

# STANISLAUS RESEARCHER

Genealogical Society of Stanislaus County

May 2009

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## Recap of April Program

By Jeff Wells

Theresa Grieshaber presented an outstanding program at the April general meeting. She gave us very effective strategies for using public library resources in our research, and shared methods of finding exact holdings in libraries near and far. Theresa also showed us internet search techniques which will help you get the results you really want. Thank you, Theresa, for a very informative and practical presentation!

## Research Seminar Review

By Janet Lancaster

If you're transcribing old letters or court records mainly before 1850 and having problems with thorns, tildes, or flying letters, maybe you need a class in paleography—or just some time with Marge Bell of the Oakland Regional Family history Center. Members attending our seminar there had the opportunity to learn the basics and practice reading early handwriting and evaluating the data for genealogical value. We also considered the calendar adjustment and change of 1752/53 as related to vital records. Marge introduced us to additional vital records being made available on-line and tips to use the new [www.pilot.familysearch.org](http://www.pilot.familysearch.org) website. Following the presentations, members scattered over the FHC to pursue various research objectives.

A great ride in glorious weather and a stimulating and resourceful environment with knowledgeable research support staff all added up to a successful research seminar.

## May Program

May 19, 2009 7:00 p.m.

This month we will hear popular Central Valley speaker, Robert Givens. Mr. Givens resides in the Fresno area and has been an active genealogical researcher since he was a teenager. He's an expert in the use of Family History Centers and was Director of the Fresno North Stake Family History Center for eight years. He is also 1st Vice President of the Fresno County Genealogical Society, and a member of South Central Pennsylvania Genealogical Society and of the German Genealogy Society in Sacramento.

Whether you're a beginner or a forty-year veteran in family history, come learn what genealogists from around the world consider to be the top twenty lessons every genealogist should learn, and how you can effectively apply these lessons to your research.

Those who attend this meeting will be able to sign up for a 100-plus page handout which Mr. Givens will e-mail to you. This handout will greatly expand the information presented at the meeting.

## Salt Lake City Trip Preview

By Millie Starr

The following article comes from the archives of the old GSSC Newsletter, now known as the *Stanislaus Researcher*. It first appeared in the June-July 1990 issue and contains a review of one of our earlier trips to Salt Lake. As you read this you'll see that some things never change. We fly now instead of taking the bus, and everyone uses computers, but the delight a dedicated genealogist takes in being at the Family History Library with like-minded people for a whole week is the same today as it was then.

### Normal Behavior? Or What?

The third Sunday of April brought together forty-some-odd mature and otherwise keen-minded Stanislaus County genealogists for a bus trip to Salt Lake City. This dedicated gang, acting in unity, got out of bed at an ungodly hour and assembled at the designated rendezvous where they voluntarily submitted to a 15 hour long experiment in togetherness and close encounters of the best kind. The tedious trip on a Storer bus would surely be considered drudgery by the uninitiated but not by our group of happy researchers. These folks considered it a privilege and were in a state of pleasant anticipation and unbridled eagerness.

Having left the warmth of hearth and the comfort of home, our heroes were equal to the task they had each undertaken.

Upon arrive in Sal Lake City our researchers buckled down to six days of intense and single-minded rooting and digging. Seemingly each one had adopted a prioritized list of projects that would require total concentration for the entire time allotted. Our lion hearted heroes were easily identified by their air of determination and, in some cases, by their glassy eyes. Suffice it to say, if resolution was essential our group would prevail.

The non-genealogist would never understand why people of apparent sound mind (and people who mostly didn't have to) would put in 15+ hour days cranking microfilm readers, risking physical collapse and reading added old documents that could well result in permanent eye damage. The non-genealogist would no doubt question the mental health of anyone who willingly risks curvature of the spine, shoulder-it is, prolapsus of the wristus, enlargement of the ankles, and the painful consequences of buttocks blisteritus.

The non-genealogist won't understand the researcher's tendency to discuss only **dead** people...in preference to talking about **live** ones. They wouldn't appreciate the family historian's partiality to **grandparents** and more or less disinterest in **grandchildren**. They find it strange that these students of history treat the past and rarely have time to be concerned with the future.

The non-genealogist might ponder why researchers of this kind rarely think of eating, sleeping, or playing. They eat only at odd intervals and then their choice of diet is questionable. They seem to sleep only when they can't find an ear for tales of their ancestors, or even worse, when all the libraries are closed. They seem to choose play only when threatened by annoyed spouses or out of sheer desperation.

Our Salt Lake City group persevered and ended the wee with smiling faces and most were ready to start it over again. As stated, some might not understand why these folks will sacrifice so much—so willingly—when they could surely be doing something so much less demanding. It seems to me that these good folks are indeed behaving in a normal way, but then, how can I speak of researchers when, if you must know, I am one.

Someone has said (and his name escapes me) the following: "By knowing who we have been and what we have done, we will know who we are and what we must do."

*Submitted by: C-350 (for those who don't read Soundex, this is Rae Codoni.)*

## **Report on Special Collections Room**

*By Marilyn Belleville*

If you have not been lately or never been to the Special Collections Room at the Stanislaus County Library in downtown Modesto, please pay us a visit.

There have been some changes and they are for the better. New shelves have been added so the books are not so packed together and no longer on the top shelf. We received some new books a few months ago. There has been a project going on to re-catalogue some of the books. Now all books pertaining to a certain state are together. Only books that cover more than one state or to a geographical area have not been changed. The Dewey Decimal System is still in use, but the books are now catalogued by state rather than by subject.

The catalogues in blue binders have been updated to reflect the new catalogue numbers. They are found on top of the new shelf. Unfortunately one table and some chairs had to be removed to make space for the shelf, so space for work is more limited.

Volunteers are still available each Monday from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. to help anyone who needs it. The door to the room is locked during library hours, but sign in at the magazine desk and a staff member will open the door for you. The room is kept lock to keep the books in, not the patrons out. The Special Collections Room can be used any time the library is open.

## **One Way to Get a Library Card**

*By Susan Park*

In an earlier issue of this newsletter I wrote about the value of having a library card from another county in California whose library offers HeritageQuest Online and other databases of interest to genealogists. For example, if you have a library card from San Francisco you can access The San Francisco Chronicle (1865-1922); New York Times (1851-2006); ProQuest Newspapers (1979- present); HeritageQuest Online; San Francisco Historical Photograph Collection (1850-present); Sanborn Maps California; and several other interesting databases and programs—all from your own home.

I told a friend of mine about this idea, and didn't specifically say, "you have to go to the library in person," but I assumed that to be the case. Not knowing any better, he simply went on-line to Tuolumne and Alameda County Library websites, downloaded library card application forms, and mailed them off with a copy of his driver's license as proof of California residency. Within a few days he received his new library cards in the mail. I checked out both websites and didn't see anything that said to do it that way, but it worked for him.

## **Memorial Day Cemetery Help May 23-25, 2009**

*By Vicky Wolff*

We will once again spend the Memorial Day Weekend at the four adjoining cemeteries on Scenic Avenue, helping the general public 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 May general meeting, or you can call me 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**

*By Vicky Wolff*

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.

Unwanted but gently used items we can use include furniture, clothing, electronics, games, books, shoes, DVDs, videos, records, antiques and collectibles, jewelry, knick knacks, and so forth. 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.

**What's Going on in Merced?**

*By Robyn Echols*

On Saturday, May 16, 2009 at 1:00 p.m. the Merced County Genealogical Society will present Kathy Burrows, a Family History Center director and a beginning and advanced genealogy instructor. Her topic is "Searching for Original Records in the Court House." This is an in-depth look at court records, what's available, how to prepare for a visit to a court house, and a look at court records available on-line.

On Saturday, June 20, 2009 at 1:00 p.m., Anne Field of the Merced County Genealogical Society will make a presentation entitled "Taking Control of your Computer files and Folders." Can't find your files on your computer? Don't tear your hair out. Come find out how to take control and find your stuff.

**Check This Out: Keepfiling.com**

*By Susan Park*

I just ran across this website and was amazed at the choices in the way of sheet protectors. High capacity expandable sheet protectors! Legal size sheet protectors! Sheet protectors with colored stripes! 11" x 17" folding or flat sheet protectors! They also sell binders of various sizes to hold all these marvelous sheet protectors and the prices are very low. Go to [www.keepfiling.com](http://www.keepfiling.com) for more information.

**Verify County Names**

*By Susan Park*

This week I spent quite a bit of time cleaning up my Legacy Family Tree database. About a year ago I printed out a report called USA County Verification. This is found under Reports: Books/Other for those of you who use Legacy. My report was seven pages long. What it does is produce a long list of improper county designations. Some of them were easy to resolve. For instance:

Paul Lemon BROCKWAY [604]

Death, Date: 20 Jul 1945, Location: Wichita, Sedgewick County, Kansas.

There was never a county by the name of Sedgewick in the state of Kansas.

What d'ya mean there's no Sedgewick County? There is too! Then I looked it up to prove that Sedgewick County existed and...oops...it's spelled Sedgwick. So that was an easy fix. A few more counties were discovered with creative misspellings, but I can report to you now that all have been corrected and no more county spelling errors can be found in my database. On the other hand, most of the improper county designations took much more work to correct. The majority of errors reported on that seven page report looked like this:

Mary MORRIS [1765]

Birth, Date: 25 Dec 1838, Location: Wilkesville, Vinton County, Ohio.

Vinton County did not exist in 1838 in the state of Ohio. It was not founded until 1850.

Oh brother...I have made the same mistake many others do. When I came across a new town name I looked it up in a modern atlas to learn what county it was in. Even though I own Thorndale & Dollarhide's book on county boundary changes, did I ever put two and two together on that subject? Apparently not! So, using a combination of tools I think I have them all corrected now. One by one I looked up the boundary changes using the program AniMap. Some were easy. The new county was created from a single county. But others were more challenging, as they were created by taking pieces of two or three other counties and forming the new governmental unit. Then it was on to Wikipedia and other websites to see if I could figure out which former county was home to the town. There might be an easier way but I didn't know of it at the time. In the example of Mary Morris, I ended up checking the 1840 federal census on Ancestry.com and found Abraham Morris, Mary's father, living in Wilkesville, Gallia County, Ohio.

In the end there were some places I just could not identify. In those cases where I only had the county and no town or smaller unit to help pinpoint the location, I ended up deleting the county and just going with the state only. I found most of these instances occurred in the late 1700s and early 1800s. As always, more research is needed to learn the answer.

Most genealogy programs have some sort of place name checker similar to this one. Have you tried out the one on your program? You might be just as surprised as I was to find out that your data isn't entered as perfectly as you thought.

### What's In Your Library?

By Susan Park

Last year some members shared with us what books they own in their private genealogy libraries. I would like to share just two of my books with you this month, both of which focus on the technological side of genealogy.

First up is a 263 page book called *Getting It Right: The Definitive Guide to Recording Family History Accurately* by Mary H. Slawson. Published in 2002 by Deseret Book Company in Salt Lake City, this book includes examples of how to document EVERYTHING in the genealogy computer program of your choice.

Such examples include how to document a birth or death on a ship at sea, or on board an airplane in flight! Don't think you won't need that information because as soon as you do, one of your ancestors (or descendants) will pop up and let you know differently.

Make sure you do not include non-jurisdictional place names in your program's place name fields. For instance, hospitals, cemeteries, prisons, and colleges should be entered as notes to the city-county-state place name fields. Ms. Slawson provides dozens of possible Event tags and how to use them.

### People Do Read This Newsletter

E-mail received on April 2, 2009

"Dear Ms. MacDonald,

Thank you so much for your article in our newsletter regarding the Missouri Death Certificates. Not only was it very interesting, but it provided the means to answer several puzzles I've been trying to solve. These documents were a gold mine for me!

Warmest Regards,

Valyrie Gillespie

Events or Facts, or whatever your program calls them, are such things as Burial, Residence, Occupation, Naturalization, Census, and so forth. Six appendixes are included. My favorite was the list of World's Major Religions and Subdivisions.

The value of this book is that it guides you to enter your data in a consistent manner. If you enter data with no plan in mind you will end up with this sort of mess:

**Stanislaus County, California**  
**, Stanislaus, CA**  
**, Stanislaus Co., Calif**

A human will read those three entries as one place. Your genealogy program will read them as three separate locations and will print out reports accordingly. This can be maddening when trying to put together information for a research trip, and is the modern day equivalent of those creative misspellings that census takers made when recording the names of their neighbors. This book is one which I find myself referring to regularly, and I always manage to learn something new each time.

The second book I want to let you know about is *Social Networking for Genealogists*, by Drew Smith. Mr. Smith is one half of *The Genealogy Guys* who put out the weekly podcasts that you can listen to on your computer or mp3 player. This book contains 129 pages and discusses in the most basic and easy to understand language all those mystifying terms—**RSS, Blogs, Wikis, Flickr, LibraryThing, Facebook, Delicious, Podcasts**, and even **Second Life**. This is the perfect “get your feet wet” book for those who want to know what the heck everyone else is talking about.

Both of these books can be found on Amazon.com and each costs less than \$20.

## Newsletter Exchange

By Susan Park

The following newsletters were placed on the freebie table at the last general meeting. If there is one you want to read make sure you get to the meeting early enough to snag it.

<i>Newsletter</i>	California State Genealogical Alliance	March-April 2009
<i>Diablo Descendants</i>	Contra Costa County Genealogical Society	April 2009
<i>The Jotted Line</i>	Fresno County Genealogical Society	March 2009
<i>Newsletter</i>	Immigrant Genealogical Society	April 2009
<i>Tree Shakers</i>	Los Banos Genealogical Society	March 2009
<i>Tree Shakers</i>	Los Banos Genealogical Society	April 2009
<i>The Family Snoop</i>	Merced County Genealogical Society	April 2009
<i>Wine Press Newsletter</i>	Napa Genealogical & Biographical Society	February, March, April 2009
<i>O Progresso</i>	Portuguese Historical & Cultural Society	March 2009
<i>Der Blumenbaum</i>	Sacramento German Genealogy Society	April, May, June 2009
<i>Newsletter</i>	San Joaquin County Genealogical Society	March-April 2009
<i>Root Digger</i>	Solano County Genealogical Society	April 2009
<i>Gold Diggers</i>	Tuolumne County Genealogical Society	April-May 2009
<i>WAGS Family Tales</i>	Whittier Area Genealogical Society	April 2009

The Genealogical Society of Stanislaus  
County  
Night at the Ball Park

- What:** **Baseball Game *Plus* Buffet:**  
**Modesto Nuts vs. Lancaster Jethawks**
- When:** **Thursday Night, June 18, 2009, 6:00  
PM**  
**First Pitch 7:05 PM**
- Where:** **John Thurman Field**
- Buffet Time:** **6:00 PM (Tri-tip, Hot Dogs, Beans,  
Salad, Soft Drinks)**
- Price:** **\$19.00 Per person - Includes Box Seats  
for the Game and the Pre-Game Buffet**

**\*\*Sign-up Deadline June 8, 2009\*\***

Genealogical Society of Stanislaus County

Baseball Game Event - June 18, 2009

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ (Home) \_\_\_\_\_ (Work)

Number of Tickets \_\_\_\_\_ Amount Enclosed \_\_\_\_\_

**Price: \$19.00 per person. Checks should be made payable to GSSC**

**Mail to:** Jeff Wells 3533 Highmore Lane, Modesto, CA 95357

## 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](mailto: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](mailto: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	Joann Gabriel
2nd Vice President	Janet Lancaster	Budget	Susan Park
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Treasurer	Susan Park	Historian	Theo Schock
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Director at Large		Mentor	Joann MacDonald
Director at Large	Joann Gabriel	Newsletter	Susan Park
Director at Large	Diana Loomis	Planning	Beverly Graham
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		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 195 members.**



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