

One woman's improbable journey to chronicle her family history has led her from Illinois to Colorado to Walla Walla, Washington, and ultimately to Winnsboro. Janie Ball, a descendant of the Hans [Wagner](#)/Waggoner family has been in Winnsboro recently to do research at the Fairfield County Museum.

Museum director, Pelham Lyles, says that there have been a number of descendants of this family who have visited and written her for help in locating their ancestors' burials and settlement areas. She and volunteers with the genealogical records have introduced these distant relatives to each other through emails and phone calls. There is a regular email Round Robin of queries that often accompany such family research projects and the Wagner correspondents are one of many groups active in recent times. The genealogy research room is staffed with volunteers to respond to questions about Fairfield County family lines.

[Janie and husband Ron](#) met her first cousin, Connie Cerdena [after finding her name in a book she came across while doing research.](#)

In the Waggoner Family Geneology History Book there was a notation about Walla Walla Washington, leading Ball to make a blind call to the area asking if any Waggoners, or Wagners, in Washington were descended from the family of Isaac and Hans Waggoner. Ball learned there was a major family reunion of Waggoner descendants in Washington state and she found a kindred spirit in her first cousin, Cerdena, who has been covered several times by the quilting magazine *Fons and Porter's*.

For Cerdena, researching her family's history involved more than just writing. She combined her passion for quilting with her history buff tendencies and the results have been beautiful depictions of family heritage. [She](#) has researched the family for 25 years and been a quilter for over 30 years. At the time they met, Cerdena was being treated for cancer. Her health has been improving the past few years and she is easing her way back into quilting once more. The trip to Winnsboro and the leads her cousin, Janie, received on their family have re-energized her and her efforts.

[On her visit last week to Fairfield County Janie hoped to see the marker near Highway 215 and Beaver Creek.](#) The marker refers to Fort Wagner, a log house that was fortified by her ancestors to provide a place of refuge during attacks by the Cherokee [Indians. Colonial encroachment by settlers had provoked a two-year war with the tribe in South Carolina.](#) The fort is the subject of Cerdena's quilt and she and Ball want to link it physically to the actual site. So far they know that

the Waggoner grave is unmarked [somewhere near](#) Highway 215 and that according to legend a large cedar tree stump sits atop it.

Cerdena longs to come to the Carolinas to explore leads that Ball has learned of, in addition to information she gathered while doing research in Moultrie County, Ill. [She](#) made the Hans Waggoner quilt in about three weeks. [Four symbolic log cabins represent the fortress and stars](#) are included in the pattern to represent settlers living out in the wilderness. In addition to being in the magazine, Cerdena's quilt was featured in the book *The Best of Fons and Porter's table toppers*.

Cerdena sent the quilt to Ball so she could take it to Winnsboro and show it around at the museum, at monuments, and at cemeteries.

"I did that to let people know how important my Waggoner family heritage is to me," Cerdena said.

[Hans Wagner](#) was a miller, trapper and supposedly set up a grist mill in Fairfield County. Ball and Cerdena are doing land research to see if the mill site was owned by [Hans Wagner](#) ([Waggoner is a variation of the name spelling](#)), who relocated to Fairfield County from a tract of land Moravians claimed in what is now the [Winston-Salem](#) area.

[The actual geographical site for the fort was not legally documented in the land records.](#) "Though we have collected some [writings and oral histories about its location](#), no site that we know of has ever been [archaeologically](#) located," said Fairfield County Museum Director Pelham Lyles.

"There are traditions of where it might be [in northwestern Fairfield](#) but nothing definite."

"During the Indian Wars, a byproduct of the French and Indian Wars, backwoods Englishmen enlisted Cherokees to fight settlers in Fairfield County," Ball said. "Since the conflict was Cherokee-related, the S.C. [Royal](#) government at the time furnished the fort with provisions [between 1759 and 1761.](#)" [Defenses were constructed around a number of log structures in the Carolinas to provide protection for groups of families living in the sparsely settled areas.](#) [Historical accounts described trenches to allow settlers to run into the fort without being accosted and walls were strengthened as well as windows blocked off.](#)

The passion for Ball also involves a promise she is keeping to her late Aunt Helen Lily who asked her in the mid-1970s to do a family genealogy. She put off the project while she raised her family, but then in the 1990s her mother, Charlotte, got Ball to start the project. Now Ball is

continuing it in her late mother's memory as well.

"It has been intense work for 8-9 years, like a full-time job," Ball said.

Her genealogy reads more like a scrapbook because she is including photos and stories of daily life from that historical time period.

Ball said that week three of her journey may be the final leg which would end in Winnsboro, depending upon what she finds here. Her husband and pet dogs also made the trip from Colorado in their camper to offer support of her retirement dream.

This really is a quest for my family. It's not really a void in the history because we know a little about it, but I would like to fill in as many of the blanks as we can," Ball said. She said it is rewarding to learn about her family and really also enjoys period recipes she has found in family scrapbooks.

Persons interested in Connie's quilts can visit [www.jennycreekdesigns.com](http://www.jennycreekdesigns.com).

If anyone in Winnsboro has information related to the Waggoner/Wagner family that they would like to share, they are asked to Janie Ball at 970-481-7485 or email her at [thelazyeasel@estesvalley.net](mailto:thelazyeasel@estesvalley.net).

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