

THE GSOC NEWSLETTER

THE GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY OF OKALOOSA COUNTY, FLORIDA
JULY 14, 2017

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Happy Birthday America!

Anniversary of the publication of the
declaration
of independence from Great Britain in
1776



Jim Moore
as Governor Sidney J. Catts

The Creation of Okaloosa County

Presenter: Hon. James E. Moore, Jr.

Our July program will be presented by attorney, author, and narrator James Moore. For over twenty years, Jim Moore has been volunteering to perform historical presentations for schools, civic clubs, church groups, and fraternal associations. He has been a regular presenter for the Florida Chautauqua Assembly, Defuniak Springs, The Florida League of Arts, and other associations, representing various historical personalities.

Moore has done a study into the lives of each personality he portrays and appears in the dress appropriate for the occasion. Among his "personalities" are Gen. Andrew Jackson; Gov. Sidney J. Catts, a Baptist preacher from DeFuniak Springs who made an aggressive run in 1916 to be Governor of Florida with a campaign method that forever altered political races in the state; and Lord Baden-Powell, the founder of the Boy Scout movement.

Books written by Moore include researched and humorous stories in "Walton Wanderings", true cases and legal histories in "Walton Wickedness", and a novel "Hotel DeFuniak". In addition, he is co-author of "Up, Down, In & Around Boggy Bayou", tales of around the present Niceville.

For our July program, Mr. Moore will assume the character of William "Bill" Mapoles, the "father" of Okaloosa County. Mr. Mapoles was one of the representatives to the state legislature from Walton County. He lived in Laurel Hill and he recognized the problems that people living in eastern Santa Rosa County and western Walton County had getting to their respective county seats to conduct essential business. The roads were few, unpaved, and usually bad, and there were many creeks and rivers with no bridges. Mr. Mapoles sponsored legislation which eventually resulted in the creation of Okaloosa County from the eastern part of Santa Rosa County and the Western part of Walton County.

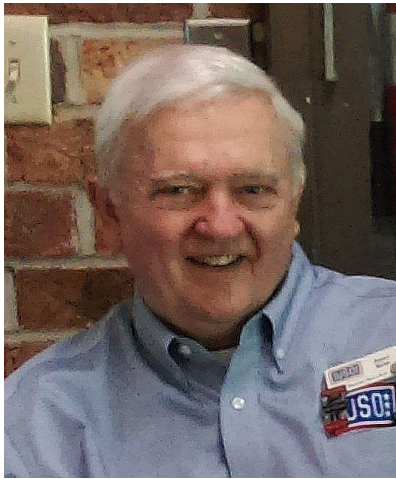
Mr. Moore graduated from Florida State University in the Class of 1957, with a B.S. degree and from the University of Florida in the Class of 1959 with a J.D. He was admitted to the Florida bar in 1959; to the U.S. District Court, Northern District of Florida in 1960; and to the U.S. Court of Appeals, Fifth Circuit, in 1968. He lives in Crestview.

August 26, 10:30 AM

Fort Walton Beach Library
185 Miracle Strip Parkway SE, Fort Walton Beach, FL.

Family Stories, Mysteries and Brick walls

Presenter: Mr. Jerry Rush



Mr. Jerry Rush

Mr. Rush has always been intrigued by the stories that families pass from generation to generation. Those stories make family history much more than just names and dates. They are also highly perishable.

As his own Rush history had already been well documented, he concentrated on other families and has worked on some 45 to date. Along the way he has also uncovered some mysteries and fresh solutions to conquering "brick walls".

GSOC member Jerry Rush was born in northwest New Jersey in 1941 and served in the US Air Force from 1959 until 1979. He retired from the USAF in 1979 while living in Hawaii and went back to school to finish his BA degree and to earn an MA in Counseling Psychology. He then joined the federal civil service and continued his career in military intelligence. In 1993, he accepted an assignment to Hurlburt Field, FL and worked there until his retirement in 2005.

Mr. Rush, now a widower, has three sons and four grandchildren, and lives in the Poquito Bayou subdivision of Shalimar. He says that he loves to do genealogical research and has worked on over 40 families thus far. He likes to get people interested in genealogy and get them started in discovering their family story.

E-MAIL FROM JIM YOUNG:

I wondered how long it would be after Ancestry.com bought Find A Grave before they began to monetize it. Of course, it cost them to buy it and it costs them to maintain it; but the information came from and continues to come from thousands of volunteer hours. I just hope that they are content to add advertisements and don't put it behind a pay wall.

Check out the previews of the new site at <https://new.findagrave.com/>

Jim

----- Forwarded Message -----

Subject: Findagrave.com - upgrading their system

Date: Sat, 8 Jul 2017 19:49:12 +0000

From: Yancey, Dennis J <dyancey@miami.edu>

FINDAGRAVE.COM - where over 162 million grave sites have now been registered and documented.

(mainly in the United States) Some things you may not know about [FINDAGRAVE.COM](https://new.findagrave.com/)

1) There are now over 15,000 memorial pages dedicated to the memory of deceased members of the Yancey/Yancy family. Chances are there is a page for members of your Yancey family - if you don't find them recorded please let me know so one can be created.

<https://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi>

2) The vast majority of these 15,000 pages - contain photos of the grave site - and in many cases photos of the deceased. If you have a photo of your Yancey ancestors and/or their grave - that is not already posted - please let me know so we can post it.

Many also have eulogies, bios, and notes concerning the deceased from people who knew them.

3) Findagrave will at some point in the future be transforming their existing site with a new version that will have a newer and better "look and feel" and be better for mobile app use. check out the reviews here: <https://new.findagrave.com/>

4) Grave Markers can sometimes have incorrect information, (such as a name misspelling or a transposed date), BUT the Findagrave pages are the perfect medium by which to bring this information to the awareness of others.

Notes can be placed on the memorial to indicate what may be incorrect and an explanation of why and what their sources can be referred to - to verify this.

5) Even if you cannot make contact with the admin of a specific Findagrave page- most submitted updates to the page (which you can make) will be updated after a period of a few weeks (even if the admin takes no action).

6) Anyone (including you) can easily create a new Findagrave memorial page - if you become a free member - and if the memorial doesn't already exist for the deceased. And technically you don't even need to be related to the deceased. Nor does it matter whether, or not, you have a photo of the grave.

7) Please note that Findagrave is first and foremost a database of graves - and NOT a family tree database.

It is true that grave memorials of related family members can be interlinked - thus creating what is in essence, a family tree that you can navigate by clicking on the names. But the driving factor of a memorial being created should NOT be simply because you are adding a memorial for a family member as part of a tree - rather it should be - because a grave site exists and is being recorded in the database of grave sites.

This is why sometimes you will see missing members of a family - among the family links on a page - because, for example, the person is not yet deceased - or because the grave site has not yet been found. (Don't expect names to show for related family members - who don't first have a recorded grave site). Having said this though, Findagrave memorials can be created for such cases as cremation and other scenarios where no grave exists or the precise location is not exactly known.

Findagrave is just as good or bad - as we (members of the family) make it. If it has things that lack - in many cases we can submit items to make it more complete and accurate.

Please don't focus on what may be incomplete or inaccurate.

Rather take it as an opportunity to take action, and in some cases, share your information and help make the site more accurate and complete.

Findagrave is a perfect way to GIVE BACK to the genealogical community and even give back to our ancestors - by making sure they are remembered.

This email brought to you by the Yancey Family Surname Resource Center

<http://yanceyfamilygenealogy.org/>

Dennis J Yancey

dyancey@miami.edu

GSOC Editor Note: Minor corrections were made to Dennis Yancey's e-mail.)

ODDS AND ENDS

JIM YOUNG'S LIST OF JOURNALS FOR THE MONTH:

OKAHOMA GENEALOGICAL SOCEITY QUARTERLY

THE COWETA COURIER, COWETA COUNTY, GA

SWANNEE VALLEY GENEALOGY, LIVE OAK, FL

AMERICAN SPIRIT MAGAZINE, DAR

GENEALOGY

BEGINS AS AN INTEREST

BECOMES A HOBBY

CONTINUES AS AN AVOCATION

TAKES OVER AS AN OBSESSION

AND IN THE LAST STAGES

IS AN INCURABLE DISEASE

-AUTHOR UNKNOWN

Events and Information of GSOC Interest

GSOC INFORMATION

Officers for 2017

President, Jon Sheperd
1st Vice President (Programs), Margaret Harris
2nd Vice President (Membership), Jerry Rush
Treasurer, Phil Hoge
Recording Secretary, Kathie Sheperd
Corresponding Secretary, Val Moreland

Immediate Past President, Sue Basch
Journal Editor, TBD
Genealogist, Margaret Harris
Publicity Chairperson, Val Moreland
Newsletter Editor, Edward Crosby
Webmaster, Jim Young

Addresses

P.O. Box 1175, Fort Walton Beach, FL 32549-1175
Email: gsocokaloosa@yahoo.com
Newsletter Editor: edcrosby@valp.net

Membership

Annual membership dues are \$24 for an individual and \$35 for an individual and spouse at the same address.

You can obtain a revised membership form from our web site or use the copy that is included in this newsletter.

The Newsletter

The GSOC Newsletter is now published on or before the third Friday of each month.

Suggestions for articles are welcome. The editor, Edward Crosby, can be contacted by phone at (850) 678-5423 or by email at edcrosby@valp.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 2016 issue, was published and distributed in October 2016 and has been mailed to all GSOC members.** The theme of the 2016 issue is the Vietnam War. If you are a member and didn't receive your copy, please contact us.

The Web Site

<http://www.rootsweb.com/~flogcs>

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.

GSOC on Facebook

<http://www.facebook.com/okaloosagsoc>

The shortcut address to the official **page** of the Genealogical Society of Okaloosa County is shown above; or you can go to your Facebook account and search for **Genealogical Society of Okaloosa County**. This page will provide the latest information about our future meetings and other news that is important to members or prospective members.

There is also a Facebook **group**. It is useful for exchanging information about your research and getting help with questions you may have about the Society or resources available to you. You can find it by going to your Facebook account and searching for **Friends of the GSOC**.

The GSOC Books

The five GSOC cemetery, marriage, and funeral books are all out of print, but are now available on the GSOC web site for reading on line and for downloading as searchable PDF files at no charge.

Please note that all these GSOC books are copyrighted by The Genealogical Society of Okaloosa County and may be only used for personal use. Reproduction is prohibited without the permission of the GSOC.

Go to the web site, scroll down and click on the **GSOC Books** link, click on the name of the book to access, and read it on line. Save it to your computer to download it.

Because of the size of these books, it may take them a few minutes to display (depending on the speed of your internet connection.)

MINUTES OF THE JUNE 24, 2017 GSOC MEETING

Fort Walton Beach Library

Jon Sheperd introduced himself as GSOC president and welcomed GSOC members, our guest speaker, Cissy Wyninegar, and visitors, Ernie Masters, Gail Meyer, Judy Duran, Elizabeth Mangam, and Joan LaCross. The meeting proceeded as follows:

OLD BUSINESS

Minutes: The minutes from the May meeting were in the June Newsletter. The minutes were approved by acclamation.

Fieldtrips: Jon reminded the group that GSOC has an upcoming field trip to the UWF Archives and West Florida History Center on Friday, July 7th (*changed from July 8th*). The tour will start at 10:30 a.m. Following the library visit, the group can do lunch and then go to the Genealogy Library at the Pensacola State College. Jon passed around a clipboard with a sign-up list which offered carpool opportunities. He will follow up with an email to the members who signed up.

Journal: Cindy Barber is still looking for people to write articles for this year's Journal, with the theme being Education, primarily here in Okaloosa County. So please talk or email Cindy and let her know how you can help. Thanks!

NEW BUSINESS

Door Prize: The door prize was won by one of our visitors. **Thank you, Val Moreland**, for donating a jar of your delicious homemade jam!

Lunch: The Dutch-treat lunch following the meeting was at McAlister's Deli, on Eglin Parkway.

Newsletter: The June edition of the GSOC Newsletter is editor Jim Young's last newsletter. Over the last seven years, Jim developed and published 85 issues! Jon said: "I think you will all agree with me that he has written many informative and interesting articles over the years. So, on behalf of the society I would like to thank Jim for his dedication and wonderful job of being our newsletter editor." The attendee's all applauded Jim for his wonderful and long serving efforts as editor. Jon also stated how we look forward to Ed Crosby carrying on as GSOC Newsletter editor.

Organization Expo: There will be an Organization Expo at the Crestview Public Library on August 7th from 5-8 pm. This would be an excellent opportunity to tell the north end of the county about the GSOC. If there is anyone that is interested in representing GSOC please let Jon know.

REPORTS

1st VP and Genealogist Margaret Harris: Next month, Mr. Jim Moore will attend as our guest speaker and present a live history re-enactment of a historical leader from Okaloosa County, Mr. William “Bill” Mapoles. Mapoles was a state representative from Laurel Hill who became known as the “father of Okaloosa County”. If you have ever seen one of Jim Moore’s historical characterizations, you know you are in for a real treat. In August, our own Jerry Rush will be our guest speaker, speaking about “family stories, mysteries, and brick walls”.

2nd VP Jerry Rush: The GSOC has just over 60 paid members.

Treasurer Phil Hoge: Phil was out of town and Jon stated that our treasury last month had \$2,117.30.

Recording Secretary Kathie Sheperd: Nothing sufficient to repost.

Corresponding Secretary Val Moreland: Val brought in several magazines and journals for our GSOC cabinet to use as reference materials. She also brought in several to give away.

Newsletter, Jim Young: Jim will still serve as our GSOC webmaster.

GUEST SPEAKER:

Margaret introduced Cissy Wyninegar, who is a granddaughter of Theo Staff who built the legendary Gulf View hotel and Staff’s Restaurant, which operated for 100 years. Cissy is a certified mediator specializing in county, family and dependency mediation. She has also worn many other hats: she was a previous owner of Staffs Restaurant, was an educator (a former teacher and school principal, she has a M.S. in school administration and public administration), served on the Fort Walton Beach City Council from 1989-1997, and was a mayor Pro Tem. She has been involved in numerous local civic endeavors and has served on the boards of several organizations. We welcomed Cissy Wyninegar, who was accompanied by Gail Meyers, Manager of the FWB Heritage Park and Cultural Center.

Ms. Wyninegar:

Part of the presentation was to introduce us to the Staff, Gerlach and Bass families, of which she is a descendant and a 5th generation Floridian. Her grandparents arrived in 1917. Historically, 1824 was when Walton County was created from Escambia Co, and 1842 was when Santa Rosa County was created. John Brooks arrived in 1860. Throughout her presentation, Cissy showed old photographs of her family through various periods of life. Her stories:

Grandpa Staff was Theodore Emil Staff, from Europe who served in the Spanish American War and moved to Tampa. He liked Florida and married. Shortly after, he and his family moved to Medina Mexico, which was a good place to live until the Mexican's became a big threat and the family was forced to leave for their safety. They then moved to this area.

The Gerlach family heard about Fort Walton Beach in 1913 when the local town was called Camp Walton. In those days, there were about 90 people in this area. There was no road from Pensacola, but there was a small north-south dirt road from Crestview and in those early days, the local roads were dirt and sand. The Gulfview Hotel had been built in 1907. Adam Gerlach and son-in-law, Theo Staff and his wife Molly, purchased the hotel in 1913. They lived off of the fish from the Gulf of Mexico, had a farm, and raised their own vegetables which they served to patrons at the hotel. Theo Staff was a born fisherman and in 1920, this was a popular area for hunting and fishing. Although the hotel was not air conditioned, it had the gulf breezes and the hotel was opened to allow those breezes to flow through. In WWI, all the mail was inspected... The Gerlach family was Catholic, and because they were from Germany, they were thought to be possible German sympathizers or German spies. The family went to their priest for advice and he gave them a solution: Go home and put 4 large U.S. flags in front of their home to show they had four (military servicemen) sons serving in the war. That seemed to end the problem!

The Gulfview hotel continued to be very prosperous. By the 1930's people came via the railroad. The family bought all the property from Gulfview hotel and Staffs' restaurant all the way to the Brooks Cemetery behind old St Mary's church. In the 1940s, they had boats and the 1950s were adventures with swimming races from the hotel pier. Cissy was active in the Girl Scouts of the USA, played piano, and sang at church. Each Sunday evening, she had to perform for her grandfather, which included singing a song and telling a joke. The performance was taken seriously, with much preparation. It would be like a recital and every

child in town was invited to come to the recital. Delivery of the joke was just as important as the singing and Cissy perfected her speaking skills.

Her grandfather, Adam Gerlach, was very involved in the establishment of the Old St Mary's church in Fort Walton Beach. In 1914, Grandpa Theo Staff and his visiting friend, Father Gruethoff, recognized the need for a Catholic church in the community. Adam Gerlach donated the land and they requested \$500 from the Catholic Bishop. Adam also donated \$500. With the money, he helped build the wood church (it was located where Sealand restaurant is now). Old St Mary's was a wood structure and it stood for many years until a new and larger church was built of brick – by her dad.

Cissy's aunts and uncles passed on great stories. One aunt in particular, Aunt Aggie, frequently regaled the kids with the ancient legend of the headless Spanish woman who had been captured by a pirate captain and forced to live here (but her indiscretions ended her life!) Aunt Aggie was a fun-loving character, a great pioneer, and very involved in early Fort Walton Beach. She was the founder of the women's club. She was a writer and the first article she wrote was about how the women of the town cleaned up the area of pigs and cows (wild pigs would go under the buildings, such as the Camp Walton school house).

Throughout the years, the Staff family grew and prospered with their entrepreneurial spirit. They had the Gulfview hotel, the restaurant which grew out of it, a grocery store, and a car repair business. In the 1950s, Staff's restaurant expanded into a cafeteria because of the growing military presence at Eglin Field. It became a hangout for the military men assigned there. They also operated "Brooks Cabins" at the beach as the area was attracting tourists. Every 4th of July, Grandpa Theo Staff hosted a huge swimming competition at the hotel docks, complete with swim lanes and prizes.

Before she concluded, Cissy said that her Bass family ancestors settled in Milton in a large old house on Alabama Street. Cissy has fond memories of her step-grandmother, who she called "Two Mama" and "Papa", her grandfather

CLOSING:

Jon Sheperd led the applause in thanking Cissy Wyninegar for speaking to us and thanked Gail Meyers for helping her with the PowerPoint presentation. He thanked everyone for attending with special thanks to our visitors. Jon reminded the group of the next meeting: same location on July 22nd; at 10:30 am when Jim Moore will be in character and tell us how Okaloosa County was born.

Kathie Sheperd, GSOC Recording Secretary



Our August 26th, meeting
will begin at 10:30 am

Family Stories, Mysteries and Brick Walls

Presented by: Jerry Rush

***Uncovering some mysteries and fresh solutions to
conquering "brick walls"***

**Fort Walton Beach Library
185 Miracle Strip Parkway SE,
Fort Walton Beach, Florida 32548**

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

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

