



## THE BIRMINGHAM GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY

Founded March 15, 1959

[www.bgsal.org](http://www.bgsal.org)

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

THE PIONEER TRAILS NEWSLETTER

JANUARY 2019

**General Meeting for January:** The Birmingham Genealogical Society will meet at 2:00 p.m. on **Saturday, January 26th** on the fourth floor of the Birmingham Public Library (in the Computer Lab next to the Arrington Auditorium). The Board of Directors will meet at 1:00 p.m. in the same room.

**Please join us as Paul Boncella, Map Conservator and Book Mender in the Southern History Department, Linn-Henley Research Building, presents: "So Many DNA Matches".** Genealogy and genetics have become interconnected. It is important to know what is in your genes. Your DNA can provide insight into your heritage that you cannot get from genealogy research alone. Please join us!

### Research & Genealogical Tips

© Michael John Neill, "Genealogy Tip of the Day,"

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

**That Secret No One Tells, You Never Thought to Ask, and Just Assumed Did Not Happen:** Some secrets are difficult to uncover, especially if you have no inkling that they ever happened in the first place. If you do not ask, no one will volunteer the information. Sometimes if you ask, they still will not provide any information or say that the event never took place. And sometimes you do not even know specifically what to ask and the only "clue" you have is an inkling that there's something you are not being told about a certain family member (and...your "gut" could be wrong). And it could be that there's a "secret" about a family member that only a few other family members are even aware of and they have an unwritten pact among themselves not to tell anyone else. If a great-uncle lived in Kansas for two years and returned home to Illinois, don't assume that nothing happened in Kansas. He could have been in jail, gotten married/divorced, had a child no one talked about, or lived a mundane life that only generated bills and rent receipts. Never assume that Grandma is telling you "everything." Even if she is telling everything she knows, someone else may have held some details from her. Just because the facts Grandma told you are correct, does not mean that she's told you everything she knows. She may just hope you don't find out that her brother was married in 1920 and divorced three months later. Or no one may have told her that her own father's brother had a first wife with whom he had three children.

**Need A List Of Churches?** If you need a list of churches, try a city directory. They often have lists of churches grouped by type of denomination. Addresses and names of ministers may also be listed which may help in determining which church your ancestor attended.

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

*Scott A. Martin, BGS Newsletter Editor*

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## ALIEN REGISTRATION RECORDS

Alien registration records are an excellent source of family history information on U.S. immigrants who were not naturalized citizens.

**Record Type: Immigration/Citizenship**

**Location: United States**

**Time Period: 1917-1918 and 1940-1944**

**What are Alien Registration Records?:** Aliens (non-citizen residents) living in the United States were asked during two different historical periods to register with the U.S. Government.

### World War I Alien Registration Records

Following the beginning of United States involvement in World War I, all resident aliens who had not been naturalized, were required, as a security measure, to register with the U.S. Marshal nearest their place of residence. A failure to register risked interment or possible deportation. This registration occurred between November 1917 and April 1918.

### WWII Alien Registration Records, 1940-1944

The Alien Registration Act of 1940 (also known as the Smith Act) required the fingerprinting and registration of any alien age 14 and older living within or entering the United States. These records were completed from August 1, 1940 to March 31, 1944 and document over 5 million non-citizen residents of the United States during this period.

### What Can I Learn From Alien Registration Records?:

**1917-1918:** The following information was generally collected:

- Full name (including maiden name for females)
- Current residence and length of residence
- Place of birth
- Spouse's name and residence
- Children's names, sex, and years of birth
- Parents' names (including maiden name for mother), birthdates, and birthplaces
- Names, dates of birth, and current residence of siblings
- Whether any male relatives serving in the military for/against US
- Whether registered for selective draft
- Previous military or government service
- Date of immigration, name of vessel and port of arrival
- Whether naturalized in another country
- Whether reported/registered with a consul since 1 June 1914

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- Whether applied for naturalization or took out first papers; if yes, when and where
- Whether ever taken an oath of allegiance other than to the United States
- Whether ever arrested or detained on any charge
- Whether held a permit to enter a forbidden area
- Signature
- Photograph
- Description of registrant
- Full set of fingerprints

**1940-1944:** The two-page Alien Registration Form (AR-2) asked for the following information:

- Name
- Name at time of entry to the US
- Other names used
- Address
- Date and place of birth
- Citizenship/Nationality
- Gender
- Marital status
- Race
- Height & Weight
- Hair & Eye Color
- Date, port, vessel and class of admission of last arrival in US
- Date of first arrival in US
- Number of years in the US
- Usual occupation
- Present occupation
- Name, address and business of present employer
- Membership in clubs, organizations or societies

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- Dates and nature of military or naval service
  - Whether citizenship papers were filed and if so the date, place, and court
  - Number of relatives living in the US
  - Arrest record, including date, place and disposition
  - Whether or not affiliated with a foreign government
  - Signature
  - Fingerprint
- Not all registrants provided all information.

### Where Can I Get Alien Registration Records?:

**WWI Alien Registration files** are scattered, and the majority are no longer extant. Existing files can often be found in state archives and similar repositories. Existing WWI alien registration records for Kansas; Phoenix, Arizona (partial); and St. Paul, Minnesota can be searched online. Other alien registration records are available in offline repositories, such as the 1918 Minnesota Alien Registration records at the Iron Range Research Center in Chisholm, MN. Check with your local or state genealogical society to learn what WWI alien registration records might be available for your area of interest.

**WWII Alien Registration (AR-2) files** are available on microfilm from U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) and can be obtained through a Genealogy Immigration Records Request. Unless you have the actual alien registration number from an alien registration card in your family's possession, or from a passenger list or naturalization document, you will want to begin by requesting a Genealogy Index Search.

**Important:** Alien Registration Forms AR-2 are only available for A-numbers 1 million to 5 980 116, A6 100 000 to 6 132 126, A7 000 000 to 7 043 999, and A7 500 000 to 7 759 142.

If the subject of your request was born **less than 100 years before the date of your request**, you are generally required to provide documentary proof of death with your request. This might include a death certificate, a printed obituary, a photograph of the tombstone, or other document demonstrating that the subject of your request is deceased. Please submit copies of these documents, not originals, as they will not be returned.



**Cost:** Alien registration records (AR-2 forms) requested from USCIS cost \$20.00, including shipping and photocopies. A genealogy index search is an additional \$20.00. Please check the USCIS Genealogy Program for the most current pricing information.

SOURCE: <https://www.thoughtco.com/alien-registration-records-1422067>

### WHAT WERE POORHOUSES?

<http://www.poorhousestory.com/history.htm>

Poorhouses were tax-supported residential institutions to which people were required to go if they could not support themselves. They were started as a method of providing a less expensive (to the taxpayers) alternative to what we would now days call "welfare" - what was called "outdoor relief" in those days. People requested help from the community Overseer of the Poor (sometimes also called a Poor Master) - an elected town official. If the need was great or likely to be long-term, they were sent to the poorhouse instead of being given relief while they continued to live independently. Sometimes they were sent there even if they had not requested help from the Overseer of the Poor. That was usually done when they were found guilty of begging in public, etc. [One misconception should be cleared up here; they were **not** technically "debtors' prisons." Someone could owe a great deal of money, but if they could still provide themselves with the necessities for remaining independent they might avoid the poorhouse.] Prior to the establishment of poorhouses the problem of what to do with paupers in a community was dealt with in one of threeways: ***Outdoor Relief provided through an Overseer of the Poor:*** When people fell upon hard times and members of their family, friends or members of their church congregations could not provide enough assistance to tide them over, they made application to an elected local official called the Overseer of the Poor. Within a budget of tax money, he might provide them with food, fuel, clothing, or even permission to get medical treatment to be paid out of tax funds. ***Auctioning off the Poor:*** People who could not support themselves (and their families) were put up for bid at public auction. In an unusual type of auction, the pauper was sold to the *lowest* bidder (the person who would agree to provide room and board for the lowest price) -- usually this was for a specific period of a year or so. The person who got the contract got the use of the labor of the pauper for free in return for feeding, clothing, housing and providing health care for the pauper and his/her family. This was actually a form of indentured servitude. It sounds a lot like slavery -- except that it was technically not for the pauper's entire lifetime. And it had many of the perils of slavery. The welfare of the paupers depended almost entirely upon the kindness and fairness of the bidder. If he was motivated only by a desire to make the maximum profit off the "use" of the pauper, then concern for "the bottom line" might result in the pauper being denied adequate food, or safe and comfortable shelter, or even necessary medical treatment. And there often was very little recourse for protection against abuse. ***Contracting with someone in the community to care for Paupers:*** In this situation the care of a *group* of paupers was delegated to the person(s) who would contract to provide care at, again, the lowest price. This system allowed the opportunity for somewhat better supervision as indicated in the terms of the contract -- which might specify what minimum standard of care must be provided and that community officers would do inspections, etc. There were still often the same opportunities for abuse that were noted above. Note: In some cases (before state laws began to *require* the establishment of County Poorhouses) local communities had already discovered that a place to house paupers helped reduce the cost of poor relief. These **small town poorhouses** were the prototypes for the later state-required county poorhouses. Those earlier poorhouses often instituted the use of an adjacent farm on which the paupers could work to raise their own food, thus making the houses more self-sufficient (relying less on local tax funds). That is how the term "poor farm" came into being.

During the second quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, as the industrial revolution had its effect on the United States, the importation of the factory system from England was followed almost immediately by the full scale adoption of what seemed to be an inherent component of that system -- the Poorhouse System. These poorhouses were built with great optimism. They promised to be a much more efficient and cheaper way to provide relief to *paupers*. And there was a fervent popular belief that housing such people in institutions would provide the opportunity to reform them and cure them of the bad habits and character defects that were assumed to be the cause of their poverty.

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## Save The Date! Upcoming Genealogical & Historical Meetings

**Alabama Genealogical Society Spring 2019 Seminar**, Saturday, March 9th, Samford University

“Proving Your Case With Law And Standards” presented by Judy G. Russell, CG and CGL

Registration Form <http://algensoc.org/main/SeminarFlyer.pdf>

**Alabama Cemetery Preservation Alliance, 18<sup>th</sup> Annual Workshop**, Saturday, May 18<sup>th</sup>, Montgomery, Alabama Department of Archives & History (more information in next newsletter)



**Don't Forget To Remit Your 2019 Dues!**

**\$20 Individual/\$25 Family**

**Please Mail to: PO BOX 2432  
Birmingham AL 35201**

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## **Marion Herald, 1 September 1887**

A WALKER COUNTY STORY - [Weekly Headlight] - Uncle LEVI BATES, one of the old pioneers of Walker County was entertaining a little knot of friends the other day with reminiscence of old times in Walker County. He says about fifty years ago he was out on a bear hunt with a party of hunters and that on a little creek at a spot about a quarter of a mile from where Cap. LONG'S residence at Cordova now stands, he killed three large bears as fast as he could load his old flint and steel musket. The first came up and stopped in the creek for a moment and as he was about to fire, disappeared behind some undergrowth, but in a few minutes was followed by a larger bear which stopped at the identical spot where the former stood. He fired making a dead shot. The bear which had just passed on hearing the dying growls of its companion returned just as he had re-loaded, which he also shot and killed. Uncle LEVI then loaded for the third time, but not a moment too soon, for the third bear, larger than either of the two which lay dead at his feet, approached. Again the old musket report sounded through the woods and another bear lay dead at his feet. Uncle LEVI says that it was a common sight in those days to see a thousand or fifteen hundred turkeys in a drove, and that it was a small matter to go and till two or three deer before ten o'clock in the morning.

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### **Officers & Directors**

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