

Past Tracks



A Publication of the Southern Arizona Genealogy Society

February 2025
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Due to last-minute circumstances, articles and stories emailed to Deb Kabinier may not appear in this issue. If you sent her something and it is not in this issue, please email it to both Bob Pitcher rpitcher1040@gmail.com and Becky McCreary rebeccamccreary764@gmail.com by February 23. It will be published in the March issue of *Past Tracks*. See page 7 for submission requirements.

Contributors

Mike Day
Darillyn Doss
Debra Einweck
Becky McCreary
Paul McCreary
Bob Pitcher
Ed Storey

Southern Arizona Genealogy Society Annual Workshop and Seminar

*Building Bridges Through Time:
Mastering Genealogy*

*Registration for
Workshop and
Seminar is still
open!*



Guest presenter D. Joshua Taylor
Professional genealogist, speaker, and host
of PBS's *Genealogy Roadshow*

Workshop: Friday, February 14
8:30 a.m. - noon

Seminar: Saturday, February 15
8:30 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

In-person and Zoom
The workshop and seminar will not be recorded

More information on page 3

Vice President's Message

Welcome February, when we celebrate romantic love with hearts, flowers and candy. As a bird watcher, I always think of the ancient belief that birds began mating on Valentine's Day... Chaucer wrote:

"For this was on Saint Valentine's Day
When every bird comes to choose their match..."

Genealogy focuses, after all, on the consequences of romantic love, so it is appropriate that we have our big event, the Seminar and Workshop in the month of February. If you have not already signed up for the Seminar and Workshop, on February 14 and 15, please do so and join us online or in person for a day and a half of presentations by Josh Taylor on a wide range of topics of interest to our members. Josh Taylor is a favorite speaker of our President Deb Kabinier and it should be an entertaining and informative time. Look for more details on the next page and on the Southern Arizona Genealogy Society webpage.

I have been presenting and attending two Society events that I think you would find useful and engaging if you have not already done so. The first is the DNA SIG, held in the morning on the fourth Friday of the month. We have covered DNA Testing, Ethnicity Estimates, Genetic Relatives, DNA Painting and Cluster Diagrams. Our approach is hands-on (bring your laptops) and driven by the interests and questions of our members.

The second is "Let's Talk About Genealogy," a discussion group held in the morning of the first Wednesday of the month where we talk about anything and everything that we are excited about or frustrated by. We have covered Family Stories, Genealogy Travel and other topics. We go anywhere the conversation leads us and we learn from each other how to solve problems and dig deeper into our families histories.

Thanks again to all the SAGS volunteers who help keep our organization busy and vital.
See you at the Workshop and Seminar!

Mike Day



Upcoming Southern Arizona Genealogy Society meetings/programs

All programs are Hybrid (Zoom and In-Person) 1:00 - 3:00. In-person at La Posada Recreation Center.

March 20

Main Program: Nancy Hendricks "A Closer Look at the 1850-1950 Census"

Short Program: Jackie O'Donnell "The 1950s"

April 17

Main Program: Member Stories Deb Kabinier, Jon Otto, Ed Storey + more

May 15

Main Program: Mark Hester (Quail Creek author) "A Sterling Life: John Danz, Seattle Theatre Pioneer and a Grandson's Journey"

Short Program: Chris Arundell "The Cuban Missile Crisis"

Building Bridges Through Time: Mastering Genealogy

Featuring virtual presentations by D. Joshua Taylor

Hybrid Workshops & Seminar



Workshop (2 sessions)

- The Web, the World and YOU! (Advanced Online Research)
- Weaving the Historical Narrative into the Lives of Your Ancestors

Friday, 14 February 2025

\$20 members / \$25 non-members

0830 am - noon

Hybrid (La Posada Recreation Center and Zoom)

Seminar (4 Sessions)

- Climbing in Unknown Territory – Beginning Your Genealogy
- Bridging the Gap: Finding Ancestors in the United States between 1780 and 1840
- Following the Buzz: Keeping Current with Genealogical Trends
- Putting it Together: A Case Study

Saturday, 15 February 2025

\$40 members / \$50 non-members

0830 am - 0400 pm

Hybrid (La Posada Recreation Center and Zoom)

Go to: <https://azsags.org> to purchase tickets, find meeting times, lunch options, and obtain additional information

Do you remember when. . .

D. Joshua Taylor was at our February 2016
Seminar and Workshop?

He was our Seminar and Workshop presenter in 2016. It was a fun two days of learning from a popular genealogist and enjoying time with Society members. Many of the current members won prizes and you can check out the two pages of their photos in the March 2016 *Past Tracks*. On the SAGS website, www.azsags.org, click on Member's Only, type in your login and password, then click on *Past Tracks*. Search for the March 2016 issue. Enjoy the two pages of memories!



*What to bring to the
workshop and
seminar:*

- A wrap in case the room is cool
- Paper and pen for taking notes
- Small bills to buy raffle tickets
- Lunch, if you did not pay for one (Saturday)

February Education Opportunities



February 11

Storytellers: Writing Family Stories

10:00 a.m. - noon (In-person)

Friends in Deed, Room D, 301 E. Camino Casa Verde, Green Valley

Facilitator: Becky McCreary

Don't let your family stories or research get lost in time! This class is for SAGS members who enjoy writing the stories of their ancestors to share with family members and to pass to future generations. It is not a research, grammar, or punctuation class. There are assignments, in-class writing prompts, and time to share stories. We use pen/pencil and paper – no electronic writing devices. The class is limited to 15 and there is a reasonable commitment to attend each class, as others depend on your participation. This is not a drop-in SIG; you must register in advance to join the class. If you are interested, please contact Becky McCreary: rebeccamccreary764@gmail.com

February 27

Beginner's Genealogy

3:00 - 4:00 p.m. (Hybrid: Zoom or in person)*

* Green Valley-Sahuarita Genealogy Library at LaPosada

Facilitator: Jon Otto

This SIG is open to non-members and 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, or check Events Calendar [on website](#) for future meeting dates.



February 28

DNA Special Interest Group

9:00 a.m. (In-person)

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

Facilitator: Mike Day

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 at vicepres@azsags.org.

Please inform the facilitators/instructors if you will attend their session. Some classes require a Zoom link. Inform the instructor if you will attend a Zoom class to obtain the Zoom link. The latest information is always on the SAGS website: <https://azsags.org>



Awesome Workshop and Seminar Raffle Prizes!

Raffle tickets will be available to ALL SAGS members PRIOR to the Workshop and Seminar; Only to attendees on the days of the events. Tickets will be available in the Green Valley - Sahuarita Genealogy Library at La Posada Shoppes from February 10 - 13 and the afternoon of February 14. Door Prizes will be given at both the Workshop and each session of the Seminar.



1 Raffle ticket for \$1.00
10 Raffle tickets for \$5.00
30 Raffle tickets for \$10.00



Raffle Prizes

Ancestry

Six-month All Access with Publisher Extra
Seminar morning

Family Tree Maker

Copy of 2019 Software and copy of 2024
Software when released
Seminar morning

Find My Past

Annual Subscription for Everything access
Workshop

Fold 3

Annual Subscription
Seminar afternoon

Genealogist's Google Toolbox Lisa Louise Cooke
Workshop

My Heritage

Membership for one year of FamilyTree Webinars
Workshop & Seminar afternoon

Newspapers.com

Six-month subscription to Newspapers.com with
Publisher Extra
Workshop & Seminar morning

Roots Magic

Download of latest software version: 101
Seminar afternoon

Door Prizes -

AZ Family Restaurant

\$25.00 Gift certificate
Seminar morning

Moqah

\$ 20 Gift Certificate
Workshop
\$15 Gift Certificate
Seminar afternoon

Posada Java

Basket of goodies
Seminar afternoon

SAGS

2025-2026 season Single membership
Workshop
Seminar afternoon

And More ...

Are you registered for in-person Workshop
and/or Seminar and need directions?

See page 10.

There is also a La Posada Campus.

Click below:

[https://www.azsags.org/upload/files/
SIGs_maps/LaPosada-Recreation-
Cntr_MAPs.pdf](https://www.azsags.org/upload/files/SIGs_maps/LaPosada-Recreation-Cntr_MAPs.pdf)

SPECIAL EVENTS!

in-person and virtual
SAGS 2025 Workshop & Seminar
D. Joshua Taylor (virtual)
Presents
Building Bridges Through Time:
Mastering Genealogy



SAGS 2025 Workshop & Seminar **Reservations are still open!**

Date: February 14 and 15

Times: Workshop: 8:30 a.m. - noon Seminar: 8:30 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Location: La Posada Recreation Room, La Posada Circle

Workshop and Seminar information is on page 3 of *Past Tracks* and on the Southern Arizona Genealogy Society website: <https://azsags.org>



Family Tree Maker presentation **Free event—tickets required!**

Date: Thursday, February 20

Time: 1:00 - 4:00

Location: LaPosada, 635 S. Park Centre, La Perla Building - El Dorado Room. Click **HERE** to download location map.

Get news and info on the upcoming release of Family Tree Maker 2024 software in a FREE in-person presentation. Mark Olsen and Duff Wilson, Family Tree Maker Ambassadors, will host a session open to the public and all users of FTM, regardless of any version you may be using. This is a great opportunity to see the new features of the software and to ask any questions you have.

* Make Your Reservation ASAP: this is a free event but seating is limited and you need to make a seat reservation through EventBright to reserve your spot – click **HERE**.



5th Annual Arizona Genealogy Day **Registration is open!**

Date: March 29

Time: 8:30 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.

Location: Zoom only

Join the Arizona Genealogical Advisory Board and the Arizona State Library, Archives & Public Records for their annual FREE Arizona Genealogy Day event!

Speakers and Topics:

- Curt Witcher – “Beyond Hatched, Matched, and Dispatched: Methods for Finding Our Families' Stories”
- Susan Weinberg – “Unraveling the Puzzle: Finding the Thread”
- Mckell Keeney – “Fresh Eyes on Your DN: Exploring Essentials”
- Emma Stoltenberg & Yahm Levin – “City Directories: Step in the Right Direction”
- Amy Urman – “AI Tools for Genealogy”

Registration is now open – click **HERE** to register and to get more details.

An apology . . .

While converting and resizing “News from the Library” from Mac Pages to a Word document for publishing in January *Past Tracks*, a library staff member’s name was inadvertently dropped from the list.

Barbara Zimmer, a long-time shift volunteer, is important to the success of the Library. My sincere apology and thank you for your dedication Barbara.

Also, I want to thank all the SAGS members who use the Library and spread the word about our many resources to the community

Thank you,
Becky McCreary



Do you have a key to the SAGS Abrego Storage unit? If so, please leave it for Ed Storey at the Green Valley-Sahuarita Genealogy Library at La Posada.

FREE TO GOOD HOME !!

(No, not puppies or kittens)

Southern Arizona Genealogy Society is clearing out the storage unit it has maintained at Abrego Storage in Green Valley. Our current lease on the space is up this Spring, and everything must be gone.

Arrangements have been made for everything except bookcases, which SAGS is giving away to anyone who can use them.

The bookcases are all made of composite (pressed) wood, some stained to resemble a wood finish, one painted white. The four units range from 68 to 72 inches in height, 24 to 48 inches wide, and 12 to 24 inches deep. All of the shelves are adjustable; there are ample clips to secure them. The number of shelves in each bookcase varies from 3 to 5 – not counting the interior bottom surface of each, nor the top.

If you’re interested in taking one or more of these bookcases contact SAGS Treasurer Ed Storey at ecs7fg@gmail.com.

Ed asks as well if there are any SAGS members that have a key to the SAGS storage unit to please leave it for him at the Green Valley-Sahuarita Genealogy Library.

Past Tracks Submissions

How to submit your family stories, research and genealogy tips, book reviews, and any other genealogy or family history materials to be published in the newsletter. If you use people and places in your articles, be sure to give them names. For example, do not say “my grandpa” or a “small town in Arizona.” Readers like to identify with names. Plus, you might find another person researching the same family name or location.

Articles should be saved as a Word.doc file only and attach the file to an email. Please do not place your text within the body of your email. Photographs add interest to an article. If you do not know how to place them in your piece, save them as a jpg and email them separately. Articles and stories are printed as they are submitted unless there is a question, then you will be contacted. Email us if you have questions.

Submissions for March *Past Tracks* are due by February 23. Please email to both Bob Pitcher rpitcher1040@gmail.com and Becky McCreary rebeccamccreary764@gmail.com



News from the Green Valley - Sahuarita Genealogy Library

Darillyn Doss

What was your New Year's Resolution?

Jane Doe's goal was to find the birthplace of her great grandmother - the clues: grandmother born in Milford, Connecticut and spouse born in Guilford, Connecticut. She found the answer in: "Society and Economy in Colonial Connecticut" (974.6 H6m). The technique she used was to first print the books about Connecticut that are listed in the Genealogy Library catalog and then research many of them in the Library. She borrowed several and finally found her answer.

John Smith's resolution was to uncover the reason his great grandfather traveled from Germany to Pennsylvania. He used the same method as Jane and found the answer in "The Story of the Palatines, An Episode in Colonial History" (974.7 F2cs).

Frank Jones received a DNA kit for Christmas and was baffled by all the information he received after he registered his kit and attempted to digest the resulting details. His visit to the Library was simply to borrow several books about the use of DNA to further his genealogy research. His favorite is: "Your DNA Guide, The Book: Step By Step Plans To Connect You With Your Family Using Your DNA" (929.1 So87y).

Lyn Johnson wanted to prove the family story of having Mayflower passenger ancestors, but was overwhelmed with the abundance of information available. A Library volunteer suggested she check the new additions, "Mayflower Families Silver Books Index Parts 1, 2 & 3" where she found answers to begin her journey with the Pilgrims.

Bill Wilson's resolution was to find where in England his ancestors originated. He had the name, but could not find the village on any current maps. While perusing the shelves at the Library he found, "A Genealogical Gazetteer of England: An Alphabetical Dictionary of Places With Their Location, Ecclesiastical jurisdiction, population, and The Date of The Earliest Entry in The Registers of Every Ancient Parish in England" (942 E5g) which, much to his delight, gave him the answer.

The Genealogy Library is open six days a week with volunteers who can also help you achieve your New Year's resolution.

Monday to Friday 9:00 am to 3:00 pm
Saturday 9:00 am to noon
520-648-4016

Did my Great Grandfather William Roberts Lie to his family?

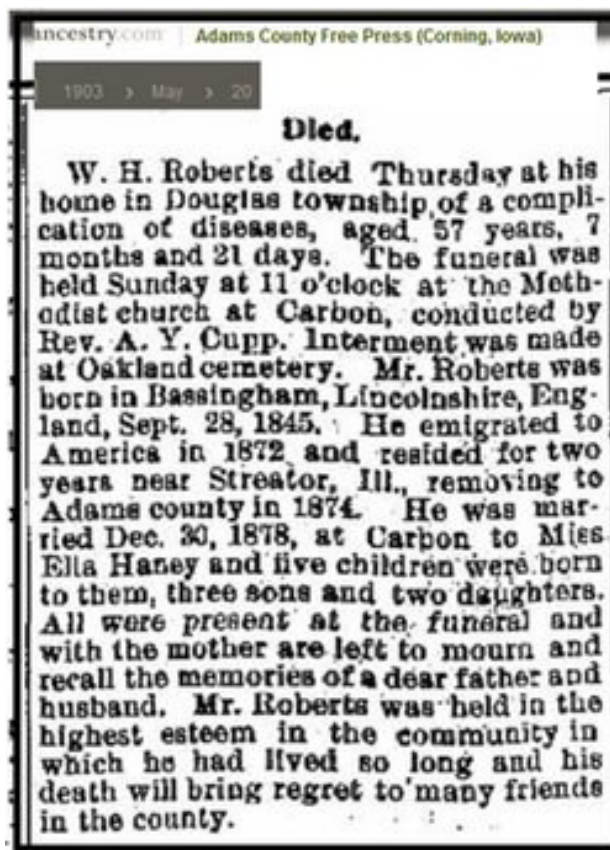
Michael Day

William H. Roberts was born William H. Bugg, in Bassingham, Lincolnshire, England on 23 September 1845. He was the son of a farmer who had 7 children. English census records indicate he worked as a servant in a public house near Bassingham when he was a teenager and later was a private in the British Army, part of a unit bivouacked in Kent in 1871.

The oral history my father, Arthur Day passed on to me was a story of the young William being a private in the British Army, being denied leave to visit his sick mother, he deserted and went home to find she had died. He was arrested and escaped while riding on a train, made his way to America and changed his name to Roberts, choosing the name of the ship's captain. He eventually made his way to Carbon, Iowa, where he worked as a coal miner and married Ella Haney, the daughter of his landlady. He worked hard, saved his money and bought a 160 acre farm west of Carbon where my grandmother Fannie M Roberts and 4 other children were born. He died in Douglas Township, Adams County, Iowa on 14 May 1903, aged 57 years. His obituary, below, cited the cause of death as a "Complication of Diseases." A phrase that meant he had several diseases, any one of which could have been the cause of death. I believe one of these diseases was tuberculosis which was epidemic at the time and common among coal miners.



William H. Roberts



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I knew there were problems with the family story as to why he changed his name, however, I would not have questioned the broad arc of the story until I was in contact with a distant cousin in England named Bugg. We located each other on MyHeritage DNA testing. He found a record of William Bugg landing at Castle Garden, New York in 1872 on a boat full of other men whose profession was listed as miner on the manifest. I had been looking in all the wrong places for William Roberts, however, he traveled under his own name. I never found him in any list of deserters from the British Army. The obituary indicates he resided in Streator, Illinois, a coal mining town, for two years after he arrived in America. I suspect the coal company paid his passage to America along with dozens of other English coal miners and he was indentured to them, probably for 4-6 years. If he left after two years, he would have been a criminal in Illinois. So I surmise he moved to a quiet corner of Iowa, a coal mining town as well, under an assumed name.

He maintained contact with his relatives in England. A nephew, also named William Bugg, came to visit his uncle in the 1880's. He married Ella Haney Roberts' younger sister and the two of them moved to Oklahoma to find land. They lost their first child on the journey and buried him in Kansas. The family settled near Kingfisher, OK. Had William Roberts been a deserter and a criminal in England, contact with his family in England might have been a problem.

I believe William Roberts invented a fanciful story of how he came to America to satisfy his children's curiosity about why he changed his name... preferring to have them think of him as a soldier rebelling against an unjust system than a common cheat and criminal, still wanted in Illinois. The documentary evidence does not support the family story but does support my conjecture.



Directions to the Workshop and Seminar

- If heading North on Continental Rd., turn left onto La Posada Campus
- At the 4-way stop sign, turn left onto Morningside
- At the next 4-way stop sign, turn left onto La Posada Circle
- Continue on La Posada Circle until you see the sign for La Posada Recreation Center
- There is parking in front of the Recreation Center.

The evolution and revolution of recreational vehicles.

Becky McCreary

In early Spring 2020 the COVID-19 Pandemic halted planned family vacations, cruises, international trips, motel reservations, and more. But the number of folks “hitting the road” increased dramatically. People found it a way to travel safely. The traditional over-60 RVers transitioned into the 35-50 age group.

The number of new and used Recreational Vehicles (RVs) sold rose substantially in 2020 and 2021. Dealers had back orders of a year or more, while factories strained to manufacture the homes on wheels.

How did the love of traveling in a tiny space begin in the United States? The lure of travel beyond home seemed to stem from the formation of the National Park system, part of the Department of the Interior. In 1872 Congress established Yellowstone National Park in the Territories of Montana and Wyoming “as a public park or pleasuring-ground for the benefit and enjoyment of the people.” On August 25, 1916, President Woodrow Wilson signed the act creating the National Park Service. The railroads promoted taking the train to a destination to camp.

In 1869, William H.H. Murray authored America’s first how-to camping guidebook, *Adventures in the Wilderness; Or, Camp-Life in the Adirondacks*. Its popularity caught on even more with post-war mobility. Americans began “roughing it” but with modern comforts. Prior to that, camping was a tent, cots and blankets, folding canvas stools, a bonfire, and picnic foods.

Vacationers gained travel time with the passage of the Federal Aid Highway Act of 1956, and the construction of National System of Interstate and Defense Highways. It was another post-war plus for the RV industry. The first camping club was created in 1919 and named *Tin Can Tourists*, because they heated tin cans of food on gasoline stoves by the roadside

RVs have evolved from the first bus-like vehicle called a *Gypsy Van* driven cross-country in 1915 by its builder Roland Conklin of Huntington, New York. Now there are trailers, pop ups, Class A, B, and C motorhomes, campers (attached to pickup truck bed), toy haulers, 5th wheels, and camper vans. Van conversion to a “home” has become an enterprising business, not unlike Mr. Conklin’s design. People convert school and shuttle buses, cargo vans, U-Haul trucks, and almost anything with four wheels and a body.

Choosing a place to park an RV has evolved from pulling along side a river or in a forest to the conveniences of electric, water, and sewer hook up and facilities that might include a pool, workout room, restaurant, movie theater and more in RV parks, resorts, and campgrounds. And there are those who choose to camp off-the-grid or better known as dry camping or boondocking, which in itself is a still a giant step up from those who camped in the early 1900s.

Aside from pleasure, RVing and camping has helped the economy for several generations of Americans, providing jobs in RV factories, parks, maintenance facilities, and dealerships.

A favorite saying of RVers is “I won’t say goodbye . . . I’ll see you down the road.”

Family history is more than names and dates—it is also the time in which our families lived.

Tiny

Paul McCreary



D.J. and Stella
McCreary

The knowledge of my ancestry is minimal, or tiny. For most of my life I knew very little about the maternal side of my family. I never met my mother's parents, Levi and Melissa Griffin Creamer but I did know four of her five brothers—Fred, Lawrence, Dutch, and Harry. She lived with her parents and brothers in a tiny, two room house. I am not certain of those grandparents' origin.

I did have a close relationship with my paternal grandparents, knowing them into my 20s. Dilver Jack McCreary, or commonly called D.J., lived until he was 79, and Stella Turner McCreary died at 71. They both came from tiny towns in Switzerland County in extreme Southern Indiana, on the Ohio River. The towns' names were appropriately unpretentious—Rising Sun and Bear Branch, both with small populations surrounded by hills.

Grandpa said he “escaped” there because of an intense dislike of tobacco farming, a major crop grown in that area. He was a tough, strong man when I knew him in his 50s and 60s, but cutting and bundling tobacco and hanging it to cure in barns must have been arduous, difficult work. He never once spoke of his time there in a positive way.

Stella came from the tiny village of Bear Branch, with a population of only a few hundred. Her family, the Turners, was positive and decent in the best possible way. After Grandma passed away, I met her sisters and brother and they were all the same. To meet them, even for a short time, would make anyone feel better. She had sisters who were just like her—caring, helpful and generous. No one could leave any of their houses without receiving a gift. I was given violets from one of the sisters. It was a nice touch that stayed in my memory and brought tears to my eyes because it reminded me so much of my grandmother.

Her only brother lived on a hilly farm and was the kind of person that anyone would want to be around at any time. The hour or two I spent with him will always be a fine memory. The whole day of spending even minimal time with them all was special, and I can imagine how positively they influenced each other and anyone with whom they came in contact.

Perhaps we all have the potential to make a positive, lasting difference with the people we meet. I am sure the Turners did not plan or think about their behavior, or try to be a certain way. It was just natural, which made it so extraordinary. Such meetings are inspirations for us all, and that is no tiny accomplishment in the scheme of life.

The prompt “tiny” was a Storyteller’s writing assignment.

LANGUAGES

Bob Pitcher

Photography is not really very old. My family has one or two photographs and one painting of ancestors nearing 175 years old, but I don't know what any of my ancestors looked like even two centuries ago. But I can at least conjecture what they sounded like, as far as what languages they spoke.

I'll focus here on the languages those ancestors spoke who came over to America. Most of my ancestors who came here spoke English as a first language. Those that didn't spoke one of the other Germanic languages – Scots, German, or Dutch; one of the Celtic languages – Erse (Scottish Gaelic) or possibly Welsh; or a Romance language -- French or something like it. If there was an Indian ancestor or two, she or they may have spoken Cherokee.

English

The ancestors born in England spoke English, though what that English sounded like depended on when they came here and where in England they came from. Most either came to New England between 1630 and 1675 or to Virginia, probably around 1700. One or two families came just after the Revolution. Many of the New England emigrants came from areas in England strong in Puritanism -- the southeastern counties or the west. I don't know about those that came to Virginia. The later arrivals were Borderers, from up near Scotland.

Judging both from what Englishmen were writing in the 17th and 18th centuries, and how little difficulty people in England and in the Colonies seem to have had in understanding one another's speech, I think we too could understand the English my ancestors spoke when they arrived here, though it might take a little practice. After all, with a little practice – and a glossary – we can still read Chaucer today, and his language is not only much older, but his London dialect was not the one that evolved into standard English.

Dialects were more distinct in England then than now, especially in the north, like Yorkshire or the Border, or in the west, like Somerset -- and some of my people did come from those places. It's not suggested, though, that these dialects, however strong, constituted languages distinct from English. Northerners spoke differently from Londoners in Chaucer's day too, back in the late 1300s, but Chaucer quite evidently considered them English speakers, though he could make them sound funny to his readers.

The Puritans came to speak a more uniform, educated English during the 1600s, from all reading the same Bible (the Geneva Bible not the King James!) and listening to so many sermons from preachers educated (mostly) at Cambridge. Puritans brought that language to New England, and I imagine it was the prestige speech there, emulated by many non-church-members. The upper sort that went to Virginia spoke something similar, I think. It would be the speech of the lower sorts we might find more difficult. By 1650 at the latest, Most sorts of English were also pronounced pretty much as English is today, as the Great Vowel Shift was over by that time.

Puritans themselves were often mocked for praying, preaching, and singing hymns in a nasal whine, and the reports are so consistent there's likely some truth to them.

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The English spoken by educated people in America became more uniform by the mid-1700s, and supposedly stayed that way, mostly free of regional variations. Those variations – recognizably “southern accents,” say, below the Mason-Dixon line, or the New England accent -- appeared quite quickly during and after the 1820s. We’d think Americans of the Revolution and before it had an accent, I’m sure, but I don’t know if it was any accent we’d recognize today as peculiarly American. There might be an exception to that in my late-arriving Borderers from Westmorland. What we call Appalachia today was settled in large part by Borderers, whose language was closer to what the Scots spoke than more southern dialects. Some linguists think some of the features of that dialect led to the Mountain Southern dialect of American English.

Finally, would the manner of speaking of the ancestors strike us as unusual – their choice of words, idioms, and so on? We can get a sense of this in what the earliest educated Americans wrote, or in what 17th-century Englishmen were writing back home at the time: Lord Clarendon in his *History*, for instance, or George Herbert in his advice to a country parson. Their written language strongly reflects their fluency in Latin as well as English, with (in Clarendon) learned vocabulary and sentences lengthy and involved beyond what would pass today. And some of the words they use don’t have just the same sense they do today.

I imagine there would be far less Latinity in everyday speech, except the speech of a Puritan minister; but we’d hear more words that are today somewhat or completely obsolete. We’d also, I think, be struck by the 17th century’s obsession with matters religious -- many more references to biblical language and use of theological terms beloved of Puritans and Anglicans alike. In contrast, though, it’s said, we’d be surprised, not always pleasantly perhaps, by how earthy a lot of the talk of even the strictest Puritans was. After all, though many would deny it, Americans are still influenced by Victorian prudery, and that wasn’t a problem for the Puritans.

Scots

Many linguists – and the Scottish – say that the language traditionally spoken in the Scottish Lowlands is Scots rather than English. You can find all the supposed differences between the two in Wikipedia. I don’t think they amount to a whole lot; a broad Scots accent, as they call it, takes some getting used to, and there are words and locutions strange to us, but it’s understandable with a little practice. But in the past, certainly before 1700, when Scotland was a nation independent of England, Scots was less influenced by English than it is now. Vocabulary, intonation, idioms, even some grammatical features, might puzzle us for a time before we got the hang of it. ‘Tis said that “a language is a dialect with an army”; Scots was then surely a separate language, though one also descended, as is Modern English, from Middle English.

Scotsmen came to America before 1800 either directly from Scotland, or after a stop in Ulster for a few years to a few generations. Mine took both routes, and I don’t know in every case which one. Ulstermen came to speak a particular variety of Scots, still spoken there today. Only a trickle of Scots came to America before the floods of Scots-Irish immigrants from Ulster began in 1718.

Apart from the early arrivals sent over as indentured servants after being captured by Cromwell’s armies during English Civil War, Scots in the Colonies were aliens, and weren’t supposed to be here. Their language surely set them apart to a degree. Yet at least some of my early Scots immigrants did well in America.

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My latest immigrant ancestors, the Works, my maternal grandfather's family, are a special case. Not only did they come over relatively late, only in 1873, just before Grandpa was born, but they were from the Shetland Islands. Shetlanders had their own language until about 1700 --Norn, a mix of Norwegian and Scottish Gaelic. Norn died out about the time of the earliest Work ancestors I know of, when the mainland Scots influence became much stronger in the Isles, but Norn's echo, and the isolation of the Shetlands, influenced the local dialect. Grandpa Work's father was a sailor who had seen the world -- English would have been familiar to him. But I wonder about Great-grandma Work, set down in the Chicago of the 1870s.

German

I have a strand of German ancestry -- Palatine Germans from the Rhineland, who came in the first half of the 1700s, and eventually settled in the German Flatts area of New York, in the Mohawk River valley. The Rhineland German these immigrants spoke evolved into Pennsylvania Dutch, still spoken in this country and Canada by a third of a million people. It's a descendant, evidently not much changed, of the Palatine German dialect, Pfälzisch, still one of the distinct dialects of German. Wikipedia says Pennsylvania Dutch speakers can understand modern Rhineland German to a degree, but the vocabulary and even the grammar of the American language has seen changes the German dialect has not.

These Germans in the Flatts along the Mohawk did not assimilate quickly. They were initially beyond the western edge of settlement in New York, and were isolated from later settlers in language, religion, and culture. Until some way into the 1800s, German would've been the primary if not quite the only language -- even for some of my Scottish ancestors that strayed into the Flatts and married German girls.

Dutch

My Vanmeter ancestors came to the Hudson Valley when it was still, for a few years, Nieuw Amsterdam. They spoke Dutch, and the for first generation or two in New York and New Jersey, they might not have felt much pressure to learn English well. (There's some indication some of them spoke at least a sort of French -- see below.) By the time the Vanmeters were engaged in their large-scale land speculation and outfitting in western Virginia, though, they operated in English.

Erse

Some of the Scots I know about in my family almost certainly spoke Gaelic, called Erse in Scotland to distinguish it from the closely related Irish variety. Erse was widely spoken in the Scottish Highlands until the 1740s, and is as different from Lowland Scots or English as, say, Spanish is from English.

Ancestor George Darrow, over here in the 1670s, is supposed to have come from Jura one of the more isolated Hebrides. He surely spoke Erse, and, I would think, perhaps hardly any English at first. While most of the Scots that settled Ulster in the 17th century spoke Scots, some surely came from among the Highlander clans that became Presbyterian but still spoke Gaelic. I would guess that the first of my Pattersons in Ulster were of this group, as well, maybe, as my Campbell strain. Though I know little about these Campbells as individuals, the Campbell clan were one of the strongest in the Highlands. I imagine that the Patterson and Campbell lines that spent several generations in Ulster before coming over retained little if any Erse, and would have spoken Scots. Erse is now dying out in Scotland.

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Welsh

I've never certainly nailed down any Welsh ancestors, though names like Davis are almost certainly Welsh in origin. If any of those I suspect of Welsh ancestry were born in Wales, however, they would have spoken at least some Welsh, and perhaps only Welsh. It is said that even in the mid-1800s -- long after any Welshmen in my ancestry would have come over -- most of the Welsh population was literate in Welsh, though the language has more recently lost much ground to English. Like Erse, Welsh is a Celtic language, though the two are very different. (Tolkien modeled one of his Elvish languages on Welsh. I claim no Elvish ancestry.)

French

The French connections I have are old, back into the 1600s and involve Huguenot refugees from the French religious wars. The Dutch Vanmeters and the Scot George Darrow married daughters of Huguenot refugees, named, respectively, Dubois, Bodine, and Charlet. The Dubois family was from what's now the French-Belgian border. The local languages there are Dutch (Flemish in Belgium) and a dialect of French called Picard -- or, as some linguists would have it, the Picard language. The Dubois who emigrated pretty surely spoke both, as well as some English and German, as they had had to move around Europe several times to avoid persecution. Part of the Bodine family was from western coastal France, part from Normandy, representing two quite different French dialects -- or, again, two different languages closely related to French. The Charlet who emigrated here had probably lived in England, possibly for many years; his family probably also came from across the Channel in Normandy. Some of the other names in my ancestry, such as Sorrells, are French in form, but those lines had probably been in England since the Middle Ages.

Cherokee

It's all quite vague, but there may be some Indian in my family, and it's likely enough Cherokee. Cherokee is an Iroquois language, spoken now only by a few thousand old people in Oklahoma. Its structure is nothing like that of a European language. Cherokee has long had its own alphabet, devised by the great Sequoyah, and the most published literature of any Indian language. All this is in lieu of saying anything about my Indian ancestors, because I know nothing of them, if they even existed. And who knows what *their* ancestors might have spoken when they came into America from Asia?

Take a break from your laptop!



Are you still researching an ancestor online and now feel that you have hit a dead end road? Remember, even though new information is uploaded to genealogy sites probably every day, it is only about 30-some percent of what is documented in other resources. Have you checked the books (3,500) catalogued on the SAGS website and filling the bookshelves of the Green Valley-Sahuarita Genealogy Library? If you are looking for migration maps, Mayflower descendent books, or someone to help in your research. We are very lucky to have one of the few genealogy libraries in Arizona.

WALKING

Bob Pitcher

James Fox was born about 1738 in Orange County, Virginia. That doesn't pin down the location much, since Orange, then the most recently organized county in northwestern Virginia, notionally stretched to the Mississippi. James's parents aren't known; it's likely he was English, but he might've been German or Scotch-Irish. He married twice, had five sons by each wife, and at last a single daughter. James married his second wife, Elizabeth Bean, in Dunmore County, Virginia, at the head of the Shenandoah Valley. Their first son was Elijah.

There were Indian raids in the Valley during the Revolution. About 1778, the family headed to Wilkes County, North Carolina. How did they get there? They walked. The Great Wagon Road led down the Shenandoah, then turned south to the Carolinas, where Wilkes lies just west of the Road. For most all its length, the Wagon Road wasn't suitable for wagons: people walked, their belongings packed on horses, if they had any. Right after the War, the Road carried more traffic than all the other major American routes put together -- walking, for the most part.

The Foxes stayed some years in North Carolina, but pairs of Fox half-brothers went out to explore, speculating in land, finding new territory to settle. By 1798, several were in Pendleton District, the far western corner of South Carolina, near the southern end of the Wagon Road. Eldest brother Titus settled there for a time, and so did Allen, one of Elijah's sons, who'd been born in Wilkes. Allen's son Charles Henry was born in Pendleton about 1800.

But Pendleton wasn't right, evidently; the brothers kept looking, walking what trails there were, heading north now through the Appalachian valleys to the head of the Wilderness Road that led through the mountains to Kentucky, the magnet of those days. Most of the boys, and patriarch James too, went on to western Kentucky, walking all the way, settling finally in Hopkins County, where there are still many Foxes.

Elijah, though, headed farther north, past the end of the Wilderness Road, and crossed the Ohio River into Indiana Territory. Elijah himself came back to western Carolina, but his son Allen and family walked the Wilderness Road and settled for a time in Washington County, Indiana, perhaps on land Elijah had bought for them. There Charles Henry married Louiza Vanmeter, daughter of a real pioneering family. Once more, these Foxes headed west, walking Indiana's old Buffalo Trace, eventually to Martin County, where Charles Henry's youngest child Rachel, my father's grandmother, was born in 1849.

Successive Fox generations, like many others in those unsettled years, moving incessantly on – until they did settle. Walking all the way, most likely, wherever they were headed: Virginia, both Carolinas, Tennessee, Kentucky, finally Indiana, in all a thousand miles. Walking the few trails there were, they populated the new country. Quite a feat.

The prompt “feet” was a Storyteller’s writing assignment..

All truly great thoughts are conceived by walking

Friedrich Nietzsche

Southern Arizona Genealogy Society

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