



THE GSOC NEWSLETTER

THE GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY OF OKALOOSA COUNTY, FLORIDA

OCTOBER 20, 2017

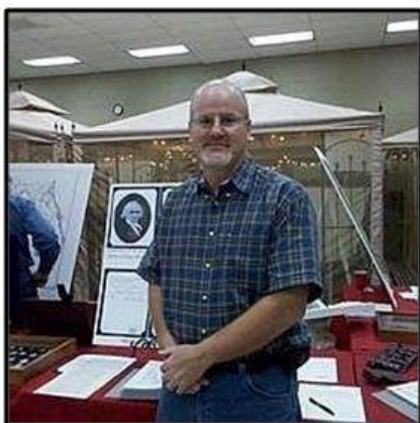
Next scheduled GSOC meeting: October 28, 10:30 AM
Fort Walton Beach Library, 185 Miracle Strip Parkway SE, Fort Walton Beach, FL

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"The Preservation of Walton County History and Heritage"

Presenter: Mr. Bruce Cosson



Mr. Bruce Cosson



Mr. Cosson in his Alaqua community home with some of the historical documentation he has compiled

Mr. Bruce Cosson is a member of the Board of Directors of the Walton County Heritage Association (WCHA) Museum & Genealogical Society which is dedicated to preserving the history and heritage of Walton County, Florida.

He's a life-long resident of Walton County and his family heritage goes back to the early days of that county's settlement. He's also a local historian and conducts most of his research in the local panhandle area. Mr. Cosson has been doing serious family research since 2009.

In addition to tracing his own family roots, Mr. Cosson has done extensive research in the history of his community of Alaqua, the first county seat of Walton County.

One of his hobbies is metal detecting which will be represented in some of the displays and photographs that he plans to show.

Future Attractions:

November 25, 2017

"Journey of Man: A Genetic Odyssey"

A Video Presentation Facilitated by Charlene Grafton

This is a fantastic documentary tracing the earliest human migration on this planet, as shown by our genetic roots. This informative film, full of surprising news, is based on the work of Spencer Wells, who is both an innovative scientist and enthusiastic host. He and crew scour the world for indigenous people with deep roots in one place, asking for samples of DNA to test, in order to piece together our "big family" genetic tree. The best parts are when he returns with DNA results and we see the diverse ways in which people and tribes react to the news of what science says about their arrival and relations.

The election of GSOC Officers for 2018 will also be held.

December 16, 2017



*Christmas Luncheon and
Installation
of Officers*

*Saturday
Dec 16th
11:00 AM
to 1:00 PM*

*Fort Walton Yacht Club
180 Ferry Road NE*

*Open Menu
Reservations Requested*

*Cindy Barber: 863.307.2300
Cindybarber2@gmail.com*

January 27, 2018

**"Photography for Genealogists"
Presented by Mr. Fred Borg.**

Having grown up in Connecticut and moving around the world during a 20-year Army career, Fred retired and settled down in Panama City. Retiring again after working 21 years as a civilian drug abuse counselor, a 2002 Boxster caught his eye. Fred's first Porsche! In addition to Porsche activities, Fred is an avid genealogist and wildlife photographer. Everybody takes pictures of scenery, children, family vacations and such, but as genealogists we sometimes need to photograph other things. We need to document paper records, headstones, family heirlooms, and other things that normally don't get photographed. We'll learn about what some of these things are, where to find them, and how to capture the image.

The following article was written and submitted by Jim Young



**IN DEFENSE OF ANECDOTES
October 1, 2017**

Our GSOC Genealogist and teacher of genealogy, Margaret Harris, recently posted a link in the Friends of NWFL Genealogy Facebook Group. She introduced this link by saying, "What stories from your childhood do you remember? It is documents that will lead the way for you learning more about your ancestors, not anecdotes." The link she provided is to an article about Jim Van Schaack who set out to see if the stories handed down in his family about his great grandfather being a sailor in the Confederate Navy were true. Jim is a stickler for every bit of his ancestors' lives – every detail in his long genealogical journey has had to be confirmed by document, not anecdote. If possible, by more than one document.

Dr. Tom Sajwaj, GSOC member, retired psychologist, and also a teacher of genealogy, spoke to us in September and gave us a psychological perspective of oral family history. He reminded us of how fragile and fleeting human memory actually is.

We might think from Margaret's comment, Mr. Schaack's story, and Dr. Sajwaj's reminder that anecdotal information, oral family history, if you will, is of little value in an accurate family history. I respectfully disagree.

I firmly believe that oral history is essential to a good family history. For the first many thousands of years of human history, there were no documents. History was passed orally from generation to generation. The first parts of the Tanakh, the Hebrew Bible which became the Christian Old Testament, were based on stories told and retold from generation to generation. Native American histories were passed down orally. Even documents when they began to appear, are not a perfect source of family information. We all know examples of errors in census enumerations, in newspaper accounts of events, in obituaries, in applications for pensions, and so on.

I guess what I'm saying is that I think that oral history is just as valuable as documents in our family history research; BUT, we need to remember that Dr. Sajwaj's presentation clearly showed the fragility of human memory and

perception. Oral history puts the flesh on the dry bones we find in the census reports and on tombstones. I am not satisfied for my family history to consist only of names, dates, places, and perhaps some description. A document tells me that my great-great grandfather Morgan was 25 years of age in 1836 and was 5 feet and 8 inches tall with a fair complexion, black hair, and light blue eyes. My family oral history tells me that in his old age he walked around the community, helping widows in need, to try to atone for running away from home in North Carolina when he was 14 leaving his widowed mother and seven children younger than him to fend for themselves.

But we must use oral history carefully, verifying what we are able to, and labeling what we cannot verify as such.

It is, I think, essential that we preserve these anecdotes. We often hear (and say), "Oh, I wish Mother/Grandmother/Grandfather/Aunt/Uncle/Cousin/etc. were still alive so that I could talk to him/her." What is it that we would hear, if we could have such conversations, but anecdotes? If we are the only people now living who remember these, they will be forever lost unless we somehow preserve them.

My own family provides, I think, an example. My mother, an only child, was born and grew up on a small farm in a remote area of a rural county in north central Mississippi. Although she heard family stories all while she grew up, it wasn't until she was fifty, a widow with three grown children, that her interest in family history began to grow. At that time she was living in Memphis and had access to a good library with genealogical resources. She was also in contact with several in our family who were considered family historians, especially her third cousin Clarence. As a child, Clarence preferred to sit on the porch steps and listen to the old folks talk rather than play. His memory was unusually good, as was borne out decades later when both Mother and I would run across documentation that supported most of what he remembered.



I was on active duty in the Air Force, but each time I visited Mother or talked to her on the phone or got a letter from her, she'd talk about some aspect of family history that she had discovered. When she was about 65 she began sending me even longer letters with bits and pieces of family history. She said, "You may not be interested in this now, but your children and grandchildren may be." After a number of years of this, and I had carefully saved the letters, I realized that I could take advantage of the new-fangled word processing capability of computers and I began to type the historical information she sent. Mother had bought a typewriter some years earlier and had taught herself to type, but most of the letters she sent were in her hard-to-read handwriting. In my spare time, over a period of many months, I finally had the information typed and stored in my computer.

I realized, then, that with a good bit of rearranging the information (such as putting all the information about the Reuben Morgan family together, and all the information about the Poplar Springs Baptist Church together, etc.), that I could have a coherent book. I could make it even more interesting, I felt, by including old maps, extracts from appropriate documents, and so on.

Mother's 75th birthday was approaching and I completed the book and ran off a few copies at the local office supply store. I gave her one for her birthday and she was delighted. However, she complained, "If I had known you were going to do this, I'd have added this and that or would not have said that so and so was a drunk!" So, I told her to take this as

a draft and go through it in detail and add or take away whatever she wanted to and I would make those changes. She did that, and I made all the changes she wanted plus some improvements I had thought about.

She wanted the preface to the book to include the statement: "Most of what I will tell, except for my personal reminiscences, has come from family historians. Some of them were told it long ago by old people of the area and some have studied old family records, census reports, and church rolls. One of these historians is my third cousin, Clarence Morgan. His grandfather and my own were brothers. I am only skimming the surface of all he knows. ... Much valuable information was provided by my Aunt Leila Murphree Parker, by Frances Blue Cox, and by many others."

Clarence, Mother, and the others she mentioned are now all gone. But the book remains.

I had 30 copies made and gave them to her along with the original. I suggested, if anyone wanted a copy, that they just pay her for the cost of printing. As word spread in our extended family, the 30 copies were soon gone and when someone wanted a copy, Mother would take the original to the local printing store and have a few copies made. Over the years, she added a few additional pages to the original that she had typed herself. When her health got to the point where she wasn't able to make the trips back and forth to the print shop, she called on another of her cousins who lived nearby and he would have the copies made for her.

Over the years, some 300 copies of "the book" were made in this way. She was even interviewed on the small local TV station in Bruce, Mississippi, which was about 30 miles from where she was born. I have a video of her interview and she was asked about the book and asked to narrate some of the stories that tickled the interviewers fancy.

Mother died in 2000 at the age of 85. At some time, she had accidentally mailed the original pages to someone instead of a copy and had been making copies from a copy. This had evidently happened several times and the quality of print was degraded a bit. Too, she had added several more pages that were not in the original book.

I had Mother's funeral held in the small town where I was born and where my father died. Although Mother had not lived there for over 50 years, the little funeral home was packed with relatives and friends. I was especially touched by one lady who introduced herself and told me, "I didn't know your mother personally, but I loved her book so much that I just wanted to come and pay my respects to her and to you."



Several months later, I retyped the entire book. The eight-inch disks I had saved the first version on were long since obsolete and OCR was not reliable. In the second edition I included Mother's biography and photograph, the changes she had made over the years, and corrected any errors that had been pointed out as people had read it. I had 200 copies of the second edition printed and I now have only three or four left. I donated copies to all the libraries in the towns near where Mother was born and grew up, to the libraries at the University of Mississippi and Mississippi State University, and to the Mississippi State Museum and Archives. The Museum book store also sold copies.

What prompted me to write this article is that I just received a request for a copy of the book in printed form for an elderly man whose relatives are mentioned in the book. Although I have made the book available in PDF format on the Internet for downloading at no cost, many people still prefer something they can hold, read, put on a shelf, and pass on to their children.

ODDS AND ENDS

Genealogy is all about chasing your own tale.

A new feature is added to the GSOC Newsletter. It is called [Genealogy Genie](#). It will include information about learning Genealogy by providing links to web sites, tips, how-to info, and other items. Your questions about Genealogy can be sent to: editoGSOCFLnews@gmail.com.



Genealogy Genie

This month: "How to Start in Genealogy"

A Google search "How to start genealogy" will yield many sites giving you information. A sample of some sites are:

- <https://www.floridamemory.com/onlineclassroom/family-history/>
- www.legacytree.com/genealogist
- <https://www.familytreemagazine.com>
- https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Family_History_for_Beginners
- <https://www.findmypast.com/content/10-tips-to-start-your-family-history-journey>
- www.wikihow.com › Home › Categories › Family Life › Genealogy

There is a basic outline:

- Interview family members and record information like dates of births, marriages, and deaths, where they lived and worked, etc. Search the web for a sample questionnaire to help you.
- Try to locate family documents like birth, school, church and death records, photos, scrapbooks, letters, etc.
- Start a family tree. There are free sites that offer easy to use family trees. Here are a few:
 - Free Family History and Genealogy Records — FamilySearch.org (<https://www.familysearch.org/>)
 - Ancestry® | Genealogy, Family Trees & Family History Records (<https://www.ancestry.com/>)
 - 100% Free Family Tree and Genealogy Research - FamilyTreeNow.com (<https://www.familytreenow.com/>).

Have a question about Genealogy? Send it to editorGSOCFLnews@gmail.com.

JOURNALS RECEIVED OCTOBER 2017

PEA RIVER TRAILS, BULTER COUNTY, HISTORICAL & GENEALOGY QUARTERLY, SUWANNEE VALLEY GENEALOGY,
ENTERPRICE ALABAMA, GREENVILLE GEOEGIA, LIVE OAK FLORIDA.

Want to be a GSOC Officer?

Persons to fill all of the GSOC officer positions for 2018 will be elected at our November 25, 2017 meeting. Members are invited to contact me to have their names included on the list of nominees to be presented at our October 28th meeting. A listing of the officer positions and the names of the current office holders is at the bottom of this page.

Jim Young
Chair, Nominating Committee
850-862-8642, youngjmy@cox.net



AFGHAN RAFFLE

(Separate raffle for each one)

For benefit of the Genealogical Society of
Okaloosa County

Beautiful handmade afghans (shown folded in half)

Both measure about 45" wide and 67" long

Tickets are \$1.00 each or 6 for \$5.00

Do not have to be present to win

Drawings for both at Dec 16th meeting of Society
Just in time for Christmas!

Genealogical Society of Okaloosa County (GSOC) Meeting Minutes for 23 Sep 2017

GSOC president, Jon Sheperd, opened the meeting and welcomed members and visitors to the September meeting. The following business actions were discussed:

OLD BUSINESS:

Minutes: Minutes from August GSOC meeting were in the September Newsletter. As there were no changes to the minutes, they were approved by acclamation.

Journal: The 2017 GSOC Journal is available and Jon said it looked great! Jon thanked Journal editor Cindy Barber for all her hard work and her team of Marv Cochrane, Hilma Jenus and the many article contributors for their efforts. Journals were available for pick-up at the meeting, and members were asked to acknowledge receipt on Cindy's Journal "received list".

Fundamentals of Genealogy: The Most Helpful Tools You've Never Used: We still have several copies of this excellent resource book available. If you ordered a copy and were not at the last meeting, please see treasurer Phil Hoge, to pay and get your copy.

NEW BUSINESS:

Door Prize Winners: Jackie Edge was the recipient of a jar of Ed Crosby's local honey and Yvonne Payne received a jar of Val Moreland's homemade raspberry fig jam. Thank you, Val and Ed, for your generous gift donations.

Lunch at local restaurant: After the meeting, the group went to Fokker's Pub, Fort Walton Beach.

Newsletter: The September edition of the GSOC Newsletter was sent out Sep 17th. Jon thanked Ed Crosby for another informative edition of the Newsletter.

Genealogy T.V. Show: The fourth season of the PBS series "*Finding Your Roots*" will premiere Tuesday, October 3, 2017. Dr. Henry Louis Gates will explore the ancestral stories of 28 guests during the season.

Research and Genie Group: It was suggested by Cindy Barber we have a GSOC research group. This group would meet periodically, to help other members and the public with brick walls or other genealogy areas. Ed Crosby suggested forming a "Genie group" which would also help members and the public with genealogy questions but in a little different manner. The GSOC Board supported these ideas and both approaches could be done by one group. Jon asked if there anyone was interested in being part of these efforts and eleven people raised their hands.

Cindy and Ed agreed to head this up and Jon requested they propose a concept of operations for the GSOC Board to review. Send this "Concept of Ops" to Jon, who will review it with the Board, before presenting it to the membership. More on this in the weeks to come.

Bay County Seminar: Guest Fred Borg from Bay County Genealogy Society (Panama City), informed us about their October 14th seminar titled: "*Beginning Genealogy: How Do I Start*". This will be held at the Bay County Public Library and attendees are asked to pre-register. The seminar fee is \$20 for members and \$25 for non-members and brand-new membership with the seminar is \$30. Cost includes seminar, handouts, snacks and drinks. You may register through their web page.

Nominating Committee: Jim Young agreed to head up the nominating committee for the slate of 2018 GSOC officers. Jim needs help with this. If anyone would like to serve on the nominating committee or run for one of the officer positions please contact him. Jim will have a proposed slate of officers for our October meeting. Voting will occur at the November meeting with installation in December.

Afghans: Our friend, Cissy Larson made two more afghans for us to raffle, as a way of raising funds for the Genealogical Society of Okaloosa County. Both afghans were brought to the meeting; one is red and the other is cream and teal in color. The members were happy to receive the afghans and agreed to hold two separate raffles; one for each afghan. The raffle drawings will be at the December meeting – just in time for Christmas gifts!

REPORTS:

1st VP and Genealogist Margaret Harris: Next month, Mr. Bruce Cosson, from the Walton County Heritage Association Museum and Genealogical Society, will give a presentation on "*The Preservation of Walton County History and Heritage*." As a reminder, our Okaloosa County was carved out of Walton and Santa Rosa Counties in 1915.

2nd VP Jerry Rush: There were 4 visitors at the meeting and our membership is up to 70 members.

Treasurer Phil Hoge: We have \$1333.52 in the treasury, but a few unpaid bills for Journal mailing, etc.

Recording Secretary Kathie Sheperd: Nothing sufficient to report.

Corresponding Secretary Val Moreland: We received the Baker Block Museum newsletter and four other county journals in the mail. They will be available in the file cabinet.

Newsletter, Ed Crosby: Please submit articles to him for the Newsletter.

Webmaster, Jim Young: The website is up to date. If you don't have the password to the Members-Only section, please call him.

GUEST SPEAKER:

Margaret Harris introduced our guest speaker, GSOC member Dr. Thomas Sajwaj, who is a retired psychologist and who was active in therapy, research, and management. He has about 20 years of experience in genealogy, and has published two articles in a genealogy journal.

His Sajwaj family records go back to the late 1600s, and Sajwaj is an extremely rare name. In fact, the surname has all but died out in Poland. Unfortunately, most records after the early 1900s are protected by Polish privacy laws. Tom's background as a clinical psychologist and researcher made him uniquely suited to examine his family history stories and both their facts and fancy.

One of the key sources of genealogical family history is the unique and precious nature of oral family history which may have come from a primary or secondary source, depending on whether the story was heard from an actual witness to

the events in the story, or from someone who hears the story from someone who was only repeating the story. In either event, when the person who has the family material in memory dies, that information is gone.

We have a popular view about memory; that our eyes and ears work like a video/audio recorder and provide a true representation of what occurred. Yet, human memory is dynamic and perception changes. There are intervening factors and recall where we don't all see it the same way. Memories are dynamic in nature and they will morph, shift, and change to include inaccurate material in part or whole. Changing memories happens to all of us.

There are differing effects of story reproductions in our memories. Repeating the story will change and shift even when told multiple times by the same individual. Stories especially change across individuals and across generations. When hearing stories, you should expect they are a mixture of facts *and* fancy.

Tom gave two personal examples of oral family stories in his family. In one, Tom actually heard two similar stories about the death of a young relative coming to America with a different fact in each. Did she die at sea, or did she die before the voyage ever started? Tom showed how he analyzed each story's facts using research, maps, and the laying out of timelines pertaining to each story, in order to differentiate between the facts and fiction.

As a result of this and his other research, Tom developed a set of guidelines. He passed out a handy guideline called: "*Guides for Separating Fact from Fancy*" which were extracted from "*Thomas Sajwaj, Fact and Fancy in Oral Family History: A Psychological Perspective. Rodziny: The Journal of the Polish Genealogical Society, Fall 2006*".

Record Use these Guides for Separating Fact from Fancy to determine the validity of your own family stories:

- ***the story, preferably electronically***
- ***Record the story verbatim as you heard it, if electronic recording devices are not available.***
- ***Get the same story from different relatives on different occasions, and get the same story from the same relative on different occasion.***
- ***Look for patterns, especially similarities and differences, in the different telling of the same story.***
- ***Visit the place where the events in the story occurred. Look at a map for the location.***
- ***Look at the credibility and motives of the individual(s) telling the story.***
- ***Find written records associated with the story, such as newspaper articles and church records.***
- ***If there are relevant photographs, carefully scrutinize the background and other details of the photos.***
- ***Assemble all available material about the involved ancestor(s), not just the oral stories.***
- ***Look for anomalies, inconsistencies, and things that don't belong in the totality of the material about the ancestor.***

Tom introduced the group to the 13th century problem solving tool called "*Occam's razor*" which is also known as the "*law of parsimony*". With Occam's razor, we pare down the details to the simplest facts, choosing the simpler hypothesis in making logical decisions.

For further reading, he recommends the book titled "*The Seven Sins of Memory (How the Mind Forgets and Remembers)*" by Daniel L. Schacter, c. 2001, ISBN 0-618-04019-6.

In closing, Tom accepted questions from the group and Margaret Harris asked about the expression told through generations in her family: "*children born between the rains.*" What would that mean? Tom advised that linguistics experts could tell her where the phrase came from and what kind of people said it. For instance, they might be farmers. The phrase could indicate when the children were born, and what their birthdates were.

CLOSING:

Jon thanked everyone for attending, and especially thanked Dr. Tom Sajwaj for his enlightening presentation. The next meeting will be at the Fort Walton Beach Library on Oct 28th at 10:30am, and will feature Bruce Cosson's presentation on "*The Preservation of Walton County History and Heritage.*"

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, Cindy Barber
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 2017 issue, was published and distributed in September 2017 and has been mailed to all GSOC members.** The theme of the 2017 issue is the Education. If you are a member and didn't receive your copy, please contact us.

The Web Site

<http://www.rootsweb.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.

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.)



Our October 28, meeting
will begin at 10:30 am

***“The Preservation of Walton
County
History and Heritage”***

Presenter: Mr. Bruce Cosson

**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**