

Past Tracks



A Publication of the Southern Arizona Genealogy Society

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Contributors

Mike Day
Becky McCreary
Bob Pitcher

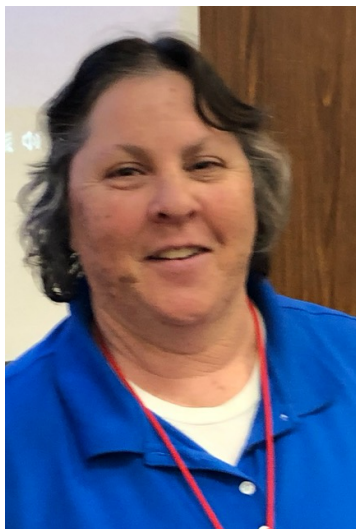
Southern Arizona Genealogy Society Seminar

Saturday, February 7, 2026

9:00 AM - 3:00 PM

Recreation Center at La Posada
(directions on page 29)

In Person Meeting Only



MOREEN FERDIE PLCGS



AMY URMAN

Tucson Genealogists Moreen Ferdie and Amy Urman will talk on 3 topics: Moreen will talk on 1: Those In-between Census Years and 2: Are you Using Family Search, Ancestry and My Heritage to full advantage? Amy will talk on 3: Working Smarter: Using Premade Forms and Software to Process Your Genealogy

President's Message

February, mid-winter and shortest month



MICHAEL HARDY DAY

February is the month of ground hogs and hearts, for we celebrate Ground Hog's Day and Valentine's Day. Because of its unique status as the shortest month of any year, I always think of oddities... strange facts and coincidences. One thing I remember relates to a couple of my mother's high school students. They were twins. One was born just before midnight on 28 February and the other was born just after midnight. They always insisted on separate birthday celebrations. 3 years out of 4 they were on adjacent days, but every leap year, there was an extra day in between. They should have celebrated their mother's labor day on 29 February.

Valentine's Day is a celebration of romantic love because the medieval Italians believed that the birds began to mate on that day, and we all know about the birds and the bees. In 1972, my first wife and I were married on Valentine's day and began the first of more than 40 years together. You can look it up in my family history!

My January was very busy with choirs, social events, concerts, a short trip to Yuma to visit the Territorial Prison (none of my relatives were among the 3,069 people who were imprisoned there between 1876 and 1909). I found the history compelling and well told in the exhibits.

Let's work to build our community of family historians and let's help each other find forgotten relatives and their stories. I have been humbled by how my family history is deeply entwined with the history of our nation.

Mike Day

SEMINAR: SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 7, 2026, 9 am - 3 pm.

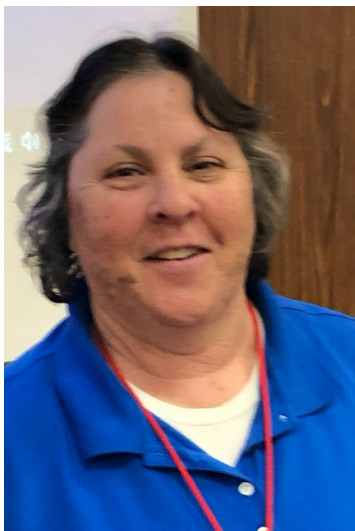
Presenters will be:

Moreen Ferdie, PLCGS, is a graduate of the National Institute for Genealogical Studies in American Records, Methodology, and Eastern European Records. She is a professional genealogist. Moreen has been researching her family history for a number of years. Her specialties are Jewish, Eastern European, and Newspapers.

9:00 am- Ms. Moreen Ferdie PLCGS, Professional Learning Certificates in Genealogical Studies

TOPIC 1: Those In-Between Census Years.

TOPIC 2: Are you Using Family Search, Ancestry and My Heritage to full advantage



MOREEN FERDIE PLCGS



AMY URMAN

1:00 pm - Ms. Amy Urman, Nosy Wilma LLC, Private Investigator, Genealogist, Lecturer and Educator. Amy holds a Certificate in Genealogical Research from Boston University and is a graduate of the ProGen Study Group.

TOPIC: Working Smarter: Using Premade Forms and Software to Process Your Genealogy

It's not too late to sign up for the
Seminar... **if you act quickly!**

- You can buy your ticket on the website, azsags.org
- First, sign in as a member.
- If you do not want to use a credit card/Paypal, you can still register on the website and send in a check. Registration must be received by Feb 2, 2026.
 - Allow a week's time for USPS mail to be delivered to SAGS's PO Box
 - or hand deliver to the Genealogy Library next door to Posada Java
 - (please do not mail to the Library)
- Mail-in forms are available on-line and on the following page of Past Tracks.
- There is limited seating.
- Coffee and breakfast pastries will be available in the morning
- The lunch break is only 45 minutes long.
- LaPosada will provide lunch which is included in the Seminar price;
- Sandwich makings, soda, and chips.
- Dessert at lunch will be provided by SAGS members
- Session descriptions are available on the website.
- As always, there will be a raffle.
- Looking forward to seeing you there.

Southern Arizona Genealogy Society 2026 Annual Seminar • Saturday, February 7, 2026



SAGS is pleased to offer two programs to help you acquire some new skills or to enhance your current skills. Each program features well-known and experienced speakers in genealogy and technology.

This is an in-person only event.

MORNING PROGRAM: 9:00AM – 12:00PM

- ◆ **SPEAKER:** Moreen Ferdie
- ◆ **TOPIC 1:** Those Years In-Between Census Years
- ◆ **TOPIC 2:** Are you Using Family Search, Ancestry and MyHeritage to your Full Advantage?

Moreen Ferdie is a graduate of the National Institute of Genealogical Studies.

AFTERNOON PROGRAM: 1:00PM – 3:00PM

- ◆ **SPEAKER:** Amy Urman
- ◆ **TOPIC:** Working Smarter: Using Premade Forms and Software to Process Your Genealogy

Amy Urman is an Arizona-licensed private investigator and professional genealogist with expertise in forensic genealogy, genealogical research, and asset recovery. Amy holds a Certificate in Genealogical Research from Boston University and is a graduate of the ProGen Study Group.

SEMINAR VENUE:

Attend in-person at the La Posada Recreation Center
685 S. La Posada Circle, #37, Green Valley, AZ

REGISTRATION DETAILS

- ◆ Complete this form and mail it along with your check to the address below.
- ◆ Registration must be received by Feb. 2, 2026
- ◆ Cancellation Policy: no refunds after Feb. 2, 2026.

REGISTRATION FORM

PLEASE USE A SEPARATE REGISTRATION FORM FOR EACH INDIVIDUAL REGISTERING.

Name: _____

Address: _____ City, State, Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

☐ Member \$40.00

☐ Non-Member \$50.00

TOTAL: \$ _____

NOTE: Fee includes coffee and breakfast pastry and "Build Your Own Sandwich" for lunch.

Please mail this completed form & your check, payable to Southern Arizona Genealogy Society, to:
SAGS, P.O. Box 1009, Green Valley, AZ 85622



MARK YOUR CALENDARS FOR THIS SPECIAL EVENT!

On Thursday, March 19, 2026 we will be celebrating the 50th anniversary of our society. The original name was Green Valley Genealogy Club. A few years later it was changed to Green Valley Genealogy Society, and in 2018 it was renamed Southern Arizona Genealogy Society (SAGS).

This event will take place at the Recreation Center of LaPosada from 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. Our members, friends and the Green Valley community will be invited to this celebration. We will have displays showcasing the Green Valley-Sahuarita Genealogy Library at LaPosada; several of our members will be dressed as their ancestors and will display the vast amount of research they have done; SAGS and SIGS (Special Interest Groups) will have displays as well. We will have door prizes and of course, refreshments!

Mark your calendars and join us as we celebrate our Society's 50 years and also as we honor our long-time members and friends.

Calling for Volunteers!

SAGS needs volunteers to serve as:

- Past Tracks Editor
- SAGS Board Vice President
- Director of Membership

Please refer to the website for description of responsibilities and contact a member of the SAGS board if you would like to help.



Education Opportunities



Please inform the facilitators/instructors if you will attend their session. Some classes require a Zoom link. The latest SIG information is always on the [SAGS website calendar](#). You may contact Pat Edwards at education@azsags.org for more information.

Let's Talk Genealogy (SIG)

First Weds of each month: Feb 4; Mar 4; Apr 1; May 6

9:30 - 11:30

In-person Meeting

Genealogy can be confusing. Sometimes, you just need to be with some friends to talk about a research problem. Maybe you want to share a breakthrough you have been working on for years. That's the purpose of "Let's Talk Genealogy"— friends talking about genealogy and family history. Meetings are held the first Wednesday of the month. Meeting location: La Posada Pavilion, Building #670, 2nd Floor, Synergy Room.

SIG Leader: Bob Pitcher; rpitcher1040@gmail.com

Storytellers: Writing Family Stories

Second Tuesday of each Fall/Winter months: Feb 10; Mar 10; Apr 14; May 12

10 - noon

In-person Meeting

The Storytellers class for SAGS members meets on the second Tuesday of the month October through May at Friends in Deed. This is a class for those who want to write to preserve their personal stories and those of ancestors. **This is not a drop-in SIG; you must register in advance to join the class.** For more information, please contact the instructor, Becky McCreary: rebeccamccreary764@gmail.com

Family Tree Maker SIG (Updated Schedule!)

Third Monday every other month: Mar 16; May 18

10:00am - 12:00 noon

Zoom meeting

Explore the features of FTM with a hands-on approach! An email with the Zoom meeting link will be sent out approximately 5 days prior to the meeting to those on the group email list. To have your name added to the group list, send an email to webmgr@azsags.org.

SIG Leader: Karen Feeney

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Beginning Genealogy SIG

Fourth Thurs of each month: Jan 22; Feb 26; Mar 26; May 28

3:00 - 4:00

* Hybrid Meeting: Green Valley Genealogy Library, and Zoom.

This meeting is open to non-members & members. It is a great way to get started with researching your family tree. This group meets the 4th Thursday of the month. For more details, contact Jon Otto, Group Leader, at jonotto48@yahoo.com and check the SAGS Events Calendar for future meeting dates.

* In-Person Meeting location: Green Valley Genealogy Library, 665 S. Park Centre Ave., Green Valley.

DNA Special Interest Group

Fourth Friday of each month: Jan 23; Feb 27; Mar 27; Apr 24; May 22

9:30 - 11:30

In-person Meeting

LaPosada Recreation Center, 685 S. LaPosada Circle, Bldg. #37, Green Valley, AZ

This SIG will start with the basics through the experience of its leader, Mike Day. Mike is a former teacher and technologist who brings a decade of experience as a user of DNA testing services and a career of understanding technologies. If you have any questions or would like more information, contact Mike Day at michaelhday@me.com



Green Valley - Sahuarita Genealogy Library

at La Posada

Becky McCreary

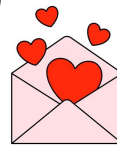
National Library Lover's Month



Wanted:

The Library has a display of genealogy and history magazines for visitors to take home. We are running low and greatly appreciate donations. Please, no newsletters or periodicals, other than genealogy and history magazines. Bring them to the Library during open hour.

Thank you!



A Valentine's Day gift idea

Do you know someone who is interested in genealogy and would enjoy borrowing books from the Green Valley-Sahuarita Genealogy Library? You can gift them a 2-year library card for only \$10. Current (2025-2026) SAGS members and La Posada residents may borrow without a card.



Missing Books

At the last annual Library book audit, and after assuring they were not checked out nor mis-shelved, these books are listed as missing. They may have been inadvertently borrowed without filling out a card. Help us fill those empty spaces by checking your own bookshelves to see if the errant books are there. Thank you!

- *1860 Census Of Noble County Ohio*
- *Family History Research*
- *Historical Collections of the State of New York*
- *Iowa: The Home For Immigrants, Being a Treatise on the Resources of Iowa, and Giving Useful Information with Regard to the State, for the Benefit of Immigrants and Others*
- *Map Book of Michigan Counties*
- *National Road: Main Street of America*
- *Twenty-Six Great Migration Colonists to New England & Their Origins*
- *Will Records of Decatur County, Indiana 1822-1906*



*For
your
Reading
Pleasure*

The stories and articles written for *Past Tracks* are the property of the author and may not be used in any form without the written permission of the author.

Anthony Day: Day Zero

Michael H Day

The first Day in my family in North America was Anthony Day of Gloucester, Massachusetts. He is my 8th great grandfather. There are several profiles of Anthony online, however, I will mainly draw from work done by John C. Barrett of Boston University in 2008. He was employed by the Day family association of Maine to research Anthony's life. Mary Martin and I visited Gloucester in August 2018. We enjoyed the history and the lobster.



LOBSTER LUNCH AT GLOUCESTER HARBOR

Anthony Day was born in Ipswich, Suffolk, England in 1616. On July 16, 1635, Anthony boarded the ship “Paule of London” bound for Virginia. He had a certificate from a priest that he was a good conforming Anglican. The ship’s master was Leonard Betts. The ship Paule probably took 6 weeks or less to cross the Atlantic in the summer. The first port of call was the Massachusetts Bay Colony, where it is assumed Betts took on a cargo of salt cod to trade with the Virginia Colony. Anthony Day is believed to have disembarked there. His whereabouts for the next seven years are unclear, however, several sources state he lived in Ipswich Massachusetts Bay Colony before moving to Gloucester. Regardless of his path to Gloucester, he was one of the original landowners of Gloucester.

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In 1642, families from the Plymouth colony, led by Rev. Richard Blynmann, moved to Gloucester. Land records indicate that Anthony Day sold Gloucester property to one John Pearce in 1645.

Anthony married Susanna Matchett in 1649 or 1650. The story of how that marriage came to be can be reconstructed from the Salem Quarterly Court records and is recounted by Barrett as follows:

In 1649 Anthony found himself embroiled in litigation concerning his wife to be, Susanna Matchett. Susanna was a bond servant of William Vinson of Gloucester. Anthony had entered into a marriage contract with Susanna. But prior to the marriage, Vinson, for some unknown reasons, made some disparaging remarks about his maidservant for which Anthony decided to take him to court.

Anthony went to the Clerk of write in Gloucester to obtain a warrant against Vinson. Unfortunately, Reverend Blynmann, Pastor of the First Parish Church of Gloucester, got wind of the controversy and decided to intercede. Quarterly Court records record that the Reverend Blynmann confronted Anthony, laid hold of the warrant, tore it to shreds and threw it in the fire. When the Clerk of Write refused to issue Anthony a second warrant Anthony decided to take Blynmann to court as well.

Concerning this incident the Quarterly Court Records of Essex County, Salem Court Adjourned November 7, 1649 read: "Anthony Day of Gloster vs. Mr. Blinman, the pastor there, for tearing a warrant he had taken out against William Vinson and throwing it in the fire, and the Clerk of Write there refused to grant him another warrant. Mr. Blinmann answered that he did it to stop proceeding and have the matter healed privately. He was astonished for his rash act."

Anthony prevailed in his court action and a second warrant was issued against Vinson. Later that year (1649) Vinson appeared in Salem Court to defend himself. The record reads: Note: "William Vinson of Glostar, being accused by Anthony Day of reproaching his servant Susan Matchett, to whom Anthony was Contracted, saying she was not virtuous, etc., confessed and was discharged." Thus Anthony was successful in vindicating the good name of his wife to be.

Anthony's work can be inferred from court and genealogical records. One genealogical dictionary gives the following description:

"He (i.e. Anthony) worked about the mills in Exeter (i.e. N.H.) For several years around 1653."

Anthony was a resident of Exeter for some time and was also involved in the transportation of lumber from the Exeter mills to Ipswich, Gloucester and possibly Boston. This involved large, flat-bottomed boats sailed down river to the north by way of Portsmouth, east to the coast and then south to the Bay

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Colonies. Exeter had both the trees and the water power to saw them. The first water-powered sawmills in Maine and New Hampshire date from the 1630s. Later records indicate that Anthony worked as a shipwright, building and repairing boats.

Anthony and Susanna had their first of nine children, Thomas, in 1651. In 1657, they bought land in Gloucester:

In 1657 Anthony purchased a house and land near the "Poles" in Gloucester from Edward Marshall. This purchase is described in another source as follows; "... he (Anthony) brought a house and land, once in the possession of Charles Glover, having the rocks called the Poles on one side. Anthony's house was located on the peninsula of land between the Mill and Squam rivers, in an area then known as the "Neck of Houselots", which is now called the Riverdale section of Gloucester.



Intersection of Wheeler and Washington Streets in Gloucester where Anthony's home once stood. Rocks known as the Poles are behind (Author's Photo).

There were about fifteen families living in this vicinity at the time, including Anthony and the Reverend John Emerson, "the first parish meeting house, Rev. Emerson's grist mill, and a tavern were located in the same general area". Anthony's home was situated at the fork formed by the intersection of modern day Wheeler and Washington Streets. The rocky promontory known as the "Poles"(i.e., probably after Powell, an early inhabitant of Gloucester) rises sharply to the left as one proceeds North on Washington St., near to the place Anthony's house once stood. It is recorded by Babson in his History of Gloucester Cape Ann that descendants of Anthony were still inhabiting this part of town as late as 1872.

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Anthony and Susanna had nine children who survived infancy:

The children of Anthony and Susanna Day were: John (b:1657) Ezekiel (b:1662) Nathaniel (b:1665) Elizabeth (b:1668) Samuel (b:1670) John, Joseph (b:1672) Thomas and Timothy.

Barrett notes the following about the Day family and the Province of Maine:

In 1658 Anthony, along with Mathew (b. Portsmouth, N.H. 1640) and other Gloucester men journeyed to Falmouth (i.e., now Portland) and Scarborough, Maine. The purpose of this venture is unknown, but some of those who were with Anthony took up permanent residence there. Days themselves were to later demonstrate an affinity for the Province of Maine (i.e., a part of Massachusetts up to 1820). Descendants of Anthony would help found the towns of Fryeburgh, Phippsburg and Leeds and likely others as well.

The Day family was present for a lottery of land:

On February 27th, 1688 the Gloucester town meeting decided to distribute by lottery some of the commonly owned land. "The town meeting voted that every householder and young man that had attained his majority and was a native of the town, capable of rights and duties of citizenship, should be granted six acres of land. Accordingly, 82 lots were laid out in numerical order on the eastern side of the cut (i.e., the Annisquam River), and were drawn for and secured by the following persons." The names of those receiving land are then listed and among those names are, Anthony Day, Ezekial Day, John Day, Thomas Day and Nathaniel Day.

The Day family paid the following polls and taxes in 1693, indicating that they were neither the wealthiest nor the poorest citizens of Gloucester.

Timothy	14 shillings, 10 pence
Ezekiel	11 shillings, 3 pence
Thomas	1 pound, 6 shillings
Nathaniel	10 shillings, 6 pence
Anthony	18 shillings
John	14 shillings, 2 pence

Around 1700 Anthony's name appeared on a list of the sick and infirm residents of Gloucester. He was described as "Very Aged."

On April 23, 1707, Anthony passed away:

On April 23rd, 1707 Anthony Day passed away at the ripe old age of ninety-one years. His son Ezekial administered his will which was registered May 13th, 1708. Susanna Matchett Day died December 10th, 1717, aged ninety-four years.

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Anthony Day's burial ground



All that are left of markers from the early 18th Century
(Fragile rock and Railway Blasting destroyed older gravestones.)

I am descended from Anthony's son Thomas and grandson Thomas (from "History of the Town of Gloucester, Cape Ann" John J. Babson, 1860):

THOMAS DAY Thomas Day married Mary Langton, Dec. 30, 1673. She and her daughter Mary were killed by lightning, in the entry of their dwelling-house, July 15, 1706. He died Jan. 29, 1726, aged seventy- five. Two sons are recorded to him,-- Thomas, born in 1675; and Joseph, in 1689. The former was lost on a fishing voyage, at the Isle of Sables, August, 1716, aged forty-one.



Thomas Day's Name on
Fisherman's Memorial



Mary Martin at Fisherman's
Memorial August 2018

WHY THE WORKS LEFT THE SHETLANDS

Bob Pitcher

In the first article I wrote for *Past Tracks* (see the December 2022 issue), I related the relatively little I knew of my maternal grandfather's family. His father and mother, Laurence and Susanna (Goudie) Work, emigrated to Chicago from the Shetland Islands of Scotland in the spring of 1873, two years after the Fire and a year before my Grandpa, Robert Work, was born in Chicago. I know the names of Laurence and Susanna's ancestors for a few generations, but Shetland records become scarce the farther back one goes into the 18th century; before 1700 there are hardly any. Although I have a journal of Laurence's, he wrote little in it, and almost nothing before he came to America. I know a bit of his story, but essentially nothing of Susanna's, or what either of them was like personally. Well, thought I, if there's to be nothing more specific about the Works themselves, perhaps a look at conditions in the Shetlands in the years before the great-grandparents left the place might be instructive – if, that is, I could find a good source for that.

I've found such a source. Project Gutenberg (www.gutenberg.org) has posted a book with the unprepossessing title, *Second Shetland Truck System Report*, by William Guthrie, compiled and originally published as a report to Parliament in 1872, and edited and annotated by Michael S. Hart in 2001, updated by him in 2021. It's on-line at Gutenberg here: <https://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/3611/pg3611-images.html>. The *Report* is immensely long; I think I've been through the parts most relevant to my family. It's quite a story.

Isolation

An introduction to the Shetlands may be in order, to explain how conditions in the islands got to be what the Commission found them. The Shetlands are isolated, away in the North Sea about as far from Scotland as they are from Norway. They're isolated from the rest of Scotland not only by geography but by history and economy as well.

In historic times, the population of the Shetlands was Scandinavian. The Vikings settled the islands in the 8th and 9th centuries, though there had been other people there – perhaps the Picts, whoever *they* were – for thousands of years before. The Norse brought their livestock, their laws, and their language. Over the centuries, some of the isolated breeds of their domestic animals diverged to become subspecies of the originals. There are said to be some 200 unusual genetic traits in the DNA of Shetlanders today, though no notorious ones that I know of. The Shetland variety of Old Norse became Norn, a distinct language. Norn died out soon after 1700, but it's said all Shetland placenames remain Norn, and the dialect of Scots that replaced Norn in the Shetlands and persists today is full of Norn words.

In 1469, the king of Denmark (Norway was then Danish) pledged the Shetlands to the Scottish king in lieu of a dowry for a Danish princess. The pledge wasn't redeemed and in 1472 the

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islands became part of Scotland. Little changed until about a century later, when Mary Queen of Scots gave the Shetlands to a particularly objectionable offshoot of her unpleasant family. Those Stuarts took over as sole landlords of the islands, whose inhabitants had before that owned their own land. Within another century, other Scots had also become landlords, mostly absentee, and the Shetlands were run by their agents.

The Shetlanders found themselves isolated economically too. The islands aren't much use for other than subsistence farming; the sole male money-making activity was always fishing. Women knitted and sold woolen goods. Fish and woolens were the only exports the islands had, and the natives had no control at all of the marketing of either one.

Finally, disasters hit isolated communities harder, and the Shetlands have seen a variety of disasters. Set apart as they were, islanders had no immunity from smallpox. There were epidemics in 1700, 1720, 1740, and 1760. It's supposed that the first killed a third of the population; later outbreaks mostly affected those who'd been born since the preceding ones. There were famines, especially in the 1690s – perhaps the worst decade for weather in Europe since the Ice Age; in 1783 -- when all the crops failed; and again the the 1830s. The Shetlanders had grown dependent on potatoes to an extent; the potato blight of the late 1840s and early '50s carried off more of them. Finally, since in the summertime all the men spent their weekdays fishing miles out in the North Sea, a bad summer storm could wipe out a generation of fishermen. There was such a storm in 1832, and there was a vague memory of it in Grandpa's family.

Disasters tend to weaken and demoralize a society. Sympathetic, competent leadership can forestall or ameliorate those effects – but the Shetlands had no such leadership. Isolation and a series of hardships combined to allow the creation of the conditions the Truck Commission found to prevail in the islands in 1872.

Island Society

Before setting out the testimony he received from the Shetlanders during the early months of 1872, Commissioner Guthrie reviews various aspects of the islands and island society. He makes it plain, however, that statistical reviews of the Shetlands are impossible. Although the population at the censuses of 1861 and 1871, for instance, show a total of some 32,000 inhabitants, there is a discrepancy of over 5,000 between men and women in both counts, since the census was taken when the men in the merchant marine were away. With respect to agriculture, landholdings were reckoned in archaic measures with no necessary connection to more recent acreage or productivity. Still, the *Report's* observations on island farming, housing, and fishing are striking.

Farming. Guthrie refers to the Shetland “peasantry.” Although it's said that England really had no peasants after the 1400s, Scotland was a different matter, even in mid-1800s. Shetland's cropland, what there was of it, was farmed almost entirely by smallholders of a few acres under

rental agreements. Oats were sown on poorer land, barley and potatoes were grown on better. Much land is of no use for farming, and was devoted to pasturage and for cutting peat for fuel. Most families seem to have had some sheep, some a mix of other livestock; not every family owned a horse. Many Scots landlords had turned to larger scale shepherding and had thrown out their tenants in the process; this “clearance” was uncommon in the Shetlands and doesn’t seem to have affected my people. What farming there was was subsistence farming -- about the only marketable product was butter.

Fishing. The predominant mode of fishing in the Shetlands in 1872 was *haaf* fishing – deep-sea fishing – at that time for ling. It had once been herring, it would again be herring, but then it was ling, a fish similar to cod. It was caught on long lines from open, generally six-man boats, sailed thirty or forty miles out into the North Sea for four or five days at a time, and then sailed, or, if need be, rowed back again. This went on continuously during the season for *haaf* fishing, mid-May to mid-August. This was the primary male industry of the Shetlands, the one that paid the bills – if anything did. It was arduous and risky. There was some fishing during other seasons and for other fish, but that was peripheral to the *haaf* fishery the islanders depended on.

Housing. On the dwellings of the ordinary smallholder, Guthrie quotes a survey done some years earlier:

The Shetland cottage or hut is of the rudest description. It is usually built of undressed stone, with a cement of clay or turf. Over the rafters is laid a covering of [sod], and above this again a thatch of straw, bound down with ropes of heather, weighted at the ends with stones, as a protection against the high winds which are so prevalent. Chimneys and windows are rarely to be seen. One or more holes in the roof permit the escape of the smoke, and at the same time admit light. Open doors, the thatched roof, and loose joinings everywhere, insure a certain ventilation....

Drainage is wholly unattended to, and the dunghill is invariably found at the very door. As the house is entered, the visitor first comes upon that part allotted to the cattle, which in summer are out night and day, but in winter are chiefly within doors. Their dung is frequently allowed to accumulate about them; and I was told that this part of the house is sometimes used by the family in winter as a privy. Passing through the byre, the human habitation is reached. The separation between it and the part for the cattle is ingeniously effected by an arrangement of the furniture, the bed chiefly serving for this purpose. The floor is of clay, and the fire is nearly always in the middle of it....

There were no doors and windows -- as the Shetlands are treeless, there was no wood for any.

The Shetland women did not work outside the home. Their industry was knitting woolens.

It’s clear that life for the peasants of the islands, which would be rigorous at best, was difficult. The key to it all, however, the key which served to open opportunity to a few and to lock the rest out, was the truck system.

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The Truck Commission

The editor of the *Report* provides the relevant definition of the term Truck, per the OED:

Truck – The payment of wages otherwise than in money, the system or practice of such a payment.

In terms more familiar to Americans, the truck system revolves around a company store.

A truck system had grown up in the Shetlands in the 18th century, then had gone into abeyance from the late 1700s until the famine years of the 1830s, when it had returned, at least as strong as ever. Its establishment clearly depended on the islanders' isolation and demoralization.

Truck existed in other parts of Britain as well, and was recognized at various times as an abuse in various industries. Adam Smith mentioned truck in *The Wealth of Nations* as an anomaly in the economics of the Shetland fishery, and economist Alfred Marshall mentions truck in his *Principles of Economics* as a distortion tending always to reduce real wages. From time to time the British government attempted to address the practice. The second Commission was one such attempt.

The first parliamentary Truck Commission had taken testimony from those affected by truck in both England and Scotland in 1871. Testimony given in Edinburgh concerning the Shetlands convinced the commissioners that additional testimony gathered on site in the islands would be necessary. This was done – from hundreds of witnesses, men and women both, and the *Report* largely comprises the minutes of those proceedings. Fortunately, those compiling the testimony translated it from Shetland dialect into standard English. This does not affect the dignity of the witnesses, however, or lessen the strength of their testimony.

Guthrie, who may have taken all the testimony himself, was thorough and conscientious. Following summaries of conditions in the Shetlands, the Report sets out *verbatim* the testimony of the witnesses, taken at several locations in the islands, including Sandwick Parish, the southernmost district of the Mainland -- the major island of the Shetland group -- and the parish where my people lived. The testimony is in question-and-answer format, with each pair assigned a number: there are somewhat more than 17,000 in all.

The Truck System

The truck system depended on two factors. First, the system of land tenure prevailing in the islands, which in outline was this. All the land was owned by a small number of landlords, mostly absentee, who leased it to primary tenants, who served as managers and agents for the landlord. These agents, in turn (let's call them merchants), leased the land to subtenants, the farmer-fisherman-knitting peasantry. These leases were often merely verbal, and were for the term of a year. The critical element of the lease was that the tenant was required to sell the product of his fishing (generally the *haaf* fishing only) and of her knitting activity *only* to the

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landlord/merchant and to no one else. Initial marketing of both kinds of product was entirely in the hands of the merchant, who provided the fishermen with boats and other equipment and the knitters with wool as a part of their leases. Summer was the fishing season, but after the fish were caught, they had to be cured, exported to Scotland or Germany and marketed. The profit of the summer season wouldn't be known to Shetlanders until early the following year. Knitted woolens were marketed similarly.

The second necessary aspect to the truck system was the essentially cashless Shetland economy. Supplies needed for fishing and knitting were furnished on credit by the merchant to his tenants. Groceries and all other necessities were similarly furnished by the merchant on credit during the year, when no one knew what fish or knitted goods might eventually bring on the market. A fisherman or his wife might buy at any merchant's store – in theory – but credit was given only at the store of the merchant to whom the fisherman owed rent. At the end of the year, the merchant would settle with his tenants, still, as far as could be managed, on a truck or barter basis, so that the local economy remained cashless.

The merchant's hammer was his power to evict a tenant for a violation of the lease, Housing in the Shetlands, however miserable, was limited, nor could an evicted tenant readily find another merchant willing to rent to him. Word got around. Those evicted would like as not have to leave the islands for good, often as paupers.

Guthrie found that the truck system was generally accepted by the tenants; it was just a fact of life, in effect as far as memory ran. What was objected to was greater than usual abuse by a particular merchant, one who pushed the boundaries. Such a one, evidently, had been in charge for some years in Sandwick Parish, where witnesses with names familiar to me gave testimony, names like Goudie, Halcrow, Mouat, and Harkus. It was evident to Guthrie himself, however, as one placed outside the truck system, that it necessarily incorporated abuses of fishermen and knitters, and shortchanged them at every turn.

Aftermath

Guthrie submitted the Report later that same year of 1872. Parliament effectively did nothing. In 1880, however, the migratory herring, which had been absent from the vicinity of the Shetlands for many decades, came back. The herring market was differently constituted, and allowed an infusion of cash into the islands. The truck system began to dissolve. In 1886, Parliament finally passed the Crofters Act, which effectively made it impossible to evict a farming tenant in Scotland, and stopped the notorious clearances – the swapping of people for sheep. The Act also made a real dent in truck, though it did not stop it, especially with respect to the woolens market. That part of the system only died for good with World War II, when American servicemen stationed in the islands readily bought up local knitted goods for cash.

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The Works

Even when the truck system was fully in force, Shetlanders had two other options, however desperate. Great-grandpa Work availed himself of both of them. First, a man could join the merchant marine as a sailor. Great-grandpa Laurence went to sea. Whaling expeditions organized in the Shetlands might fall within the truck system, but those in the merchant marine were paid in cash. Moreover, Laurence spent some time in the Australian goldfields, and brought some money home with him. So not only did he have greater means than his Sandwich neighbors, but he'd seen the world, and knew opportunities existed elsewhere.

That was the second option for Shetlanders: emigration. Better transportation, the generally expanding world economy of the late 19th century, and increasing population, induced or drove islanders away. In the decade of the 1870s, a quarter of the islanders left for the U.S., Canada, Australia, or other places in Great Britain. Laurence's brother, for instance, wound up in the Isle of Man, also as a sailor. And Laurence and Susanna, with little Jesse and Mamie, went to Chicago. Laurence had expected to sign on as a sailor in Great Lakes shipping, but Susanna is said to have begged him not to leave her alone with the children in such a place as Chicago (what it must have seemed like to her!), and he involved himself in construction instead.

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