

Miss Blanche Robertson and Mrs. Sara Bolick copy resource material to fill requests made to the Fairfield County Genealogy Room for information.

To Fairfield County Museum

9/3/92

Genealogical inquiries come from all over U.S.

By T. Lawrence Ward
Staff Writer

"You'd be surprised at how many families have connections in Fairfield County," said Mrs. Ruth Stevenson. And she should know. Stevenson along with her sister Mrs. Sara Bolick and Miss Blanche Robertson, have seen visitors from all over the United States and even a few from abroad on

the third floor of the Fairfield County Museum on Congress Street.

The ladies comprise the self-titled Fairfield County Genealogy Room, and act as researchers, correspondents and resource collectors on the history of Fairfield County families.

Stevenson's excursion into genealogy began when her chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution put her in charge of about 20 books that were stored in the old Fairfield County Library. The books had data from only a few Fairfield County families. When the new library was built, the genealogy records were moved to its present location at the museum and from there it has grown vastly, as have inquiries.

"I don't know how people find out about us," Stevenson said. "We get inquiries from all over, Texas, California and even Alaska."

Stevenson went on to say that many researchers tracing family histories are in Fairfield County for a couple of days to do research and stay at local motels or camp at the campgrounds on Lake Wateree.

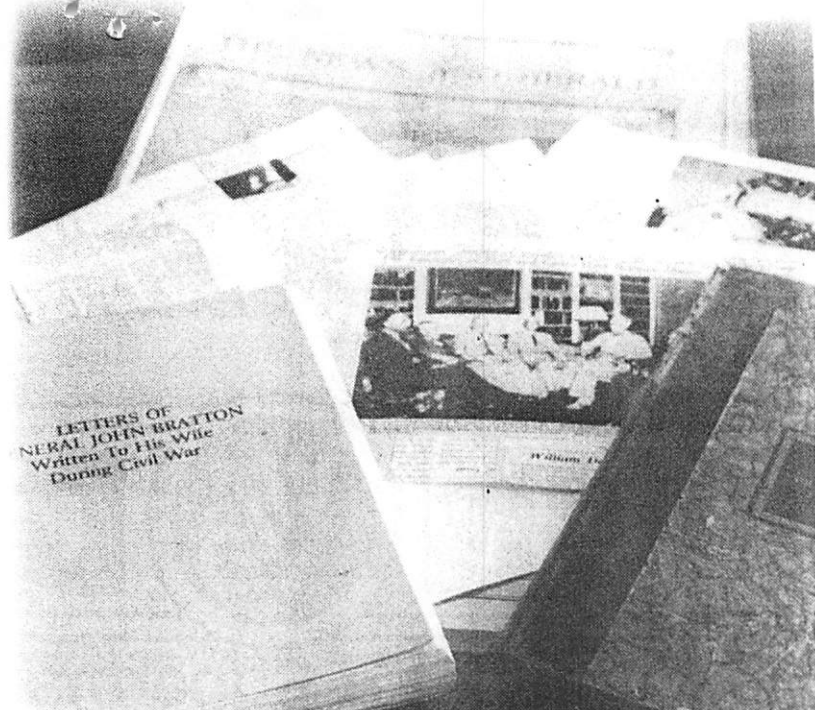
Stevenson said museum brochures that list the genealogy services are distributed at a state welcome center explains some of the attention her room receives, but admits interest outweighs publicity. "I never knew when I got into this there was so much interest," Stevenson said.

"We had a man in here not too long ago tracing his family, who said he was an editor for *Southern Living* magazine."

All three women who volunteer their time, from 10:30 a.m. til 4:30 p.m. on Wednesdays, to help trace genealogy reported different reasons for becoming involved.

"I just love history and working here with these ladies," Robertson said as she scanned a broad book chronicling the important dates of long gone Fairfield County residents whose ancestors have likely spread out like the spokes of a bicycle wheel to different parts of the country. Bolick, who has been given the title of expert by her cohorts because of her ability to remember dates and specifics, admits, in jest, that she has the genealogy pox. A disease

Please see Genealogy
Continued on Page 6A



A sample of the research materials that visitors searching for ancestral clues may use on the third floor of the Fairfield County Museum.

Genealogy

Continued from Page 1A

that just gets worse and includes symptoms such as feverishly scrutinizing records and an interest in cemeteries and ruins.

Stevenson described working in the museum as a hobby and an outlet, besides counteracting her husband's hobby...raising cows.

The ladies indicated that one of the reasons most of their users were from out of town was because a lot of local residents were not aware of the wealth of information available in the genealogy room. Adding that they also solicit any family information residents may have to add to their collection.

"We want people to share records," Bolick said. "We would really like to increase our files on the county's black families."

Currently the genealogy room does have a book which includes newspaper accounts of accomplishments by the area's black citizens, but needs specific family records to expand the section.

"Right now we get more information from out-of-state people than we do from county residents," Stevenson said. Adding that people who use the room's resources or get help through correspondence, usually donate a copy of their family histories when they complete them.

In recounting one of the most memorable requests she has received, Stevenson told of a woman who came to her, inquiring about her grandfather.

"I knew who she was talking about when she said his name," Stevenson said with a concerned smile in her eyes, as the man's exploits had taken place yesterday instead of the late nineteenth century. "And I told her that what I knew about him wasn't very good."

"The woman said I know, he had the reputation as the



Mrs. Ruth Stevenson corresponds with several researchers on a weekly basis as she helps trace genealogy.

meanest man in the world," according to Stevenson.

After preparing the woman for the truth, Stevenson shared the information with the inquisitive descendant that her grandfather had shot and killed a Fairfield County constable and was hanged in front of the County Courthouse for the crime after his capture.

In addition to enlightening this woman on the life (and death) of her infamous forefather, the Fairfield County Genealogy Room has helped many, including researchers from England and Ireland, at no charge, except 20 cents a page for copied materials.

Some of the delighted examiners who use the room make donations, which the ladies use to expand their resource material. The genealogy room also sells cemetery listings for Fairfield County burial places.