



QUESTING HEIRS GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Volume 35 ♦ Number 11 ♦ November 2002

Questing Heirs Genealogical Society, Inc., P. O. Box 15102, Long Beach CA 90815-0102



REGULAR MEETING -- Sunday, November 17, 2002 -- 1:15 pm

Resurrection Lutheran Church Parish Hall, 1900 East Carson Street, Long Beach
(at Gardenia Ave., one block west of Cherry Ave.; between the 405 and the 91 freeways.)

1:15 – CLASSES

BASIC: Family History Centers, Public Libraries, and Specialized Libraries
INTERMEDIATE: Jeanette Jones will be talking about her recent research trip

Time for chatting, browsing and refreshments **2:15** Sign up to borrow the microfilm reader

2:30 -- GENERAL MEETING

NANCY CARLBERG: How To Make the Most of Your Research Trip

Be sure to join us at our November meeting to hear one of QHGS' favorite speakers, Nancy Carlberg. She will just be returning from her latest trip to the British Isles and will give a presentation entitled "How To Make the Most of Your Research Trip." Nancy is a former librarian, the author of over thirty books, and a lecturer and genealogy teacher throughout Los Angeles and Orange counties. She specializes in Scandinavian records. After five years as a hobby genealogist, she became a serious professional, and has now been working in the field for over twenty-five years. She worked as a researcher for the Alex Haley "Roots" project. For several years, she led the Orange County Genealogical Society research trip to Salt Lake City, Utah. She has traveled extensively doing research for herself and others throughout the United States, Great Britain and Europe. She is currently a cataloguer at the Los Angeles Family History Center in West Los Angeles, and President of the British Isles Family History Society.

Questing Heirs Board meeting to follow



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~ QHGS BOARD ELECTIONS ~

Elections for three positions on the Questing Heirs Genealogical Society Board will be held at the November meeting. The Nominating Committee -- Aaron Day, LaVerne Maxwell, and David Werts -- presented their slate of nominees at the October meeting. They nominees are:

- President: John McCoy
- Second Vice President: Jeanette Jones
- Corresponding Secretary: Vickie Elliott

There were no other nominations made from the floor. At the November meeting, we will again ask for nominations from the floor before voting. The results of the balloting will be printed in the December newsletter, and the installation of the new officers will take place at the December meeting.

~ REFRESHMENTS ~

Georgie (Peterson) LYONS (562) 432-4908

Thank you to our October Hosts:

LaVerne (Jeffrey) MAXWELL
 Ruth (Coats) CHRISTESON
 Norma (Splits) GRADY
 Richard HOOVER

Our November Hosts will be:

Marilyn (DeLonjay) BRASHER
 Kaye (Finlay) FOORD
 Georgie (Peterson) LYONS
 Phyllis STRAWN

~ FINANCIAL REPORT ~

David WERTS (562) 431-7790

September INCOME	\$ 215.00
September EXPENSES	\$ 1404.50
 BALANCE as of October 3, 2002	 \$ 3747.28

~ MEMBERSHIP REPORT ~

Betty MARR (562) 433-0370

OCTOBER MEETING ATTENDANCE: Our attendance was 24; there were no visitors.

RENEWALS as of October 20

Baxter, Martha	Individual		to 9/03	McKillip, Christina	Individual		to 9/03
Day, Aaron ☺	Contributing	\$35	to 9/03	Morgan, Martha	Subscription		to 9/03
Foord, Jack & Kaye ☺	Sustaining	\$50	to 9/03	Proust, Joycelyn	Individual		to 9/03
Grady, Norma	Individual		to 9/03	Simon, David	Individual		to 9/03
Horton, Charles	Individual		to 9/03	Smith, Mary Ellen	Individual		to 9/03
Jones, Jeannette ☺	Patron	\$100	to 9/03	Spohr, Jacqueline	Individual		to 9/03
Marks, Jack & Vivian	Family		to 9/03	Thompson, Mark	Subscription		to 7/03

Thanks to all for renewing!

☺ *A special thanks to those who were able to subscribe at a higher level than the basic membership.* ☺

~ **PRESIDENT'S COLUMN** ~

FINDING THE POLITICIANS IN THE FAMILY

In our never-ending quest to find something more than names and dates to hang on the family tree, we may be lucky enough to discover that an ancestor played some role in civil society, whether by participating in local government, political movements, charities, or other activities for the common good. It is a pleasure to find a record of such service, but the documents are sometimes very hard to find.

The first mention of someone in my own family having served in an elected office came from a perplexing set of notes by a distant in-law relation named Jenny Penn (1868-1946). Today, my family remembers her notes mainly for the fact that scarcely anything in them has turned out to be entirely correct. As far as we have been able to determine, every statement has been shaded in the direction of exaggeration.

My mother first encountered Jenny Penn in Santa Clara, California, about 1940. Jenny and her brother, Julius Augustus Penn, Jr., retired US Army Brigadier General, were roaming the US with the intent to visit all of their relatives. Jenny had no children of her own, and she was apparently compiling a list of people who would have the good fortune to inherit something of hers when she died. What impression my mother and her 7 sisters made on Jenny Penn is not recorded, but some years later, a lawyer assembled the relatives to deliver news about her will. He told them she had made elaborate provisions down to the last umbrella, with codicils taking back said umbrella from one heir and bequeathing it to another, but his recommendation was just to take the money and enjoy it, as he thought Jenny never had. In any event, there wasn't much of an inheritance to argue about in my mother's family. They were low on the testamentary totem pole, because their connection to Jenny was quite remote. My mother was the great-grandniece of Jenny's stepmother, and, in addition, Jenny's mother's mother had been the second wife of my mother's great-great-grandfather. In other words, they were not actually related.

Nevertheless, Jenny Penn left notes about her stepmother's family, which came to my mother's attention in the 1960's. After the initial euphoria that the notes had survived at all, the first thing we spotted was a statement that Thomas Brock (1801-1870), my mother's great-great-grandfather,

had once been mayor of Chicago. We hastened to the library, but after much searching, we discovered that Thomas Brock's only recorded claim to fame in Chicago was that he had *lost* an election for alderman in 1837. With this stunning discrepancy in mind, we pounced on the rest of Jenny Penn's notes, and found error after error. There was a grain of truth in everything, but only a grain! Even, we suspect, a little hanky-panky in Batavia, Ohio. There the matter rested until quite recently.

In 2002, the Illinois State Archives added newly-indexed records of the Chicago City Council to its website. These records were apparently either lost or else poorly known, and they cover the entire history of Chicago before the great fire, 1833-1871. I entered BROCK in the search field and pressed the enter key. There it was! March 21, 1839, Official Oath of Thomas Brock, Assessor, 2nd Ward. It would appear that Thomas Brock was involved in Chicago government after all! A bit more searching in published newspaper abstracts of early Chicago newspapers also revealed that Thomas Brock must have been a justice of the peace or served in some similar position, as he is noted performing several marriages in 1839. At last, we have some idea of the facts behind Jenny Penn's fanciful account of the family.

At other points in my research, minor political connections have come up. These clues are often hard to find, and they rarely go into much detail. In some of my Swiss families, I have mentions of relatives serving as councilmen and mayors of their little villages as far back as the 1400's. In more recent times, there is at least one mention of a relative assisting the Underground Railroad, attending Anti-Masonic conventions, and so forth. These otherwise insignificant mentions are often the only clues we have that tell us anything about a person's life. Discovering civic-minded relatives is good for the family history!

But whoever wins the elections this month, I hope their relatives will correctly note the circumstances, and not weave the day's events into a work of fiction, to throw future genealogists off the track!

Happy Hunting to all!

John McCoy

~ **FEATURE ARTICLE** ~

UNDOCUMENTED CHAOS

by Michael John Neill

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As genealogists looking to the past, we are forced to focus on paper records left behind by our forebears. We also use historical records and information about larger historical movements and cultural trends to reasonably infer things about our ancestor's lives. For many of us, there are times when neither of these sources or approaches is particularly helpful. Sometimes things just do not make any logical sense. There are times when our confusion stems from a misconception or ignorance we have about records, history, or cultural practices. But there are times when we've tried to learn as much as we can about the situation and perhaps have asked others more knowledgeable about the area to help us out. At times even the experts are stumped.

And so I occasionally wonder: Did some event in my ancestor's life throw the entire family into chaos?

Some of these events may be easily documented. There generally are records of epidemics, natural disasters, or the closing of a major employer (the main exception being when these first two events took place on the extremely raw frontier). The impact may have been very direct and very immediate. County historical societies, newspapers, county histories, or other sources may provide at least some information on an outside event in our ancestor's life. The loss of employment by the father, the death of three family members due to an epidemic, or a massive flood might have easily thrown a family into turmoil. The more difficult situation is where the causal event left no record.

The connection may not always be easy to make.

MAYBE . . .

--- A marriage was hastened in an attempt to avoid the draft?

--- An emigration took place to avoid compulsory military service?

--- A sudden move took place because the father lost a job?

--- A move took place because of a significant economic opportunity?

--- A child left home because of a difficult step-parent?

--- A son left for California to pan for gold?

In these cases the causes are partially discernable. Rash generalizations should not be made. When the outside factor is something large and something relatively well known it is easier to logically connect it to events that took place within the family. It is important though not to grasp at straws and create convoluted soap operas to fit scant ancestral records.

WHERE'S THE P?

In logic classes, students study implication, cause, and effect. If p happens then q happens as a result. The problem in some family history situations is that we have the q, but have no idea what the p was that preceded it.

There are many explanations for the p above, but we'll focus now on events within the family that might have caused other family members to react. They might have responded in ways that do not always make sense when analyzed two hundred years later without the perspective of living within the actual family itself as it endures the turmoil.

DID SOME EVENT THROW YOUR ANCESTOR'S LIFE INTO CHAOS?

Did one parent die at a young age? The death of the father (typically the breadwinner) might have been a major challenge for the family. The death of the mother (typically the housekeeper and minder of the children) would have been equally difficult, especially if the older children were not of an age to take care of the younger ones. If your ancestral family was living in an area outside their kin network, the death of one young parent might have hit them especially hard.

HUBBY DEAD . . . MOUTHS TO FEED

One ancestor died in the 1850s while in his early thirties. His widow Barbara was left with two small children in a town several hundred miles from where they had married and had family. As a German immigrant, Barbara likely

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spoke little English and had few marketable skills. The small river town where she lived offered few employment opportunities. Her options were extremely limited, she did not have some of the options her great-great-grandchildren may have today. Within six months of her husband's death she married a man who left her two months later. The records only point towards the recorded facts, they provide little idea of the likely situation in Barbara's home. And while we cannot find a tombstone, the breadwinner of her family was buried in the local cemetery and she was left with two young children to care for. She did the only thing she could: she ran her husband's tavern for several years until she married for the third time. And from newspaper records, that tavern was quite a place.

I had another ancestor die and leave a widow with children in Kentucky in 1814. The children were old enough to help out and the husband left the wife with a few hundred acres of property. Records are scant, but it appears this forty-something widow was not in quite the same situation as my German immigrant in the 1850s. Still, the road after her husband's death was likely not easy.

In some cases, children may have scattered after the father's death as a necessity. Some may have gone to live with other family members or even strangers. Some may have been apprenticed to learn a marketable skill, potentially leaving records. These apprenticeship records (if available) are typically found at the county level. In some cases, there may be records of guardianships as well. But if the family was particularly poor, records of guardianships may be non-existent.

WIFE DEAD . . . MOUTHS TO FEED

A young widower with small children was in a similar situation, especially if there were no nearby family members to provide childcare. Widowers who had older female children may have enlisted them to help care for younger siblings. One of my own ancestors married three times, wives one and two likely dying in childbirth and leaving behind several small children. This ancestor waited a year, at most, to remarry.

Michael John Neill, is the Course I Coordinator at the Genealogical Institute of Mid America (GIMA) held annually in Springfield, Illinois, and is also on the faculty of Carl Sandburg College in Galesburg, Illinois. Michael is the Web columnist for the FGS FORUM and is on the editorial board of the Illinois State Genealogical Society Quarterly. He conducts seminars and lectures on a wide variety of genealogical and computer topics and contributes to several genealogical publications, including "Ancestry" and "Genealogical Computing." You can e-mail him at: <mailto:mneill@asc.csc.cc.il.us> or visit his website at: <http://www.rootdig.com/>, but he regrets that he is unable to assist with personal research.

My own great-great-grandmother "disappears" ca. 1882 and her two young daughters live with other families for several years, apparently while the father gets things "together." I am not exactly certain what happened in this family. All I know is that the mother "left" (or so I've been told) and was never heard from again.

UNKNOWN CHAOS?

Some of the cases already discussed leave records that hint at the problems. Some situations can reasonably be explained by other historical records. Not all chaotic situations leave behind records delineating the problem. And the records that do document the results rarely focus on the past. There may be no record indicating a family member was mentally unstable or had an alcohol problem. Yet these situations may have impacted the family significantly, perhaps for generations.

The family of the sibling of one of my great-great-grandparents had particular difficulties. The mother apparently became mentally unstable in the 1880s while the children were young. She died a few years later. The father never remarried and knew two things: "how to acquire land and drink whiskey." A doctor who visited the family at about the same time said he never knew a family who lived in such squalor. One of the children was classified as "simple" and intentionally injured himself on at least one occasion. It is not difficult to see how the family lost contact with other family members, particularly the mother's family. Nor is it difficult to see why some family members show little interest in their family's past.

This family's home life is partially documented only because upon the father's death there was legal trouble and court records provide a scant paragraph on the family's past. Had there been no money worth going to court about, this family's lifestyle would not have been documented.

Was there chaos in your ancestor's life? There might have been, but the problem will be in proving it. The real problem is that the chaos frequently creates records that make no sense without a rough knowledge of the underlying issues.

~ **OF INTEREST** ~

**LONG BEACH FAMILY
HISTORY CENTER**

Did you know that Long Beach has its very own Family History Center? It's in Bixby Knolls at 3701 Elm Avenue, one block east of Long Beach Boulevard. Their phone number is (562) 988-0509.

If you haven't been yet, you might want to check it out. It's a pleasant, uncrowded place -- weekday mornings you practically have it to yourself -- so you can work at your own pace with few distractions. All the LDS CD sets are available. They don't keep many microfilms in stock, but if you order films ahead you'll have plenty to keep you occupied. They have four computers, five microfilm readers, a microfiche reader, and a combination microfilm and microfiche printer. The machines are well cared for, so you won't use up all your quarters on copies that are too light or too dark. Of course, the staff and volunteers are very friendly and helpful. Best of all, it's close to home, so you won't arrive already worn out from traffic!

The Long Beach Family History Center is open Mondays 9 am to 1 pm; Tuesdays and Wednesdays 9 am to 1 pm and 6:30 to 9 pm; Thursdays 1 to 5 pm and 6:30 to 9 pm; and Saturdays 10 am to 2 pm. They are closed Sundays and all major holidays.



DECEMBER MEETING

Once again, it's almost time for our annual Christmas Potluck and Show-and-Tell Party! This is everyone's opportunity to participate, so we'll be asking for volunteers to share their research experiences with us. Aaron will have a sign-up sheet at the next meeting, but now's a good time to start thinking about what you'd like to share.



JANUARY MEETING

The guest speaker at our first meeting in 2003 will be Elaine Alexander. The topic of our beginners' class will be "Locating Your Families in the Census Records of 1930 back through 1880."



**EARLY QHGS
NEWSLETTERS SOUGHT**

The Allen County Library in Fort Wayne, Indiana is looking for copies of the first six years of the QHGS Newsletter to complete their collection. Please contact John McCoy at (562) 437-4337 if you have any of these issues.



LOST & FOUND

A navy blue zippered jacket was left behind at the October meeting. To claim it, please contact Mike Powers at (562) 621-6631.

**"TAKE MY HUSBAND ...
PLEASE!"**

*Previously published in
RootsWeb Review: Volume 5,
Number 40, 2 October 2002.
Submitted by Jim Liptrap,
Spring, Texas, USA
<jliptrap@dcnet2000.com>.*

From "The Brandon Republican and Eastern Advocate," of Brandon, Mississippi, Volume 1, Number 39, December 29, 1837:

**NOTICE TO
YOUNG LADIES, WIDOWS
AND OLD MAIDS**

Whereas my husband, Isaac W. Odom, left home without any just provocation on Saturday night the 11th instant, with an intention of not returning, this is to forwarn [sic] all persons from stopping him or impeding him on his journey in any way whatever, as I am resolved not to pursue him, as this is the second time he has made the attempt. I particularly forwarn all young ladies or widows from marrying or harboring him, as I do positively assure them that they would rue their bargain. He is about 5 feet 11 inches high, spare made, light hair, blue eyes, tolerably talkative, fond of company, 19 years old. Any person seeing him will do me a favor by advising him never to return, as I positively will never live with him.

/s/ Mahalah Ann Odom,
Yalobusha Co. Nov. 23, 1837

~ ON THE WEB ~

1880 & 1881 CENSUS INDEXES
AT FAMILYSEARCH.ORG

On October 23, familysearch.org unveiled a fantastic new resource. Indexes to the 1880 U. S. census and the 1881 censuses of the U. K. and Canada are now available to the public as a free service.

To access the census indexes from their main page at <<http://www.familysearch.org>>, first select the "search" tab. Then, on the left side of the next page, select the "census" tab. A page will then come up for you to enter your information. Your search can be quite specific or quite general.

By clicking on an individual name on the results page, you get the index information, which also includes the the National Archives film number, and the Family History Library film number. There is also a link to the film notes in the FHL catalog. From there, you can view the previous or the next person on the page. Or, by selecting the "household" link, you can view the listing for the entire household. From there, you can even jump to the next or the previous household. Results are downloadable, just as with the IGI.

We think you will find that the indexes are quite easy to use, and the results are full of information and very well-presented.



INFLATION CALCULATOR

Reprinted from Rabbit Tracks, quarterly publication of the Conejo Valley Genealogical Society, Inc., Volume 20, Number 3 (Fall 2002).

Research Tips, compiled by Anne Tetley Butcher

Have you ever wondered what your grandpa's house would be worth in today's dollars -- or your great-grandpa's farm? The Inflation Calculator computes dollar amounts in any year from 1800 to 2001. You put in what the property was worth at the time your ancestor purchased it, the date of purchase and it

will calculate the worth in dollars of any year between the purchase and 2001. The website address is <<http://www.westegg.com/inflation/>>.



NATIONAL PERSONNEL RECORDS CENTER,
ST. LOUIS, MISSOURI

Full information on ordering federal personnel records is given on these pages, part of the extensive National Archives site:

Civilian Personnel Records

<http://www.archives.gov/facilities/mo/civilian_records.html>

CPR houses the Official Personnel Folders (OPF) and Employee Medical Folders (EMF) of separated Federal civilian employees. CPR also houses personnel documents that date back to the mid-nineteenth century, although the bulk of the collection covers the period from 1900 to present. The medical records of military family members treated at Army, Air Force and Coast Guard medical facilities are also stored here. How do I get information from my civilian personnel records?

Military Personnel Records

<http://www.archives.gov/facilities/mo/st_louis/military_personnel_records.html>

The National Personnel Records Center, Military Personnel Records (NPRC-MPR) is the repository of millions of military personnel, health, and medical records of discharged and deceased veterans of all services during the 20th century. NPRC (MPR) also stores medical treatment records of retirees from all services, as well as records for dependent and other persons treated at naval medical facilities. Information from the records is made available upon written request (with signature and date) to the extent allowed by law.

Please note that all requests must be in writing, signed and mailed. They will not accept requests by email.

~ UPCOMING EVENTS ~

- Saturday, November 2, 8 am to 4 pm. South Orange County California Genealogical Society Family History Seminar. Mission Viejo Civic Center, La Paz & Marguerite. Hank Jones, speaker. Featuring interesting displays and information tables, heritage album display, SOCCGS book sale, door prizes, periodicals for sale, several patriotic organizations represented, quilt raffle.
- Saturday, November 2, 11 am. Orange County, California Genealogical Society monthly meeting. Huntington Beach Central Library, 7111 Talbert Avenue.
- Wednesday, November 6, 9:30 am. NARA Workshop: Introduction to Genealogical Resources. National Archives & Records Administration, 2400 Avila Road, Laguna Niguel. For reservations and information, phone (949) 360-2641, extension 0.
- Wednesday, November 13, 9:30 am. NARA Workshop: Naturalization & Immigration Records.
- Saturday, November 16, 1 pm. Whittier Area Genealogical Society monthly meeting. Masonic Lodge, 7604 Greenleaf Avenue, Whittier.
- **Sunday, November 17, 1:15 pm. Questing Heirs Genealogical Society monthly meeting.** Resurrection Lutheran Church, 1900 East Carson Street, Long Beach. See front page for program information and directions.
- Monday, November 18, 9:30 am. NARA Workshop: Preserving Your Family's History.
- Wednesday, November 20, 7 pm. South Bay Cities Genealogical Society monthly general meeting. Torrance Civic Center Library.
- Sunday, November 24, 1 pm. BIFHS-LA British Isles Family History Society monthly meeting. Classes and meetings are free with plenty of free parking at the Los Angeles FHC,* 10741 Santa Monica Blvd., West Los Angeles. Meetings are held in the Main Reading Room at 1 pm on the fourth Sunday of each month, except August and December. Everyone is welcome. For further information, contact Dorothy Losee at (310) 838-6085 or e-mail <dotom2@aol.com>.
- Saturday, February 22, 2003. Whittier Area Genealogical Society 21st Annual Conference. Masonic Lodge, 7604 Greenleaf Avenue, Whittier. With Katherine Scott Sturdevant. Topics include: The Immigrant Experience; Trailing Families; Westward Migration Patterns in Family History; Don't Throw It Away! Utilizing Artifacts in Family History Research and Writings; and Let Family Papers Speak for Themselves: Documentary Editing for Family Historians. For more information, contact Jean Bogart at <BJCBogie@aol.com>.
- Friday, February 28, 2003, 1-9 pm & Saturday, March 1, 2003, 8-6 pm. Southern California Genealogical Society Jamboree. Pasadena Center, 300 E. Green Street at Marengo. Exhibitors, software demonstrations, how-to lectures, picture restoration, maps, computer programs, CDs, old, new and used books, videos, new products which relate to the hobby of genealogy and family history. Speakers include: Michael Daigle, Arlene Eakle, Wade Hone, Joan Lowrey, Andy Pomeroy, Don Ray, Barbara Renick, and Tom Underhill. Grand Prize: round-trip air fare to Salt Lake City and six nights at the Salt Lake Plaza Hotel.

• FHC stands for Family History Center of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. FHCs are open free of charge to the public interested in doing records research. Volunteers are on hand and will gladly give you assistance. Regular hours for the Los Angeles FHC are Friday and Saturday 9 am to 5 pm, and Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday, 9 am to 9 pm. The LA FHC is located at 10741 Santa Monica Blvd. in West Los Angeles; their phone number is (310) 474-9990. There are smaller FHCs locally, in Long Beach at 3701 Elm Avenue in Bixby Knolls, phone (562) 988-0509, in Los Alamitos, phone (714) 821-6914, and in Cerritos, phone (562) 924-3676. It is advisable to call ahead to the local centers, as their hours change from time to time.