



STANISLAUS RESEARCHER

August 2007

August Meeting

This month we will host Jim Shuman. He will be explaining the different religious groups which came to America. Who they were, their differences in beliefs, and what records do they keep and where do they keep them. This should be a very interesting and informative speaker. Please make sure you join us for this meeting.

Writing A Book?

Our Society has a very unique help-group for those who are putting together an article or book. Joann MacDonald heads a writing group which gathers at her house on the third Thursday at 10:00 AM. Members critique and assist others as they write.

Before the recent publication of her book, Jan Sharp brought parts of her book. Vicky Wolff, in preparation for her family reunion, has brought the book she is writing.

If you need some help, or just want to learn, plan on attending. You will enjoy yourself.

June Meeting


Doug Harms, from the Stanislaus County Assessor's Office, gave us a fun-filled, informative and very loose and off-the-cuff program. He started out very apologetic as he didn't feel there was much the Assessor's Office could contribute to the genealogist's search. While he may have been correct in the fact we won't find a goldmine of information within his office, he did provide a comprehensive talk about the various pieces one could find within the office. One of the more interesting was the fact they have a picture of EACH property, many taken years ago. If you are/were collecting pictures of where your ancestors, or where you, lived, this in itself could be a big help.

This was a fun program.

What Would You Like?

Do you feel something is missing in your newsletter? Do you want something else in place of articles used monthly? Would you like to contribute an article? Please contact David Wolff at 529-9430 or dwolffden@sbcglobal.net with your ideas, wants or contributions.

CALENDAR	
August	
Board Meeting	Aug 13
General Meeting	Aug 21
Arkansas Study Group	Aug 13
Writing Group	Aug 16
Sep	
Board Meeting	Sep 10
General Meeting	Sep 18
Arkansas Study Group	Sep 10
Writing Group	Sep 20



7:00 PM August 21, 2007
 Trinity United Presbyterian Church
 1600 Carver Road, Modesto, CA
 Jim Shuman speaking on the
 different religious groups
 In the USA

2008 Salt lake City Trip

Don't Miss the 2008 Salt Lake City Research Trip!

You are cordially invited to join us in Salt Lake City **April 27 to May 4** to research at the Family History Library, the largest genealogical library in the world. Included in your trip will be bus transportation to and from the Sacramento airport, your airfare and your hotel room.

We expect this to be a very fun trip! Look for the registration form and estimated trip cost in the September newsletter. A \$200 deposit to Theo Schock by October 1 will be your reservation.

If you know now you want to be added to the already growing list for this trip, please contact one of the members of the new Salt Lake Research Trip Committee: Theo Schock at thschock@sbcglobal.net, Bev Johnson at jbevjohnson1@aol.com, Lisa Bruk at lbruk@sbcglobal.net, or Wayne Black at 1waynethelain@sbcglobal.net.

Queries For May 2007

Among the six queries received in May, we had a request for obits for Emily Louise Martin and her son Ransas Waller Martin. Both lived in Turlock and our Modesto newspaper only had a report on the son's death as being hit as a pedestrian. We would have more success in answering queries if the Turlock newspapers were on microfilm in the Modesto library. Other obituary requests were for Earl Arnett and his wife Lucille Helton (second marriage), and for Janie (Loveless) Cullum.

We wasted time with a query about a family who turned out to have lived in Tuolumne county, a query about David Smith was also sent to and answered by the Modesto library, and a request for details on the "Mormon colony" of New Hope on the Stanislaus river by a fellow in Idaho who is writing an historical novel which apparently includes our area.

Pat then corresponded with the Swedish woman with the end result we had the wrong Axel Carlson! But now we had a reliable birth date for the Axel of interest. More examination of census, city directories, and obituaries gave an outline of this Axel's family.

Fortunately, Pat had heard of some of these people and gave me the name of one of Axel's grandsons who will help his newly found cousin in Sweden.

"Then And Now." 1893

(written in Jan. 1893)The following article was taken from "Stone" magazine, Vol. VI, No. 2, pp. 113-115.

"The older readers will remember when they had to pay twenty-five cents postage on a letter instead of two cents as now, with a prospect of an early reduction to one cent. Then the old wooden pepper-box filled with black sand was used instead of blotting paper, the sheet on which the letter was written folded and addressed, sealed with wax or wafer, the present self-sealing envelope not having been dreamed of, nor the quill pen displaced with steel. If the letters were copied it was by pen, the letter-press and tissue paper letter-book not having yet come in.

The following articles are reprinted with permission from The Modesto Bee. Both articles were written by Michael R. Shea, Bee staff writer.

Genealogy, preservation mix at graves

Zelma Gaffery was born in 1890 and died in 1930, but Vicky Wolff didn't know even that much when she flipped through the Genealogical Society of Stanislaus County's book of found graves in Modesto cemeteries.

With just the last name, Wolff pulled the grave location from the book—Section B, Tier 3, Grave 12—and with a little help from the grounds manager, she marched into Modesto Pioneer Cemetery and found the Gaffery family plot.

'Mother' is inscribed under Zelma's name. Next to her is 'Dad,' John R. Gaffery, 1891 to 1955. John Wm. Gaffery, 1911 to 1930, is next to Zelma and Jeannie Gaffery, 1916 to 1930, is just above her, likely her children.

"Now what happened in 1930?" Wolff asked aloud.

(The mother and two children all have the same year of death.)

"I wonder about that," she said. "Was there an epidemic?"

Two hours later, Wolff sat under a shaded tent between Modesto Pioneer and Modesto Citizens cemeteries with half a dozen Genealogical Society members. Free of charge, the group is helping people locate graves from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. through Monday.

"There was a flu epidemic in 1930," said David Wolff, Vicki's husband, as he unscrewed the cap off a bottle of water.

"Well, there you go," Vicky Wolff said. "That explains it."

With American flags waving and families carrying flowers, Memorial Day weekend is a popular time in graveyards across the country. But for the Genealogical Society members such as the Wolffs, any day is a good to uncover the past.

"Knowing about your ancestors, where they came from, what they did, it's important in knowing who you are," Vicky Wolff said. "It's about family."

About 50 members of E Clampus Vitus, or "Clampers," were in the five-cemetery complex off Scenic Drive on Saturday morning.

The fraternal organization's No. 1 aim is to preserve California history. Members are responsible for regular cemetery cleanup projects and numerous historical markers around town. The No. 2 aim is to have fun, Rob Lamb, a senior member or "white shirt," said from atop a small tractor pulling two tubs of beer on ice.

The tombstone of J.B. Bolin, April 12, 1849 to Oct. 15, 1924, fell over from weather and age. Lamb watched as one member lathered the tombstone's base with a special epoxy and another set the 83 year-old stone slab into place.

"There's no money for the cemetery, so the Clampers stepped up," Dewey Summitt said as he worked the epoxy tube. "We had to come out and take care of it while building the endowment fund."

Under California state law, cemeteries can't spend endowment dollars on upkeep, only the interest, so the Clampers and Modesto Citizens Cemetery board of directors are working to build the fund.

A plot in the Citizens Cemetery runs \$700, all of which goes into the endowment, said Meredith Hamilton, president of the cemeteries board of trustees.

‘It’s the least expensive real estate in Modesto,’ he said.

While amateur genealogists hunted down old graves and the Clampers worked to repair them, Beverly Williams placed small silk flower bouquets on her husband’s family plot.

His parents were clearly marked in the center of Pioneer Cemetery, but only family lore told that a baby and an uncle were laid to rest in unmarked graves.

“They worked hard for us,” Williams said, “It doesn’t hurt to put a flower down and remember.”

Modesto cemetery mystery resolved **Electrocution caused 1930 family tragedy**

Electrocution, not a flu epidemic, killed the Gafferys.

Zelma Gaffery’s grave was the starting point of a Memorial Day story in *The Bee* about Modesto genealogists who helped people locate graves of family members during the holiday weekend.

Local genealogists speculated a 1930 Modesto flu epidemic was responsible for the deaths of Zelma Gaffery and two teenagers, John and Jeannie Gaffery.

It turns out a tragic accident more than 75 years ago left a husband without a wife and two young girls without their mother, brother and a cousin.

The Gaffery name was selected at random from the Genealogical Society of Stanislaus County’s book of found graves in Modesto cemeteries. Vicky Wolff, a society member, hunted down the family plot. Zelma’s grave was inscribed Mother and dated 1890 to 1930. Nearby were the graves of John Wm. Gaffery, 1911 to 1930, and Jeannie Gaffery, 1916 to 1930 — a 19 year old boy and 13 year old girl.

“Now what happened in 1930?” Wolff asked aloud at the gravesite. “I would wonder about that . . . Was there an epidemic?”

An e-mail crossed *The Bee* news desk late Wednesday afternoon. “Zelma Gaffery was my mother’s aunt, wrote Barb Fonderwhite, who works in *The Bee*’s advertising department. “We thought you would like to know the real story behind the names on the graves.”

Monday, July 21, 1930, was a quiet morning on the Gaffery family ranch four miles north of Merced.

The head of the house, John Gaffery, was sick in bed. Radio reception was fuzzy, so his wife and three children went outside to adjust the old pole antenna.

John William, who everyone called William, was a Merced High School and Modesto Junior College graduate with a federal amateur radio operator’s license. A brilliant student, according to family legend, he entered MJC at 16 and graduated by 19.

William directed his family as they pulled and slackened the long guy wires that kept the antenna straight.

Then the wind changed. The long pole antenna bent with the breeze and 11,000 volts coursed off the overhead Joaquin Light and Power Corp. lines and through the family. Whether the antenna touched the line or the electricity radiated off the high-volt lines is still a mystery.

12 year-old Jane Gaffery ran for help

“As far as we can find, the lines never touched, but there was so much electricity being generated, it picked up that electricity,” said Vivian Bibler Zuidema. “There used to be a big cement plant nearby with very-high-tension wires.”

Zelma, whose maiden name was Bibler, was Zuidema's aunt; Fonderwhite was Zuidema's daughter.

Twelve-year-old Jane Gaffery, thrown from the guy wire, picked herself up off the ground and burst into the family farm house. "Daddy, our whole family is burning up!" she said, according to a 1930 Bee report.

John leapt out of bed and knocked the antenna away from the overhead lines. Zelma and William's bodies were charred beyond recognition having been connected to the live wire for more than 10 minutes, The Bee reported 77 years ago. William's cousin, 14 year-old Jean Gaffery, also was dead.

Rescue crews from the cement plant, Yosemite Portland Cement, and the power company breathed life back into William at the scene, but he died two days later in a Merced hospital, The Bee reported. Jane Gaffery and her 14-year-old sister, Aileen Gaffery, spent months in the hospital but lived into their 80s and 90s, Zuidema said.

Four days after the tragedy, 14-year-old Aileen testified at a coroner's hearing in Merced to determine the cause of the accident.

"We all had hold of the guy wires in our bare hands," she sobbed to the jury. "We pulled the (antenna) about half way up. The wind blew ... and that's all I remember ..."

John, who died in 1955, was reportedly torn up with grief.

The coroner's jury returned a verdict of death by accidental electrocution.

The day after the hearing Zelma, William and Jeanie were laid to rest in Modesto Pioneer Cemetery. That same day, Zelma's parents arrived home from a Florida fishing trip.

"My grandparents came home to bury one of their children and two of their grandchildren," Zuidema said.

Elderly woman relates same story

After the Sunday story ran in The Bee, the genealogists got a phone call. The caretaker for an elderly woman was on the other end.

"She told us the same story," said David Wolff, Vicky's husband. "She was a caretaker for a 97-year-old woman who read the article, cut it out, and said she used to date William."

David didn't get the woman's name, but planned to contact The Bee to flesh out the rest of the story.

"Genealogy is a puzzle you piece together," Vicky Wolff said. "Just by looking at a gravestone, just look what we've found out. Serendipitous stuff happens."

The Box Under The Bed by Michael R Shea

I had the pleasure of meeting Vicky and David Wolff while reporting a Memorial Day story for The Modesto Bee. I planned on writing about hunting dogs that Saturday but it fell through. Scanning the holiday events listing, I came upon:

MODESTO: Modesto Pioneer and Citizens Cemetery, 905 Scenic Drive. Genealogical Society of Stanislaus County will locate graves from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. 529-9430.

I was interested, but truth-be-told, my interest stretched beyond journalistic duty. My interest, deeply, is in my grandparents.

I called the number in the paper and Vicky picked up the phone. The next day, at the cemetery, I picked a name at random out of the society book of found graves. A detective story unfolded, which I reported over two articles in The Bee the last week of May.

The mystery of the Gaffery Family plots was solved, it seemed, but the mystery of the Woods family still confounds me.

My mother's mother, Pauline Morrissette Woods, died September 19, 2000. She lived her entire adult life in a little Cape Cod-style home in Rumford, R.I. As she slipped into the haze of Alzheimer's disease the house fell into disrepair. Dishes were put away dirty, shelves of knickknacks collected a decade of dust, stepping onto the carpet in the unused "cold room" – once a living room – was like stomping a dirt road in Oakdale in the middle of August: as brown clouds thickened the air. When her last day finally came, cleaning the house fell to my grandfather, Tom Woods, and his oldest daughter, my mother, Meredith Woods Shea.

The house was a time warp. State-of-the-art golf clubs from 1950 shared floor space with old framed posters taken off the wall in 1960. There were old books and paperwork and ... a single brief case with black vinyl siding printed like Alligator hide. Inside was 100 years of Woods and Morrissettes, bound together with a rusty old paperclip.

My grandmother was an avid genealogist. Before the days of rootsweb.com she mailed letters to anyone that may have been related. One letter dated January 11, 1980 – three months before I was born – mailed to Somerset House in London reads, "I am searching for the origins of my paternal grandmother ... I understand that by 1851 the census returns required that a person say where he/she was born and that these ten-year census records are also kept at Somerset House."

She was good.

My grandmother's carefully typed brackets go back five generations from her children. Her research on my grandfather's side of the family, The Woods and Rayne families, is equally rigorous. My great, great grandmother on my grandfather's paternal side was Ellen Murphy, born in Drumlish, Ireland. A saved letter shows that family going back seven generations.

My grandmother's genealogy work seemed to stop in the mid-1980s. Many things happened around that time, from grandchildren to the likely early onset of Alzheimer's. Her work has far from faded, though.

I'm working on a project about my family in World War II. Though none of the Woods family brackets after my great grandparents have dates, I'm trying to piece together the puzzle of those who came before me. (I'll probably enlist some society help in this soon.)

I was interested in writing about you guys that last week in May because I've seen first hand the historical back roads and alleys good genealogy illuminates. I hope in time to see further down my own family roads.

Best to all,

Michael R. Shea mshea@modbee.com

Using RootsWeb: Knowing What Enumerators Were Instructed

Searching for American families is pretty easy these days -- especially if you subscribe to the U.S. census records at Ancestry.com. Just type in the names and narrow the search to a particular census year and state, right?

Alas, it is not always that simple. And, even when you find them, how can you be sure they are yours, when the ages and other information do not quite match?

Did our ancestors really lie to the enumerators? Did the census takers "pad" the records? Of course, there is no way to know for sure in a particular instance, but knowing what the rules

were and how the answers were suppose to be recorded can make you a better family historian. Such knowledge might enable you to sort out some anomalies you encounter during your census searches.

The enumerator instructions for the 1850-2000 census years are online and well worth the time to read them in order to understand the questions asked and how the responses were to be recorded. American censuses are available for searching for the years 1790-1930. <http://www.ipums.org/usa/voliii/>

For example, in the instructions for the 1910 U.S. census under "ages of children" the enumerator was instructed to take particular pains to get the exact ages of children. The instructions were in the case of a child not two years old, the age should be given in *completed months,* expressed as twelfths of a year. If a child was not yet a month old, enter the age as 0/12, but note again this question should be answered with reference to April 15 [Census Day]. A child who is just a year old on the 17th of April 1910 should nevertheless be returned as 11/12, because that is the age in completed months on April 15.

So, if you, like many researchers, have assumed the ages given were those as of the day of the enumerator's visit, take a closer look, noting what the official Census Day was for each census. You might have made an assumption that is erroneous. U.S. Censuses for 1790-1800-1810-1820 had a Census Day of the first Monday in August, which ranged from August 2 to August 7. For the years 1830-1900, Census Day was 1 June. In 1910 it was 15 April; in 1920 it was 1 January; and in 1930 it was 1 April.

The 1910 instructions pertaining to Column 8 were: Persons who were single on April 15 should be so reported, even though they may have married between that date and the day of your visit; and, similarly, persons who become widowed or divorced after April 15 should be returned as married if that was their condition on that date.

In Column 12 (place of birth of this person) if the person was born in the United States, give the state or territory (not county, city, or town) in which born. The words "United States" are not sufficiently definite. A person born in what is now West Virginia, North Dakota, South Dakota, or Oklahoma should be reported as so born, although at the time of his birth the particular region may have had a different name.

Enumerators also were cautioned not to rely upon the language spoken to determine birthplace, noting that this is especially true of German, for "more than one-third of the Austrians and nearly three-fourths of the Swiss speak German. In the case of persons speaking German, therefore, inquire carefully whether the birthplace was Germany, Switzerland, Austria, or elsewhere."

Column 12--about "mother tongue"--can trip you up if you are not aware of the instructions given to the enumerators. They were told the question, "What is your mother tongue or native language?" should be asked of all persons who were born in any foreign country, and the answer should be written in column 12, after the name of the country of birth. In order to save space, the abbreviations (which were indicated on separate "List of foreign countries") should be used for the country of birth, but the language given as the mother tongue should be written out in full. For example, if a person reports he was born in Russia and his mother tongue is Lithuanian, write in column 12 Russ.--Lithuanian; or if a person reports he was born in Switzerland and his mother tongue is German, write Switz.--German. The name of the mother tongue must be given even when it is the same as the language of the country in which the person was born. Thus, if a person reports he was born in England and his mother tongue is English, write Eng.--English;

For tips on pre-1930 U.S. censuses and other countries, please see:

<http://www.rootsweb.com/~rwguide/lesson9.htm>

Originally published in the RootsWeb Review 9 March 2005, Vol. 8, No. 10.

Member Passing

BOB MOSER

Bob Moser passed away at home recently. While Bob was not a member of our Society, he was a big influence behind his wife, Geri Moser.

When the Society needed a place to keep our Book Nook, Bob gave up half of his garage so Geri could bring the books, periodicals and all of the research materials to their house. He even built some shelves and completely rearranged the whole garage. While the Society was walking the various cemeteries, Bob was a big help with the computer programs used to keep track of the graves and the various engravings on the headstones. He was always available to help the Society.

Our hearts go out to the Moser family in their period of loss.

Member Passing

CECIL EDWARD KILROY

Cecil Edward Kilroy passed away on July 4, 2007. He was the husband of long time member Mileta Kilroy. He was born in Turlock, Ca, living his whole life in Stanislaus County. He had a long career in law enforcement, starting with the Turlock Police Dept., then for Stanislaus County Sheriff's Office for 30 years. After retiring from the Sheriff's Dept, he worked for Norris Industries, in charge of the Fire Dept and Plant Protection.

As a member of our Society, he published a book, "1895 Military Roll of Stanislaus County CA". Recently, he published "Turlock Memory Lane", a book comprised of Turlock history. To his extended family, we send our condolences.

Member Passing

MARY INEZ LIMA

NOV. 15, 1925 - JUNE 19, 2007 Miss Mary Inez Lima was born and raised in Hilmar, California; A resident of Turlock since 1953. She worked for the school district for ten years after she graduated from Hilmar in 1944. She attended Modesto Junior College, worked for C. E. Hillberg Company CPA and Lela's Dress shop from 1955 to 1979; and then at Hughson High School as an Administrative Secretary from 1979 to 1995.

Mary belonged to the Y.L.I.; S.P.R.S.I.; Native Daughters; Luso Americano; and Sacred Heart Catholic Church. Her favorite activity was bowling.

She is survived by her brother, Manuel J. Lima of Turlock, CA; sister, Rose M. Vaz of Newman, CA, and many nieces and nephews.

Memorial contributions may be sent to American Heart and Stroke Association, 1710 Gilbreth Road, Burlingame, CA 94010; American Cancer Society, 1604 Ford Ave. Ste. 8, Modesto, CA 95350; or to a favorite charity of one's choice. Visitation will be Monday, June 25, 2007 3:00 PM at Allen Mortuary. A Rosary will be said at Allen Mortuary same day 7:00 PM. Mass of Christian Burial will be Tuesday, June 26, 2007 11:00 AM at Sacred Heart Catholic Church with Entombment to follow at Turlock Memorial Park.

The Society sends its condolences to her extended family.

Welcome**New & Returning Members**

***We have 228 members as of
July 23, 2007!***

We wish to welcome all new members for the year 2007. We hope you have found our society helpful, knowledgeable, and resourceful.

We look forward to welcoming many more new members in the year 2007.

RETURNING MEMBERS:

#965 Leslie Franklin Modesto, CA

#966 Cindy Kooistra Turlock, CA

#967 Elizabeth Cook Fairbanks,
AK

RETURNING MEMBERS:

#931 Donna Mendonca Ripon, CA

If there are **any** corrections, changes in your telephone number, mailing address, or e-mail address **please** send info to Maybelle Allen: telephone (209) 523-0593, email: rmallen213@sbcglobal.net, or write to GSSC, PO Box A, Modesto, CA 95352-3660; Attn. Maybelle.

Membership dues:

\$20.00 single membership

\$27.50 Family membership

Newsletter subscription included with both memberships.

**The General Meeting is at
Trinity United Presbyterian Church,
1600 Carver Road,
Modesto, CA
7:00 PM on the 3rd Tuesday, except in
July and December**

GSSC Web Page

[Http://www.cagenweb.com/stanislaus/gssc.html](http://www.cagenweb.com/stanislaus/gssc.html)

HAVE YOU CHANGED YOUR EMAIL ADDRESS? IN THE LAST 6 MONTHS? THE LAST YEAR? IF SO, PLEASE, EMAIL CHANGES TO

>gssc@worldnet.att.net<. On the subject line just put 'updating email address.' If your name is not included in your email address, **please, please**, put it in the body of the email. If you'd do it the day you receive your newsletter, it'd be greatly appreciated.

Beatitudes of a Family Genealogist

Blessed are the great-grandmothers,
who hoarded newspaper clippings and old letters,
For they tell the story of their time.

Blessed are all grandfathers who filed every legal document,
For this provides proof.

Blessed are grandmothers who preserved family Bibles and diaries,
For this is our heritage.

Blessed are fathers who elect officials that answer letters of inquiry,
For some, they are the only link to the past.

Blessed are mothers who relate family traditions and legends to the family,
For one of her children will surely remember.

Blessed are the relatives who fill in family sheets with extra data,
For them we owe the family history.

Blessed is any family whose members strive for the preservation of records,
For theirs is a labor of love.

Blessed are the children who will never say,
"Grandma, you have told that old story twice today. Author Unknown



G.S.S.C. CA.
P.O. Box A
Modesto, CA
95352-3660

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*Deadline for the STANISLAUS RESEARCHER is
the Society Board Meeting, second Monday of each month*

**THE STANISLAUS RESEARCHER MAKES EVERY EFFORT
TO PROVIDE ONLY VERIFIED INFORMATION, HOWEVER,
WE ASSUME NO RESPONSIBILITY FOR ERRORS**