

MIDWEST COMPUTER GENEALOGISTS

NEWSLETTER

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PRESERVING FAMILY HISTORY

Marjorie Slavens

Many of our articles through the years have been dedicated to the preservation of our family history. There are so many different ways we can both investigate and preserve and share the results of our research. In his "The President's Corner" article this month, Al Morse describes the research of his cousin, Laura Frances Seals Scott, in the days when we did not have the Internet, and we had to depend on trips to other parts of the country to visit libraries, court houses, genealogical societies, etc. and write many letters to gather the material we needed to trace our families. Al indicates that he has been able to extend his cousin's research through new contacts, and he has previously written about using DNA testing to make additional family contacts and discover supplementary information.

Julia Morse describes ways in which we can use the Internet, including the use of Youtube, to find records and review the material posted there as a part of our research. She has also written articles about how to restore and preserve old pictures. Of course, we have wonderful websites like Ancestry.com, Family Search, Archives, Fold3, etc. where others share the results of their research and we can find some additional historical records. Julia has created our website, www.mcgenealogists.org, to preserve our newsletters online and provide a way that each of us can preserve and share our documents with others online.

I have written articles about the books about our family that my mother, Mildred Welty Slavens, published and shared with other family members. I have also recorded or videoed interviews with family members, and we have had several MCG programs

about ways in which we can preserve these interviews.

This month, Priscilla Darling shared an article about preserving the memories of school reunions where contacts with people we knew many years ago can help us renew our contacts with these people through the years.

Priscilla says, "My all-school reunion was cancelled this year also. We meet every 2 years at Harrisonville Community building. Our family reunion on my Mother's side was also cancelled this summer. We meet every two years. This writing brought back a lot of memories".

My high school class decided when we graduated to have class reunions every 5 years, and they have done so until Reunion 60. I was only able to attend Reunions 30 and 60. Now, they are having annual reunions with preceding and following class years, which they have cancelled this year because of Covid-19. My Westmeier and Gillman ancestors used to have frequent family reunions, and my great uncle, Jesse F. Westmeier was inspired by these meetings to create books on both of his parents' family lines.

THE PRESIDENT'S CORNER

Al Morse

My cousin, Laura Frances (Seals) Scott, did a lot of genealogical research on both sides of her mothers, her fathers, and her husbands families. I happen to be on her mother's side of the family. Her mother, Amy Henrietta (Janssens) Seals, and my mother, Mildred Catherine (Janssens) Morse, were sisters. Amy was born May 30, 1894 and my mother was born October 21, 1910. Laura Frances was born November 26,

1921. She said that I was 4 years old when she married Kenneth Francis Scott and I was the ring bearer and I cried the whole time. I do not remember that at all. But her two sons seemed more like cousins to me and she seemed more like an aunt, I did not need to call her Aunt Laura Frances, but it was her mother that I called Aunt Amy.

Laura Francis was called by two names because her grandmother and mine was Laura Jessie (Mooney) Janssens. My wife Dorothy was called Dorothy Jean because her mother was Dorothy (McDaniel) Newcomb, with no middle name. In fact I grew up, in the Morse family, as Albert Jr. because I was named after my father. I do not know why, but Kenneth Scott was called Scotty.

Laura Frances and Scotty, probably after their two sons graduated from high school, traveled to the east coast in search of genealogical records. They would go to libraries, court houses, genealogical centers, and cemeteries in search of records. She also was able to find and communicate with other ancestral relatives. I have several of those letters in her files that I was given by her. With the help of Ancestry and Family Search, I have found information that Laura Frances could not find. A contributor to these sites is a Tiffany Farnsworth Nash.

One family line is the Farnsworth family. Our sixth great grandfather, Thomas Farnsworth, was born February 7, 1648 (or February 5, 1647, according to different sources) in Mansfield, Nottingham, England. He married Susannah Smith on November 10, 1672 in Skegby, England. Susannah was born June 17, 1649 in Yorkshire, England. They were Quakers. He had been arrested and jailed and she was a Quaker minister. He came to America in 1677 on the Kent. They came to Philadelphia, but he continued up the Delaware River and got off on the New Jersey side in Burlington County. Susannah came to America in 1678 with their two children and two servants. They had five more children born in New Jersey.

We are able to access records all over the world. Laura Frances relied on traveling and writing letters. The amount of records she obtained was massive.

However, her records were not always correct. She had Susannah with a last name of Ellis. But all records now show the last name as Smith. She was also unable to get the birthdates of Thomas and Susannah or their marriage record. But her records were recorded in the book Farnsworth Memorial II. This was the second edition of Farnsworth Memorial published in 1897 by Moses Franklin Farnsworth. The revised edition was in 1974 by R. Glen Nye.

I still have many of the records of Laura Frances. I have given some to the Cass County Genealogy Library in the Cass County Library in Harrisonville, Missouri. I plan to give more of these records to them.

A GLOBAL PANDEMIC IS A GREAT TIME TO EXPAND YOUR SKILLSET

Julia Morse

Life during COVID-19 times has pushed most of us to change-up how we do things in small and large ways. Developing new skills comes with the territory. We have installed apps for grocery pickup and delivery or used video conferencing for the first time just to see our loved ones or to attend church, work, or school. For some, being stuck socially-distanced at home has opened up free time to explore new activities, while for others, the push to carry on our work and community engagements in new ways has forced us to learn new technologies.

As a university instructor adapting my instruction to a socially-distanced environment, I have been pushing my technical adoption to foster better online experiences for my students. Before COVID-19, I had participated in Zoom videoconferences a few times, but now I had to learn how to set up and manage the online meetings myself. As my experience progressed, I explored expanded options for engaging the students, such as setting up “breakout rooms” for students to leave the main conference for small-group discussions, or finding new ways to use the “chat” feature to log student participation for attendance and scoring.

My teaching material development has also pushed my tech adoption. I teach technical drawing, which includes hand-sketching, so I needed to purchase and set up an overhead camera that I could use to demonstrate techniques during videoconference sessions or on video-recorded help sessions made from home.

In truth, for over a decade, I had dreamed of putting much of my teaching into videos that my students could consult on an as-needed basis, but this had been a wish that had sat on my proverbial shelf collecting dust, waiting for the day it would take priority. In 2020, the priority is here, and I have finally been learning how to use the video-editing software.

As computer genealogists, we continually expand our computer-related skillset. Much of this has to do with knowledge of resources and search techniques, but also the software and paper record-keeping methods we adopt to organize, preserve, and pass on the stories and data we discover. None of us are new to picking up new skills.

I have been marveling at how easy it has become to learn new technology, mostly thanks to the plethora of quick-start demonstrations, tutorials, and software and product reviews available on Youtube. The same is becoming true for genealogy techniques. Is there an area of your genealogy journey that has gotten stuck? Someone has probably addressed it on a video. Just start typing in “genealogy” and some other key word into the Youtube search engine.

Sometimes we know what we want to learn and can search directly. Other times we learn from others who introduce us to the possibilities. In my teaching, I hear other colleagues talking about something they are doing, or see them demonstrate it in a meeting. When I discover YouTube presenters teaching one thing I am interested in, I usually also explore their other content to see what else they are suggesting. For family research in particular, it is useful to watch for general topics and techniques others are finding useful.

One thing that I have wanted to do to improve my family history collection was to learn improved techniques for digitally restoring the old historic photos. I have sparingly used free GIMP photo-editing software for work, and over many years developed my own methods for cleaning up historic family photos. However, my crude self-developed methods have been intensely time-consuming and produced results that were not as polished as desired. They also were extremely limited for large photo defects such as rips, tears, and stains. I have long known that the software was more powerful and that, if I took the time, I could more deeply learn the software and specific techniques.

This past weekend, the time had come: My mother had a need for a historic photo repair to support a feature article she was writing for her local newspaper. The photo was key to her story about a local landmark building—the Windsor, Missouri Western Auto Building that is now slated for demolition. We had a beautiful 1940’s photograph of a community event that showed the building and its neighboring businesses--beautiful except for the fact that it had a huge rip down the center!

I studied the videos on photo restoration techniques. It took a little time and some note-taking. As I executed the processes on the scan of our torn photo, I ended up going back to a couple of videos to double check how they were handling certain features, and even consulted another video for more detail when a supporting technique became problematic.

Like many skills, photo editing is not learned in one day, but rather a little at a time. Sometimes you discover techniques and software features that are groundbreaking. Other times you are learning small steps to keep you improving along the way.

Our computer genealogy journey is similar. We learn some groundbreaking techniques at times, but at other times, we move along with incremental discoveries and adjustments.

In this case, the new techniques I applied yielded an amazingly restored photograph. It is not professional perfect, but highly acceptable for the need. Windsor Historical Society has a great image of the historical city scene, and I have a new skill added to my family history archiving repertoire.

If you would like to see the before and after of the photo restoration, check it out on our MCGenealogists.org website.

Whatever these unique times are bringing to your life, I encourage you to look for small opportunities to learn the small or large things that keep you moving on your family history goals.

**DRAWING STRENGTH FROM
OUR ANCESTORS' RESILIENCE**

Link here for the recommended article:
<https://blogs.ancestry.com/ancestry/2020/09/24/drawing-strength-from-our-ancestors-resilience-from-the-spanish-flu-to-today/>

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