

# TREASURES IN THE CLOSET

By Randy Seaver

What genealogy treasures hide in your closet or those of your parents and grandparents? Let me tell you about mine.

When I started doing genealogy research in 1988, my mother, Betty (Carringer) Seaver, gave me boxes of books and papers and pictures to sort through – the remnants of four generations of her family. Over the years, she discovered more records in her house and gave them to me. When she died in January 2002, I did not expect to find much more. So I was surprised by all the Treasures in the Closet.

A little background. My great-grandparents, Austin and Della (Smith) Carringer came to San Diego on their honeymoon in 1887 and settled in National City. In 1895, they built a one story house with a widow's walk at the corner of 30th Street and Hawthorn Street in what is now the Brooklyn Heights section of San Diego, just east of Balboa Park. My grandfather, Lyle Carringer, who was an only child born in 1891, married in 1918 to Emily Auble, also an only child, and built a house on the family property. My mother was born in 1919, and was also an only child. Emily's widowed mother lived with Lyle and Emily, and Della's widowed mother lived with Austin and Della. In 1927, Austin put a second story flat on the original house and moved it to the middle of the block. Austin and Della died in the mid-1940's, and the widowed mothers died in 1931 and 1952.

My mother married Fred Seaver in 1942, and started a family. Lyle and Emily moved into the original house in the downstairs flat, and my parents moved into the upstairs flat. This was my childhood home at 2119 30th Street in San Diego. In 1950, Lyle and Emily Carringer bought a small lot on Point Loma overlooking San Diego Bay, built a house on the lot, and moved there. They died in the mid-1970's, and my parents moved to the Point Loma house in 1978. They then sold the 30th Street properties.

Now – the Treasures. While cleaning out the Point Loma house to prepare it for sale, I found:

- An old brown briefcase in the back of the bedroom closet – it contained the handwritten family wills, the deeds for all of the houses, rent books and records for 40 years, and WW I military records for my grandfather, Lyle Carringer.
- Three boxes of financial records in the bedroom closet – including my parents tax returns from 1944 on, and year-by-year envelopes for my parents and grandparents from 1971 on.
- In another closet was my mother's baby book, a portfolio of her school, concert and art work, her wedding album, her high school and college yearbooks, her schoolteacher credentials and work history, and my father's WW II military records.
- The family room book case held many books from the 1860's and 1870's, and some of them were Austin Carringer's school books. An account book of Austin's father, David Jackson Carringer, dated to 1874 in Caribou, Colorado, was found, but many pages were covered by pasted newspaper articles with later dates. Five account books of Lyle Carringer, dating from 1919 to about 1950 (not complete) were found, revealing details about their lives – income, expenses, family events, current events, etc. I have gleaned quite a few genealogical nuggets about the extended family from these books. As I read them, I shared their heartbreak when their parents died, and their joy when their daughter married and had children.
- In the second bedroom closet, I found a spoon holder with six silver spoons. A note was attached to the back

of the spoon holder giving the provenance of the spoons – four were from Della Carringer’s grandmother and two were from Emily Carringer’s great-aunt.

- Perhaps the most intriguing find was the cache of 8 mm movie films. Lyle Carringer was an inveterate photographer, and I found about 40 movies dating to the early 1940’s and extending into the late 1950’s, including a movie of my parents wedding and my brothers and I as children. I also found the 10 movies that my father shot in the 1965 to 1980 time frame, including my own wedding. I am gradually having these converted to DVD and will pass copies to my brothers and my children.

Obviously, I was very happy to find all of these Treasures, and they really helped me deal with my grief for my mother’s passing. My overwhelming feeling is one of thankfulness for each member of this family – for their love in nurturing their children, for their hard work in building houses and living responsible lives, for their thrift and financial wisdom in navigating the 20th century, and for the immense good luck that they all kept most of their “household stuff.”