



Editor: Lucille Williams

1203 N. Main,
P.O. Box 1121
Wichita, KS 67201
316-264-3611

Established 1966

Library Hours:

Tuesday & Saturday

9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Email:

info@mhgswichita.org

Online Alert:

go to website>publications
>Alert

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Alert

Midwest Historical & Genealogical Society

MHGS is Open Tuesday and Saturday, 9am-4pm. Wi-fi is available with knowledgeable volunteers to help you with your research and answer questions. We have yearly memberships and non-members can do research for a fee. (316) 264-3611 MHGS Website: <http://mhgswichita.org/>

A Case Study: Alice Anna (West) Clark by MHGS Member Sandi Bush (continuation and conclusion from the May newsletter)

I hadn't forgotten about "the man named Fox." He had always been in the back of my mind, but I had no idea who he was or how he fit into the puzzle. I decided to turn again to the 1920 U.S. census to look for him. My mother (Lucille Williams) remembered that Alice, her mother-in-law, had said she attended "kiddiegarten," and having grown up in the same county, knew that only town kids went to kindergarten. So I decided to look for a Fox in Fort Scott city. Not trusting the index, nor knowing a first name, I searched line by line. After two hours of searching in this manner, I found a married couple with the surname of Fox. Who should be living with them but Alice West, age 12, listed as a granddaughter! I looked again at the Foxes, David and Nancy, wondering what clue they could give me as to why Alice was living with them. Then I saw it! Nancy was about 15 years older than David, which seemed odd. I then remembered that Nancy was Jay West's mother's name. Back when I had found Jay West in 1910 listed as divorced, I also found his father, John West, also listed as divorced. I really didn't think anything of it at the time, but now here was Nancy, remarried, and Alice was living with her!

I decided the next course of action would be a visit to the Bourbon County Courthouse in Fort Scott to find records for Jay and Gertie/Pearl (McNeil) West, and his parents, John and Nancy (Gall) West. Going to the District Court office, I was able to obtain the index for civil and domestic cases. Knowing that Jay and Gertie/Pearl's divorce was between 1907 (when Alice was born) and 1910 (when the census indicated they were divorced), I started with that time period, and easily found their court case file number. Very close to their listing was John and Nancy's court case file number. Surprisingly, I also found a file number for an *habeas corpus* (See note at end) case regarding Alice.

After some strenuous lifting and digging for the records in the hot, sticky, and dusty courthouse basement, I sat down to read (and photocopy) the files. (continued p. 3)

Julia's Library Updates

Are you interested in volunteering in the library? We're having two library volunteer orientation sessions in June: Tuesday the 17th and Saturday the 21st, both at 1pm. Come and get an in-depth tour of the library, find out what our volunteers do, and decide whether volunteering is for you. No obligation — just come and make your decision later! We'll have cookies! Please call the library at 264-3611 to let us know which session you're coming to. ~Julia

Upcoming Programs

Library Closed, Saturday, May 25 for Holiday.

Afro-American Special Interest Group. Saturday, May 31 at 1pm. Led by Jozel Smith Eckols. Interest Group encourages historical and genealogical study of families with special emphasis on Afro-Americans. This informal group will seek to learn more of the history and factors within the family stories that we have been given. We will demonstrate how to research your family tree with the goal of discovering and understanding your family history. The discussions will include a variety of methods, including exploring public records, interviewing older relatives and preserving information.

DAR Genealogy Workshop. Saturday, June 7 at 1pm. Led by DAR members. For anyone who is interested in joining the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) and needs help with their documentation. Join us if you need help with the application process. Call 264-3611 to register so we will know how many to plan for with handouts.

Board Meeting, Saturday, June 14 at 10:30 to 12:30

Genealogical DNA SIG. Saturday, June 14 at 1pm. Discussion led by Paul Renner Smith. Discover the latest news in the field of Genealogical DNA study. This informal discussion group uses the newest information available to learn what DNA can tell us about our ancestors. Learn what different tests are available and where.

Exploring Ancestry.com. Saturday, June 21 at 10am to 12pm. Led by Jim Scharnhorst. Ever wonder how to find "THAT" piece of information on Ancestry? Wonder what else is available on Ancestry? What am I really paying for if I join Ancestry? What is available on Ancestry for free? How do I make corrections to transcribing errors?

Afro-American SIG. Saturday, June 28 at 1pm. Led by Jozel Smith Eckels. Interest Group encourages historical and genealogical study of families with special emphasis on Afro-Americans. This informal group will seek to learn more of the history and factors within the family stories that we have been given. We will demonstrate how to research your family tree with the goal of discovering and understanding your family history. The discussions will include a variety of methods, including exploring public records, interviewing older relatives and preserving information.

Reservations requested for all classes. Call 316-264-3611 to make reservations.

Remember this Important Message as it is a fundraiser for MHGS!

MHGS has started participating in Amazon Smile, a new fundraising program. To learn how to help, and to get more information, go to our website at: <http://mhgswichita.org/wp/category/fundraising/> or our Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Midwest-Historical-Genealogical-Society/132888437350>

Midwest has received the second check from this great fundraising opportunity. You can help your society by participating in this program.

(continuation of Case Study on p.1)

Jay and Gertie/Pearl's file was unusually thick, and when I opened it, I realized why. There was a packet of letters tied with a pink ribbon included in the file. This packet looked as if no one had untied it since it was filed away. These letters were to Pearl/Gertie from family and friends, most in support of her decision to divorce Jay. It struck me as sad that no one has read these since then; apparently, no one knew they existed.

In the divorce records, Pearl/Gertie received the divorce on November 18, 1909. Pearl didn't think that Jay had supported her and their children as he should have done, refusing to buy clothing and shoes for her or the children. Occasionally, they had to go without food. Pearl felt compelled to find work outside their home in order to buy the things she and the children needed. She ended up leaving him and moving back with her parents, taking the children with her.

It also included information about the habeas corpus case regarding Alice. In essence, Alice had been left in the care of her grandmother, Sarah McNeil, while her mother went out during the day to work. On November 27, 1908, "Jay A. West kidnapped said child (Alice), by taking said child and threatening to shoot said petitioner's (Pearl) mother if she interfered with him taking said child." He then brought her into town to his mother, Nancy West, "who now has the keeping of said child." Alice was then 16 months old.

It was found in this case that since Jay was the legal father of Alice, that we would retain custody. This was obviously at a time when women had very few legal rights and the needs of the children were not considered.

Apparently, even though Jay was awarded custody of Alice, she was raised by Nancy, her grandmother. In the very little information Alice gave me, she never indicated that her grandmother raised her. She never even mentioned her grandmother's name.

Nancy West had moved to Fort Scott after obtaining her divorce and began running a boarding house. According to the 1910 census, one of her boarders was David Fox. They married shortly afterwards.

(Note: Habeas corpus, or the Great Writ, is the legal procedure that keeps the government from holding you indefinitely without showing cause. When you challenge your detention by filing a habeas corpus petition, the executive branch must explain to a neutral judge its justification for holding you. Habeas corpus prevents the King from simply locking up subjects in secret dungeons and throwing away the key. It's been a pillar of Western law since the signing of the Magna Carta in England in 1215. The Founders of our nation believed habeas corpus was so essential to preserving liberty, justice, and democracy that they enshrined it in the very first article of the United States Constitution.)

I hope you have all enjoyed this little mystery. There was much more found in the probate record packet, however, there was too much to include here. Part of my reason for including this case study was to show you, the members of MHGS, what I would like for you to do — send me articles about your family research that I can include in the *Alert*. Surely some of you have broken down brick walls, or possibly you have a very interesting bit of information you have found about an ancestor in your researching. I would like to include things from our members in your newsletter. They can be short items like my great grandfather's five-legged pig, or I would love to get pieces that are longer, like this Case Study. You can contact me in my email which is lwilliams45@cox.net. Hope I hear from some of you.

~Lucille

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Change Service Requested



May 2014 Calendar of Events
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Led by Jozel Smith Eckols

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