3708 Bold Ruler Ct., Modesto, CA 95355. Cards and letters are most welcome. If you'd like to visit, call Ora Mae's daughter Andi first to see when would be the best days or times to pay her a call. Andi's phone is 209-523-3621.

Arkansas Study Group

The Arkansas Study Group meets on the second Monday of each month, except for July. The meetings begin at 1:00 p.m. and last until 3:00 p.m. We have about twelve to fifteen members and most attend each meeting. Our meetings are informal, but always focused on Arkansas research. Whether you have a question about Arkansas research or you've solved an Arkansas problem, we'd love to hear about it. We also have a small library of books and CDs that members are free to borrow and use at home. We meet in the homes of our members on a rotating basis. Members are reminded by e-mail of the upcoming meeting site and time. If you have never attended one of our meetings you should call Wilma Martin for the location. Her telephone number is 209-883-3377.

Who Do You Think You Are?

On April 20, 2009 at 8:00 p.m. a new series begins called "Who Do You Think You Are?" An American version of a popular British show, the concept is that various celebrities will learn about their ancestors. How much actual research they'll do, I have no idea. Regardless of your opinion of Hollywood celebrities, this show will undoubtedly pique the interest of thousands of normal Americans who have yet to be infected with the incurable condition we know as *genealogy*. So, if you find your favorite spot at the local Family History Center or other research facility is taken by a stranger the next time you drop in, that may be why. The stars advertised for this series include Lisa Kudrow, Sarah Jessica Parker, and Susan Sarandon.

GSSC Membership Roster and Calendar

The annual roster of members is included with this newsletter. If you are receiving the newsletter via e-mail your roster and calendar will be sent as separate attachments. It's a good idea to check the information we have for you. Human beings have prepared the roster and mistakes do happen. If we need to update or correct your information please be sure to contact Membership Chair, Maybelle Allen.

Membership Information

- Dues: Single membership, \$20.00 per year Family membership, \$27.50 per year
- Stanislaus Researcher Published 10 times per year by Genealogical Society of Stanislaus County, P. O. Box A, Modesto, CA 95352-3660. Submit articles for publication to the editor via email: pebfarms@yahoo.com by the 15th of each month.
- Address changes: Send address, email and phone number changes to Maybelle Allen at:
 US Mail: Maybelle Allen c/o GSSC, P. O. Box A, Modesto, CA 95352-3660
 Email: gssc@att.net
 Telephone: 209-523-0593 (Maybelle Allen)
- GSSC web page: <http://www.cagenweb.com/lr/stanislaus/gssc.html>.
 The newsletter is posted at this website, along with other interesting society-related items.
- General meeting: 7:00 p.m. on the 3rd Tuesday of each month, except July and December at the Trinity Presbyterian Church at 1600 Carver Rd., Modesto, CA.
- Board meeting: 7:00 p.m. on the 2nd Monday of each month at El Vista Chapel (LDS) at 731 El Vista Ave., Modesto, CA.

2009 Officers		2009 Standing Committee Chairs	
President	Bev Graham	Acquisitions	Janet Lancaster
1st Vice President	Jeff Wells	Audit	
2nd Vice President	Janet Lancaster	Budget	Susan Park
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Treasurer	Susan Park	Historian	Theo Schock
Correspondence Secretary	Sheri Jones	Membership	Maybelle Allen
Director at Large	Vicky Wolff	Memorial Day	Vicky Wolff
Director at Large		Mentor	Joann MacDonald
Director at Large	Joann Gabriel	Newsletter	Susan Park
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		Refreshments	Jackie Niemeyer
		Registrar	Judith Welch
		Research & Publication	Millie Starr
		Research Trips: Sutro/Archives	
		Research Trips: Salt Lake City	Lisa Bruk
		Seminar & Workshop	Janet Lancaster
		Special Collections Room	Marilyn Belleville
		Sunshine	Judith Welch

We have 192 members.



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