



Arkansas Genealogical Society

AGS Ezine

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Jane A. Wilkerson, editor
Brandon Ryan, list manager

2017 Fall Seminar

Date: Friday Evening, October 20 and Saturday October 21

Speakers:

Friday: Dr. Dan Littlefield

Saturday: D. Joshua Taylor

Fall Seminar Program

Registration Form

Location: Benton Event Center, 17322 I-30, North Benton, AR 72019

Hotel: Fairfield Inn and Suites, attached to the Benton Event Center

Exhibit Hall: A variety of vendors and organizations interested in genealogy and family history

Exhibitor Forms

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Inside this issue

Coming Events	3-5
From the Vault: Saving and preserving Arkansas county records	6-17
The Key to Family Reunion Success	18-23
Never Ignore Childless Siblings	24-25
Administrative Stuff	26

Tidbits –

7 Common Genealogy Research Mistakes to Avoid

The following is from an article written by Lisa Lisson, Genealogist & Family Historian, on <http://crestleaf.com/blog>.

Genealogy is one of today's fastest growing hobbies, but getting started can be a bit overwhelming. Those new to genealogy often make mistakes. (That's okay!) Let's talk about some common mistakes genealogists often make. After all, no one wants to spend all their time researching a family only to discover they have connected to the wrong family tree!

Top Mistakes to Avoid When Researching Your Family's Genealogy

1. Researching without a plan.
2. Failing to ask what information your family already knows.
3. Assuming everything you need for your research is online.
4. Assuming the family tree containing your ancestors found online is correct.
5. Failing to be broad enough in the spellings (or misspellings) of surnames.
6. Believing everything you read!
7. Failing to cite your sources.

Avoiding these genealogy research mistakes will help you become an efficient and accurate researcher.

Coming Events

July 15, 2017

The [Genealogy Society of Craighead County, Arkansas](#), will sponsor their summer lock-in, “*Wind Back The Clock*” from 6:00 pm to midnight on Saturday, June 15, 2017. See their website for the details.

July 23-28, 2017

[The Institute of Genealogy and Historical Research](#) (IGHR) will be at the Georgia Center’s UGA and Hotel Conference Center.

July 28 and 29, 2017

2017 International Germanic Genealogy Conference will be held in Minneapolis, MN, on July 28 and July 29, 2017, hosted by the [Germanic Genealogy Society](#). Click here for the International [Germanic Genealogy Conference flyer](#).

August 5, 2017

The [Heritage Seekers](#) will sponsor a Genealogy Research Day at the Butler Center.

The Arkansas State Archives, “Cultivation Life: Agricultural History in Northeast Arkansas,”

August 30-September 2, 2017

The [FGS](#) National Genealogy and Family History Conference will be held in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

September 16, 2017

The Arkansas State Archives, Fruit of the Vine: Arkansas’s Italian Community and Foodways

Coming Events (*continued*)

October 17, 2017

The Arkansas State Archives, Pen to Podium: Arkansas Historical Writer's Lecture Series; Erik Wright - "Main Street Mayhem: Crime, Murder and Justice in Downtown Paragould"

October 20-21, 2017

The Arkansas Genealogical Society 2017 Fall Conference will be at the Benton Event and Convention Center in Benton, Arkansas. D. Joshua Taylor is scheduled to present. Watch our [website!](#)

May 2-5, 2018

The NGS 2018 Family History Conference will be in Grand Rapids, Michigan. The announcement was in the *NGS Monthly* from May 2016. Call for proposals opened January 3, 2017.

June 2–7, 2018

[The Institute of Genealogy and Historical Research](#) (IGHR) will be at the Georgia Center's UGA and Hotel Conference Center.

August 22-25, 2018

The [FGS](#) National Genealogy and Family History Conference will be held in Fort Wayne, Indiana.

October 19-20, 2018

The Arkansas Genealogical Society 2018 Fall Conference will be at the Benton Event and Convention Center in Benton, Arkansas. Cee Cee Moore is scheduled to present.

Coming Events *(continued)*

August 21-24, 2019

The [FGS](#) National Genealogy and Family History Conference will be held in Washington, D. C.

September 2-5, 2020

The [FGS](#) National Genealogy and Family History Conference will be held in Kansas City, Missouri.

From the Vault: Saving and preserving Arkansas county records

The following is republished From the Vault, the official blog of the Arkansas State Archives, an agency of the Department of Arkansas Heritage. The article written by Dr. Lisa Speer, Arkansas State Archives Director, was published on June 19, 2017.

Saving and preserving Arkansas county records

By: Dr. Lisa Speer, Arkansas State Archives Director

Arkansas courthouses hold some of the most valuable historical records in our state. Marriage records, early birth records, land deeds, copies of wills and probate records, naturalization records, military draft records, and school records are among the treasures usually found in the archives of county courthouses. Yet, perhaps no other type of historical record in Arkansas is as endangered as these local government records. Arkansas already has lost many of its county records due to disasters, both man-made and natural. In the nineteenth century, courthouse fires unfortunately were a common cause of county record loss in Arkansas. Floods and tornados also have done their parts to threaten our public records. While improvements in courthouse construction and technologies like fire suppression systems have minimized the widespread damage caused by fires in earlier times, in many Arkansas counties today public records continue to be endangered.

A recent fire in the Lonoke County Courthouse resulted in thankfully only minimal damage to records held in a storage area, while in other state courthouses, records are housed in storage areas that, by their very nature, threaten their long-term survival. These storage areas range from wet basements to attics, in which temperature and humidity fluctuates with the weather outside. The presence of vermin is not

From the Vault: Saving and preserving Arkansas county records *(continued)*

uncommon; booklice feast on mold and the starches in book paste, and moths and beetles tunnel through the pages of ledgers, taking bits of information with them. Arkansas county officials are often unable to tackle the monumental challenges of preserving their historical records due to limited funding and the difficulties that they face in finding time for “special projects,” while managing daily work.



insect-damaged ledgers

Recently, the Arkansas State Archives assisted one county with a tough records problem. Howard County Judge Kevin Smith and his staff partnered with the State Archives to tackle a challenge in the courthouse basement in Nashville. Recognizing that the situation in his courthouse basement was beyond the scope of what he or his staff could safely handle, and keenly aware of the need to preserve Howard County’s historical records, Judge Smith called on the Arkansas State Archives for assistance.

Jane Wilkerson, ASA Manager of Collections, Conservator Amy Minger and Dr. Lisa Speer visited the Howard County Courthouse earlier this year in March to survey the situation in the basement after a call from Circuit Clerk Angie Lewis. Lewis described a problem in the basement with records that had been wet; the March visit confirmed our worst fears - widespread damage from water and mold. The Howard County

From the Vault: Saving and preserving Arkansas county records (*continued*)

Courthouse, an attractive two-story Art Moderne-style building constructed by the Public Works Administration in 1939, was constructed over a natural spring.



mold-damaged ledgers

Precautions taken over the years by courthouse officials to manage water incursion into the basement had not been 100% effective; records kept in the basement had been wet and now were heavily infested with mold.

Fortunately, not all the county's records were stored in the basement; most are housed upstairs in court offices and in a designated records storage room in the courthouse annex. Our preliminary survey of the basement

records indicated that some of the moldy ledgers and file drawers housed records that Arkansas's public records law defines as permanently valuable (A.C.A. Title 13, Chapter 4). We believed that the LDS Church likely had filmed some of the records decades earlier, but without checking each volume and each drawer against a list of microfilm holdings at the State Archives we couldn't be sure. And, until such a survey was completed, Howard County could not move forward with the badly needed mold remediation of the basement. Unsure of how to move forward with what undoubtedly would be a time-consuming, dirty and expensive project, I turned to Department of Arkansas Heritage Director Stacy Hurst for assistance. Finally, the wheels began to turn.

From the Vault: Saving and preserving Arkansas county records (*continued*)

Director Hurst agreed that we had a responsibility to work with the county to save the historical records housed in the courthouse basement. She provided support from Heritage for a disaster salvage company to perform an assessment on a select group of records to determine if they were salvageable. I worked with Metro Disaster Services of North Little Rock to schedule the assessment, which took place on June 1. Metro was selected because they had experience working with historical records, and recently had worked with the Lonoke County Courthouse following their fire. Due to record-setting floods in Northeast Arkansas in late spring, Metro was unable to schedule the site work at Howard County any earlier than June; but, because the courthouse basement issue was not recent, the few additional months we had to wait seemed negligible.



mold-damaged ledgers

Metro's initial test clean of records indicated that, overall, the ledgers in the basement could be cleaned well enough to allow for microfilming. The Metro crew used a HEPA vacuum to clean the exterior covers, spine and text block of about twenty volumes. They also vacuumed inside the front and back covers, and then wiped each volume down with a mold-retardant solution.

Finally, the volumes were treated overnight with ozone to remove the smell of mildew. Unfortunately, the Metro crew discovered that mold was growing inside many of the volumes. Almost all the test volumes showed evidence of

From the Vault: Saving and preserving Arkansas county records (*continued*)



mold-damaged ledger



Register of school directories, 1910s-1930s

mold growth inside the gutters of many pages. This confirmed what State Archives staff already suspected. While the volumes could be cleaned enough for microfilming, the original records were too contaminated to retain once copied. You see, mold spores don't require a lot of encouragement to grow - too much heat, or too much humidity and suddenly, you have another outbreak. While Metro was conducting the test clean, I reviewed the assortment of records in the basement. I found voter registration records, prisoner lists, land surveys, tax assessments, lists of school district teachers, and records pertaining to postbellum cotton production. I knew the LDS church had not filmed all these records, which were potentially valuable to scholars and family history researchers.

With additional support from Director Hurst, this time from emergency conservation funds available through the Department of Arkansas Heritage, members of the Arkansas State Archives staff returned to Howard County the following week ready for work. Arkansas State Archives staff members Jane Wilkerson, Archival

From the Vault: Saving and preserving Arkansas county records *(continued)*

Assistant Elizabeth Freeman and I worked for seven hours on June 7, pulling ledgers from rusty shelves, inspecting their condition and content, and comparing them against the County Records Retention Schedules, as well as a list of records already filmed by the LDS Church and available at the State Archives.



Dr. Lisa Speer examining a ledger



Standing water in the basement

We worked in standing water of about 1 inch, either because of the natural spring that runs constantly in one corner of the basement, or perhaps because of the condensation dripping from the metal pipes running overhead. To protect ourselves from the black mold that covered the records, we wore protective gear—respirators, Tyvek suits, rubber boots, and nitrile gloves. Despite the cool temperature of the basement, we were quite warm!

From the Vault: Saving and preserving Arkansas county records *(continued)*

As we identified records that met permanent retention requirements and were not already filmed, we bagged them and carried them upstairs to load into the covered trailer we brought with us. The basement steps were steep and slick, and we lost count of the number of times we went up and down. Records that were not deemed permanently valuable or that were too far gone to save, received a red sticker to mark them as “casualties”.



Jane Wilkerson, Dr. Lisa Speer and Elizabeth Freeman in hazmat gear



mold-damaged ledgers

From the Vault: Saving and preserving Arkansas county records (*continued*)

Each time I applied a red sticker, I felt a conflicting sense of grief for the information that would be lost and relief that I would not have to carry that volume up the stairs. Most the ledgers were quite large, and generally, we could carry no more than one, sometimes two, up the stairs per trip. By 3 o'clock in the afternoon, all the ledgers that met the criteria we'd established for the operation were out of the basement; but we knew we were not yet finished.

The basement contained two metal file cabinets, along with loose file drawers stacked along the top of ledger shelving. The labels indicated that the cabinets held documents like chancery court records, pension files, oil and gas leases, guardianship papers - records we knew we should save. On Friday, June 9, Jane Wilkerson and I returned to the courthouse, this time with staff members from the Southwest Arkansas Regional Archives in Historic Washington State Park, one of our agency's two branch archives.



water-damaged ledgers

From the Vault: Saving and preserving Arkansas county records (*continued*)

Archival Manager Melissa Nesbitt had visited the Howard County basement with me the previous week, but Archival Assistant Josh Fischer, employed at SARA for less than a month, had no idea what was in store for him!



File drawers stacked atop ledger shelves



Melissa Nesbitt and Josh Fischer

From the Vault: Saving and preserving Arkansas county records (*continued*)

Once again, we suited up into our gear and prepared to head down into the basement for the last expedition. As you might expect, the gear attracted much attention from folks visiting the courthouse. We were compared to the Ghostbusters®, asked if we were there for a gas leak, and one person even asked if we were bee keepers! I promise you, there was no honey in the basement.

Fortunately, the third and final excursion into the basement only took three hours. Our crew worked quickly to identify drawers of records to save. Unfortunately, drawers that were about two feet off the ground were rusted shut, so we could only speculate about the condition of the contents inside. We left the paper files inside the drawers to keep them in order. Thankfully, the drawers were narrow and not very long, that is not heavy. We carried the drawers out of the basement two at a time in boxes until we

ran out of boxes, and then we carried out the rest singly wrapped in the left-over plastic bags. We made sure we captured the moment of bagging the last drawer - this was mostly moment of celebration for us all. I say “mostly” because of the casualties - the records that perhaps had permanent value, but were too far gone to be saved. For an archivist, leaving those behind bites.



Josh Fischer, Melissa Nesbitt, Jane Wilkerson, and
Dr. Lisa Speer

From the Vault: Saving and preserving Arkansas county records *(continued)*



Melissa Nesbitt bagging the last drawer

The story doesn't end here, and won't be concluded for a little while yet. We brought the loose records back to Little Rock, where we placed them in a climate-controlled storage unit. Our crew will clean and prep those records for microfilming, while Metro Disaster Services continues to clean the ledgers, also in preparation for filming. Once the records can be safely handled for filming, our crew will deliver them to a filming company out of state. While the Arkansas State Archives maintains a microfilming lab, we cannot risk bringing such a large concentration of contaminated records into our facility. Once filmed, the negative film will be safely stored in the ASA microfilm vault, while access copies will be available for research in our facility and also for purchase.



From the Vault: Saving and preserving Arkansas county records (*continued*)

So, what is the lesson to be learned from this saga? There are many. Probably the most important is that records you want to keep a long time need appropriate storage. Basements and attics are not the best choices, nor are storage spaces near water pipes, windows, or in the vicinity of mechanical rooms. Cooler and drier is better, and clean is important. A second, important lesson is to act fast when you discover a problem, even a little one. The longer you wait, the harder and more expensive it may be to clean up, or it may not be possible to clean up at all. And finally, don't be afraid to ask for assistance when you need it. This situation in Howard County was addressed because Judge Kevin Smith and Circuit Clerk Angie Lewis knew they needed assistance, and they knew the State Archives was the place to call for help. Thanks to support from the Department of Arkansas Heritage and the work of the State Archives staff, this story has a (mostly - there's that word again) happy ending. While we regret the need that took us to Howard County, we are glad to have had the opportunity to work with the courthouse staff on this cleanup, and commend them for their role in acting to save these important historical records for Arkansas!

The Key to Family Reunion Success

The following is republished from FamilySearch Blog. The article written by Leslie Albrecht Huber was published May 23, 2017.

The Key to Family Reunion Success

Planning a successful family reunion can be overwhelming—you can almost imagine yourself drowning in all the details and decisions. Before you get too distressed, it makes sense to ask: what will make your family reunion successful? Although everyone has a different picture of the ideal event in their mind, most would agree that a successful reunion brings family together and allows them to reconnect, share stories and experiences, and strengthen their understanding and love of their heritage.

To help you nail down the major elements of your event and free your mind to be creative about ways to achieve the real goal, we've put together a nuts-and-bolts guide to planning a family reunion. We'll focus on big questions that will help you know you are on the right track and free up time to plan for the more meaningful aspects of the event.

If you answer these questions as early as you can, the rest of the details will fit nicely in the framework you build.

The Key to Family Reunion Success (*continued*)

1. What type of reunion will you have?

The One-Day Extravaganza

This works best for:

- Groups of any size.
- Family members who live relatively close to each other. If family members have to travel a long distance for the reunion, having a one-afternoon event might not feel worth the trip.

The Weekend (or longer) Adventure

This works best for:

- Small to mid-size groups.
- Family members who live far apart from each other.

2. When will the reunion be?

Many reunions take place when the weather is warm and schedules are flexible. This is not required though. Do a quick poll of family members to find dates that work.

The Key to Family Reunion Success (*continued*)

Once you set a date, don't change it—even if your cousin Fred tells you that it's the least convenient day of the whole year. No date is going to work for everyone.

Here are some survey tools to help take a poll to find the best time for most family members:

- Doodle
- Survey Monkey

3. Where will the reunion be?

We've divided our recommendations on location by reunion type.

One-day extravaganza

Since this is a one-day affair, the location needs to be central and easy.

- *Option A:* Someone's home — If the group size isn't too large and someone is willing to host, a home might be perfect. It's free and if it rains, everyone can move indoors.
- *Option B:* A park — Parks are often cheap and have lots of space for outdoor fun—just be sure to rent a pavilion or have a back-up plan in case of rain.
- *Option C:* A rented indoor space — If you're willing to pay, this guarantees weather won't interfere.

There are several ways to approach this. Here are two to consider:

The Key to Family Reunion Success (*continued*)

- *Option A: Near family* – If there is a central location near most people, you could choose that location. If not, you could hold the reunion near one family and rotate locations to be near a different family each year. Both options allow for a home base and cut travel costs—at least for one family a year.
- *Option B: Destination reunion* – Simply choose a fun place to go. The advantage of this option is that many families don't have the funds to travel for both a vacation and a reunion, so this allows them to accomplish both at once.

4. Where will everyone sleep?

This is relevant only for multiple-day adventures, and it depends on where you hold the reunion. Here are some possibilities:

- *Option A: Family member's house* – In the right conditions (the reunion is near one family's home, the family has space, the group is small enough to fit in the home, and you don't think everyone will strangle each other), you can have everyone stay at someone's house.
- *Option B: Rental house* – If a family house isn't realistic but you like the concept of shared meals and sitting around the living room to talk after the kids are in bed, look online for a large rental

The Key to Family Reunion Success (*continued*)

- *Option C*: Condos/hotel rooms – For larger groups or families who do better with a little space and privacy, consider renting adjacent condos or hotel rooms.
- *Option D*: Under the stars – An outdoor setting like camping in tents or staying at clustered cabins means you have outdoor gathering space (as long as it doesn't rain).

Once you've gotten these first four decisions made, take a deep breath. The worse is behind you! In a pinch, other decisions can be made within a couple weeks of the event. Here are the last two questions to answer:

5. What should you eat at the reunion?

- *Option A*: Potluck – If families live close, potlucks are cheap and easy for one-day events.
- *Option B*: Catering or take out – This can work for a one-meal event or for the big meal of a longer event. Make sure you find a way to have people chip in for costs.
- *Option C*: Divide and conquer – For longer reunions, remember that hooking up for at least some of the meals provides important bonding time. Let each family cover a meal, and then let them do what works best for them—whether that means making a homemade four-course meal or ordering pizza.

The Key to Family Reunion Success (*continued*)

6. What activities should you have at the reunion?

While you can be as elaborate as you want, here's the area you can also really simplify. Instead of choices, we've provided ideas here:

- Maximize meal times. Focus on food and time for talking, and keep organized activities minimal.
- Provide simple options for kids and teens—a playground at a park, a soccer ball and football, some Frisbees, some easy crafts, or some party games that don't require much prep.
- Share the schedule. For longer events, divide planning responsibilities by day between families.
- Offer options. Plan outings and activities that fit different ages and abilities, and let people select what works for them.
- Have some downtime activities on hand. Games and movies can fill an unexpected rainy afternoon.

As you plan, keep in mind what reunion success really means, and make decisions that help you achieve that—and you will be well on your way creating an event everyone will remember.

Never Ignore Childless Siblings

The following two part article written by Harold Henderson is republished from *Midwestern Microhistory: A Genealogy Blog*. Part 1 appeared on April 30 and part 2 on June 3, 2017.

Never Ignore Childless Siblings

Part I

One of my immigrant ancestors had six children between 1795 and 1815, one of whom apparently died young. Two of the six were daughters who married but had no children. Their husbands both left wills.

One husband's will left everything to his wife if she survived him. If she did not, he divided his estate in half -- one half to be divided among his surviving siblings, and the other half to be divided among his wife's siblings . . . He named them all, including the one we thought had died as a baby, with her married name. Both had common names, there was no other way to find her.

When I started reading his will, I thought, well, this is pretty far out on a limb. But in genealogy, "out on a limb" is a wise place to be.

Never Ignore Childless Siblings (*continued*)

Part 2

My wife's grandfather had two older sisters, Bonnie and Nellie, who never married and had no descendants. Both had professional careers in the first half of the 20th century, but we never learned much about them, partly because they had decamped to California by the mid-1920s. I've been working on their mother's family for publication(s) and found that I pretty much had to reconstruct their professional lives by wide searching and judicious use of on-line newspapers and directories. It made me feel that perhaps they had not been taken seriously enough by other family members.

In the course of this searching I came upon a contribution Bonnie made in 1927 to a folk music collection, and that ended up on a folk-music site, [Bluegrass Messengers](#). It was the lyrics to a folk song that their grandfather William was said to have brought with him from England to Wisconsin in the late 1840s, and that his son Sam, their father, now a Wisconsin blacksmith, sang for them. (If you know any ballad tunes at all, you will see how the rhythm fits; I haven't got hold of an audio version yet.)

My hair, what there is of it, stood right up on end. Of all the things I might have expected, a chance to eavesdrop on Sam and Harriet and their three children by the fireside, most likely in the 1880s when the children were growing up, was the last thing on my mind. What a gift, one their grand-nephew-in-law only opened by accident 90 years later.

It's a cliché because it's true. You really never know what you will find. By the same token, we never know how some small act of preservation now may reverberate in future generations.

Administrative Stuff

Contributions: If you have news for the Ezine, send it! To IdeasForAGS@gmail.com – Thanks!

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