



CHEYENNE GENEALOGY JOURNAL

A PUBLICATION OF THE CHEYENNE GENEALOGICAL AND HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Volume 8, Issue 1

October 2010

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE OCTOBER 2010

By: WENDY DOUGLASS

It seems lately that I have become more and more disgruntled with some of my recent genealogy searches, even after giving "family history" a rest and a backseat to traveling, reading and gardening for most of the summer. Last spring we took a trip through eastern Nebraska and central and western Minnesota—territory that was in both my husband's mother's side of the family as well as my father's side. The trip was a highlight and visiting with real-life family members and finding lost cemeteries and family gravesites was exciting and positive "searching." But it is now fall—despite lingering hot weather—and researching is becoming more frustrating and exasperating. I need a prescription for a positive leap over a major brick wall; I need a serendipitous happening to jump-start my research!

So many great "things" have been discovered by serendipity--Silly Putty, Teflon, Scotchgard, Superglue, Cellophane, Saran (plastic), Iodine, polycarbonate, Iodine, mauve dye, Saccharine, Penicillin, Viagra, infrared radiation, X-rays, ink-jet printers, the popsicle, vulcanized rubber, Velcro, safety glass, corn flakes, Post-It notes, the microwave oven, pyroceramics (Corningware), the Slinkyya, even chocolate chip cookies! Serendipity is a propensity for making fortunate discoveries while looking for something unrelated. The first noted use of this word was by Horace Walpole (1717-92). In a letter to a friend he said he formed it from the Persian fairy tale "*The Three Princes of Serendip*" whose heroes "were always making discoveries, by accidents and sagacity, of things they were not in quest of."

In the book, "Psychic Roots: Serendipity & Intuition in Genealogy," by Henry Z. Jones, Jr., he documents so many kinds of wonderful "accidents" many genealogists have had.

I'm just wondering when I will have that wonderful accident and discover something I am not looking for!

*"Brick walls are there for a reason.
They let us prove how badly we want things."*

--Carnegie Mellon Professor Randy Pausch
in his final lecture

Join with some of your fellow genealogists at the Brick Wall Interest Group gatherings held on the third Thursday of the month at 7 p.m. in the Family History Room of the Laramie County Library. We can collaborate and help each other out on things we are "not looking for!"

Upcoming Brick Wall Group meeting dates:
October 21, November 18, December 16.

CHEYENNE GENEALOGICAL & HISTORICAL SOCIETY MEETING OCTOBER 12, 2010

Shaking bedposts, strange noises, slamming doors, moving objects--just a few of the paranormal activities happening in Cheyenne's famous and infamous homes and buildings. The Cheyenne Genealogical & Historical Society invites the public and its members to an eerie evening discovering these "Ghost Stories of Cheyenne Homes" on Tuesday, October 12 in the Cottonwood Room of the Laramie County Library in Cheyenne.

Jill Pope, director of "Visit Cheyenne" and the Cheyenne Street Railway, will relate mysterious stories about local homes that she has collected and researched that show the ghostlier side of the community. Pope has been a resident of Cheyenne for about 30 years and she began collecting these stories when she became the "Visit Cheyenne" Director so she could provide some entertainment to people riding the trolley.

The free, educational program is sponsored by the Cheyenne Genealogical and Historical Society whose mission is to stimulate and encourage family history research through a variety of programs, projects and resources. The meeting begins at 6:00 p.m. with a social followed by a short business meeting and the program at 7:00 p.m. For more information on the meeting, call Wendy Douglass at 630-0924.

RESEARCH STORIES
BY
CG&HS MEMBERS

**"MICHAEL CURTIN, SLAYER OF HIS OWN FATHER,
SENTENCED TO LIFE"**

My husband's great aunt, Minnie Nora Thomas was born March 27, 1887 in Seward County, NE. She married Michael James Curtin in Grand Island, NE on July 02, 1907; they had 7 children and lived near Grand Island, NE. Michael Curtin murdered his father. Could this really be true? Yes it was! I have been hoping to find the ending of this family story for many years.

This past June, while I was in Lincoln, NE, I stopped at the NE State Historical Society to see if I could find the final story of Michael Curtin. To my good fortune they had an old Descriptive Register for the NE State Penitentiary. It listed the date that he was incarcerated along with his description, family information, etc. Since I now knew the date he was imprisoned I went to the Grand Island Independent Newspaper microfilm and started looking backwards. December 09, 1920 the front page headline screamed "MICHAEL CURTIN, SLAYER OF HIS OWN FATHER, SENTENCED TO LIFE" and the complete story, which filled about 2 pages in the newspaper. Michael killed his father by slitting his throat during an argument on June 1, 1920. I was thrilled to have finally found it.

Referring back to the Descriptive Register I noticed there was no disposition for Michael. Did he die in prison or was he released? The NSHS had no further information and they gave me the phone number for the NE Department of Correctional Services. I called and told them I'd found the Descriptive Register at the NSHS and there was no disposition for Michael Curtin. She called back a few hours later with the following information: On Feb 8, 1939 his sentence was commuted and he was released on parole February 16, 1939. On April 10, 1940 he was discharge from parole. She sent me copies of his Board of Pardons application. One page lists the names of people that sent favorable letters for Michael to the Parole Board. Several of my husband's relatives were named. They also sent a copy of his Order for Discharge of Prisoner on Parole. Recently I also found the 1930 census which shows Michael in the NE State Penitentiary in Lincoln, NE.

This was my first time dealing with prison research and I was very pleasantly rewarded. The NSHS and the NE Department of Correctional Services were super helpful and I thank them!

Sandy Norris

A TIP ABOUT USING FIND-A-GRAVE

You may be able to get a lot more than just a photo of a headstone. I found that when I located someone on Find A Grave, I could locate the address of the cemetery on the site. Then I could ask for burial records and the name of the funeral home that handled everything. When I have written to a funeral home (one I could even email), they were very nice and sent me everything they had. One even had an obituary clipping from the newspaper. Now I'm working on tracking down a Great Aunt's descendants.

Margie Dreiling

THOMAS SHADRICK'S PROBATE FILE

We all have enjoyed the thrill of the search for our ancestors through those paper trails in the county records. Many people, not realizing that those documents are only transcriptions of the original, express the excitement that they 'have found their grandfather's signature'. One of my first research trips to Clay County, Missouri provided me with a completely different experience. When I inquired about the Probate File for Thomas Shadrick at the Clay County Archives Library in Liberty, Missouri, the archivist brought me a box and that wonderful pair of white gloves. The realization that the only thing between my fingers and the actual document that had been signed by my great-great-great grandfather was a thin layer of cotton knit material gave a new definition to history.

The collection of papers in the Probate File gave a picture of the last days of Thomas' life in 1842. His wife had died about 2 years prior and Thomas was left to raise six children, ranging in age from 6 to 22 years. Times were not easy in 1842 Missouri and Thomas was broke. In February of that year he had tried to sell his farm, but to no avail. He had borrowed money from neighbors, anything to survive, but he could not repay his debts. On March 19, 1842 a judgment was filed against Thomas for default, and another judgment was filed on April 4, 1842. The last piece of paper in the file was a small scrap from Mathias Himelbach (sic) with the wording 'raised lid lined cherry coffin'.

Although a burial site has not been found, the documents in the Probate File tend to lead you to the conclusion that Thomas, overwhelmed with the problems he faced, took his own life sometime between April 4, 1842 and April 23, 1842.

Wanda Wade

HISTORY FROM THE WYOMING NEWSPAPERS

By: WANDA WADE, EDITOR

IN CELEBRATION OF FAMILY HISTORY MONTH

I thought this would be an interesting column to run in the newsletter this year. Future issues will cover additional time frames. These articles appeared in the earliest Cheyenne, Laramie County newspaper. In the next issue I would like to concentrate on articles from about 125 years ago, or around 1885. Hopefully we can find some interesting historical items for the state. If you find articles in the Wyoming newspapers that you thought were interesting, please let me know and I will include them. Be sure to give me the name and date of the newspaper, and the page the article was printed on.

Cheyenne Leader

Volume 1, Number 1

Cheyenne, D.T., Thursday Sept 19, 1867

Page 4

The pastoffice (sic) is now located in friend Robinson's frame building, on O'Neil Street. Conspicuous letters "Paint Shop" apprise one of the locality.

The track of the U.P.R.R. is finished to within about fifty-miles of Cheyenne, and it is expected that it will be completed to this point about the middle of October.

Caution in the use of stove pipes through the inflammable material of roofs of buildings here may save many a disastrous fire. A word to the wise: Lumber is worth \$100.00 per thousand.

On the trip up from Denver we passed many sections of high prairie, with soil of the greatest fertility, and needing only irrigation to yield crops in enormous quantities. We expect to see, at no very distant day, some of the finest farms in the United States occupying the regions spoken of.

We, in common with many new comers, must confess to a feeling of pleasant surprise at the handsome location of the size of this city. We feel more at home because of the pleasantness of the surroundings. Water is abundant, the soil being freely permeated with the element all throughout the valley. Crow Creek is a stream which at this season is a foot deep and ten feet wide, and is probably larger at other seasons of the year.

Missoula's Moon-Randolph Homestead joins National Register of Historic Places

Many times in our research efforts we race to find the connection between Grandpa and Grandma and their parents, but we fail to stop and study the circumstances of their lives. In our race back through the limbs of our family tree, we sometimes miss the importance of the history that surrounded their lives and prompted the decisions they made in their everyday activities. Perhaps we need to stop and take in the surroundings to understand our family.

An article by Kim Briggeman in the March 31, 2010 edition of the Missoulian newspaper tells some of the history of the homestead and the efforts to have the homestead placed on the National Register of Historic Places.

missoulian.com/.../article_03e9a3d0-3d49-11df-adb2-001cc4c002e0.html -

"With the Moon-Randolph Homestead, you had sort of the last tier of lands available to homesteads, and they were pretty difficult lands to farm," according to Philip Maechling, Missoula's historic preservation officer. Maechling said. "They literally eked out a living. It happened to have a couple of limited resources to keep people up there - a small spring that delivered some water and a small coal mine."

The August 2010 issue of Sunset Magazine also contained a story about 'The Moon-Randolph Homestead' which was located on 13 hilly acres 3 miles from downtown Missoula.

In "Butterflies and Railroad Ties: A History of a Montana Homestead," Caitlin DeSilvey's eloquent guide to the Moon-Randolph, she imagined Moon's decision-making process at a time of year "when the grass was just starting to green after the gift of winter moisture."

I found the following quotes from her book interesting:

"The Old English meaning of the word "homestead," DeSilvey writes, connotes a place that "looks backward and forward at once, planting more seeds in rich soil where other hands went before, digging through layers of living, and encouraging new growth."

"It is a place where the simple things are celebrated, where lettuce grows in the garden again, apple trees bloom, and, when the sun shines - 'nothing else has to happen'"

"Imagination," wrote DeSilvey, "snags on images that belong simultaneously to past and present. ... History bends back on itself like a box elder branch, twists around toward the light, and sprouts new growth."

"This hardscrabble ranch is an homage to homestead-era grit and Depression-era resourcefulness"

These articles paint a vivid picture of the lives many of our 'homesteading ancestors' lived.

UP COMING CHEYENNE GENEALOGICAL &
HISTORICAL SOCIETY MEETINGS

Genealogy Classes

October 11, 2010 Genealogy: Basics
Cottonwood Room
Laramie County Library.

October 18, 2010 Genealogy: Beyond Basics
Cottonwood Room
Laramie County Library

Presented by Special Collections Librarian Elaine Hayes
To register, call 634-3561 or visit "Ask Here" on the third floor.

Programs presented by **An Evening with the Wyoming State Museum**. Held on the second Thursday of each month at 7:00 p.m. at the Wyoming State Museum in the Barrett Building.

For more information please contact Sarah Ligocki Curator of Education, at (307) 777-7021

October 14, 2010 The Evolution of Gold Recovery Processes at the Carissa Mine.
By Jon Lane, Assistant Superintendent, South Pass City State Historical Site.

November 4, 2010 History of the Cheyenne Chamber of Commerce
By Bill Dubois & Shirley Flynn

December 9, 2010 John B. Kendrick: The Rags-to-Riches Story of Wyoming's 'Cowboy Senator'
By: Cynde Georgen, Historic Program Manager, Trail End State Historic Site, Sheridan, WY

Upcoming Brick Wall Group Meetings

October 21
November 18
December 16. in the Genealogy Research Room
Laramie County Library

Cheyenne Genealogy Meeting

November 3, 2010
Cindy Cook and family will present a program entitled "Fort D. A. Russell, 6th Infantry; a Living Museum. Cottonwood Room, Laramie County Library. The meeting begins at 6:00 p.m. with a social followed by a short business meeting and the program at 7:00 p.m.

PLEASE WELCOME OUR NEW MEMBERS

Joan and David Ketchum

Family History Month at the Library

Be sure and stop by the library see the new display honoring October as Family History Month in the glass case outside of the Genealogy Research Room. Also please take time to look at the Family Photos that are on display in honor of Family History Month on the first floor of the library by the Book Sale Room.

Next Newsletter

The next newsletter will be a Holiday Edition. You are always invited to share your stories. Your personal experiences make the newsletter more important to the readers. Thank you for your contributions. Wanda

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If you have suggestions for newsletter or areas of interest you would like to share please contact me at

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