



WINTER 2019 Vol. 60 No. 4



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On the Cover:

Bernard Doetsch and his grandkids – Christmas 1959

Photo courtesy of Angela Doetsch

The Austin Genealogical Society Quarterly is published once per quarter of the year (Spring, Summer, Fall and Winter) by the Austin Genealogical Society (AGS). Deadlines for submissions are the 3rd Saturday of the second month of the quarter. The AGS Editor reserves the right to edit all contributed materials for style, grammar, and length. Contributors are solely responsible for the accuracy and proper citation of consulted sources. In addition, contributors are responsible for adhering to all applicable copyright law in their works. AGS assumes no responsibility for the content of submitted material.

AGS Members and the public are encouraged to submit material for publication to:

Angela Doetsch
quarterly@austintxgensoc.org

FROM THE EDITOR

Greetings AGS Members,

No matter your religious preference or cultural background, most can agree that the winter holidays are a time for celebrating customs and traditions and spending time with family and friends.

Some of these traditions have been passed down to you from past generations and maybe you have even started a new tradition that others will honor for years to come. Maybe you gather to decorate a grand holiday tree and hang stockings by the fire? Maybe you take a drive to a nearby town to revel in the county courthouse decked out in twinkling lights? Maybe you grab a cup of hot cocoa or mug of mulled cider and gather for the annual lighting of a tree in your town square? Maybe you set out your menorah, kinara or advent wreath with candles ready to light in honor of your beliefs? Do you participate in a local “polar bear plunge” bravely jumping into chilly waters with other brave thrill seekers all to benefit charity?

In the following pages, you might learn a bit about the history of these winter customs and how people celebrate around the world. We take a virtual trip to the Midwest Genealogical Center (MGC) in Missouri to learn about what the facilities have to offer. In the future, if you plan a trip to the MGC during the winter holidays, they host some great themed events. Make sure to take the short 30-minute drive to nearby Excelsior Springs, Missouri, to visit their *Hall of Trees* where over 30 Christmas trees are decorated by local groups. You will also read about how kitchens have evolved over the decades and maybe get a bit nostalgic thinking about your grandmother’s kitchen during the holiday and how it was filled with warmth and joy. And finally, we follow Griff starting with the harsh winter of 1936 and witness how perseverance and a little hope might bring about brighter days to come.

I wish you all a happy holiday and fruitful new year!



Angela Doetsch

quarterly@austingensoc.org

CORRECTIONS CORNER

By AGS Member Judith C. Morris

"Lucky Strikes Can Happen" AGS Quarterly 2016 Vol. 57, No. 2

I've been troubled for some time that a few months after the article I wrote, *"Lucky Strikes Can Happen"* that was published in the AGS Quarterly (2016 Vol. 57, No. 2, page 46) I discovered I'd made two relationship mistakes in it.

At about the mid-point on page 47:

great-great grandfather

"...Maurice Morris, Tom's ~~great-grandfather~~, had emigrated from Wales to Canada. The vicar also provided the name and contact information of ~~one of Maurice's other descendants~~, Mary Morris."

a related Morris descendant

Final Correction:

"...Maurice Morris, Tom's great-great grandfather, had emigrated from Wales to Canada. The vicar also provided the name and contact information of a related Morris descendant, Mary Morris."

NOTE FROM THE EDITOR:

A note will be made on the digital issue of the 2016 AGS Quarterly Vol. 57, No. 2 on the AGS website regarding the correction for future readers.

WINTER CUSTOMS FROM AROUND THE WORLD

By AGS Member Angela Doetsch

The holidays are a wonderful time to gather and celebrate traditions and customs. Some adorn the outside of their homes with lights and hang wreaths and mistletoe at their door. Families gather to decorate trees with ornaments, candy canes and twinkling lights. We enjoy giving and receiving gifts, and gathering for feasts with yule logs, eggnog and mulled wine. But do you ever wonder what the origins of your favorite holiday traditions are?

In the United States, the Christian holiday of Christmas or “Christ’s Mass” is observed on December 25th, and was declared an official federal holiday on June 26, 1870.¹ December 25th was originally adopted in the 4th century AD by Pope Julius I, as the official recognized day for Christmas, signifying the birth of Jesus of Nazareth. While the birthdate of Jesus is not written in the Christian bible, some believe the Christian church adopted the date in conjunction with “mid-winter” to influence Pagan cultures observing the

winter solstice and the festival of Saturnalia into adopting Christianity.² Christmas is just one of the observed mid-winter holidays around the world but the customs and traditions are deeply rooted in history.

The winter solstice has long been celebrated around the world near December 21st, “representing the end of the darkest days of winter and the shift into longer days filled with sunlight.”³ “Saturnalia, held in mid-December, is an ancient Roman pagan festival honoring the agricultural god Saturn.”⁴ Early Romans celebrated Saturnalia by hanging evergreen wreaths, giving gifts, and lighting candles for the coming solstice.

“The Norse celebrated Yule from December 21, the winter solstice, through January. In recognition of the return of the sun, fathers and sons would bring home large logs, which they would set on fire. The people would feast until the log

¹ <https://www.history.com/topics/christmas/history-of-christmas>. Accessed December 14, 2019.

² *Ibid.*

³ <https://www.history.com/topics/christmas/history-of-christmas>. Accessed December 14, 2019.

⁴ <https://www.history.com/topics/ancient-rome/saturnalia>. Accessed December 14, 2019.



Painting of the Yule Log being brought in at Hever Castle
Robert Alexander Hillingford (1825-1904) [Public domain] {{PD-US}}
https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Hillingford_Yule_Log.jpg

burned out, which could take as many as 12 days.”⁵

“Celtic and Gaelic cultures used to decorate a large log with holly, pinecones, and a splash of wine and burn it to cleanse the old year and usher in the spring.”⁶ The fires were continuously stoked until the log had burned to ash.

The ashes guarded against evil and protected homes from lightning.⁷

Over time, the burning of a yule log became impractical with the advent of smaller hearths, and symbolic representations in the form of baking were adapted.⁸ In the 19th century, The French created the *Bûche de Noël* as a representation of the Yule log in the form of a

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ <https://www.history.com/news/christmas-history-facts-trivia>. Accessed December 14, 2019.

⁷ <https://www.history.com/news/the-delicious-history-of-the-yule-log>. Accessed December 14, 2019.

⁸ *Ibid.*

chocolate cake roll that many eat at holiday gatherings today.

Holiday libations such as eggnog and mulled wine also have rich histories.

Most agree that eggnog, made with eggs, milk, spices, and boozy additions of sherry or rum “originated from the early medieval Britain “posset,” a hot, milky, ale-like drink. By the 13th century, monks were known to drink a posset with eggs and figs. Milk, eggs, and sherry were foods of the wealthy, so eggnog was often used in toasts to prosperity and good health.”⁹ Captain John Smith of Jamestown, Virginia, is thought to have adapted a variation of posset into the American eggnog as we know it today, with variations of the milky libation spreading throughout North and South America. In Puerto Rico, “the local version of eggnog is called “coquito,” and is made with eggs, coconut milk, sweetened condensed milk, evaporated milk, cinnamon, vanilla, and of course, rum.”¹⁰ In Mexico, you can enjoy “rompope,” flavored with ingredients like almonds, allspice, cinnamon, pine nuts, vanilla and

chocolate.”¹¹ In Peru, you find “biblia con pisco,” and “sabajón” in Columbia.

Mulled wine can be enjoyed all over the world during the winter holidays. Wine with added spices was heated during the harsh winters to keep warm.

“There is evidence that spiced wine dates as far back as ancient Egypt, circa 3150 BC, when it was used for medicinal purposes and was considered to be a



Mulled wine on the Christmas market in Osnabrück in Germany in 2015

Basotxerri [CC BY-SA 4.0

(<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>)

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Gl%C3%BChwein_Weihnachtsmarkt_OS.jpg

⁹ <https://time.com/3957265/history-of-eggnog/>. Accessed December 14, 2019.

¹⁰ <https://mixology.eu/en/the-eggnog-cocktail/>. Accessed December 14, 2019.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

remedial elixir of the afterlife. Egyptian medicinal wine was laced with pine resin, figs, and herbs such as balm, coriander, mint, and sage.”¹²

2nd century Romans also drank spiced wine, but the warm drink became associated with the Christmas holidays in Nordic countries in the 1890s with Gløgg, a red wine made with “sugar, spices such as cinnamon, cardamom, ginger, cloves, and orange.”¹³ Gløgg is usually garnished with fruit and nuts such as raisins, figs, prunes, or almonds. Glühwein “is a traditional beverage offered during the Christmas holidays” throughout Germany and Alsace Christmas markets.¹⁴ In France, you can enjoy “vin chaud,” in Italy, “vin brulé,” and in the Netherlands, a mulled wine called “Bisschopswijn” can be found “during the Sinterklaas holidays”¹⁵

Gift-giving is another deeply rooted holiday tradition. Across the world, depictions of gift-giving figures around wintertime are celebrated. Many have

origins in old-world customs pre-dating Christianity.

Old Nordic folktales depict “a magician who punished naughty children and rewarded good children with presents.”¹⁶

In Italy, observers of Stregheria, (a branch of modern paganism)¹⁷ celebrate a festival in honor of La Befana. “According to folklore, on the night before the feast of the Epiphany...Befana flies around on her broom, delivering gifts. Much like Santa Claus, she leaves candy, fruit, and small gifts in the stockings of children who are well-behaved throughout the year. On the other hand, if a child is naughty, he or she can expect to find a lump of coal left behind by La Befana.”¹⁸

One of the earliest gift-giving figures dates back to the 3rd century. St. Nicholas, a monk born near modern day Turkey, is venerated for his kindness towards others. “It is said that he gave away all of his

¹² <https://www.norwegianamerican.com/food/think-the-vikings-invented-glogg/>. Accessed December 14, 2019.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mulled_wine. Accessed December 14, 2019.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Saint-Nicholas>. Accessed December 14, 2019.

¹⁷ <https://www.learnreligions.com/about-stregheria-traditions-2562552>.

¹⁸ <https://www.learnreligions.com/witches-in-mythology-and-legend-4126677>.

inherited wealth and traveled the countryside helping the poor and sick."¹⁹

On December 6th, the feast day of St. Nicholas, children wake to "find small presents under their pillows or in the shoes, stockings, or plates they have set out for him. Oranges and chocolate coins are common treats that represent St. Nicholas's legendary rescue of three impoverished girls by paying their marriage dowries with gold. Candy canes, which have the shape of a bishop's crozier, are also given."²⁰ St. Nicholas "is depicted as an elderly, stately and serious man with white hair and a long, full beard."²¹ He also wears a red cape and carries a ledger containing the names of all children and whether they have been "naughty" or "nice." Sound familiar?

In the Netherlands, Sinterklaas "is a legendary figure based on Saint Nicholas."²² In the 17th century, Dutch colonists brought Sinterklaas to America better known as Santa Claus today.²³



"Groeten van St. Nicolaas!"

St. Nicholas and a helper, St. Nick is in a white robe, orange cap, sitting on a white horse

http://collections.carli.illinois.edu/cdm/singleitem/collection/nby_teich/id/1458

¹⁹ <https://www.history.com/topics/christmas/santa-claus>. Accessed December 14, 2019.

²⁰ <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Saint-Nicholas-Day>. Accessed December 14, 2019.

²¹ <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Saint-Nicholas>. Accessed December 14, 2019.

²² <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sinterklaas>. Accessed December 14, 2019.

²³ <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Saint-Nicholas>. Accessed December 14, 2019.

In the 16th Century, protestant reformers adopted the gift-giving traditions and replaced St. Nicholas with the "Christkind," German for "Christ-child," and changed the date of gift-giving to December 24th, Christmas Eve.²⁴ "Children never see the Christkind in person, and parents tell them that Christkind will not come and bring presents if they are curious and try to spot it. The family enters the living room, where the Christmas tree has been put up, for the opening of presents (the *Bescherung*), when the parents say that they think that the Christkind who has brought the presents has now left again."²⁵

In Christianity, the tradition of gift-giving comes as a representation of the biblical Magi known as the "Three Wise Men" or "Three Kings" who traveled from faraway lands bearing gifts of frankincense, gold and myrrh to Jesus after his birth.²⁶ Nativity scenes depicting the travelers with the baby Jesus in a manger can be found in the yards of churches and homes during Christmas.

"Long before the advent of Christianity, plants and trees that remained green all year had a special meaning for people in the winter. Just as people today decorate their homes during the festive season with pine, spruce, and fir trees, ancient peoples hung evergreen boughs over their doors and windows. In many countries it was believed that evergreens would keep away witches, ghosts, evil spirits, and illness."²⁷

Germany is credited with the early 16th century advent of the decorated Christmas tree as we know it today. It is widely believed that Martin Luther, a 16th century protestant preacher, was the first to add lights in the form of candles to the evergreen tree. The Christmas Tree as we know it today, became popular with the masses when in 1848, the *Illustrated London News* published a drawing of Queen Victoria and Prince Albert "celebrating around a decorated Christmas tree in Windsor Castle."²⁸ Today, trees may be real or artificial and instead of candles, we hang strands of light bulbs.

²⁴ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christkind>. Accessed December 14, 2019.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Biblical_Magi. Accessed December 14, 2019.

²⁷ <https://www.history.com/topics/christmas/history-of-christmas-trees>. Accessed December 14, 2019.

²⁸ <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-12-19/the-history-of-the-christmas-tree/8106078>. Accessed December 16, 2019.



Bernard Doetsch and his grandkids singing *O Tannenbaum* – Christmas 1959

Photo courtesy of Angela Doetsch

My grandfather, Robert Maximillian Doetsch, always belted out the German Christmas carol, *O Tannenbaum* (O Fir Tree/Oh Christmas Tree), at our Christmas gatherings – a family tradition passed down from his father, Bernard, and presumably back generations in the Doetsch family from their early German heritage. The tree was always an important centerpiece of our family holidays.

Another plant revered through the ages for its ability to survive the harsh winter months is mistletoe. Kissing under a branch of mistletoe has ancient roots dating back to the Celtic Druids and written about in Norse mythology. “Because mistletoe could blossom even during the frozen winter, the Druids came to view it as a sacred symbol of vivacity, and they administered it to humans and animals alike in the hope of restoring fertility.”²⁹

²⁹ <https://www.history.com/news/why-do-we-kiss-under-the-mistletoe>. Accessed December 14, 2019.

In Norse mythology, Baldr (Baldur), the son of Odin and Frigg, was plagued with dreams of his own death. His mother Frigg, “in an effort to reassure and protect him...made everything, plant, animal or rock, living on or growing in the earth swear never to harm him.”³⁰

For some time, Baldr remained invincible until he was slain with a sprig of mistletoe by the blind god Höd, who was deceived by the trickster-god, Loki, on the technicality that mistletoe grows on trees and not in the earth.

In mourning, “Frigg’s tears became its pearlescent berries, still seen today and Frigg decreed that, instead of being punished, mistletoe should become a symbol of peace and friendship evermore.”³¹

Many familiar customs and traditions are also present in other winter celebrations without direct Christian or old-world European influences.

Hanukkah (Chanukah) “is an eight-day Jewish holiday that celebrates the rededication of the Holy Temple in Jerusalem



Baldr's death is portrayed in this illustration from an 18th-century Icelandic manuscript.

Jakob Sigurðsson[2] [Public domain]

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:S%C3%81M_66,_75v,_death_of_Baldr.jpg

after the Maccabean Revolt.”³² Traditions include the lighting of the Menorah, signifying “an ancient miracle in which one day’s worth of oil burned for eight days in the temple,”³³ and a gift-exchange.

³⁰ <http://mistletoe.org.uk/home/wp/index.php/traditions/>. Accessed December 14, 2019.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² <https://www.unitedplanet.org/blog/2013/01/03/from-christmas-to-diwali-winter-holidays-around-the-world>. Accessed December 14, 2019.

³³ <https://www.learningliftoff.com/9-winter-holidays-around-the-world/>. Accessed December 16, 2019.



Tech. Sgt. Jennifer Myers (above), 66th Air Base Wing noncommissioned officer in charge of the Military Equal Opportunity office, demonstrates a Kwanzaa ritual where she lights a candle in the Kinara.

Photo by Christopher Myers [Public domain]

<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Kwanzaa-Myers.jpg>

Kwanzaa “is a week-long holiday celebrated in communities in the United States and Canada, as well as in the Western African Diaspora to honor African heritage in African-American culture.”³⁴

Each night, one of seven candles is lit on the kinara representing one of the seven principles (Nguzo Saba):

- Unity (Umoja)
- Self-determination (Kujichagulia)
- Collective Work and Responsibility (Ujima)
- Cooperative Economics (Ujamaa)
- Purpose (Nia)
- Creativity (Kuumba)
- Faith (Imani)

A feast and gift-giving are observed.³⁵

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ <https://www.history.com/topics/holidays/kwanzaa-history>. Accessed December 16, 2019.

The Hopi people of northern Arizona celebrate the winter solstice with the Soyal Ceremony, symbolizing “the second phase of Creation at the Dawn of Life”³⁶ as the Katsinam or Kachinas (spirits who

watch over the Hopi) “bring the sun back to the world.”³⁷ Many ceremonies involve dancing and singing and the kachinas may even bring gifts to the children.



Photo of dance by kachina dancers of the Hopi pueblo of Shongopavi, Arizona, USA taken sometime between about 1870 and 1900. The dancers, which would be members of the local kiva religious societies, represent spirits called kachinas and wear elaborate masks.

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:The_mask_of_Kachina_\(Hopi_Indians_rain_maker\),_village_of_Shonghopavi,_Arizona-single_image.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:The_mask_of_Kachina_(Hopi_Indians_rain_maker),_village_of_Shonghopavi,_Arizona-single_image.jpg)

³⁶ <https://www.wilderutopia.com/traditions/soyal-ceremony-hopi-kachinas-dance-at-winter-solstice/>. Accessed December 16, 2019.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

Diwali is a five-day Hindu festival “referred to as the “festival of lights” and celebrates both the attainment of nirvana by Mahavira (an Indian Sage), as well as a Death Anniversary of Swami Dayanand (Hindu religious leader).”³⁸ Small clay lamps are lit that symbol good vs. evil. “Revelers adorn themselves in their finest clothes, illuminate the interior and

exterior of their homes with *diyas*...and partake in family feasts, where *mithai* (sweets) and gifts are shared.”³⁹

As you celebrate your winter holidays, try to take some time to express gratitude for past generations for gifting us these beloved customs.



Lighting candles and clay lamps during Diwali night
Khokarahman [CC BY-SA 4.0 (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>)]
https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Diwali_Festival.jpg

³⁸ <https://www.unitedplanet.org/blog/2013/01/03/from-christmas-to-diwali-winter-holidays-around-the-world>. Accessed December 14, 2019.

³⁹ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Diwali>. Accessed December 16, 2019.

A RESEARCH TRIP TO THE MIDWEST GENEALOGICAL CENTER, INDEPENDENCE, MISSOURI

By AGS Member Erin Garcia

Every year, I go on a research trip in October as a birthday gift to myself. This year, I went to the Midwest Genealogy Center (MGC) in Independence, Missouri, after having read an article about the facility in NGS Magazine (January - March 2019, Volume 45, Number 1).

The Midwest Genealogy Center is an amazing facility located in Independence, Missouri, less than 30 minutes away from Kansas City. This is a wonderful library to visit, particularly if you have Midwestern ancestors. I spent three days at the library and was impressed with their exemplary customer service, the modern and spacious facilities and the ease of traveling to Independence.

I took a non-stop flight on Southwest Airlines which only took two hours. The Kansas City airport is in Missouri, but the city itself straddles the Missouri - Kansas border. The airport is in the northwest quadrant of the city, about a 30-minute drive to Independence. I did not realize it before I visited, but Independence is almost a suburb of Kansas City, making it very easy to get to from the Kansas City airport.

I like modern hotels, so instead of staying in Independence, I chose to stay in Overland Park, Kansas, which is another suburb located south of the city. It is a new and affluent area, with outdoor walking malls, like the Domain shopping center in Austin, Texas.

The Midwest Genealogy Center is open from 10am to 8pm, Monday through Saturday and 1pm to 8pm on Sundays. Perfect hours for those who like to sleep-in, but still get in a good 10 hours of research time!

As I entered the library, I was immediately greeted by a staff person at the main desk and was given a packet that included a map of the facilities, several genealogical forms and a couple "how-to" guides. The staff are very eager to help and ready to get you started in your research.

The library has two floors, with spacious areas designated for various types of research. There is a large computer lab, with at least 20 computers. A separate microfilm room contained several readers, which can accommodate both microfiche and microfilm.

I visited over a weekend and never had to wait for a reader or computer. Staff was always on hand for immediate help.

The second floor contains reference books, which cover all the United States, but is particularly strong in Missouri resources. There are a number of research guides at the help desks. The library houses a large collection of city directories and phone books, which are located separately from the reference area.

One example of the MGC's exceptional service is their "Appointment with a Genealogist." In advance of your visit, you can email their staff with a question or "brick wall" that you want help with. Their staff (or volunteers) will do research on the question and then meet with you during your visit, to discuss their results. There is no fee for this service and when asked if I should offer a gratuity to the researcher, the staff member looked faintly horrified. You definitely do not tip them!

I took advantage of this service and emailed about a month in advance of my trip. I asked for help with my "brick wall": my great-great-grandmother, who

was born in Virginia and who moved to Missouri around 1840. I have been doing genealogy for 20 years and have spent considerable time trying to figure out who her parents were. I wish I could say that the staff person at the Midwest Genealogical Center solved the mystery, but I was not so lucky. However, she did direct me to resources that I had never tried or even heard of. For example, she told me about the Virginia Historical Index (also known as SWEM, for the creator of the index: Dr. Earl Gregg Swem). The Virginia Historical Index is a comprehensive index of articles published about Virginia history and genealogy. It is kind of like a PERSI, just for Virginia. The MGC also has these Virginia journals available on microfilm.

Another amazing offering at MGC is the "research card" that you can purchase. For \$32.50 you gain remote access to nearly all the databases that the Midwest Genealogical Center offers, including *America's Genealogy Bank*, *HeritageQuest*, *Fold3*, and *Newspapers.com*. This membership lasts six months, allowing you to do research from home. The library has the following requirements for a "research card:"

- You must be a U.S. resident living outside of the MCPL service area.
- You must be present at the Midwest Genealogy Center to register.
- There is a fee of \$32.50 (as of July 2019), and the card is valid for six months.

The Midwest Genealogical Center

The library has ample free parking and is easily accessed from I-70, which will quickly take you back to Kansas City, or if you want to continue your research, you can head east to Columbia (home of the State Historical Society of Missouri) and Jefferson City (home of the Missouri

State Archives). But that is for another article.

If you have Midwest ancestors, especially any Missourians in your tree, I highly recommend a trip to the Midwest Genealogy Center!



Midwest Genealogy Center, Independence, Missouri USA

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Midwest_Genealogy_Center_1.jpg

KITCHENS THROUGH TIME: PUTTING OUR ANCESTORS IN THEIR PLACE IN TIME

By Ken Giorlando – Reprinted with permission from the Passion for the Past blog www.passionforthepast.blogspot.com ©2019

Family history, to me, is so very important. I've been working on mine, off and on, for over twenty years and have been able to acquire some wonderful information on the bloodline that runs through my veins.

The thing is, genealogy is so much more than names and dates...and as cool as those DNA tests are, it's also more than that.

So, today's post is part history and part family history: a blending of the two. And one way to show how you can place your ancestors in their time.

Remember: our family history is American history. I hope you enjoy it.

There are so many things to see at the Henry Ford Museum, which is adjacent to Greenfield Village in Dearborn, Michigan. There are trains, planes, and automobiles. There is an actual 1940s diner, stagecoaches, and the chair that President Lincoln was sitting in when he was assassinated by John Wilkes Booth in 1865. There is an original copy of The Stamp Act, Thomas Paine's Common Sense, and Paul Revere's rendition of the Boston Massacre. There are also Paul Revere teapots, spoons, and casters. Let's not forget about George Washington's camping equipment and the Rosa Parks bus. Farming tools and machinery from the 1700s through the 20th century, and furniture dating back to the 1600s. Representations in the fiber



The front facade of the Henry Ford Museum has some familiarity to it, now doesn't it?

Photo courtesy of Ken Giorlando

arts, ancient muskets and rifles, and a 19th century shoe shop.

It has so many historical objects inside that I believe it can easily rival the Smithsonian. According to the website: "Henry Ford (the man) had collected a slice of the American past unmatched in size and scope."¹

I don't know exactly how many items are displayed inside the museum, but I know it's in the tens of thousands. And we're not even including the 300 acres of historic Greenfield Village right next door!

But of all the items on display inside the Henry Ford Museum, there are two sections I always enjoy visiting and never leave before seeing: The first one is the "With Liberty and Justice For All" exhibit (which I wrote about pretty extensively²), and the second one is the "Kitchens Through Time" collection, of which is what today's post is based around. "Kitchens Through Time" is an exhibit of, well, four kitchens – one from the later part of the 1700s, one from the 1840s, one

from the 1890s, and one from the 1930s – all back to back where the corners meet to form a circle, allowing the viewer to easily see the noticeable changes over a 200+ year period at a few step glance.

Now, I've searched far and wide to find information about this set up - the "history" behind the history - to no avail. All that I have found is that it is a display to show that kitchens have changed little in the basic design in over two hundred years. That's it. I can't tell you any more about this exhibit at this time.

So, I decided to sort of make these vestiges of kitchens past come alive in my own personal way – by utilizing a few stories of my ancestors. Particularly, to some extent, my female ancestors. After all, it is Women's history month.³ And I love the fact that my ancestors have been on this land since 1710, so I can easily cover each era. With little blurbs 'neath each kitchen photograph, I've tried to give a snippet of four of my ancestor's lives – sort of like filling in that dash carved in between the birth and death years on a tombstone.

¹ <https://www.thehenryford.org/>

² <https://passionforthepast.blogspot.com/2013/02/with-liberty-and-justice-for-all-fight.html>.

³ The blog post was original published on March 28, 2019.

Let us begin in the 1700s, right around the earlier days of our nation's birth:



Here is a depiction of a late 1700s kitchen –

Photo courtesy of Ken Giorlando

Which may be similar to what my 5th great-grandmother, Mary (Evans) Heacock (b. 1759), wife of Jonathan (b. 1755) – both of Bucks County, Pennsylvania – may have had.

Yes, they were Quakers.

“In the kitchen a glowing bed of red-hot coals, banked the night before, still burned on the hearth, streaks of sunlight gleamed through the eastern windows. Soft reflections shone from the pewter porringers hanging on the dresser; a sunbeam flecked with bright light the brass candlesticks set on the mantel over the hearth.

“Drawing the bowls up to the table, Jane placed her father Jonathan's chair at one end and her mother Mary's at the other. Jane and her younger siblings, Susannah (who would become my 4th great-grandmother one day), Edward, and Nathan, took their porringers and wooden bowls from the dresser and stood in their places at the table. From the steaming kettle on the hearth, their mother Mary dished up the corn meal mush, or hasty pudding, and added a large thin johnny cake, which was browned in the skillet. The children and their mother folded their hands and bowed their heads as their father leaned over the high back of his

chair and asked for blessings on home and family..."

Not much is known of Mary, but I know she and Jonathan were married in 1784 in Richland, Pennsylvania. There is talk that during the Revolutionary War my 5th great-grandfather was a Loyalist and trained with the British. Quakers were generally Loyalists, due mainly to their strong beliefs of peace and pacifism (imagine...me, a Patriot, descended from Loyalists!). Because of this military training, Jonathan was removed from the Society of Friends. And because she was his wife, Mary was also removed from the

monthly meetings as well. It took them over a year to become accepted back into the Society of Friends again.

Jonathan, from what I had read, always dreamed of having "an ideal farm," and set out to find it, and it was in 1788/89, that he and Mary, along with numerous other family members, took advantage of the opportunity of removing themselves to Canada.

Arriving at the Niagara, Jonathan's brother, John, saw the swift current of the river and, according to lore, asked, "Does thee think it prudent to venture over,



Farm living is the life for me...the ideal farm?

Photo courtesy of Ken Giorlando

with the beasts and the baggage and the little ones?"

My 5th great-grandfather is said to have replied, "We are in the hollow of God's hand. If He willeth it, we shall find safe crossing."

John, at that point, turned westward with his family, eventually settling in Ohio. Jonathan, however, turned northward and followed the river to a point not too far from Niagara Falls and, using an improvised windlass (a simple hoist worked by a crank used for lifting and lowering), he and his party lowered the heavy oxcarts and guided the beasts and the rest of his party down the steep incline, which can still be seen to this day, though it is now known as Lewiston Hill.

Jonathan and Mary settled on land and farmed for 15 years until 1804 when, quite by accident (we are told), that Jonathan saw a farm that he felt was precisely the one of his dreams. He purchased the 400 acres it sat upon and contently farmed until his death in 1812.

It is unfortunate that I have no information when Mary passed away.

I find it interesting from a personal note that I now portray a farmer in my colonial presentations.

Let's move forward a few decades:



Here is a depiction of an 1840s kitchen –

Photo courtesy of Ken Giorlando

Which may be similar to what my 3rd great-grandmother, Mary (Shrigley) Robertshaw (b. abt 1812) and her husband William (b. abt 1810), may have had.

Mary is the granddaughter of Mary & Jonathan Heacock from the previous photo of the 1700s kitchen.

During this period William and Mary were living in Upper Canada. The two were married in 1841, right around the time this style of the kitchen we see in this picture was common.

a doctor that the wilds of Canada had," for it's been said she learned her medicinal trade from "the local Indians," and treated many of the locals for a variety of ailments.

Mary was also present at hundreds of births in her town of East Gwillimbury, as well as being present at a number of her own grandchildren's births and has been listed as such in the local registries.

I have no death record of Mary nor her husband William, and the last I find her in any document is on the September



The 1841 marriage record of my 3rd great-grandparents

Photo courtesy of Ken Giorlando

Mary had been previously married to a man named Henry Gillet (back in 1833), who, we have heard, had passed away not too long after.

I have very little information on my 3rd great-grandfather, William. He seemed to have disappeared off the face of the earth. But in a rare twist of historical genealogical fate, I actually have more information on his wife. My 3rd great grandma was a midwife. Or, as son, Nelson, put it: "She was the closest thing to

1881 birth record of one of her grandsons.

Just two years later, in 1883, the entire Robertshaw clan – siblings, spouses and children included – moved to the United States and settled in and around Port Huron, Michigan.

Mary was not part of this move, and I am assuming she had died shortly before.

I am still searching for her and her husband. Maybe one day.

Now we, again, jump up to another decade, this time to the 1890s in Port Huron, Michigan.



Here is a depiction of an 1890s kitchen –

Photo courtesy of Ken Giorlando

Which may be similar to what my 2nd great-grandmother, Linnie (Raby) Robertshaw (b. 1858 in England), wife of Nelson (b. 1852 in Upper Canada), may have had. My 2nd great-grandfather, Nelson, was the son of Mary & William, mentioned in the 1840s kitchen picture.

During this time, Linnie & Nelson lived in Port Huron, Michigan.

Linnie Raby sailed over to Canada from England when she was in her mid-teens and married Nelson Robertshaw at the tender age of 17 on April 28 in 1875. Her new husband was a lumberman and had spent most of his life in the lumber camps in upper Canada.

He was only eight years old when he began working at these camps as a “stripper” – that is, he would strip off the extra branches of the felled trees with an ax. Nelson used to tell his grandson that he had his first taste of whiskey at the age of nine while working at the lumber camps in the winter months to help keep him warm. After they were married, Linnie joined him at these camps and spent her days mending and washing the men's clothing. I suspect she ended her stay there after they began having children.

At the time of the 1894 Michigan State census – right around the time of this kitchen picture – my 2nd great-

grandparents had been married for 19 years with a brood of six offspring; they would eventually have nine total by the turn of the 20th century.

It was in the various 1890s directories that Nelson began to list himself as a carpenter and had built homes in and around the Port Huron area. While Linnie remained home to care for their kids, Nelson would be gone for weeks on end, for many of his jobs took him miles from his family and walking the distance back and forth daily was simply not reasonable to do.

My great-great-grandparents eventually moved to Detroit where they lived out the rest of their lives living with their eldest daughter and her husband and kids

Both passed away in the 1930s.

I took this picture in the 1990s so I cannot tell you if it had changed much in a hundred years' time. But you can see it was not the typical "Victorian" house we are so familiar with when we think of houses of this period.



This is the actual house my 2nd great-grandparents were living in with their six kids at the time of the 1894 Michigan census.

Photo courtesy of Ken Giorlando

Now we move out of the 19th century and into the 20th century; to a time when my own mother was alive, though still in her pre-teens. As we have followed my maternal line this entire time, we shall continue to do so here and meet the granddaughter of Nelson and Linnie from the 1890s picture: my mother's mother, Pearl.

as part of Pete McCurdy's Bon Ton Girls in the early 1920s, Pearl went on the circuit with them to sew their costumes and care for them as needed. They would perform at movie theaters, often being the entertainment in between double features during this silent movie era, and my grandmother would sometimes fill in as a sub as needed, for she knew the differing parts to the show.



Here is a depiction of an 1930s kitchen –

Photo courtesy of Ken Giorlando

Which may be similar to what my grandmother, Pearl (b. 1907 in Detroit, Michigan), may have had.

Like most young girls, Pearl, at a very young age, was taught to clean and care for her younger siblings. When her two sisters, Bea and Babe, were singing and dancing on the local Detroit area stages

In 1925, Pearl married Bert, a man who was quite the handyman and could do a little of everything. I was told he was a very smart man and that there was nothing he couldn't do. Unfortunately, he worked mostly odd jobs, and to help make extra pennies during this time of the Great Depression, my grandmother

would put her girls to bed then head out and sell apples on the street.

My mother told us how on one particular 1930s Christmas she and her sisters received a doll and carriage for their gift: two got the doll and the other two got the carriage, in this way all four would be forced to play together.

I can just imagine youngsters today receiving such a gift, eh?

The family usually rented houses and, until shortly before she passed away, my mother could still recite each address she lived at.

In a rare occurrence for the time, Bert and Pearl ended up divorced and, by 1938, she had remarried, this time to a man named Ray, and the two had two kids to add to Pearl's four. By the time the 1950s had rolled around, no one again had heard from Bert, so I had never had the pleasure of meeting my biological maternal grandfather (though my father's father more than made up for that!).

And there you have it. Four kitchens – four family history stories. It is a unique way of bringing the objects in a museum to life, don't you think?

But when it comes to history, this sort of thought is the norm for me, for the items we see as we walk through the hallowed



My mother, front left, and her three sisters in 1936.

Photo courtesy of Ken Giorlando

halls of history were once a part of someone's everyday life, just as our own kitchens are to us today.

Hmmm...I wonder if a kitchen like mine (or should I say my wife's) will one day be shown in the same manner 150+ years from now?

Well then, let's move ahead from the 1930s to the early 21st century.



Here is an actual (not a depiction) of an early 21st Century kitchen – which my wife designed.

Photo courtesy of Ken Giorlando

No, this is not in the Henry Ford Museum. It belongs to my wife. But if they pay us enough, we'll sell it to them (lol).

We had a very small kitchen originally – so small we could not fit a table in it to eat upon. But back in 1999 we renovated our home by adding a back room and enlarging our kitchen.



Early 21st century kitchen

Photo courtesy of Ken Giorlando

Neither picture here shows our refrigerator, but it's there, on this side of the booth and in the same color as our stove, which you can see in the bottom pic. And on the left in front of the door our diner booth can be seen.

So, just as I wrote a little on my ancestors, I will tell you a little about us:

Patty and I have been married since the mid-1980s and have four kids (now all adults), a daughter-in-law, and three grandchildren. My wife is an elementary

school secretary, and has been for years, and I am a high school classroom paraprofessional working with special needs kids.

We love music, usually of the older variety, and I've been lucky to meet many of my musical heroes while I was still working in record stores a couple of decades ago, which I plan to write about in a future posting.

250 years of history right in this photo:

Oh, what fun we do have together!



The Plympton House - 18th century

The far background - 21st century

Patty - 21st century

Ken - 18th century

Photo courtesy of Ken Giorlando

We both love to reenact (duh!), though Patty will agree I love it more, and most of our time-travel excursions are documented right here on *Passion for the Past*. Patty also spins on a spinning wheel, then will dye the wool and either crochet or knit it into something useful. That's her passion. We also consider ourselves traditionalists, which can be pretty difficult in a non-traditional society.

Our offspring? Why, we love them most of all.

Oh! And we have a dog named Paul Anka.

Since we are both still alive, and hopefully will be for decades to come, I will not go any further about our lives.

So now we have traveled through about 250 years' worth of kitchens, all the while visiting my ancestors in doing so. I hope you enjoyed it. I believe my ancestors did.

Until next time, see you in time.



Christmas dinner in home of Earl Pauley. Near Smithfield [i.e. Smithland?], Iowa. Dinner consisted of potatoes, cabbage and pie

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Chapter XV: Recovery

By AGS Member Glenda Lassiter

Griff (Gordon Oscar Griffiths) was born in 1908, near Jermyn, Texas in Jack County. In 1990, at the age of 82, Griff recorded the story of his life on audio tapes. When he died the following year, he left the tapes to his daughter, Glenda Lassiter, asking her to write his memoir from them.

Chapters 1-14 are serialized in the Austin Genealogical Society Quarterly beginning in the December edition of 2015.

Chapter 1 – “Sand” (December 2015 Vol. 56 No. 4)

Chapter 2 – “A Child in Texas” (June 2016 Vol. 57 No. 2)

Chapter 3 – “Graduation” (September 2016 Vol. 57 No. 3)

Chapter 4 – “Leaving Home” (December 2016 Vol. 57 No. 4)

Chapter 5 – “Denton” (March 2017 Vol. 58 No. 1)

Chapter 6 – “College” (June 2017 Vol. 58 No. 2)

Chapter 7 – “The Deal” (September 2017 Vol. 58 No. 3)

Chapter 8 – “Last Year of College” (December 2017 Vol. 58 No. 4)

Chapter 9 – “Exams” (Spring 2018 Vol. 59 No. 1)

Photographs from Griff’s Life – (Summer 2018 Vol. 59 No. 2)

Chapter 10 – “The Monitor Top” (Fall 2018 Vol. 59 No. 3)

Chapter 11 – “A Christmas Robbery” (Winter 2018 Vol. 59 No. 4)

Chapter 12 – “Wed” (Spring 2019 Vol. 60 No. 1)

Chapter 13 – “In Business” (Summer 2019 Vol. 60 No. 2)

Chapter 14 – “Loss” (Fall 2019 Vol. 60 No. 3)

“Jeannine, let's go. They'll be waiting.” Desda had put on her own wool coat while holding little Jeannine's small white fur coat and matching bonnet, waiting for her daughter to come to the front hall. Winter of 1936 was cold in Vernon, Texas.

Desda looked at the tiny jacket and hat. She and Griff had bought them for Jeannine in Wichita Falls, Texas, last year, before their store in Electra, Texas, had burned, when they still had enough money to buy her a fur coat and matching bonnet. Desda recalled that they had Jeannine's photograph taken in a Wichita Falls studio in her new coat and bonnet the day they bought them. Desda looked at the coat thinking that by the end of winter the coat would be too small. She worried that they would not be able to afford a warm coat for Jeannine for next year.

Jeannine rushed in, smiling, and eager to go. Desda always felt a warm thrill of happiness when she looked at her pretty little daughter, now 4 years old. Just like the Stephen Foster song "I Dream of Jeannie" for which she was named, Jeannine had light brown, naturally curly hair, and bright blue eyes. Desda made most of Jeannine's clothes and dressed her petite daughter like a doll. Jeannine looked like a doll.

Mother and daughter left, hand in hand, walking the five blocks to Allingham Park. On the way they would stop to pick up Desda's sister-in-law, Zella Jo, and her son at their apartment. He was just two months older than Jeannine. The cousins loved playing together at the park.

Allingham Park was such a gift. Mrs. J. E. Collins, a pioneer woman of Wilbarger County, Texas, had come to Vernon as a child in 1886. Always active in religious and women's club work, she had managed through the Vernon Home Science Club and the Federated Clubs to oversee the purchase and improvement of beautiful Allingham Park which was later ceded to the city to be forever used as a space for human recreation and enjoyment. When the Depression hit in 1929, Vernon had to let the park fall into disrepair. In 1933, one of Roosevelt's New Deal Public Works agencies had provided funds to rural communities to upgrade their parks and streets. Vernon had responded by planting trees, hedges, installing sets of swings and seesaws, concrete picnic tables, and building a clubhouse and a shallow round wading pool. Allingham Park was a perfect place for the young mothers to take their children to play, while giving them a chance to sit on one of the new benches and commiserate.

What a sweet picture this made: Two young pretty women sitting shoulder to shoulder watching their beautiful little children playing happily in the freshly manicured park. An observer would never imagine the anguish and fear these young wives felt as their husbands struggled to recover from the debt and loss created when the store burned and by the desperation of the Depression years.

Desda felt so lucky that her best friend and sister-in-law had moved to Vernon from Electra because she desperately needed a friend to talk to about the troubled times. Being new in town, the only friends Griff and Desda had made in Vernon were members of the First Baptist Church which they had joined the first Sunday after they moved there. Aside from Ross and Zella Jo, the church was their only respite from their constant worry about their finances.

Desda was still scrupulously keeping track of their expenses and managing to keep them clothed and fed on Griff's small income. She struggled to provide wholesome food for her little family, often resorting to canned goods – cheap, nutritious and filling. Desda and Griff, like other families, had to give up their devotion to fresh fruit, vegetables, and meats. Stores had little income and were unable to stock fresh foods. New canned foods such as Spam, and boxed goods

like Kraft Macaroni and Cheese, Bisquick, and Ritz Crackers were invented during the Depression to replace fresh meats and vegetables. Frozen foods were the miracle foods of the Depression. Desda became quite creative cooking with the less expensive foods and cuts of meat that were available. Her specialty was chili, and they all liked canned fruit cocktail and peaches.

In spite of working from dawn until 10 or 11 most nights, Griff had so far been unable to recoup his losses from the fire and get a new start. Desda's brother Ross Stubblefield had been working for Griff in Griffitts Electric Company when it had burned. Now both men were trying to earn a livelihood in Vernon by selling appliances from the small storefront Griff owned downtown. With the Depression and the chronic dust storms that were robbing farmers of their topsoil, most of their customers found that farming in Wilbarger County had become impossible. This area of the state was still in the throes of the Dust Bowl. And most of Griff's customers were farmers, very few of whom were in the market for appliances. Griff's spent his time trying to collect payments on appliances that people had bought back when they still had a little money. Usually the customer just wanted to return the merchandise because they could not keep up the payments. Reluctantly Griff was forced to

repossess appliances that would probably just be stored.

Griff was driven. He was often sleepless worrying about keeping his family safe. He had tried to sell the dealership in Vernon, but the man he tried to sell it to, a man named Moore, was cheating him, so Griff had had to take the little appliance storefront back. Griff could hardly blame Moore for stealing from him. People were reduced to stealing by the

When Roosevelt took office in 1933, one third of the nation was unemployed. Agriculture lay destitute, factories were idle, businesses were closing their doors, and the banking system teetered on the brink of collapse.... In Iowa a bushel of corn was selling for less than a package of chewing gum. In Mississippi, cotton sold for less than five cents a pound. Crops rotted unharvested in the fields, and 46% of the nation's farms faced foreclosure.

It seemed to Griff that his store could not have burned at a worse time. He was coming to the realization that he could not successfully make a living by selling appliances or by collecting on appliances that had already been sold. He reluctantly found another buyer for his dealership and went into straight financing. He used the money from the sale as seed money and opened a loan office in Vernon to finance automobiles, homes, and appliances.

This change also meant that Ross would be out of work. Ross applied for work with a New Deal Program called the WPA, The Works Progress Administration, which was established by Roosevelt

desperate times. Griff knew that people did not need appliances; they needed money.

Newspapers and radios screamed out the news about the deteriorating conditions throughout the country. Jean Edward Smith, a noted historian, in his book *FDR* describes the conditions in the nation that had confronted Roosevelt during those dark days:

in 1935 to employ millions of job seekers to work on public buildings and roads. Ross and Zella Jo had to relocate to Dallas, Texas to take the job.

In Griff's new finance business, he had no trouble finding people who wanted to borrow money. Finding people who could pay back the loan with interest was quite another thing.

During 1938, Desda began to feel ill. She was sick with nausea almost every day. Griff thought that she was just depressed because Ross and Zella Jo had moved back to Dallas. She and Zella Jo had been such close friends. However, as the year progressed, Desda continued to be sick.

She couldn't remember when she had been so sick. Then, she remembered. She was going to have another baby.

When she told Griff, he knew he had to make enough money for her to go back to Wichita Falls to have this second baby. The only doctor she had confidence in was the doctor who had delivered Jeannine.

In November 1938, Desda delivered their second baby in Bethania Hospital in Wichita Falls. Desda was so sick that she stayed in the hospital for nine days. They thought they would have a boy and planned to name him Gary Glen Griffitts. However, Gary Glen turned out to be a girl. They named her Glenda Gay Griffitts.

Although it was a difficult time for them to be welcoming a new baby, they both did their best to love and nurture their second daughter. Jeannine was now six and a half, and just as Desda had treated the infant Jeannine like a doll, Jeannine treated the new baby like her doll, rocking her, feeding her, dressing her, bathing her and playing with her.

Griff continued to work in his loan business. However, since 1938, he had loaned too much money on car and home loans, and, in 1941, he had to close his finance company. It was a rainy and drab day in

December when Griff approached Desda with the bad news.

"Honey, I'm going to have to close the loan office. With the economy, people cannot pay back their loans, and I can't continue to carry them. We are going under," Griff told her.

Desda had been expecting the news but was sad for the despondent Griff and afraid for her family. She said, "Griff, we could ask Papa Stubblefield to help us. You know, Papa has been buying some teachers' vouchers because the Cisco school district can't pay them because of the Depression."

"He's just doing that because he still had a little money to invest and nowhere to invest it. The teachers will have to pay him back with interest when they can," Griff replied. "He's already helping relatives who can't get by. I think we'll be able to handle this."

He shook his head at the impossible situation everyone was in. "I really don't want to ask Papa Stubblefield for help yet. I'm not ready to give up. I want us to go out to Lubbock and look into the jobs that Keron told us about."

Desda's sister, Keron, had remarried and was living in Lubbock, Texas. She had called recently saying that there were jobs in Lubbock at Sears and Roebuck.

Desda would have been happy to live in the same town as her only sister.

So, Griff, Desda, Jeannine and Glenda went to Lubbock. They had been staying with Keron and Harley for a month when a Vernon businessman, T. E. Davis came to Lubbock to see Griff. T. E. Davis was the owner of the largest real estate and insurance agency in Vernon. His real estate salesman had shot and killed a bus driver in Wichita Falls. Mr. Davis fired him. That's why he had come to Griff to ask him if he would come to work for him. He told Griff that he needed him to come to work for him really bad.

"You had a loan office in Vernon. You know how to handle home loans, and I need your experience," T. E. said. "Now that Roosevelt's Federal Housing Association will be insuring home loans soon; the real estate market is going to be turning around."

"Desda wants me to accept a job out here in Lubbock with Sears and Roebuck because her sister lives here," Griff told him.

"I need you badly enough that I'll pay you \$100 a month," T. E. said. Griff was a little bit stunned. Money had been so tight for them, that a guaranteed \$100 a month did not seem possible.

"You are offering me \$100 a month as a salary?" Griff asked.

"That's right," T. E. said.

"You've got yourself a deal!" said Griff.

Griff worked for "Old Man T.E.," which is what everyone in the office called him, for one month and was selling houses "pretty good." In fact, Griff was selling houses so well that T.E. raised him to \$150 a month and said he would give him half of the commission on every house he sold.

Half of the commission on every house he sold was an unbelievable amount of money to Griff. The money was so good, he never did call on "Old Man T.E." for that other \$50 per month.

(To be continued) ...

PIONEER FAMILIES OF TRAVIS COUNTY, TEXAS

The Austin Genealogical Society will issue a pioneer certificate to those who can prove their ancestors lived in Travis County, Texas, prior to the close of 1880. To qualify for the certificate, you must be a direct descendant of people who lived here on or before December 31, 1880, proved with birth, death and marriage certificates; probate, census and military records; and obituaries and Bible records.

Applications for Pioneer Families of Travis County can be found at:

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Austin Genealogical Society

3616 Far West Blvd.

Ste. 117-247

Austin, Texas 78731