

Fairfield Genealogical Society NEWSLETTER

Volume 5, Number 3

1992

Searching for a Professional Genealogist

In this issue of the Newsletter is an article I wrote about my experience with a professional English genealogist. I hope this article will be helpful to those of you who may retain a professional genealogist. I think most of the points I make would be applicable to any genealogist, not just to those who are out of the country.

Most of us seldom use a professional genealogist. When we do approach a professional it is generally when we have exhausted every avenue we can find and we then hope the professional can pull a miracle out of a hat. When you think of it that way, it is probably unrealistic to hope the professional is going to have much more success than we have had.

When do we need someone to research an ancestor that is distant from where we live, in another country or in another state, hiring a professional may be the only solution. Unfortunately, in hiring away from our home state, we don't really have any way of knowing if the person we are hiring is good, great, mediocre, or what.

There is something we can do, however. You may have noticed, the letters "CG" behind the names of some genealogists. Those letters stand for "Certified Genealogist" and it means that person has met the standards of accomplishment set forth by the Board for Certification of Genealogist. When a person you hire to do some research for you has that designation, you at least know he has advanced beyond the amateur status. You also know he has agreed to abide by the Board's written code of ethics. The Board does try to maintain ethical standards and it will investigate any complaint you may have about members of that group.

The Board, by the way, has several other designations for its members including Certified American Lineage Specialist (CALs) which means the person is certified in one specific American line, and Certified Genealogical Record Searcher, Certified Genealogical Lecturer and Certified Genealogical Instructor. There is also the category Certified American Indian Lineage Specialist. The Board has a listing of its members which it will send you. Their address is: P.O. Box 19165, Washington, D.C. 20036-0165.

The only other caveat I would mention when you hire a professional genealogist is try to get someone who knows the area and time frame you are interested in. It's better, obviously, to have someone, even a professional, who is basically familiar with the material you need researched rather than one whose area of expertise is elsewhere.

Hiring A Professional Genealogist In A Foreign Country: A Personal Experience.

By
Lake E. High, Jr.

In the Volume 4, Number 1 issue of the Fairfield Genealogical Society Newsletter I wrote a short piece where I told of just getting started trying to hire a professional genealogist in England and Germany to do some research for me. I entitled the piece "Looking for Ancestors over the Water." Well, I've made some progress and its time to let you know what I did and how it worked out. Hopefully, my experience might prove beneficial to you.

First of all, I wrote to the address that was given in Ohio to see about the German ancestors. (See the piece in Volume 4, Number 1) They offered a deal that seemed to be unbeatable. There were, if you remember that article, some 250,000 German male surnames entered in a computer data base and they said; "When the 1871 to 1918 period is finished there will be about 1,000,000 names." The way to get started, they said, was to submit a name and it would be checked against the computer and if that name was found they would let you know just what the cost would be to pursue it further. After finding out what the cost was, and if you wanted to continue, you could send a check. If they didn't find anything, or if you did not like the quoted price, you were under no obligation.

The problem with this service, it turns out, is that the overwhelming majority of the names in their computer comes from a master list that was compiled for a German military draft for the Franco-Prussian War of 1870. Their master list has very few entries before 1870.

Most of the German immigrants who came to South Carolina came between the 1730's and the 1760's. There was also a good number of German males (but a small percentage of the total) who mustered out of the British Army after the Revolutionary War where many had been employed as mercenary soldiers. I had a German ancestor who came over with the British army as a mercenary in the late 1770's so I'm familiar with that situation. Also, I had another German ancestor who immigrated to South Carolina in 1790. He was, you will note from the 1790 date, not part of the Palatinate Germans/Swiss who came into Orangeburg, Lexington and Newberry in the 1740's through the 1760's.

The reason I have not perused this German research offer is going to be the same reason it will probably not do the average South Carolinian any good to do so either--my ancestors came 80 to 100 years before that 1870 German draft list was compiled. There is a slim chance they are among the few who were recorded before the draft list of 1870 and I do plan to write them just in case. I will let you know the outcome.

My other over-the-water project was to get in touch with some professional genealogists in England and see what they had to offer.

I started by selecting three ads I found in the back of an English travel magazine and wrote them each a similar letter. I briefly mentioned my families and asked them for some information on how they worked. In short order each letter was answered. One was an individual researcher who worked out of Wales (his ad in no way indicated this but his address suggested it) and I decided, after studying his nice letter, that he would not be able to do the job I wanted. He suggested as much, in fact.

The other two ads had been placed by larger groups, Achievements of Canterbury in Kent and Debrett in London. Debrett is the historic keepers of the Peerage in England, by the way. These two organizations are large groups who specialize in genealogical research and they both boasted of their computerized expertise and how long they had been offering genealogical services. I had seen both of their ads in a variety of magazines before.

Both offered to work for a flat hourly fee and both fees were about the same with Debrett being just a little higher than Achievements. Debrett quoted a charge of \$750 and Achievements about \$650 for an initial search. Both allowed clients to send a small amount to get started (about \$150) and then pay the remainder over a four month period.

I did not respond to either of their letters right away, and then both, about two months later, sent me a second letter offering a price discount if I would, in effect, "do it now." I still did not respond and Achievements sent me a third letter about two months after their second letter offering a 50 pound (not dollars) "savings voucher" which I could apply to their initial fee. That made Achievements willing to do the initial work for about \$530 (counting their discounts and the 50 pound "savings voucher" which was then worth about \$90). I also appreciated that third letter from Achievements, hoping they were as persistent about my ancestry as they were about my business.

Achievements also sent, along with their savings voucher, a complete package which allowed me to fill out four monthly payment slips which they would charge off against my American Express card. All of those factors--the persistence, the \$90 savings, and the American Express card payment--led me to choose Achievements. (Debrett would also have reduced the price some, and also offered monthly payments, but did not offer the American Express card option.)

The monthly charge card deduction, by the way, was consistent in that it was for 62 pounds and 50 shillings per month, but as the currency exchange rate changed, the cost changed slightly going from \$110 to \$118 per month. If the dollar had been going up against the pound, the opposite would have been the case, that is, the cost, in dollars, would have dropped slightly.

In addition to the sheet to fill out concerning the method of payment, Achievements sent their blank family tree chart and a request for all of the information I had on the line I wanted researched. Plus, there was a sheet to fill out that asked a few questions on personal information such as where to mail the material and so forth. One of the sentences on the Achievements' "Preferential Ancestral Research Document," as they called it, was a line that said, "You may work to an additional limit of 50 Pounds if

necessary at each stage (their emphasis) of research and I undertake to meet your account within that limit." They stated if I did not want to agree to pay an additional 50 pounds at each stage of the research I was to draw a line through that sentence. Not wanting to chance that additional cost, I drew a line through the sentence.

I took a slightly different approach to the "family tree" than the one they suggested. I did send a tree, but I gave them the option of doing a small amount of initial research on any one of five names on that tree and asked them to follow the easiest one they then thought they could research. That way, I reasoned, if they found an easy trail to follow they could follow that line rather than spend all of their time trying to research a family line that would prove impossible to trace.

I gave as much information on each of the five different ancestor as I could and on one line, my Spencer line, I specifically pointed out that my ancestor, Nicholas Spencer, was not the Nicholas Spencer who was the Royal Governor of Virginia in the 1600's. I stated my Nicholas Spencer had a well known brother named William (Ancient Planter, William Spencer) and they may have been a cousin of Governor Nicholas Spencer.

I, of course, kept Xerox copies of all the material they sent me and all of the material I sent them.

In about two weeks I received a nice letter from Achievements telling me of the name of the individual who had been assigned to do my work saying he would be back in touch with me in about "8 to 10 weeks" and suggested if I should discover any more helpful information either send it along or call him by phone.

In about 7 weeks, sooner than I had expected, I received a large, nicely packaged, booklet with a fancy ribbon through the heavy covers and the name "Spencer" hand written in script on the front. I quickly read the cover letter and it said they had been unsuccessful in finding any material on most of the ancestors I had submitted, due to one problem or another, but had been reasonably successful, they thought, on two of the names--Spencer and Hansford. So, I opened my new Spencer "book" with great expectation. The Spencer report that was included then gave me page after page of information on the wrong Nicholas Spencer. They had sent pages of material on the Royal Governor of Virginia. You can imagine my disappointment.

Not only had I specifically said he was not my ancestor, I had discussed, in as much detail as I knew, where he came from. I had said my Nicholas Spencer had probably come from Blunham Parish while the Governor Nicholas Spencer had come from Cople Parish which is about 50 miles to the west of Blunham. I had long since collected the information they sent, which was primarily Xerox copies of an old family tree published in the 1920's.

Believe me, I could not have been any clearer on the point that Governor Nicholas Spencer was not my man. I had made it so clear, in fact, that the researcher chose to argue with me by saying in the report, "it is unlikely that there are two Nicholas Spencers in Virginia who both have a brother named William." He was arguing in vain because that is exactly the case, both Nicholases have brothers named William, a fact which is easily provable.

My major disappointment was, of course, that they had spent any time researching, and copying material about, a person I specifically

told them was not my ancestor.

In the back of the booklet there was some useful material that the Achievements researcher had uncovered. It was a book which had a listing of a will (filed in York county, Virginia) of Elizabeth Hansford, the wife of my John Hansford. I had already located John Hansford's will but I had not looked up his wife's will. (I should have since it was easily available for me to do so.) Her will gave her father's name (Richard Jones), her mother's name (Elizabeth) and her brother's name (Richard Jones, Jr.) so all was not wasted; I did get another family surname and one more generation out of the research.

In addition to the booklet, the mailing contained a detailed invoice of the cost and an accounting of my payments. This accounting clearly listed a credit for the 50 pound savings voucher, but it indicated a number of additional hours of research already done that added up to almost exactly fifty pounds. There was also a letter in this package saying, in effect, since they had made such great progress they would suggest that I authorize more research. The request for the additional fees was unexpected.

I promptly wrote back and said that I had only authorized four monthly payments against my credit card and those four payments, in addition to my original down payment, constituted the entire amount that was due. I also said I was disappointed the Governor Nicholas Spencer line had been researched because I had specifically said that was not my line. Trying to be as nice as I could, I closed by saying if I wanted to authorize any more research I would be in touch.

In about two weeks I got a letter saying I owed the 50 pounds anyway (now about \$96). They also said they were disappointed I did not want to continue with the research since so much great progress had been made. I assumed that was just their parting effort to get an additional fee and hoped I had heard the last of them.

In another month another invoice came that listed me "three months past due." I then sent them a second letter explaining my position as best I could and called their attention to the enclosed copy of the original form where I had clearly marked through, (as they specified the proper way of doing it), the sentence that authorized additional expenditures.

Then another letter arrived from England saying, in effect, that I was, of course, under no "legal" obligation to pay the additional money. (Just a moral one, I presume.) I was reminded the people at Achievements of Kent are, just as I had first thought, persistent.

So, what have I learned? This is the second time I've hired a professional genealogist by mail and both times it has proven a little difficult. If your instructions are not perfectly clear there is always room for misunderstanding. Plus, (and maybe this is just a fantasy, but I know of several cases) genealogists seem to have some perverse urge to research just the very line you tell them not to. I have hired a professional genealogists only two times and this is the second time it has happened to me, so I'm batting 100 percent on this phenomenon. It has also happened twice to a friend of mine who has complained bitterly to me about it. My friend wondered just why it is that professional genealogists seem to want to do work you

specifically tell them not to. His theory is that professional genealogist look up to the easy to find material first, and then somehow convince themselves that first found information must be correct even though the client doubts it. Maybe the problem also is they do not read closely enough the letters that are sent to them.

I, of course, wondered if I could make my letters even clearer. I had actually underlined some words to make them stand out, but I had not underlined the sentence about Governor Spencer not being my ancestor. Maybe an underlining might have helped, especially if coupled with a sentence such as "do not research this Governor Spencer line under any circumstances." I doubt if any such strong language was necessary, however, to emphasize the two men were different. The genealogist demonstrated that he understood and acknowledged my statement by repeating it and arguing with it.

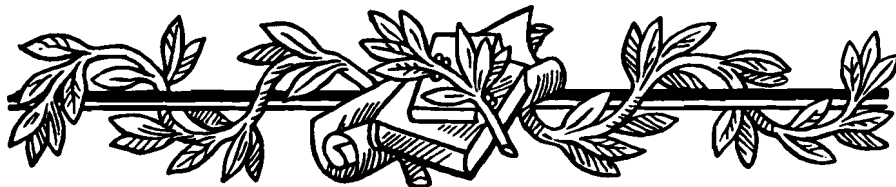
What could I do about the additional charges? Thank goodness I struck the line authorizing 50 pounds additional at each stage of research. It may have been they would have presented me with an even larger bill which I would have felt honor bound to pay if I had not so clearly stated they were not authorized to go over the basic limit. I would strongly suggest in any dealing with genealogists over-the-water that you set a firm limit for each stage of research and hold to it.

I would also suggest that only one family line be researched at a time. Not because I think my initial effort was wrong, in fact that did not seem to cause any trouble at all, but because I now think any possibility for misunderstanding should be eliminated.

I remain undaunted. At some time in the future I will try another genealogical service. Again I will keep copies of everything so I can check back and see exactly what I said and what they said. I will again keep all of the correspondence, brochures and literature together in a separate file folder so it will be easy to check and manage. I will try to simplify my letters. I will again insist on definite cost limits.

And I will not feel guilty when my instructions are not followed and I decline their future services.

I'll also keep you posted on the results.



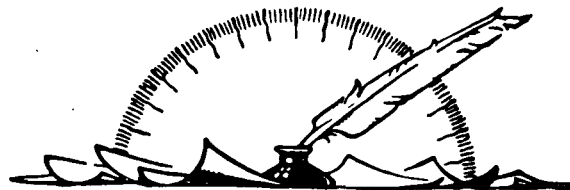
A Genealogical Newsletter SCAM

In the May 1989 issue of N.C. Genealogical society Journal it was noted that someone had sent them three 1988 issues of the McClinton Family News. This disappointing family newsletter contained a large amount of generic material assembled in cut-and-paste fashion, but very little genealogical information pertinent to the family McClinton. It seems unlikely that any McClinton genealogist will be helped by recipes and by a comic strip called "McClinton Man." My father received exactly the same publication called The Cothran Family News. It looked like a computer generated paper where they just change the name - I even called the telephone number - it, too, was computer generated - press 1 from a touch tone phone if you want to order one of our books; press 2 for a query; press 3 for complaint, and so forth. (Adapted from the Catawba-Wateree Newsletter.)

It should be noted that there are now over 5,000 legitimate family associations in the United States. Some are, obviously, larger, stronger and better than others. Many associations have family newsletters. It is certainly possible that some of the legitimate ones will solicit additional family members. But, if you get a request in the mail to subscribe to a (your name) Family Newsletter - beware. You can avoid any problem by simply asking for a sample copy before you send your money.



QUERIES



Does anyone know of a young man named Henry Parker who "went West?"

Henry, age 18, came to Texas about 1845 in a wagon from South Carolina through Alabama to Bryan, Brazos Co., TX. He then traveled along the Brazos River to Milam County, TX. We have been told that he was with his father or a brother, but have no names of parents or siblings.

Henry first appears in Milam Co. in the tax rolls and census in 1850, married in the year and living with his father-in-law Alexander Black.

I found folks who came from York Co., SC, in researching the area where Henry came into Texas in 1845, but have not found a reference to Henry. So, I felt that perhaps Henry could have come with someone from York Co., SC.

Henry and Nancy named their first child William Alexander. Could William be Henry's fathers name? We know Alexander was Nancy's fathers name.

Can anyone help me find Henry's parents and siblings?

Neva Parker Morgan
5616 Main Street
Watauga, TX 76148

James A. Gabel
RR 8, Box 4130
Rapid City, SD 57702

FAIRFIELD GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY
P. O. BOX 696
Winnsboro, S. C. 29180

21 Aug 1991

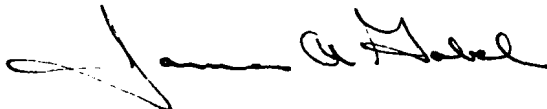
To Whom It May Concern:

I've enclosed a family lineage chart for my eldest son, that way I was able to also include the information on my wife's side of the family. Since James Henry Rion and Mary Catherine Weir are the Winnsboro connections of the family, I've include charts for the that gives more detailed information than is provided on the larger chart. If one accepts James Henry Rion's death bed revelations, with which students of Winnsboro history should be familiar, the empty spaces of his paternal ancestry would be filled in with Louis XVI of France and Marie Antionette and their respective ancestors. Rather than reopen that controversy at this time, I have left that data out.

In June of last year, I forwarded to Mrs. Marion Stevenson in the Fairfield Genealogy Room, an initial set of charts on the Rion family and those families that married into it. Since then I have continued to fill in additional data where dates, places and even whole generations are missing missing from the family tree. However I am still awaiting data from extended family members in Hartsville and Georgetown, SC. Once I have that incorporated, I will provide the Genealogy room a complete set of charts.

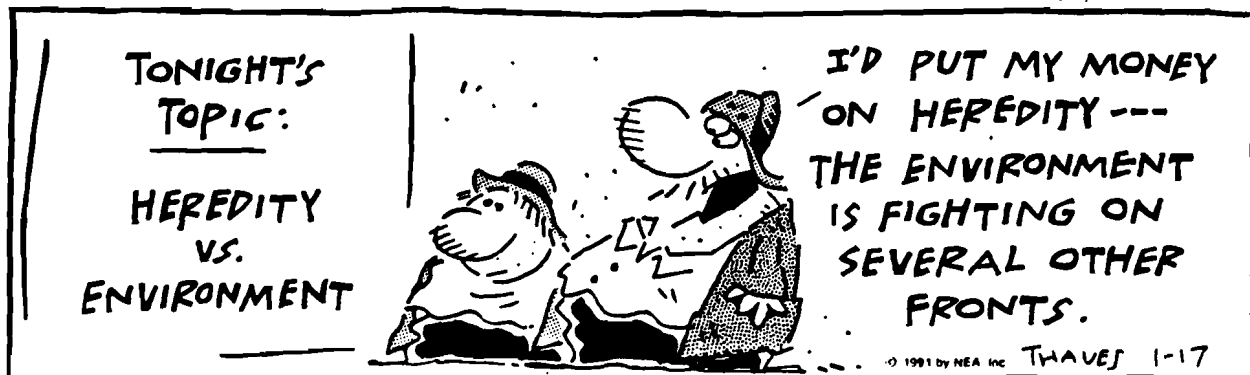
Would you please correct the spelling of my last name on both yours and the State Society's mailing list - GABEL vice GABLE. It is a common error, the root cause probably being the general familiarity of people with Clark Gable and Betty Grable. Maybe after enough generations pass things will change.

Sincerely yours,



FRANK AND ERNEST

By Bob Thaves



PEDIGREE CHART

5 Aug 1991

Chart No. 1

		8 -----
		BORN:
		PLACE:
		MARR:
4 Samuel WEIR-167-----	PLACE:	
BORN: 29 Sep 1744	DIED:	
PLACE: Bellmony,Auntrim,Ireland	PLACE:	
MARR: --10		
PLACE:	9 -----	
DIED: 15 Aug 1820	BORN:	
PLACE: Harrisburg,,PA	PLACE:	
	DIED:	
2 Samuel WEIR Jr-167-----	PLACE:	
BORN: 15 Feb 1798		
PLACE:		
MARR: 18 May 1818 --11		
PLACE: Washington,,DC	10 Samuel WALLACE Captain-164-----	
DIED: 9 Jun 1847	BORN: 1730	
PLACE: Columbia,Richland,SC	PLACE: Ulster,,Ireland	
	MARR: 1762 --9	
	PLACE:	
5 Mary WALLACE-166-----	DIED: 2 Oct 1798	
BORN: 8 Sep 1765	PLACE:	
PLACE:		
DIED: 9 Nov 1836		
PLACE:	11 Margaret FATTON-165-----	
	BORN: 1741	
1 Mary Catherine WEIR-4-----	PLACE:	
BORN: 16 Mar 1829	DIED: 10 Sep 1782	
PLACE: Sparta,,GA	PLACE:	
MARR: 11 Dec 1851 --2		
PLACE: Harrisburg,,PA		
DIED: 1 Jul 1901	12 -----	
PLACE: Reading,,PA	BORN:	
James Henry RION Colonel-3-----	PLACE:	
Spouse	MARR:	
	PLACE:	
	DIED:	
	PLACE:	
	13 -----	
	BORN:	
	PLACE:	
	DIED:	
	PLACE:	
3 Margaret WEAVER-172-----		
BORN: 20 Dec 1795		
PLACE:		
DIED: 16 Jul 1869	14 -----	
PLACE: St. Augustine,St. John's,FL	BORN:	
	PLACE:	
	MARR:	
	PLACE:	
	DIED:	
	PLACE:	
	15 -----	
	BORN:	
	PLACE:	
	DIED:	
	PLACE:	

Name and address of submitter:
 James A. Gabel
 RR 8, Box 4130
 Rapid City, SD 57702-9329
 Phone:(605) 342-6158

PEDIGREE CHART

5 Aug 1991

Chart No. 1

		8 -----
		BORN:
		PLACE:
		MARR:
	4 -----	PLACE:
	BORN:	DIED:
	PLACE:	PLACE:
	MARR:	
	PLACE:	9 -----
	DIED:	BORN:
	PLACE:	PLACE:
2 Henri DE RION-1-----		DIED:
BORN: 27 Mar 1785		PLACE:
PLACE: Versailles,,France		10 -----
MARR: 28 May 1827 --1		BORN:
PLACE: London,,England		PLACE:
DIED: 7 Mar 1828		MARR:
PLACE: Montreal,,Canada		PLACE:
	5 -----	DIED:
	BORN:	PLACE:
	PLACE:	
	DIED:	11 -----
	PLACE:	BORN:
1 James Henry RION Colonel-3-----		PLACE:
BORN: 17 Apr 1828		DIED:
PLACE: Montreal,,Canada		PLACE:
MARR: 11 Dec 1851 --2		12 John HUNTER Dr-159-----
PLACE: Harrisburg,,PA		BORN:
DIED: 12 Dec 1886		PLACE:
PLACE: Winnsboro,Fairfield,SC		MARR: --6
Mary Catherine WEIR-4-----	6 James HUNTER-160-----	PLACE:
Spouse	BORN:	DIED: 1809
	PLACE:	PLACE: London,,England
	MARR: --8	
	PLACE:	13 -----
	DIED: 20 Aug 1828	BORN:
	PLACE: Montreal,,Canada	PLACE:
3 Margaret HUNTER-2-----		DIED:
BORN: 1 Dec 1810		PLACE:
PLACE: Liverpool,,England		14 James Henry Leigh HUNT-161-----
DIED: 1 Jan 1863		BORN: 1784
PLACE: Charlottesville,,VA		PLACE:
	7 Margaret HUNT-163-----	MARR: --7
	BORN:	PLACE:
	PLACE:	DIED: 1859
	DIED: 12 Aug 1828	PLACE:
	PLACE:	
Name and address of submitter:		15 Marianne KENT-162-----
James A. Gabel		BORN:
RR 8, Box 4130		PLACE:
		DIED:
		PLACE:
Rapid City, SD 57702-9329		
Phone: (605) 342-6158		

WANDA MORGAN PEARCE
3033 Jane Lane #710
FORT WORTH, TX 76117

Phone: (817)838-3972

8 Henry PARKER

Birth: 1827
Place: S.C.
Marng: 3 SEP 1850 BEF

Number 1 on this chart
is the same person
as No. 1 on
Chart No. 0

4 John Wesley PARKER

Birth: 1862 ABT
Place: Milam Co, TX
Marng: 1882 ABT
Place: Milam Co ?, TX
Death: NOV 1900
Place: Indian Territory, Poff, OK

Place: San Gabriel, Milam, TX

Death:

Place:

Place:

9 Nancy SLACK

Birth: 1835 ABT
Place: Benton Co ?, AL
Death: 29 APR 1902
Place: Austin, Travis, TX

2 Ezra Daniel PARKER

Birth: 24 APR 1853
Place: Freezeout, Milam, TX
Marng: 27 OCT 1912
Place: Cornish, Jefferson, OK
Death: 10 FEB 1982
Place: Ardmore, Carter, OK

10

Birth:

Place:

Marng:

Place:

5 Anna Mae SHORT

Birth: 22 FEB 1864
Place: Milam Co, TX
Death: 25 FEB 1937
Place: Reck, Carter, OK

11

Birth:

Place:

Death:

Place:

1 Neva Mae PARKER

Birth: 11 MAY 1921
Place: Wirt, Carter, OK
Marng: 15 JUN 1937
Place: Hewitt, Carter, OK
Death:
Place:

12 Benjamin L. THRONEBERRY

Birth: 22 SEP 1837
Place: TN
Marng: 20 DEC 1854
Place: Franklin Co, TN

Death: 3 AUG 1909

Place: Montague Co, TX

Place:

13 Nancy C. FERRELL

Birth: 26 SEP 1835
Place: TN
Death: 16 OCT 1921
Place: Bowie, Montague, TX

3 Della Mae THRONEBERRY

Birth: 14 OCT 1898
Place: Montague, Montague, TX
Death: 16 MAR 1984
Place: Bedford, Tarrant, TX

14 William Austin VOWELL

Birth: 5 JUN 1836
Place: Wilson Co ?, TN
Marng: 1868 ABT

Place: Fannin Co ?, TX

Death: 6 NOV 1903

Place: Montague, Montague, TX

Place:

7 Annie Alice VOWELL Allie

Birth: 30 JUL 1871
Place: Texas
Death: 27 MAR 1935
Place: Hewitt, Carter, OK

15 Mary Lou FLEMING

Birth: FEB 1850
Place: Fayette Co ?, ILL
Death: 1882/1899
Place: Montague, Montague, TX

Walter J.C. Jerry MORGAN

Spouse

SEEK IDENTITY OF OLD LETTERS FROM THE 1930s

I have now in my possession a black notebook with loose pages filled with letters written during the 1930s from "Ruby" to "Mama, Papa, and All" from Memphis, Tennessee. The letters were all removed from the envelopes, so there is no way to tell to whom they are addressed. There are numerous clues throughout the letters - names of persons in the family, but none to precisely identify the writer or the ones to whom written.

In the front of the book is written: "Letters from Nov 27th, 1934, (including 1 letter May 30th, 1934) to June the 1st, 1935, from our only Daughter Ruby. We thank the Good Father for her and her Beautiful Life and the Blessings these letters have brought to us. They have kept us 'on the Way.' Papa and Mama - - God Bless her and make her useful in His Kingdom."

This notebook with the letters was found in some old papers at Shelton in Fairfield County. They may have a connection to some of the Colemans. On one is a penciled reference to "Narcie." Ruby's last name may be Brown. Her husband is Herman, and her children are Peggy and Buddy. She refers to having moved to 404 North Avalon in Memphis, phone 2-3398. She encloses a religious tract that had been addressed to Mrs. H. B. Brown, 1936 Mignon, Memphis, Tennessee.

I am very much interested in getting these letters to someone to whom they will mean a lot. They are becoming very fragile, but are in good condition for reading, and could be preserved.

Henrietta Morton
PO Box 1203
Greenwood, SC 29648