

Next GSOC Meeting

April 12, 2014



The speaker for our April meeting will be Margaret Harris who will present the program, ***Social Networking for Genealogy***. There will be handouts.

Margaret is a native of the local area and has twice served as president of the Genealogical Society of Okaloosa County. She currently teaches "Beyond Basic Genealogy" at the Center for Lifelong Learning and serves as a staff member at the Fort Walton Beach Family History Center. Her past activities include articles written for the Alabama Genealogical Society, presentations at libraries from Pensacola to Panama City, programs for Panhandle genealogical societies, and service on the board of the Florida Genealogical Society.

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GSOC Meeting Minutes for March

March 8, 2014

Heritage Museum of Northwest Florida
Pat Pruett, Recording Secretary

The meeting was called to order by President Jim Young, at 10:00 AM. He welcomed 19 members and 10 guests. Other officers present were, 1st Vice President Del Lessard, 2nd Vice President Sue Basch, Treasurer, Bob Basch, Recording Secretary Pat Pruett and Corresponding Secretary Carl Laws.

Members and guests signed in and received a ticket for the door prize drawing. Del Lessard had a guest draw a ticket for the door prize, which was a book, and the winner was also one of our visitors.

For the benefit of visitors, Jim explained that the Blue Box collection that is taken up at each meeting by our treasurer is in support of the genealogy departments of our local libraries, as well as for our journal expenses.

President Jim asked for a motion to accept the minutes from the February meeting as published in our March Newsletter. Motion was made by Donna Elliott and seconded by Del Lessard to accept them and the motion was passed.

President Jim said the business meeting would be short to accommodate our program. He then called for the officers' reports.

Officers Reports:

1st VP/Programs –Del Lessard said that Mr. Carl Rove, will present a program in May on "Finding Female Ancestors" and that he is working on obtaining a speaker whose subject will concern military records and another speaker concerning the immigration routes by the military into this area.

Del took this opportunity to announce that the large screen TV in use today was recently donated to the Heritage Museum by our President Jim Young of behalf of the GSOC.

2nd VP/Membership – Sue Basch said we now have sixty-nine members and mentioned that she plans to contact members who have not paid dues so far for this year.

After March, unpaid members will be dropped from the current list and will not receive notification of meetings. She is working on a project to list which surnames our members are researching. She then passed out applications to guests. Sue, also said, that our personal information is kept strictly within our organization.

Treasurer's Report – Bob Basch stated that our bank account is still improving. We now have a checkbook balance of \$2178.86 and only one outstanding bill.

Recording Secretary Pat Pruett had nothing to report.

Corresponding Secretary Carl Laws said several publications that we have received are on display on the table for viewing and that our Ft. Walton Beach Library liaison, Hilma Jenus, will take them to the Ft. Walton Beach Public Library for the History/Genealogy Room.

Committee Reports:

Publicity –Val Moreland – Not present
Genealogist – Margaret Harris – Not present

Library Reports:

Hilma Jenus plans to take all of the new publications to the FWB Library this week.

Beverly Gross was not present and she has in the past requested that a replacement for her be chosen to be the representative to the Valparaiso Library.

Journal – Jim explained to our visitors that our Journal is a more scholarly accounting of local history that we compile and publish each year.

Newsletter/Website: Jim informed those present that he maintains the GSOC Newsletter and Website. The GSOC website has minutes and newsletters from about 2009 available to view.

Old Business: None

New Business: None

Announcements:

Upcoming Events of Interest:

1. The Bay County Genealogy Society will hold a seminar on 22 March, with Mr. Dick Eastman as speaker. Ken and Donna Elliott have offered to car pool with those interested in attending. Call Donna at 850-678-1739.
2. The Florida State Genealogical Society will hold their annual conference in Gainesville 28 –30 March. This is a very big event with a well-known keynote speaker and nineteen other speakers who will present programs. For more information, look on their website.
3. On March 14th the Heritage Museum will sponsor another lunch and lecture. Check their website.
4. The Heritage Museum will hold their annual Saturday in the Park on 26 April this year.
5. West Florida Genealogy Society holds its meetings on the first Saturday of each month in Pensacola. Check their website.

Lunch Plans: Del announced that lunch today will be at the Dockside restaurant and took a count of eight people who will attend.



**Mrs. Dorothy Jones Burdick
and Del Lessard, GSOC 1st VP for Programs**

There being no more business, the meeting was turned over to Del and he introduced our speaker for today, Mrs. Dorothy Jones Burdick, Regent of the Choctawhatchee Bay Chapter of the DAR, Ft. Walton Beach. She gave a very informative program on the use of the DAR database for genealogy research. The DAR has a facility in Washington, DC, which contain a DAR Museum, Library and Americana Collection among many other resources. Those of us who are not familiar with this wealth of information for genealogy research will certainly benefit from her lecture today.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:25.

"Is she buried there, and what name was she buried under?"

Surveyors last month discovered dozens of neat, tight rows of coffins just feet below the ground at the University of Mississippi Medical Center in Jackson. There were stories that there was a cemetery somewhere on the grounds of the medical center that today sits where the Mississippi State Lunatic Asylum once stood. But the location of the cemetery was lost to history.

The medical center and the Mississippi State University anthropology department formed a team led by Prof. Nicholas Hermann that was tasked with removing the remains for testing. Almost immediately, the team determined the bodies were connected to the asylum, which opened on the grounds in 1855.

A number of factors, from historical records to the layout of the coffins, led Hermann to believe this was just the beginning of the find. When he found out the medical center was planning on building several large buildings on the site, he said: "I think you are going to have a lot of graves."

Part of his assessment hinged on history. The asylum drew residents from across the state, people who were committed for a variety of ailments and many were institutionalized for years. When residents died, few were claimed since many families could not afford to retrieve and transport the bodies. As a result, most were buried in unmarked graves in the asylum cemetery. Without headstones and markings to denote the outlines of the cemetery, it was swallowed up by time.

Ground-penetrating radar was used to survey the property. "It was mind-blowing," officials said. The radar survey showed hundreds and hundreds of coffin-like outlines in tight rows. As it turned out there were 800 to 1,000 graves on the southern piece of property, and another 1,000 graves on the north side of the property.

Construction plans have been put on hold. For now, the medical center will leave the dead where they lie and look for alternatives for the expansion.

As news of the find made headlines, people across the country reached out to the medical center. The questions, in many cases, were the same: Can you tell me if my family member is buried there?

That's the question Jannie White posed when she stumbled upon the news of the unmarked graveyard at the medical center. White has spent years researching her family history, trying to piece together the path her family had taken from Mississippi north. She grew up hearing stories about a great-grandmother who had been institutionalized at the asylum. The details were sketchy, and nobody was sure where the woman was buried or even what name she was buried under. "I guess you would call it a rumor in the family. They kept saying she was in an institution a little bit outside of Jackson," White said in a telephone call from her Detroit-area home.

Ms. White started making phone calls and eventually connected with officials at the medical center. "I asked whether they could tell me if she was buried there, and

what name she was buried under," she said. "I'm just trying to find out what our last name was then." But answers have been hard to come by. Records related to the asylum are contained in 16 bound volumes at the Mississippi state archive, Hermann said. The volumes, all handwritten, are rich with detail, chronicling the name, age, ailment and admission date for every patient from between 1855 and 1935, when the asylum was closed and relocated. "These records provide a detailed account of how many people died every year and what they died of," Hermann said. "People are very concerned about their relatives, and that's a driving factor," he said.



It will be a years-long project that requires digitizing the records as well as testing DNA, primarily from teeth of the remains. Those results, Hermann says, will reveal details about where the person grew up regionally. With that information combined with the records, Hermann and others believe it's possible to link the dead with the living.

Knowing where the dead came from and what they died of will help shed light on the history and treatment of mental health conditions across the state of Mississippi in the late 1800s and early 1900s, Hermann said. With a limited budget and less than a dozen people on the research team, the answers are likely years away.

Publications Recently Received By the GSOC

Pea River Trails, Enterprise AL, Volume 38, No. 4

The Searcher, Burbank CA- Spring 2014 Volume 51, No. 2

The Butler County Historical & Genealogical Society Quarterly, Greenville AL - January 2014 Volume 50, No. 1

Genealogical Gazette, Albany GA - February 2014 Volume 32, No. 1

Montgomery Genealogical Society Journal, Montgomery AL - July - December 2013 Volume 20, No. 2

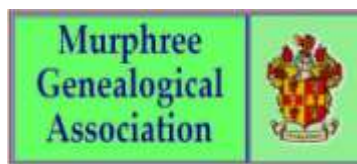
Kinfolks, Lake Charles LA - March 2014 Volume 38, No. 1

Yakima Valley Genealogical Society, Union Gap WA - March 2013 Volume 46, No. 1

THE MURPHREE GENEALOGICAL ASSOCIATION DATABASE

Many GSOC Surnames are Included

By Jim Young



The national Murphree Genealogical Association (MGA) was organized in October, 1963. It is dedicated to furthering research on the ancestry

and descendants of Daniel Murphree (ca 1715-1771) and his wife Sarah Dempsey Murphree (abt 1721 - ?), both born in North Carolina. They had 5 daughters and 8 sons.

Six of Daniel and Sarah's sons fought in the Revolutionary War: Daniel (Jr.), John, William, Levi, James, and David. Daniel (Jr.) was killed in the war in 1781.

Many descendants of Daniel and Sarah moved on to South Carolina, then spread west to Tennessee, then south to Alabama (Murphree's Valley in Blount County, for example), further west to Mississippi, and on and on.

The MGA Genealogist recently provided a copy of the MGA database in a form suitable for posting on the MGA website. It is now possible to download the complete database and its associated index to personal computers.

The database file itself is in Microsoft Word format and consists of 3,587 pages (in 10 point *Times* font). The index is another Microsoft Word file and it consists of 4,870 surnames in 552 two-column pages (10 point *Times* font).

Each surname listed in the index is followed by a list of given names with that surname. The given names each have a reference number which can be looked up in the database file itself to see the information about that person.

Out of curiosity, I checked the surnames of current GSOC members to see if any of them were in the MGA index. Many were. However, this obviously doesn't mean necessarily that the GSOC member with that surname is related to the person(s) with that surname in the MGA index. It would be interesting if they are!

The GSOC surnames that are also listed in the MGA index are: **Bishop, Blair, Brown, Bryan, Cox, Davis, Edge, Elliott, Flanagan, Gross, Harris, Hicks, Howard, Laws, Long, McDonald, Manis, Maze, Moreland, Nagel, Peterson, Pruett, Stiles, Strickland, Sutherland, Wagner, and Young.**

The MGA database is available from the MGA website which is at www.murphree.us

The two files which need to be downloaded are fairly large but seem to download easily. Opening the files in Microsoft Word also goes smoothly but takes a little time due to their size. To use the system, download both files and open them. Using the "Find" capability in Word, search the index for the surname of interest. If you find a given name you'd like to see in the database, make a note of the reference number and "Find" that number in the database file.



Civil War Sesquicentennial

Selected Highlights of April 1864

<http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/april-1864-civil-war.htm>

April 1864 saw the American Civil War move into its fourth year. The improved weather meant that the month saw action on all the fronts. April 1864 witnessed another controversial incident in the war at Fort Pillow in Tennessee (April 12th).

April 2nd: The improving weather resulted in action throughout all of the theatre of war.

April 8th: The Senate passed a joint resolution by 38 to 6 to abolish slavery. It also approved of the 13th Amendment to the Constitution.

Union forces suffered a defeat at Sabine Cross Roads. They lost 113 killed, 581 wounded and 1541 missing or captured. The South suffered total losses of 1000 men.

April 9th: Grant sent orders to Meade, commander of the Army of the Potomac. Meade's army had to follow Lee's Army of Northern Virginia wherever it went. Grant made it plain that the destruction of Lee's army was his top priority. "Wherever Lee goes, there you will head also."

April 11th: Union troops involved at Sabine Cross Roads and Pleasant Bank continue with their withdrawal from the Red River region.

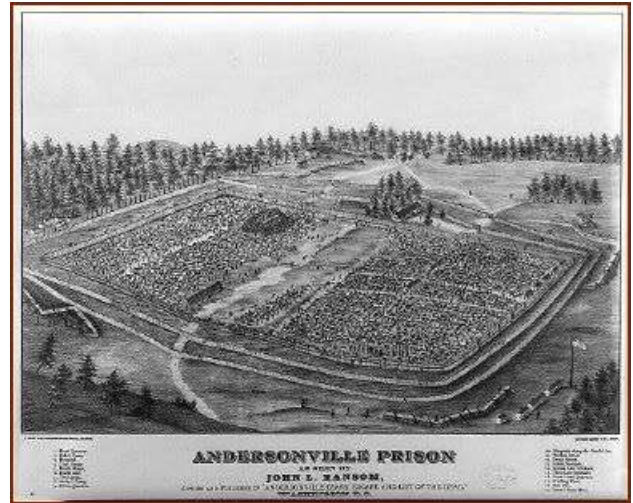
April 12th: An attack by Confederate cavalry at Fort Pillow, Tennessee, became one of the most controversial incidents of the war. Fort Pillow was held by 557 Union troops, including 262 African-American troops. Confederate cavalry, commanded



by Bedford Forrest, attacked and over-whelmed the fort. It was what happened next that caused controversy. Of the 557 defenders, 231 were killed and 100 wounded. A high percentage of the deaths were African-American soldiers. In the post-war Joint Committee on the Conduct of the War it was claimed by those who survived that former slaves were specifically picked out by Forrest's men after the fort had surrendered – a claim he denied. Forrest claimed that the fort's commander carried on fighting even after it was obvious that the fort would fall.

However, even by the standards of the American Civil War, casualties were high.

April 16th: A report released by the Union government showed that 146,634 Confederate prisoners had been captured since the beginning of the war.



April 17th: General Grant refused any more prisoner exchanges. From a military point of view this was an obvious move as it reduced even further potential Confederate military reserves. However, the decision also condemned many Union men held as prisoners to appalling conditions. The South could barely feed itself, let alone prisoners-of-war.

April 20th: A sea-based attack on Fort William, near Plymouth, North Carolina, was a resounding success for the Confederates. Not built to withstand a sea attack, the fort quickly surrendered with the capture of 2,800 men. More important, 200 tons of anthracite coal was also taken.

April 22nd: Jefferson Davis sent out an order to Lieutenant General Polk that any captured African-American soldier who turned out to be an escaped slave had to be held until recovered by his owner.

April 26th: The loss of Fort William prompted Grant to pull out of Plymouth, North Carolina. In fact, Grant did not believe that the area had any strategic importance, so it was not worth defending.

April 27th: Grant issued his orders for a spring offensive. The Army of the Potomac was to attack the Army of Northern Virginia head on. The Army of the James was to attack Richmond from the South. For Grant a coordinated and cohesive attack on the South's main fighting force was the start of the finish of the civil war. Grant believed that if his plan worked, the war would be over. He was not to know that on the same day Jefferson Davis sent Jacob Thompson to Canada to unofficially put out peace feelers for an end to the war.

April 30th: Davis sent out an order that any captured slave had to be returned to his owner.

The Gold Star Pilgrimages 1930 – 1933

Compiled by Jim Young from numerous Internet sources

On May 6, 1930, the S.S. *America* steamed out of Pier 4 from Hoboken, New Jersey, with 231 women aboard, all guests of the U.S. Government. With flags flying, band and drum corps playing, and hundreds of friends and relatives lining the pier to wave them off, this inaugural party of Gold Star Pilgrims embarked on their long-awaited maiden voyage to Europe.

From the same pier in 1917 and 1918, thousands of soldiers attached to the American Expeditionary Forces had sailed to participate in the Great War raging in Europe. By the time of the armistice, there would be more than 75,000 American war dead, and of those, approximately 31,000 would forever be buried in U.S. cemeteries overseas. The controversial decision to leave the deceased in foreign soil was both political and practical, but the unforeseen result was the legacy of the Gold Star Pilgrimages.



The U.S. entered World War I in April 1917 and as soon as our forces landed in France in June, the problem of caring for the dead became an immediate concern. In August 1917, War Department General Order 104 authorized the organization of a Graves Registration Service (GRS). The first GRS unit reached France on October 31, 1917.



At the time of the Armistice there were approximately 2,400 places in Europe where American dead lay temporarily buried. The original monuments—crude, improvised, and hastily built of field stones and wood by well-meaning survivors—soon became neglected in farmers' fields. This picture is

of some of the graves in Flanders Fields.

The GRS was not responsible for the original burial. The individual combat units had the responsibility of burying the dead as soon as possible, but the GRS eventually moved the bodies to American military cemeteries in Europe. France, in particular, asked that the burial sites be consolidated.

Within the United States, powerful figures—including former president Theodore Roosevelt, General Pershing and much of the military leadership—argued that burying servicemen at the battlefield with their fallen comrades

offered the greatest glory. Roosevelt and his wife, Edith, objected when told their son's remains would be brought home.

The Roosevelt's objection received widespread publicity, but the majority of Americans found that Roosevelt's philosophy of sacrifice was too great to bear and 70 percent chose to have their loved ones returned to the United States for burial. One mother from Brooklyn wrote: "My son sacrificed his life to America's call, and now you *must* as a duty of yours bring my son back to me." Another begged for her son's return in terms that expressed her anguish: "Please send his body home to us as soon as you can and tell me...how bad he was hurt and if he had a chance to say any thing before he died oh if I could of bin with him."

In October 1919 a compromise was forged. The War Department announced that it would survey each of the fallen soldiers' next of kin. They could choose to bring home remains or have them buried in newly created American military cemeteries in Europe. Ballots were sent to nearly 80,000 families, and in kitchens and living rooms across the country, the bereaved sat down to decide how best to honor their loved ones.

The decision to leave their loved ones overseas came at a high price for families. For them there would be no funeral service, no grave site nearby, nothing left to venerate, and no closure or resolution so necessary in the grieving process.

In late 1920, the French yielded to American pressure and lifted their ban on the return of bodies. The United States spent the next two years and more than \$30 million—\$400 million in today's dollars—recovering its dead. The remains of 46,000 soldiers were returned to the States at their families' request, while approximately another 30,000—roughly 40 percent of the total—were laid to rest in military cemeteries in Europe.

Gold Star Mothers

During the early days of World War I, families began to hang a small banner with a blue star in their front windows. A separate blue star was used to represent each person, man or woman, from that family in military service. As the war progressed and men were killed in combat or died from their wounds or disease, people began to substitute a gold star for the blue one.

The idea of the Gold Star was that the honor and glory accorded the person for his supreme sacrifice in offering for his country, the last full measure of devotion and pride of the family in this sacrifice, rather than the sense of personal loss which would be represented by the mourning symbols.



In June 1928, a group of mothers residing in Washington, DC, organized and incorporated a national organization to be known as American Gold Star Mothers,

Inc., a non-denominational, non-profitable and nonpolitical organization composed of women who had lost a son or daughter in World War I. There were many small groups of Gold Star Mothers functioning under local and state charters. When these groups learned of a national organization, many wished to affiliate with it and did so.

In March 1929, after much campaigning by the Gold Star Mothers association, including appearances before congressional panels, the U.S. Congress passed a law authorizing the use of government funds to pay for mothers and widows of fallen veterans to visit their loved ones buried in Europe. In their testimony these women placed great emphasis on the bond between a mother and son. The bond between wife and husband seemed almost secondary in the congressional debates. The bond between fathers and sons was barely considered--the association maintained that the maternal bond surpassed that of the paternal bond. This unprecedented program honoring the "Gold Star" mothers and widows was entrusted to the Quartermaster Corps for proper and faithful execution.

The legislation authorized the secretary of war to arrange for pilgrimages to the European cemeteries "by mothers and widows of members of military and naval forces of the United States who died in the service at any time between April 5, 1917, and July 1, 1921, and whose remains are now interred in such cemeteries." Congress later extended eligibility for pilgrimages to mothers and widows of men who died and were buried at sea or who died at sea or overseas and whose places of burial were unknown. The Office of the Quartermaster General determined that 17,389 women were eligible. The law did not contain any provision for any member of the family to make the trip except the mother or unmarried widow, nor did it permit the mother or widow being accompanied by any member of the family.

At 11:30 a.m. on Friday, 7 February 1930, in the Red Room of the White House, Mrs. Hoover, the President's wife, reached into a large silver bowl and pulled out the first of 54 envelopes. Each had in it a card bearing the name of a state or overseas territory. The first state picked was Nebraska.

Three months later, May 7, 1930, two hundred and thirty-one women boarded the Quartermaster steamer S.S.



America and left New York harbor for Europe. Over the next three years, ending with the return of the S.S. *Washington* in August 1933, some 6,693 Gold Star

mothers and war widows had made the pilgrimage abroad. No nation before or since has ever so honored the women

whose sons and husbands gave their lives in the service of their country.

The Pilgrimage

Once a mother or widow accepted the offer to go on the pilgrimage, she received carefully written and detailed instructions on what to do and what to expect. The government paid all of her expenses. As Col. Richard T. Ellis, Officer in Charge of the American Pilgrimage Gold State Mothers and Widows in Paris, wrote, the quartermaster had to develop an organization that could create and operate simultaneously as a hotel, travel, steamship, and welfare bureau. In 1930 alone, the quartermaster general provided these services for 3,653 mothers and widows between May 16 and September 22, with each trip lasting approximately two weeks. Whenever possible, the quartermaster wanted to organize the pilgrimage with as little disturbance "to the way of living of the Pilgrims as possible" and considered both physical and psychological comforts.

The age of the women created problems. Their average age was between sixty-one and sixty-five, which "reduced the speed with which almost all operations of the Pilgrimage could have been conducted." The methods of travel, the food, and



everyday living conditions were different from those to which the women were accustomed. The pilgrims visited not only Paris, a large city with all modern conveniences and medical facilities, but also small country towns where many of the graves were located. To do this in a country with different laws and customs, the quartermaster needed to obtain special permission to do things that were not customary. Where the quartermaster general thought it would not be possible to get such permission, they tried to make such adjustments and compromises that would least disturb the women's morale. The majority of the woman did not speak French, and provisions had to be made for bilingual field personnel. The nature of the visit also presented problems. Col. Ellis wrote that the trip "was in no sense a holiday or a pleasure trip but on the other hand it was necessary to prevent over-emphasis of the sentimental side in order to prevent morbidness or hysteria."

Before the women left home, the quartermaster sent each a list of what to pack and gave detailed travel arrangements. The War Department warned the women to wear "somewhat heavier clothing" to protect them against "the cold and dampness." Because of the lack of laundry facilities, the quartermaster urged them to pack "sufficient underwear, nightgowns, stockings, and handkerchiefs." The travel arrangements included dates and times of travel as well as berth, seat, or room number for the ship, trains, and hotel rooms.

Georgia McCleskey didn't usually carry dirt in her suitcase when she traveled. But, on a steamy July afternoon in 1930, she climbed aboard a train in Fort Worth, Texas with both dirt and flower seeds tucked into her luggage. Before she left home, she dug up the dirt from a flower bed that her son Joe used to tend. She didn't mind giving up the space in her suitcase for her unusual cargo because she was on a mission. Her mission was to plant the seeds, along with the soil, on her son's grave in France. Joe McCleskey, an Army private, died in battle on 1 November 1918, just ten days before the Armistice. Georgia wasn't the only woman carrying dirt in her luggage. Mary Crouch had a dozen jonquil bulbs and a box of dirt in her suitcase, too. The jonquils always bloomed on her son Hutt's birthday. Mary wanted the flowers to bloom again on Hutt's grave.

Each pilgrim began her journey by traveling to New York City to meet with her group. Once in New York City, the majority of the Gold Star mothers enjoyed staying in grand accommodations like the Astoria Hotel or Hotel Pennsylvania. Mrs. Agnes Fraas remarked in a letter dated July 14, 1931, "This is a lovely hotel and we have the best of everything." Similar sentiments were expressed about the accommodations aboard the transport vessels. Mrs. Conrad Neth expresses her pleasure in her quarters aboard the *SS American* enroute to Paris in on August 12, 1931, "We have a nice room just like in a house: a rug on the floor, 2 chairs, 2 beds, bath room, electric fan and lights."

While the early days of the pilgrimage were dedicated to the tourism and comfort of the mothers, memorials for soldiers and sailors spanned the entire length of the journey. Mrs. Neth recollected in her letter dated August 16, 1932, "At 2:30 we went on dock for a memorial service for the boys that were buried at sea. There was one Mother. She dropped the wreath for her son." Although the trip continued to include sightseeing ventures, memorial services became the primary activity for the pilgrims. After arriving in Paris, Mrs. Neth commented on August 23, 1931, about another memorial service attended by the mothers, "We all left by buss for a memorial service for the French and our oldest mother 77 years old layed the wreath on the unknown grave and one was layed for those berried at sea. There was a great crowd gathered there and we marched 2 by 2 and lined up. It was a sad sight."

Although general ceremonies were held throughout the pilgrimage, both Mrs. Fraas and Mrs. Neth recounted the personal experience of visiting their sons' gravesites. Mrs. Fraas noted that on July 28, 1931, the mothers "Had lunch at the hostess house than we were given a wreath of beautiful flowers to place on our beloveds grave." The group arrived at the St. Mihiel American Cemetery where Mrs. Fraas found her son Frank's grave and placed the wreath provided at the hostess house. Later she mentioned an inscription at the cemetery: "Their devotion their valor and their sacrifice will live forever in the hearts of their grateful country men Sept. 12-18... He sleeps for from his own in the sweet land of France St. Mihiel Cemetery."

Unlike Mrs. Fraas, Mrs. Neth did not have a grave to locate; her son, Carl Musbach, was included in the Tablets

of the Missing at Aisne-Marne American Cemetery. Similar to Mrs. Fraas' experience, Mrs. Neth received a wreath to place on a grave. On August 26, 1931, discussed the placing of the wreath, "Each of us got 2 flags one French and one USA then each of us was given a large wreath to Place on a Grave. Some found there boys grave and some were unknown. So the unknown mothers placed a wreath on a Unknown grave saying it mite be my boy."

The Quartermaster assigned a letter of the alphabet to each party. Katherine Holley, an African American, was assigned to Party Q, the Oise-Aisne group, which was composed of African American women. The white and African American women had the same itineraries; however, they were segregated. In many instances the accommodations were different. For example, white women traveled on luxury liners; African American women, in commercial steamers. Katherine Holley sailed from New York on August 16 on the *American Merchant*. Col. Benjamin O. Davis was the officer in charge and there were two nurses and a hostess who also accompanied the party.

Colonel Ellis, along with a staff of ten that included two nurses, met the ship when it docked at Cherbourg on August 25. The War Department had made special arrangements with the French authorities to get the women off the boats as quickly as possible. Although French law required that baggage be checked carefully, the director general of Customs issued instructions that reduced the customs formalities to a minimum.

The Operations Division worked with the International Dining and Sleeping Car Co. to provide meals for the women on their way to Paris. To avoid the congestion of the St. Lazare Station, special arrangements were made for the trains to arrive at Les Invalides, which was usually reserved for state occasions. The executive officer and his staff, nurses, and interpreters met the party at Les Invalides.



The women in this group stayed at the Hotel Imperator. The accommodations consisted of double rooms with twin beds and a bath. Traditionally, the police controlled registration at hotels in France and throughout Europe. Rather than have each woman provide the necessary information to the police, the Quartermaster's Office was permitted to submit the forms containing the names and room assignments of each woman as well as home address, date of birth, nationality, occupation, and the authority and purpose of the visit. Each party selected an "honor pilgrim," who laid a wreath on the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier at the Arc de Triomphe. Mrs. Louise Kimbro, the mother of Martin Kimbro, was Party Q's honor pilgrim. The Ministry of Pensions arranged with the Federation of Veterans Societies in France to have

representatives at each wreath laying. Following the wreath laying the women had tea and reception at the Restaurant Laurent at the other end of the Champs Elysees. Aside from a trip to Fontainebleau, the women were free to see Paris, or be with their thoughts, until they left for the cemetery on the morning of August 29.

On the twenty-ninth, the party left at 8 a.m. for Soissons via La Forte, with a rest stop at Hotel de la Terrassee at the Chateau Thierry, where they lunched at the Hostellerie du Bonhomme. At Soissons the party had dinner and spent the night at the Lion Rouge hotel. The itinerary for August 30 notes the women were to have "breakfast at the hotel." Even this apparently simple part of the day had required negotiations between the War Department and the French hotels. To provide an American breakfast, the hotel had to add kitchen staff. After negotiating with the seven hotels, the hotels and quartermaster agreed on a price per pilgrim per day.

The same day, the women visited Chateau Thierry. In the afternoon, they saw Belleau Wood, Aisne Marne Cemetery, Monument Hill 204, and the grave of Quentin Roosevelt (Theodore Roosevelt's son). Before returning to Soissons for dinner, the women had tea at the Oise-Aisne Cemetery.

The towns near the Meuse-Argonne, Oise-Aisne, and St. Mihiel cemeteries did not have restrooms or cafes that could efficiently serve the groups. The quartermaster therefore built, within ninety days, rest houses at each of these cemeteries. The rest houses had tables, comfortable chairs, and restrooms as well as kitchen facilities. Each rest house had a shady porch for the hot weather and a large, open fireplace for the cooler days.

On the morning of August 31 they visited the Oise-Aisne cemetery. The quartermaster very carefully planned the reception at the cemeteries. To make the visit as personal as possible, they did not permit any ceremonies but focused on each woman's visit. The cemetery superintendent gave each pilgrim a grave locator card, and cemetery staff guided each woman to the grave. The guide then gave the woman flowers or a wreath to put on the grave and took a photograph.

On September 1 the women were free to sightsee or visit the cemetery. After lunch at the hotel, they left for Reims where they spent the night at the Hotel Bristol Crystal. The following day they toured the cathedral as well as the Fort de la Pompelle. After lunch the party left for Compiègne, where they spent the night.

The party arrived back in Paris the next day around 6 p.m. They had dinner at the hotel and spent the rest of their time in Paris visiting such sites as the Louvre, Versailles, Sacre Couer, Notre Dame, and Napoleon's Tomb and took a nighttime tour of the city. Although the purpose of the trip was serious, the women were still permitted time to see and enjoy Paris.

On September 7 Katherine Holley and her party sailed for home on the *American Merchant*. Ten days later, on September 16, they arrived at the port of New York and then returned to their homes.

The Gold Star Pilgrimage provided the chance for 6,693 women who might otherwise not have been able to visit their loved ones' graves to travel to France.



**Mrs. Hannah Snidow, age 66,
from Willamette, Oregon
Mother of:**

**George M. Snidow, Private, U.S. Marine Corps.
6th USMC Regiment, 2nd Division
Died: September 15, 1918.
Buried at Plot D, Row 13, Grave 25,
St. Mihiel American Cemetery, Thiaucourt, France**

For Genealogists

The War Department documents related to the pilgrimages are filed in the servicemen's Burial Case Files. These files are part of Record Group 92, Records of the Office of the Quartermaster General, and are housed at the National Archives in College Park, Maryland. These case files can be hefty; the file for Missouri soldier Wilford A. Fair contains 200 pages.

The documents concerning the Gold Star Mothers are filled with fascinating and occasionally heart-wrenching details. The files contain many, many pieces of correspondence regarding the women's current circumstances, eligibility for the trip, itineraries, and many family clues including names, birth, death, and marriage dates, and addresses. Many of the women wrote sorrowful letters about their lost sons and husbands and how they wished they could go on the trip, but poor health and other obligations prevented them from going.

After mining the rich Burial Case Files, check historical newspapers on Ancestry.com. The pilgrimages were big news stories and many local papers interviewed women both before and after their trips. A number of communities sponsored receptions, and even parades, as send-offs for the women. The first round of trips in 1930 generated the most press, although the trips in subsequent years still received some coverage as well.

Don't forget to check ship passenger lists on Ancestry.com. The pilgrims traveled by ship and you'll find clusters of women with their passports identified as "Gold Star Passports."

In December of 1929 the War Department sent a list of women eligible to make the trip to Congress. This list was printed as the List of Mothers and Widows of American Soldiers, Sailors, and Marines Entitled to Make a Pilgrimage to War Cemeteries in Europe. You can find an index of this document on Ancestry.com. Not every Gold Star woman is in this index, though, as several thousand more women were later added to the eligibility list.

Events, Groups, and Sites of GSOC Interest

West Florida Genealogical Society April 5, 2014

West Florida Genealogy Library, 5740 N. 9th Ave, Pensacola, FL

"The Ties That Bond"

The program will be a video of a webinar presented by Judy Bond in February for Legacy Family Tree. Bonds have been used in a variety of circumstances throughout history and can provide information about family members and their community associates. Types of bonds covered include marriage, appearance, administrator, executor, guardian, appeal, special, peace, forthcoming, attachment and freedom.

Members and guests are welcome to attend. Refreshments available at 9:45. Meeting begins at 10:00. Contact Charlotte Schipman 850-477-7166 cschipman@mac.com

Heritage Museum of Northwest Florida Friday, April 11 at 12:00 Noon

115 Westview Ave., Valparaiso, FL 32580

History Sandwiched-In free lecture, "Creek by Blood"

Enjoy a free lunch-time lecture presented by Nathan Chesser, author of "Creek by Blood". Chesser will exhibit his collection of Native American artifacts and talk about the history of the Indian Trading System and how it affected the people that lived in our local area, including Rocky Bayou and North Okaloosa's Oak Grove.

Bring a sandwich and take your lunch break at this informal lunchtime education program. Please call to reserve your seat: (850) 678-2615

DESTIN LIBRARY

TWO-PART FAMILY HISTORY WORKSHOP 5:30 – 7:30 PM, TUESDAY APRIL 8TH AND APRIL 15TH

"Who's in your family tree?" Free for valid library card holders from any Okaloosa County Public Library. Space is limited to 18 participants and is on a first-come, first-served basis. Call 850-837-8572 for reservations.

Instructors are Elders Simmons and Nelson and will feature hands-on use of the Family Search Website from Family Search International, a non-profit organization affiliated with The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints.

PERSONAL GENEALOGY & FAMILY HISTORY WORKSHOP FIRST MEETING APRIL 17, 2014

Marc Strickland is starting a free Personal Genealogy and Family History Workshop which is planned to meet once a month to work on genealogy and family history. The first meeting will be on 17 April from 10:30 am to 12:30 pm in the Family History Center at the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, 339 Lake Drive, Fort Walton Beach.

For more information, contact Mr. Strickland at 850-855-0319, or email him at marcstrickland5@gmail.com

The City of Fort Walton Beach Heritage Park and Cultural Center

139 Miracle Strip Parkway, SE

Friday, April 18, 2014, 6:00 PM

"The Doolittle Raiders at Eglin Field: Preparation for History"

The Doolittle Raid during World War II is an important piece of local history. While the raid took place thousands of miles away on the other side of the Pacific Ocean, the pilots and crews of Jimmy Doolittle's B-25s trained here at Eglin Field in February and March of 1942.



Dr. Robert Kahn will tell the story of the men and planes of the raid and the training they went through to prepare for their historic mission.

Lectures take place inside the Indian Temple Mound Museum. Lectures are free and open to the public. Doors open 20 minutes prior to lecture start time. All seats are on a first come, first served basis. For information call (850) 833-9595

38th Saturday in the Park Heritage Museum of Northwest Florida

The Heritage Museum of Northwest Florida will host the 38th Saturday in the Park Heritage Festival on April 26 from 8 am to 4 pm. This free family-oriented event offers a



variety of activities for everyone. The festival begins with the Heritage 5K Run/Walk and Kids 1 Mile Fun Run at 8 am, then continues through the day with live entertainment, historic craft demonstrations, reenactors, folk artists, food vendors, and a Kid Zone with old fashioned toys, contests and more! Saturday in the Park has long supported the Museum's

mission to promote the rich heritage of Northwest Florida and will offer free Museum admission all day.

Handicap parking and shuttle service provided. This event is made possible through the generous support of the City of Valparaiso. Additional sponsors and craft vendors are welcome. For more information call 850-678-2615.



GSOC INFORMATION

Officers for 2014

President, James Young
1st Vice President (Programs), Del Lessard
2nd Vice President (Membership), Sue Basch
Treasurer, Bob Basch,
Recording Secretary, Pat Pruett
Corresponding Secretary, Carl Laws
Immediate Past President, Donna Elliott

Journal Editor, TBD; Historian, TBD
Genealogist, Margaret Harris
Publicity Chairperson, Val Moreland
Webmaster & Newsletter Editor, Jim Young

(Elected, Appointed, and Ex Officio positions)

Addresses

P.O. Box 1175, Fort Walton Beach, FL 32549-1175
Web Site: <http://www.rootswest.com/~flocgs>
Email: gsocokaloosa@yahoo.com
Newsletter Editor: youngjim@cox.net

Meetings and Membership

Regular meetings of the GSOC are held at the Heritage Museum of Northwest Florida, 115 Westview Avenue, Valparaiso, FL, at 10 AM on the second Saturday of each month. There is no admission charge and all are welcome. The meetings are usually followed by an optional Dutch treat lunch at a nearby restaurant.

Annual membership dues are \$24 for an individual and \$35 for an individual and spouse at the same address. If you would like to become a member, want to renew your membership, or want to update your membership record, please go to the GSOC web site and get one of the appropriate forms.

The Newsletter

The GSOC Newsletter is published on or before the first Friday of each month. Suggestions for articles are welcome. The editor, Jim Young, can be contacted by phone at 850 862-8642 or by email at youngjim@cox.net. Letters to the editor are welcome and may be published.

The Journal

The GSOC Journal, *A Journal of Northwest Florida*, is published once each year. The 2013 issue, Volume XXXII, Issue 102, was published and distributed in December 2013.

The Web Site

The GSOC web site is hosted by Rootsweb at:
<http://www.rootswest.com/~flocgs>

The site is updated frequently and contains information about future GSOC meetings, minutes of past meetings, copies of the newsletters, articles and items of genealogical and historical interest, and much more.



The symbol on the left is the QR code for the address of the GSOC web site. Scanning this symbol with properly equipped mobile devices will connect that device to the GSOC website.

The GSOC Publications Disk

This compact disk (CD) contains all of the books listed below in searchable PDF files. To get a copy, please send your check for \$17.00 (shipping is included) with your order information to GSOC, P.O. Box 1175, Fort Walton Beach, FL 32549-1175, and mark your envelope "Book Sales"

Volume I, Cemeteries of Okaloosa County, Florida; 24 cemeteries east of the Yellow River & north of the Shoal River and I-10

Volume II, Cemeteries of Okaloosa County, Florida; 26 cemeteries north and west of the Yellow River

Volume III, Cemeteries of Okaloosa County, Florida; 11 cemeteries south of the Shoal River

Funeral Records of Okaloosa County; Records from McLaughlin Funeral Home, Crestview, FL, from 1927 - 1984. Over 11,000 entries. Includes the names of the deceased and, when given, the names of parents. Deceased are listed alphabetically, parent's names are indexed.

Santa Rosa County Marriages, 1869-1906

Over 7,000 names with every-name index, 123 pages.

Walton County Marriages, 1895-1915

Over 10,000 names with every-name index, 165 pages.

Nostalgia

98 Years Ago in Okaloosa County:



This two-hour 28-mile \$2 trip in 1916 would cost about \$43 in 2014 dollars.

Today the one-way trip would take about 35 minutes; and, in a gas-efficient vehicle, would use about 1 gallon of gas costing \$3.50 plus other vehicle costs.

Wouldn't it be wonderful, though, to go back in time for just one trip on the Jitney down the Camp Walton road?

Advertisement Courtesy of the
Niceville, Florida – Online History Center
at <http://boggysflorida.com/Niceville/>
Created by Elisa Mitchiner (boggyshistory@yahoo.com)



The April GSOC meeting will be held on Saturday, April 12, at the Heritage Museum of Northwest Florida at 10 AM.

The speaker will be Margaret Harris who will present the program, ***Social Networking for Genealogy***.

"Whatever you know, whatever you learn – Pass it On!"

HONOR THOSE WHO CAME BEFORE

**Genealogical Society of
Okaloosa County (GSOC)**
P.O. Box 1175
Fort Walton Beach, FL 32549-1175

