



THE BIRMINGHAM GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY

Founded April 15, 1959

www.birminghamgenealogy.org

<http://birminghamgenealogy.wordpress.com/>

THE PIONEER TRAILS NEWSLETTER

AUGUST 2015

General Meeting for August: The Birmingham Genealogical Society will meet at 2:00 p.m. on **Saturday, August 22nd** on the fourth floor of the Birmingham Public Library (in the Arrington Auditorium). The Board of Directors will meet at 1:00 p.m. in the same room.

Please join us on Saturday, August 22nd (2:00 pm) as BGS member Bill Clement presents “Y-DNA as a Genealogical Tool.” The Y-DNA test is used for testing males only (males have one x and one y chromosome). Surname Projects use Y-DNA test results which is useful in tracing the male participant’s father’s line. Because Y-DNA is passed down from father to son, just as surnames are passed down in western societies, it is easy to visualize and track through genealogy. This is why Y-DNA projects are organized around surnames. Please join us for this informative program!

Genealogical News

The Avondale Sun, a newspaper published by Avondale Mills for its employees, ran from 1924-2006. Over its 82 year history it published community and employee news, company information, and photographs. G. Stephen Felker, chairman and Chief Executive Officer of Avondale Mills, Inc., donated the *Avondale Sun* newspaper collection to the B.B. Comer Memorial Library in 2006. A researchable database is located on the Birmingham Public Library website at:

http://www.bplonline.org/resources/Digital_Project/AvondaleSun.htm

Familysearch.org currently added a name index and images of marriage records created by Alabama counties. Records are arranged by county, volume and date. Currently, the following counties are represented in this collection: Baldwin, Barbour, Bibb, Bullock, Chilton, Cleburne, Crenshaw, Cullman, Dallas, St. Clair, and portions of Jefferson. Currently this collection is 41% complete. Additional records will be added as they are completed.

The Alabama Genealogy Society Fall Seminar will be held on Saturday, October 10th, 2015 in Montgomery AL. Details and registration form will be posted at a later date. If you wish to be notified when registration opens send an email to ags-seminar@algensoc.org

The past is not dead. It isn't even past. --William Faulkner

Scott A. Martin, BGS Newsletter Editor



“Why Victorian-era Southerners Created Seashell Graves”

Kelly Kazek - courtesy of www.AL.com

As many cemeteries as I've visited over the years, I never came across seashell grave covers until recently. I'm not talking about shells scattered on a grave, which I've heard is an old African custom. I mean mounds with seashells cemented on them to create protective grave covers. It turns out, the practice was quite common across the South in the Victorian era and not only in coastal areas. They seemed to be particularly plentiful in Texas, although there are quite a few across Alabama, Georgia, Mississippi, Louisiana and Florida, most dated from the late 1800s to before 1910. Also, the types of shells used for this construction are the type commonly referred to as "cockleshells," the shell of a salt-water bivalve such as a clam. So if not because the graves were close to the shore where shells were plentiful, why did people use seashells on graves? There are several theories, including an interesting one about the economics of the time period.

The sea shall take them home. According to "The New Encyclopedia of Southern Culture, Volume 23, Folk Art" by Crown, Rivers and Wilson, seashells were a representation to slaves of returning to Africa: "They said the sea had brought them to their new country and the sea would return them to Africa when they died." So whether the shells were scattered or cemented into place, "they are meant as a symbol that ensures a safe journey is made to that unknown shore where everlasting life is possible. Loose shells placed on a tombstone or dropped on the ground around it are also a visible reminder that the person buried below continues to be remembered and honored by those still living." However, many of the seashell grave covers are found in cemeteries where only white settlers are buried. Some theorize white people took the tradition from slaves while others have other ideas on the origins of seashell graves.

Crossing over. Experts at the Association for Gravestone Studies say seashells have to do with Christianity. "Clam shells, scallop shells and other types of shells are a symbol of a person's Christian pilgrimage or journey through life and of baptism in the church. In the middle ages, Christians wore the scallop shell to indicate that they had made a pilgrimage to the shrine of St. James of Compostella in Spain," the association's website says. "Placing a shell on a gravestone when visiting the site is an ancient custom and may in fact have several different meanings depending on the cultural background of the people placing the shells. The idea of crossing over a body of water to the promised land or crossing the River of Styx to the afterlife, the final journey to the 'other side' is also part of the symbolism of the shell."

Protection for the dead. William Flake "Sonny" Joiner, an Alabama genealogist, wrote that he believes the shells were used by poor Southerners as a means of protecting grave sites. Seashells, laid as one would lay shingles or a tile roof, would effectively protect the mound of earth from rain. "The traditional method of marking a grave (for the less affluent) in South Alabama during the early years and especially during the Reconstruction era was to create an earth mound 12- to 18-inches wide and from 5- to 6-feet long," he wrote on the genealogy site rootsweb.ancestry.com. "Needless to say, the rains washed these mounds away quite easily ... it was found that seashells, laid as one would lay shingles or a tile roof, would effectively protect the mound of earth from the rain and yes, the seashells were also decorative. "

"Making do" with found materials. The shells were not only effective and pretty, Joiner wrote, they were cheap and available. "Salt, during the reconstruction era was scarce and very expensive. To overcome this, salt making crews were formed in many communities ... to make an annual trip to the coast, where they would boil down the seawater or water from salt ponds into salt crystals to take back to their families and communities. While at the coast they would also catch fish, clean them, butterfly filet them and pack them in salt to take back home. And a by-product of their time at the coast was the collection of seashells to take back for the graves in their cemeteries." Stephanie Linecum wrote on the blog SouthernGraves.net that Southerners often had to "make do" with materials at hand. "If a grave marker is found in a pioneer model, southern-folk cemetery, this is where the art of 'making do' is seen," Linecum writes. "What is missing most often from a pioneer southern folk cemetery is commercially produced gravestones or granite or marble...A common decorating practice in southern folk cemeteries still seen

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today is the use of shells. Conch shells, among others, are frequently seen. The shells are used to varying degrees, from a single one at the head of the grave to a line of them down the center of the grave or as a border. Sometimes the entire grave will be covered with shells."

8 January 1941 *THE BIRMINGHAM NEWS* "MORE LOCAL DRAFTEES LEAVE"

To the end that democracy may live and flourish on the earth, the United States of American-conceived and dedicated on the principles of democratic government-is preparing a strong defense against all possible foreign assailants. The nation's youth is being called to arms in the country's first peacetime draft, and those thus summoned are answering with warm enthusiasm. Among them are the young men of Jefferson County, many of whom are leaving substantial jobs to serve a year in the nation's armed forces. Above is a group of the county's second contingent of 100 white draftees, some of whom left for Fort McClellan Monday afternoon and others Tuesday. Shown at the Terminal Station Tuesday afternoon, just before they boarded a train for Anniston were, front row, Richard C. Tillery, 233 South Fifty-Ninth Street; Herman R. Knox, Jr., 2811 Avenue H, Ensley; Drayton Orville Denny, 2306 Avenue H, Ensley; Dan M. Campbell, 2322 Avenue E Ensley, and Walter D. Kinsolving, 2012 Avenue I, Ensley. Second row, Jesse Herman Judd, Jr., 6728 Center Avenue and Joseph Charles Hearn, Y.M.C.A. Rear row, Alexander J. Sumner, 2900 Avenue C, Ensley; Cecil C. Masters, 5008 Division Avenue; J. P. Reed, Collinsville; Louis H. Cutcliffe, 5015 Second Avenue; Horace D. Corbett, 1111 Tenth Place, South, and Joseph L. Husband, 2356 Twenty-Fourth Street, Ensley. Others who left Tuesday, but are not shown in the picture were Norman E. Bowen, 4528 Eleventh Avenue, North; Aulton V. Smith, 29 Mill Village; Paul G. Plemmons, 3528 Fourth Avenue, South; Leslie E. Lee, 328 North Fifty-Ninth Street; Edward m. Carmichael, 804 South Twentieth Street; William Dorman, 1627 Twelfth Avenue, North; Richard L. Mackeww, 110 Tenth Place, South; Robert C. Wilson, 920 Seventh Avenue, South; Rolbert C. Shelby, 1405 South Eleventh Street; Glenn Whitlock, 1708 Jefferson Avenue; Ollie E. Jones, 645 Southwest Twenty-Sixth Street; Henry Moore, 208 Princeton Avenue and Thomas David Phares, 717 Princeton Avenue.

Jefferson County Probate Index, 1870-1899 Book A, Final Settlement

Settlement papers appear on the same film. Prior to the establishment of the Probate Court in 1870, estate matters were handled by the Orphans Court. LDS film #1064858 All index entries include "Deceased" and/or "Estate of," unless noted. No dates were noted in the index. The last page is 564, dated November 1899. Not all page numbers appear to be noted in the index, esp. when sequential. The original index was in order by last letter of the surname only. Though quality of film was good, handwriting was still difficult to read in places. Allowances should be made for errors.

LAST NAME	FIRST NAME	PAGE #	NOTES
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CROCKER	A. J.	358	
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DEASON	M. P.	173	
DUNCAN	U. S.	29	
DUNLOP	Samuel	73	
EDWARDS	H. D.	217	
ELMORE	Rhode	265	
FERGUSON	E. A.	464	
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FRANCIS	Chas. H.	523-4	
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GOLDEN	Wm	121	
GRADY	Dennis	237	
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GRIFFIN	Jordan	515	
GRIFFIN	Turner C.	405	
GRIGOR	Beatrice L.	429	
HALEY	Walter E.	491	
HALL	Nathan	449	
HEADGES	[none]	315	the word deceased does not appear
HOGAN	Geo.	559	alias Geo. Johnson
HUGHES	B. M.	17	
IRWIN	R. M.	189	
JANES	W. L.	5	
JARMON	Laura	49	
JEFFERSON	King	157	
JOHNSON	Geo.	559	Hogan, Geo., alias Geo. Johnson
JUSTIUS	Alonzo	547-8	
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KILPATRICK	Peter	35 & 36
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MACKE	Caroline, Mrs.	377
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MASSEY	W. D. Sr.	433
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1895-1898, no heirs found by admr.

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