

Mecklenburg Messenger



Olde Mecklenburg Genealogical Society
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August 2003

Joan Raney, Editor

Directions to Aldersgate

Fellowship Hall, Aldersgate -- Ray Hall
Community Center: Aldersgate asks that we use the main entrance and park in front of the Ray Hall Community Center, entering the building by the front door.

Coming from Eastway Dr., turn on Shamrock Dr. Instead of turning on Cole Drive, proceed out Shamrock to Aldersgate Main Entrance. You will pass these buildings on Shamrock Dr.: WNC Methodist Center, Museum of History, Asbury Care Center, and Wesley Nursing Center.

At the traffic light, turn right on Willard Farrow Dr. After the Welcome Center (like a gate house), drive 0.3 mi. on Willard Farrow Dr. After the Hezekiah Alexander House on the right, you will see 3 buildings facing a circle.

Ray Hall Community Center is the 2-story building in the middle, between Epworth Towers and Francis Residential Building.

Park in the visitor parking in front of the Community Center and enter by the front door.

From the President

by George Sutcliffe

Thanks to all who were present at our last membership meeting and who contributed to the collection to purchase microfilm offered to us from the Char-Meck Library Carolina Room. Ellen Poteet's appeal and your generosity made it possible to purchase the 26 rolls of film for our future Archives at a bargain price.

Olde Meck is still in need of a Chairperson for the Publicity Committee. The committee is already formed, but needs a person to coordinate its activities. Only a couple of hours a month would be necessary to help us with this vital function. Please consider volunteering for this position. Contact me right away if you have an interest.

OMGS Meetings

The August 2003 meeting of OMGS will be held on Wednesday, 13 August 2003 at the Fellowship Hall of Aldersgate, 3420 Shamrock Drive, Charlotte. *See first article for directions.* Social hour begins at 7p.m. with light refreshments and the meeting begins at 7:30p.m. Our speaker will be Mrs. Ann Williams, and her topic is "Your Affectionate Daughter, Isabella." In September we will have Judy Gibson, Register of Deeds for Mecklenburg County, NC and her husband speak to us. Sounds like a couple of great programs so hope to see you there!

The Hopewell Branch will not meet in August. Be sure to rejoin them in September for a great program. Enjoy your summer!

We appreciate the suggestions for future programs that were made by members, but we are still in need of ideas. Send your ideas to me or call Pinny Cook with suggestions. We want your ideas on interesting programs.

Notes from the July Meeting

by Mary Utting

When Pinny Cook introduced Alden Davis, speaker for the July meeting, she said this might be the first X-rated program in OMGS history. The talk was titled "Skeletons in Our Ancestral Closet."

Mrs. Davis said that our ancestors were very good at hiding family secrets, often for hundreds of years, because they would not talk about such things. She went on to classify the three kinds of sin we may find in research.

The first is Dishonor. For example, a Confederate great-grandfather from Georgia was last heard of at the siege of Vicksburg. It was assumed he was among the many who perished during that episode, so his family honored him as a hero. Seeing the city was surrounded by Yankees, this fellow decided the only way to save his life was to

sneak out and join the Union Army. They sent him to fight Indians in the West, where he met and married a young lady and raised a family. He did not bother to tell her that he already had a wife and children in Georgia.

Her grandfather's brother-in-law was once expelled from the Methodist Church for lying. He heard a sermon at the church and said it offended someone. When he denied making such a statement, he was told to leave the church.

Insanity, which described many afflictions, including mental retardation, birth defects and Alzheimer's, was considered dishonorable, so any such problem was kept hidden if possible.

The second sin was Crime. A young journalist found in the family Bible that his ancestor had died in a fall. When he checked the information in a newspaper, he learned that it was a fall from the gallows with a rope around his neck. He had been caught stealing horses.

She described a story her former husband disliked hearing about his uncle, who lived on a farm in upstate New York. This man just took a horse and left home. Twenty years later, the family received a letter from Illinois reporting that he and the horse were both fine.

One coroner's jury investigating the death of a one-month-old infant learned that the mother had just stopped feeding the baby. The verdict: natural death, not murder.

The third sin was Sex. Mrs. Davis said that we may have rules about this subject, but our ancestors had many more. She called attention to a book, *Indiana Gothic*, whose author learned an amazing tale about his great-grandfather. He was a noted politician in Indiana and also known as a lady-chaser. He married a plain-looking woman who had a beautiful sister, married to a poor teacher. During a visit, the beauty and the politician began a secret love affair that went on for years. The clandestine lovers decided to have a child, believing no one would be the wiser. But the teacher-husband was able to compute the time from conception to birth and realized this child was not his, so he killed the politician. The book's author reports that a plea of temporary insanity saved the murderer; this was the first instance of this plea resulting in an acquittal.

Looking for children born out of wedlock? Mrs. Davis suggested using the records of bastardy bonds. In one Cabarrus County record, Mrs. Davis found that two families lived side by side, and a son of one family and a daughter of the

other had a child out of wedlock. The young mother sued the young man for support of her baby in 1797. A family member was angry at Mrs. Davis for unearthing this secret, no matter how old it was, but another said it led to a whole new line of relatives.

The speaker noted that there were laws against miscegenation. A Quaker ran a plantation in Georgia, where he trained slaves in farming skills. They then moved on from his place. There was one West Indian woman who was given a cabin for herself and her light-skinned children. As the Civil War approached, the Quaker sent the entire family back to the West Indies. Mrs. Davis wonders if descendants know about this ancestral history?

She told the audience to be suspicious about family history, because every family has secrets. Watch for clues such as a name change and a move to distant parts. One Edgar Watson of Edgefield County, S.C., was married and had several children. He was in a barroom fight during which someone was murdered, so he next turned up in Oklahoma, where he was accused of shooting the famous Belle Starr. Then he surfaced in Florida running a sugar cane plantation, making syrup. This generous soul hired people that others would not hire, but somehow these workers had a strange habit of disappearing just before payday. It was realized he was burying these people instead of paying him. When he took a boat to a nearby town, the men all met him, and every one of them shot him.

Mrs. Davis said that sometimes it is impossible to report such stories unless they are old enough to do no harm to living people. If it is a contemporary incident, she believes it has to wait for another generation to tell the tale.

From the Board of Directors

by George Sutcliffe

The Board of Directors of OMGS is proud to announce that the editors of the OMGS Quarterly have been nominated to the North Carolina Genealogical Society Awards Committee as candidates for The Award for Excellence in Periodical Publishing for 2003. Our editors, Ellen Poteet and Mary Utting, were nominated based on their work with the 20th Anniversary edition of the the Quarterly, Volume 20, Numbers One through Four, for 2002. The Board recognized their outstanding work in organizing and writing, as well as their dedication to making a high quality contribution to published material for the old Mecklenburg County area. Please offer your congratulations to the candidates and thank them

for their hard work on our behalf. Results will be announced by the NCGS at the end of the year.

Founding Families of Mecklenburg

Catawba Valley Scottish Society has invited descendants of early settlers of Mecklenburg County to become members of the Founding Families of Mecklenburg. This group will honor and perpetuate the memory of early pioneers who were living in Mecklenburg County before May 31, 1775.

To be eligible, a person must be able to prove each generation of his or her lineage back to an individual who settled in Mecklenburg County before May 31, 1775, the date of the adoption of the Mecklenburg Resolves. This document, which was published in several North Carolina newspapers, contained 20 amendments to the earlier Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence. These amendments stated how the people would elect leaders and maintain law and order until Congress could authorize laws. Captain James Jack delivered this document to North Carolina delegates at the Second Continental Congress in Philadelphia.

Although the Meck Deck, as it is familiarly known, remains in some doubt among historians, because a fire destroyed minutes of the May 19-20, 1775, meeting at which it was adopted, the newspaper records verify the authenticity of the Resolves.

Those whose heritage makes them eligible for the Founding Families recognition may request an application blank from Founding Families of Mecklenburg, Historic Rural Hill Farm, P. O. Box 1009, Huntersville, N. C. Please enclose a long, self-addressed, stamped envelope. Anyone whose application is verified will receive a specially designed lapel pin and a certificate suitable for framing.

An Elephant for a Dime?

When an organization like Olde Mecklenburg Genealogical Society has a dream of establishing its own headquarters/archives, it may seem that the cost of such an undertaking is just too great. On the other hand, a dime once bought a real live elephant.

This story comes from Ann Wilt, an OMGS member who lived in Atlanta as a small child. She was 5 years old when an elephant died at the Atlanta zoo. Ann was devastated. She wondered how much it would cost to buy a new elephant, so she checked her finances and found she had one dime. She asked her mother, "Could we buy an

elephant for a dime?" Her mother, being an understanding soul, said, "We'll try."

She wrote a letter to the Atlanta Georgian, describing little Ann's sorrow at the loss of the elephant and her desire to donate her dime to the cause of replacing the favorite animal. A sympathetic editor ran the letter, starting a dimes for an elephant drive throughout the city. The response was magic. Before long, people all over the city of Atlanta were collecting dimes for the cause, and the zoo had the money to purchase a new elephant.

That's how a dime bought an elephant. If every member of OMGS sent in a contribution to the Building Fund, the total might well add up to the cost of a new archives. Let's try it and see.

Queries

Bruce Baker and his brother are compiling a family file on the Todds of Mecklenburg County, NC, and would appreciate receiving any information on this family from OMGS members. They hope to have the file completed by the end of this year. Contact Bruce at bebaker@charter.net or write him at 881 Ravenwood Drive, Morristown, TN 37814.

Upcoming Events

Triad Highland Games, Archdale, NC, August 16, 2003. For more information call (336) 431-8482 or email president@triadhighlandgames.org.

Appalachian Highland Games & Scottish Festival, Martins Creek, NC, September 6, 2003. For more information call (828) 837-5684 or email ahginfo@webworkz.com.

Charleston Highland Games & Scottish Gathering, Mount Pleasant, SC, September 19-21, 2003. For more information call (843) 529-1020 or email info@charlestonscots.com.

Want to Join OMGS?

It's easy to join. Annual dues are \$20 for an individual membership, \$25 for a family membership, \$40 for a sustaining membership, or you can pay \$225 for a lifetime membership. Make a check or money order payable to Olde Mecklenburg Genealogical Society and send it along with your name, address, phone number, email address, and names you are researching to OMGS, P.O. Box 32453, Charlotte, NC, 28232-2453.

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OMGS Publications for Sale

<i>Mecklenburg County, NC Cemeteries, Volume 1: North Mecklenburg</i>	\$32.50 PPD
<i>Mecklenburg County, NC Cemeteries, Volume 2: South Mecklenburg</i>	\$32.50 PPD
<i>1850 Census Abstract, Mecklenburg County, NC</i> Sale!	\$27.50 PPD \$17.50 PPD
<i>OMGS Surname Index, 2000 Edition</i>	\$11.95 PPD \$8.00 PPD
<i>Mecklenburg County, NC Waterways Map</i> (by William T. Skinner, C.S.R.S.)	\$3.50 PPD
<i>Nine Generation Ancestor Chart</i>	\$6.00 PPD (rolled) \$5.00 PPD (folded)
OMGS <i>Quarterlies</i> : 1983-2002	\$21.50 PPD (4/year) \$8.50 PPD (single) \$2.00 PPD (index)

Books by Herman W. Ferguson

<i>Mecklenburg County, NC: Minutes of the Court of CP&Q Sessions, Vol. I, 1780-1800</i>	\$30.00 PPD
<i>Mecklenburg County, NC: Minutes of the Court of CP&Q Sessions, Vol. II, 1801-1820</i>	\$32.50 PPD
<i>Mecklenburg County, NC: Minutes of the Court of CP&Q Sessions, Vol. III, 1821-1830</i>	\$27.50 PPD
<i>Mecklenburg County, NC: Minutes of the Court of CP&Q Sessions, Vol. IV, 1831 - 1840</i>	\$25.00 PPD
<i>Mecklenburg County, NC: Minutes of the Court of CP&Q Sessions, Vol. V, 1841 - 1850</i> New!	\$27.50 PPD
<i>Mecklenburg County, NC: Genealogical Deed Abstracts Books 10-14</i>	\$27.50 PPD
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<i>Mecklenburg County, NC: Will abstracts, 1791-1868, Books A-J/Tax Lists 1797-1799, 1806-1807</i> (transcribed by Ralph B. & Herman W. Ferguson)	\$32.50 PPD
<i>Mecklenburg County, NC: A Petition, 1792; Tax Lists 1797-1799, 1806-1808, 1810-1811, 1815, 1823-1824</i> (transcribed by Ralph B. & Herman W. Ferguson)	\$27.50 PPD
<i>Mecklenburg & Cabarrus Counties, NC: Decedents for Whom Loose Estate Papers are Extant</i>	\$16.50 PPD

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