

MIDWEST HISTORICAL & GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY

ALERT

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MISSOURI RESEARCH JACKPOT

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Library Hours:

Tuesday and Saturday
10 to 4 pm.

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In the process of building a timeline for my grandfather's family, I discovered several events that added mystery to their history. I have always known about friction between my grandparents and my grandfathers's siblings, but my grandmother's explanation seemed a little too trivial. I interviewed her several years before her death and she told me a story that I found believable, but didn't seem to be cause for the outcome. My grandfather was the youngest surviving child of the eleven born to my great-grandparents who had purchased a farm in Texas County, Missouri. When my great-grandfather died in 1920, just days before my grandparents married, my great-grandmother made an agreement with her son to give him the farm if he took care of her for the rest of her life. They lived on the farm for several years together, but in 1927 great-grandma left the farm, hiked the eight miles to town, and entered into a new agreement with her oldest son. She would give him the farm in return for him providing her with a house and taking care of her. According to my grandmother, the split was over my great-grandmother's anger over my grandmother burning all the bedclothes in the house because of a bedbug infestation.

I never had cause to doubt my grandmother, but I decided to do the research to fill out my great-grandparents history. I had recently discovered that my great-grandfather, George Stinger, was not German, as I had always assumed, but was French, spoke French, and had learned English when he immigrated in 1867. My great-grandmother, Caroline Theiss, was of German extraction, born and raised in St. Louis, and changed her surname spelling to Stenger after she married George.

I knew that Missouri had digitized their records because they found doing research for genealogists was expensive due to employee costs. They saved money by just giving the information away. I began looking at what was available. The Secretary of State made vital records accessible, but I wasn't finding probate records, only indexes. As I continued to dig down, I decided to try looking at land records to see who owned what, when and where. I knew the Register of Deeds office in Sedgwick County was in the process of digitizing those records, but I wanted to see much older transactions than were available here. I could only hope there was something similar for old records in Missouri.

I searched for the Register of Deeds in Texas County, Missouri, and was pleasantly surprised to find they had adopted an app called iCounty for their historical records. I looked at the app and found it was made by a company in Blue Springs, Missouri. My expectations were not high. I cautiously began looking at what was online and was excited to find the app was intuitive, and the costs weren't prohibitive. The instructions were

minimal, but sufficient. I learned where to find a list of the abbreviations, and slowly but surely began learning what the legal language meant in English. Parties of the first part, etc. As I put the timeline together, more and more of the history was revealed. I added the news printed in The Houston Herald from Newspapers.com. Publication began in 1878, the year my great-grandfather bought the farm.

The timeline began to tell the story of a family that had secrets to tell, much more than any of the current family was aware. Caroline put her agreement with her oldest son in a legal document, listing her demands and expectations. Her son, John, brought her to the home he had just purchased for his family. The house was two story, seven rooms, and had been the Smith Hotel, the only hotel in Texas County for years after its construction in 1872. Shortly after, the house caught fire and burned down. John cut his losses, moved to San Francisco, and put Caroline in with the King family, where she stayed the rest of her life.

My cousin has lived in Texas County his whole life, lives on the family farm, and relates to me that the local history has Caroline as a difficult person to deal with. Knowing that both of her sons living in Texas County eventually didn't have the stamina to live with her, I tend to think that was true. The other documents dealing with the family show other feuds among the siblings, suits, quit claims, deeds, and affidavits. I would recommend anyone having a Missouri heritage look into the digital records available at the state or county level.

Jim Scharnhorst

WHAT'S UP WITH OUR LIBRARY CATALOG? STILL NOT WORKING!

We're having technical difficulties with our library catalog, so it's not available at the moment. In the meantime, you can try searching for the items that have been added in about the last ten years by doing a site-specific google search:
site:mhgswichita.org search term

WICHITA GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY CONFERENCE

The Wichita Genealogical Society conference will be Saturday, October 7, at the Hughes Metroplex. The speaker will be Cheri Hudson Passey, a professional genealogist, teacher and podcaster, who will be speaking on probate records, location research, city directories and the categories of genealogical evidence. The cost will be \$65 for members, \$75 for non-members, including lunch, if you register before September 10. MHGS will have a table there as usual. For more information: <https://wchitagensoc.org/page-18198>

WHAT'S A CMSR ?

A CMSR is an envelope (called a jacket) containing a set of cards that provide an overview of an individual's service in a military company. The jacket is labeled with the soldier's name, rank, military unit and a list of card numbers. The information on each card was taken from some type of original record in which the soldier's name appears, such as an enlistment book, muster roll, hospital roll, descriptive book, prison record, payment voucher or discharge. Some CMSRs, especially those of officers, also may contain personal papers.

In the aftermath of the Civil War, clerks of the War Department Record and Pension Office painstakingly copied information from original records onto the cards to expedite the processing of pension claims. Rather than sift through more than 500,000 rolls and books to verify a man's service, pension officials could now find what they needed in minutes. Family historians reap the same benefits today.

HANDBFAST

Do you know the meaning of “H/F” after a person’s name? This may be found in marriage and birth records. The letters stand for “handfast”. It basically is a sign of the confirmation of a form of “uncanonical, private or even probationary form of marriage.” Handfasting was a form of announcing a union between a man and a woman who wished to live together as husband and wife before receiving the blessing of the church.

The couple would stand before a group of their peers, hold their clasped hands above their heads and state their intentions. The agreement was good for a year and a day, or until the preacher came to perform the rites of the church. If at the end of the specified time both wished to go their own way, they could do so with no ties. No matter what happened, any child of a Handfast was considered legitimate and would inherit.

TRACE THEM TO THE END

Have you ever noticed that many genealogy charts have vast numbers of people who were born and married, but never died? It’s easy to fall into this trap. However, if we don’t try to determine when and where each of our ancestors (and their siblings) died, we will miss some of the most valuable records that are available to the genealogist.

Newspaper obituaries, wills, and gravestone inscriptions often provide key pieces of information that we can’t find elsewhere.

Precise birthplace information can often be found in these records. You have to read wills carefully because some information may be hidden.

101 Best Genealogy Research Tips

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Please see the Google calendar or our Facebook page for more information

GENEALOGY ROUNDTABLE SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP	DAUGHTERS OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION AND SONS OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION
Second Tuesday @ 1:30 to 3 pm Led by Julia Langel	Fourth Tuesday @ 1:30 pm Led by Twila Ackley Brown
PHOTO MYSTERIES	
Third Tuesday @ 1:30 to 3 pm Led by Rex Riley	

Midwest Historical and Genealogical Society

P.O. Box 1121

Wichita, Kansas 67201

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