

Volusia County Genealogical Society

N E W S L E T T E R

DECEMBER 2013

37TH YEAR SERVING DAYTONA BEACH GENEALOGY

2013 OFFICERS

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Next VCGS Meeting December 19, 2013

Kim Dolce will present a program on "Information Gleaned From The FGS Convention"

Volusia County Genealogical Society

Minutes of Meeting on November 21, 2013

Opening of Meeting:

Cora May Hartzell called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. She asked everyone to stand for the Pledge of Allegiance.

Approval of Minutes:

On motion by Hal Gauper and second by Dave Farris, the minutes of the meeting of October 17, 2013 were approved as printed in the newsletter.

Treasurer's Report:

Kitty Consalvo was not present so Cora May Hartzell reported that the closing balance on October 17, 2013 was \$1,186.23. There were deposits of \$55.00 from dues and expenditures of \$28.45, with a balance on November 21, 2013, of \$1,212.78.

Publicity: Cora May reminded members that we do have a Facebook page and that it is used very little by our members.

Member Directory:

Cora May announced that the board was interested in making a Member Directory and they would be able to choose what information they want listed.

Program:

Kim gave the background and introduced the speaker, Jack Butler. He has over 10 years of research in his background, his main research being in Florida and the south. His program was "Wills and Estates."

When researching wills and estates, try to get the entire probate packet. It will contain a wealth of information that just the will, including petitions, applications, letters, bonds will contests, proof of heirship, guardians, inventories, sale bills, dowry receipts, and various account information. Do remember, that about 70% of people do not have a will.

Wills can show information including names and relationships, locations of properties, ancestors, and family members. Wills may also list previous owners of property and the financial status of the deceased. The inventory of property will show information on additional property. Newspapers would list information on estate sales, debts owed and information on money owed from others.

If any one has any questions about the program, Jack Butler's email address is jackbutler@shwgenealogy.com. His website is www.shwgenealogy.com.

Adjournment of Meeting:

On motion by Ruth Patrignani and second by Kim Dolce, the meeting was adjourned at 7:15 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Stephanie DiMatties

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VCGS Society Calendar

Thursday, Dec 19, 2013 Board Meeting 5 pm

Thursday, December 19, 2013 6 pm

**Kim Dolce will present a program on
"Information Gleaned from the FGS Convention"**

Volusia -Flagler Sister Societies

HGS Ormond Library Dec 12th—Holiday Party

GSSVC NSB Library, Sunday, Dec 8th Christmas
Dinner at Norwood's at 2:00 pm

GSFC Palm Coast Flagler Library - Wednesday,
Dec 18 at 5:30pm Christmas Party—Meeting—
Trivia Program

\$\$ **Report by Treasurer Kitty Consalvo** \$\$

\$1,212.78



Christmas Quiz

Q: Modern depictions of Santa Claus as a fat, jolly elf in a bright red suit with rosy cheeks and a long, white beard were inspired by...

- ☐ Coca-Cola advertisements of the 1930s
- ☐ The beloved children's poem "A Visit from St. Nicholas"
- ☐ The drawings of 19th-century cartoonist Thomas Nast
- ☐ All of the above

Q: True or false: The character "Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer" was originally created as a holiday promotional gimmick for the Montgomery Ward department store chain. ☐ True ☐ False

Q: The word "mistletoe" derives from an Anglo-Saxon phrase meaning...

- ☐ Dung on a twig
- ☐ Yule tidings
- ☐ Kissing weed
- ☐ Winter harbinger
- ☐ Bitter leaf

Q: True or false: Statistics show that the U.S. suicide rate increases significantly during the Christmas holiday season.

- ☐ True ☐ False

Q: According to folk tradition, the first person in history to decorate a fir tree with Christmas lights (actually candles, in those days) was...

- ☐ St. Nicholas
- ☐ Martin Luther
- ☐ King Henry VIII
- ☐ St. Augustine
- ☐ None of the above

Q: True or false: The beloved Christmas carol "The 12 Days of Christmas" was composed as a secret catechism for British Catholics during the Protestant reign of Queen Elizabeth I.

- ☐ True ☐ False

Q: Known to us today as "Santa Claus," the third-century monk St. Nicholas came to be associated with Christmas because...

- ☐ He was venerated for his piety and kindness
- ☐ He died in the month of December
- ☐ He was known as a protector of children
- ☐ He gave to the sick and needy
- ☐ All of the above

: The tradition of "decking the halls" with boughs of holly and other greenery originated from...

- ☐ Propaganda disseminated by the horticulture industry
- ☐ The need in bygone days to preserve plant life from harsh winter weather by keeping it indoors
- ☐ The superstitious belief that bringing greenery into the house during winter would ensure its return in the spring
- ☐ To add a bit of color to the typically dull Medieval décor

(Christmas Quiz - Continued from Page 5)

Q: True or false: The shape and color scheme of candy canes were originally intended to symbolize the purity of Jesus Christ and the blood he shed on the cross.

☐ True ☐ False

Q: The tradition of hanging Christmas stockings by the chimney was inspired by...

☒ The belief that stockings symbolize, in miniature, Santa's bag of gifts

☐ The legend of St. Nicholas, who is said to have provided dowries for three poverty-stricken sisters by dropping gold coins down their chimney and into the stockings they had left out to dry

☐ The story of baby Jesus, who had no stockings to wear

☐ None of the above

Q: True or false: Poinsettias are quite poisonous if eaten and must be kept out of reach of children and pets.

☐ True ☐ False

Q: What was the origin of the abbreviation "Xmas"?

☐ It was created by secular humanists in an attempt to dilute the Christian aspect of the holiday

☐ It was simply a side effect of the need for brevity in commercial advertising

☐ In Greek, the language of the New Testament, the name *Christ* begins with the letter *Chi* (X), which has been used for many centuries as an abbreviation for Jesus Christ

☐ None of the above.

Q: In what year was the earliest known commercially-made Christmas card sold?

☐ 1501

☐ 1760

☐ 1843

☐ 1941

(Answers on Page 5)

Stockings According to tradition, the original Saint Nicholas left gifts of gold coins for three poor girls who needed the money for their wedding dowries. One bag of gold coins is said to have landed in a stocking hung by the chimney to dry. Thus was born the tradition of receiving small gifts in stockings hung from the mantel. For almost two centuries, American writers have reflected on this cherished reminder of childhood. Among them was Washington Irving, who referred to "hanging up a stocking on the chimney on St. Nicholas eve" in the *Knickerbocker History of New York*. In 1883, a tongue-in-cheek editorial in *The New York Times* promoted use of the Smith Christmas Stocking, an elastic stocking "suited to the circumstances of every family."



DAR Meeting

The Sugar Mill Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution will meet at the Port Orange Christian Church at 804 Taylor Rd., Port Orange at 7:00 p.m. on December 17, 2013. The subject will be Federal Depository at Stetson Speaker, Barbara Costello, Stetson University's Government Documents Librarian. The public is invited. Please call the Regent at 760-9921 for more information. Has your family been in this country since the 1700's? If so, you might be eligible to join the DAR. We will assist you in your research to track your heritage.

DUES

A letter has been sent to all members who have not paid their dues for 2014 advising them of the increase and the change of the dues year.

All members who have not renewed by January 1st will not receive the January newsletter.

Answers To Christmas Quiz

All of the above

True

Dung on a Twig

False

Martin Luther

False

All of the above

The superstitious belief that bringing greenery into the house during winter would ensure its return in the spring

False

The legend of St. Nicholas, who is said to have provided dowries for three poverty-stricken sisters by dropping gold coins down their chimney and into the stockings they had left out to dry

False

It was simply a side effect of the need for brevity in commercial advertising

1843.

Volusia County Genealogical Society, Inc. Founded 1976, is the oldest Genealogy Society in Volusia County. Meeting City Island Library Daytona Beach, 3rd. Thursday, monthly at 6pm. Sept—June

Mission: Encourage Society Members and the community to find their ancestors and connect with the past. Provide enlightening speakers at the monthly meetings on relative topics to aid, assist and better our research. Promote the use of and growth of our genealogy research room, develop our resources and

Christmas Traditions

The Christmas season abounds with holiday customs and traditions, but most of us probably never stop to wonder about their origins. We decorate our homes inside and out with lights, candles, and greenery. We stuff stockings and send Christmas cards to family and friends. But why do we do these things year after year? Of course, we're celebrating the birth of Jesus, but did you know that many of our modern-day Christmas traditions have their roots in ancient cultures and practices, some of which actually predate Christ? Let's take a closer look at a few holiday customs.

Christmas greenery Christmas festivities often include the hanging of the greens. Christmas trees, mistletoe, holly, and poinsettias grace homes, businesses, and churches. Many traditions involving greenery originated in Druid, Celt, Norse, and Roman civilizations, which celebrated the winter solstice around December 21. Because the color green represented eternal life, plants that remained green throughout the year played an important role in these celebrations. The Romans celebrated the solstice with a mid-winter holiday called the Saturnalia, honoring the Roman god Saturn. They lit candles in their homes, spent time with friends and family, decorated their homes with wreaths and garlands, exchanged gifts, and feasted. As pagan cultures converted to Christianity, they continued many of their traditional winter solstice activities. Because the use of greenery had pagan origins, early church leaders often objected to its use. However, the traditions were so deeply ingrained that the customs continued - but from a Christian frame of reference.

The Christmas tree

Although the Romans used spruce and fir trees decorated with lighted candles and trinkets during Saturnalia rituals, the Christmas tree as we know it is a German tradition believed by some to have originated in the 8th century with Winfrid, an English missionary later known as St. Boniface. Others attribute the origin of the Christmas tree to Martin Luther in the 16th century. Luther, inspired by the beauty of the stars on Christmas Eve night, is said to have cut an evergreen and put lighted candles on it to represent the starry sky above the stable the night Christ was born. By the early 1600s, trees decorated with candies, fruits, and paper roses were a part of the holiday decorations in German homes. In 1841, Prince Albert, Queen Victoria's German-born husband, celebrated the birth of their first son with a Christmas tree at Windsor Castle. The English court adopted the custom, and soon it spread throughout England. In Victorian times, people decorated trees with candies and cakes hung with ribbon. German immigrants brought the Christmas tree tradition to the United States. Settlers most often used the cedar tree as their Christmas tree because of its abundance. They decorated trees with berries, popcorn, and Christmas gifts for the family.



(Christmas Traditions Continued from Page 6)

Mistletoe and holly

Ancient cultures believed bringing in green branches would ensure the return of vegetation at winter's end. They used mistletoe and holly in pagan religious rituals and to decorate their homes. Romans exchanged holly wreaths as part of their Saturnalia festivities. For several centuries after the birth of Christ, the Romans continued to celebrate Saturnalia. Christians began celebrating the birth of Christ in December while the Romans were holding their pagan celebrations. By decorating their homes with holly as the Romans did, Christians avoided detection and persecution. The early Christian church associated holly with various legends about its role in Christ's crucifixion. According to one legend, Christ's crown of thorns was formed from holly. The legend claimed that the holly berries were originally white, but were stained red by Christ's blood. So for ancient Christians, the sharply pointed holly leaves became symbols of the thorns in Christ's crown and the red berries drops of His blood. Mistletoe also played a role in various cultures. The Druids believed the plant was sacred and had healing powers. Mistletoe was an important element in the Norse legend of Balder, the sun god. The Romans considered it a symbol of hope and peace, so under the mistletoe. During the Victorian period in England, holly-



in the Roman era enemies reconciled day decorations included an ornate ring was suspended from the ceiling

Evergreen wreaths For centuries wreaths have represented the unending cycle of life and have been symbols of victory and honor. Ancient Druids, Celts, and Romans used evergreen branches in their winter solstice celebrations. As early as 1444, evergreen boughs were used as Christmas decorations in London. In 16th-century Germany, evergreen branches were intertwined in a circular shape to symbolize God's love, which has no beginning and no end.



Poinsettia Poinsettias are called the "flower of the Holy Night" because their red bracts are said to represent the flaming Star of Bethlehem. Native to Mexico, the plant was cultivated by the Aztecs. Seventeenth-century Franciscan priests in Mexico used the plant as part of their Nativity celebration because it bloomed during the Advent season. Worshipers placed the flowers around a manger built at the church altar. The plant is named after Dr. Joel Poinsett, an American ambassador to Mexico from 1825 to 1829, who was so taken with the plant that he sent cuttings home to South Carolina. The plants flourished in Poinsett's greenhouse. Credited with developing poinsettias for sale is Albert Ecke, a Swiss farmer who lived near Los Angeles in the 1890s. The Ecke family became the leading producer of poinsettias in the United States.

**The real reason for the season**

This year, as you select the perfect tree and pull the holiday decorations out of storage, take time to reflect with your family on God's gift of His Son. Regardless of the origin of our holiday traditions, we can joyously celebrate the truth that Jesus Christ, the Light of the world, has redeemed us and has delivered us from lives filled with darkness and superstition. We have a real reason to celebrate!