

Gallatin County Genealogical Society Meeting Minutes April 12, 2014 @ 11:00 a.m.

Business Meeting:

The April GCGS Meeting was at the MSU Library in Special Collections. We didn't have a formal business meeting, because of how the meeting progressed.

Program: MSU Special Collections - Kim Scott, MSU Professor/Archivist

-Introduction: Kim Scott introduced himself to the 20 people who attended the meeting. He began the program with the question: Are you citizens of Montana? If so, this is your place, which means the materials in the Special Collections belong to you. The Special Collections at MSU are open from 8-5, M-F, and they don't close during lunch.

-Genealogy—He shared that his mother had recently passed, so he and his brother are sifting through her things to decide what to keep. As an archivist, he said he probably should have his family history organized by now, but he doesn't, because as usual the shoemaker's children have no shoes. However, he has now begun processing his mother's papers just as he would if someone had donated them to the Special Collections at MSU. After all, as an archivist, he can't help himself.

-What do archivists do? They organize valuable records. A manuscript curator collects papers from others. They both act as a repository for these items. Most people wouldn't be able to distinguish between the two types of people, but there are differences.

-MSU mainly collects items about Montana history such as:

- Greater Yellowstone Area
- Yellowstone National Park – the park has its own archives as well. It is also a manuscript repository, so YNP gets a lot of people's travel journals rather than MSU.
- Montana State University history
- Montana Native Americans – Native Americans want to collect their own stuff and by law they can confiscate any Native American items that others have collected. The courts have determined that these items belong to the Native Americans no matter where they are found, including in private collections when someone has paid money for the item. Therefore, buyers beware.
- Montana politicians such as U. S. Senator Burton K. Wheeler
- Prominent Montanans
- Ranching and Agriculture, because MSU is a land grant university
- Engineering and Architecture
- Fred Willson's drawings, photographs, diaries, letters, etc. – He designed the Willson School, the old county courthouse, and Roberts Hall, as well as several other buildings in Bozeman, Montana.
- Fish—they have a large collection of trout and salmonid books; Bud Lilly's papers (He was a famous fishing guide); Dadus Proper, author of "What the Trout Said," papers, private library, and Foreign Service papers from places such as Portugal
- Conrad Burns' papers – They can't process his papers yet, because he is still alive
- Aubrey Haines, author of *History of Yellowstone* – all his research and papers
- Papers from the Cook-Folsom-Peterson Expedition of 1869, which was the first organized expedition to explore the region that became Yellowstone National Park. Kim Scott passed around an original page of this expedition written about three friends from Diamond City that traveled through Yellowstone.

-Papers from the second expedition through Yellowstone National Park by Gustavus C. Doane (see an account of this expedition later in the notes).

-How do we make the things we collect available to the public? An example would be Mark Twain's book *Huckleberry Finn*. Harper Row published the book in 1887 and the author was Mark Twain, not Samuel Clemens. In a library you tell people you have the book so they can come check it out. You put the following subject headings in the card catalog—who wrote the book, what the book is about, and the title. The process is not that easy for archivists, because people donate big cardboard boxes of stuff that have to be divided into groups such as photos, journals, and letters, which are called a series. The archivist then needs to create a finding aid to catalog the items in the box like you would a book. The person's birthdate and death date are recorded. An inventory is then taken to create chapters with scope and content. Next, a subject is determined for the item such as Family Life or Depression Era. Items such as these are valuable to writers, because they can use the materials to put color to the story that is being written about family life or the depression. Someone else's materials or story can help flesh out your own family history if your ancestor lived during that same time period.

-Processing—MSU has lots of stuff they haven't even processed. The Special Collections are kept on the 2nd and 4th floors in the library as well as in a warehouse on South 5th.

-Evidential value—evidence of life to preserve its progression on earth. This is what an archivist is interested in.

-Informational value—names, dates, places the person lived, etc. – genealogists like this stuff, but evidential value also reveals informational value. An example is the census records, which tell us who is living where and statistics about the person such as age, sex, marital status, etc. The government used this information to reapportion legislative districts, but genealogists can also use this information to help track their ancestors and determine where they lived, their occupation, their spouse, the names of their children, etc.

-“Montana Vigilantes” by Fredrick Allen from *Montana The Magazine of Western History*, 54 (Spring 2001), 3-19—Montana was all about gold and bad guys whose necks were stretched by others who would brag about the event. He showed us an original wanted poster for a man that was wanted for incest. On the old TV westerns, the wanted poster would have been nailed up with the butt of a six-shooter. The reward was offered in greenbacks or gold dust. He also told us the story of James B. Daniels, who was in the Territorial Jail in Virginia City, Montana, after being convicted of manslaughter for a death that occurred in a saloon brawl and sentenced to prison by Justice Lyman Munson. He was released from the jail with a pardon from the acting territorial governor Thomas Meagher. He immediately traveled to a saloon in Helena and bragged about how he was going to get revenge against all the people who had helped put him in jail. Angry vigilantes who had been drinking at the saloon surrounded Daniels and strung him up with the pardon still in his pocket. The lynching of James B. Daniels in Helena on March 2, 1866, triggered a public debate about the practice of vigilante justice in Montana. The MSU Special Collections has the original pardon that was in his pocket when he was lynched. Kind of eerie!

-Rare Books—MSU Special Collections owns a first edition copy of *Vigilantes in Montana*, which was the first book printed in Montana. The typesetting was very professional, which seems unusual for 1800s Montana. They also own the second book printed in Montana called *A Trip to the States by way of the Yellowstone and Missouri* by J. Allen Hosmer. This book was in frontier printing, which was rough, uneven typeset.

-Internal and External Criticism – He passed around a page from Lt. Gustavus C. Doane's report from the Washburn-Langford-Doane Expedition into Yellowstone in August-September 1870. What is strange about the document is that the numbers are in a different handwriting than the rest of the report, so it made the authenticity questionable. Upon researching the situation, they found that Doane had experienced excruciating pain in his thumb while traveling through Yellowstone, making it difficult for him to sleep. At one point in the report, he talks about seeing stars. His friends had to numb him with chloroform and slice off his thumb to rid him of the life-threatening infection. This immediately made it so he could sleep, which he did for the next 36 hours. Unfortunately, he couldn't hold a pen after that. When he returned to Fort Ellis, he had a private with good penmanship write down his oral account of his journey while using his field notes to refresh his memory. When it came to the scientific calculations of landforms he observed in Yellowstone, he didn't trust the young man to write them down correctly, so he inserted those calculations into the report himself. Discovering this information helped the MSU Special Collections team determine that the document was indeed authentic. Lt. Doane became a significant contributor to the process that ultimately resulted in the creation of Yellowstone National Park on March 1, 1872. Although he was skillful and resourceful throughout the expedition, it was his thorough and detailed report to the Secretary of War in February 1871 of the natural phenomenon in Yellowstone that played a convincing role in moving Congress to create the park.

-Galen Tuberculosis Institute – MSU has a scrapbook kept by a patient at Galen Sanatorium that contains information on every patient. Unfortunately, the scrapbook has medical records in it, which makes it difficult to share the information, because there is no time lapse on privacy restrictions concerning medical records. There is only an 80-year period of restriction on student records, though.

-Millard E. Peterson, a 1921 MSC biology student – his scrapbook contains dance cards and other memorabilia from his experience during college, which would be a great resource to research what was happening during this time period at MSC.

-Lester Willson, the father of Fred Willson – He was a member of the 131st New York Infantry during the Civil War. He was present during the surrender of the City of Savannah, Georgia, in the March to the Sea. MSU has numerous Willson family pictures and other items from the family.

-Davis Willson's Mercantile, which was a two-story log cabin that stood where the Masonic Building with the horse on Main Street stands today. He showed us an 1867 picture of the mercantile, which is probably the oldest picture of a business taken in Bozeman, Montana.

-Disposal of Donated Items—MSU does throw away some donated items, because there isn't enough space to preserve everything. For example, if a box of checks with a check register is donated, MSU will keep the check register and a few checks, because the valuable information would be contained in the check register usually making the checks duplicative. An example of when they would keep two copies of something is when there is marginalia.

-Basic Research—Kim Scott used the projector to show us how to access the library's catalog for basic research. He looked up the John B. Wisenall Papers (1833-1907) under Montana History. Wisenall was a person searching for gold in Montana in the 1800s. MSU has some of the letters from his sisters in Omaha, Nebraska, diaries, and business papers. His file contains 15 folders of his papers that give insight into the gold rush in Montana.

-Special Collections Room—If you come into the Special Collections room, the archivist will put the items you want to look at on a table. You cannot have food, drinks, or pens in the room. You are

encouraged to take pictures with your digital camera, since this is actually better than photocopying the document. You only have to wear white gloves when looking at pictures. They don't want you to wear the gloves when looking at documents, because your "clumsy gloved fingers" are more likely to tear the documents than bare hands, which is worse than a little oil from your hands getting on the documents. Remember, you will be watched while in this room, because the documents you are looking at are valuable.

-Online Sources—If you don't want to come to campus because of the parking situation, you can often look at documents that have been scanned and placed online. These documents have a description with an inventory of the complete file they are a part of. More and more of these items come online daily. However, there will always be a need for archivists, because the original item has to be available somewhere to make it authentic and valuable to researchers. Caution about copying items from this site is in order though, because many of these materials are copyrighted and cannot be posted online. It is appropriate to photocopy these materials or download them to your computer for research purposes though.

-The Fort Assiniboine Telegrams from 1880 have been scanned and are available online for research. The federal government was tracking Sitting Bull (Sioux) near the Canadian border at the time, so the information contained in the telegrams is valuable to researchers interested in the topic.

-Omega Betas—MSU has a photograph album from the Omega Betas (males) that were never an official Greek organization on the MSU campus, but later became affiliated with another organization. A future donation gave them information on Henry O. Fortin, a member of Omega Beta. Kim Scott was able to match a picture of Fortin from the album with the papers being donated.

-Other tools to use at the MSU library only—Go to Homepage and click on Find. Click on the Articles & Research database. Go to A in the alphabet and find Ancestry.com. They have a world subscription, which allows you to use the program on any computer in the building for free. You may be able to use your own laptop in the building on the wireless system as well, but he isn't sure about this. Ancestry.com information is posted by millions of people worldwide for others to see. Therefore, there is no formal control that is present in a card catalog. What this means is that spellings of names will often be different and the material posted may not be as reliable as what is found at an archive, due to the protocol they follow.

-American History & Life, which contains historical journals—He showed us how to look up information that may be important to your research of ancestors who came to Montana on a steamboat traveling up the Missouri River. He used the key phrases steamboat, Missouri, and Montana, which took him to an article called "Steamboats, Woodhawks & War on the Upper Missouri River." Woodhawks were individuals such as Liver Eating Johnson, who chopped and sold wood to the steamboats on the Missouri River to make a living.

-Historical Abstracts—these are European publications, so everything online isn't just local

-Newspapers—they have several newspapers on microfilm, because we are entering the digital age. Microfilm can be found on the 4th floor of the library. They also have the *Billings Gazette*, the *Great Falls Tribune*, the *Bozeman Daily Chronicle*, the *MSU Exponent*, and the *New York Times* in print. Kim Scott talked about the *Bozeman Weekly Chronicle* having a Republican slant, while the *Avante Courier* had a Democratic leaning. They have both of these newspapers at the library. You can also use *Chronicling America*, which is a website providing access to information about historic newspapers and

select digitized newspaper pages. The National Digital Newspaper Program (NDNP) produces the search site, which is a partnership between the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) and the Library of Congress.

-WorldCat – a giant catalog with library items from all over the world that can be checked out through the interlibrary loan system.

-Questions–Several members stayed after the meeting was adjourned to ask Kim Scott additional questions. The presentation was very interesting and should have some of our members heading up to the second floor to access some of the materials that are stored in the Special Collections room of the MSU library. Impressive stuff.

-Next Meeting: The next meeting will be held Saturday, May 10, 2014, at 1:00 p.m. in the large conference room at the Bozeman Public Library. In addition to officer elections, the meeting will include time for members to share successful research techniques, discuss roadblocks, and ask any questions about genealogy.

Respectfully submitted,

Bonnie Jackson
GCGS Secretary