

STANISLAUS RESEARCHER

Genealogical Society of Stanislaus County

November 2009

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In this Issue

President's Message.....	1
November Program.....	1
The Elusive Elinor Briggs.....	2
Nominating Committee Report.....	3
Book Reports	4
Fresno Seminar	5
Membership Renewal Notice.....	5
New Editor for 2010	5

President's Message

By Beverly Graham

What a fabulous time we all had at the Potluck Dinner in October. We all ate, asked for recipes, ate, talked, ate, exchanged news, ate, and then we ate again. Whew, I'm getting full all over again just thinking about all that food. What a wonderful dinner. Can't think of anything we could have done that would have been more satisfying than eating with friends! Just enjoying each other's company is a treat in itself.

November will be a happy time for all of us. Some of us will be leaving the loop and some will be coming into it—the loop being the Executive Board. It's always fun to see the changes. New blood makes for new thoughts and new ideas. It's also fun to see what the new officers will come up with to help us all move forward in our genealogical endeavors.

Change is everything. To those Board members who have given their time so graciously, you can't be thanked enough. We could not be such a successful Society without the brave souls who so willingly give of their knowledge and time. From the bottom of my heart I thank you...

Jeff.....for all your hard work to put together some of the best programs we've ever had. Your expertise and knowledge was wonderful.

Janet.....for all your inventive ideas, trips, and workshops. You are a creative genius. Your ideas are constantly increasing, getting better and better. Thanks again.

Susan.....for all the suggestions and work you so willingly did on the newsletter. Your updated accounting kept us on track and within budget. You were great.

Dorothy.....for all the great notes and recall you had at our meetings. What a treat to have all those sent to us in those timely e-mails. Great job.

Vicky.....for all the endless hours spent organizing the table, doing the yard sale, Memorial Day, and all our "food" drives. You are wonderful and greatly appreciated.

Marilyn.....for all your Mondays at the library. You keep us in the know regarding the updates and changes the library makes. You kept us from being left in the dark.

November Program

November 17, 2009 7:00 p.m.

Every November we celebrate our ancestors with an Ancestors Night meeting. Usually four or five members bring some item once owned by an ancestor and they tell us about the item and its significance in their family.

Always an entertaining evening, this is also the last general meeting for the year. Remember, we have no general meeting in December. Enjoy the holidays and we look forward to getting back together with everyone in January.

Charlie.....for all those queries you answer. No one could do it better. At times it is such a thankless job, but you made it a great gift for all those you helped.

Judith.....for sending the cards and taking on the job as our Historian. Your tireless effort is much appreciated.

Millie.....for all your experience and knowledge in things regarding our Society's past and present. Without your willingness to share we would have been out in left field. Thanks again.

Maybelle.....for keeping us up to date with memberships and e-mails. What would we do without your gentle reminders and bits of advice? Thanks again.

Lisa.....for all your hard work putting together the Salt Lake City research trip. Your endless hours of work can only be known to those who work and travel with you.

Lewis.....for stepping up to the plate and advising us with your knowledge and computer savvy. An internet presence is just a dream for some societies, but for us it's a reality thanks to you.

Carolyn.....for all the time you have spent doing the behind-the-scenes work for us.

Joann.....for your endless hours helping newbies at the Family History Center. Great mentor!

Jackie.....for all the wonderful treats you brought for us to munch on. Without you we would have gone hungry and been crabbiest than usual. Thanks so much for feeding us!

And most of all...**TO ALL OUR MEMBERS**...WHO UNSELFISHLY HELPED US LIVE THROUGH ANOTHER YEAR. This will go down as the "food" year and in the "waist-line" memory of us all.

The Elusive Elinor Briggs

By Donna Buhler

It all started with a short sentence in the biography of my maternal grandfather, William Henry Gray. In the *Commemorative Biographical Record of the Counties of Rock, Green, Grant, Iowa and Lafayette, Wisconsin* © 1901, on pages 421 and 422, it states, "Joseph Gray, the grandfather of William Henry was a native of New York and of Scottish descent. He was a soldier in the War of 1812, lived to be old, and reared a large family." That statement began a journey to trace my ancestors and has not stopped since. While talking to Bud and Norrine Coyle from my church, they encouraged me to visit and join the Genealogical Society of Stanislaus County, which I did in June. I have since made many new friends who have the same indescribable drive that I have to learn more about my ancestors.

Along the way I have made many discoveries as well as created many new questions. Being a detective is a good way to describe my new "profession." When Bud told me about the Special Collections Room at the Stanislaus County Library I went there as soon as I could to see what it was all about. There, I met Marilyn, Janet, Bette, and others who are slowly but surely giving me direction; teaching me about indexes, censuses, state maps, and county boundary line changes. They are encouraging me to start the work of family group sheets and timelines.

I guess it was only natural to begin journaling about my genealogical journey, and therefore, I was excited to find out about the writing group led by Joann. Today is my third time visiting the writing group and I will share this piece with Joann, Vicky, Dorothy, Judith, Ellen, Millie, and Bev, among others. It's wonderful to get their input as this journey is given legs and maybe, someday, wings. It will be passed on to my children as a gift of their heritage.

At first I was bouncing off the walls with my weekly discoveries, but now I'm beginning to settle down as I come up against certain challenges. One is finding Joseph Gray from Floyd, Oneida County, New York on the list of soldiers in the War of 1812. (Marilyn, did you notice I wrote city, county, and state?) It is unknown how those records were destroyed—perhaps in a fire or a flood. I understand it is a common occurrence.

Another challenge was finding the resting place of Joseph Gray. I found Betsey, his wife, listed in the Floyd Cemetery, Oneida County, New York, along with some other Grays I didn't know about. No Joseph Gray was listed in the Floyd Cemetery, so I e-mailed the town clerk's office and asked if they knew anything about him. That began new friendships. The clerk's office contained a wealth of information. The assistant town clerk, Arlene, took me in several directions. She eventually discovered that she lived next door to the land where Joseph Gray lived! Georgianna is the town clerk and Arlene helps with genealogy queries like mine. Would you believe it? Arlene went out to the Floyd Cemetery and took pictures of Betsey's headstone, as well as those of the Gray family. The Gray headstones mark the graves of Joseph and Betsey's daughter-in-law and two infant twins who all died shortly after they were born. Another grandson is also buried there. While taking pictures, Arlene discovered Joseph's headstone flat on the ground and hidden not very far from Betsey. She thought the headstone had fallen over and was covered up. That was probably why it had not been recorded when the volunteers came through. What a blessing she was. I now had photographs of my ancestors' final resting places. I was thrilled, but only for a short while.

I was compelled to know more about Joseph and Betsey's lives. Is any discovery enough? Where were Joseph's father and mother buried, and what was their story? Where did the "Scottish descent" come into the picture? What about Betsey's story? To answer my questions I looked online and googled "Milton, Rock County, Wisconsin," where my mother was born and raised. I discovered a whole bunch of my Gray family on a RootsWeb World Connect Project. Wow! Someone had done an awful lot of work before me. There were Grays all the way back to England but not one hint of a Scottish name among them. My friends in the Special Collections Room are teaching me to find and properly record all my sources. I am trying faithfully to do this. I checked all the names and all the septs. Was Joseph just a liar, or a good story teller? Hmmmm. So now I come to Elinor.

Joseph Gray's father was Asahel Gray. Now there's a name for you! One I had certainly never heard before. According to the information on "They Came To Milton," his wife was Elinor Briggs Gray. In my investigation there is no recorded mother or father for Elinor. There is no recorded birth date or marriage certificate. There is no evidence she was even born in New York. There is no death date or burial date or even a record of her burial site. But, one thing I do know, she had four children, including Joseph Gray. I have a strange but wonderful feeling that my great-great-great-grandmother, Elinor Briggs, holds the key to the answers of several of my questions. Someone knew she existed, and that she was married to Asahel Gray, and they had four children. I will start from there and begin to track the trail of the elusive Elinor Briggs. I don't know if I will ever discover her completely but it's sure going to be great fun trying. See you in the Special Collections Room!

Nominating Committee Report

By Susan Park

At the October general meeting, Nominating Committee Chair, Diana Loomis, reported the following members have agreed to stand for election, with an eye to serving on next year's Board of Directors. We are very fortunate to have these folks volunteers their services.

President	Jeff Wells
1st Vice President	Lowell Beachler
2nd Vice President	Millie Starr
Recording Secretary	Vicky Wolff
Treasurer	Sue Hinrichs
Director at Large	Carmen Pedrioli
Director at Large	Donna Buhler

Book Reports

By Susan Park

In the Napa Valley Genealogical & Biographical Society's July-August 2009 newsletter (whew!) I read a review of an interesting sounding book entitled, *Annie's Ghosts* by Steve Luxemburg. The reviewer was NVGBS member Nancy Gilien. I was hooked with her first words, and will quote just a couple of paragraphs from that review. Maybe you'll want to read this book too.

All diligent genealogists uncover a family secret, sooner or later. A baby was born "too soon," a cousin ran away, or a certain relative was never discussed in front of the children. Such family issues, once disclosed, fade in sensitivity and interest with time into sidebars or endnotes to the genealogy....

Beth Luxemburg had always told her family she was an only child. In fact, she had grown up with a sister until their parents sent her sister, Annie, to a psychiatric hospital at age twenty-one. The family erased any hints that she had existed. Annie died, incarcerated, at age fifty-three. Twenty-seven years later Beth died, still maintaining her secret. Learning almost by chance of his mother's sister, Steve began researching his missing aunt. His findings result in a genealogical detective story, a memoir, and a social history.

I could hardly wait to read this book and was ready to make a trip to Borders to get my own copy, but then I decided to be thrifty and use the library instead. I checked the online catalog of the Stanislaus County Library and found that they had the book in their collection, but someone else was already reading it. I was asked if I wanted to reserve it, and even better, I was allowed to specify which branch I'd like to have it delivered to! I said "Salida, please" and in about two weeks I had a nice e-mail from the library telling me that the book was ready. I think I picked it up on a Thursday, and I know that I read it almost non-stop. Finished in two days.

Not only was the story as intriguing as advertised, but it reminded me that there is always more than one way to peel a potato. While we often stress and worry over how to properly format and document our genealogical endeavors, we also want our families to actually read and enjoy our work. A binder full of family group sheets and pedigree charts just doesn't appeal to the regular world the way it does to "us." I'm not encouraging anyone to abandon the research and reporting standards our industry promotes, but I am encouraging you to think outside the box, and consider telling your thoroughly documented family history in the way that Mr. Luxemburg told his.

Yesterday I received my copy of the *NGS Quarterly* and, as I always do, I flipped to the back to check out the book reviews. There on page 232 I found another book that sounds like a "must-read." This one is called *Jacob's Well: A Case for Rethinking Family History* by Joseph A. Amato. The reviewer, Carolyn Earle Billingsly, Ph.D., writes, "Amato has written a perfect example of the slightly differing viewpoints, yet strong affinities, between history and genealogy. Genealogists of any level will be educated, and fascinated, by this work—and they will not likely perceive it simply as a work of history."

Not having read the book yet, I can't tell you exactly what it is about, nor whether it is worth pursuing, however, it appears that Mr. Amato comes from a family much like mine—ordinary people who were neither wealthy, nor prominent, and only occasionally successful. In Ms. Billingsly's words, "As all genealogists should, Amato tells his family story, warts and all, skillfully adding psychological insights to illuminate unknown motivations and actions." I will be ordering this one from the library too, and look forward to reading it sometime soon.

Fresno Seminar

By Susan Park

In our Society mailbag we received notice of an excellent seminar coming up on Saturday, November 21st. The seminar is co-sponsored by the Fresno County Genealogical Society and the Fresno-Yosemite Chapter DAR. This is billed as a Genealogy Technology Seminar and the speaker is Geoff Rasmussen, who is affiliated with the producers of Legacy Family Tree, a genealogical database program. I've heard Geoff speak before and even if you don't use Legacy, you will still learn a LOT at any of his talks. The topics he intends to cover in Fresno are as follows:

- A Genealogist's Guide to Working with Digital Images
- Timelines & Chronologies: Secrets of Genealogical Success
- Sharing Genealogy Electronically: Publishing to CD/DVD, the Internet, and E-mail
- Market Your Ancestors using Message Boards & Mailing Lists

For more information please contact Corky Peterson at 559-322-1743, or at corksterr@sbcglobal.net, or at 2627 E. Waterford Ave., Fresno, CA 93720-4643. The seminar will run from 8:30 a.m. until 4:00 p.m. on Saturday, November 21st.

Membership Renewal Notice

By Susan Park

Membership Chair, Maybelle Allen, asks that you complete the membership renewal form on the back of this page and return as soon as you can. If you've already sent in your dues for 2010, she thanks you for being so prompt.

Maybelle also asks that you clean out your e-mail boxes from time to time. She often sends reminders and announcements to our members via e-mail and lately she's had quite a few returned because the recipient's mailbox was full. If that was you, not only did you miss Maybelle's e-mail, but who knows how many others you didn't get too?

New Editor for 2010

By Susan Park

I've enjoyed editing this *Stanislaus Researcher* for the past two years, but now it is time to let someone else have a chance at it. Lewis Ruddick, one of our Directors at Large, has volunteered to take over the editorship of this newsletter. You may know Lew as the webmaster, the fellow who maintains our website at <http://cagenweb.com/lr/stanislaus/gssc.html>. If you haven't checked out the website recently, you really should. I'm sure that Lew will bring a new and different perspective to this newsletter, and I look forward to reading it next year as a subscriber, rather than as the editor.

GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY OF STANISLAUS COUNTY
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GSSC 2010 MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

Membership Year: January 1, 2010 to December 31, 2010

Member # _____ Member # _____ Date _____

Print or type name as desired on Membership Card:

NAME: _____ TELEPHONE: () _____

ADDRESS: _____ CITY, STATE: _____

9-DIGIT ZIP: _____ - _____ E-MAIL ADDRESS: _____

Please list any information you wish to be **excluded** from the printed roster. _____

Your preference of receiving GSSC newsletter, the *Stanislaus Researcher* is by: Hard Copy (by US mail) _____ or Email notice (to print & read or to read on line) _____ - **You MUST – MUST keep your email address current with us ~ send changes to gssc@att.net.**

OCCUPATION (Optional) Was/Is _____

ARE YOU WILLING TO SERVE ON BOARD OR COMMITTEES? YES _____ NO _____ Short-term _____

Optional Donation to National Archives Records Administration Fund: \$ _____

NARA Gift Fund is a nationally supported program to finance the creation of finding aids and the microfilming of valuable research materials now preserved in the National Archives and Records Administration in Washington, D. C.

Optional Donation to **Special Collections Room**, Stanislaus County Library \$ _____

GSSC Dues: \$20.00 single membership, \$27.50 for couple*
(*One newsletter - one address): \$ _____

Check #: _____ Total Enclosed: \$ _____

Make checks payable to G S S C. ***Mail to:** GSSC, ATTN. Maybelle Allen, 1141 Springcreek Dr. Modesto, 95355-4820. Please make notation on check 'annual dues.'

If you enclose a **self-addressed stamped envelope**, your membership card will be mailed to you. **You may use a letter size envelope and put your address as the return address.** Membership cards are available at the general meetings.

Questions? Call Maybelle Allen at (209) 523-0593 or e-mail: roymallen213@yahoo.com

Membership Information

- Dues: Single membership, \$20.00 per year Family membership, \$27.50 per year
- Stanislaus Researcher Published 10 times per year by Genealogical Society of Stanislaus County, P. O. Box A, Modesto, CA 95352-3660. Submit articles for publication to the editor via email: pebfarms@yahoo.com by the 15th of each month.
- Address changes: Send address, email and phone number changes to Maybelle Allen at:
 US Mail: Maybelle Allen c/o GSSC, P. O. Box A, Modesto, CA 95352-3660
 Email: gssc@att.net
 Telephone: 209-523-0593 (Maybelle Allen)
- GSSC web page: <http://www.cagenweb.com/lr/stanislaus/gssc.html>.
 The newsletter is posted at this website, along with other interesting society-related items.
- General meeting: 7:00 p.m. on the 3rd Tuesday of each month, except July and December at the Trinity Presbyterian Church at 1600 Carver Rd., Modesto, CA.
- Board meeting: 7:00 p.m. on the 2nd Monday of each month at El Vista Chapel (LDS) at 731 El Vista Ave., Modesto, CA.

2009 Officers		2009 Standing Committee Chairs	
President	Bev Graham	Acquisitions	Janet Lancaster
1st Vice President	Jeff Wells	Audit	
2nd Vice President	Janet Lancaster	Budget	Susan Park
Secretary	Dorothy Winke	Four Generation Charts	Vicky Wolff
Treasurer	Susan Park	Historian	Theo Schock
Correspondence Secretary	Sheri Jones	Membership	Maybelle Allen
Director at Large	Vicky Wolff	Memorial Day	Vicky Wolff
Director at Large		Mentor	Joann MacDonald
Director at Large		Newsletter	Susan Park
Director at Large	Diana Loomis	Planning	Beverly Graham
Director at Large	Lewis Ruddick	Program	Jeff Wells
Past President	Millie Starr	Publicity	Sheri Jones
		Queries	Charlie Tieman
		Refreshments	Jackie Niemeyer
		Registrar	Judith Welch
		Research & Publication	Millie Starr
		Research Trips: Sutro/Archives	
		Research Trips: Salt Lake City	Lisa Bruk
		Seminar & Workshop	Janet Lancaster
		Special Collections Room	Marilyn Belleville
		Sunshine	Judith Welch

We have 204 members.



Genealogical Society of
Stanislaus County
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