



Irving Genealogical Society

November 2007

Irving, Texas

Volume 15, Number 10

Officers:

President: Joe Sissom

Vice President: Jeanne Mantooth

Secretary: Is Needed

Treasurer: Erle Kellog

Newspaper Editor: Mary K. Weber

Coming Events

Monday, Nov. 19, 7:00 p.m., Irving Central Library - Donald Raney, a sixth generation Texan who has been an active genealogist for over 30 years, will be speaking about Early American Migration Routes. This lecture identifies the important overland migration routes used by American pioneers from 1700 until 1815.

Saturday, Dec. 1, 10:30 a.m.-12:00 Noon - Shirley Apley, Ft. Worth Central Library Senior Librarian, will present her program "Where Oh Where Is Bessie?" at the Tandy Lecture Hall of the Fort Worth Central Library, 500 W. 3rd St., Fort Worth.

Christmas Pot-Luck Supper

Monday, Dec. 17, 6:00 p.m. – Ruth Blough will be our hostess in her home.

There will be a sign-up sheet at the meeting next Monday night for those attending to list what they plan on bringing and how many will be coming with them. If you cannot be at the meeting Monday night, please call Ruth and let her know you are coming and what you are bringing.

Monday, Jan. 21, 7:00 p.m., Irving Central Library - Cheryl Vaughn will be speaking on Researching Your Indian Ancestry. She started doing genealogy in 1997 when she set out to prove her Indian Heritage. Since then she has received her certificate degree of Indian blood and has become a tribal member of the Cherokee Nation. Currently she holds membership in the First Families of the Cherokee Nation, and has traced her Indian heritage back to Nancy Ward, who helped the American Patriots in the Revolutionary War. In addition to her own Indian Heritage, she has researched her husband's Indian Heritage, and today Curtiss is a registered member of the Choctaw Nation.

Election of Officers for 2008

At our October meeting, VP Jeanne Mantooth presented a slate of officers for 2008 which will be voted on at our November meeting. Jeanne's slate: President, Joe Sissom; VP, Jeanne Mantooth; Secretary, still need a nominee; Treasurer, Erle Kellogg. In addition to this slate of officers, nominations will be accepted from the floor. There are additional offices that are appointed by the President-Elect. If you are interested in filling one of the positions for 2008, please get in touch with the new President after the election.

Saints & Sinners Tour

Barb Tsirigotis

On Saturday, October 27th, at 1:00 and 3:00 p.m., the Oakwood Cemetery in Fort Worth and the North Fort Worth Historical Society hosted the first ever Saints & Sinners Tour of the Oakwood Cemetery. Tour Guide, Quentin McGown, said he hoped to have at least 50 people show up between the two tours. He was amazed when over 200 attended the first tour and about 150 showed up for the second tour. The crowd was made up of historians, tourists, genealogists and curiosity seekers; and, it didn't hurt that Halloween was just a couple of days away. No one knew quite what to expect, but none were disappointed.

Mr. McGown was sharply dressed in turn of the century evening attire complete with tails, purple cravat with a diamond stick pin. He took us first to the Oakwood Chapel which stands at the north gate of the cemetery. It was built in 1912 with funds raised by a group of women. Funerals were held on the upper floor, and the lower floor was used for the storage of bodies arriving from out of town by horse drawn hearses. Well preserved stained glass windows surround the chapel.

At the next stop on the tour a lady and gentleman in period dress awaited us. He introduced himself as John Peter Smith, "the father of Fort Worth." Mr. Smith said he was born in Kentucky in 1831 and made his way to Fort Worth in 1853. He was a school teacher, a surveyor and even practiced law. In 1867 he married the widow Mary Fox with whom he had five children. He served as mayor several times and was a staunch advocate of education, public transportation, parks and hospitals. Mr. and Mrs. Smith donated the original 20 acres where Oakwood Cemetery is located.

Farther down the path we came upon the grave site of Belle Burchill, and yes, Ms. Burchill herself. Ms. Burchill told us she organized the Fort Worth Benevolent Association which provided a home for orphans. She also taught school and campaigned for women's rights, and, as postmaster in 1881, she initiated home delivery of the mail. A few steps farther brought us to Luke Short, a gambler and partner in the original White Elephant Saloon. On February 8, 1887 Mr. Short shot "Long-haired Jim" Courtright on the street in front of the saloon in one of the last big shootouts in Fort Worth.

Next to greet us was none other than Timothy Isaiah "Long-haired Jim" Courtright and his wife Betty. Mr. Courtright had quite a colorful past on both sides of the law. He lived life on the edge but always managed to escape incarceration. He was a former city marshal who was very good with a gun. In fact, he taught his wife Betty to shoot and she worked at a shooting gallery just down the street from the White Elephant Saloon.

The most enchanting spirit of all awaited us at Soiled Dove Row. This was a group of unmarked graves which were only recently discovered to be the resting place of several of Fort Worth's fallen women. Research showed that the plots had been purchased by a well-known madam. A lovely lady in bright dress, big hat and an abundance of cleavage was there to greet us. She talked about the prominent men of Fort Worth who visited her often and provided bail when she was arrested some 193 times for vagrancy...a more tasteful term for prostitution.

Buried on a hilltop overlooking downtown Fort Worth was J. B. "Jim" Miller, a notorious killer for hire. Dressed in a long black coat and carrying a shotgun, Mr. Miller told us of his experiences as a gunslinger and how his favorite mode of operation was a late night ambush. While jailed in Ada, Oklahoma awaiting trial for killing a local man, a mob took justice into their own hands and lynched him.

At our next stop we were greeted by the Cooper family. Descendants of the late Cooper family were dressed in 1920s costume and told stories of the life of William T. "Buck" Cooper, Minerva Cooper and Daisy Cooper Mims. The stage (plot) was set with a large floral hat box, and an antique occasional table which held a small lamp, a ladies purse and gloves. The Cooper family arrived in Fort Worth in 1888. Buck was a well-known businessman and saloon owner in North Fort Worth.

Young Ada Loar Mustard was out next spirited encounter. At the age of 17, Ada visited the Texas Spring Palace on the night of the fire in 1890. She helped to rescue numerous women and children from the Palace which was constructed entirely of agricultural products.

At our last stop on the tour we came upon a man sitting on the ground, leaning against his tombstone, hat pulled down over his face, and napping in the shade. When we woke him he told us he was H. P. Shields, an Irish immigrant who arrived in Fort Worth before the railroad. He proudly stated that he was a solid citizen and had served the city as an early city marshal, police officer and officer of sanitation.

It was a delightful tour and I do hope they make this an annual event.

Open Records Urged for Adult Adoptees

The Associated Press

New York – It's among the most divisive questions about adoption: Should adult adoptees have access to their birth records and be able to learn the identity of their birth parents?

In a report being released today, a leading adoption institute says the answer is yes and urges the rest of the U. S. to follow the path of the eight states that allow access to all adults who were adopted. "States' experiences in providing this information make clear that there are minimal, if any, negative repercussions," said the Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute in the report. "Outcomes appear to have been overwhelmingly positive for adult adopted persons and birthparents alike.

Opponents of open access argue that unsealing birth records violates the privacy that birth mothers expected when they opted to give up their babies. They raise the specter of birth parents forced into unwanted relationships with grown children. But the Donaldson Institute says most birth parents welcome contact with the children.

Opening the records through legislation has been slow. The most recent state to opt for open records is Maine; a law signed in June will allow adult adoptees to access their birth certificates starting in 2009. One of the bill's sponsors was state Sen. Paula Benoit, an adoptee who lobbied all her colleagues.

In Connecticut, where bills have failed in the last two years, bill foes included the state chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union, which says it was speaking for birth mothers reluctant to speak out publicly.

In New Jersey, where a campaign to pass an open-records bill was derailed again this year, the opposition includes New Jersey Right to Life and the New Jersey Catholic Conference. They argue that eliminating the prospect of confidentiality might prompt a pregnant single woman to choose abortion rather than adoption.

The Donaldson report says evidence from open-records states indicates there is no proof that abortions rise, that adoptions decline, or that birth parents are harassed following a switch to open records. "There has been no evidence that the lives of birth mothers have been damaged as a result," the report says.

Eight States Allow Access - Kansas and Alaska never barred adoptees from seeing their birth certificates. Since 1996, six other states – Alabama, Delaware, Maine, New Hampshire, Oregon and Tennessee – have decided to allow access to all adult adoptees. Texas law does not provide for open access to adoption records.

LDS Indexing Project

Mary K. Weber

I recently discovered another wonderful source of death certificates for my Ohio ancestors and relatives. LDS with the help of volunteers has put digitalized copies of Ohio death certificates for the years 1908–1953 online at:

<http://search.labs.familysearch.org/recordsearch/start.html?datestamp=1193689479706>. There were some married names for some of my Dorff females that I didn't have as well as other family information. In addition to the Ohio death certificates, copies of George death certificates for the years 1914-1927, which I also needed, and Utah death certificates for the years 1904 – 1856, again certificates I needed, are on this web site. I am not sure all of the certificates for these projects have been included at this time as it appears to be a work in progress. If you would like to volunteer helping to index the records being put online, there is information for doing this as well. While going through the Ohio death certificates, I sent corrections for names that had been input wrong even though they were right on the certificates. Some of these names were difficult to read which resulted in the misspellings. Some were just misread or mistyped in the index. This was something I could do to help with the indexes. There are lots and lots of records that are being worked on and much help is needed. If anyone is looking for a project to work on, volunteer to help.

The Year Was 1886

The year was 1886 and Chicago, Illinois--at the time only fifty-three years old--had grown to become an important trade center. But as in other parts of the country, divisions between capitalists and labor coupled with economic instability to cause friction. Unions were pressing for an eight-hour workday.

On 3 May, following a national eight-hour walkout, violence broke out at a union rally, and clashes with police resulted in the deaths of two workers. Another outdoor meeting was planned for the following evening at the Haymarket on Randolph Street near Desplaines Street. The police and government officials were worried that the assembly would turn violent and as the meeting was winding down, police marched in and ordered the attendees to disperse.

A bomb was thrown into the gathered police, setting off a wave of gunfire in the panic that ensued. Seven policemen and at least four workers were killed in the Haymarket Riot, and more casualties would follow. Anarchists were rounded up and arrested. Eight men would be charged with conspiracy, although the actual bomb thrower was never discovered and it was never proven that the eight men had planned the bomb throwing. They were convicted on the grounds that their speeches and actions had incited the mob actions. Four of the men were hanged, another condemned to die committed suicide, one was given fifteen years in prison, and the other two--originally condemned to death-- had their sentences commuted and were eventually pardoned in 1893. To learn more about the Haymarket Riot, the conditions that led to it, and the aftermath, visit the Chicago Historical Society's online exhibition, *The Dramas of Haymarket*.

In Vancouver, British Columbia in Canada, workers on the Canadian Pacific Railroad lost control of a fire set to clear some land when a sudden blast of wind blew up. The flames spread quickly consuming buildings and people in their path. In less than forty-five minutes, the two-month-old city was in ruins.

On 31 August, a magnitude 7.6 earthquake struck Charlestown, South Carolina. The strong earthquake devastated the city leaving 90 percent of the buildings damaged or destroyed, and sixty people dead. Damage was reported within a radius of about one-hundred miles, and the quake was felt in thirty states and Ontario, Canada. Images of the damage can be found on the Earthquake Center at St. Louis University website.

Drought plagued the western U.S. that year, and the 22 July New York Times reported the following:

FLEEING FROM DROUGHT

Fort Worth, Texas, July 21.--*Throughout the day wagons loaded with families and their effects from the western counties have been streaming through the city. They are fleeing from the drought prevalent in the western counties and have come here in the quest of work. They give most gloomy accounts of the condition of crops and the lack of water for stock. It has not rained in some of these drought-stricken counties for over a year. Hundreds of families are abandoning their cattle and homes and going eastward to keep from starving to death. The situation is critical. Rain seldom falls in this drought-stricken district during August, and by that time there will be nothing left in the country.*

If you were parched in Georgia, there was a new way to relieve your thirst. 1886 was the year that an Atlanta pharmacist, Dr. John Pemberton, came up with the syrup that would be combined with carbonated water to become Coca-Cola. – From Ancestry Weekly Journal.