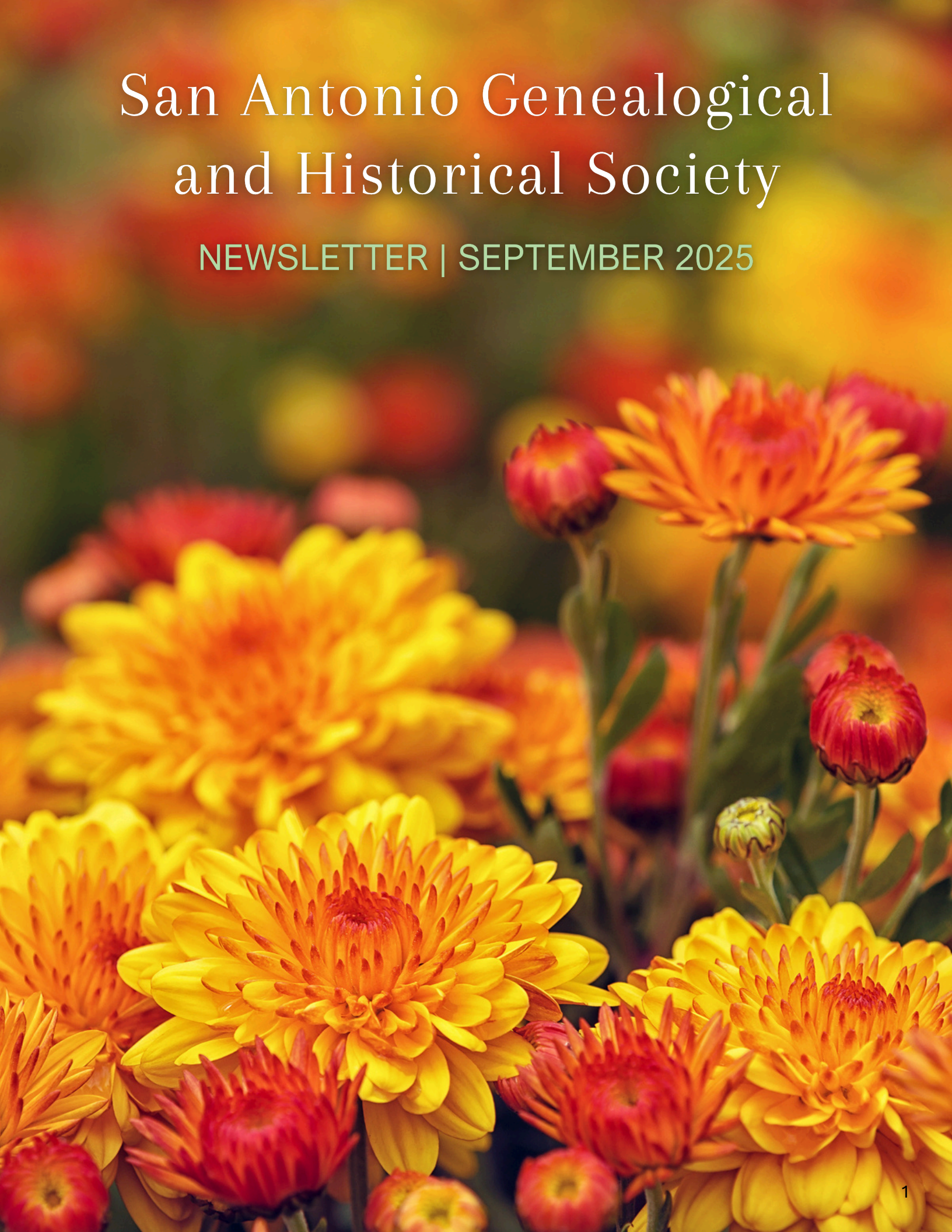
San Antonio Genealogical and Historical Society

NEWSLETTER | SEPTEMBER 2025





PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

By Peter Baron

Your board and I have had a busy summer.

I want to start by thanking all of our great volunteers. This Society's success is due to your continued support. I have appointed **Barbara Holmes** to fill the vacant Board position. Her support for the Society is unwavering; her continued service is much needed. I have also appointed **Carol Thompson** as the Publications Committee Chair. She has been behind the scenes too long and I pledge her all of my support to continue to produce the national "face" of our Society, *Our Heritage*, under the direction of **Dr. Jeffery Hankins**. We have finalized an agreement with Texas A&M University-San Antonio. We have agreed to provide the History department with one thousand dollars a semester for support of their undergraduate history program.

TAMU-SA is excited to be able to recognize their exceptional Senior History majors with a scholarship and the opportunity to be published in our journal. We should have the first recipient announced in December. The membership approved additional funds for this project, and we are looking forward to growing this program by including additional colleges. Planning for the Fall Seminar is nearing completion. I encourage all members to attend and invite a friend. We will have numerous opportunities for volunteers to assist.



I'm proud to announce that Miss **Kylee Keilner** has been granted SAGHS funds to support her participation in National History Days Competition. National History Days is a non-profit organization based in College Park, Maryland. The goal of this origination is to improve the teaching and learning of history. It was established in 1974 and currently engages more than half of million students each year in conducting original research on historical topics of interest. It also supports teachers through professional development opportunities. Students present their research as a documentary, exhibit, paper, performance, or website. Projects compete first at the local and affiliate levels, where the top entries are invited to the annual National Contest at the University of Maryland.

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Prior to the National Event in June, she has competed and won, in her Junior Exhibit Category, against other San Antonio students and in the Texas State competition.

Miss Keilner will attend our September 20th Membership Meeting. She will be available to talk about her experience, answer questions about her National History Day project. Please plan to attend and support this exceptional student.

My family and I have also had a busy summer. We drove out to the east coast and had an excellent trip including stops in Tennessee, Virginia, Pennsylvania, and North Carolina. Some highlights include: Vicksburg Battlefield, Fort Pitt, Fort Ligonier, Bushy Run Battlefield, Jumonville, Fort Necessity, US Marine Museum, Stratford Hall, Berkeley Plantation, Jamestowne Glass House, and Biltmore. I learned a lot about the French and Indian War and Washington's early life.

I wish you all good health and exciting discoveries.

New Members



By AnneMarie Esparza

Membership Chair

Welcome to our newest SAGHS members!

Julie Gudgel
Larry Loop
Paul Masters
Dennis Moreno
Scott Peters
Juanita Santos
Chris Smith
Dave and Susan Spoon



FALL SEMINAR – Inviting Our Neighbors

By Dr. David Katerndahl

Chairman - Seminar Committee

As the Fall Seminar draws near, we're reaching out to kindred spirits and inviting you to join us on **October 18th** for a day of discovery, connection, and heritage. We're extending a warm welcome to members of genealogical and historical societies from Austin to Victoria, Luling to Castroville, and beyond. We are connecting with descendants from over 30 lineage organizations and have partnered with area libraries—both military and civilian—as well as university history departments to spread the word. Keep an ear out: your favorite radio or TV station may soon announce the event, and even the Express-News will be sharing the excitement! This is a fantastic opportunity to showcase our society, celebrate our shared history, and welcome new members into the fold.

Speaking of community support, we wish to thank Jefferson Bank for its sponsorship of our seminar presenters. Their generous support helps keep SAGHS thriving and opens doors to new opportunities.

If you have not registered yet, now's the time! Seating at the Dwyer Center is limited, and spots will fill quickly as guests from across the region join us. **Reserve your seat today with the form on the next page!**

This year's seminar features representatives from 16 lineage groups who will be sharing their expertise and insights. If you are not yet affiliated with a group, this is the perfect chance to learn more about them and explore how to get involved.

Let's make history together—see you on October 18th!

2025 FALL SEMINAR

Dwyer Center, 903 Melissa Drive

Saturday, October 18, 2025

San Antonio GENEALOGICAL AND HISTORICAL SOCIETY founded 1959

SCHEDULE		INSTRUCTORS
8:30 am	REGISTRATION	**Teri E. Flack, M.A., M.B.A.** is a professional genealogist, researcher, and educator with deep roots in Texas as a sixth-generation Texan. Holding a Master's Degree in Public History, she brings extensive experience in both historical research and public service, working for the Texas Attorney General and the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board. A fellow of the Texas State Genealogical Society, she chairs the society's Records Preservation and Access Committee and serves on the faculty of the Texas Institute for Genealogical Research.
9:00 am	***Seeing the Patterns: Organize, Visualize, & Evaluate the Evidence***	
10:00 am	BREAK	
10:30 am	***Using Maps to Explore our Ancestors' Lives***	
11:30 am	LUNCH (On Your Own)	
1:00 pm	***Guide to Joining a Lineage Society***	**Larry W. Luckett, M.S.** is a genealogist, researcher, and historian, deeply involved in lineage and heritage societies. A retired U.S. Army Lieutenant Colonel with 22 years of service, Larry earned a Certification in Genealogical Research from Boston University and previously worked as a Board-Certified Health Physicist. Since 2011, Larry is a valued member of SAGHS, leading the Committee for Publications and editing two family genealogy anthologies recognized by the Texas State Genealogical Society and the Conservation Society of San Antonio.
2:30 pm	***Lineage Group Forum*** ❖ Colonial Dames of 17th Century ❖ Daughters of the American Revolution ❖ Daughters of the Republic of Texas ❖ Daughters of Union Veterans ❖ General Society of War of 1812 ❖ Huguenot Society ❖ Jamestown Society ❖ Los Bexarenos ❖ Magna Carta Dames & Barons ❖ Mayflower Society ❖ National Society of Colonial Dames ❖ National Society of New England Women ❖ Sons of the American Revolution ❖ Sons of Union Veterans ❖ United Daughters of the Confederacy ❖ U.S. Daughters of 1812	

REGISTRATION LIMITED TO 100 ATTENDEES!

Members $40.00 / Non-Members $45.00

Name (s): _____

Address (required): _____

E-Mail (required): _____

Phone (required): _____

Number Of Registrations (names of ALL registrants required): ___= Total Enclosed: $_____

Mail in OR Drop off this form with a check to "SAGHS" by _____

SAGHS ♦ 911 Melissa Drive ♦ San Antonio, TX 78213

On-line registration at www.txsaghs.org by credit card and requires $5 processing fee

QUESTIONS? Call (210) 342-5242



MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

Margaret "Peggy" Buell Durack

By Carol Thompson, Editor

Peggy Durack is a name known to many who have been seeking help or assistance in connecting with their ancestors through genealogy. She has certainly provided a resource to locate those proven, documented connections. Born in Canandaigua, located in upstate New York, she moved with her parents to Baldwinsville, a suburb of Syracuse, due to her father's job as electrical engineer with General Electric.

Remarkable in that generation, both she and her mother graduated from Syracuse University; her mother a history major, Peggy, an English literature major.

During college summer breaks, she took a civil service job at an Amy Recruiting Main Station in Syracuse. The commanding officer often assigned her to work with a recently returned Vietnam vet, **Michael O'Rourke Durack**, a handsome Floridian whose grandparents were Irish immigrants. They were married after Peggy graduated from college.

As her husband's career promoted him to successively larger offices, she worked at various short-term jobs in a TV station, a newspaper, and a school. The family moved from North Carolina to Florida, then to New Jersey where she earned a Library Science Master's degree, and finally to Texas. When both New Jersey born children, son Brian, living here in San Antonio, and daughter Elizabeth in Madison, Wisconsin were young adults, she earned both Texas Teaching and Learning Resources Specialist Certificates from UTSA. Peggy then worked as a librarian at Hobby Middle school.

After she retired, interest not only in her own but also Michael's Irish and Acadian lineage kept drawing her, beckoning. She was fascinated by those twists and turns that American history, as it unfolded, provided challenges to those ancestors. Peggy began to seek out libraries, tracking down both her and Michael's ancestors. And lo and behold, the subject of American history now began to pull her into that endless vortex, yes— American history!



left to right: Brian, Elizabeth, Peggy and Michael Durack – vacationing in NJ park-a family photo with permission

And amazing— she discovered that on her father's ancestral line, there was a **William Buell** who settled in Connecticut in

1640, whose unique surname has stamped every American with that surname as a descendent of this one adventurous, brave fellow. She was surprised and delighted to meet a library volunteer, Mr. **William Collins Buell IV**, who is a cousin through their mutual Revolutionary War patriot ancestor—living history!

Now she was, as they say, hooked on history before she arrived in Texas, but the fire ignited, burned ever brighter to not only find, document her own ancestors but to help others with the knowledge, skills she had acquired. This is how her friendship with **Rob and Nancy McNamara** found its beginnings. She helped Rob to document the proof needed for Mayflower Society membership.

Peggy had been researching both public and online resources but found that in our very own library, she had access to those **Silver Books** (*Mayflower Families Through Five Generations*)—very helpful for those who think they may have Mayflower ancestors. These tomes contain the documentation of those passengers with proven descendants. Peggy also made great use of the databases that are available within our library to members and visitors.

Peggy is of course, a proud **Mayflower Society** member. She is also a **Founders and Patriots Society** member through her pursuit of that Buell line.

And to me, most fascinating, she proudly belongs to the **Associated Daughters of Early American Witches** along with **Norene Fiacco** and **Diane Scannell** This, through her mothers' **Webster** line.

When questioned, Peggy shared that it is most unusual that she has no ancestral connection with a Civil War participant other than a great grand uncle on her father's line. She has twelve Mayflower ancestors, 30 direct DAR connections, but not a single Civil War ancestor.

"That's a rarity. Everyone can find some connection with that event," she told me. However, each December she has a wreath placed on that relative's Civil War grave marker in the Andersonville National Cemetery.

Peggy has recently stepped away from service as **Historian of the Texas Mayflower Society**. That service-oriented position is one of helping candidates to research, document, and submit an application of their ancestral findings, proving that indeed those family members of yesterday had been an integral part of creating our great country.

Her primary goal is that connection with history, the documentation of personal family stories. Joining a lineage society preserves that documentation where it can be saved to be passed on to others. Peggy also documented some of those family stories by writing and submitting articles for publication in ***Our Heritage***, both about her family and her husband's ancestor. She also wrote an article about the research and steps used when she joined **The National Society of Women Descendants of the Ancient and Honorable Artillery Company.**

What has motivated years of such selfless volunteering is that sure knowledge that preserving the work, the proper documentation for generations to come. This work will be there to record the real-life connection that they have, through their ancestors, to a real part of the history, those dark days, trails of hardship and testing that have made our United States the majestic mecca to freedom that it remains to this day.

HOW TO ENJOY VISITING TEXAS OUTDOOR MUSEUMS

LtCol. Frank L. Kebelman III, U.S. Marine Corps Retired

Most everyone enjoys visiting museums whatever the focus might be. They provide windows into our personal and collective histories and strolling through a museum for a few hours offers us a "time out" from our daily cares and duties. Many of us have even been known to plan our vacations or even shorter excursions around stopping to tour famous museums. Yet museums often charge an admission fee or ask for donations to help maintain their facilities. Sometimes the museums we expect to visit are closed for repairs or booked for private fund-raising events. Finding a long-looked-for museum closed can really destroy the beauty of a trip, especially if it was the scheduled centerpiece of a planned visit. But what if I told you there are museums that are normally open (at least during daylight hours), invariably free and always uncrowded; museums that never charge an entrance fee; museums that provide direct links to the history of the area you're visiting; museums that you can even help maintain. Did you ever think you might like to become a museum docent? Well, I know a way you can make that dream come true and by doing so provide a valuable contribution to helping keep Texas history alive for future generations.

The Texas Historical Commission indicates there are some 14,000 of these "museums" in Texas. Many are nearly forgotten, neglected or soon to be covered with new construction. If you enjoy the rural beauty of Texas and like to explore the Texas history, you might just be the person to begin visiting some of these museums. I am speaking of course about cemeteries, both public and private, and the history that all of them contain. While cemeteries are created to provide a way to honor our deceased, they can easily be considered outdoor museums. Visiting one you might stumble upon a famous person, learn about a long-forgotten tragic story or have the opportunity to pay your respects to a local military hero. Perhaps you will even discover the resting place of one of your ancestors or come upon some unique beautiful stone sculptures. Visiting a cemetery is a beautiful way to pause on one of your day trips or to use as a respite on longer journeys. Searching for cemeteries you want to visit will take you down country roads, through farms and ranches, and into little Texas towns you never thought about visiting. It will also give you the chance to meet nearby residents, ones whose families are interred



Photos of how some neglected Texas cemeteries look.
Photo Credit: Frank L. Kebelman, LtCol., Retired

Before and after photos of headstones after restorative cleaning by Frank L. Kebelman, LtCol., Retired



there and to have conversations about local events, pick up county gossip or to meet Texans who are members of the associations that care for the cemeteries you're visiting.

So, how can you find out about cemeteries in the locales you will be visiting? If I'm planning a visit to somewhere beyond Bexar County, I usually start by going online to either Google Earth (earth.google.com) or findagrave.com. Or I might just ask my computer to list all the cemeteries in a county that will be on my route. Doing so will produce a list, one that can be surprisingly large, and from that list you can choose a few "outdoor museums" that might be near your route or have some interesting features you'd like to see. Historic city cemeteries are especially interesting. Findagrave.com provides a way for you to scroll through the names of the deceased interred in the cemetery. Here you can pick up tidbits of history or learn more about the families who may have first settled that area. If you discover a specific grave you'd like to visit, findagrave.com usually provides a photo of the gravestone, brief obituaries and perhaps even pictures of the deceased. Ancestry.com can also connect you to further information about the lives of those you are visiting. And if you've come prepared with the proper equipment, your visit can have a very beneficial lasting effect on a cemetery.

So, what do I carry on my visits to these museums and how do I prepare for a day of stops at multiple cemeteries? Planning a route and creating an itinerary is essential. And the details of your plan should be given to a responsible friend or family member. When are you departing and, more importantly, when do you plan to return? Is your car's fuel tank full? Is your phone charged? Are you carrying lots of bottled water and snacks? Do you have a first aid kit in your car? Have you fixed any lingering maintenance issues and checked to see if your tires are properly inflated? Are you wearing proper clothing for the time of year your trip will occur? Jeans and boots are preferred over shorts and flip-flops. And wear a hat that keeps the sun off your face. Have you always secretly wanted to dress like a real Texas cowhand? Here's your chance. Wearing practical clothing can mean the difference between enjoying your outdoor museum experience and barely surviving it. All these precautions may seem obvious, but I have frequently come upon visitors who are not prepared to endure the changes that Texas weather brings. The term "babes in the woods" always comes to

mind when I offer water to a thirsty tourist, help someone read a map or orient themselves in the direction of the nearest town. “Be Prepared” is a motto I grew up with and it still applies even in the 21st century.

I mentioned that your visit to an outdoor museum can have an impact long after you leave it. Here’s how. Bring along a few trash bags. Put on gloves when you get out of your car and plan on picking up any trash you may find. When you visit a cemetery with lots of trash you will know that cemetery is stressed through lack of attention. Do your part to keep Texas beautiful - pick up trash. I always carry a bucket of tools and equipment because I like to clean headstones, particularly those of men and women who served in our armed forces. My bucket has soft brushes for cleaning away dirt and nylon brushes to clean the headstones, hand clippers, large scissors, plastic paint scrappers, a medium-sized sprayer containing water and a bottle of D-2 biological solution headstone cleaner, the industry standard for working on stone. I also carry a variety of wood sticks and toothbrushes to help clean out the lichens that often fill the engraved lettering and crevices headstones usually have. I have a fully charged electric weed eater in my truck along with several extra gallons of water, small American flags to place on the graves of military veterans and even a bag of clean stones that I leave on any headstones I clean. I often find coins, usually pennies, left on grave markers, but coins can stain a stone. Leave the pennies at home and bring a bag of small clean stones to mark your work. If you don’t know how to clean headstones, I’ll be happy to teach you.

So now you know how to create an adventure out of any Texas road trip. Locating an outdoor museum, you’ve been researching and then seeing it in person will give you a real sense of satisfaction. It will also give you a goal, a productive goal, and help remind you why Texas history is worth saving. One final note. Always keep your phone with you. You will probably be alone when you visit an outdoor museum, so you’ll need that phone if an emergency occurs. Better yet, bring along a friend or two and invite them to share your adventure. And you can still stop for BBQ or to visit some of those interesting attractions you saw in Texas Monthly, but now you’ll be performing a public service while growing in your knowledge of Texas history. I hope to see you at one of these wonderful outdoor museums. Happy trails.



SAGHS SCRAPBOOK NEEDS

By Norene Fiacco, Historian

SAGHS needs **anything prior to 1985** and **anything from 2001 to 2013**.

We need programs, advertisements, flyers, news clippings, brochures, newsletters, and pictures. Anything that will lie flat in a scrapbook. (With pictures, it would be most helpful to identify people, dates, activity, etc.) These artifacts can be delivered to me at the library or email me at npfiacco@gmail.com and we will try to coordinate delivery.

We have made much progress thanks to **Charles Brussells** who so generously has shared his time, talents, and resources. Thank you.

A WORD ABOUT OUR PHOTOGRAPHERS, CONTRIBUTORS...



By Carol Thompson, Editor

Our Newsletter, like Peggy Weyels' weekly eBlast, our amazing journal *Our Heritage* edited by **Dr. Jeffery Hankins**, is composed of many moving parts. In my imagination, I can visualize swans—those graceful, coiffed by none other than Mother Nature herself, no-hair-out-of-place... gliding across a liquid table of water—pond or lake... serene... intentional.

On the flip side of that watery surface, the fish side, are legs in motion, pushing, turning that regal animal as it glides here and there pursing only God knows what, most likely lunch or dinner.

Our Newsletter is similarly seen as popping into one's Inbox or suddenly available, thanks to webmaster **Rob Lewis**, on our enormous website txsaghs.org—like magic.

But, just like those stately birds paddling with intention, our volunteer staff, and just plain volunteers, are planning, writing, scripting items that we think might entertain, enlighten, amuse, and inform readers.

The photo you see below was taken during the June 14th Annual Founders' Day luncheon by editor-emeritus **Barbara Holmes**. And the significance of this particular photo is—see how many members, when asked, brought their cameras to record the event, to share with those who could not attend or were unable to get tickets for this quickly sold-out affair?

Please see on the left, famed staff photographer **Gaspar Gomez**, then pressed-into-service **Diane Scannell**, and on the right, forever faithful, of *Our Heritage* and yearbook fame, **Charles Brussells**.

All three—four, if you count Mrs. Holmes, who you see here are jumping to help—a trifecta of dedication, all filling in for our scheduled photographer **Judy McKee** who had to cancel at the last minute, to make sure that this event had its proper documentation for the July/August issue! All need a heart-felt THANK YOU.

There are photos of those members and guests who did enjoy speaker **Dan Garza**, his The Angel of Goliad presentation, all available for July/August issue. These volunteer photographers recorded **Mary & David Ringer**, **Bill & Ellen Myers**, **Dr. David Katerndahl**, **Max Strozier**, **Mary-Catherine Gomez**, **Diane (Dee) Stephens** receiving her First Family citation from our **Nancy Brennen** and **Dina Sifuestes** also getting her certificate - all attendees, enjoying a pleasant afternoon with friends. And about that July/August cover—our thanks to pressed-into-service, reluctant

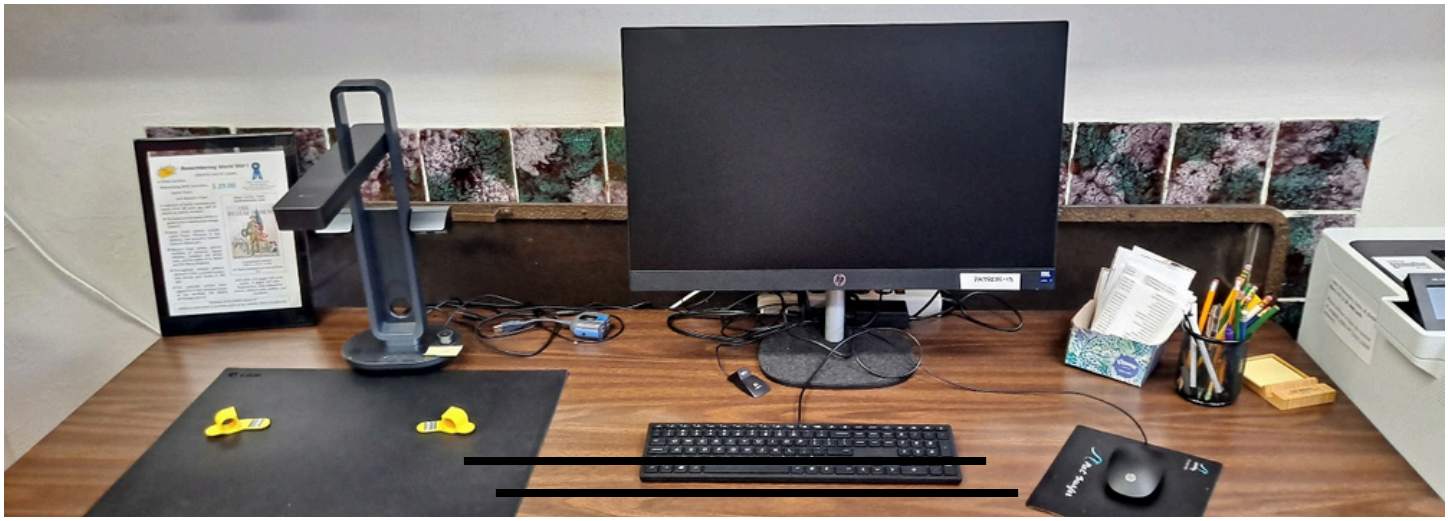


photographer, master gardener **Smitty Smith** and **Barb Holmes**, we were able to show you how our garden grows!

Many times, space limitations make photo credits, disappear; same challenge in labeling photos. We do try mightily to credit photographers, event participants, trying all sorts of creative tricks to share this information with you.

Staff, all of us want to thank these dedicated volunteers for taking the time, oft times standing in weeds, battling mosquitos e.g. July/August cover, efforts to help create a Newsletter, a journal, an eBlast that enriches us all.

A quick note: if you have time/talent and courage to contribute, the publication committee/family is an interesting place to share enthusiasm and ideas. Please contact me cet@satx.rr.com You may be eligible for a free decoder ring, instructions for our secret handshake...ct



Technology Corner

BOOK SCANNER IN LIBRARY THERE FOR USE



By Dan & Nita Heinchon

When you are researching your family tree in the SAGHS library, this book scanner can be used to create a searchable PDF of any pages in a book that helps with your research. Don't forget to scan the title page showing the author, publisher and publish date. These are written instructions on the desk, and the librarians can help you learn to use it.

They use it frequently on their workdays. It is easy to use once you learn how. It includes a foot pedal which allows you to use the yellow holders (these disappear in the scan) to flatten the book and start the scan with your foot. Any poorly scanned or unwanted pages can be deleted before you save the PDF. Anything that fits on the black mat such as maps and large pictures can be scanned. You can scan one or two pages at a time in color or black and white.

Remember to bring a memory stick to plug into the little black USB slot under the monitor. This is where you will store your document so you can take it home. If you don't bring one, the librarians can sell you one for a nominal fee. You can also save the PDF to the computer and print it in the library on paper if you choose instead.

This is the same scanner that is used in the Salt Lake City Family Search Library.

Bones and Notes

WRITING ABOUT TRAGEDIES IN OUR FAMILY HISTORY

By Don Sharon



Tragedies—unfortunately—are part of our family history. Whether a fatal car wreck, a drowning, a fire, or one of many other events, we should use discretion when writing about those times. The recent flooding deaths in Texas brought this to mind.

When I was on my first newspaper job covering the police beat, I saw and heard the emotions as I heard the screams of death, smelled burning flesh, seen bodies and body parts. And, when covering murder trials, I watched jurors react as they listened to testimony, examined photos from a crime screen, and looked over autopsy diagrams.

I learned two valuable lessons when writing about tragedies that I use today when writing about tragedies in my family history. First, write "just the facts." Second, determine if the facts/details "add value" to your family history.

Whether writing a news account or a family history, we have to consider the emotions then and, in the future, as family members read through. what we have written.

We sometimes come across tragedies in newspaper articles, death certificates, and stories passed down from one generation to the next.

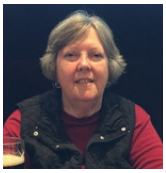
Then, sometimes, we are witnesses or get information directly from other family members.

When writing "just the facts." we might rely on police or media reports. But facts can be wrong when released during emotional times. To use "just the facts", allow for time to pass—that may depend on a lot of factors. Once you have written the facts, set your writing aside for some time and come back to review it when you are calm.

To determine if the facts "add value" to your family history, consider if the facts of the story about that person's tragic ending are necessary.
You might consider writing a separate story that you want sealed for a long time, and not be published with your family history. You have to consider that whoever has that sealed document may not be able to access or read it due to changing technology. Besides, people later on will have their own tragedies and may not consider reading your sealed document.
Even if you intend to keep your story private just within the family, someone may pass that written document along to a cybercousin without realizing the secrecy you intended.

Of course, you could decide not to write anything, and just leave the facts as part of a data dump in a megadatabase within some genealogy program.

I prefer to write about that person. What I write is intended to "add value" to my memory and the meaning of that person's life.



From the Library

By Bev Rakowitz

As any librarian can tell you, the list of 'Wants' is never ending. To keep, maintain collections that are alive and growing, we are always adding new useful material; libraries are always needing new places to display, store items.

Of course, most all physical libraries are space limited but when new items that are so valuable can be added, space must be found to display, be in handy reach of those who come to do their research.

Just recently, a most thoughtful donor, Mrs. **Rita Worthy**, retiring, moving to her son's home in New York, offered a desk, a filing cabinet, books, office supplies and shelving! Rita, over the years, has been a certified paid genealogist, helped many folks with their Revolutionary relatives.

But, as most Christmas-weary parents will recall, a 'some assembly required' whisper might have accompanied such a gift. And so it was, that past president and webmaster **Rob Lewis** and WikiTree/FTM teacher **Scott Atkinson** found themselves using their skills and equipment to assemble the new shelving! Thankfully, Scott stopped to train his camera on that task in motion!

Luckily this shelving donation which will accommodate periodicals, found a wonderful new home. It's always best to check to see if space is available for such donations. Sadly, we do have limitations. Library members are gracious, always wanting to enhance, volunteer to help make our truly unique physical genealogical library a one-of-a-kind asset for all who search, here in south Texas. However, remember.....cash always it just the right fit, just the right color, and just the right size---no assembly required.







A BRIEF HISTORY OF ENGLAND'S LAWS REGARDING OWNING & HOLDING OF LAND

Part 7



By Jeffery R. Hankins, PhD

It took over 100 years to fully establish English colonies in America and most of the efforts were overseen by Stuart kings: James I, Charles I, Charles II, and James II. But at home, trouble was brewing between the Stuarts and their English subjects. A group of "middling sorts" had been ascending into England's society, politics, and economy. Acquiring incomes from advantageous marriages, landholding rents, commercial activities, or the professions, this "gentry" would later evolve into an English middle class. But in the 1600s and 1700s, these minor landowners, lawyers, and county elites gained prominence and power by serving England's monarchs as sheriffs, justices of the peace, and deputy lieutenants.[1]

This rising social class was at the heart of England's seventeenth-century crisis, the Civil War. After decades of serving the crown, the English gentry believed themselves to be a necessary part of governance: collecting taxes, meting out justice in the counties, and mustering troops in wartime. The Tudor monarchs, especially Henry VIII and Elizabeth I, had gladly given the gentry more duties, rewarding them with offices, titles, and the status that went with being the "king's men." This system worked well and by 1600, county and town elites were the accepted leaders of their shires, and some had been elected to the House of Commons.[2]

However, the Stuart kings did not continue this arrangement. James I believed that social or political advancement should come from the king's initiative alone, not on some "consensus" between crown and county. James I's relationship with parliament was similar: he believed that his word alone ruled the kingdom while the House of Commons saw it as *their duty* to speak for the English people. Within five years of being crowned, James I was ruling England through a clique of palace favorites while parliament was granting the king barely enough money to live on.[3]

When James died in 1625 CE, he was succeeded by his son Charles. The relationship between king and parliament worsened because Charles I trusted very few, making him and his council appear secretive and evasive. In 1628, Charles I asked parliament to grant him more money and the House of Commons countered with a "Petition of Right" for the king to sign. The Petition guaranteed that Englishmen would be free from taxes without common consent, imprisonment without cause, or martial law in peace time. Of course, Charles refused to sign and in 1629, the king dissolved Parliament, vowing to rule England on his own.[4]

What does all this have to do with landholding? One thing that king Charles did need parliament for was to approve new taxes to run the government. So the king decided to exploit any and all fees, dues, or loans that



Image of Charles I

previous English monarchs had demanded from their subjects. For Charles, the good news was that these fees did bring in money to the crown; the bad news was that they generated a lot of resentment. The king exploited the "wardship fee" which made a landholder's minor son a ward of the state until he was old enough to walk onto his father's lands. Through collecting wardships, forced loans, and selling noble titles, Charles I provided himself a steady income without having to call parliament.[5]

But in 1640, Charles I needed parliament to help repel an invasion of Scots who were angry with the king's meddling in their religion. Parliament jumped at this opportunity, saying they would supply Charles with the necessary funds once the king guaranteed the "right of Englishmen." An exasperated Charles tried to arrest some of parliament's members and by 1642, the two sides were at war.[6] The English Civil Wars affected landholding in ways similar to the Wars of the Roses; the losers in battle often also lost their lands (or their lives). In the English Civil Wars, the king's forces (Royalists) ultimately lost. In January 1649 Charles I was beheaded by parliament's rebellious leaders.[7]

It was highly unusual for England *not* to have a king. Parliament tried to rule the country through the army and committees but by 1658, England was falling into ambivalence and anarchy. The army's surviving leaders decided to restore a king, inviting Charles I's eldest son to return from exile in France. In May 1660, Charles II entered London and was acclaimed king by the restored parliament; the 1640s were conveniently forgotten. Charles II promised a general pardon to those who had rebelled against his father but what became known as the Restoration Parliament indicted, imprisoned, or execute some who had fought against Charles I.[8]

Again, how did this affect landholding in England? Many Royalists whose lands had been confiscated during the Civil Wars were eventually returned to their property (after paying a fee). But those who had sold their estates to support Charles I or had been ruined by a "decimation tax" were out of luck. Some historians estimate that in certain parts of England, almost 50% of lands changed hands between 1640 and 1660. While some land was later purchased by "friends" of former Royalists, no doubt England's rising gentry benefitted from the sale of estates that had long been held by noble families.[9]



Image of Charles II

But the return of the king presaged other changes that would impact English landholders. In 1661 CE, the restored parliament decided that the monarch's finances should no longer rely on old feudal dues like forced loans, wardships, and knighthood fees. Instead, the king's government would be funded through taxes on imported goods (*customs*) and domestic products like beer, soap, and candles (*excise*).[10] Land was not directly taxed but this would change very soon; a land tax was to become a consistent part of English life.

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1. Lacey Baldwin Smith, This Realm of England, 1399-1688 (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 2001), pp. 186-191.
2. Mark Kishlansky, A Monarchy Transformed: Britain, 1603-1714 (London: The Penguin Group, 1996), pp. 50-55.
3. Smith, This Realm of England, pp. 246-252.
4. Ibid., 273-275.
5. Kishlansky, A Monarchy Transformed, pp. 87, 120.
6. Smith, This Realm of England, pp. 286-291.
7. Kishlansky, A Monarchy Transformed, pp. 178-186.
8. Ibid., pp. 222-225.
9. Smith, This Realm of England, pp. 324-326.
10. Ibid., p. 326. A "hearth tax" was added in 1663 but that was paid (or evaded) mostly by the wealthy.

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SAGHS:
911 Melissa Drive, SA, TX 78213
210-342-5242
txsaghs.org

President:
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Education:
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Webmaster:
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