

# MIDWEST COMPUTER GENEALOGISTS

## NEWSLETTER

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### PRESERVING OUR FAMILY STORIES

Marjorie Slavens

I have been publishing the Midwest Computer Genealogists Newsletter since January, 2006. Although we have not met in the months of September and December during these years, I have published issues of the newsletter every month. I believe that is a total of 168 newsletters. This has certainly been a learning experience, and I have enjoyed the research, although the last minute activity related to final formatting, proofing, and correcting the articles has, at times, been a little stressful. Sometimes the newsletter is a little long and other times a little short. Moving margins solves some of those problems, but there is always some related historical event that will supplement an article, and there is always next month to include the article that will not fit this month.

President Al Morse in his "The President's Corner" and I in my family story articles have tried to suggest ways in which our readers might preserve a larger variety of their own family stories. Al has related stories about his family and the family of his wife, Dorothy. Dorothy was not a writer in these newsletters, but she was a major part of their production; as a former legal secretary, she was experienced in looking for mistakes that Al and I might never have seen.

After writing monthly for several years, Al decided to collect his articles and produce bound copies for his two sons, Brian and Steve, and his brother, Carl. Each year he adds a new series of articles to their family collection. We both know that, just as we were too busy to think about such things while

we were still working full-time, our younger family members may not have time to dedicate to genealogical research, but they will want to have the stories we are providing when they are no longer able to ask us questions about what we have discovered in our research. We hope our readers will preserve such written records and stories for their families. We are very pleased in recent months to add as a writer Al's cousin and MCG presenter, Julia Morse, who has contributed articles for this publication. We welcome articles from other researchers as well.

### THE PRESIDENT'S CORNER

Al Morse

My wife, Dorothy Jean (Newcomb) Morse, died January 3, 2019. We had been married 55 years. She was a survivor through many health problems. She always faced each one head on and accepted the circumstances without complaining.

We were married August 18, 1963. I started teaching school in Independence, Missouri and she continued working as a stenographer for the FBI in downtown Kansas City, Missouri. She had to ride a bus from the Independence square to downtown Kansas City. The trip took about one hour each way. In the early part of 1964, she told me she wanted to quit and I agreed. In March, 1965, we bought a house in Independence near the freeway of I-70. She returned to work as a secretary for Gulf Oil in downtown Kansas City. She was able to find someone to ride with. She did this until our son, Brian, was born October 4, 1967. She became a stay at home mother. Our second son, Steven, was born September 29, 1970. She loved to cook and bake. She baked, decorated, and sold cakes, mainly birthday cakes, but she also did a wedding

cake or two.

Early in 1974, she felt a lump in her left breast. She saw her doctor, who referred her to a surgeon. She went in the hospital for a lumpectomy, but the doctor came and told me the lump was cancerous. She then had a left mastectomy. They also removed some lymph nodes, some flesh, and some muscle. She had no chemo or radiation treatments. The boys were 6 and 3 at this time. I was able to find some friends who helped keep them. Brian was in kindergarten. In the late spring of 1975, Dorothy felt a lump in her left neck. Surgery removed it and she had a partial hysterectomy. She did receive radiation treatments in her left neck area. This made it difficult for her to swallow for several weeks. She once again continued baking. She also started singing in the church choir and playing the piano at church. When the boys were both in elementary school, she started working at Cloth World on a part time basis. She then became very active in sewing.

Things went along smoothly for several years. We did a lot of camping and took vacations. She became a legal secretary. The boys graduated from high school and from the University of Missouri in Kansas City (UMKC).

We retired in 1994 and moved to the country. We bought one and a half acres from Dorothy's cousin and put a double wide trailer house on it. This was 5 miles west of Rich Hill, Missouri. We did keep the house in Independence as we continued going back there for doctor's appointments. She felt a lump in her right breast in June, 1996. She saw a surgeon and then an oncologist. As he talked to her, he decided to check her heart. After a heart cath it was discovered that she had had a small heart attack and she had two heart murmurs. It was decided that medicine could take care of the heart for the time while she battled this new round of cancer.

She had a biopsy to show the lump was cancer. She then had a powerful round of chemotherapy. She lost her hair. She had surgery for a right

mastectomy. She then had another round of chemo and then radiation. Since the surgery in 1974, she slowly began to lose the feeling in her left hand and arm. As it continued to progress, she continued cooking, sewing, playing the piano, and canning.

She had been seeing a cardiologist for several years and it was determined she needed open heart surgery to replace the aortic heart valve with a man-made one. This surgery took place on February 10, 2004. Two days following the surgery, it was determined she needed a pace maker. It was installed on the right side as the left side had no flesh but only skin. In the fall of 2004, it was decided that we needed to move back to Independence, and we sold the house in the country.

On January 7, 2005, she went to the hospital with a bacterial infection. It was discovered that she was losing blood from the area of the heart valve. On February 4, she had open heart surgery to replace the man-made heart valve with a flesh one. I kissed her as she was taken into surgery at 7:30 am. It was after 9:00 pm that the surgeon came and talked to us about the surgery. They had to reconstruct the wall of the aorta. A new pace maker was place in her left waist area. She went to ICU where she remained, with a vent tube down her throat, for 3 weeks. She remained in the hospital for another 3 weeks, taking antibiotic IV's. She came home on March 17.

For the next one to two years, she had to go back for some minor surgeries or because she had more bacterial infections. In 2006, she spent 5 weeks in a nursing home in Kansas City, Missouri for IV antibiotics. Even though she could no longer use her left hand or arm, she was still very active in cooking. When we moved to Foxwood Springs in Raymore, Missouri on August 19, 2008, she began taking painting classes. Over the years she painted many pictures. All in her class were amazed at her artistic ability by using one hand. We continued with gardening and canning.

On September 23, 2017, she had a stroke, which affected her right hand. She started using puzzle books where you circle, or draw a line through, words. She enjoyed them. She then helped me cook and can. In the fall of 2018 she began to lose interest in doing her puzzle books and eating. She wanted to lie down. She entered the Care Center at Foxwood Springs on November 29 and was placed on hospice on December 13. She peacefully passed away 3 weeks later on January 3, 2019.

### **AN EARLY 1800's MORSE FAMILY THANKSGIVING IN A FREE BOOK ONLINE**

Julia Morse

One of my favorite finds from free online book libraries (such as Archive.org and Google Books) is a book that records reminiscences of Vermont frontier life in the same village where my third great grandfather, Ephraim Morse, (MCG's Albert Morse's great-great-grandfather), lived as a very young child.

The narrative was, in fact, written by a very distant Morse cousin, Bathsheba Phillips Crane, about her Morse grandfather's homestead in the same neighborhood. We know that our own Morse family had two aunts who were married to founders who cleared and settled the town in the 1760s, so our family was very much connected to the community described by Mrs. Crane.

At this time of year, I always enjoy referring to Mrs. Crane's description of Thanksgiving as celebrated in her Morse grandparent's homestead during her childhood in the 1810s:

"The great family gathering was at Thanksgiving, which came in December, when children and children's children assembled at the old homestead, to acknowledge the blessings of a kind Providence, and enjoy the yearly feast. The house was put in the best possible order for the occasion; the pewter was scoured till it shone;

the Delft cups and saucers, so diminutive in size, with their bright red roses, birds, and quaint figures, were nicely arranged, the furniture rubbed and polished, the floors scrubbed and sanded, and the great open fireplaces where "Lords of the forest, maple, birch, and pine, lay down for them in flames of martyrdom," were radiant with light and heat.

The supper was of the most substantial kind, yet excellent even in those days when luxuries were comparatively few. Besides the roast meat, plum pudding, chicken, mince and pumpkin pies, a boiled dish that had been cooking in a great kettle over the kitchen fire occupied a prominent place upon the table. It consisted of beef, pork, chickens, and a good assortment of vegetables, covered with a thick, light crust or dumplings, making a lordly dish not to be rejected, and regarded as some of the guests as the best part of the dinner. Apple-sauce and pickles served as a relish. The divine blessing was invoked before eating, and thanks returned after the repast was finished.

"Before the party separated, they joined in singing one of the old songs that had thrilled their lyres in days gone by, every note of which bore a tale of joy or sorrow to the heart, according as their lot had been. These family gatherings were kept up so long as our grandparents lived." [Jacob and Sarah Hawes Morse both died in 1818.] [Reference 1]

This is a great example of the kind of details of life for our ancestors that are not passed down in family Bibles, family trees, or vital records. How amazing that from the comfort of our home, we can mine into the vast old libraries, now scanned and text-searchable online!

I unearthed Bathsheba Crane's wonderful reminiscences of early settlement life in Newfane, Vermont, as a result of a search I was doing on one of her cousins who is named in her book. At the time, I found it through Google Books, but her book is now also found in the

Allen County Public Library Genealogy Center book collection at Archive.org: [https://archive.org/details/allen\\_county](https://archive.org/details/allen_county).

The Allen County Public Library collection is amazing! You can search just within this collection at the link above. Try a unique family name or a location where they lived and see what you can come up with. [Reference 1]

Crane, Bathsheba H. (1880). Life, letters, and wayside gleanings: For the folks at home. Boston: James H. Earle, Publisher, p. 51-52. <https://archive.org/details/lifeletterswaysi00cran>

(Note: Julia's article suggests a topic for future articles about family customs surrounding major holidays, such as Christmas, Easter, July 4, Halloween, etc.)

## **PRESERVING MY FAMILY Stories**

Marjorie Slavens

We frequently discuss the various ways one can preserve family history stories. My mother, Mildred Welty Slavens, and I used Family Treemaker to preserve our research data at first. The program permitted us to enter dates, family connections and also to include notes about the information we included in the data base of the program. However, we soon discovered that writing the stories which were based on the data was a more effective way to both preserve the information and to interest other people who were not doing the basic research in reading the material. Names, dates, and places do not inspire family members to read about the family discoveries, but telling their stories about who they were and how they lived was much more interesting for those who were not doing the basic research. Mother published 6 books on her Welty, Eppright, Kerr, Crawford, and Heape family lines and was able to share them with other branches of these families. She and I both have preserved some of these stories through MCG Newsletter articles.

When in the 1940s and 1950s we visited my great grandparents, Charles Merlin Kerr and Millie Bain Kerr in Asbury, Jasper County, Missouri, I heard many stories about the friends and activities when they were first married in 1896 and lived in Medoc, Missouri in a hotel they had purchased and continued to manage until they decided to move their business to Asbury in 1907. Asbury is a small town between Joplin and Pittsburg. I did not know the people about whom they talked, and I was not very interested in the stories when I was very young, but, fortunately, they repeated the same stories so often that I could bring some of them back when I was old enough to be interested in them.

Charles Kerr had 16 brothers and sisters. His father, John Kerr, married Susan Adams, and they had 12 children, moving from Washington County, Pennsylvania to Licking and Union Counties, Ohio, and then to Dewitt and Piatt Counties, Illinois, and finally in 1865 to Cherokee County, Kansas briefly and then, to Jasper County, Missouri. Then, he married Mrs. Harriet Dale in Clinton, Dewitt County, Illinois, and they had a daughter. Then, he married Elizabeth Crawford Branin, who already had four children when they were married; John and Elizabeth had four children, Millard, Alice, Charles, and Huldah, who were 11, 9, 7, and 3 years old when John Kerr died in Medoc in 1870. Elizabeth could not easily care for her children, and Charles was placed with another family, who cared for him and assured that he had a good basic education.

We knew Charles Kerr had some brothers and sisters that remained in Illinois when he came with his parents to Jasper County, but we knew very little about the step-brothers and step-sisters before Mother researched the family. We only knew about the family that came to Missouri. My great grandfather had a family Bible, which had belonged originally to his father's first wife, Susan Adams Kerr. All of the 17 children were listed there with births and deaths, if they were known. Her mother and brother had the Bible

until Mother began her family research, and her brother, Edward Charles Welty, gave it to her. Mother later found an article in which Charles step-sister, Mary Jane Kerr Nicewander of Champaign County, Illinois told about her family and the trip that brought them from Ohio to Central Illinois. Mother included this information in her Kerr and Crawford family books.

*[Copyright article removed for archive edition of this newsletter.]*

Family stories need to be verified before they are shared. I remember hearing that the Kerrs from “Kerr jars” were among his brothers, but we have found no evidence of any relationship; they were certainly not children of John Kerr.

Mother knew nothing about the family of her great grandmother, Elizabeth Crawford Branin Kerr, before she began her genealogical research. She made some excellent early research discoveries through family contacts on the Jasper County site of USGenweb. We visited Auglaize County, Ohio, where Elizabeth and her family had lived and found more important information about the Crawfords, the Branins, and the Adams family of her great great grandmother, Nancy Adams Crawford.

Charles Kerr married Elzina H. (Ella) Heape in Peru, Kansas in 1886. After living in Medoc, they moved to Las Vegas, New Mexico in 1890, where he worked as a brakeman on the Santa Fe Railroad. Ella Heape Kerr died in February, 1895 following child birth. Charles took his two children, Hattie, my grandmother, and Ora, back to Medoc, where he and Millie Bain were married June 30, 1896. They lived for a while on her father’s farm but purchased a hotel in Medoc in 1903, where they lived and operated the business until March, 1907, when they moved their business to Asbury. They operated that business until 1943. They were married for 62 years before her death in 1959. Charles Kerr died in April 1962 at age 98 ½.

## **THE FUTURE OF MCG**

At our November, 2019 meeting, we discussed the future of Midwest Computer Genealogists. President Al Morse, Treasurer Byron Gilbreath, and Marjorie Slavens, Newsletter Editor, Programs Chair, and Secretary proposed that MCG be discontinued. Marjorie can no longer schedule programs, and we have had no volunteer to fulfill that role. We decided to donate our remaining funds to the Genealogy Branch of the Cass County Library when the organization is terminated.

Since that time, Julia Morse, our August speaker, who has presented several programs and has also contributed articles for the newsletter, suggested that she would like to preserve the newsletters on the web. She says, "I had two ideas for keeping the newsletter archive online and accessible

digitally to future researchers: First, I could set up a website for these (free on Wordpress). But more lastingly, I would like to publish them on Archive.org (Internet Archive), which should end up making them permanently available in the public domain.

I have not published yet on Internet Archive, but have plans to put some of our own family documents there, so need to learn how to do it anyway.

If you are thinking of continuing the newsletter for a while, I would be interested in continuing to submit some articles as able, or at least some vignettes drawn from the past, like the December Thanksgiving description--hopefully on a monthly basis."

Our newsletters were for some time included on an MCG web site, but that site no longer exists. Monthly newsletters have been placed on the Foxwood Springs residents' web site, but new issues replace the previous months issues. If we are able to create such an online reference home for our newsletters, we will try to do so. In addition, we will continue to publish the newsletter as long as we are able to do so. Some of us continue to research our family history, and the newsletter gives us an opportunity to share our research with other interested researchers. There will be a January issue of the newsletter, and we will continue to keep our readers informed about the status of this project. Our recognition by the state of Missouri as Midwest Computer Genealogists is paid through August, 2020.

## **OFFICERS**

Al Morse, President  
Byron Gilbreath, Treasurer  
Marjorie Slavens, Programs, Newsletter Editor