



# San Diego Genealogical Society

# Newsletter

Feb. 2006



*Happy  
Valentines  
Day*

Vol. 39, No. 1

## *KPBS To Air Genealogy Program*

Beginning in early February (check local listings), KPBS will air a four-part series on African American genealogy. Titled '**African American Lives**', it is hosted by Dr. Henry Gates, professor of Humanities and chair of African American Studies at Harvard University. Using genealogy, oral history, family stories and DNA analysis, it will trace lineage through American history and back to Africa. It will "take Alex Haley's Roots saga to a whole new level through moving stories of personal discovery". Dr. Gates will be joined by an all-star cast including Oprah Winfrey, Whoopi Goldberg, Quincy Jones and others.

The episodes titled 1) Discovering Roots, 2) The Promise of Freedom, 3) Before the War and 4) Beyond the Middle Passage, will restore the participants' lineages in reverse chronological order. Starting with the oral histories of the individuals' families, drawing on photographs, film clips, music and early personal records. Dr. Gates' genealogical research becomes increasingly more difficult as he works back through the Reconstruction, Civil War, Colonial and early slave trade periods in American history.

When the genealogical road comes to an end, he turns to some of the country's leading scientists who are involved in cutting-edge work using DNA samples to trace ancestral roots to Africa. This is the first television series to explore black roots in both America and Africa using genealogy and DNA.

At a time when ever-increasing numbers of Americans are interested in their family histories, '**African American Lives**' provides a timely and powerful demonstration of how meaningful the reclamation of one's past can be. Don't miss this unprecedented program.

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## **February 11th Monthly Meeting St Andrew's Church, noon**

### *Identifying Old Photographs with Patti Pipkin-Hacker*



Do you have old family photographs you would like to find out more about? When and where they were taken and who is in them? By carefully examining the pose, background, props, clothing, hair styles and other clues, you can help 'fill in the blanks' of those long lost secrets. Our speaker will help you identify the print type and teach you how to critically look at old photos to reveal their hidden clues. Dozens of old photos will be presented to help illustrate this process.

Patti Pipkin-Hacker is past-president and officer of the Hemet-San Jacinto Genealogical Society and has been doing genealogical research for over 30 years. She specializes in Civil War research.

As the owner of Hacker's Daguerrean Studio, she has experience in restoring, dating and printing more than 5,200 old photographs. She has made an in depth study of the history of photography and has developed a keen interest in portrait photography. She has been successful in identifying many photographs included in an undocumented family photo album she inherited.

Come and learn the tools to revealing the hidden secrets in your old photographs. This could lead you to significant breakthroughs in your genealogical research.

The Newsletter is published monthly, except January, by the San Diego Genealogical Society and mailed to all current members. Submission deadline for articles and announcements is the 15th of the month for the following month. Inclusion is based solely on the discretion of the Editor and/or Board of Directors. Members are encouraged to submit materials for publication, subject to copyright provisions. Please contact the Editor for guidelines.

#### 2005 Board of Directors

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Comments and suggestions can be e-mailed to the editor at [steelquist@aol.com](mailto:steelquist@aol.com) or left on the Library answering machine, 619-588-0065.

### *Thanks To Our Library Donors*

It has been a while since we have acknowledged and thanked our members and friends who have so generously donated books and other publications to our library. Below are those that have made donations in 2005. (Some books have yet to be cataloged -- please excuse us if your name was omitted). Thank you all for making our library such a valuable resource.

Diane Altona	Betty Mabee
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## President's Message.....

Your Society begins its 61st year! We were founded in 1946 by a group of 20 dedicated people who wanted to share their knowledge about family history research and to get others interested in pursuing their ancestral quest. From those days when family group sheets were meticulously typed and hand written and microfilm was the cutting edge of technology, we certainly have come a long way.

Today, the purpose and aims of the Society have not changed. We are still dedicated to advancing genealogical research through education and providing a venue to promote and encourage solid research to the highest standards. Towards these ends, our monthly meetings and seminars bring you the highest quality professional genealogists with relevant and timely topics. Our library, the second largest genealogical library in San Diego County, has a collection which we can all be proud of. While the Internet is now the leading edge of technology, it still has less than one tenth of one percent of the genealogical sources we seek. There still is no substitute for solid library and 'on location' searches.

But libraries and archives, including ours, face significant challenges. Funding, whether public or private, is scarce. While the Society's charter specifically calls for the "maintenance of a library of specialized literature", it is becoming increasingly more difficult for us to financially support it. To increase revenue, we have offered tiered membership pricing, requested donations, held fund raising campaigns and events and promoted new membership recruitment. These, however, have not kept up with increasing expenses (rent, utilities) and slowly declining membership (a trend seen across the country).

While we have instituted some short term measures to insure our library stays open, we need a long term solution to the situation. The Board will be looking into many possible ways this can be accomplished. The best and most immediate would be to find ongoing donor(s) who would support the library or provide an alternate site. If you can help or know of possible benefactors, please phone or e-mail me. I would also like to hear from you with any suggestions for a longer term remedy.

Our library, after all, is a central part of a legacy that began 60 years ago. It represents the work, dedication and aspirations of our members, both past and present, to bring the highest level of scholarship to the San Diego genealogical community. Lets keep it going.

Thank you  
Peter Steelquist, President

## 'Trash to Treasure' Sale Coming

Instead of a rummage sale this year, the Society is sponsoring a 'Trash to Treasure' sale. "What is that", you ask?

Well, we provide a location, sales tables and promotion for you to sell your things. If you have crafts you or someone else has made, used items (books, electronics, kitchen ware, clothing, etc.), new resale items, plants -- just about anything else others would buy, here is your chance to make some money. If you or someone you know is moving, what a great chance to unload some stuff or to just clean out that closet or garage. Make it a family project. (Our spring sale will be indoors so no furniture, yard equipment, etc.)

How does it work? You rent a table (8' x 3') for \$10 and show up early to set up. (Many eager buyers start arriving early.) From 8 am to 2 pm, you sell your stuff. Then, 10% of your sales total is donated to the Society. Anything you don't sell you take back with you. Everybody wins!

The 'Trash to Treasure' sale will take place on Saturday, April 29th at the New Frontier Mobile Home Park in Santee. There are only 40 tables available (to Park and SDGS members only) on a first come basis. Your \$10 check, payable to SDGS, mailed to our library (note 'Trash to Treasure' on the envelope) will reserve your table -- but only as long as they last. For questions regarding location and sale procedures, phone member Jim Reynolds at 619-562-2235.

The Society will have several tables selling used non-genealogy books and potted plants. If you have books you want to donate or to help out at the sale, please phone member Joan Carter at 619-443-3679.

Here is a great, no hassle way for you to help your Society while you convert your 'trash' to cash. Even if you won't be selling, plan to stop by and pick up some real treasure hunting bargains and handmade crafts.

## New Magazine, 'Internet Genealogy'

'Internet Genealogy' is a new magazine from the publishers of Family Chronicle and History Magazine. The first issue will be on newsstands at the end of February and will carry a cover date of April/May 2006. For a limited time, you can download a FREE preview issue of Internet Genealogy. You can also take advantage of a limited time introductory subscription offer of \$20 (US) or \$23 (Cdn) for one year. Visit:

[http://internet-genealogy.com/IG\\_subsRW.htm](http://internet-genealogy.com/IG_subsRW.htm)

*The Meaning of Life*.....

When learning by experience, you never graduate.

## Misunderstood Christmas Gifts

In our December 2005 Newsletter, we offered some suggestions for some family history related holiday gifts. Well, Maxine Ford of Brentwood, N. Y. had similar ideas this Christmas and worked very long and hard researching and writing some unique gifts for her family. However, on Christmas Day, all she got in return were tersely polite "Thank You's".

Maxine, a self described 'genealogy fanatic' had created truly unique gifts -- fake obituaries for each member of her family. She included a brief life history, list of accomplishments and other real details. The nicely printed documents, on special paper, were matted and presented in fine oak frames. The family, it seems, failed to appreciate the attention to details and fancy framing.

"At first I thought they were just speechless with happiness", Maxine said. "But then they looked at me with those blank, confused expressions. I've never felt more embarrassed", she said.

Her brother, Harold Know, says the gifts caught the family by surprise. "We know her heart's in the right place, but.....obituaries?.....on Christmas?

Perhaps most disturbing was the obituary given to matriarch Florence Knox, 97, which included her imaginary date of death of December 30, 2005. She became convinced she was going to die the following Friday. She even asked Harold to cancel her subscription to TV Guide.

Maxine was heartbroken that her hard work was so misunderstood. "I should have followed my first instinct and just gotten them cemetery plots", she said.

Perhaps just another example of a genealogist taking her hobby too seriously.

Source: The Genealogue, an 'exclusive'



# A 'Rose' By Any Other Name

Have you ever been frustrated or confused by your relatives' alternate or substitute names? You have probably run across references to your 'cousin Bessie' or heard someone tell a story about 'Uncle Wil' but you are really not sure where they fit in your family tree. Worse yet are those old photographs with only partial names written on the back (if you are even that lucky). Let's take a look at the use of alias names and how to decipher and correctly use them in genealogical research.

First of all, what are we referring to? A 'nickname' is an alias for someone's first name. Mostly they follow standard designations - Meg for Margaret, Polly for Mary, Bill for William, etc. - but not always. A 'diminutive' name is usually a shortened version of the full name - Joe for Joseph, Nick for Nicholas. A 'pet name', on the other hand, may not share any resemblance to the person's real name. It can be a clever, cute, descriptive, derogatory or misleading alias (e.g. Slim, Shorty, Col). And to confuse things further, some were known by pseudonyms (e.g. authors - Mark Twain, rap stars - Snoop Dog) or used stage names. Alternate names were also used when foreign names were anglicized. Some people used their middle names as their first while others may have gone simply by their initials. Also, popularity of nicknames has changed over time and could be different from one generation to the next and from one country to another or even be 'locality specific'. To add to the confusion, these names were not usually legal (as in changed by the court) and could change during the person's lifetime.

As much as we would like to have some hard and fast rules on how these names were used, there are always going to be exceptions. The only rule of thumb is just not to make assumptions. It used to be that 'Larry' was considered to be a shortened version of 'Lawrence'. Not today. And if you assume that Sally is the same person as Sarah, you may be making a terrible mistake. The best the family historian can do is to become aware of the commonly used substitutions. A very good source of commonly used aliases can be found at [www.tngenweb.org/franklin/frannick.htm](http://www.tngenweb.org/franklin/frannick.htm). Another good resource for the history of first names and their meaning (English and foreign) can be found at [www.behindthename.com/nmc/eng.php](http://www.behindthename.com/nmc/eng.php).

So, what can you do to prevent such naming errors in your research? First off, always note and document changes in names and spellings. Cite the sources with dates and include the aliases in your notes. Many software programs have a format for adding name variations. If it is commonly used, you may want to include it in the person's formal name (i.e. Mary "Polly" Lastname)

such that it appears thus on your monitor and in printed reports. If there is any doubt concerning the names used, note your concerns and reasons in your notes. Secondly, don't repeat the mistake your relatives made - always use the person's full name and cite aliases used. If there could be any possibility of confusion with other relatives or families, be sure to make the distinctions, even if it seems like you are stating the obvious. After all, your descendants may not know that your cousin Daisy was also your cousin Margaret.

## Favorite "Pet Names"

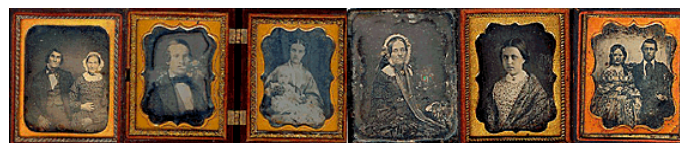
According to the Veterinary Pet Insurance Co. of Madison, WI, the following are the 10 most popular pet names (for animals, not people);

### Cats

1. Max
2. Tigger
3. Smokey
4. Tiger
5. Chloe
6. Shadow
7. Lucy
8. Angel
9. Oliver
10. Simba

### Dogs

1. Max
2. Bailey
3. Buddy
4. Molly
5. Maggie
6. Lucy
7. Daisy
8. Bella
9. Jake
10. Rocky



## Library Notes..... by Anna Acosta

I trust everyone had a wonderful holiday season and is looking forward to getting back to serious genealogical research this new year.

I want to thank all the library volunteers who have given of their time this past year. It takes a lot of hours and several members to keep our library clean and welcoming with the books shelved properly and the shelves and books dusted. And our office staff is so devoted in keeping our books and periodicals catalogued and entered into our on-line catalog. A special thanks to Lynne Robinson for answering queries and Miriam Hutzelman, our Library Consultant, for her advice and cataloging expertise. Also, Margarett Davis for keeping the card catalogs up-to-date and Pat Hotaling for typing all the information from the new members pedigree charts (as well as for the members who have submitted extended charts showing their family lines found while doing research since joining).

Our greatest joy is to have a member or visitor come in to the library and find new information. Please don't be shy about seeking help! Often we receive pedigree charts from new members who don't know the proper way to fill in the chart and we would be pleased to help. If you need

some advice on getting focused or where to look next, we can probably be helpful to you in that situation also. If we can't help you we may know who can or where you can check.

I know most of you are not as immersed in researching as some of us. Perhaps you think you've gone as far as you can go and put your records aside. I would urge you to go back to those first papers you collected and look at what you did or collected when you first started climbing your family tree. By checking from the perspective you have gained over the years and look once again at those first records gathered and used. You'll probably recognize something you missed before, when they were not meaningful to you at that time. I kind of smiled the first time I did this, but what a surprise - there was information that I couldn't connect to earlier. What a leap forward it gave to two families. Besides I was pleased to discover how well I had researched without knowing anything about genealogy as a study. In addition, so much new material is being published and put on the internet it seems to get easier all the time. So it might be smart to review your old sources and see if you can find ideas for going forward again.

See you at the library! Anna

## *Annual Meeting a Big Success*

We had 169 people sign up to attend our January all-day seminar and luncheon. From the feedback, everyone had a great time and learned many new tips to improve their research. William Dollarhide and Leland Metzler gave captivating presentations that kept everyone wanting more. It was difficult to keep the meeting on schedule with so much material and such excellent questions. Nobody wanted it to end.

The speakers brought hundreds of books and CDs (14 tables) for sale which keep everyone busy during the breaks. A number of titles sold out. The only downside is that we didn't have enough cashiers.

After the luncheon, Society President, Peter Steelquist, introduced the 2005 board and the new incoming board members for 2006. Recognition was also singled out to some of the many volunteers who do so much to make everything the Society does run so smoothly. The 'Presidents Recognition Award' was presented to outgoing Program Chair and incoming 1st VP, Elaine Foulger. A well deserved award!

On a note of sorrow, he announced the November passing of Treasurer and Past-President, Harvey Keating, and dedicated the meeting to his memory.

There were many door prizes given out throughout the day. The two-night Salt Lake City Red Lion Hotel package was won by Kitty Taylor and the four-night Plaza Hotel certificate was won by Joan Carter. Congratulations.

# *Godfrey Library Update*

In past issues (Dec., Sept. 2004) we have reported on the valuable resources provided by the Godfrey Library in Connecticut. Their extensive online databases are one of the best bargains available at only \$35 per year.

It was recently announced that they will be dropping HeritageQuest Online (from ProQuest) from their offerings. This includes the original images of the U. S. census records, Revolutionary War Pension Applications, old family and local history books and others.

For several years the library has been aggressive in promoting its collection of online offerings for home use, particularly HeritageQuest Online. Normally this is offered by subscription to libraries for in-house use only. ProQuest has decided that Godfrey's approach violates the terms and conditions of their contract. A decision was made not to renew the contract.

From now on, new library members will not have access to HeritageQuest Online. Current members will continue to have access until the end of their membership or Dec. 31, 2006, whichever comes first. If you joined Godfrey for access to these databases, don't despair. HeritageQuest is available for free at many libraries. Also see our Dec. 2005 Newsletter for libraries that still offer it online.

The big plus to this is that Godfrey will be investing the library funds in other online services. They recently added more than 40 new sites to their menus. They also plan on digitizing many of the publications on their shelves, including bible records and other manuscripts not available elsewhere.



## *Genealogy Researchers Wanted*

The El Cajon City Library, 201 E. Douglas Ave., El Cajon, is sponsoring a class for beginners on Saturday, Feb. 25 from 10 am to Noon. The session entitled "An Overview for Beginners and Beyond" will be presented by Anna Acosta, Library Director, SDGS. Handouts will include forms and a list of Internet sites.

If you have been doing research for about 2 years or less this session is highly recommended. Many beginners do not know how to fill out a pedigree chart properly so this will be the first topic reviewed.

If you have put aside your family tree search for sometime perhaps this session can help you refocus and look at your past effort through a new frame of understanding.

To reserve a seat please call Anna at 858-271-9287.

## *The Meaning of Life.....*

When you harbor bitterness, happiness will dock elsewhere.

# Farm Directories

Most of us have used city directories in our research and know the valuable information they contain. They can be particularly helpful in researching between the census years. But what if your ancestor didn't live in the city? Even up to the early twentieth century, the majority of the population lived in rural America, many still farming the land their families had for generations. Have you ever tried looking them up in farm directories? Like city directories, they contain a wealth of information that can open up your research and add a whole new perspective to your family history.

From the mid-nineteenth through the mid-twentieth centuries, several companies produced them. Early farm directories usually list the name of the farmer, the township and section of the farm, whether the farmer owns or rents, the number of acres owned or rented, and the farmer's post office address. One of the most popular, "*Prairie Farmer's Reliable Directory of Farmers and Breeders*", built upon this basic information and, though their entries are still brief, provide a fantastic amount of data. Each entry includes the farmer's name, the wife's maiden name, the first names of the children (names of children followed by an asterisk indicate children not living at home), the farm name (if any), the post office address, the township and section of the farm, how many acres the farmer owns, the land owner's name (if the farmer was a tenant), and the year when the farmer first moved to the county.

Some directories also include the names of parents, siblings, in-laws, nieces, nephews and grandchildren living in the home and occasionally give the farmer's primary crop and names of any farm hands. Owners of purebred animals such as cattle, chickens, hogs, goats, ducks and even bees are then listed by types of animal and breed. Later directories provided a listing of automobile owners and the makes of their vehicles as well as tractor owners and the makes they owned and even what type of silo a farmer possessed. A directory of county businesses is always included; as with modern directories, advertisements from local proprietors financed much of the publication costs and can be found throughout.

As informative as the general farm directory information is, the supplemental data can prove as much of a gold mine. Don't hesitate to look all through the directory to see if there are any pictures of your ancestors' homes, their livestock, or even your ancestors themselves. Some farm directories include brief histories of the county's settlement and its early pioneers. Finally, remember to check nearby city directories for farmers and others living in outlying areas. Residents of rural Allen County, Indiana, for example, are listed in the back section of older Fort Wayne city directories.

So, where can you find these directories? Start by look-

ing in 'all the usual places'. Ancestry.com has an extensive collection, usually indexed by the county name. HeritageQuest Online and FamilySearch.org also have many titles. Another online source is [www.DistantCousin.com/Directories](http://www.DistantCousin.com/Directories). A recent search of [ebay.com](http://ebay.com) even located 44 farm directories for sale. And, of course, check your local, university, regional and state libraries and archives as well as those located in the areas you are researching. Often a phone call to the library reference desk will result in an on-the-spot lookup and a letter with SASE will get you a photocopy.

So, just because your ancestor didn't live in the city, don't overlook the 'other' directories. As you have seen, they can add so much missing information and open the door to knowing how they really lived their lives.



## 'Cold Case Files'

Just like in the television forensic dramas, you probably have some 'cold case' files in your genealogy research. We can use a lot of the same techniques and strategies as seen on TV to help us crack some of our old and unsolved mysteries as well. Just pretend for a moment that you are a police forensic investigator trying to solve an old murder case. Here are some things you will probably want to do in your investigation.

To start, throw out all your old assumptions and start fresh. Review each fact and each piece of evidence as though it were new. Re-verify the information to be sure it is correct. Are the sources valid? Are they substantiated by other evidence? Go through the entire file with a new, fresh approach. Much of the information you have accumulated over time may look different when viewed all together. Make a timeline of the information and sort the documentation accordingly. You may begin to see some different patterns develop.

Check all the 'facts' a second time. Today, there are most likely new and better sources for that information. New databases are now available which may help confirm the original findings - or cast doubt on the old sources. Look at the sources with a critical eye. Are they primary or secondary, direct or indirect, original or derivative (see the Aug. 2005 Newsletter article on evidence)? Were conclusions made from incomplete information? Are you missing some critical information? Make a list of the important information you need to find and sketch out strategies for locating it.

Are new tools now available that can help you? Just like DNA evidence solves many of the crime dramas, new techniques are available to genealogists. While DNA research is still in its infancy for genealogists, locating a surname group for your line could help prove - or dis-

prove - your conclusions (see the June 2004 Newsletter article on DNA research). In addition, many new resources have recently become available which could be your 'break'. Check 'Google' and other search engines, search surname and locality message boards which are continually being added to, go to RootsWeb 'WorldConnect' and other user-contributed databases to see if others are researching your lines, check the compendium sites like Cindi's List, Linkpendium.com, ePodunk.com, etc. for new links and resources.

Ask for help. Get a 'fresh set of eyes' to look at your information. Others may be able to see connections you have missed or raise questions about some of the basic assumptions. One of the best benefits of being a member of the Society is having many experienced genealogical researchers who can help you. Take advantage of them. Also, they probably have a 'different set of research tools' than you do that just could lead to an important discovery.

With your information verified and re-organized, begin new research. Have you searched all the collateral lines? Are there living relatives that may be able to help? Seek them out and ask. Have you done 'proximity searches' (neighboring cities, counties, etc.)? Have you done 'cluster studies' (tracking same surnames, family groups, community migrations, etc.) to get the bigger picture of how they lived as a group? Have you researched all the alternate spellings of the names - both first and last? How about the possible misspellings? Have you looked at generation-to-generation naming patterns to find clues? Have you gone beyond the indexes and examined the original records? After all, an index is only as good as the indexer, transcriber or original penmanship.

Don't assume that just because you can't find it, that the information isn't there. Are you looking in the right place? Have geographical boundaries changed over time. Could the records you seek have been moved elsewhere? If records were destroyed, are there other copies or alternative records that could reveal the same information? Be sure to check NUCMC (see the May 2004 Newsletter) and other archive locating catalogs. When dealing with librarians and record custodians, let them use their expertise and training. When seeking records, ask "where could I find ....." rather than "do you have ....." You may be pleasantly surprised at the difference in answers you get.

Hopefully, these suggestions for cracking your 'cold case files' will lead you to the same successes we see the forensic investigators having on TV. However, don't get discouraged. While they always seem to wrap up their investigations within a primetime hour, yours may take longer - and with no commercial breaks - but the results will be even more satisfying. Good Luck!

### *The Meaning of Life.....*

The pride of ancestry increases in the ratio of distance.

## *New Year Resolutions -- 1852*



*In 1852 by candle light, Henry Hydenwell took quill in hand and penned his New Year resolutions;*

1. No man is truly well-educated unless he learns to spell his name at least three different ways within the same document. I resolve to give the appearance of being extremely well-educated in the coming year.
2. I resolve to see to it that all of my children will have the same names that my ancestors have used for six generations in a row.
3. My age is no one's business but my own. I hereby resolve to never list the same age or birth year twice on any document.
4. I resolve to have each of my children baptized in a different church -- either in a different faith or in a different parish. Every third child will not be baptized at all or will be baptized by an itinerant minister who keeps no records.
5. I resolve to move to a new town, new county, or new state at least once every 10 years -- just before those pesky enumerators come around asking silly questions.
6. I will make every attempt to reside in counties and towns where no vital records are maintained or where the courthouse burns down every few years.
7. I resolve to join an obscure religious cult that does not believe in record keeping or in participating in military service.
8. When the tax collector comes to my door, I'll loan him my pen, which has been dipped in rapidly fading blue ink.
9. I resolve that if my beloved wife Mary should die, I will marry another Mary.
10. I resolve not to make a will. Who needs to spend money on a lawyer?

(Thanks to members Bill Davis, Candice Booth who passed this on from Roots-L.)

## *FHC Film Fees Increased*

The microfilm circulation loan fees at the Family History Centers have been increased effective 14 January 2006.

The microfilm loan fee for the San Diego FHC will increase from \$3.75 to 5.75. The renewal fee will be \$5.50. Microfiche fees will remain at 20 cents. The new fees still includes return postage

This fee change, the first since February 1997, was needed to keep pace with increasing costs. The FHC will continue to use the current Microfilm and Microfiche Order Card and Microfilm and Microfiche Order Sheet.

## *Fake Family Trees*

Just when you think you have heard it all, another scam appears targeted towards genealogists. Recently, a new computer program called "Fake Family" has been offered for sale. The program, costing \$75, produces randomly generated names with era-specific dates (bogus birth, marriage and death dates and places). Furthermore, it produces information that follows popular naming patterns (e.g. more 'Orville' and 'Bertha' names in the 1880s vs. 1980s), mirroring infant mortality, marriage rates and migration data. The program will create thousands of pages of unique content "with almost no effort". It creates files in the standard GEDCOM format that can be converted to html pages for posting on web sites.

Why, you ask, would anyone want to create fake family trees? The whole purpose of "Fake Family" is to produce web pages that can 'trick' search engines (Google, Yahoo, etc.). By doing so, more people are likely to click on links they believe are legitimate family history related sites which then take them to sites that have 'sponsored links'. Advertisers pay site owners that refer users to them a small fee (usually pennies or less) and if purchases are made at the site, owners may get a commission. This can be a profitable source of income with some enterprising entrepreneurs making millions of dollars a year! Another benefit is that with more traffic and revenue-producing mouse clicks, the paying sites get higher list rankings and top listings for some search words.

The real problem here is that while the 'fake trees' are intended to fool search engines, they will also lure unsuspecting family researchers who could incorporate this information into their own research and even download it and later upload it to genuine sites like FamilySearch, Ancestry.com, Rootsweb WorldConnect, etc. Don Harrold, co-creator of the program, defends it by saying that there is "absolutely zero chance" of matching any real person or family. He also notes that there is already lots of errors and incorrect information on posted databases.

These claims aside, many family history organizations are outraged and the response from the genealogical community has been overwhelming. In fact, the web site, [www.fakefamily.com](http://www.fakefamily.com), has been taken down. There is no word, however, on whether the software is being sold elsewhere or may appear again on the web. For now, the uproar has been quieted.

The clear message from this for genealogists is to always verify your sources. The Internet, like any resource, is only a 'finding aid'. When you find information on a web site, e-mail the owner to get source information. And in all cases, verify your data with primary and secondary sources. As always, let the buyer - and genealogist - beware!

## *"Family Yearbooks" Sued*

The publishers of 'Family Yearbooks', Morphcorp LLC, have been sued by the State of Colorado. The Parker Colorado company marketed the "*Family Yearbook*" as a product of genealogical research that was unique to the consumer's family history. What the purchaser received was a book of general information, jokes, recipes and old photographs of people unrelated to them. In fact, the company did not conduct any genealogical research specific to the named family. Much of the content was the same regardless of the surname for which it was created.

The company is alleged to have used deceptive advertising and marketing tactics to sell thousand of 'Family Yearbooks' to unsuspecting consumers in Colorado and throughout the country. Sold through direct-mail, the advertising included various false and misleading statements. One claim was that the publisher, Maxwell MacMaster, shared a same last name of the consumer to whom the flyer was sent. It also falsely advertised that the book was available at a "special pre-publication price" for a limited period. The book price of \$44.85, including shipping and handling.

The lawsuit seeks a court order providing refunds to purchasers, civil penalties of up to \$2,000 for each violation of the Consumer Protection Act and attorney fees and costs as well as an injunction preventing the defendants from engaging in future sales. *Caveat emptor*

## *TV Program: Ancestors in the Attic*

History Television (Canada) is creating an exciting new series about family history. This is your opportunity to share your stories, your research and your research challenges. If your story, research or question is chosen, it could appear on *Ancestors in the Attic*.

Were your ancestors sheep-thieves or war heroes, saints or sinners, or something quite unexpected? Are there family secrets you'd still like to unlock or legends you've already untangled? Let '*Ancestors in the Attic*' help you solve your dramatic, personal family mysteries or feature the stories you've already uncovered.

Whether you're a historical researcher or a family historian, '*Ancestors in the Attic*' would like to hear about astonishing stories with a Canadian connection that you've already unearthed.

Discover more on the History Television website: [www.history.ca](http://www.history.ca) or go directly to the *Ancestors in the Attic* page at: [www.history.ca/microsites/ancestorssearch/default.asp](http://www.history.ca/microsites/ancestorssearch/default.asp)

In 500 words or less, tell *Ancestors in the Attic* about your story and briefly outline the evidence you gathered in your research. E-mail all information to: [Ancestors.Search@allianceatlantis.com](mailto:Ancestors.Search@allianceatlantis.com)

## Gold Rush letter .....

From George W. Twist to his brother R. P. Twist of Yellow Spring, Ohio. Many came and 'saw the elephant' and were left stranded and penniless.

Santa Clara

February 28, 1859

Dear Brother

It has been almost [sic] two years since I have heard from you or any of the family and I feel very anxious to hear from you and the balance of the family. I have got all most [sic] tired of writing and not getting any answer. I write once more to stir up your mind in remembrance of me. I am well at present but I have just got over a severe spell of sickness. I was taken sick with the fever in October last and then it turned to ague and now I have just barely got over it. Now I am in very good health.

I have had very bad luck for the last two years. My mining operations [sic] proved a failure and I lost everything that I had and a great deal more and I had just got squared up when I was taken sick. So now I have to commence again without a cent in my mining operations. I lost over two thousands dollars and then being sick so long it has made my financial affairs [sic] rather slim and now I have made up my mind to come home as soon as I can make money enough to take me therethat will be next Fall, for wages is very small here now and it will take some time to make enough. The fairs [sic] is so high now.

I haven't had a letter [from] Elizabeth for more than two years. I don't know what has become of her and the children. I feel very anxious to hear from her and the children. I wish you would see her and have her to write to me as soon as possible, for I am very uneasy about them. I wrote so much and haven't got any answer that I don't know where she is and where to direct my letters. If you get this letter, I wish you would write immediately and let me know how you and family is getting along and let me know how Mother's health is. Give me all the news in general.

Direct your letter to Santa Clara, Santa Clara Co., Cal.

Very truly yours, Brother, Geo. W. Twist.



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### **SDGS Event Calendar**

Unless otherwise noted, all meetings held at;

St. Andrew's Lutheran Church, 8350 Lake Murray Blvd. (at Jackson Dr.) San Diego

Feb. 4 -- FTM User Group, Society Library, 10:00 a.m. -- noon

Feb. 8 -- Board Meeting, Society Library, 7:00 p.m.

Feb. 11 -- RootsMagic User Group, St Andrew's, 10:00 a.m. -- noon

Feb. 11 -- Monthly Meeting, 'Dating Old Photographs', Patty Hacker, noon

Mar. 4 -- FTM User Group, Society Library, 10:00 a.m. -- noon

Mar. 8 -- Board Meeting, Society Library, 7:00 p.m.

Mar. 11 -- RootsMagic User Group, St. Andrew's, 10:00 a.m. -- noon

Mar. 11 -- Monthly Meeting, , noon

**View All San Diego County Genealogy Events at: [www.cgssd.org/events.php3](http://www.cgssd.org/events.php3)**