



Irving Genealogical

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Book Review

Biographical History of Arkansas

By Alan Miller

Biographical and Historical Memoirs of Southern Arkansas. Goodspeed Publishing Co, Chicago, Nashville and St Louis. 1890, reprinted and indexed in 1978 by Southern Historical Press. 1088 pp + index

Along with the upsurge in national patriotism accompanying the 1876 celebration of the centennial of our country's independence came an interest in recording and preserving our local history. County and town histories were researched and published across the land, especially in the Northeast and Midwest. They were often called "mug books," as it was said that anyone could have his "mug" in them if he paid the fee, and no one could if he didn't.

In the Midwest and Southern states the Goodspeed Company became the dominant early publisher of these volumes. For each county a brief history of its settlement and early history was provided, followed by description of its businesses, educational institutions, churches, and natural advantages. A series of laudatory biographical histories of the leading citizens followed, sometimes with a portrait. Since the information was supplied by the citizen profiled in response to a questionnaire, its accuracy depended on the individual's personal recollections and veracity, but it was generally rather accurate. Ancestry of both members of the family was usually covered so far as known, along with ones business accomplishments and religious affiliation.

A problem with using many of these volumes for genealogical research is the lack of an index. This is remedied in most of the reprint editions (as in this one) by thorough indexing. Local historical societies have also contributed indexes in some counties. This allows one to gather information about an ancestor even if he or she is not the primary subject of the sketch, but perhaps married into the family.

The current volume covers twenty-one counties in Southern Arkansas, each in a separate chapter. It is an excellent example of the regional approach in these volumes, and deserves to be consulted by anyone whose ancestors may have spent time in the area. The book is a recent addition to the Local History and Genealogy Section of the Irving Public Library, donated in honor of Loderick Matthews.

Get 1/2 Off Your Membership Dues in '06

How?? By getting a friend to join! Bring along a friend who has an interest in family history. Get him or her to sign up as a member for the coming year and get your membership for 1/2 off. You and your friend benefit, as does the Irving Genealogical Society.

Book Donated in Memory of Earlene Hammer Harris

This month a book will be placed in the genealogy section of the Irving Public Library in memory of past member and friend Earlene Hamner Harris. The book chosen was **Virginia Revolutionary Pension Applications, Volume 51 Hamner-Harding** by John F. Dorman, 1958. Some of the information covered in these volumes includes United States & Virginia history, registers, genealogy, Revolution 1775-1783, military pensions, veterans, registers of births, and much more.

This entire set is comprised of 84 volumes and would make an outstanding addition to our library and we could all benefit from this set as most all of us have roots in Virginia. The price is roughly \$20 each. This could be a terrific gift to the library and the IGS. Please consider buying and donating one volume, whether in memory of a loved one or just because it's a volume you'd like to research. Volumes covering different letters of the alphabet can be purchased from:

**Appleton's Books and Genealogy
8700 Pnvl-Mthws Road, Suite 590-151
Charlotte NC 28226-4715**

Rangers, U. S. Marshals and Lawmen

By Gretchen D. King

When a family story says one of your ancestors was a Texas Ranger, U. S. Marshal or a lawman, where do you look to verify the story? The information you got was sketchy and the time frame was inaccurate. Where do you look?

If your ancestor was a U. S. Marshal, it is easy to verify. Virgil D. White has transcribed the names in Record Groups 60 and 287 from the National Archives. The "Index of U. S. Marshals. 1789-1960" is available in book form. Check your local library for the book or interlibrary loan. The U. S. Government also has a publication called "Register of the Department of Justice and Judicial Officers of the U. S., including instructions to U. S. Marshals, Attorneys and Clerks, 1885-1870," (Record Group 287, 46 volumes). These registers give the name, office, place of birth, place appointed from, where employed, annual compensation, and date of employment. These records are available from the Reference Service Branch, General Services Administration, Washington, D.C. 20408 for forms, cost and procedures to obtain these records.

If your ancestor was a deputy marshal you must search federal court records of the place your ancestor served, as the deputies are not listed in any index. This will require some time and a great deal of reading.

To find information on "Texas Rangers," the Moody Texas Ranger Memorial Library in Waco, TX is extracting names from official documents, books, magazines, photographs, etc and is creating biographical files on Texas Rangers beginning in 1823. The "Texas Rangers" were actually part of Confederate Army during the Civil War and the U. S. Army during the Mexican War. There were other groups called "Rangers" but they were part of the Railroad system. The Texas Ranger Library, P. O. Box 2570, Waco Texas, 76702-2570 offers a search service to genealogists at cost of \$20 per surname with includes copy service for up to five pages and postage.

The Texas Archives, P. O. Box 12927, Austin TX 78711-2927 has some rolls of microfilm dating from 1836. The Republic of Texas Rangers are listed on 2900 cards listing name, rank, enlistment and discharge date, and sometimes place of enlistment. They also have 8000 cards listing Texas Rangers during the 1880's.

Gunfighters and other lawmen are not as easy to locate. Information is usually contained in biographies and other manuscripts. The "Encyclopedia of Western Gunfighters" may mention your ancestor. Local histories, manuscripts and local newspapers often provide additional information. State libraries and archives can be helpful in finding these items.

Join us for the September 19th Meeting

Our Speaker for the **September** meeting at the library will be our own **Barbara Lancaster Tsirigotis**. She will share information on how to organize our many genealogical finds and all our paperwork. This is must for every genealogist. There is never too much organization of our files. Be sure to join us at 7 p.m. and bring a friend.

Mark Saturday, October 8th on your calendar! We are planning a trip to the Dallas Library for a day of Genealogy. Departure time will be announced Monday night. There are two ways to get there, by Trinity Express or by car. Sign up with Mary K . Dallas Library via Public Transportation from Irving instructions are as follows: Take the Trinity Express in the Irving area to Union Station in Dallas. Ride the bus to City Hall from the bus stop in front of Union Station. At City Hall, walk across the street to the library. For those wanting to get a little exercise, walk from Union Station up Young Street about 6 blocks to the library. Limited transportation by car will be available.

Our **October 17th** speaker will be **Barbara Wylie**. Barbara and her husband, John, have been working on a master project dealing with Methodist Research. Barbara will share her techniques and how they proceeded with the project.

Around Town and the Country

September 24, 2005 the Mesquite Historical and Genealogical Society will hold their fall workshop featuring Emily Croom. She is a noted author, lecturer, teacher and researcher and an avid genealogist for more than 30 years. Topics will include "Genealogy in the Urban South," "The Other Half of the Story: Researching Female Ancestors," "Old Dominion Research: Our Virginia Ancestors" and "Sifting Through the Ashes: Research in Burned Counties." Registration is at 8:30 am at the Mimosa Lane Baptist Church Fellowship Hall, 1233 N. Beltline Rd., Mesquite, Texas. The cost is \$27.00. Contact the Workshop Chairman, David Ladymon at 972-789-1686 for additional information. Don't forget the FGS is **September 7-10** in Salt Lake City.

Untapped Resources

Notes from the Mid-Cities Genealogical Society's Fall Workshop October 4, 2003 featuring Pat Gordon by Barbara Lancaster Tsirigotis

Throughout the country there are libraries and special collections virtually unknown to genealogists. These gems are found in college and university libraries. They may hold books, diaries, letters, journals, newspapers, manuscripts, photographs, oral histories, maps or Bibles that someone from the not too distant past simply couldn't throw away. Such collections are seldom used; therefore, many custodians may not even be aware of their existence. Call ahead before you head out on a research trip. Ask the hours of operation. Many such collections are unavailable on weekends; during the summer; or when students are away on break. Call on a weekday when you are more likely to get in touch with a full time librarian. Ask specifically for special collections pertaining to the history of the area and its people.

If you are very lucky, the collection will have been indexed; but, don't count on it. If there is an index, check not only for your ancestors surname but also for locations such as the community where they lived. While account ledgers and plantation ledgers may not mention your ancestor by name, they do give a timeline to follow and may describe the crops grown in the area and the weather conditions along that timeline.

Don't overlook an item because it was written by someone other than your ancestor. Perhaps it was written by a neighbor or someone traveling through the area who met your ancestor. You are very likely to find these documents have loose pages due to their age and frequent handling. It is important to maintain the correct order in which you found the pages. Such a collection is usually quite old and may even hold original documents. These items must be handled with great care.

Local Resources: Texas State Library List <http://www.tsl.state.tx.us/texshare/pl/texlibs.html#Academic>

Texas Tech University: Southwest Collection-Lubbock <http://swco.ttu.edu>

University of Texas: Special Collection-Arlington <http://libraries.uta.edu/SpecColl/>

Baylor University – Waco <http://www.baylor.edu/libresearch.asp>

Other Locations: Yale University, University of Arkansas, University of Georgia, University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill, and Samford University-Birmingham, AL

Newspaper Research

Notes from the Mid-Cities Genealogical Society's Fall Workshop October 4, 2003 featuring Pat Gordon by Barbara Lancaster Tsirigotis

When researching old newspapers for genealogical tidbits, keep the time frame in mind. Could your eighteenth century ancestors read and write? It's doubtful. That is one reason there were so few newspapers in the 1700s. Cost of paper and printing equipment are other reasons. When researching in newspapers, keep in mind that mainly the well educated, the affluent and the politically active could read and write; and, most of what was printed in newspapers pertained to them and their lives. Unless your ancestors fall into one of those categories, you are not likely to find anything printed in the very early newspapers about them.

By 1820-30 more and more people could read and there was great interest in gossip, deaths, and marriages. By the end of the Civil War reading and writing were more common; and newspapers were about the only way to get news to the settlers in the western part of the country. Farming was a mainstay, making farm and weather reports vital information to the farmer.

Always consider location. For instance, if your ancestor lived and died in Grapevine but there was no Grapevine newspaper at the time of his death, locate the nearest city that published a newspaper...Ft. Worth or Dallas perhaps. Newspapers weren't printed daily like they are today. Some were printed only once a month or whenever there was something worth reporting. Therefore, if your ancestor died on the 3rd of May but the newspaper was printed on the 1st of May, his obit would not appear until the following month. Farmers came to town on the average of once a month. If they had a wedding, death or Indian raid to announce, it may appear in the newspaper as much as 2 or 3 months (or more) after the fact. So, just because Aunt Gertie died on May 3rd doesn't mean that you should only search the paper issued in early May.

Today's newspapers are divided into sections such as Obituaries, Community News, Classifieds, Entertainment, etc. Organization or lay out of the news was not so important in the early years. Tidbits of news were plugged in wherever space permitted. An obit may appear on the front page following an article about a presidential debate; or, on the last page between a wedding announcement and an ad for a missing horse.

When searching for an obit, check the newspaper in the area where Aunt Gertie came from (perhaps she moved here from Smith County Tennessee) as well as the one near where she died. Also, if Aunt Gertie happened to be visiting family in Austin when she died, check the Austin paper as well. By 1920 there was a greater focus on obituaries. Funeral directors discovered it was a good form of free advertising; so, they became more diligent about reporting deaths and funerals.

Local community columns occasionally reported deaths, marriages and births of families in their particular community rather than including them in the usual obituary column. They also reported who was visiting in or out of town. Thanksgiving and Christmas were the main times of the year that people traveled to visit family. Otherwise, they were busy planting or harvesting crops. Bridal showers, young people going off to college or military were also items of interest.

Society pages included obituaries as filler when there wasn't much else to write about. In later years the classified section contained probate information which mentioned the name of the deceased. These ads usually had to run for 4-6 days before the estate of the departed could be settled. Sometimes, it was years after the death of the individual, especially if the individual died leaving minor children. Memorials were often printed around the one year and five year anniversary of the date of death of a loved one.

Around 1870, publishers discovered that the local courthouse was the place to find news. They could obtain a list of marriages (wherein the couples parents might be mentioned) who was suing whom, who was granted a divorce, who was appointed guardian of a minor, who sold land, who served on a jury, who was arrested, lists of epidemic victims, soldiers who died or were injured in the war, ships passenger list, etc.

Birth notices have only been reported in newspapers on a regular basis since about 1920, particularly in community newspapers or columns. Such notices were very irregular prior to 1900.

Unclaimed mail was a routine item in many newspapers. If the mail was not claimed within a set time, a dead letter list was printed to give the owner one more chance to claim his mail before it was discarded. Strangers staying at the local hotel were often listed along with their reason for visiting the town, and where they came from. Notices occasionally ran for lost family members. This was more common on the east coast where residents were searching for a new arrival from a foreign country or an indentured servant who had run away. Such ads were run in the South for runaway slaves.

Church announcements and various organizations sometimes listed their officers. Major religions such as Baptist, Methodist and Catholic often published their own newspaper. Advertisements sometimes listed the owner of the store and people who worked for them.

Ethnic newspapers should not be overlooked. They often ran lists of names of their people arriving in America in order to help them locate family already here. Departure lists of people traveling abroad were also published.

Until 1980, newspapers were ignored as a document worthy of preservation. The Library of Congress was one of the first to locate and record newspapers. There are 5400 titles found in Texas alone but only the newspapers of county seats were microfilmed. Some places to check for older newspapers are:

- Baylor University and Dallas Baptist Baptist newspapers
- SMU and McMurry Methodist newspapers
- New York Times 1851 – present Book form
- Univ. of Georgia 1828 forward, some are online
- Cornell University has put twenty-two 1800 magazines online
- National Union Catalog of Manuscript Collections
- Univ. of Virginia website has newspapers of Civil War period online

Remember, the older they are, the smaller the print!

We'd like to thank Barbara for attending the Midcities workshop and taking these good notes and sharing them with us. It is almost as good as being there in person.

Election Time

It is that time of year again and the election of officers for the 2006 year. If you would be interested in being an officer or a volunteer for a director position please contact Gretchen King or Barbara Tsigotis. Elected officers include President, Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer. Directors are Membership, Projects, Program and Publicity. We also need a Parliamentarian.

Don't Misspell the Word Genealogy

This is fairly basic, but many people new to genealogy research have trouble spelling the word genealogy. There are several ways that people spell the word, the most common being "geneology" with geneaology coming in a close second. A more exhaustive list will include almost every variation: geneology, geneaology, genology, geniology, etc. This may not seem as if it is a big deal, but if you wish to appear professional when you are posting queries or want people to take your family history research seriously, you will need to learn how to spell the word genealogy correctly.

Genealogists **E**vidently **N**eeding **E**ndless **A**ncestors
Look **O**bsessively in **G**rave **Y**ards

GENEALOGY