

## Cheyenne Genealogical & Historical Society

Jan-Feb 2015  
Volume 12 Issue 1

# CHEYENNE GENEALOGY JOURNAL



### Message from the CGHS President...

As part of our society's mission, we purchase books for use in the Family History-Special Collections Room at the Laramie County Library. Through this endeavor, we have created an ever-growing collection of research materials for persons who are beginning or continuing work on their family history. For many, family history research is no longer putting a name and biographical information on a pedigree chart, but also putting their family in the context of time. Internet and digital collections such as various historical newspaper sites, have aided in adding a story to the name; however, as we all know, it has not replaced other forms of research. Last year we had groups from Nebraska and Colorado come to do their research in the library genealogy room. In addition to these groups, individuals have contacted our society for assistance in their research. I am sure you are wondering why I am rambling on about all of this - but think about it...through the continuing efforts of the society, we have created a *destination place* for family history research! How cool is that? *Robin Everett, President*

### Upcoming Events:

**10 Feb 2015**  
6:00-8:30 p.m.  
Cheyenne Genealogical & Historical Soc. Meeting  
"Filling in Gaps in Your Family Tree," Research Night, Laramie County Library

**12 Feb 2015**  
Noon-2:00 p.m.  
"Finding Stories About Your Pioneer Ancestors," Ramona Henderson, Cheyenne Family History Center

**12-14 Feb 2015**  
Roots Tech Convention, Salt Palace Convention Center, Salt Lake City

## Black History/African-American Genealogy: Shared Stories of Joy, Fulfillment

One of Henry Louis Gates Jr.'s most memorable moments from his PBS show "Finding Your Roots" came with U.S. Rep. John Lewis of Georgia. On March 7, 1965 [Lewis](#) was one of the notable civil rights leaders who led more than 600 people on a peaceful march across the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma toward Montgomery, Alabama, advocating for the right to vote. As portrayed in the recent film "[Selma](#)," Alabama state troopers interrupted the marchers with violence, and Lewis was among those badly beaten. In researching Lewis' family tree during the first season of "[Finding Your Roots](#)," Gates found that the first thing Lewis' great-great-

grandfather Tobias Carter did in 1865 when set free from slavery by the 13th Amendment was register to vote. "You can't make this stuff up," Gates said. "We found this incredible document, and I showed it to Congressman Lewis. When he looked up, I said, 'John, no one in your whole line hasn't voted between your great-great-grandfather and you.' He looked at me, blinked, then his head fell over and hit the book, and he wept. He wiped his eyes and said, 'I guess it's in my DNA, this right to vote.' Then he said, 'This is too much.'

"(Genealogy) is like taking them on a time machine and

introducing them to their ancestors," Gates said he used to think only black people had what he called 'genealogical amnesia,' but it's not true—everyone does.

In commemoration of February's Black History Month, the (Salt Lake City) *Deseret News* (5 Feb 2015) interviewed Gates, professional genealogist Megan Smolenyak and family historian Prince Furlow about their experiences with African-American family history work. Gates and Smolenyak also shared advice and resource tips for building one's family tree, which can become all-consuming.

"Once you get started, it might become addicting,"

Gates said. In addition to his PBS show, Gates is the director of the Hutchins Center for African-American Research at Harvard University. He's a literary scholar, filmmaker, journalist and genealogist, among other professional pursuits. "One of the greatest satisfactions of my whole life is to have played a small role in the renaissance of ancestry-tracing among Americans in general and among African-Americans more specifically through my PBS series," Gates said. "Every people, every ethnic group, has this urge to ground yourself in the world by constructing your individual family tree."

(To finish the article & read the other interviews, go to [Deseret News](#).)

# Why Your Family Name Wasn't Changed at Ellis Island

by Philip Sutton (Milstein Division of U. S. History, Local History and Genealogy, S. A. Schwarzman Building, NY) from his New York Public Library Blog, July 2, 2013

Between 1892 and 1954, more than twelve million people entered the United States through the immigration inspection station at Ellis Island.

There is a myth that persists in the field of genealogy, or more accurately, in family lore, that family names were changed there. They were not. Numerous blogs, essays, and books have proven this. Yet the myth persists. The legend goes that officials at Ellis Island, unfamiliar with the many languages and nationalities of the people arriving at Ellis Island, would change the names of those immigrants that sounded foreign, or unusual. Vincent J. Cannato's book [American Passage: The History of Ellis Island](#) explains why this did not happen:

"Nearly all ... name change stories are false. Names were not changed at Ellis Island. The proof is found when one considers that inspectors never wrote down the names of incoming immigrants. The only list of names came from the manifests of steamships, filled out by ship officials in Europe. In the era before visas, there was no official record of entering immigrants except those manifests. When immigrants reached the end of the line in the Great Hall, they stood before an immigration clerk with the huge manifest opened in front of him. The clerk then proceeded, usually through interpreters, to ask questions based on those found in the manifests. Their goal was to make sure that the answers matched. Inspectors did not create records of immigration; rather they checked the names of the people moving through Ellis Island against those recorded in the ship's passenger list. The ship's manifest was created by employees of the steamship compa-

nies that brought the immigrants to America, before the voyage took place, when the passenger bought their ticket. The manifest was presented to the officials at Ellis Island when the ship arrived. If anything, Ellis Island officials were known to correct mistakes in passenger lists."

The [Encyclopedia of Ellis Island](#) states that employees of the steamship companies...mostly ticket agents and pursers required no special identification from passengers and simply accepted the names the immigrants gave them. Immigrant inspectors accepted these names as recorded in the ship's manifests and never altered them unless persuaded that a mistake had been made in the spelling or rendering of the name. Nonetheless the original name was never entirely scratched out and remained legible. Although it is always possible that the names of passengers were spelled wrong, perhaps by the clerk when the ticket was bought, or during transliteration, when names were translated from one alphabet to another, it is more likely that immigrants were their own agents of change. Cannato, for instance, suggests that people often changed their name in advance of migration. More commonly, immigrants would change their names themselves when they arrived in the U.S. for a number of reasons—to make it sound more American, to fit in with the local community, or simply because it was good for business. There is at least one instance of a small businessman arriving in the United States from Eastern Europe changing his name, at least his public name, to something that sounded Swedish, because he had settled in a Swedish neighborhood in New York City. Immigrants would sometimes officially record their name change, when naturalizing for in-

stance, but often, as there was no law in New York State requiring it be done, no official record of a name change was made. People would just start using a different name. John Colletta, in his book [They Came in Ships](#), describes the immigration process at Ellis Island in more detail:

"[The] Inspector [in the immigration receiving center] had in his hands a written record of the immigrant he was inspecting and, asking the same questions over again, could compare the oral statements with it. The inspectors therefore, read the names already written down on the lists, and they had at their service a large staff of translators who worked along side them in the Great Hall of the Ellis Island facility."

There are hundreds of stories about the immigration inspection station in the newspapers of the time that do not mention names being changed. In a 1922 article, "To Be or Not to Be American" in the *New York Times*, journalist Elizabeth Heath described a visit to Ellis Island where immigrants were processed. "Upstairs, in the great main hall of the building, the straggling crowd is skillfully split into a dozen long lines, each leading to the desk of an inspector. Before him is spread the manifest of the steamship company, giving the required information about each steerage passenger—religion, relatives in America, amount of money, source of passage money, literacy, occupation, and the positive statement that the candidate for admission does not believe or practice polygamy or anarchy. It is a seeming miscellany of information, but each item has a direct bearing on the legality of admission."

The idea that names were changed at Ellis Island raises lots of questions: why are there no government records of this; where are the first-hand accounts of inspectors and immigrants; what happened to the paperwork? All rather silly, perhaps—yet the myth persists—mostly in family lore.

## Genealogy News You Can Use...

### Cheyenne Family History Center Offers February Classes

The Cheyenne Family History Stake Center is pleased to announce its lineup of February classes. If you are interested in any of these classes, be sure to call to make a reservation due to limited space. All classes are free at the LDS Church, Family History Center, 308 Western Hills Blvd., Cheyenne. To register, call the FHC at 307-634-9536 or e-mail

[wy.cheyenne@ldsmail.net](mailto:wy.cheyenne@ldsmail.net)

Thurs, Feb 12, 10 a.m.-noon, *Family Tree #2*, Mary Ann Jenkins

Thurs, Feb 12, 12-2 p.m., *Finding Stories About Your Pioneer Ancestors*, Ramona Henderson

Thurs, Feb 19, 10-noon, *Family Tree #3*, Melanie Bosselman

Thurs, Feb 19, 12-2 p.m., *Ancestral Quest*, Clark Jenkins

Thurs, Feb 19, 7-9 p.m., *Ancestry.com*, Cindy McCormick

Thurs, Feb 26, 10-noon, *Family Tree #4*, Clark Jenkins

Thurs, Feb 26, 12-2 p.m., *Writing Life Stories*, Mary Ann Jenkins

Thurs, Feb 26, 7-9 p.m., *Family Search Indexing*, Bridget Hill

### Family Search Plans to Retire New.FamilySearch.org in 2016

FamilySearch recently announced that starting 1 Feb 2015 FamilySearch would cut access to

[New.FamilySearch.org](http://New.FamilySearch.org) (NFS). Instead, users will have to access the information through [FamilySearch Family Tree](http://FamilySearch Family Tree). This is a step toward the eventual retirement of

[New.FamilySearch.org](http://New.FamilySearch.org), which is planned to occur in early 2016. At that time, FamilySearch will break the link between NFS and Family Tree.

### TLC Announces Celebrities for Spring 2015 Season of "Who Do You Think You Are?"

*Who Do You Think You Are?* returns with new episodes on Sunday, March 8 on TLC to give eight new celebrities a unique opportunity to dig into their roots and learn more about their family history. The two-time Emmy nominated series is produced by Lisa Kudrow and Dan Bucatinsky. TLC announced the featured contributors for the upcoming episodes:

--Melissa Etheridge, who heads to Quebec to trace the history of her paternal side, learns about the scandalous marriage of her 6x great-grandparents.

--America Ferrera, who brings the series to Honduras for the first time ever, learns about the father she barely knew, and unravels her great-grandfather's role in the violent Central American political system.

--Tony Goldwyn, who is familiar with his prestigious paternal Hollywood lineage, but knows little about his mother's side of the family. In his episode, he comes to learn about his 3x great-grandparents, who fought for women's rights and westward expansion.

--Josh Groban, who discovers his 8x great-grandfather was a highly educated and renowned scientist that studied astronomy, and was quoted by Isaac Newton himself. Previously announced celebrity contributors include Julie Chen, Angie Harmon, Bill Paxton and Sean Hayes. The air dates are currently scheduled as follows:

—Mar 8: Julie Chen

—Mar 15: Josh Groban

—Mar 22: Angie Harmon

—Mar 29: Sean Hayes

—Apr 5: Tony Goldwyn

—Apr 12: America Ferrera

—Apr 19: Bill Paxton

—Apr 26: Melissa Etheridge

### Ancestry.com to Reveal Modern "User Interface" With Updated Visual Design, & Addition of "LifeStories" and "Facts View"



Ancestry.com recently announced a major update to the user interface of its popular genealogy website. The new version presently is in beta test and will not be rolled out to production until the programmers are satisfied with the new software. The new version will have a new visual design, especially for viewing the pages with a tablet computer or a smartphone, and will feature lifestories, a narrative of a person's life which is visually appealing and includes facts of interest to genealogists, such as the age of the parents on the day of a child's birth and other important life events. The improved Ancestry website will include:

- A new LifeStory view that will transform ancestors' facts and events into engaging, unique stories
- A modern, intuitive look to streamline work flow & focus on the family story
- Historical Insights that will feature significant historical events our ancestors may have experienced
- A new Facts View to make it easier to validate facts with sources, and edit and review facts contextually
- A new Media Gallery where you can consolidate all your media in one place

Ancestry will be showcasing their beta at RootsTech, Feb. 12-14. Visitors to the Ancestry booth will be able to opt in to participate in the beta. For those not at RootsTech who would like to be invited to the beta, they should visit this link to request to be on the waitlist: <http://home.ancestry.com/beta>. New participants will be invited off the waitlist to join the beta test over the next few months.



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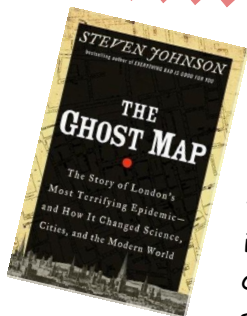
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The Cheyenne Genealogical & Historical Society encourages members to invite friends to attend our monthly meetings, participate in our ongoing activities and join the organization to begin their genealogy research, or to further their knowledge of family history.



**"CHECK THIS OUT"**

Family history-related fiction & nonfiction  
book reviews by CGHS members



***The Ghost Map*** by Steven Johnson  
(2006—Nonfiction, Call#: 614.514 JOH)

It's the summer of 1854. Cholera has seized London with unprecedented intensity. A metropolis of more than 2 million people, London is just emerging as one of the first modern cities in the world. But lacking the infrastructure necessary to support its dense population—garbage removal, clean water, sewers—the city has become the perfect breeding ground for a terrifying disease that no one knows how to cure. This is a story with four protagonists—a deadly bacterium, a vast city and two gifted but very different men. As their neighbors begin dying, these two men are spurred to action: the Rev. Henry Whitehead, whose faith in a benevolent God is shaken by the seemingly random nature of the victims, and Dr. John Snow, whose ideas about contagion have been dismissed by the scientific community, but who is convinced that he knows how the disease is being transmitted. *The Ghost Map*, is a chilling story of urban terror and a baffling mystery, told through a vivid history and a provocative explanation of how scientific inquiry shaped the world we live in.

I picked this book off the ship-library shelf while on a recent Alaska Cruise, and became so engrossed in its tale, that I finished in a couple days—between watching whales and seeing glaciers! Never had I heard of "bone-pickers, bunters, mud-larks, toshers, pure finders and night-soil men," scavengers who lived in a world of excrement and death—among the 100 thousand of London's underclasses—more than likely including some of our British ancestors! I was reminded that without the bacterial driven processes of decomposition, the earth would have been overrun by offal and carcasses eons ago—a rogue virus could wipe out every mammal on earth, but life would proceed. But if bacteria disappeared overnight, all life on the planet would be extinguished within a matter of years. Despite its unpleasant subject matter—waste recycling (*an ancient art—composting pits were used in Crete 4000 years ago and manure spreading since medieval times*), I was fascinated by this true story and the way these two visionary men solved the most pressing medical riddle of the age.

—from Wendy D. with info from the book jacket