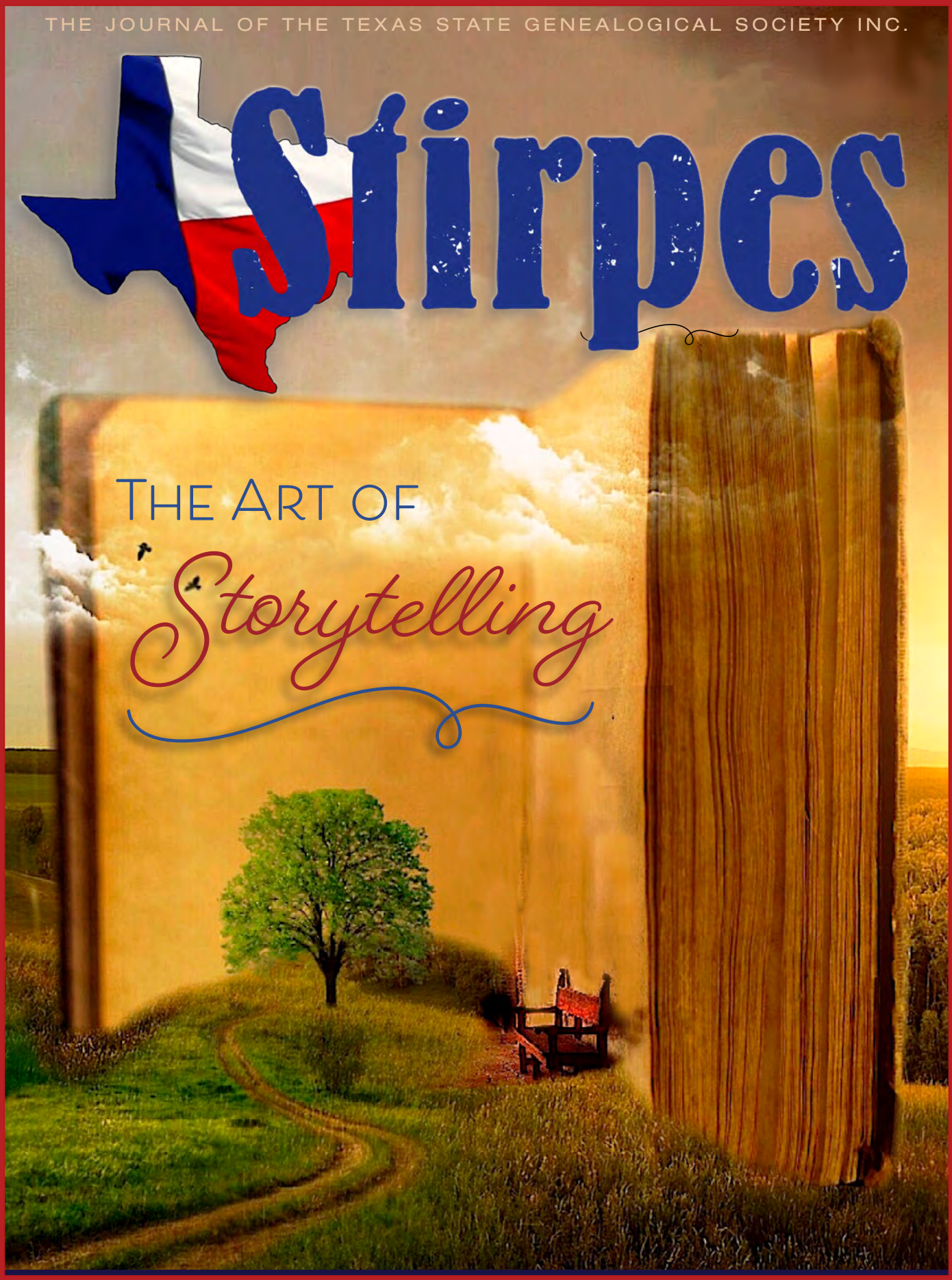
THE JOURNAL OF THE TEXAS STATE GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY INC.

Stirpes

The Art of Storytelling



Volume 64, Number 1 March 2025

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Why Name our Journal Stirpes? Pronounced "STÛR'PEZ," it perfectly describes the core understanding of our passion in researching ancestry and family history: The phrase "… to my heirs, per stirpes" means that the legal heirs share their inheritance based on their relationship to the deceased. (See full story in *Stirpes*, 2016, Volume 55, Number 3-4.)

Editorial Policy

Neither the Texas State Genealogical Society, the board of directors, nor the editors assume any responsibility for information or material included in the publication *Stirpes*. We expect all contributions to be factually accurate and will print corrections as they are brought to our attention. We solicit material that is Texas related or of a general research nature. The editors reserve the right to accept or reject data submitted and to edit such material. Electronic submissions are preferred, as a Word document (.doc or .docx) or in rich text format (.rtf). For a copy of our style sheet, please contact the editors: Susan E. Ball and Sandra Crowley, stirpes@txsgs.org.

Submission Guidelines

Stirpes, a periodical of the Texas State Genealogical Society, Inc., is generally published four times a year in March, June, September, and December. The editorial board solicits articles and materials such as letters, diaries, photographs, and book reviews relating to genealogy, Texas, and history. *Stirpes* has no quotas with respect to authorship or content. Statements of fact beyond common knowledge should be documented with endnotes and located at the end of the manuscript. For specific questions about the use of endnotes, please contact the editors. Edited works may be submitted to the author for review at the end of the editing process prior to publication. The author retains copyright to his work. The Texas State Genealogical Society retains the right to print this material exclusively for one year dating from its first printing in *Stirpes*. The writer may use and distribute his material for presentations, lectures, seminars, or for similar purposes.

- One digital copy of manuscript sent to the editor at stirpes@txsgs.org.
- Preferred manuscript length of 1,500-5,000 words, exclusive of source notes.
- Please use 11-point type and single spacing, both for text and notes.
- Photo images, illustrations, maps, and tables that enhance the article are encouraged.
- Images should be accompanied with captions, source citations, and permission from the image owner to publish or proof that the image is in the public domain.
- Do not embed images into text; the resolution is too low. Send each image in a separate file. See *Stirpes* submission guidelines for detailed instructions.
- Please follow *The Chicago Manual of Style* (16th ed., 2010) for general form and style, *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* (11th ed., 2003) for spelling and word division, and *Evidence Explained* by Elizabeth Shown Mills (3rd ed., 2015) for citation models unique to genealogy and history. *Stirpes* follows *Chicago*'s recommendation with regard to the use of the ellipsis to indicate omissions.
- View submission guidelines online at www.txsgs.org/publications/stirpes/submission-guidelines

Deadlines: January 15 for the March issue; April 15 for the June issue; July 15 for the September issue; and November 15 for the December issue.

Back Issues

Copies of previous issues of *Stirpes* are available at the price of $15.00 per issue, if available, which includes mailing. Contact: Betsy Mills, Treasurer (email: treasurer@txsgs.org), at Texas State Genealogical Society, attn: Treasurer, 2028 E Ben White Blvd #240-2700, Austin, TX 78741. **Claims for lost issues must be made within 60 days of the last day of the publication month.** Claims made after the 60-day period are handled as a sale.

About TxSGS

TxSGS is a non-profit, tax exempt 501(c)3 organization registered with the IRS. All donations are tax exempt to the full extent allowed by law.

From the Editors' Pen

Genealogy facts are important, but they are only part of the puzzle. It's just as important, if not more so, to incorporate storytelling into our genealogy efforts, transforming the facts we've discovered into vibrant narratives of our family history. To help our readers embrace the storytelling process, this issue of *Stirpes* includes articles on finding inspiration for stories from heirlooms, artifacts, shared memories, story triggers, and more.

"The Art of Storytelling" by Sandra J. Crowley presents tips for writing an engaging family story, from getting started to overcoming challenges. Inspiration for family stories can be found in family heirlooms. Nancy Gilbride Casey shows how in "Tell Me a Story: Using Heirlooms and Artifacts to Inspire Your Writing."

Sandra J. Crowley explores various types of memory triggers that can unlock the human elements of our family history and enrich the storytelling process in "Story Triggers: Finding Inspiration for Writing Family History." Emily Coffman Richardson encourages enhancing your family's stories by interviewing siblings, cousins, and more in "Shared Memories Make the Story Resonate."

Jim Thornhill shares his genealogical expertise in two storytelling articles. "A Tale Told After the Fact" illustrates how facts gleaned from a death certificate can yield new avenues for research and enhance an ancestor's story. "Your Family's Story" explores methods for turning facts into an engaging story using social history.

Storytelling resources that provide context and clues include newspapers and death certificates. "Quest for a True Death Location: Newspapers Prove to be a Valuable Resource" by Paula Perkins uses newspaper research to correct erroneous reports of her great grandfathers' death place while enriching the story of his life and career as a Texas state legislator.

"GeneaBloggers: Learn, Share, and Find Community Through Family History" by Laura Hedgecock introduces a site to explore and find inspiration for sharing your family's story.

Tameka Susberry Miller, PhD, tells a fascinating story about her great-grandfather who was a WWII veteran and among the first African Americans to serve in the U.S. Marines in "Herbert Joel Susberry in the U.S. Marine Corps: Pioneering Montford Point." "Tracing My Swedish Roots: Part 2" by Pamela J. H. Slutz follows Pamela's research into her great grandmother's Swedish family and her journey to Sweden to meet cousins and visit the family's homes.

"The Lumberman, the 'General,' the Watchman, and the Comeback Queen: Slavery and Its Afterlife in the Bayou City from 1861 to the Present" by Karen Kossie-Chernyshev, PhD, uncovers a connection between the African American Taylor family of Houston's Fifth Ward and the wealthy Rice family, founders of Rice University.

Sandra J. Crowley's article, "Roots and Resilience: Women's History in Genealogical Perspective," highlights ways to celebrate the women in our family tree for Women's History Month and any month we research our women ancestors.

Be sure to read the "Partner Society Roundup" for genealogical society news from TxSGS's Partner Societies across Texas. You might find an event of interest in your area. Also in this issue: information about our upcoming bi-annual institute, TIGR, slated June 16-20, and the annual fall conference, *Deep in the Heart: Discovering Family Roots*, November 7-8.

Stirpes' June issue will focus on "Final Footprints," which addresses the passing of an ancestor from death to burial. Obituaries, death certificates, funeral cards, tombstone symbols, and more help genealogists record that final footprint. ✯

—*Stirpes* Editors

New Members & More

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Tell Me a Story: Using Heirlooms and Artifacts to Inspire Your Writing

by Nancy Gilbride Casey

Family artifacts and heirlooms can evoke strong memories of a person, an event, or a place. They come in all shapes, sizes, and types. They hang out in drawers, stow away in attics, lurk in jewelry boxes, and sometimes even hide in plain sight.

If you're like me, you probably have several items which were passed down through the family or given to you as the family's "keeper of all things." While we may occasionally look at the photographs or use the china set or quilt from time to time, we probably don't think of these items as a means by which to tell our family stories.

But heirlooms can be a great source of inspiration and can provide a focus for a brief sketch or longer story about an ancestor or family. Some questions you might ask about an item are: Who owned the article? Who created it? Who used it? What is its history? What is its symbolism or significance to the family? How does it connect the past to the present?

Heirlooms and artifacts are one of my favorite things to write about in my blog *Leaves on the Tree*. In fact, one of my very first posts considered a tiny spoon I grabbed from my silverware drawer several years back to put sugar in my iced tea. On closer inspection, the utensil turned out to be a silver baby spoon engraved with my husband's birth information![1]

There are seeds of a story in most any family heirloom or artifact. Take a fresh look at items you may own to draw the story out. Here are some broad approaches to consider when using these items as writing inspiration.

Image 1: Silver baby spoon engraved with birth information.

Then and Now – *Consider how an item was used in the past and its current state.*

For example, my father-in-law (we call him Papa) gave me his well-loved teddy bear, Teddy, a constant companion of his childhood. I also had a black and white photograph of him as a child asleep in bed with Teddy tucked under his arm. The old photograph, a current photo of the bear perched in Papa's little rocking chair, and his reminiscences about the bear and its place in his life were the ingredients to create a short piece about this heirloom.[2]

In a similar way, a box of my wedding artifacts inspired a look at how traditions have changed in the 30+ years since my husband and I were married. I contrasted our engagement announcement from a local newspaper, handwritten wedding invitations, and the low-tech wedding program that we created with the carefully curated nuptial events produced by some social media-conscious couples today.[3]

Image 2: This well-loved rabbit was the inspiration for retelling a funny family story.

Funny Anecdotes – *Tell the giggle-worthy story behind a favorite artifact*

My mother loved to relate an incident about when my brother Joe was in the hospital for a tonsillectomy. Mom was dumbstruck when the nurses said they repaired "his ears, nose, and gave him new whiskers!" Turns out they were talking about upgrades they gave Joe's stuffed bunny, but in her heightened mom-state, it took a minute before she understood! And now my brother tells this tale as well. I used a photo of the rabbit (which he still has!), with quotes of him retelling this beloved tale to capture the story.[4]

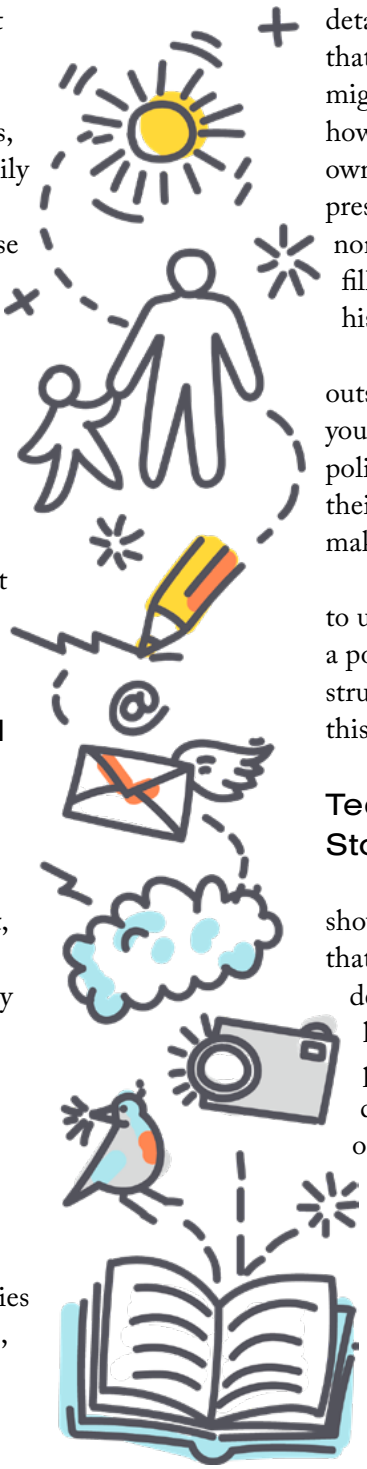
The Art of **Storytelling**

by Sandra J. Crowley

For many genealogists, the thrill of discovering an ancestor's name in long-forgotten records is just the beginning. It opens doors for us to piece together the family's past and how we're connected.

We quickly discover that it's more than just documenting the names, dates, and places. We want to know more about these people who came before us. Stories can enhance dry records, turning them into vibrant narratives of our family history.

Storytelling is essential in genealogy because it breathes life into ancestors who might otherwise remain distant figures on a family tree. A well-crafted story can transform a collection of records into a vivid, engaging narrative that connects generations and fosters a deep love for family history. By combining personal details with historical context, storytelling helps you to get to know your ancestors not just as individuals but as part of a larger community and as part of ***your*** heritage.



What Makes a Great Genealogical Story?

A well-told family story does more than relay facts—it captures the essence of a person's life and times. Accuracy is the foundation, but the story is the heart. Adding historical context, personal details, and a sense of place helps give voice to our ancestor's journey. Instead of simply stating that an ancestor was born in Texas in 1850, consider what their daily life may have been like, the challenges their family faced, and the world around them.

Types of Genealogical Stories

There is no single way to tell a family story. Some genealogists write narrative family histories that are carefully sourced generational accounts, with details that engage the reader and help them visualize the persons in each generation. Others focus on a single ancestor, collecting details and writing biographical sketches that highlight one individual. Another writer might begin with personal reflections—how an ancestor's story connects to their own—providing a bridge between past and present. Some even turn research into creative nonfiction, imagining conversations and filling in missing details while staying true to historical accuracy.

Remember that your ancestor did not exist outside of a community. Strive to show each of your ancestors as part of larger group—social, political, or cultural. Their experiences with their friends, associates, and neighbors helped make them the person you're researching.

Small, personal details make them real to us. Perhaps a grandfather always carried a pocketknife that one day caused him to be struck by lightning. There has to be more to this story!

Techniques for Engaging Storytelling

The best stories draw readers in by showing rather than telling. Instead of stating that an ancestor struggled with farming, describe the weight of the plow in his hands or the way he or she counted every penny at the general store. Use sensory details—what they might have seen, heard, or smelled in their time. If a couple danced at their wedding, include details about the venue, what the day was like, the music they danced to, or other details. As with any story, be sure to structure your story with a beginning, middle, and end. Diaries, letters, or newspaper clippings are great resources to provide the details of community life.

Herbert Joel Susberry in the U.S. Marine Corps:

Pioneering Montford Point

by Tameka Susberry Miller, PhD

There certainly are many notable examples of Blacks fighting in America's Armed Forces, especially during periods in which they generally were restricted or discouraged from enlisting. Often mentioned in the media are the Buffalo Soldiers of the Spanish American War, World War I's Harlem Hellfighters, and the Tuskegee Airmen "Redtails" of World War II. The lesser-known history of the Marine Corps servicemen of Montford Point is one worth learning, especially in case there is one like Herbert Joel Susberry in a historian's family tree.

Image 1: Congressional Gold Medal awarded the Montford Point Marines (front).

Introduction

When Herbert Joel Susberry died in 2008, his family members reported that he was a member of the United States Marine Corps.[1] However, there were no details about the dates of his enlistment and discharge or the circumstances surrounding his service. The facts he had shared with his grandchildren were very few: his duties involved accounting work, and he spent time in Hawaii during World War II.[2] Questions abounded. When and where did Herbert serve as a Marine? What was his job? What were his accomplishments? These questions have been answered in this story, which stitches together bits of oral history, details from military records (e.g., draft cards, muster rolls, and discharge paperwork), and facts reported in unit histories.

Herbert Joel Susberry was born on 19 January 1925 in Colorado County, Texas, the firstborn child of Dave and Louella Tatum Susberry.[3] According to his obituary, "With very few economic opportunities in the small town of Columbus, Herbert joined the United States Marine Corps after graduating high school in the top of his class. He learned administrative and business skills while serving his country."[4] Based on the recollection of his family members, Herbert must have enlisted in the Marine Corps between 1939 and 1945, the time frame of World War II. More specifically, his service could not have begun until after 1941 when African Americans were first allowed to enter the Marine Corps.

The Selective Service Act of 1940 was enacted on 16 September 1940 and implemented the following month. After the Pearl Harbor attack and Congress' declaration of war, it was amended on 20 December 1941. The Act stipulated that all men, regardless of race, aged 18-64 years were required to register for military service in land and naval forces, and those aged 18-44 years could be called on to serve.[5] These men could volunteer into their preferred branch ahead of the time they might be drafted, but Blacks could only serve in the Army and Navy, the only branches heretofore admitting them. Even then, Blacks in the Army served in only all-Black units, and the Navy assigned them to food service, supply, and steward duty. Moreover, segregated facilities and units meant limited training and service opportunities.[6]

In response to pressure from civil rights leaders, on 25 June 1941, President Franklin D. Roosevelt issued Executive Order No. 8802. This action charged the newly created Committee on Fair Employment Practice with the task of promoting "full participation in the national defense program by all citizens of the United States."[7] After significant hesitation and even resistance from senior leaders, the Navy Department announced on 20 May 1942 that the Navy and the Marine Corps would begin enlisting Blacks for general service in active duty reserve components.[8] The Marine Corps (USMC) would begin recruiting men aged 17–29 years old who would, in time, serve in a defense battalion. Faced with fewer volunteers than expected, the USMC initiated mandatory conscription in January 1943 for 18–37-year-old men, and thousands of Blacks were drafted into the Marine Corps over the ensuing months.[9]

Your Family's **Story**

by Jim Thornhill

Stories have to be told or they die, and when they die,
we can't remember who we are or why we're here.

—Sue Monk Kidd

One of my first lessons about writing or speaking is that people love stories. Whether reading a novel, listening to a guest on a talk show telling their story, or viewing one of the many biographies on TV, we want to know people's stories.

After all, isn't that why people are prone to gossip? They want to share *other people's* stories.

As family historians, we tend to be more interested in facts, those things we can prove. For the rest of the world, they sometimes find those facts dry and boring. *Can you imagine?*

If we turn those facts into a story, then we conquer both worlds. We communicate the truth of our family's history in a form that will interest most listeners. That's the kind of storytelling I can get excited about! So let's unlock the hidden storyteller within you.

Of course, what comes first is our research. We should always be true to our research and the details we have discovered about our family members. To tell a story, we must go one step further and learn about our ancestor's environment, the places they lived, what surrounding conditions were like, and what happened in their communities. Just like us, what happened in our ancestor's communities affected their lives.

Take the recent pandemic as an example. If one day someone is writing your story and they leave out how the pandemic affected you, the story would be incomplete. Even if they could find no evidence directly telling your reaction, not recognizing that your life changed for two or three years would be missing part of your story.

Without direct evidence of your reaction to the pandemic, your biographer could turn to the reaction of your community. Articles in the local newspaper would tell of people quarantining, of empty grocery store shelves, of restaurant closures, or of the stands people took for or against vaccination policies. Would learning these things tell the author whether you got sick or if you refused to get vaccinated? No. But comparing this contextual information with the evidence can provide some answers. If research reveals that you appeared in every U.S. census during your lifetime, and that you regularly served on jury duty, that would indicate you had a habit of complying with your civic duty. That's probably not the kind of person who refuses a mandated vaccination.

Another thing that will help with your storytelling is to realize that our ancestors were people. They raised families, had hopes and dreams, earned a living, and reacted in many ways like we do. Of course they did not have many of the conveniences we have, but they still cooked meals, had bratty neighbors, and spent time with friends just like we do. I promise you, if your ancestor was riding his horse while daydreaming and a limb smacked him in the forehead, he had a few choice words to say!

Using all these tools, let's write a story surrounding my great grandfather's migration to Mississippi. First, I am going to research. Here is what I have learned about Joshua Seale.

- Joshua married Ellender Hasseltine in 1797 (U.S. and international marriage records).
- Charles Seale, Joshua's father, died in 1798 (probate documents).
- Joshua is enumerated in the 1800 and 1810 censuses of Anson County, North Carolina.
- Joshua had a younger brother Daniel who moved his family to Mississippi with Joshua's (U. S. Bureau of Land Management (BLM) land patents, deed records, Seale anthology).
- In 1810, when they moved, Joshua and Ellender had the following children: Lewis, Lydia, Martha, Alexander, Ellender, Daniel, and James.

The Lumberman, the "General," the Watchman, and the Comeback Queen: Slavery and Its Afterlife in the Bayou City from 1861 to the Present

by Karen Kossie-Chernyshev, PhD

Living people, the oral histories they share, and genealogical research allow researchers to make fresh, vibrant connections to the past. Such connections may breathe life into our present or take our breath away by rearranging or completely disrupting what we thought was already known or fully understood.

Historians committed to best practices use sound methodologies and the available historical evidence to create established bodies of knowledge, but they do so knowing that new evidence may emerge from unknown sources that force us to rethink what we thought we knew and reconstruct narratives rooted in new historical information.

The story I am about to tell is that kind of narrative. It emerged out of orality—the Q&A session for a Juneteenth presentation that I gave on 19 June 2024 on the 9:30 a.m. "prayer line" hosted by the Latter Day Deliverance Revival Church (LDDRC).[1] My Juneteenth presentation focused on the 260-page final report of Rice University's Taskforce on Slavery, Race, and Racial Injustice, which was commissioned in 2019 by former President David Leebron, the seventh president of Rice University, and released in September 2023.[2] The knowledge I shared was fresh on my mind as I had recently served as a panelist for the "Emancipation Conversations Lecture Series," held at Emancipation Park on 14 June 2024 and co-sponsored by Rice University's Center for African and African American Studies and the Emancipation Park Conservancy.[3]

Image 1: Entrance sign to the Fifth Ward, a historic African American community in Houston.

I thought prayer line participants would appreciate learning about William Marsh Rice's little-known interactions with African Americans in Houston's historic Fourth Ward, known as "Freedman's Town," before the Rice Institute opened its doors. Armed with fresh knowledge, I hardly expected to learn about yet another Rice connection that spanned from slavery to freedom in a different historic community—the Fifth Ward.

At the end of my presentation, Johnnie Mae Taylor, a longtime member of LDDRC and lifetime Fifth Ward resident eagerly interjected, "You said, 'William Marsh Rice.' My daddy worked for him!" "What!!," I responded in amazement. Others on the call began to unmute their phones and respond with exclamations like "my-my-my," "what-you-say," and "look at God."

Johnnie Mae Taylor went on to explain that while she knew I was a Rice alumna, she had not made the connection between my alma mater and William Marsh Rice until I stated his full name. The pronouncement of his full name brought back memories of conversations she had with her beloved father, who passed away when she was only 16 years old.

Now a resilient 85-year-old, Mother Taylor, a senior church leader whom members affectionately call "The Comeback Queen," shared that her father had served as a night watchman for William Marsh Rice and lived on the property in a small

TEXAS STATE GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY

TEXAS INSTITUTE of GENEALOGICAL RESEARCH

To Enrich, Expand and Inspire.

TIGR 2025 Registration is Open!

Join us Virtually - June 16-20, 2025

The Texas Institute of Genealogical Research (TIGR) provides in-depth instruction and hands-on experience in specialized research areas. Since its launch in 2017, TIGR has grown from a single course to a multi-course program designed to help genealogists tackle their toughest research challenges.

The 2025 institute, held virtually from June 16–20, offers five intensive courses led by top experts in the field. Through interactive sessions, case studies, and collaborative learning, students will gain practical skills to enhance their research. Whether you're returning to build on past learning or attending for the first time, TIGR provides an engaging environment where genealogists of all levels can expand their expertise—all from the convenience of home.

2025 Course Offerings

Course 1 – **Research in the Lone Star State**

Coordinator: Kelvin L. Meyers

This course is designed to introduce participants to the rich resources and techniques available for tracing family history in Texas. Whether you're a lifelong Texan or exploring family ties to the Lone Star State, this course will provide a solid foundation in Texas genealogical research. Participants will learn how to access key records, navigate unique Texas historical contexts, and connect with local repositories.

Course 2 – **Building Communities Across the South**

Coordinator: J. Mark Lowe, FUGA

Early families found their way into prime lands seeking opportunities and freedom. These citizens included merchants, blacksmiths, preachers, traders, craftsmen, speculators, hunters, and farmers. Early pioneers and settlers were a diverse group with family members across the country. How did their need for essential supplies inspire movement and continued migration? We will focus on the development of communities throughout the South prior to 1850 but will include some later records that will help shed light on the early settlements.

Course 3 – **Legally Texas: Advanced Legal Research in the Lone Star State**

Coordinator: Judy G. Russell, JD, CG®, CGL®, FUGA

This course will offer an in-depth look at the unique legal history of Texas and its impact on research in the Lone Star State. From the lingering effects of Spanish and Mexican civil law to the frontier rules of the Republic, and clashes with settlers from the old eastern common law states, knowing how to research Texas law and its application to records is essential. Sessions will explore the laws impacting Texas's courts, land distributions, inheritance, family relations, and more, as well as the laws of slavery and Texas's role in the Confederacy. Students will get assistance in finding law-related records held by the major repositories including the Texas State Library and Archives and the Texas General Land Office.

Course 4 – **Integrating AI into Genealogical Research and Writing**

Coordinator: Nicole Elder Dyer

This course explores how to integrate artificial intelligence tools into the genealogical research and writing process, including setting an objective, research planning, transcription and document analysis, note-taking, documentation, and writing. Students will learn practical applications of AI technology for improving efficiency while maintaining high standards of quality by incorporating AI tools throughout the entire research process using hands-on exercises and real-world case studies.

The course covers multiple forms of genealogical writing, from formal research reports to engaging family narratives and proofs. Participants will learn to streamline their workflow by using AI to assist with time-consuming tasks like formatting, data extraction, transcription, basic analysis, and summarization allowing more time for complex research and writing decisions that require human expertise and judgment.

This comprehensive course is designed for both professional and intermediate genealogists seeking to expand their research and writing practices. Participants will emerge with practical strategies for integrating AI tools into their genealogical work.

Course 5 – **Beyond the Battlefield: Advanced Military Research Analysis and Methodology**

Coordinator: Michael L. Strauss, AG®

This course offers an in-depth exploration tailored for historians, genealogists, and researchers aiming to gain expertise in the complexities of military records. Spanning conflicts from the Revolutionary War to the Vietnam War, the curriculum delves into essential military resources including musters, service records, pensions, draft registrations, and bounty land records. Participants will learn advanced research techniques, strategies for navigating archives, and methods for analyzing military documents to create comprehensive service narratives. Particular attention will be given to lesser-known sources, record repositories, and techniques for addressing gaps caused by missing or destroyed records

Visit our website for more information: www.txsgs.org/tigr-2025/

The Motivation Behind Writing Your Family's Past:
Honoring Ancestors, Preserving History, Winning a TxSGS Writing Award

by Susan E. Ball

Every genealogist has stories about their family, a place important to the family, or an event that changed their family's life. Often, these tales are shared with family members and passed down orally to the next generation. How much better would it be if these stories were researched and recorded in written form?

Often, all that's standing between the loss of family lore and its preservation in written form is motivation. The TxSGS Awards program asked its 2024 winners what motivated them to write their book, article, blog, or website.

First place winner, Mary Jo Kenny (Category I, Books by a Non-Professional/Family History) shared her storytelling motivation: "As a child, I was always interested in the family stories told by older family members. Some of these stories had been told to them as children and included tales of encounters with Indians and wild animals when Texas was a sparsely settled wilderness." Mary Jo decided to start her book, *Kenny-Colwell, History of an Early Texas Family*, with Elizabeth Jane (Eliza Jane) Colwell, who came to Texas as a five-year-old child. According to Mary Jo, "Eliza Jane had been the source of the stories I had heard as a child." Mary Jo used historic records to enhance these stories and give authenticity to her family's tales.

Sometimes, motivation takes the form of a need to help future generations see a glimpse of their ancestor's personalities. Peggy Durack, third-place winner (Category III, Manuscripts by a Non-Professional),

wrote "Albert's son-in-law Frederick Buell, my grandfather, told stories about Albert's forceful personality. Frederick's son Bill Buell [explained], 'When they would have trouble with someone in the local beer joint, they would call Albert, and the unruly ones would settle right down when he got there. It didn't sound like it was a physical interaction, but a psychological one, to me.'"

Writer's groups can bolster motivation. First-place winner Karen Lindberg Rasmussen (Category I, Books by a Non-Professional/Reference) credited her genealogy society's writers circle as her motivation. "I am currently serving again as a president of The Humble Area Genealogical Society (THAGS)," Karen explained. "At a recent leadership training put on by the Texas State Genealogical Society, creating a society writers circle was discussed," she continued. "We decided to give it a go this past year. This book was my project that I took on as part of our writers circle. I felt that completing the project and submitting it to this year's Texas State Genealogical Society's writing contest would be a good example to others in this group." Karen's award-winning book is *Thoughts, Theories, and Impressions of … Groveland Pioneer Cemetery, Located in Groveland, Livingston County, New York*.

TxSGS encourages all genealogists to muster their motivation and start writing. Motivational experts tell us that if you're having trouble getting started, the first step is too big. Create a plan for a writing project, then start small. Here's an outline for a "small steps" writing plan:

- Collect your research.
- Create an outline.
- Identify the missing pieces.
- Create a research plan to address the missing pieces.
- Break the research plan into small steps that can be accomplished in a short amount of time.
- Start writing!

If at any time you feel overwhelmed, go back and break your plan into smaller steps.

Quest for a True Death Location:
Newspapers Prove to be a Valuable Resource

by Paula Perkins

Compelling family stories need more than facts – they need the special details to bring ancestors to life and give them personality. These stories place them in context within their family and community. The key is finding resources to discover this information and weave them into a captivating tale. It didn't take long to realize that one of the best sources for crafting such a story is newspapers.

It all started with a family member who gave me a newspaper clipping of an obituary stained with red cough syrup. They knew I was seeking information on my paternal great-grandfather, John Richard Elliott. This was years before the current proliferation of digitized newspapers online. There was no newspaper title or issue date on the clipped article. I knew J. R. was born in Texas and was surprised that the article claimed he died in Chicago, Illinois. To my knowledge, we did not have a connection to Chicago. I knew there was research to be done on J. R. to discover details about his life and family.[1]

My first step was to search newspapers published in Grayson County where he was born and lived most of his life to find the obituary's date and the newspaper in which it was published. At the time I started this research project, Grayson County newspapers were not available online. I drove to Sherman, the county seat of Grayson County, to look at the Grayson County newspapers that the Sherman Public Library had on microfilm. This library also held notebooks of obituary clippings that were created by volunteers. I did not find J. R.'s obit in those notebooks. My obituary clipping wasn't found in any of the microfilmed newspapers, either. I eventually found a digitized copy through an online database of the *Dallas Morning News* at the Dallas Public Library.[2]

I expanded my search and discovered a sketch on J. R. Elliott in *The Biographical Souvenir of Texas* that included additional family information and listed all of John Richard Elliott's paternal aunts and uncles.[3] With the information provided in a sketch such as this, you can discover extended family through research—provided the information was not embellished or fabricated. I proved the family data found in the sketch through records in courthouses, academic and public libraries, the Texas State Library and Archives, and the Texas General Land Office. The story about J. R. emerging from these facts was enhanced further through articles found in newspapers.


FORMER STATE OFFICIAL
WHO DIED IN CHICAGO.

J. R. ELLIOTT.

Special to The News.

Sherman, Texas, Feb. 10.—J. R. Elliott died in Chicago last night. He was a resident of Sherman and had served two terms as county treasurer and in the Legislature from Grayson County. He also served as chief clerk in the office of Secretary of State and Purchasing Agent under Governor Colquitt. Previous to his election he was actively connected with the State Agricultural Department under Commissioner Fred W. Davis. Last July he resigned from a position under the State Board of Control on account of declining health.

He is survived by a son and three daughters—John Elliott and Misses Mary, Dixie and Hazel Elliott.

The body will be brought to Sherman for burial.

HOUSE R...

Image 1: Newspaper Clipping

The Life of John Richard Elliott

John Richard Elliott was born on 5 October 1861 in White Mound, Grayson County, Texas.[4] He was the eldest son of George W. Elliott and Elizabeth Allsop.[5] The Elliott family first lived in Nacogdoches until about 1857 when George W. Elliott moved his family to White Mound.[6]

John Richard was referenced as Bud or J. R. in many of the sources I found. I searched for information about his life using newspapers and other resources. When performing each search, I tried every given name found for John Richard. As the saying goes, one piece of paper or information leads you to the next one.

J. R. attended the Centennial Institute in Cannon, Grayson County, and later taught school at the Savoy Institute.[7] He married Dixie Eleanor Glaze, daughter of Peyton Hawes Glaze and Mary Ann Elizabeth Storey, on 1 July 1883 in Sherman, Grayson County, Texas.[8] She was born 11 March 1867 in Linden, Cass County, Texas, and

Story Triggers: Finding Inspiration for Writing Family History

by Sandra J. Crowley

Every genealogist knows the feeling: you've spent countless hours researching your family history, collecting dates, names, and places, but when it comes to writing about these discoveries, you find yourself staring at a blank page. How do you transform dry facts into compelling stories that capture the essence of your ancestors' lives?

The answer lies in what we call "story triggers" – those tangible and intangible elements that spark our creativity and forge emotional connections to the past. These triggers serve as bridges between the factual framework of genealogical research and the rich, emotional narratives that bring our ancestors to life.

The Power of Story Triggers

Story triggers are more than just prompts for writing; they're keys that unlock the human elements of our family history. While dates and locations provide the skeleton of our family stories, it's the emotional resonance of a grandfather's pocket watch, the faded cursive in a great-aunt's diary, or the familiar aroma of traditional family recipes that adds flesh to these bones.

These triggers work because they engage our senses and emotions, helping us connect with our ancestors on a deeper level. They transform abstract historical figures into real people with hopes, struggles, and dreams—people whose stories deserve to be preserved and shared.

Types of Story Triggers

Story triggers come in many forms. Exploring different categories can help genealogists uncover new avenues for storytelling.

Visual Triggers

Perhaps the most powerful category of story triggers is visual. Old photographs, whether formal portraits, casual snapshots, or postcards, capture moments frozen in time. A sepia-toned image of your great-grandmother in her Sunday best might reveal details about fashion, social status, and family traditions. Family heirlooms, from delicate jewelry to well-worn tools, tell stories of craftsmanship, personal taste, and daily life. Even seemingly mundane items like old receipts or concert tickets can offer glimpses into how our ancestors lived and what they valued.

Auditory Triggers

Sound has a unique ability to transport us through time. The hymns your grandmother sang while cooking, the lullabies passed down through generations, or recordings of family gatherings preserve not just voices but emotions and relationships. Family sayings and expressions—those peculiar turns of phrase that everyone in the family uses—often have fascinating origins that illuminate your family's cultural heritage. A song that comes on the radio as you're driving may be an "oldie but goodie" from your college or high school days that brings back memories of where you were and who you were with.

Sensory Triggers

Some of our most potent memories are tied to scents and textures. The smell of fresh-baked bread might evoke stories of your grandfather's bakery, while the rough texture of a handmade quilt could spark tales of resourcefulness during hard times. Chocolate chip cookies just out of the oven remind me of home, while the smell of blackberry cobbler in the oven reminds me of my grandmother

A Tale Told After the Fact

by Jim Thornhill

Death certificates can reveal a treasure trove of information. The key to utilizing this treasure is realizing the parts of the certificate and how reliable the information is on each part. While each state developed its own certificate, the parts are similar and what we learn from Texas's certificate can be applied to most other states.

For us in the Southern U.S., death certificates did not become a reality until the early twentieth century. The exception to that is if your ancestor lived in an older established city like San Antonio or New Orleans. These cities would often record death certificates earlier than the state mandated. If your ancestors lived in a religious community, such as Catholic or Lutheran, the church would often keep birth, christening, or death records.

If you have ancestors in the Northern U.S., death certificates or some record of a person's passing are available earlier. Death records are available back to the 1700s in New England, and it seems as though one of the first functions of towns in Massachusetts was to record vital statistics, giving us records in the 1600s.

Texas death certificates can be broken down into four different parts, as seen in image 1. At the top (section 1) is the basic information for the deceased person. Most of this was reported by an official such as an ambulance driver, doctor, or police officer. Section 2 contains the information about the deceased person. This information was given by a person called an informant. Hopefully, the informant is identified on the death certificate, because knowing the name of the informant is key to determining the reliability of that information.

Next is the medical information in section 3. This information was provided by the deceased's doctor or the coroner. Lastly there is the burial information in section 4. This contains the name of the cemetery where the deceased was buried and the funeral home used.

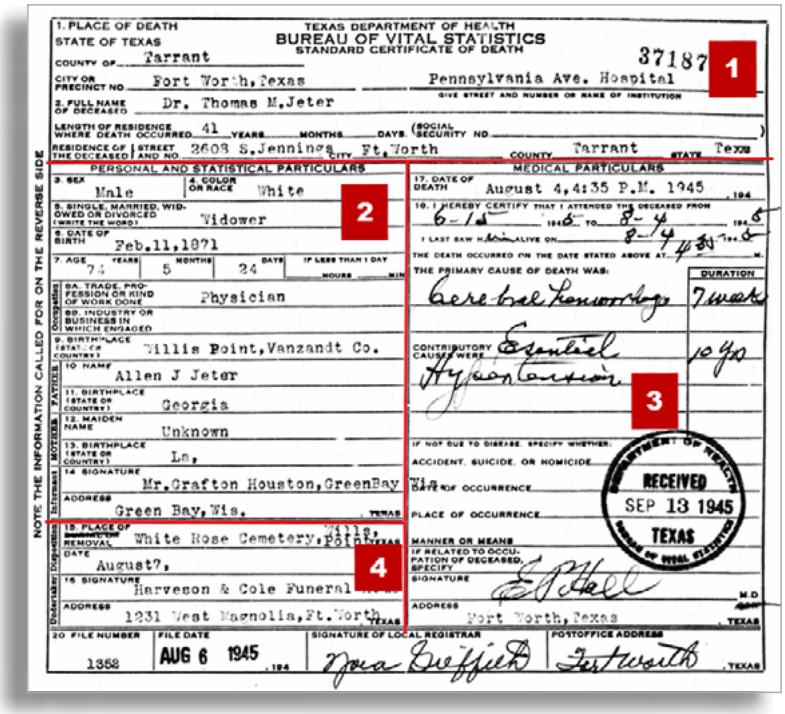

1. PLACE OF DEATH
STATE OF TEXAS
TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
BUREAU OF VITAL STATISTICS
STANDARD CERTIFICATE OF DEATH
37187
1
COUNTY OF Tarrant
CITY OR PRECINCT NO. Fort Worth, Texas
Pennsylvania Ave. Hospital
2. FULL NAME OF DECEASED Dr. Thomas M. Jeter
LENGTH OF RESIDENCE WHERE DEATH OCCURRED 41 YEARS MONTHS DAYS
(SOCIAL SECURITY NO.)
RESIDENCE OF THE DECEASED (STREET AND NO.) 2608 S. Jennings CITY Ft. Worth COUNTY Tarrant STATE Texas
PERSONAL AND STATISTICAL PARTICULARS
MEDICAL PARTICULARS
3. SEX Male
4. COLOR OR RACE White
2
5. SINGLE, MARRIED, WIDOWED OR DIVORCED (WRITE THE WORD) Widower
6. DATE OF BIRTH Feb. 11, 1871
7. AGE 74 YEARS 5 MONTHS 24 DAYS IF LESS THAN 1 DAY HOURS MIN
8A. TRADE, PROFESSION OR KIND OF WORK DONE Physician
8B. INDUSTRY OR BUSINESS IN WHICH ENGAGED
9. BIRTHPLACE (STATE OR COUNTRY) Willis Point, Vanzandt Co.
10. NAME Allen J Jeter
11. BIRTHPLACE (STATE OR COUNTRY) Georgia
12. MAIDEN NAME Unknown
13. BIRTHPLACE (STATE OR COUNTRY) La,
14. SIGNATURE Mr. Grafton Houston, GreenBay Wis.
ADDRESS Green Bay, Wis. TEXAS
15. PLACE OF DISPOSITION REMOVAL White Rose Cemetery, Ft. Worth TEXAS
DATE August?,
16. SIGNATURE Harveson & Cole Funeral
ADDRESS 1231 West Magnolia, Ft. Worth TEXAS
4
17. DATE OF DEATH August 4, 4:35 P.M. 1945
10. I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT I ATTENDED THE DECEASED FROM 6-14 1945 TO 8-4 1945
I LAST SAW HIM ALIVE ON 8-4 1945
THE DEATH OCCURRED ON THE DATE STATED ABOVE AT 4:35 P.M.
THE PRIMARY CAUSE OF DEATH WAS:
DURATION
Cerebral Hemorrhage 7 weeks
CONTRIBUTORY CAUSES WERE Carcinoma Hypertension 10 yrs
3
IF NOT DUE TO DISEASE, SPECIFY WHETHER ACCIDENT, SUICIDE, OR HOMICIDE
DATE OF OCCURRENCE
PLACE OF OCCURRENCE
MANNER OF MEANS
IF RELATED TO OCCUPATION OF DECEASED, SPECIFY
SIGNATURE E. P. Hall M.D.
ADDRESS Fort Worth, Texas TEXAS
RECEIVED SEP 13 1945 TEXAS BUREAU OF VITAL STATISTICS
20. FILE NUMBER 1358
FILE DATE AUG 6 1945
SIGNATURE OF LOCAL REGISTRAR Nora Duffield
POSTOFFICE ADDRESS Fortworth TEXAS
NOTE THE INFORMATION CALLED FOR ON THE REVERSE SIDE

Image 1: Death certificate for Dr. Thomas M. Jeter (11 Feb 1871 – 4 Aug 1945).

The information in section 1 is usually accurate. The only exception might be how long the deceased lived in their last residence. The medical information in section 3 is is usually very accurate since it was filled out by the deceased's doctor or the coroner. The burial information in section 4 is also usually accurate because it was issued by a mortician or undertaker who had firsthand knowledge of what arrangements were made. This person often issued the death certificate.

The personal information in section 2 requires caution. This section is often the most helpful to family historians since it gives the deceased's date of birth and identifies their parents and where they were born. Hopefully the informant who supplied this information will be listed on the death certificate. This person's identity is important, because how close they are to the deceased may determine the accuracy of the information they supplied.

The death certificate I am using as a guide for this article is for a relative who lived and worked as a physician

Tracing My Swedish Roots: Part Two

by Pamela J. H. Slutz

My sister and I will never forget when we visited the farm where our grandmother was born. We learned much about my grandmother's childhood, but nothing about her father. In 2019, *Stirpes* published "Tracing My Swedish Roots," which detailed my initial research into my mother's Swedish roots and my first trip to Sweden.[1]

I concluded the article with Next Steps: use DNA testing and matching and consult a professional Swedish genetic genealogist to:

1. Identify the biological father of my grandmother, Elsie (Johnson) Vierling.
2. Locate living descendants of Johanna Alfrida (Karlsson) Åkerblad, the sole sibling of my great-grandmother Elisabet Karlsson to have living descendants in Sweden.

Image 1: Elsa Elexia Karlbom, circa 1910.

Image 2: Elisabet Karlsson, circa 1890.

It took another five years, but thanks to the assistance of several dedicated and determined cousins and a professional genetic genealogist based in Sweden, I returned to Sweden in November 2024 to meet with living descendants of both my biological great-grandfather, Frans Oskar Karlbom, and my second-great aunt, Johanna Alfrida Karlsson. This is an account of how I was able to break through the brick walls and learn more about the lives and personalities of my Swedish ancestors.

Background

In August 1990, while researching my mother's Swedish ancestry at the Family History Library in Salt Lake City, I discovered that my Sweden-born maternal grandmother, Elsie (Johnson) Vierling (1890-1982), was born out of wedlock to Elisabet Karlsson (1862-1937). Her birth name was Elsa Elexia. I say "discovered," because if Grandmother Elsie knew her father, she never shared that information with her children, claiming she had no recollection of him and that he had died when she was a child in Sweden.

Image 3: Unknown man in uniform, Fakoping, Sweden, circa 1890.

Over the years, my parents and I tried to identify her biological father but to no avail. All we had was a surname, Karlbom. When Elsie was about two years of age and living with a foster family, the Swedish Lutheran Church parish priest began recording her in the parish "Swedish Household Examination Book" as Elsa Elexia Karlbom.[2] Elsie lived with this foster family for eight years until her mother, Elisabet, arranged for Elsie to join her in Minnesota.[3] Another clue we had was a photo taken in Sweden of an unidentified young man in a military uniform that had belonged to Great-Grandmother Elisabet.

During an initial visit to Sweden in May 2019, my sister and I visited

Partner Society Roundup

Read these reports from around Texas to identify events and societies in your area.

TxSGS recommends that persons interested in society events check the society's website and Facebook page to see whether the event will be held in person, virtually, or both. Names of societies with webpages or Facebook pages are hyperlinked to those pages; otherwise, just search for the society on the TxSGS society webpage at txsgs.org/partner-societies/.

To find your society's district, check the Partner Society map on the TxSGS website at txsgs.org/about/district-map/. Click on your region to see your district representative's name and contact information plus a list of genealogical resources in that district.

Is your Partner Society missing? Perhaps our contact information is out of date or your society's membership has lapsed. Please contact your district representative and memberinfo@txsgs.org to update your society's contact data and confirm your society's membership status.

Partner Societies are encouraged to investigate the many benefits and resources available from TxSGS at the Partner Society Resource page (txsgs.org/partner-society-resources/). Benefits include webinars to use for society programs, publicity support for society events, media downloads, preservation and access support, awards, and much more.

District B

Nancy Gilbride Casey, District Representative

The ***North Texas Genealogical Association*** (NTGA) serves a nine-county region in District B, covering Hardeman, Wilbarger, Baylor, Archer, Young, Clay, Montague, Jack, and Wichita counties. In January, NTGA explored the life of Henry W. Strong, a prominent figure in North Texas history, who chronicled his experiences in *My Frontier Days and Indian Fights on the Plains of Texas*. This rare book is housed in the Wichita Falls Public Library, though reprints are available for purchase. February featured Wichita County Archivist Carol Rudd who provided insights into the extensive holdings of the county archives, sharing examples of historical materials that captivated members. NTGA President Mike Moody presented "Genealogy Myths" in March, debunking common misconceptions encountered by genealogists at all experience levels. Those wishing to attend an NTGA meeting via Zoom can request an invitation through the NTGA Facebook page (https://www.facebook.com/groups/1078569545574426).

District C

Emily C. Richardson District Representative

The ***Collin County Genealogical Society*** (CCGS) is excited to announce the launch of its new website, developed with the help of member Rob Thayer, co-webmaster. The refreshed site features updated tools, a blog, events, and a members-only section, with additional features planned for the future. A full list of programs, complete with Zoom links for registration, is available online. Visitors can subscribe to the society's mailing list from the homepage to receive up-to-date information on genealogy programs and events, and they are encouraged to post genealogy-related questions regardless of Collin County ancestry. The society has also formed a new special interest group—All Things Technology! This group will explore topics including Artificial Intelligence (AI), DNA, genealogy organization software, and other tech-related subjects designed to enrich attendees' knowledge. The spring kickoff details are posted on their website.

Recent programming included a Digital Projects Committee presentation on January 9 titled "Preserving Collin County's History for Future Generations." The presentation highlighted the society's newspaper digitization project and current efforts to digitize McKinney and Plano historical city directories, books, family papers, and church records. On February 12, Diane L. Richard delivered a presentation on Freedmen's Bureau records, emphasizing their value to Southern research. The society now holds its second Wednesday monthly programs at 6:30 p.m. Central Time, preceded by a networking session at 6:00 p.m. On April 9, Sara Cochran presented "Shamrocks, Leprechauns, and Harps: Researching Your Irish." Upcoming programs include "DNA Clusters: Concepts and Uses," with Randy Whited on May 14; "Know Your Location; Case Study: Northeastern Canada/USA," with Sue Gover-Lee on June 11; and "Mining Genealogical Evidence from State Legislative Records" with Bill Buckner on July 9.

The ***Denton County Genealogical Society*** (DCGS) meeting on January 9 featured a presentation by Jennifer Holik on researching veteran history,

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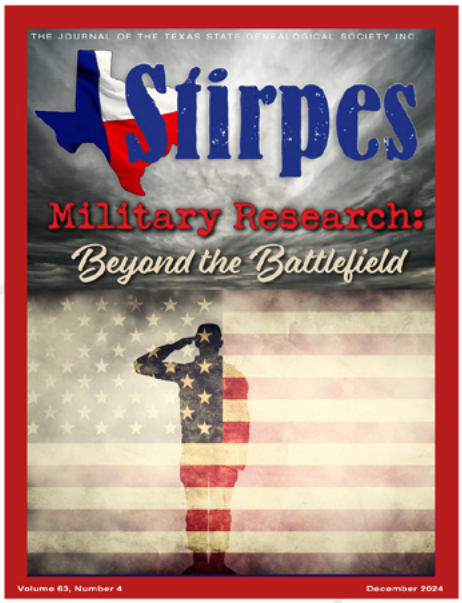

Themes for 2025:

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Q2 - Final Footprints (Apr 15, 2025 deadline)
Q3 - Skill Building: Applying the Law (Jul 15, 2025 deadline)
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