

THE GSOC NEWSLETTER



THE GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY OF
OKALOOSA COUNTY, FLORIDA

SEPTEMBER 10, 2016

Next GSOC Meeting
September 10, 2016 10:00 a.m.
Heritage Museum of Northwest Florida
Valparaiso, Florida

Cemeteries and Electronically Preserving Obituaries as Cultural Heritage (EPOCH)

by Barbara Russell and Dorothy Pichardo



EPOCH is a depository of information that will be held for future generations of researchers and genealogists. Family

and friends of the deceased can submit detailed obituaries as a tribute to their loved ones, and in doing so help build a meaningful history of the residents of the community. Unlike obituaries in newspapers and on funeral home websites, which expire after a certain time frame, the information posted on EPOCH will remain there indefinitely as part of a searchable archive.

With so many newspapers on the chopping block due to the Internet, most newspapers now charge to print an obituary rather than providing it as a complimentary community service. While rates vary by region, a traditional obituary with a cherished photo can cost hundreds or even thousands of dollars.

Many people now feel that everybody deserves an obituary: people of limited income, refugees and immigrants, transients passing through, the lonely suicide in a hotel room, everybody. Increasingly, the feeling is growing that denying someone an obituary just because the family can't afford it is morally wrong.

Barbara Russell has worked for the Washington County Library for 36 years, and has been doing genealogy for about 20 years. She loved to listen to family members telling stories about her ancestors. Her favorite story, which is true, is about her great great grandmother rising from the dead. The more she learns the more excited she becomes, she says. She has one son Kevin who is her heart and soul. She has been talking about cemeteries and obituaries for about 5 years and has been presenting programs on EPOCH for about 2 years.

Dorothy Pichardo is the Branch Manager in Vernon and also the technical specialist for the libraries in Washington County. She has worked with the library for about 20 years. She also loves to hear about her ancestors and the past. Her two sons, David and Travis are the apple of her eye.

Elusive Ancestor *by Merrell Kenworthy*

I went searching for an ancestor.
I cannot find him still.
He moved around from place to place
and did not leave a will.

He married where a courthouse burned.
He mended all his fences.
He avoided any man who came
to take the U.S. Census.

He always kept his luggage packed,
this man who had no fame.
And every 20 years or so,
this rascal changed his name.

His parents came from Europe.
They should be upon some list
of passengers to U.S.A.,
but somehow they got missed.

And no one else in this world
is searching for this man.
So, I play geneasolitaire
to find him if I can.

I'm told he's buried in a plot,
with tombstone he was blessed;
but the weather took engraving,
and some vandals took the rest.

He died before the county clerks
decided to keep records.
No Family Bible has emerged,
in spite of all my efforts.

To top it off this ancestor,
who caused me many groans,
Just to give me one more pain,
betrothed a girl named JONES.

*Remember the days of old, consider the years of
many generations; ask thy father, and he will show
thee; thy elders, and they will tell thee.*

Deuteronomy 32:7

Also In This Issue

Destin Fishermen Helped With Army Test	2
Making of a Genealogist: Bill Linder	3
Events and Sites of GSOC Interest	5
Mohammedans in West Florida	6
Minutes of August GSOC Meeting	8

Destin Fishermen Helped With the Testing of the JB-2 Missile During WW II

By: H. C. "Hank" Klein

Driving east on US Highway 98 as you leave Destin proper and enter Walton County if you look closely on the right side of the highway you might notice a private wooded street with two signs. One announcing the **Coffeen Nature Preserve** is just beyond the gate and a second sign for **Four Mile Village**. There is a lot of history inside that gate. A secret government testing facility for the American version of the deadly "Buzz Bomb" occurred there during World War II.

In the early 1940s, John and Dorothy Coffeen purchased the property but were delayed in using it by WWII. The Army Air Force requested use of their land for an important military mission. Germany had developed flying bombs, called V1 and V2 rockets. These were commonly referred to as "Buzz Bombs" due to the buzzing sound they made when in operation against a target. These flying bombs were used by Germany against England and nearly destroyed London during WWII.

The Allies had captured some of these deadly Germany rockets. These were used by the United States Army to replicate this powerful war weapon at Wright Field in Ohio. They named it the JB-2.



The JB-2 was the United States' first operational guided missile. About 1,300 were produced and shipped to Eglin Field where about 600 unarmed missiles were tested over the Gulf of Mexico.

In 1944, the Army Air Force at Eglin Field set up a launch site at this remote area just east of Destin to test the newly developed JB-2 rocket.

At the Coffeen Nature Preserve you can still observe the two missile launching ramps and the observation bunkers that were used during the missile testing from 1944-1946.



Susan and Bruce Paladini, the resident managers of Four Mile Village and Coffeen Nature Preserve, offer an interesting program where they educate visitors about the history of the military use of the preserve. To schedule a visit call 850/622-3700. Admission is free.

Local Destin fisherman also helped with the JB-2 test effort. They signed on to the newly formed Marine Unit at Eglin Field and operated what were commonly called the "crash boats."

In the photo below, the crew is shown with the boat in the background. Once a JB-2 missile was fired they would go into the Gulf of Mexico and retrieve the missile and its launch sled. The launch sled would be reused, and the JB-2 missile would be retrieved, studied and improvements would be made.



Marine Unit – Eglin Field, 1944

The author's father-in-law, Clarence Lee Marler, is on the front row, second from the left. To his right is Captain Nick Maltezo. Kneeling at the front right is Theo "Smoky" Shaw. Aubrey Jones is at the top right of the photo. Howard Marler's father-in-law is in the first row at the far left, but we do not know his name.

We need help naming the others in this 1944 photograph. Can you help? Just e-mail the name and location of your relative in the photograph to klein@aristotle.net.

H. C. "Hank" Klein is a Destin historian who visits Destin often and lives in North Little Rock, Arkansas with his wife (the former Muriel Marler of Destin). Klein recently published a historic book about Destin's pioneer settlers. **DESTIN Pioneer Settlers...A Land History of Destin, Florida from 1819-1940** can be obtained from Amazon.com, Tony Mennillo of Arturo Studios at 850/585-2909, Dewey Destin's Restaurants, in Destin, the Magnolia Grill in Fort Walton Beach, or Bayou Books in Niceville. Klein can be contacted at klein@aristotle.net.

This article is used with Mr. Klein's permission.

The making of a genealogist **Bill Royce Linder, 1937 – 2000**

Director of the Central Reference Division of the National Archives
Director of the National Institute on Genealogical Research, U.S. National Archives
Chairman of the National Genealogical Society

Bill Royce Linder was born in Kenedy, Texas, in 1937, the oldest of four sons born to Royce and Maxine Linder. He was attending the University of Texas in 1957 when he took a trip that helped change his future. He tells us of this trip in the definitive history of the descendants of Daniel Murphree, *The Murphree Ancestry of Bill R. Linder of Kenedy, Karnes County, Texas.*

In 1957 at age 20, I had the privilege to drive my grandparents from South Texas to Mississippi for a visit.



Bill Linder
Age 20, University of Texas, Austin

'Nanny' had been away from there for 65 years, having left Yalobusha County in 1892 as a child with her parents John and Jemima (Murphree) Shaw. Here I met more Murphrees than I could interview, and I even learned how to pronounce the name with emphasis on the "Murph" instead of the "ree". We excitedly took pictures of a roadside monument honoring Gov. Dennis Murphree, not realizing at the time that the honorable governor was a first cousin of Nanny's mother, and of my great-grandmother, Jemima (Murphree) Shaw.

Visiting relatives on both sides and extensions on the extended family, I was surprised at how very many of them Nanny knew. They either did remember, or acted as if they remembered Mattie. She found two Murphree aunts, three Shaw aunts, and a Shaw uncle, and Nanny was about to turn 76! There are some good genes in the family.

The cousins gathered other cousins, fed us far too much good Southern cooking, and toured us around the cemeteries, homesites, farms, churches, and small towns. A treat was a night at a county fair.

Graves of David Murphree, Revolutionary War Patriot, and his wife Jemima in the Airmount Cemetery. They were the first Murphrees in North Mississippi and were ancestors of Bill Linder, the Murphrees in North Mississippi, and many Murphree kin who moved on west to Texas, Oklahoma, and on further.



Nanny attended church as a girl in the rustic Primitive Baptist chapel at Airmount, which we visited. At another church her family had long ago attended, she sat at the piano and played hymns. While "What a Friend We Have in Jesus" echoed through the empty building, I saw tears on her cheeks and they rolled down mine, too.

At one of the cemeteries, where we went with pen in hand and cousin Guy Shaw as a guide, I did a double-take when I saw a gravestone for a baby named Linder Murphree. Later I learned that the baby was named after preacher Lee Linder, and was a brother of Gov. Dennis Murphree and of Anne B (Murphree) Inman, who would become the first president of the Murphree Genealogical Association (MGA).

Six years after that first Mississippi visit, I emerged as a spunky college grad and ambitiously married man; and was also suffering from a strong bite by the genealogy bug. My Murphree correspondence surfaced as the most prolific, so much so that I conceived the idea of being better able to cope by forming an organization and using a newsletter to communicate with everyone. The Murphree Monthly was born that fall. The Murphree Genealogical Association (MGA) blossomed out of the Monthly. Shortly, out of necessity, the Monthly calmed down to the Murphree Quarterly.

The organization and the newsletter have survived the past 35 years* and there are incredible accomplishments to boast. Hundreds, or even thousands, of Murphree cousins from all over have participated. These are tremendous people, the Murphrees. Throughout the traced history of the family, going back some 300 years in the South, Murphrees have been up front and willing. They have led, followed, pioneered, taught, argued, preached, judged, and politicked. Many farmed, some merchandised. Today -- as well as raising prize-winning bulls and beef, crops and kids -- they track El Nino, explore space, design networks, wear lots of hats as 'home executives', counsel foreign governments, manage banks, discover cures, build skyscrapers, model fashions, transplant hearts, and run daycare centers, colleges, and governments.

Join the MGA, if you haven't already. Start writing letters and visiting relatives and cemeteries as you develop your own family's history. Begin attending the national conventions and local reunions. You'll meet and get to know these nice, friendly, hard-working cousins with the Irish name of Murphree."

- Bill R. Linder

Deseret News, Salt Lake City, UT, 19 June 2000

Bill Royce Linder, former director of historical information at the National Archives and a leading authority in genealogical research, died June 9, 2000, at his home in Arlington, Va., of a heart attack. He was 63.

Mr. Linder worked as director of the central reference division of the National Archives from 1969 to 1982 before working as a systems analyst for the General Services Administration for 13 years. He retired in 1995.

Throughout his career, Mr. Linder maintained his own genealogical research, concentrating on American families. He wrote beginner's guides to genealogical research and family history and helped form organizations to support genealogical research. Most recently, Mr. Linder collected and posted information on selected American families on his Web site.

Mr. Linder was born in Kenedy, Texas, in 1937, the oldest of four sons born to Royce and Maxine Linder. He graduated from the University of Texas with a degree in history and did postgraduate work at Brigham Young University. He married Nancy Kathryn James in 1963, with whom he is the parent of five children and 12 grandchildren.

While living in Utah, Mr. Linder served as editor of the *Ensign*. In 1969, he was instrumental in establishing the first World Conference on Records, at the time that he joined the National Archives. For five years he served as a director of the National Institute on Genealogical Research in Washington, D.C., including the 1976 Bicentennial Session on Genealogy. Mr. Linder was also chairman of the National Genealogical Society, serving during the NGS's 1981 Atlanta and 1982 Indianapolis conferences.

Mr. Linder assisted many dignitaries with the development of the field of genealogy and lectured widely in the United States and abroad on genealogy, including hosting yearly genealogy tours in London, Salt Lake City and Washington, D.C.

*** Editor's Note: The Murphree Genealogical Association is still alive and well, 53 years after Bill Linder founded it in October 1963. My mother and her aunt were charter members. I joined many years ago and am currently serving as a member of the Board of Directors and have the honor of being the Webmaster for the Association. (<http://www.murphree.us>). Like Bill, I am descended from David and Jemima Murphree whose graves are pictured above. --Jim Young**

Events and Information of GSOC Interest

GSOC INFORMATION

Officers for 2016

President, Sue Basch
1st Vice President (Programs), Charlene Grafton
2nd Vice President (Membership), Jon Sheperd
Treasurer, Phil Hoge
Recording Secretary, Kathie Sheperd
Corresponding Secretary, Val Moreland
Immediate Past President, James Young
Journal Editor, Kathie Sheperd; Historian, TBD
Genealogist, Margaret Harris
Publicity Chairperson, Val Moreland
Webmaster & Newsletter Editor, Jim Young

Addresses

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

Meetings and Membership

Regular meetings of the GSOC are usually 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 download the membership form.

The Newsletter

The GSOC Newsletter is usually 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 youngjimy@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 2015 issue, was published and distributed in October 2015.

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.

Surname Websites – Jim Young

In addition to websites devoted to general family history/genealogy, there are many extremely useful ones that specialize in one specific surname (including spelling variations of that name.)

The article in this issue about Bill Linder mentions the Murphree Genealogical Association. Their Murphree surname website is www.murphree.us. My great grandmother was a Blue and I've found a tremendous amount of information about my Blue ancestors on the National Blue Family Association web site at:

<http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~bluefamily/>

The excellent Yancey Family Surname Resource Center at <http://yanceyfamilygenealogy.org/> has a tremendous amount of general information useful to all researchers.

Great Genealogy Web Sites

<http://www.yanceyfamilygenealogy.org/links.htm>

Great Genealogy Tutorials

<http://www.yanceyfamilygenealogy.org/tutorials.htm>

West Florida Genealogical Society

Saturday, September 3, 2016

West Florida Genealogy Library
5740 N. 9th Ave, Pensacola, FL
850-494-7373 Time: 10:00 AM

Fact or Fancy: How to Decipher the Oral Histories our Families Pass Down to Us

Speaker: Tom Sajwaj

When family members share stories which have been passed down through the ages, we sometimes question whether the information is factual or just family lore. Further research is required to decide. Mr. Sajwaj will show us how to determine which is correct and which is just fancy.

WFGS celebrates its own history in September. Founded in 1982, we'll mark this 34th anniversary with special refreshments before the meeting begins.

Members and guests are welcome to attend. Refreshments will be available at 9:45. Meeting begins at 10:00.

Contact: Charlotte Schipman, 850-477-7166,
cschipman@mac.com

MOHAMMEDANS IN WEST FLORIDA --Dean DeBolt

One of the concerns expressed in the 2016 Presidential Election has been the issue of immigration of Muslims and Syrians into the United States. Reactions to these issues are met with expressions ranging from acceptance to firm denials. The headlines in this article, however, do not come from 2016 . . . they come from 1893!

PENSACOLA THREATENED WITH MOHAMMEDANISM

On May 31, 1893, the Pensacola Daily News reported that they had received a report from the New York press that Alexander Russell Webb, a former U.S. consul who had embraced the religion of Mohammed, had announced plans to form colonies of Muslims in the southeastern United States. He was soliciting and collecting prices on

large tracts of land in Florida, primarily Jacksonville and Pensacola, as well as lands in Georgia and Alabama. Webb claimed to represent a syndicate of wealthy Mohammedans in India. Webb further noted that the Muslim Indians would be an industrious addition to the American workforce. The Pensacola newspaper was perhaps somewhat alarmed, using the word “threatened” as their headline.

**DO WE
WANT
THEM?!**

Alexander Russell Webb is known as America’s First Muslim. He grew up in Massachusetts and New York and began a career as a newspaper publisher in Missouri, succeeding to the editorship of the Missouri Republican in St. Louis. In 1887, he was appointed by President Cleveland as consular general to the Philippines in Manila. He began to study Islam and in 1888 formally declared himself to be a Muslim. His wife and children also became Muslims and he had a formal speaking tour of Indian cities. In 1892, he resigned and returned to America in 1893. He began a Moslem World Publishing Company in New York and became a leading exponent of the Muslim religion. He operated a lecture hall and made a speaking tour in various cities. In 1893 he attended the Columbian Exposition in Chicago as the only representative of Islam at the World Parliament of Religions assembly.



MOHAMMED ALEXANDER RUSSELL WEBB.

He published an English language newspaper Moslem World and promoted his book “Islam in America.” In his speeches, he criticized American bigotry against Muslims, and also urged the curious to at least study the religion before condemning it. He believed it unfair that if a Muslim did something wrong, Americans would condemn that individual as if he represented the whole religion.

With America focused on the World’s Fair, his remarks garnered wide publicity and especially after it was leaked by the Associated Press that he was preparing to buy land for settlements of Muslims throughout Alabama, Georgia, and Florida.

Following up their May 31st story, the Pensacola Journal on June 1, 1893, re-ran most of the same information under the heading “Do We Want Them?” Webb was further quoted as saying that he wanted to establish study “circles” in towns and cities to teach about the Muslim religion. He opined that these circles were not to make converts but ‘to soften the prejudice of Christians in America against the great religion of the Indies.’

The paper also published an editorial in the same issue titled “The Coming of Mahomet” in which the editor commented on an issue of “The Moslem World” that he was reading. He noted the assurance that soon we will

have “possibly near Pensacola, a large settlement of Mahometans who will own a large landed interest and be supported by ample capital.” The Pensacola editor noted:

SHALL THEY VOTE? CAN OUR REPUBLICAN INSTITUTIONS SUSTAIN THE WEIGHT NOW BEING PUT UPON THEM?

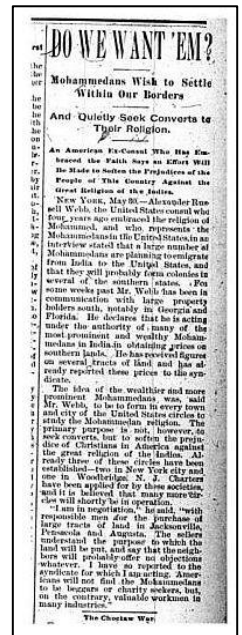
And the editor answered: “We must now practically demonstrate that we are sound enough in body and wise enough in policy to become in truth and in fact “the refuge of the nations, the asylum of the world.”

Other Southern papers had additional commentary. The Atlanta Constitution contacted the land agent for the Georgia Southern and Florida railroad who indicated he had not been approached but would certainly sell land to the Mohammedan syndicate. The Constitution further suggested that letting them colonize might be a good way to convert them to the Christian faith. The Florida Times-Union said an Islamic colony would be an added attraction for winter tourists. The Thomasville Times said “what is the world coming to?”

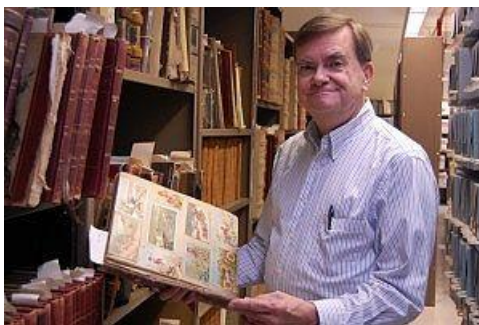
Did They Come?

No. Webb later complained that his foreign backers never came up with the funds, and after a flurry of newspaper reports and speculations, the story faded from public view.

In 1898 Webb moved to Rutherford, New Jersey, to edit the Rutherford News. He sold that newspaper to Capt. Addison Ely, who merged it with the Bergen County Herald. He held a number of political offices in Rutherford, New Jersey. In 1901 he traveled to Turkey having been honorary consul general for them in New York City. Webb died on October 1, 1916 in Rutherford, New Jersey. He is still revered as an example of an American Muslim hero.



Note: I initially did Pensacola research in 2005 for Brent D. Singleton, Reference Librarian at California State University, San Bernardino who later published “Minarets in Dixie: Two 1893 Proposals to Introduce Islam in the American South” (2006), Library Faculty Publications, Paper 12 (John W. Olin Library at CSUB). This story is an updated version of one wrote for the PHPS Newsletter in 2005 and incorporates information from Singleton and from America’s First Muslim Convert: Alexander Russell Webb by John L. Crow. —Dean DeBolt



Dean DeBolt is the University Librarian and Archivist of the University of West Florida. He’s served in this position since June of 1981.

As Librarian and Archivist, he oversees the largest and most comprehensive research collection in existence on the West Florida region, including the colonies of Spanish and British West Florida, and the ten counties of the Florida Panhandle, the history from earliest occupation to the present. Collections number 1.5 million items including rare books, photographs, maps, manuscripts, business records, family papers, genealogy, etc.

This article on Mohammedans in West Florida is used here with Mr. DeBolt’s permission. It was originally published in the August 2016 issue of the *Pensacola Historic Preservation Society NEWSLETTER*.

MINUTES OF THE 13 AUGUST 2016 GSOC MEETING

Genealogical Society of Okaloosa County

The meeting for this month was held at the Destin Library. President Sue Basch opened the meeting and welcomed our speaker, Kathy Marler Blue who would be speaking about early Destin History and the Marler family footprints in Destin.

OLD BUSINESS

Minutes from the July 9th meeting were approved by the membership.

Last month, our guest speaker was Dr Rucker who gave a very interesting talk about the Unionists in Florida. President Lincoln was not on the ballots in the south in 1860. Cotton was not a major interest in NW Florida so slavery was not an issue here. For more information, go to last month's minutes published in the newsletter.

Events: No one attended any genealogical events last month.

Door Prize: Kathy Marler Blue donated a book about Destin, Florida titled "Destin History ...And The Roots Run Deep" (authors Vivian Foster Mettee and Shirley L. Flowers). The book is about the pre-city era of Destin. We are most appreciative of her donation.

People Updates: Phil Hoge, treasurer, is recovering from heart surgery; Charlene Grafton, 1st VP, was in Jacksonville to witness granddaughter's graduation and Army commissioning.

GSOC Board Update from Sue: The Board voted not to update the constitution, but to maintain it as a historical update. The Board is reviewing potential sites to hold our monthly meetings next year. We are looking for a place that would accommodate more growth.

Journal Update from Kathie Sheperd: Margaret Harris requested one to two lines from members about their memories during the Vietnam War. She is compiling these for the Journal. Please get these to her now. The Journal is coming along fine: There was very little local information found in the libraries and museums about the Vietnam War era, so much of the Journal will be about how people in our local area were involved during the war.

By Laws: Jon Sheperd reported that we received two inputs for the bylaws, which had been updated by the Board, and these will be discussed at the next Board meeting (August 20th). There was also a typographical error which was corrected. The final proposed version of the By-Laws will be voted on at the next meeting and will be placed on the GSOC website.

GSOC Elections: It is nearing the end of the year and we will be electing new officers in November. To begin the process, we need a nominating committee. Please call/write Sue Basch if interested. Current Board Members are not eligible for the committee. The call for nominees will be in September. Voting is in November

and installation is in December (at our annual Christmas party).

REPORTS:

1st VP Charlene Grafton: Our guest speakers next month are coming from Chipley. Barbara Russell and Dorothy Pichardo will be speaking on "Cemeteries and the Electronic Obituary Service". October we will hear a talk on "Ethics in DNA" and November we will hear about the "Genographic Project" by National Geographic.

2nd VP Jon Sheperd/Membership: Jon introduced our visitors: Marian Roberts, Jeff and Laurie Freeman, Norma Freeman, and Joe Jenus.

Treasurer Phil Hoge: Phil could not attend, due to surgery recovery.

Recording Secretary and Publicity had nothing to report.

Genealogist, Margaret Harris: Margaret Harris reported that there are 3 Center for Lifelong Learning (CLL) genealogy classes available. (ABCs of Beginning Genealogy, Accomplishments in Genealogy, and Family History on the Internet). Registration is Sept 2nd (\$50/pp.) at 9 am-12pm Univ. of West FL (FWB campus) Auditorium. Late registration is Sept 6 & 7, UWF Bldg 1 Lobby - same time. Payment by check only. Classes begin the week of Sept 12 and the catalogue is on line (see www.cll-fwf.org/CLL_Courses.html)

GUEST SPEAKER:

Kathy Marler Blue spoke about the Marler Family in early Destin history.

Kathy began by telling the group about the Destin Fishing Museum where she has been the director since November 2015. Her family, the Marler's, were one of the early pioneers of Destin and her genealogical line is interrelated with other early Destin families. Kathy has been a genealogist and family historian since she was 17 years old and she is a member of the GSOC.

Destin was first settled about 1835 and remained a village until it was incorporated in 1984. There was no bridge until 1936, no electricity until 1938, and no telephone until 1952. Construction of the bridge (1933 - 1936) opened Destin to the World. Prior to the bridge, travel north, south, and west was by boat. Traveling east was through a pine forest.

In the old days, after the Civil War and through the early 1900s, there were 16 early pioneer families - she called them "pioneers of paradise." The surnames were Brunson, Calhoun, Chambless, Destin, Jones, Kelly, Maltzeo, Marler, Melvin, Oneal, Paschall, Shirah, Taylor, Walter, Wells & Woodward. The fishing industry began with Leonard Destin. He was the first person that made a specific mark on the area called the East Pass. He set up a fish camp.

Up to 1925, there were 41 seine boats powered by 68 young men, ages 12 and up, using hand lines and 20 foot

oars. It was difficult work. "The Primrose" was a historical old boat built in 1926 by John George Maltezeo and powered by a small motor. This old boat was restored and is located at the Destin Fishing Museum. It is historical because of the role it played in the fishing industry.



Miss Ida "Chinky" Calhoun takes a picture of her doll Daisy with a Kodak classic, Brownie camera, while a seine boat passes offshore in Choctawhatchee Bay in 1934. From the Photo Gallery of the Destin Fishing and History Museum

In the early days, excess fish were taken to Pensacola by schooner to barter and trade for food. Seine boats started to be converted to "Head Boats" (meaning the number of heads or people aboard). The first head boat was the "Martha-Gene" in August 1939 and it took passengers for deep sea charter fishing. This was about the same time electricity came to the village of Destin (1938). So the evolution of fishing boats went from Seine boats to Party Boats to Charter Boats.

The Destin family first came to the area in Sept 1833 from New London CT. They permanently settled here in 1852. The Marler family history started with William Elisha Marler. He entered the Civil War in 1861 and married Sarah Rotincia Lancaster in 1865. He was in a prison hospital after the war and came to the Euchee Valley area, then the Boggy area with his wife and family. He settled in Boggy Bayou in 1871.

His eldest son William Thomas Marler, "Uncle Billy" was the unofficial village manager; the doer who got things done. He was the guy that picked up the mail from Pensacola (by boat, beginning in 1896), was a teacher, a preacher, operated boats, and ran a grocery store. Since he picked up the mail and handed it out to families, Uncle Billy becomes the first postmaster. Kathy told the story how people picked up their mail at Uncle Billy's home (and stayed all afternoon and ate his food -- something that wore thin with Uncle Billy's wife as the years passed by). He eventually built a tiny building at the end of his driveway so he could dispense mail there instead of in the house, and the Marler family made it the old Post Office Museum after a formal post office was built. There were 6 Marler families who served as postmaster, so from 1896 to 1972, the Marlers handled the Destin mail. Uncle Billy also gave Destin its name and he named the village after his best friend and first employer.

Destin never had a lighthouse but had range (beacon) lights on land, to guide in the fishermen returning at dusk/dark weather. Thirty-six kerosene lamps were lined up just so, as to guide in the fishing boats at the end of the day. When the lamps were in proper visual alignment,

each boat would come in the pass accurately and would not run aground. The lamps started in the East Pass but went along Fort Walton Beach and Niceville. It was arduous work keeping them lit every day, and for very little pay. Young men hand carried the kerosene by a yoke and big buckets over the sand; a long walk across Destin to Highway 98. In 1960, Eugene Marler took over and he worked from dark to dark.

The Marler family started the annual Destin Christmas Eve Children's Party. It was the brain child of Uncle Billy so that every child had at least 1 gift and some nuts, fruit & candy. Before 1915 it was run by 2 families; the Destin's and Marlers, holding it at the community church.

The Destin Fishing Rodeo began in 1948. It began to extend the fishing season for tourists (and benefit the Destin area). Tyler Calhoun donated the land but \$1000 was needed to pay off the mortgage on the building. The Rodeo idea would bring in the money to pay off the mortgage. The name "Rodeo" came about because of the water-fenced off "pens" to hold the caught fish. Since they didn't have the ice, placing the fish in the water pens would keep the fish alive. The Destin Fishing Rodeo brought fame to the area. Today the Rodeo is held with over 100 categories with over 35 species of fish.

There is a Marler Family Cemetery off Calhoun Avenue, past Taylor Park. It is a private cemetery but the old names there reflect the early days in Destin. It is managed as a 501C non-profit entity. The city was incorporated in 1977.

Okaloosa Island is home to Marler Park. It is a wonderful and beautiful park that runs along the water, just behind the Emerald Coast Convention Center. It is a public park, but not well advertised so it is not crowded. It is a great place to have a picnic or to swim.

Kathy closed by saying how Destin was called "The World's Luckiest Fishing Village" because so many fish were caught off it's (deep water) shoreline. The sand is 97-98 percent quartz, created by glaciers from the Appalachian Mountains. The white sand runs 170-180 miles along the coast line. We are invited to come to the Destin History and Fishing Museum to see the old pictures, and early Destin memorabilia and heritage.

CLOSING:

Sue thanked Kathy for her time to speak to us and for providing such a wonderful talk (the pictures and slides were fantastic as well). She encouraged everyone to visit and support the Destin Fishing Museum.

The next meeting will be back at the Northwest Florida Heritage Museum on Sept 10th at 10:00 am.

/S/

Kathie Sheperd
Recording Secretary
Genealogical Society of Okaloosa County



Our September 10th, 10 a.m. program will be

**Cemeteries and
Electronically Preserving Obituaries as
Cultural Heritage (EPOCH)**

**by Barbara Russell and Dorothy Pichardo
Washington County Library System**

**Heritage Museum of Northwest Florida
Valparaiso, Florida**

"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**

