

Genealogical Society of Okaloosa County Meeting Minutes, 25 August 2018

GSOC President Jon Sheperd welcomed members and visitors to the meeting, including Dr. Jamin Wells, GSOC's guest speaker. There were 22 people present.

OLD BUSINESS

Minutes: The minutes from the July meeting were in the August GSOC Newsletter. With no changes or additions, the minutes were approved by acclamation.

Family History Fair: The LDS church in Panama City had a Family History Fair on Aug 4th. Jon and Kathie Sheperd were the only GSOC members who attended. Jon gave a presentation on Military Records. There were many other interesting topics discussed.

2018 Journal: The latest update from Cindy Barber is that we have 15 people that submitted a story on why they or their ancestors came to NW Florida. Jon requested all other articles be turned in by the end of the following week to Cindy.

West Florida Genealogical Society 2018 Seminar: As mentioned at the last meeting, the West Florida Genealogical Society is holding an all-day seminar with guest speaker, Dr. John Colletta, author of the popular book, "They Came In Ships" on October 27th from 9am to 4pm with continental breakfast and lunch. The deadline for registering is Sept 30th and the cost is \$35 for members or \$40 for non-members. Go to their website to register/download a registration form.

<https://wfgsi.org/eventListings.php?nm=34>

NEW BUSINESS

Door Prizes: Jon won a jar of fig jam donated by Val Moreland and Marion Roberts won the jar of honey harvested and donated by Ed Crosby.

New England Trip: Jon and Kathie just returned from a 3600 mile trip to the New England area. While there they attended a family reunion on Kathie's mother's side, researched ancestors at the Connecticut Genealogy Society Library, the Connecticut state genealogical library, the New London, Connecticut library genealogy room, and the New England Historical and Genealogical Society (NEGHS) library in Boston. They both added numerous ancestors to their trees and learned a lot more about their New England roots. Jon passed out some handouts from the NEGHS to include a brochure

on the NEHGS and a guide on caring for your personal heritage photographs. They also picked up the latest NEHGS magazine called "American Ancestors" which was passed around and then left in the GSOC cabinet for reference. It had a special section on Mayflower ancestry and Mayflower lineage societies (2019 is the 400th anniversary of the Mayflower sailing to America).

Food Story Project: Cindy Barber forwarded Jon an email from Mr. Oso Wallman who is leading a Food Story Project which collects family food histories. This is part of a ten year documentary on food linguistics and histories. He is collecting these stories at the Baker Block Museum on Fridays from 11-3. Jon will forward more information via email and encouraged members to support the project if they have some family food recipes/histories to share.

CLL Classes: The Center for Lifelong Learning will begin its fall semester starting the week of September 17th. Classes last for eight weeks. There are 64 classes offered with 24 of them new. The genealogy classes being offered include: Beginning Genealogy taught by Hilma Jenus and Tom Sajwaj, Family History on the Internet being taught by Jon Sheperd, Genealogy Forum being led by Hilma and Tom, and finally a new offering, Genealogy DNA Testing for Dummies being taught by Cindy Barber and Tom. Registration for classes will be on Friday, Sep 7th from 9am to 1 pm. Due to construction the registration will be in the Administration building 1 and not the auditorium. To find out more information about CLL and courses being offered go to their new look page at <http://cfl-fwb.org/>.

Lunch at local restaurant: Lunch was at Fusion Bistro, 9 Eglin Pkwy.

REPORTS:

1st VP: Upcoming presentations: Virginia Shelby will give a presentation on Native American Research at the September meeting. We will do a GSOC member "Show and Tell" at the October meeting. More details on that at the next meeting.

2nd VP Jerry Rush: Nothing sufficient to report.

Treasurer Phil Hoge: GSOC funds are \$2038.05.

Recording Secretary Kathie Sheperd: Fort Walton Beach Library Update: A large portion of the genealogy section's books are still off the shelf until the library has the

time to catalogue them. Kathie will provide a further update next month. Marion Roberts donated 6 books for GSOC use and they will be in the cabinet for the near future. These are older reference books about doing genealogy research in Georgia, Alabama, Virginia, South Carolina, etc.

Corresponding Secretary Val Moreland: Val reported that a couple of individual emails are not working. She will try to contact those members for an email update.

Newsletter, Ed Crosby: Nothing sufficient to report. Jon thanked Ed for this month's GSOC newsletter.

Webmaster, Jim Young: Just a reminder that our website is temporarily located at <http://www.youngj.us/GSOC> until RootsWeb is back up. Jim said it is almost ready. He also passed around 2 very nice books which were published through createspace.com. Members will recall that last month's speaker spoke to us about this great resource for self-publishing. (**Update:** As of 1 Sep the website is back up and can be found at <http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~flocgs>)

Genealogist, Margaret Harris: Margaret is still recovering, but Val Moreland reported that she is slowly making progress.

There was no other old or new business.

PRESENTATION: Jon Sheperd introduced our speaker, Jamin Wells and said we are fortunate that he was able to speak to our Society. Dr. Wells is an assistant professor and director of the Public History Master's Program at the University of West Florida. He teaches courses in local, environmental, digital, and public history. Dr. Wells has an undergraduate degree in history from the University of Rhode Island and master's degrees from the University of Rhode Island and the University of Delaware. He earned his Ph.D. from the University of Delaware where he was a fellow in the Hagley Program in Capitalism, Technology, and Culture.

Dr. Wells has special interests in Coastal history, history of capitalism, community history, history of violence, historical memory, and digital humanities. He has written several articles for publication and one book all dealing with shipwrecks. He is committed to researching, writing, and teaching a usable past.

Dr. Wells:

Oral History Workshop: Oral history is a huge topic. It's an inherently radical and complex undertaking. Consider oral history is everyday life and it is often stories that are excluded or ignored. Oral history humanizes the past, but it is a co-creation; we are creating a historical document. What can we take from the story that is valuable? To know what someone DID is to know only half of the story... For the genealogist, why did they buy the land? What did it mean to them? Oral history goes back to ancient origins such as in West Africa or China, long before writing. In the U.S., the birth of modern oral history was developed with the WPA, Works Projects Administration, a New Deal jobs program. The WPA developed state and local guides and some are on line. Example: Florida Folklore with slave customs and anecdotes. You can find this collection at the Library of Congress, with many other oral histories. Oral History grew in WWII and when the cassette player was invented, it revolutionized the oral history movement. Then books were published, like ROOTS and the Foxfire books.

An excellent resource is a book titled: Doing Oral History by Donald A Ritchie (he was the former oral historian for the U.S. Senate).

The experts all agree that there is no uniform way of doing oral history because procedures and interpretations are constantly evolving. We tend to learn by doing. Rules for success: Preparation (for every hour spent interviewing, there should be 10 hours preparing). Interviewers must be flexible, empathetic (very difficult, but it helps to build trust) and honest (why are you interviewing the individual?).

Step 1: Setting up the project. Who to interview and why? What is the focus topic? What kind of questions will you ask? Who will benefit – a library, family or other people in the future? What will the outcome look like? The worst outcome is doing nothing but adding to the family tree. Think about the family history you can get out, such as high school experiences, what was significant to them. The most challenging issue: first contact. Remember to be honest with the person, do preparation and discuss copy right. The interviewee must sign a release or a gift deed otherwise he/she or their heirs will own the story/material and it can't be shared publically. (Dr. Wells related how he and one of his college classes interviewed (oral history) many town members of Century Alabama. The interviewed signed their stories to the city library.)

Step 2: Prep for the interview and do your background research. Make at least 10 open ended questions, i.e., “Tell me what the library was like when you were in elementary school...” Practice interviewing – use a neighbor or friend to ensure your recording equipment functions and that your questions are audible.

Step 3: Recording the interview: The legalities and ethics of oral history are rather specific – refer to Oral History Association (www.oralhistory.org) for a Release/Gift Deed. Check out your technology: recording level and battery, ensure you press record (!!), monitor the effort, and save and upload as soon as possible.

Step 4: Use good interview techniques: listen and don’t interrupt; be flexible. Respect their privacy and confidentiality and show empathy and gratitude. Set the stage for later listeners with information like date, and place, and who the interviewee is. Use those easy open ended questions to build trust and demonstrate a strong interest in what they are saying. Note topics to explore later. Do not offer your opinions. After they answer completely you can expand or clarify earlier points with closed questions. Always keep confidentiality foremost and do not hesitate to point out apparent contradictions as something to clarify. Hold sensitive questions until you can build trust and turn off the recording if asked.

Step 5: The Final Project: Make transcribing the interview a priority and receive your narrator’s input. Share the story through different outlets.

Step 6: Determine who gets your recordings and why. You may need to establish access authorization as well as preservation. Remember that good notes and biographical paperwork are essential. See o.transcribe.com to help slow down the digital recording so you can transcribe. Know when a project is truly finished.

To learn more, check out:

Oral History Association (<http://www.oralhistory.org/>)

Story Corps (<https://storycorps.org/>)

UWF History Department (<https://uwf.edu/cassh/departments/history/>)

Jamin Wells (email: jwells2@uwf.edu)

CLOSING:

Jon thanked Dr. Wells for his informative presentation and thanked everyone for coming. The next meeting will be at the Fort Walton Beach Library on September 22nd at 10:30 am when Virginia Shelby will do a presentation on Native American Research.

Kathie Sheperd
Recording Secretary
Genealogical Society of Okaloosa County