



# ROOTS AND GOLD DUST Genealogical Society



P. O. Box 1354 Diamond Springs, CA 95619  
Roots and Gold Dust Newsletter - February 2014

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## UPCOMING MEETING DATES & AGENDA

Our Program Chairperson, Mary-Lee Guilliland, announced that our speakers for 2014 will be following her theme of "Breaking down Brick Walls". No, not with a pick, crowbar or a fist; but by the knowledge and experiences of our 2014 speakers!

February 18, 2014 *Jim Baker of Rocklin*  
*"Finding the Un-Findable"*

March 18, 2014 \* *Keli Gwyn*  
*"Use Storytelling Techniques to Add Spice to Your Family Tales"*

\* Please bring your "homework" assignment to our March 18<sup>th</sup> meeting! Write out a simple short story about one interesting relative; something you'd like to give to your family someday to read!

*Programs and speakers for the rest of 2014 are being lined up as we speak.*

## NEXT MEETING

February 18, 2014

We are excited to welcome Jim Baker, from Rocklin, to be our speaker in February. He will be addressing many "non-archived" areas/strategies. He states that they can be utilized for "*Finding the Un-Findable*" using examples with seven case studies! He will be showing us step-by-step his procedures to find the most challenging data. Examples are presented for using collaboration, search engines, family organizations, and the tomes; broadening your search and DNA evidence. Sound like fun? You betcha!

## LAST MEETING

January 21, 2014

Linda Johnson, an archivist at the California State Archives, 1020 O Street, Sacramento, CA 95814, Phone # (916) 653-7715, held our attention with her quick wit and her knowledgeable topic. Her handout material will enable us to refresh our memory on what we learned; "Back to Basics with the 3 - R's". Then, be sure to always document the item with a repository, source and citation.

Twenty-seven attendees came to our first meeting of 2014 to hear Linda Johnson's presentation on "*Cussin' Cousins*" An Open Forum for Frustrated Genealogists. The attendees included 4 guests: Cherie, Patsy, Ann and Cathy. Then, Catherine Keeler and Mary "Kay" Osborn became members! Welcome aboard!

Diane Florentine and Valaree Petritsch provided cookies and drinks.

## THOUGHT TO PONDER

If schools stop teaching **cur**sive, we will have to give up our signature and go back to signing documents with an "X".

## TREASURER'S REPORT - *for February 2014*

Checking Acct: Beginning Balance	\$ 1,452.15	
Income	\$ 328.00	
Expense	\$ 85.00	\$ 243.00
Ending Balance*		\$ 1,695.15
<i>*Includes the Book Can at \$ 375.42</i>		
Savings Account		\$ 10.05
TOTAL		\$ 1,705.20

## ROOTS AND GOLD DUST GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY - 2014 EXECUTIVE BOARD

President: .....Vacant  
Vice President: .....Milton Mulligan  
Secretary:..... Carol Sexton  
Treasurer:..... Cathy Chiverton  
Program Chairperson:..... Mary Lee Gilliland  
Library Liaison:.....Alice Morrow  
Newsletter Editor .....Carol Pirtle  
Webmaster.....Paul Hodel

### WHEN AND WHERE

Roots and Gold Dust meetings are held at 1:00 p.m. on the third Tuesday of each month (except December) at the Family History Center in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints building at 3275 Cedar Ravine, Placerville. Refreshments are provided. Visitors are always welcome.

Our newsletter is usually sent out during the first week of each month, depending on how fast reports can be gathered to be featured in our newsletter.

For information or membership inquiries, contact Paul Hodel [pljhodel@hotmail.com](mailto:pljhodel@hotmail.com) or by phone (530) 622-3299. Please visit our website at <http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~cargdgs/index.htm>.

### UPCOMING EVENTS

#### **Family History Day at the State Archives**

We regret to inform our members and guests that there will be NO FAMILY HISTORY DAY in October of 2014. However, plans are being developed for their return in 2015!

#### **Roots Cellar Spring Seminar**

Saturday, March 5, 2014

9:00 am to 3:45 pm - Fair Oaks Presbyterian Church  
11427 Fair Oaks Blvd., Fair Oaks, CA

Geoff Rasmussen, developer of Legacy Family Tree 8's software, author of books, videos, and webinars will be their speaker. Pre-registration is required before April 1, 2014. No registration will be sold at the door! This class will fill up quickly. Lunch can be purchased, also. For further information please visit their website at: <http://www.rootcellar.org/>.

## Sacramento German Genealogy Society Spring Seminar

Saturday, May 10, 2014

### *Spotlight on the Latest German Research Tools*

Location: Fair Oaks Presbyterian Church

Speaker: Kory L. Meyerink, A.G.

Registration is now being accepted. You may visit their site directly at: <http://www.sacgergensoc.org>

### **Placer County Genealogy Society, Auburn, CA**

February Day Study Group Meeting

Monday, February 10, 2014

### *Software Demo: AniMap Plus with SiteFinder*

Just about every researcher deals with the problem of finding an old town that has long-since disappeared from the map. Or you have a known location, but it was not in the same county 100 or 200 years ago. AniMap Plus displays over 2,300 maps showing the changing county boundaries for each of the 50 United States for every year since colonial times. Use it to "pluck & plot" places from SiteFinder, a database of over 1 million U.S. place names. Barbara Leak leads the study group. Visitors are welcome. Contact: [www.pcgs.pcgenes.com/](http://www.pcgs.pcgenes.com/)

### ONGOING EVENTS

#### **Central Library Programs**

The Sacramento Central Library has a great interest in genealogy and provides a number of resources and programs for genealogists. Programs are ongoing at the Central Library, 828 "I" St., Sacramento. For their class schedule, more information and to register, see [www.saclibrary.org](http://www.saclibrary.org)

### FHC LIBRARY UPDATE

We are fortunate to have a local FHC. They give us great support for our genealogy efforts. Let's show our appreciation for this by utilizing the Family History Center whenever we can.

The FHC Library is open Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday from 11:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Come in

and see what is new, different, and old! Everyone there is young-at-heart, cordial and very helpful.

The new Librarian has a well-known face, if you have been utilizing the library. Alice Morrow is now the Librarian with the assistance of Judy Williams' very happy smile!

This month there are no new books processed to be reported.

### **GENIE RESOURCES**

In each of our monthly newsletters, we will be presenting available sources of genealogical information. These may be local research locations, websites, webinars, places to write or visit, etc. If you have a source that you would like to share, please contact our Newsletter Editor, Carol Pirtle, at [cpirtledirect@gmail.com](mailto:cpirtledirect@gmail.com) or phone her at (530) 644-4748. Any suggestions or requests will be greatly appreciated.

### **WHY ISN'T IT FREE?**

Some people have questioned the idea of placing public domain data online and charging for access to that information, as is done by Ancestry.com, Footnote.com, FindMyPast, WorldVital Records, and others. One person claimed that it is illegal to charge for access to public domain data, and another reader stated that the online sites are "violating my constitutional rights to view the census."

Sorry, folks, but that simply isn't true.

Indeed, in the U.S. and Canada, governmental records are public domain, available free of charge to those who can travel to the repositories where the original records are stored. Many private records, such as church records, may not be public domain, but they are also often available at no charge if one can travel to view them. When travel is not an option, a trip to a local library may suffice if that library has microfilms of the original records that patrons can view for free. (For this article, I will ignore the costs of sending a filming crew to a

repository to make the microfilms and the expenses of reproducing and distributing microfilms. However, those expenses are not trivial.)

Given the fact that the records are already available "free of charge," one might question the need to pay \$50 or \$100 or more per year to access the same records on a subscription service such as Footnote.com, Ancestry.com, Origins.net, NewEnglandAncestors.org, and other genealogy web sites.

First of all, the idea that the records are available "free" is only true for those who live near the repository that houses the original records or photocopies of the records and can walk to that repository. If you have to travel some distance to a library that houses the records you seek, you will incur travel expenses. Even a trip to a library a few miles away will incur costs for gasoline and perhaps for parking. Such records are not truly "free."

While perhaps the visitor doesn't pay anything to view records in books or in microfilms, that library had to pay someone for the books, the microfilm, the microfilm reader, the building, the employees, heat, electricity, etc. The library may not charge the patron to look at the microfilms, but the process certainly is not free. Information in a library is never really free. Someone always pays, usually the taxpayers.

A longer trip will incur airfare or automobile expenses, along with hotel rooms and meals. I can go to Salt Lake City to view the "free" records available at the Family History Library. The last time I made that trip, it certainly was not "free."

A three-day trip to a distant repository can easily cost \$500 or more. If I want to go back to the "old country" to look at records, expenses will be much higher, of course. For many who do not live near major genealogy libraries, this quickly changes the concept of "free."

From the genealogist's viewpoint, accessing records published on the Internet greatly increases convenience and reduces travel expenses. From the publisher's viewpoint, the financial realities of publishing on the web add up rather quickly when

one looks at the expenses involved with acquiring, digitizing, and electronically publishing records of interest to genealogists. Such an effort is not cheap.

To be sure, there are hundreds of web pages available today at no charge containing transcribed records from a variety of sources. RootsWeb has many such pages, as do freebmd.org.uk, genuki.org.uk, Find-A-Grave, hundreds of local society web sites, and many others. These web sites contain records transcribed by volunteers, and someone pays for the web servers, often without passing those expenses on to users. In most cases, the expenses are not huge, and advertising can help pay the bills. A few of these web sites may even contain images of the original records. Most of these sites have databases that contain hundreds or even thousands of records. In contrast, commercial services typically provide millions of records, usually many millions. With larger databases come larger expenses.

Let's assume that a company or even a genealogy society, such as the New England Historic Genealogical Society, decides to make state vital records available on the World Wide Web. Once an agreement has been negotiated with the state, the company or society starts work. I will make some rough estimates of the expenses involved.

In our example, let's say that the project entails 25 million handwritten records that were recorded over a 50-year period. (This would be for a state with a rather small population; many states will have more records than that in a 50-year period.) Digitizing these records will require thousands of man-hours. It is doubtful if anyone can find that number of unpaid volunteers to travel to the repository, run the scanners, and enter the data. In fact, the repository may not even have room for a crew of that size.

If you own a scanner, calculate how many pages you can scan in one hour. Then calculate how long it would take you to scan twenty-five million pages. Using a scanner purchased at a local computer store, I can scan one page every 2 minutes. Assuming a 40-hour work week, I will need 20,833 weeks for this project. Clearly, hobbyist-grade scanners will never get the job done. Expensive, high-speed scanners need to be purchased. Five

thousand dollars is a typical price for high-volume scanners, and this project will probably require two or more of them. Next, operators need to be hired to sit at the scanners 40 hours a week to create the digitized images. Those operators need to be paid.

This process only makes scanned images of the records, probably the simplest and least-expensive part of the project. Somebody else then needs to make indexes as well. The process will vary, depending upon what is already available. In many cases, someone sitting at a computer will need to index each and every one of the millions of entries. Add in many more thousands of dollars in labor charges.

Now we have created images, plus indexes to those images. We need some skilled programmers to combine all the data into one huge database. Skilled database administrators' labor also is not cheap.

Once the records have been digitized and a database has been created, the real expenses begin. This database with twenty-five million high-quality images requires several terabytes of disk storage. (A terabyte equals one thousand gigabytes, the same as one million megabytes.) The purchase of a high-uptime, high-throughput disk array of that size, along with built-in backup capabilities, easily costs \$25,000 or more per terabyte. Add in the expense of a web server, a database, and the required software, and the cost soon exceeds \$100,000 for the required hardware and software to make these records available online to genealogists. This figure does not include the labor charges mentioned earlier. All this is for a small web site. High activity web sites such as Ancestry.com will cost much, much more.

Next, we need very high-speed connections to connect the hardware to the Internet so that we can serve 100 or more simultaneous users who wish to view these large graphics files. A single T-1 line is the minimum requirement for 20 or 30 simultaneous users, but most commercial web servers today are connected by multiple OC-3 connections. (I'll skip the technical discussion of T-1 and OC-3 connections. Let's just say that they are very high-speed lines, capable of handling many simultaneous users. They also cost a lot of money.)

In most cases, it is cheaper to install the disk array, database server, and web server at a commercial web hosting service than to build one's own data center. Hosting fees for a high-usage database start at \$1,000 a month and quickly go up. Way up. Commercial genealogy companies with lots of users typically pay \$10,000 or more per month in hosting fees. This may seem high, but it is still much less expensive than building your own data center.

The bottom line is clear to anyone with a calculator: more than a quarter million dollars is easily expended to make high-quality original source records available to genealogists. Following that cost are monthly fees to keep this data available.

The result is a database in which one can search for a name, find it, double-click on the entry, and then see an image of the original record. In other words, primary source records are visible to anyone in Virginia or California or Australia or anywhere else in the world with no travel expenses required.

Of course, I have ignored many other expenses. When a popular database of this sort is placed online, users will have questions. Someone needs to answer those questions; so, we must create a customer service department. In the case of a society, a few members might step forward to answer questions. In the case of Ancestry.com, it means several hundred employees and a large building with telephones, computers, and high-speed data connections. Again, you can guess at the expenses.

Where did this money come from?

Yes, it would be nice to provide genealogy information online at no cost. However, if you are the person who wishes to provide that information, a few minutes with a calculator will quickly bring you back to reality.

I like to use the analogy of water. Water is free. If I wish, I can obtain all the water I want at no charge. All I have to do is go to where the water is located. I can leave buckets on the lawn when it rains to obtain free water. If that is insufficient to meet my needs, I can walk to the nearest river or lake with buckets, scoop up all the water I want, and carry it

home at no charge. Our ancestors did that centuries ago, and we can still do that today if we want. Nothing has changed. Water is still free.

However, if we want the convenience of having water delivered to our homes, we will incur expenses. Our ancestors did not have this option.

Someone paid to purchase large pumps, and they paid for the pipes to be buried underground to connect our house to the water mains. The entire construction effort cost many thousands of dollars. In addition, employees were hired to maintain the pumps and the pipes to make sure everything continues to work correctly. As a result, those who consume the water must pay a fee. Yes, the water is free; but, the pipes, the pumps, and the employees are not. Most all urban home owners today pay a water bill. We pay for the convenience of home delivery. Those who do not want to pay the delivery fee could elect to have the water shut off and then obtain free water in the same manner that our ancestors did.

In my mind, public domain information is the same. The information is free, always has been free, and probably always will be free. I can still obtain information today at no charge in the same manner I always have: by going to the source records and looking at them in person. If I want to go to the location where the information is located, I can do so at no charge, assuming I am willing to walk. If the information is located hundreds or thousands of miles away, I may encounter significant travel expenses, but the information itself remains free of charge.

HOWEVER, if I want someone to conveniently deliver the information to my home at any hour of the day or night that I might want it, I have to pay for "the pipes" and for the labor of those who provide that convenient access. We might consider the information to still be free, but the "pipes" (the servers, the high-speed data connections, the data centers, and the air conditioning to keep the equipment cooled, etc.) are not free, nor is all the labor of the hundreds of people who are involved in delivering that information to me. Those who invest millions of dollars in high-speed data "pipes" and

all the associated labor certainly do deserve fair compensation for their investments.

Yes, the data was free once, and it is still free today. As always, I still may go to the location where the information is stored and, in most cases, I can look at that information free of charge. Nothing has changed. The only significant change is that we all now have another option: we can still do things the old way at no charge, or we may use new, convenient delivery options if we are willing to pay for that convenience.

Personally, I cannot afford to travel to Maine or Texas or England or Sweden to look at every single bit of information about my ancestors that I want to see. I find it much cheaper to sit at home and pay \$10 or \$30 a month to look at that information. Heck, ten bucks won't even pay for the shuttle bus to the airport, much less airline tickets, hotels, restaurant meals, and other required expenses to look at the "free" records.

The only practical method of placing large amounts of genealogy information on the web is to have someone pay the expenses of acquiring, digitizing, and providing the data. In most cases, this means that the customers who benefit will pay. If the genealogy public does not wish to pay the expenses of "piping" the information to our homes, we can always do what all the genealogists of yesteryear used to do: travel to the repositories where the documents are kept.

As for me, I will choose the cheaper option and pay a modest fee for someone to "pipe" the information directly to my home.

Provided by [Dick Eastman](http://blog.eogn.com/eastmans_online_genealogy/2009/12/why-isnt-it-free.html#more) on December 31, 2009 [http://blog.eogn.com/eastmans\\_online\\_genealogy/2009/12/why-isnt-it-free.html#more](http://blog.eogn.com/eastmans_online_genealogy/2009/12/why-isnt-it-free.html#more) in [Genealogy Basics](#).

### **COMMENTS FROM THE EDITOR**

Well, here you have it; my solo flight doing the Roots and Gold Dust Genealogical Society Newsletter. I have to give a special "Thank You" to Paul Hodel for all of his wise, efficient, and helpful assistance when he handed over this job. He had

held this position since October 2008. His shoes are larger than mine, so they will be difficult to fill!

I also want to express my appreciation to Luana, Carlyn, Carol Sexton and Cathy for getting the information that I needed to get this newsletter out to all of our special membership on time.

I realize the information in this newsletter is a little out-of-the ordinary; but I know many members find it frustrating, like me, when they go onto a website that says, "Free" and then find it is only "Free" for 3 days! I guess we now know that the charges are justified!

### **REGRETFUL NEWS**

Our new elected President, Richard Wilson, has had to step down from being our president. Our 2014 Executive Board is working on finding someone to fill that vacancy.

### **NEED OF VOLUNTEERS**

- Refreshment committee
- Greeters
- Other assistance with special committees

If you are willing to step out of your comfort zone to have fun, please contact a Board member for further information.

### **Looking forward to seeing you again at our February 18, 2014 Meeting.**

### **Members signed up for refreshments are:**

Carol Sexton will be bringing drinks and I, Carol Pirtle, will be bringing in snacks!

No, we won't be Caroling!!