



BIRMINGHAM GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY

Founded April 15, 1959

www.birminghamgenealogy.org

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

THE PIONEER TRAILS NEWSLETTER

OCTOBER 2015

General Meeting for October: The Birmingham Genealogical Society will meet at 2:00 p.m. on **Saturday, October 24th** 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, October 24th (2:00 pm) for the annual Birmingham Genealogical Society Project Fair! It's time to plan for your exhibit – some ideas to consider for an exhibit - a family heirloom to show - Grandpa's watch fob? The bullet from g-grandpa's war injury? Got a new DNA chart that is going to solve all your questions? Or even old family photos, clothing worn by an ancestor, family histories, articles owned by an ancestor or articles made by an ancestor. Table or wall space will be provided. Everyone will be asked to provide a brief talk to explain what you have brought. Please email Mary Taylor at maryalicet@aol.com so that enough table or wall space can be provided.



Think of the October Fair as a "Show & Tell" for Genealogist!

Ribbons awarded to the 1st, 2nd & 3rd place winners!

All participants will receive a certificate!

You may begin setting up your display at 1:00 p.m.

Research & Genealogical Tips: Find Their Shoes & Put Them On

If you have "lost" your ancestor at a certain point in time, put yourself in their shoes and see if it generates any ideas or leads. Think about:

1. Their age when you've "lost" them.
2. What "stage" were they at in their life--newly married, lots of children, "empty nester," etc.?
3. What economic advantages did they have? what economic limitations did they have?
4. Who were they responsible for?
5. How "easy" was it to just "pick up and move?"
6. Could "family problems" have impacted their decisions?
7. Did they move or associate with members of their extended family--either relatives by blood or marriage? And so on. No one operates in a vacuum.

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<http://genealogytipoftheday.blogspot.com/>, TIPDATE.

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF JAMES THORNY MASSEY

October 17, 1873 - September 26, 1969

Submitted by Earl Massey

Beginning my diary, Jan. 15, 1965, and going back to the age 3 years, in 1876. Only one incident occurred and frightened me. The cats went to fighting at the back of me in the kitchen, and I ran over the table to my mother. The kitchen was the old style, about 50 feet from the living apartment. At that time the kitchens in the country were all built off from the living apartment. My father's first was that way. His second home, the kitchen was only about 10 feet from the house. A walkway to the kitchen was covered over. The third home, the kitchen was built within the home. That was about 1885, at the best of my memory.

At the age of 4 years, we had an old sow with a litter of pigs at the barn. I wanted one of the pigs, so I went to the barn and picked up one of the pigs and made a dive for the house, and the old sow after me. My brother 4 years older than I, got the brush broom and met the sow and kept her whipped off and made me turn the pig loose.

The next I remember was my father put my old brother and I to planting peas in the corn between the hills, the corn was 3 or 4 feet apart. My brother dug the holes between the corn and I dropped the peas and he covered them. We had planted one day and had the field about half planted. The second day we decided to dig a hole and cover up the peas. I imagine we had about 30lbs. of peas to begin with and we had about 15lbs. left. In about a week the peas all came up and dad whipped my brother. He said he was old enough to know better.

The next thing I remember I was 6, that was when my mother died (11 Feb. 1879) from giving birth to twin boys. They died also and were buried in the casket with her. My mother had the slow fever and had just got able to sit up at the time. We went to live with my mother's father for about 2 years and my father married my mother's sister, which was a blessing for the 5 children of my mother. She was an awful good mother to us children. She had a family of her own, 7 children. Not one could tell any difference in the two families of children. I loved her as long as she lived. Being our aunt she was very close to my father. From the Underwood home, about 5 miles east of Argo we moved back to the old Massey home and built a new home where we lived for years. I began plowing at 9 years of age which I continued year after year. When I was 16 years of age my father built a cotton gin and ginned for the public. It burned with our full crop of unginning cotton which we expected to gin after he had finished for the public. It was estimated at about 8 bales and 1 bale we had in the gin he had not ginned and had to pay for. We owed one grocery bill for the year to A. W. Woodall at Springville, Ala. for \$375.00. On top of all that we had two mules to die within 30 days after the gin. We were left in a bad condition with ten children in the family and no money. He leased the mill on Little Cahaba known as the Truss mill at that time. It became the Mary Munger Camp about one half mile from where we lived. He bought me a yoke of oxen that I guess would weigh about 200lbs. for \$35.00, on a credit. He bought corn and ground it at 40 cents a bushel. I hauled it to Birmingham and sold it at \$1.00 a bushel and I soon paid for my oxen and a living for the family. The next thing I bought a horse for my brother to make a crop with and his horse got sick during the summer. I stopped peddling for about a month and plowed the crop with the oxen.

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During the time I was peddling, Louis Pizitz and Mr. Burger rode out with me to Trussville and Argo with merchandise they carried on their back and peddled in the country, before either of them was in business. Burger put up the Bear Store and Pizitz put up on the place where he operates at the present time. They both have ridden to the country on my ox wagon.

Beginning the second year I began paying on the \$375.00 store account at Springville, which they carried over for my father, plus eight percent interest. I finished paying it the next year by some hard work. We started all over again and still operated the mill for several years.

I stayed on with my father until I was twenty one and all of my brothers left at eighteen. My father offered all the boys a horse if they stayed until they were 21. I got my horse and stayed two more years and made two crops for my self.

When I was twenty three I went to Texas in August of 1896, to get rich. I only had \$3.75 to go on. I went to Pratt City and caught a freight train to Paris Texas. I arrived at twelve o'clock noon and walked to Pacio, which was 20 miles that afternoon, and went to picking cotton the next day.

My clothes were worn out from riding the box cars. The first thing I had to do was buy some clothes. I got .40 cents a 100# for picking cotton. I made \$1.40 a day and I made enough to make my crop the next year. Between B. M. Taylor and me, we had 40 acres in cotton and 10 acres in corn. We made 20 bales of cotton and 300 bushels of corn. The corn brought 25 cents per bushel and the cotton 7 cents a pound. When we got through gathering I had \$204.00.

Glenn Bros. wrote me to come back to Argo and work for them. I came back and went to work at \$15.00 per month. I worked for them 15 years. After I had worked 5 years, I married Josephine Williams on November 29th on her birthday. She was 20 and I was thirty. I was making \$40.00 per month. I stayed with Glenn Bros. 10 years and bought the Argo Store. I took J. C. Youngman as a partner and stayed with him for 5 years and sold to him. I went with W. S. Brown Mercantile Co.

We had 6 children born at Argo 3 girls and 3 boys. One of the girls died at about 2 months. I moved to Birmingham in 1918, to 8242 Division Avenue, where I live today. I had bought the house before I moved and was renting it at \$12.00 per. month. Part of that with the help of my wife milking 2 cows and selling the milk and butter almost made us a living. My salary was only \$90.00 per month and without the help of my wife we could not have lived on my salary. We raised 4 hogs back on the alley weighing about 1,000 pounds. I had a cement pen connected to the sewer.

I worked for W. S. Brown for 10 years and when they sold out in 1929 I took as a partner, Dewey Pinson. We operated as Massey & Pinson for 5 years, he left me in 1934. I borrowed \$6,000 from S. Y. Caldwell to pay him (Pinson) for his share in the business. It took me several years to pay the loan. I operated the business until 1944 as J. T. Massey Mercantile Co. At that date I sold to Hugh H. Massey one-half interest in the business and gave him 5 years to pay it. At the end of the 5 years I sold him the other ½ which he owns and operates today, 1965.

At this date, Oct. 17, 1965, I am 92 years of age. I continue to work 2 ½ hours daily for Hugh H. Massey of J. T. Massey, Mercantile Co. This is Oct 17, 1966. I am 93 and continue to

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work for Hugh H. Massey 2½ hours a day. I began work in the store in 1897; this gives me 70 years in business. I retired 8 years ago and I got in the hospital, down and out, when the doctor got me up he sent me back to the store. I only open the mail and go to the bank for Hugh H. Massey. I haven't driven my car to work for the past 2 years. I only drive to the store for fresh meats and vegetables. If I make the 94 years I will (make) a notation of it.

10/17/1967 - I am 94, ninety four, today, am feeling fine, went to the store today and worked 2 hours on my same job. This makes me 71, seventy one, years working in the store, 21 at Argo, Ala. & 49 forty nine in B'ham, Ala. Hoping the Lord will spare me a while longer. This date 10-17-1967.

1/1/1968 - I have seen 94 Christmases and have started on my 95th. Hope to make it but can't tell. The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh, I am very thankful.

First Court Held in Trussville

History of Alabama, by Thomas McAdory Owen, LL.D. page 1220, St. Clair Co.
Contributed by Earl & Carol Massey

According to the Act of November 21, 1818, creating St. Clair County, it was provided "for the time being, the said courts for said county of St. Clair, shall be holden at the house of Alexander Brown" (Act 1818 2nd Session page 72-3). "However, it also provided that for want of necessary buildings at this place, the courts could adjourn to such other places contiguous thereto, as might seem most proper." It was on this provision that court was held in the home of and by Samuel Massey, Justice of the Peace.

Circuit Court records, St. Clair County, Page 65

"State of Alabama
St. Clair County

In compliance with an order of court from April Term 1820, We, the undersigned arbitrators chosen by said parties to settle the controversy between Robert Fullerton, Plaintiff and Jean McCombe, Deft. Convened at the house of Samuel Massey (Justice of the Peace) in said county on the 19th of April 1820 and on investigating their accounts, we find most of their account erroneous and out-of-date, but on those accounts which were not out-of-date, we find a balance due from the plaintiff to the defendant of twenty-nine dollars and twenty-five-cents. We therefore do award: the plaintiff shall pay all cost except the deft. shall pay his own attorney.

Given under our hands and seals

19th April 1820

Warren Truss William Hobbs
Ruben Keyton Charles C. Clayton
James Martin James Martin, Esq."

Warren Truss, founder of Trussville served as jury foreman. A State Act of December 20, 1820, expanded Jefferson County to the north to include the Little Cahaba Creek, now in the City of Trussville.

History of Alabama, by Thomas McAdory Owen, LL.D. page 1220, St. Clair Co.

Can't Find the Grave? Alternative Locations for Burial Places for Your Ancestors

Courtesy of AncestralFindings.com

Looking for the graves of our ancestors is a basic part of genealogy. The headstones provide a tangible link between us and those who came before us. It is something... and often the only thing... that we can touch that is intimately associated with that ancestor. Standing on the ground over which their earthly remains lay is as close as we'll ever get to the more ancient ancestors we never personally knew. Finding the grave puts a bookmark at the end of that particular ancestor's story (and it's up to you to fill in the details in the beginning and middle of that story through additional research). It also tells you a lot about where that ancestor lived and what his or her life might have been like in that place long ago.

But what if you can't find the grave? Not everyone has one that is easily located. Some may not have one at all, such as if they were buried at sea (or lost at sea) or were among the missing in a war (in which case, all you may know is that they are buried on the battlefield somewhere). Here are some of the most common reasons why you may not be able to easily find a grave, or find one at all, and what to do about it.

The Town Where Your Ancestor Lived Had No Cemetery

This was not uncommon in early colonial times, and sometimes even into the later colonial era. Pioneers to the west in the mid to late 19th century may also have encountered this problem. If there was no town cemetery, your ancestors had two options for burial:

1) Use the Closest Cemetery

The closest cemetery may have been a town or even a few towns away. As long as a funeral procession could get there and back on foot in a day, the person was usually buried there. So, if you're looking for a headstone for your ancestor in the town in which they lived and can't find one, try looking in cemeteries in neighboring towns. Even if the town has a cemetery now, it may not have had one during the time of your ancestor. Such was the case with Salem, Massachusetts. For the first decade or two of its existence, it had no cemetery. People were taken to Ipswich for burial in the ancient cemetery there instead. Salem had its own cemeteries by the 1660's, but early colonial ancestors were probably buried in Ipswich.

2) Use the Family Property

This was another common option when a cemetery wasn't available nearby (or plots in it were too expensive to purchase). Roadsides and even some front and back yards of private houses all over New England have these little family cemeteries, which are protected by the state. In many cases, though, no headstones were used. In order to know if your ancestor was buried on private property, you will need an obituary or some other ancient document such as a will to prove it.

The Headstone Is No Longer There (or Never Was)

In really old cemeteries, vandalism and weathering have been problems. Many of these old cemeteries have broken headstones, or ones that can no longer be read. I ran into this in Gloucester, Massachusetts in the town's oldest cemetery. The vast majority of the stones were either broken or unreadable. While I did find a headstone for my ancestor there, it was a new

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one, put up by modern descendants. A railroad track had been built through the cemetery, and the actual burial spot of my ancestor was believed to be under the track or in the woods beyond it, where the cemetery used to extend. Some graves originally had headstones, but they were made of wood, and destroyed through weather or vandalism or age-long ago. Other times, no headstone was ever there, either because the ancestor's family couldn't afford it, or, as in the case of Quakers, their religion preached against headstones as symbols of vanity.

If you think your ancestor is buried in a particular cemetery, but there is no headstone (or no readable one for you to be sure it's him or her). You can go to the town hall or town historian to see if they have a map of burials in that particular cemetery. If they do, you can use the map to find the grave. If there is no map, as is the case with most ancient cemeteries, you may never actually be sure of the exact spot your ancestor is buried. If you can find an obituary or will that provides the information, you will at least know they are there somewhere. If it is the only cemetery to exist in the town when your ancestor died, you can also be content knowing they are there, and you visited the place, even if you didn't find the exact location.

Conclusion

While it can be frustrating to not be able to find a headstone, it is a jumping off point for doing additional genealogical detective work. A headstone may, in fact, exist, just not where you expected it to be. It is your job to track it down. If there was a headstone that is gone now, or if there never was one, you might be able to find a map showing where your ancestor is buried in a particular cemetery. If not, knowing the cemetery they are most likely to be in and visiting it to pay your respects to your ancestor is the most you can do. It's not like having a headstone you can touch or standing over the ground where your ancestor is, but you at least will know you walked on the ground where their relatives once stood when they brought the person there to be buried. Even standing in the probable cemetery where your ancestor is buried is a link to them and the past in its own unique way.

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

Scott A. Martin, BGS Newsletter Editor

