

# The Pasco County Line

P A S C O C O U N T Y G E N E A L O G I C A L S O C I E T Y

**SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:**

- Find out what Sandra Haxton is up to
- See who won an award
- Learn a bit about Florida's reconstruction and renewal
- Read Cathy Vance's submission to the writing competition

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**ORLANDO GENEALOGY CONFERENCE**

On October 25th, six members of the PCGS and one volunteer from LDS Dade City Family History Center gathered together for lunch to discuss what interesting sessions they had just attended. Brenda Riley, Ellouise Wynn, Ann Baker, Gabrielle Judah, Suzanne Plasse, Virginia Britten, and Verna King attended the Genealogy Conference held in Orlando and sponsored by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. The conference

was held in conjunction with Orange County's *Week of the Family*.

Speakers included world-class authorities Paul Smart and Dan Poffenberger from Salt Lake City, and national genealogy speaker Pam Cooper. Topics included researching in England and Wales, German, Scotland and Ireland, using the military records in NARA, using the newspapers available online, and using the different aspects of the website Familysearch.org.

Topics were presented in four 50-minute classes that ran simultaneously each hour. These well-attended presentations were on every level of research. The purpose was to provide quality training for Family History Center's volunteer staff and patrons. Our attendees enjoyed the day and plan to return next year when the conference returns. Why don't you plan to join them next year for a fun day of learning? ✂

**By Virginia Britten**



Left to Right: Ellouise Wynn, Suzanne Plasse and Verna King at 12th Annual Central Florida Conference 2008

## PRESIDENT'S LETTER

I'm happy to say we've had a great start with two well-attended meetings and two really good programs. Bob Rosengrant's trip to England and slideshow presented in September was most interesting and Peter Summers' informative discussion on Sources in October and how to record them was an eye-opener for some of us. If one expected a strict, disciplined dissertation on sources you were in for a surprise. Believe it or not he made it a fun morning! I wonder how many members went home and checked their sources.

I, for one, probably have one of the most injured list of sources, a lot of gaps and insertions need to be remedied. The more knowledgeable I become, I find I'm constantly finding out things I should have done when I first started. The only thing that keeps me having to re-research is that I've kept every scrap of paper with my notes. Oh granted, some I have trouble deciphering, but I know they are there in my shoeboxes.

On another topic, we need to give a big thank you for a job well done over the past few years by Loraine Varney as Friendship Chairperson.



## AFGHAN RAFFLE

It's still not too late to get in on the afghan raffle. Contact a board member to buy tickets. The drawing will be held at the December executive board meeting and the winner will be announced at the December membership meeting. Ж

She is always "Johnny-on-the-spot" with cards, get well wishes, and ready with your name tag. She is one member that always has a smile and friendly greeting.

Virginia Abby has volunteered to be the new Friendship Chairperson and we welcome her and thank her for stepping forward. Please, give her your support and keep her aware if some member needs a card or a bit of cheer.

At Saturday's meeting I mentioned the need of a Hospitality Committee Chairperson since Arthur and Val Burdett have resigned. Thanks to a great couple for taking it over and doing such a great job for us. Carol West and Beth Hammond took over in September; Carol covered it again in October and

will do so again in November. Pattie Schultz and Pam Treme have volunteered to take care of December. We do have a member that has given me tentative acceptance to take it over in January 2009 but I'm not going to mention her name and put her on the spot. However, when she accepts I'm sure all of you will give her a great big hand and a thank you. I will be the first to get her photo and a write up for the newsletter!

Let me leave you with this thought. I believe it was Lou Holtz that said "Ability is what you're capable of doing. Motivation determines what you do. Attitude determines how well you do it."

Happy Holidays!  
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## SANDRA TAKES ON NEW CHALLENGE

After being our guardian, confidant, right hand to LDS, and trustee of our PCGS library for eight years, Sandra Haxton was recently transferred to another duty in the LDS Church at Dade City.

Sandra served as the overseer of our library and through her persistence and determination convinced the home office LDS



in Utah that our growth and potential was worthy of their support. Because of the loyal participation of our members over these past few years, Sandra was able to secure computer equipment, internet service, and various other items for the PCGS Library. Her interest and sincere devotion to the growth of our library and resource equipment not only reflects great credit on Sandra herself, but also on the LDS church as well.

Our thanks and appreciation was expressed recently with the gift of a \$50.00 dining card from Outback and its affiliated restaurants.

Sandra is not leaving and we will see her at our monthly meetings. Right now she is busy caring for her

grandchildren, a two-year-old, a one and one-half year old, and a set of twins born in June. Sandra said if anyone has extra diapers, she would love to have them. They go through 15 a day!

P. S. Be sure to greet our new guardian—**Suzanne Plasse**—when you see her at a PCGS meeting (she's a member!). ✂



## NEWS ON JIM AND JANET GERATY

Jim Geraty and his wife, Janet, arrived safely in Colorado after a four-day drive. They are enjoying the company of their daughter and grandchildren and will soon move into their new home. ✂

## SPEND A DAY WITH GEORGE AND DREW

The Volusia-Flagler Council of Genealogical Societies is presenting a day-long seminar hosted by the Volusia County Genealogy Society.

Presenters, George G. Morgan and Drew Smith, will be discussing the following topics:

- The Genealogist as CSI
- Where is the Book with My Family in IT?
- The U.S. Naturalization Process and Documents: 1790-1954
- Live Production of "The Genealogy Guys™ Podcast"

**Date:** Saturday, 24 Jan. 2009

**Time:** 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.

**Location:** Palmetto Club, 1000 South Beach Street, Daytona Beach, Florida 32114

**Cost:** \$30.00 before 30 Nov. \$35.00 before 31 Dec. Make check payable to VGCS, Inc.

**Mail check to:**

VCGS—2009 Seminar

P. O. Box 2039

Daytona Beach, Florida 32115 ✂

## ARE YOU AN OBITUARIST?

Have you ever taken an ancestor's obituary apart, word for word, trying to glean as much information as possible? Of course you have! And, as with most of us, an obituary is the only means you have of recreating an ancestor's life. Most obituaries are just lackluster notices of facts. But the ones that paint a life picture of the person are the ones we treasure.

Did you ever wonder how and why the first obituary was written? And to whom we owe our gratitude for these written remembrances?

You can find out in the 2008 Summer edition of the FGS *FORUM* that includes an excellent article on obituaries. You can find a copy in the Dade City Family History Center, that is, our library!

Did you know that there is a professional organization dedicated to the art of writing obituaries? Carolyn Milford Gilbert, the founder of the International Association of Obituarists, has written that "The art of the obituary combined with the science of genealogy provides us with the humanistic record of one's life."

The newspapers of today are charging so much

for obituaries that they will soon be reduced to just the facts—bland data. I have seen several in the last few weeks that have only the deceased's name, age, and date of death. Pity his relatives trying to find out more about him in 30 years.

If we contrast the obituaries of today with an older obituary, it's an eye-opening experience. My relative's 1890's obituary includes the names of his parents, comments about his entire life, and a list of all his descendants. An obituary like this one gives a genealogist a complete picture. What a shame that future seekers will be faced with today's abbreviated obituaries.

The 10th Great Obituary Writers' International Conference was held in June in Little Las Vegas, New Mexico. If you want to find out more about it and obituary writing, contact Carolyn Milford Gilbert at [carolyngilbert@yahoo.com](mailto:carolyngilbert@yahoo.com) or visit the website [www.obitpage.com](http://www.obitpage.com).

Serious genealogists should want to be informed on this topic. So be sure to stop in the FHC to read this article soon. ✂

**By Virginia Britten**

## ABSENTEE BALLOT

In accordance with Article IX Section 5 of the Pasco County Genealogical Society By-Laws, society members not expecting to attend the regular December meeting may complete an absentee ballot. Absentee ballots must be received by the Society Secretary before **the start of the December meeting**. Members can vote for a candidate on the slate or write-in the candidate of their choice. To have your vote count, look for your **Absentee Ballot** in this newsletter, complete your ballot, and mail it to the address noted on the ballot. ✂

## AND THE WINNER IS...

**Virginia Britten!**

PCGS nominated Virginia for a Florida State Genealogy Society Achievement Award. Virginia found out that she had won the award when she opened the announcement after picking up PCGS mail. We plan to have a more formal acknowledgement of the award at a meeting. In the meantime, be sure to congratulate Virginia the next time you see her. ✂

## FLORIDA RECONSTRUCTION AND RENEWAL, 1865-1880

Following the Civil War, Florida, as a defeated secessionist state, went through a period of more than 12 years of “Reconstruction.” In Florida, the legislature in Tallahassee was totally Republican, but split three ways between Radical, Moderate, and Conservative Reconstruction factions. The Moderate faction was mostly in charge with occasions to the other extremes. Additionally, there was an ostensive military presence to ensure order.

The biggest population change was the freedmen population. The Freedman’s Bureau (1865-1872) was established early on to assist with the transition from slave to free citizen. The Bureau helped establish homes, hospitals, and schools for the freedmen and prevent their being taken advantage of. The largest group of ex-slaves at the end of the War was in Middle Florida (between the Suwannee and Apalachicola Rivers), where the big cotton plantations had been. Many of the freedmen sought aid and shelter elsewhere. You can find Freedmen’s Bureau and its bank records at the National Archives, online ([freedmensbureau.com](http://freedmensbureau.com), [ancestry.com](http://ancestry.com), [heritagequestonline.com](http://heritagequestonline.com)), and in the PCGS Library on the CDs purchases from the LDS. By the end of Reconstruction, the bulk of the freedmen were sharecroppers.

Florida was spared the more extreme reactionary and counter-reactionary activity plaguing other parts of the former Confederacy. The resident white population were for the most part flat broke, and had lost at least one male family member to the War, but usually more. Farms had been raided by both sides. Law and order was initially left to the occupying U.S. Army with local Sheriffs ready to resume the role. During the early days of Reconstruction, Washington was

issuing laws governing property ownership and taxes that were soon after repealed.

Land in Central Florida was opened for homesteading. Early thinking was to establish the freedmen as homesteading farmers. This plan was not successful. At the start of the homesteading, former Confederate soldier were disqualified from the process, but that also changed. Soldiers and their families from both sides took advantage of the homesteading opportunities. Travel was by foot, horse, wagon, or water. The railroads had been damaged during the War. The rails and engines destroyed or carried off to support campaigns further north. The St. Johns River was a major waterway for people and supplies that were arriving all the way down into Lake George, even onto Ocala. On the West Coast of Florida, northern colonist established settlements in the area near Sarasota and Venice. They called these areas “Jungle.”

Florida was also becoming a tourist destination. Florida was a nice place to visit, but not to stay. Even President U. S. Grant came visiting. Harriet Beecher Stowe from her home in Mandarin, Florida wrote *Palmetto Leaves*, which is a tourist guide to the wonders to be found in Florida.

Reconstruction ended with the compromise election of President Hayes. Then a period called Renewal began. The political landscape changed, the Southern Democrats returned to control in Florida. Economic investment also returned to the state.

If you want to read more about this period both Michael Gannon’s *The New History of Florida* and Charlton W. Tebeau’s *A History of Florida* are a good starting point. Ж

By Thomas D. Santa Cruz



## MURDER IN VIRGINIA

On September 27th 1817 the settlement of Dickerson Ford on the Clinch River was a peaceful, busy place. The men were making preparations for winter. The corn was already harvested and the fields would soon be planted with winter wheat. It was apple picking, apple drying, and cider making time. Big stacks of logs, which would be used for heating and cooking during the winter, were seasoning in the yards. In the woods, hogs lazily munched, getting fat for the fall butchering. The women were diligently canning and preserving stocks of foods and herbs for winter. During late afternoon a rifle shot severed the peaceful community into two factions. The news was quickly relayed from house to house. Abner Vance had shot and killed Lewis Horton!

Lewis Horton, who belonged to a prominent Clinch River family, had been having an affair with a daughter of Abner Vance. Family lore says that the girl had been living with Horton. For how long is not known but one story says that Lewis didn't want the girl anymore. Another says that Daniel Horton, Lewis' brother, made Lewis take the girl home. Whatever the cause may have been, the outcome was that Lewis took her home on horseback, threw her on the ground, and taunted Abner saying, "Take her, I'm finished with her." Abner grabbed his rifle from above the door and shot Horton in the back as he was riding away. Horton died a few hours later.

Abner was arrested, tried, and convicted for the murder of Lewis Horton. The town was split about the incident and the stories started flying about why his may have happened. The Vance family insists Abner was an upstanding man and must have had good reason for killing Horton. After all, he was a Baptist preacher, Revolutionary War hero, or Indian scout. The truth is that Abner never was a preacher, revolutionary hero, or Indian scout. What can be proved is that he had

been in trouble with the law on several occasions for assault and battery, and had been found guilty. It seems that Abner had a temper that over the years vanished from family stories. Abner didn't serve in the Revolutionary War, but he did sign an "Oath of Allegiance."

Abner was set to die but a September 14, 1818 twist prevented Abner from being hung. Instead, he was awarded a new trial by the Superior Court of Law, Russell County, Virginia. The Writ of Error stated that "The Court are unanimously of opinion that there is an error in this: that the Court rejected evidence of the witness introduced by the prisoner to prove his insanity before the fact of which he was accused, and in deciding it was improper to introduce such proof until the prisoner's insanity was proven on the day he shot the deceased. Wherefore it is considered that the said judgment be severed and annulled, and a new trial awarded, and in the meantime that he be detained in the safe custody in the jail of the Superior Court of Russell County until the next term, and until he be discharged by due course of the Law."

The next trial took place in Washington County, Virginia and upheld the Russell County verdict and sentence. On 16 July 1819, Abner Vance was hung by the neck until dead.

The Lynchburg Press—a newspaper in Lynchburg, Virginia—printed this alleged eyewitness account of the execution:

"27 July 1819. On Friday the 16th Abner Vance was executed at Abingdon for the murder of Lewis Horton. He addressed the spectators, about four thousand, for an hour and a half with considerable ability; he died with the most heroic fortitude. He accused some of giving false evidence against him; and said that if he had obtained a fair trial, and nothing but the truth had been sworn against him, he thought the penitentiary would have been

proper punishment for his offense.”

Whether Abner went insane for a moment or killed Lewis Horton without a second thought will never be known. He did pay the ultimate price for murder...his life! ✂

By: Cathy Vance

### A B N E R ' S S O N G

Abner Vance is said to have composed a ballad that he sang on the day of his hanging. The song is recognized by the Southwest Virginia Folk Lore Society as the oldest song still in existence that was written west of the Blue Ridge. Here it is.

Bright shines the sun on Clinch's Hill.  
So soft the west wind blows.  
The valleys are lined with flowers gay,  
Perfumed with the wild rose.

Green are the woods through which Sandy flows.  
Peace dwells in the land.  
The bear doth live in the laurel green.  
The red buck roves the hills.

But Van no more on Sandy behold  
Nor drink its crystal waves.  
The partial judge announced his doom.  
The hunters found his grave.

There's Daniel, Bill, and Lewis,  
A lie against me swore  
In order to take my life away  
That I may be no more.

But I and them shall meet again  
When Immanuel's trumpet shall blow.  
Perhaps I'll be wrapped in Abraham's bosom  
When they roll in the gulf below.

My body it will be laid in the tomb.  
My flesh it will decay,  
But the blood that was shed on Calvary  
Has washed my sins away.

Farewell, farewell, my old sweetheart,  
Your Face I'll see no more.  
I'll meet you in the world above,  
Where parting is no more. ✂



### U P C O M I N G E V E N T S

**December:** The PCGS Annual Christmas Party. Several member will be sharing their family's Christmas traditions and memories.

**January:** PCGS President Mike Shires will be presenting on graphoanalysis, which analyses handwriting. When you examine a document written by an ancestor, you may be able to use graphoanalysis to find out more about the author of the document.



### S U B M I S S I O N D E A D L I N E S

Want to have an article published in the newsletter? We'll be happy to accommodate you. Please submit items by the following deadlines:

- Jan 10, 2009 for Feb 2009
- Apr 10, 2009 for May 2009
- Jul 10, 2009 for Aug 2009
- Oct 10, 2009 for Nov 2009

Please feel free to send your submissions any time between now and the deadline. Early is great; by the deadline works too. Email your submissions to Pam at: [ptreme@hotmail.com](mailto:ptreme@hotmail.com)

### N E W M E M B E R S C O R N E R

We are pleased to welcome the following new members:

- Janet R. Avery
- Gabriele Brenne Judah
- George A. Nunes
- Susan Carlin Peltier
- Brenda J. Riley

WE'RE ON THE WEB AT  
[WWW.ROOTSWEB.COM/~FLPCGS/](http://WWW.ROOTSWEB.COM/~FLPCGS/)

**PASCO COUNTY  
GENEALOGICAL  
SOCIETY**

P. O. Box 2072  
Dade City, Florida 33526-2072

E-mail: [ptreme@hotmail.com](mailto:ptreme@hotmail.com)

*Researching Our Ancestors is Family Fun...*

## **SOCIETY INFORMATION**

### **Meetings**

The Pasco County Genealogical Society meets the second Saturday of each month for membership meetings from September through May. The summer recess runs through June, July, and August when there are no meetings. The public is always invited and welcomed to all membership meetings. Meetings are held at the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints at 9016 Fort King Road (State Road 41). The church is located at the intersection of Bailey Hill Road, which is midway between Clinton Avenue, Dade City, and Daughtry Road, Zephyrhills. Visit our website for a map:  
[www.rootsweb.com/~FLPCGS/](http://www.rootsweb.com/~FLPCGS/)

### **Membership**

Membership is open to all persons interested in genealogical research. Annual Dues cover the period January 1st through December 31st of the year and are paid in December for the year.  
—Individual—\$15.00  
—Family Membership—\$22.50  
—Student—\$5.00  
Visit our website for an application:  
[www.rootsweb.com/~FLPCGS/](http://www.rootsweb.com/~FLPCGS/)

### **Benefits**

Membership has its rewards! They include access to our library, quarterly newsletters, and the availability of our members, many of whom are longtime, respected genealogist.

### **Mission Statement**

To encourage research, publication, preservation and availability of genealogical material. To instruct and lend assistance to the membership and general public in the modern methods of research. These objectives shall be accomplished by regular and special meetings by means of lectures, workshops, field trips, and other educational activities. To encourage our members to strive for a personal level of achievement in genealogical research, to preserve that research with a documented lineage society and to place a record of research in the membership files. ✕



## ABSENTEE BALLOT

### Slate of Candidates

- \_\_\_\_\_ President: **Marion Shires**  
\_\_\_\_\_ Vice President: **Ann Morris**  
\_\_\_\_\_ Treasurer: **Virginia Britten**  
\_\_\_\_\_ Secretary: **Joan Knowles**  
\_\_\_\_\_ Director: **Mary Ann Balbach**  
\_\_\_\_\_ Director: **Judith Kelley**

**Write-In Candidates** (Enter your write-in candidate's name and office)

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To vote for a candidate on the slate:

1. Look at the slate of candidates on the reverse side of this postcard.
2. Place an "X" on the line next to the name and office.

To write-in a candidate:

1. Locate the write-in area on the reverse side of this postcard.
2. Write in both the name and office of the candidate you wish elected.

Place this ballot inside of an unmarked envelope then into another envelope addressed to:

Pasco County Genealogical Society  
P. O. Box 2072  
Dade City, Florida 33525