

Kerrville Genealogical Society Messenger

Newsletter of the Kerrville Genealogical Society, Kerrville, Texas

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Fall 2023

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Next Issue:

January 1, 2024

Deadline for submissions:

December 24, 2023

Send to: leslie.vandrasedk@live.com

Address changes:

If you need to make a change to your e-mail or postal address, let us know by sending an e-mail to kgs@hctc.net or by phone, 830-315-1836.

President's Message



Welcome back to Fall and welcome back to our wonderful meetings of KGS! Things have changed since Spring welcomed us into warmer weather... and it went a little overboard, in my books. But we made it to NOW. We need rain but with La Niña in the area, it looks like we are going to get plenty before she shoves El Niño away!

Changes came into my life this summer and I find myself a Kerrville citizen. Yes, I have moved to Kerrville and have a beautiful new home (well, new to me) and will be settled in this century as soon as possible. Please feel free to come and see me. Please call before you come since I am busy opening a million boxes and cannot find anything I need. I prided myself as a "military wife," I could move at the drop of a hat and always set up the home in record time. If you have ever had to move three times in three months, it is certainly trying on the nerves! So maybe I over-rated myself. I will get there but it may take a while!! But this is a long story that I will tell you some other time.

Our Board has taken care of us so well! They have stepped in and taken care of our business while I was busy moving. I thank them all for this and want to let you all know that you have a great Board that does its work so well!

I hope you are looking forward to the season in front of us. We have great speakers lined up for you to enjoy and learn so much about the subject that they will be talking about. Do not miss any of them.

We have been begging some of you to join us as volunteers. I beg still! We have had some of you join in helping us and doing it well... actually VERY WELL! Please come and volunteer to do something...anything that you are good at...your talent...your passion! We will welcome you as a team member and will help you to help us. Contact us at the KGS Library...come in or call! Just drop in for a chat and inquire about something that you would like to do! And bring a friend. We can always use new members!

Our next meeting is October 18th at 2:00 p.m. with our speaker being Janet Dugart and I will be there to welcome you!

Bye for now,

Nancy McLarry

President, KGS

Upcoming Meetings

Our meetings are held at 2:00 p.m.
Guadalupe Basin Natural Resource Center
Upper Guadalupe River Authority Auditorium
125 Lehmann Drive, Kerrville, TX 78028

October 18

Janet Dugart: What Now? Putting It All Together

Janet Dugart is a member of KGS and on the Board. We are excited to have her share her experience with us about how to put what we have gathered and learned in our genealogy journey into a book. Don't be intimidated by the subject—come and learn how you can do it, too!

November 15

Donald Frazier: To be announced

Donald Frazier is the Director of The Texas Center at Schreiner University in Kerrville, Texas and a veteran of several decades in the college classroom.



He is the award-winning author of books on the American Civil War, Texas History, Military History, and the US-Mexican Borderlands.

Frazier has been very involved in a variety of heritage and cultural tourism projects, including consulting on the development of three museums, two research centers, a Mexican War battlefield, work on Civil War and frontier heritage trails in Texas, New Mexico, and Louisiana, and work on historical projects in Europe and Mexico. He also helped Abilene, Texas achieve recognition as a Preserve America City and grant recipient. He is currently serving as President and CEO of the McWhiney History Education Group, a Texas-based educational non-profit and has served as a consultant with several communities as they develop their heritage and cultural assets, and has been recognized for his efforts by numerous organizations including the American Association for State and Local History, The Texas Historical Foundation, the Historical Society of New Mexico, and the Louisiana Historical Association. He is also the recipient of the Gold Medal for Historical Preservation from the Daughters of the American Revolution.

Dr. Frazier has received accolades and honors for his contributions to the historical dialogue in the United States. He was chosen for a military history fellowship at the United States Military Academy at West Point, a fellowship at the University of Edinburgh, Scotland, and is in high demand as a thinker, consultant, and speaker. Frazier is a Fellow of the Texas State Historical Association, an elected member of the prestigious Philosophical Society of Texas--the oldest learned organization in the state--as well serving as a scholar-director of the Texas Historical Foundation, and service on the Alamo Museum Planning Committee. In 2021, Governor Greg Abbott of Texas appointed Frazier to the "1836 Commission" and has recently been reappointed.

Membership News

Janet Dugart, Membership Chair

Our current membership totals 121. Our year is ending and it's time for renewals. If you haven't already, please renew your membership. There is a form at the end of the newsletter; just fill it in and send with your payment, drop it off, or bring it to our next meeting.



On the Shelves at the KGS Research Center & Library

Harriet M. Chesi, Collections



The Alamo – Original Title – 13 Days to Glory
Cemetery Data of Nueces County, TX
Debrett's Texas Peerage (Private World of TX Noble Families)
Fayette County, Texas Marriage Records 1838-1870
Historic Gregg County (TX) – An Illustrated History
Historic McLennan County (TX) – An Illustrated History
Historic San Marcos (TX) – An Illustrated History
The Kothmanns of Texas – 1845-1951
A Living History of the TX Hill Country – Morning Chores & Soda Fountains
More About Zephyr (Brown Co.) TX – History and Stories of Its People
The Henry and Hanne Pape Family Story (Germany to TX)
The Adams Families
William Beal, Bucks County, PA
Confederate Chronicles of TN
Cemetery Inscriptions of the Town of Barnstable, MA and its Villages (1600-1900)
Families of Ancient New Haven (CT)
First Polish Ancestors
Genealogical Record St. Nicholas Society of NYC
Generations – An American Family – Harlan Co., KY
German Element of the Shenandoah Valley of VA
Grand Parish (LA) Cemeteries
History of Brown County, IL – 1880-1970
Huguenot Historic Sites and Burials (French immigrants)
Old Dutch Church (Kingston, NY) Members – 1659-1809
Philadelphia 1776-2076 – A 300 Year View
Pioneers of Maine and New Hampshire – 1623-1660
The TenMile Country and its Pioneer Families (SW Pennsylvania)
Washington County, PA Marriages (1780-1857)

Some new “how to” research sources are available in Room 1 on the left side of the desk. One black binder contains Family Tree Magazine research information for each state, listed alphabetically. A larger black binder contains Family Tree Magazine “Cheat Sheets” on Adoptions, Cemetery Success,

English Genealogy, Finding Female Ancestors, German Genealogy, Polish Genealogy, 7 Ways to Use Maps in Genealogical Research, 5 Steps to Find Your Ancestor's Deed and much more. A BIG “thank you” to Pat Weber for putting these together for us.

A New Service by KGS

By Sharon Ashby

We are beginning to offer research help using our Kerr County book list. This list will be on our website (kerrvillegenealogy.wordpress.com) along with a form to download, complete information for the individual to be researched, include a check for \$10.00, and mail it to the Research Center &

Library. The fee will include the research from three selected sources from the book list, copies, and postage. This is advantageous for anyone doing research in Kerr County that lives a distance away or unable to do the research in person.

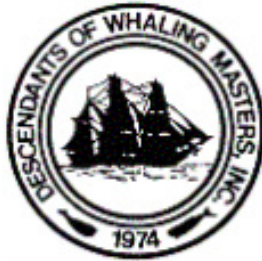
If you or anyone you know could use this service, let them know. We are here to help our members as well as the public.

Descendants of Whaling Masters

By Chris Davis

The Descendants of Whaling Masters, Inc., of New Bedford, Massachusetts, is a lineage society whose members descend from whaling masters (captains) and whalemens (crew).

The membership consists of over 450 members throughout the United States and the world who treasure their whaling history connections. The purpose of the organization is to perpetuate the history and tradition of the whaling era. The whaling industry is a slice of Americana that will go unrecognized unless organizations such as the Descendants of Whaling Masters take steps to educate today's public about this awe-inspiring and at times tumultuous period of early life in America. The Descendants of Whaling Masters are committed to



preserving this important legacy so that the fascinating story of whaling will not be lost to future generations.

Our newest member, Chris Davis of Fredericksburg, is the DWM Membership Chairman who would be pleased to assist prospective members with documentation of their whaling ancestors. She can be reached at cscout53@yahoo.com.

Application forms and lineage worksheets are available for download from DWM's website: www.whalingmasters.org. There are different ancestry categories for membership—Descendant, Relative, Crew and Associate.

Discover Your Family History

October is Family History Month and a great time to begin or continue researching your genealogy. Come into the KGS Research Center & Library and let us help you find your family history.

Simple ways to celebrate Family History Month:

1. Text or call a relative you haven't talked to in a while.
2. Spend a few minutes on Google Maps looking at a street view where one of your ancestors lived.
3. Call one or more of your oldest living relatives and ask how they are doing. Ask them something about their past.
4. In a notebook, list heirlooms and write each item's history. Photographs are a plus!
5. Frame old letters, recipes, certificates, or photo of an ancestors home or other memorabilia to add history to your walls.
6. Trace an ancestors journey on Google Maps.
7. Pick a favorite family recipe and write down a memory or story to go with it.

Do You Want To Be a Member of Daughters of the Republic of Texas?

By

Judy McVay will be coming to our KGS Research Center & Library every third Thursday to help those of you who would like to join the Daughters of the Republic of Texas.

Judy is the Registrar for DRT and has served that office before and also at the state level as the

Registrar for At-Large members. So, if you have any ancestors that came into Texas before 1845, come to the KGS Research Center & Library and visit with Judy. She can help with the process and information needed to become a member.

Rain Ritual

Printed in *The Kerrville Mountain Sun*, Saturday September 9, 1989, page 32

Last week's rainmaker ritual along with Kerrville Mayor Leonard Holloway's latest quest, hanging a snake of (sic) a fence, just might be helping, for a little of the wet stuff visited the Hill Country Thursday.

Superstitions and ancient rituals just might be the answer to getting some rain in the Hill Country. Holloway is going to try everything he can to conger up some rainclouds.

Back in the 1800s, farmers believed that hanging a dead snake on a fence would bring the rain which would nourish the crops. After researching the art of rain-making, the exact origin of the superstition was not certain.

Holloway tried hanging a snake on a fence, not a real snack of course, and low and behold the rainclouds set in and Kerr County received some rain. It was very little, however, so little that most rain guages (sic) could not give a measure.

"It can't hurt to try everything we can," Holloway said.

"We're coming real close, but we may need some help," Holloway said. Anyone with knowledge of long-standing rituals or superstitions for making



Mayor Holloway with "dead" snake.

rain is urged to participate in the mayor's campaign for rain by calling *The Kerrville Mountain Sun*.

Grab your dead snake and put it on your fence. Maybe it will work like it did for our former mayor—it can't hurt!

Ancestry.com DNA Program Update

By Sharon Ashby

Ancestry.com is rolling out a new pricing scheme called AncestryDNA Plus that will charge for access to some of the advanced DNA tools on Ancestry. You may have already lost the ability to use these tools if you have taken an Ancestry DNA test and don't have an Ancestry subscription. You will no longer be able to access Ancestry Traits, Ancestry SideView, Chromosome Painter, or view the full tree of your matches. SideView is the section that tells you which parent the parts of your ethnicity come from and sorts matches by parent. This feature can be especially important to an adoptee in efforts to find biological family and the ability for anyone to sort and locate cousins.

Ancestry will be offering the new AncestryDNA Plus subscription which gives access to all of the DNA tools at \$29.99 for six months. It is currently in a gradual membership release phase and is not yet available to all Ancestry members. As with

other subscriptions once you sign up, this feature will automatically renew until you cancel. Access to paid records or family trees is not included. You cannot currently purchase AncestryDNA Plus as a gift for someone else.

To be clear, you lose these features if you have taken an Ancestry DNA test but do not have an Ancestry subscription. Anyone who has taken the company's DNA test and has an Ancestry subscription can still access all the parts of the DNA results section.

To recover the ability to access the above mentioned DNA tools you will need to purchase the Ancestry DNA Plus subscription for \$29.99 per year but excludes access to records. Ancestry has 3 tiers of access to records that include the DNA tools if you choose to upgrade. For U.S. Discovery (all U.S. records) you will pay \$21.99 per month for six

months. World Explorer (U.S. and international records) is \$32.99 a month for six months, and All Access (everything on Ancestry, Fold3, and Newspapers.com) is \$49.99 per month for six

months. You can often find discount coupons to purchase a membership. But, they are usually restricted to first time subscribers.

The Story Behind the Photograph

By Jeannie Berger



When you come into the main room at the KGS Research Center and look up to your left, you will find a photograph labeled “Max Grona” on top of the bookcase. Max was my great grandfather, so I will tell you about that picture.

Max’s earliest encounter with Kerrville can be found in a warranty deed recorded on May 3, 1889, in Book O, p. 42, Kerr County Deed Records for his purchase of Lots 367 and 368 in Block 53 of Charles Schreiner’s Addition to the City of Kerrville, where in 1890, he built a home for his family. Today, that house serves as the office of the Kerrville Board of Realtors at 328 Jefferson Street.

In 1891, Max formed a partnership with John P. Grider and opened a blacksmith and wheelwright shop, known as Grona & Grider, on the corner of Water Street and Mountain (Earl Garrett) Street. A second partnership was later created with D. W. Ely, and the business was renamed Grona & Ely.

An article in *The Mountain Sun* of December 22, 1899, “Our Business Men,” included “The firm of Grona & Grider, blacksmiths and wagon makers and general wood and iron repairers....” In a Public Notice in *The Mountain Sun*, March 15, 1902, Grona & Grider announced “After the first of March, we will shoe horses all round for 75 cents. This is done on account of prevailing hard times, scarcity of money and a desire on our part to divide the profits with our customers by giving the lowest prices possible on first-class work.”

In 1926, the automobile industry was making its mark on Kerrville, and the demand for the work of a blacksmith was diminishing. Progress and development were about to take their toll on a once thriving business, which also happened to be sitting on a prime piece of downtown real estate.

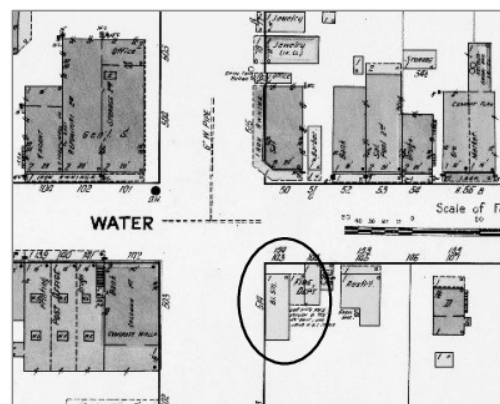
Hill View Times, July 22, 1926

RAZING OLD SHACKS TO MAKE PLACE FOR BLUEBONNET HOTEL

The old buildings which have disgraced the corner of Earl Garrett and Water Streets are being razed this week, preparatory to the building of the new hotel, Bluebonnet [sic]. No information is available through local channels as to when work on the new building will begin, but the removal of the old shacks will in itself be a vast improvement.

Max built a second shop behind his home, facing Hays Street. By then, he was seventy years old, and he spent his time mostly tinkering and playing dominoes with his friends.

In a curious twist of irony, the Blue Bonnet Hotel met a similar fate and was torn down in the 1970s to make way for the Charles Schreiner Bank’s drive-through, which in turn was eventually demolished as well. That corner is now part of a parking lot.



1924 Sanborn Fire Insurance map showing Water Street between Sidney Baker Street and Washington Street. Max’s shop (circled) is labeled “BI Sm.” (Perry Castañeda Map Collection, University of Texas Libraries, The University of Texas, www.lib.utexas.edu.)

It should be some vindication for Max and his shop that the photograph of what was once considered a "disgraceful old shack" is now one of the treasures in KGS's collection.

There is more to Max's story, and you can read about him, his ancestors and his descendants in *The Grona Family: Four Generations in the Texas Hill Country*, a copy of which you can find at the KGS library.

Genealogical Motorcycle Trip

By Leslie VanDrasek

This summer I decided that my motorcycle trip would include meeting a third cousin, Bonnie, whom I have spoken to and emailed, but this time I



Cousin Bonnie, her husband JR, and me.

would get to meet her face-to-face. Not sure what she is like, but only knowing she (with her husband) had written two books about our common ancestors. She was not only receptive to meeting me but invited me and my riding partner to spend the night.

It was a great visit where I got to learn even more about our common relatives. I should mention we are also double cousins. There were a lot of double cousins in my family because three Biller siblings married three Swoverland siblings. As a child I certainly didn't understand how you could be a **double** cousin.

Sam Biller married Daisy Swoverland
Bonnie's great grandparents:

Chris Biller, Jr., married Rhoda Swoverland
My great grandparents

Emma Biller married Alonzo (Lon) Swoverland

The Biller side of our family had some wild characters to make our research very interesting. Many of them were living in northern Wisconsin and two or three of the brothers were near Hurley, Wisconsin, which is across the border from Ironwood, Michigan. They were employed as hunting and fishing guides for Al "Scarface"

Capone, his older brother Ralph Capone, John Dillinger, Baby Face Nelson, and others.

A bit of history about Hurley:

When Chicago gangsters established resorts and gambling rackets in northern Wisconsin, Hurley was a favorite place to relax, recreate, and do business. Al Capone and his brother Ralph Capone, John Dillinger, Baby Face Nelson and even Frank Sinatra frequented this town in Wisconsin. In the 1920s and 1930s Hurley was known as a place to hide out. Al Capone was known for sending his guys up to Hurley on "vacations" to escape the streets of Chicago. Historians say that nearly 200 saloons, disguised as soda shops, lined the downtown Hurley streets during prohibition. Ralph Capone ran several businesses in nearby Mercer and died in a Hurley nursing home.

Even today, Silver Street has a faintly menacing air, especially where it dips past a small gantlet of "gentlemen's clubs" before transforming into the cheery main street of Ironwood.

According to cousin Bonnie, the irony of the Al Capone Story (and its connection to the Billers) is that her brother, a great grandson of Chris Biller, Jr., married a Capone! Fortunately, Dian is anything but a criminal!

After my informative and entertaining visit with Bonnie, my trip went on to include a few Civil War sites: Appomattox Court House, Gettysburg National Battlefield, Antietam National Battlefield (more ancestors there!), Harper's Ferry, and BEST of all, the area where my great-great grandparents were born. The houses where they were born are no longer standing, but the town of Orkney Springs, Virginia, is so cute and all the buildings are painted white. I also visited the cemetery where my 3x great grandparents and other relatives are buried. It was a gorgeous ride through the Shenandoah Valley area of Virginia.

For a long time I have wanted to visit the Virginia area where some of my ancestors lived — a bucket list item I have now completed. It was good to visit sites I have only seen in photographs. Now

I just need to attend the Biller family reunion in Virginia. Maybe another 4,000 mile motorcycle trip to Virginia is in my future.



The Samuel Mumma farm at Antietam National Battlefield, my 2nd cousin 5x removed. This home was burned down to prevent it being used against Confederates or Union.



Orkney Springs, Virginia

FAMILY TREE OF VINCENT VAN GOGH

His dizzy aunt.....	Verti Gogh
The brother who ate prunes.....	Gotta Gogh
The brother who worked at a convenience store...	Stop N Gogh
The grandfather from Yugoslavia.....	U Gogh
His magician uncle.....	Where-daddy Gogh
His Mexican cousin.....	A Mee Gogh
The Mexican cousin's American half-brother.....	Gring Gogh
The nephew who drove a stage coach.....	Wells-far Gogh
The constipated uncle.....	Can't Gogh
The ballroom dancing aunt.....	Tang Gogh
The bird lover uncle.....	Flamin Gogh
The aunt who taught positive thinking.....	Way-to-Gogh
The little bouncy nephew.....	Poe Gogh
The sister who loved disco.....	Go Gogh
The brother with low back pain.....	Lum Bay Gogh
And...his niece who travels the country in an RV...	Winnie Bay Gogh
I saw you smiling.....	There Ya Gogh 🤪

KERRVILLE GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY

Membership Application

☐ New ☐ Renewal

Membership Year: January 1 - December 31, 2024

Membership is open to all individuals 18 years and older, libraries, and societies and is pro-rated based on date of application.

Primary Member Name: _____ **Date:** _____

Address: _____

City: _____ **State:** _____ **Zipcode:** _____

Phone (home): _____ **Phone (cell):** _____

Email Address: _____

Secondary Member Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ **State:** _____ **Zipcode:** _____

Phone (home): _____ **Phone (cell):** _____

Email Address: _____

I consider myself: ☐ Beginner ☐ Intermediate ☐ Advanced

I would be willing to: ☐ Contribute to newsletter ☐ Serve on a committee ☐ Bring refreshments
☐ Other _____

Type of membership: ☐ Student \$10.00 New members and former members (if more than a full year) may join at a pro-rated fee:
☐ Individual \$25.00
☐ Family \$30.00 January 1 - June 30 full-price membership
☐ Patron \$75.00 July 1 - December 31 half-price Individual and Family memberships
☐ Benefactor \$500.00
☐ Donation \$_____ If you can, please consider a higher level of support.

Kerrville Genealogical Society is a tax-exempt, non-profit organization under the Internal Revenue Code 501(c)(3). The Society relies on donations and membership support.

SEND COMPLETED FORM AND CHECK PAYABLE TO:

Kerrville Genealogical Society
125 Lehmann Drive, Suite 102
Kerrville, TX 78028

For KGS use Date: _____ Check #: _____ Cash: _____ (☐ Send receipt for cash)

Kerrville Genealogical Society
125 Lehmann Drive, Suite 102
Kerrville, TX 78028

PLACE
STAMP
HERE