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Book Review

North Carolina Court Minutes

by Alan Miller

Mecklenburg County, North Carolina: Minutes of the Court of Common Pleas and Quarter Sessions. Vol I 1780 - 1800; Vol II 1801-1820; Vol III 1821-1830, Transcribed by Herman W. Ferguson. Rocky Mount, NC. 1995, 1997, 1998. Rocky Mount, NC, ix + 275pp, x + 342pp, x + 251pp

On November 26, 1811 Burton Belk came into the Court of Common Pleas and Quarter Sessions of Mecklenburg County, North Carolina and on the oath of John Ritch proved that he had lost a piece off his left ear by endeavoring to part two men who were engaged in a "quarrel." This was recorded and a certificate of same issued to him. Why was this important to Mr. Belk? Probably because it he did not wish to be mistaken for a common thief, as it was at that time the practice to nail such scoundrels to the stocks by their ears, later releasing them by cutting them loose.

This information is probably important to you only if either Burton Belk or John Ritch was your ancestor, but it illustrates the sort of personal stories sprinkled among the much more genealogically valuable data available in the minutes of early North Carolina and other state court records. County Courts were the lowest level court of record and so were the courts where the more day-to-day affairs of the community were settled and recorded. On the civil side these included the probate of wills and deeds, appointment of guardians and estate administrators, lawsuits of all descriptions, apprenticeships, bastardy bonds, citizenship naturalization, partitions of land, widow's dowers, and much more. Minor criminal cases such as gaming, tippling, assault and battery, thievery and similar offenses were dealt with, sometimes by minor fines, sometimes by confinement in jail or the stocks, lashing, or branding.

Other county business included assigning citizens to mark out and maintain roads as needed, and the names in each work detail often can supply hints as to where in the county an ancestor lived and who were his neighbors. Lists of insolvents may locate an ancestor too poor to own land or leave other records. A person could be released from paying personal property taxes when over age fifty years, so finding such a record may suggest an approximate age for the individual. And applicants for federal pensions usually had to have their personal data certified by the county, often in great detail.

The problem with accessing court records has always been the lack of indexes. Rarely were indexes created contemporaneously until the mid 19th Century, or when done, they were woefully inadequate. In a few cases local genealogical societies have supplied indexes, and during the depression the WPA transcribed and indexed some court records in a few states. But the best source is complete transcriptions of minutes with thorough indexes such as these provided by Mr. Ferguson, God bless him!

These volumes complement an earlier work by Doris F. Briscoe, which reproduced the earliest surviving Mecklenburg County Minutes, 1774 – 1780. All the volumes will be of great value to anyone researching Mecklenburg County history or genealogy. All are now available in the Local History and Genealogy section of the Irving Public Library.

Family Tree: Web site offers information on the past

By Ernest Thode, reprinted from the Marrieta Times (Ohio)

On Aug. 1, a new Web site became available, the Castle Garden Web site. What is Castle Garden? Castle Garden was what we think of as Ellis Island before there was an Ellis Island. It was where the majority of passengers to America landed prior to Ellis Island and when Ellis Island was damaged by fire, etc. I tried it at castlegarden.org and its look is similar to the Ellis Island site. There is also a search aid for this site online already at stevemorse.org/ellis/cgbrowse.html. An advanced search feature allows you to search by fields such as occupation or ship's name.

I gave it a trial run using some random locally familiar names and found Abicht 13 times, Wittekind 35 times, Schlicher 71 times, Highland 179 times, and Cawley 351 times. You can click on the name and find, depending on whether it appears on the ship list or not, occupation, country, place of residence, age, and other quite useful information. It is a very useful complement to the Ellis Island site.

The Canadian census for 1911 also came online recently, on July 21. There was much legal squabbling about this and whether any censuses at all would ever be released in Canada even 100 years or more after the enumeration, to have digitized images of any census is a great boon to genealogists. While not as many local persons will be interested in this census, it can still be of use if you have anybody living in Canada in 1911. However, you must know a location in Canada in order to use the site.

To test the site I used my surname. I know that a Henry George Thode, called Harry, was a scientist and university president at McMaster University in Canada. I found a biography and learned that he was born in Dundurn, Saskatchewan, in 1910. I see that he barely made the cut for the 1911 census. Because there is no name index (at least until some enterprising company gets to it), we need to go by geography, like we do in the Browse feature in unindexed censuses on HeritageQuest Online when we know a county and township.

After some trouble with the Saskatchewan land survey system, and the spelling of Dundurn (with a final E), I found the enumeration district number. I found that the pertinent district with Dundurn(e) had 19 pages. There are two ways to view the page. Applying Murphy's Law of Genealogy, I naturally found Henry George Thode on page

19. He was listed in the household of Charles Thode, 29, Johanna, 29, Eckhardt, 2, and Henrygeorge (looks like all one word), 9/12, which means 9 months old. The parents were born in the USA, although I would have guessed Germany, and the children born in Saskatchewan.

It has been some time since there were major new genealogical sites, but now there are millions of immigration records and 7,207,000 more Canadian digitized census records than there were just a couple of weeks ago.

Ernest Thode is head of the Local History and Genealogy Department of Washington County Public Library. He is a second place winner in the International Society of Family History Writers and Editors (ISFHWE) Excellence in Writing competition. Family Tree appears the first and fourth Friday of every month.

August Speaker—12 tips for researching your family

John Vincent Wylie will present the program on August 15 at the Irving Library at 7 pm. He will give us helpful tips from professional researchers to help us with our family history.

John is a full-time professional genealogist, serves the National Genealogical Society (NGS) as a member of the NGS-GENTECH Advisory Committee and the National Standards Committee; the Dallas Genealogical Society as Vice-President for Education and his church as Chair of the Information Technology Committee and as a member of its History Committee. From 2000 through 2004 he served on the Board of the Association of Professional Genealogists. He is the 2004 recipient of the Dallas Genealogical Society Lloyd Bockstruck Distinguished Service Award.

He was an active participant in the Genealogical Data Model Working Group, and served on the NGS Computer Interest Group Committee in 1999 and 2000. With Barbara, he is teaching a genealogical course at Mountain View College.

Did you do your homework?????

Did you take the time to fill out your paper from last month's presentation. We would like to know our members a little bit better and publishes some of your family information. Please **bring** your completed paper to the meeting and we will put your history in this newsletter. It will not be your obituary, just a paragraph or a short story about you. If you did not fill out a form, we will have some available for you at the next meeting..

New Titles at the Library

917.8042 MAC. Widener, Helen Ogden. *James Mackay: A Man to Cherish*. Pine Mountain Books. 2004

929.2 LYN. *The Lynch Family. American Genealogical Research.* 1976

929.208997 STA. Starr, Emmet. *Old Cherokee Families.* University of Oklahoma Foundation. 1972

929.3 BOW. Bowen, Jeff. *Cherokee Descendants. An Index to the Guion Miller Applications,* v. 2,3. Mountain Press. 1996-1998.

929.3 COC. Cocke, William Ronald. *Hanover County Chancery Wills and Notes.* Edwards Brothers Inc. 1940.

929.3757 HOL. Holcomb, Brent H. *Marriage and Death Notices from the Up-Country of South Carolina.* SCMAR. 1983.

929.375727 STO. Storey, Bill. *Genealogical Abstracts from Greenville County, SC: The Earliest Minute Books of Ten Baptist Churches 1794-1850.* Bill Store and Anne K. McCuen. 1992.

929.375743 YOR. Wells, Laurence K. *York County, South Carolina Minutes of the County Court 1786-1797.* Brent H. Holcomb. 1981.

929. 509761 MAR. Marine, Marilyn. *Morgan County, Alabama Cemeteries. Marine/Walls Historical.* 1984.

929.3758 DAV. Davis, Robert Scott. *A Researcher's Library of Georgia History, Genealogy, and Records Sources.* Southern Historical Press. 1991.

929.3769 MAR_ Marsh, Helen C. *1850 Mortality Schedule of Tennessee.* Marsh Historical. 1982

929.376947 FOT. Fothergill, Augusta. *Virginia Taxpayers_1782-87.* Genealogical Publishing. 1999.

929.5 ANC. *Ancestor Roster. A Cameo of the Ancestors of the Members of the Colonial Dames Seventeenth Century 1915-2005.* Heckman, National Society Colonial Dames. 2005.

973.3457 MOS. Moss, Bobby Gilmer. *Roster of South Carolina Patriots in the American Revolution.* Genealogical Publishing. 1994.

New at the Library.....continued

975.5916 CLE. Cleek, George Washington. *Early Western Augusta Pioneers.* Clearfield. 2001

975.727 HUF. Huff, Archie Vernon. *Greenville: The History.* University of South Carolina Press. 1995.

- 975.8552 WAR. *The Macon (Georgia) Telegraph, Jan. 2, 1833-Dec. 31, 1839 Abstracts. Heritage Papers.* 1993.
- 976.1 HAR. Harris, W. Stuart. **Dead Towns of Alabama.** University of Alabama Press. 1977.
- 976.4 CUE. Cuellar, Carlos E. *Stories from the Barrio. A History of Mexican Fort Worth.* TCU Press. 2003.
- 976.4 MEX. *Texas State Historical Association. Mexican Americans in Texas History.* 2000
- 976.4 SAN. Sanders, Marc. *Black Texas Women.* Eakin Press. 2002.
- 976.4004 BAK. Baker, T. Lindsay. **The First Polish Americans: Silesian Settlements in Texas.** Texas A&M. 1996
- 976.400441 FRE. LaGarde, Francois. *The French In Texas.* UT Press. 2003
- 976.4531 HAR. Harris, Rene, and Joyner, Arista. *Arlington: A Pictorial History.* Walsworth. 1982.
- 973.623 TIM. *The Mexican War.* Time-Life Books. 1978.
- 976.66805 HIS. *Johnston County History Book Committee. History of Johnston County, Oklahoma.* Curtis Media. 1988.
- 976.7 BIO. *Biographical and Historical Memoirs of Southern Arkansas.* Goodspeed. 1978.
- 977.852 JAM. *Jamestown Sesquicentennial Committee. Jamestown, Missouri. 1837-1987* B-W Graphics. 1987. 1837- 1987