

Western Montana Genealogical Society



Family Fables: Fact or Fiction?

By Julianna Smith

As we discussed last week, the holidays are upon us. (Not that anyone could forget. The stores have been reminding us since Halloween!) Many families will be getting together and reminiscing and sharing family stories. For many of us, our first foray into the genealogical world may have been through a family story that captured our interest. A military hero, a "rags to riches" story, or perhaps the "black sheep" of the family, all hold the promise of a rich story that will capture the imagination of even the most uninterested family members.

We also often find leads in these stories that we hope will further our quest. Unfortunately, we can also find "mistakes" and "embellishments" in them. Sometimes the stories that are passed down are closer to fiction than fact, and they probably should come with disclaimers. "Names and facts may have been changed to protect the storyteller, entertain the audience and confuse the family historian."

from the embellishments?

What's Provable?

The first step is to write down the story before it is forgotten, as we discussed last week. Next, it's time to pick it apart. Write down each fact that can be possibly be proved. Military records can help to verify stories for the military heroes. Census records and directories can put your ancestor at the scene of the event and provide other critical details. Probates, wills, and other legal documents can give you insight into interesting family stories and connections.

One of our family legends says that my third great-grandfather Thomas Tobin made a hat for Abraham Lincoln. I can prove that Thomas was indeed a hat maker. I know where he lived and worked for much of his life. Because of Abraham Lincoln's celebrity status, I can also find out much more about him.

Since I knew that Thomas was in
(Continued on page 5)

WMGS JANUARY MEETING

The WMGS will meet on Tuesday, Jan. 11th, at 7:00 PM in the Large Meeting Room of the Missoula Public Library. We have no set program for this meeting, but there are a few new things to explore at the library—

the new *digital* microfilm reader/copier just recently added to the Montana Room, as well as the new computer set up there for accessing the Montana databases. Bring your questions and 'brickwalls' too!

January 2005

**WMGS Meeting,
Tuesday, Jan.
11th, 7:00 pm, at
the Missoula Public
Library Large
Meeting Room.**

WMGS Officers 2003/2004

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In The Mail

Missoula Public Library
New Books

BIG SKY ROUNDUP, Montana State Genealogical Society, Betty L. Marshall, P.O. Box 476, Chester, MT 59522; www.rootsweb.com/~mtmsgs, Nov 2004.

CENTRAL MONTANA WAGON TRAILS, Lewiston Genealogy Society, 701 W. Main St., Lewiston, Mt 59457-2501, Nov. 2004.

FAMILY CHRONICLE, February 2005. Articles include "It's Not a Brickwall Until," "Give Your Family a Video Legacy on DVD," "Avoiding Common Genealogical Traps."

FADED GENES, Lewis & Clark Co. Genealogical Society, P.O. Box 5313, Helena, MT 59604' www.mth.mtlib.org/Local%20Information/L%20genealogy.htm, Dec. 2004.

GEN-BUG NEWS, Yellowstone Genealogy Forum, % Parmley Billings Library, 510 N. Broadway, Billings MT 59101, Oct. 2004.

GENEALOGICAL HELPER November-December 2004. See "Historic Newspapers Harbor Family Secrets," "Ten Things Family History Can Do For Your Family"

HERITAGE QUEST, Winter 2004/2005. See "Evidence of a person's Age, Birthdate or Birthplace—A Checklist of Sources" for a list of 80 useful places to look, "Birth Records and Alternatives," "Extraordinary Birth Registrations," and "Getting to Know Your Ancestors Using Artifacts."

NGS NEWSMAGAZINE, Sep.-Oct. 2004. See "Genealogy as Historical Fiction" for an interview with Elizabeth Shawn Mills, "Only 24 Hours in Your Day" for tips to give you more time (for genealogy of course,) plus columns *Online Genealogy* and *Family Health & Heredity* and others.

TALES & TRAILS, Columbia Gorge Genealogical Society, % The Dalles Public Library, 722 Court St., The Dalles, OR 97058-2270, Jan. 2005.

TREASURE STATE LINES, Great Falls Genealogy Society, High Plains Heritage Center. 422 2nd St. South, Great Falls, MT 59405-1816, Vo. 29, Nos. 3 & 4, 2004.

30 Seconds: A Guide to Organizing Your Genealogy Files by Robert R. Langman and Jimmy B. Parker, 929.1 LANGMAN

A History of Norwegian Immigration to the United States From the Earliest Beginning Down to the Year 1848 by George T. Flom, 923.0439 FLOM

Stories in Stone: A Field Guide to Cemetery Symbolism and Iconography by Douglas Keister, GenColl R 731.549 KEISTER

Tracing Your Scottish Ancestry by Kathleen B. Cory, 3rd ed., revised and updated by Leslie Hodgson, 929.1092 CORY

Encyclopedia of German-American Genealogical Research by Clifford Neal Smith and Anna Piszczaja Smith, GenColl R 973.0431 SMITH

American Genealogical Research at the DAR, Washington, D.C., 2nd ed., by Eric G. Grundset and Steven B. Rhodes, GenColl R 929.373 GRUNSE

A Story of Two Tennessee Families: Edwards-Hyder, by Ernestine Ratcliffe Edwards, GenColl R 929.2 EDWARDS

Topics For Oral or Written Family History, by Marcia Porter Reynolds

A NOTE ABOUT HERITAGE QUEST MAGAZINE AND EVERTON'S GENEALOGICAL HELPER.

Both of these magazines disappeared from my mailbox last spring and summer although my subscriptions were not expired. They have both since re-appeared. Heritage Quest, which used to be bi-monthly, re-appeared in December as a quarterly with an extended online version available to subscribers. Everton's had changed their name to *Family History Magazine*, and now, under new management and ownership, they have returned to *Everton's Genealogical Helper*.

Bits & Bytes 

FAMILY CHRONICLE WEBSITES

In the February 2005 issue there is a 3 page article "**Websites Worth Surfing: Update.**" This is an update of the more than 200 websites reviewed by Family Chronicle in their past 51 issues with updates provided for name and URL (web address.) The list is also available on the Family Chronicle website at:

www.familychronicle.com

ELLIS ISLAND UPDATED

The **ADVANCED SEARCH** capabilities have been improved and now incorporate some features previously found on privately run Ellis Island search pages. The Advanced Search capabilities of the index to the Ellis Island database enable input for the following data fields:

- First Name of Passenger
- Last Name of Passenger
- Gender
- Marital Status
- Approximate Year of Birth of Passenger
- Year Range (Expands range for Year of Birth)
- Approximate Year of Arrival
- Year Range (Expands range for Year of Arrival)
- Town/Village of Origin
- Name of Passenger Ship
- Ethnicity

LAST NAME can now be searched using "**Is, Starts with, or Sounds Like.**" Sounds like is not a soundex search, but generates a list of alternate spellings from which you must choose the names to search for.

YEAR RANGE - Now allows you to choose +/- 1,2,5, or 10 years.

FIRST NAME - The tips for advanced search says "There are 4 Advanced Search conditions that can be used in conjunction with the **First Name** field for a passenger record. They include: **Ignore, Is, Starts With, and Contains.** The default setting is to **Ignore** the First Name field." However, the **Ignore** feature was not currently available when I went to the advanced search

FAMILY HISTORY LIBRARY

COMPUTER RESERVATIONS

Call 543-6148

FHL HOURS ***** NOTE NEW HOURS

Mon. CLOSED
Tue. 9:00 AM - 4:00 PM & 7:00 - 9:30 PM
Wed. CLOSED
Thurs. 9:00 AM - 4:00 PM & 7:00 - 9:30 PM.
Sat 9:00 AM - 1:00 PM

Both online computers can access Family Search and the Ancestry.com databases. We now have DSL access to the Internet which is much faster than the dial up modem. Also, the new computer has now been programmed with the advanced viewer for Ancestry images so that they are now easier to manipulate and will print out well on the printer.

Please try to call ahead or come into the library and sign up to insure you will be able to use a computer when you visit.

screen and I was told that you must enter at least one letter of the first name. **Contains** also appeared to be not working at this time. It's a work in progress.

<http://www.ellisland.org/default.asp>

Passenger Arrival Log

This form prints on a standard 8.5-inch x 11-inch page (landscape mode) and will accommodate information for up to 20 individual passengers. Each record can incorporate up to 21 separate fields of data. (This is available from under **GENEALOGY—Free Charts and Forms** pull down menu.)

RMS LUSITANIA. This British passenger liner, carrying a number of Americans, was torpedoed off the Irish coast during World War I by the German submarine U-20. The websites provide passenger and crew lists, facts, figures, and firsts about the ship, history, and a media gallery.

<http://rmslusitania.info/pages/index.html>

<http://www.pbs.org/lostliners/lusitania.html>

WESTERN MONTANA GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY 2005 MEMBERSHIP LIST

Surname	First	Street	City	State	Zip	Phone	Email
Alsaker	Wanda	1308 Jackson	Missoula	MT	59802-3835	(406) 543-5388	whsac@aol.com
Berven	Irene	350 W. Central Ave.	Missoula	MT	59801	(406) 549-8898	patchas@aol.com
Culver	Pat	10900 Oral Zumwalt Way	Missoula	MT	59803	(406) 273-2265	olivia@marsweb.com
Denney	Terri	4112 23rd Ave	Missoula	MT	59803	(406) 251-4006	jenndriscoll@hotmail.com
Driscoll	Jennifer	430 Washington	Missoula	MT	59802	(406) 728-1714	RDunca@aol.com
Duncan	Phyllis	2622 Arcadia Dr.	Missoula	MT	59803-2021	(406) 251-3177	jalf@marsweb.com
Field	Judith	104 Elmhurst Ct.	Missoula	MT	59803	(406) 728-1628	harold227@montana.com
Fisher	Harold & Cherie	405 Agnes	Missoula	MT	59801-8746	(406) 721-5333	arleemontana@yahoo.com
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Gregory	Laura	P.O. Box 373	Arlee	MT	59821-0373	(406) 726-4366	
Harris	Margaret	3106 Old Pond Rd.	Missoula	MT	59802	(406) 728-6615	
Helterline	Maurice	P.O. Box 1453	Plains	MT	59859	(206) 340-0410	
Hostetler	JoAnn	P.O. Box 1243	Condon	MT	59826	(406) 754-2253	
		993 Rumble Creek Dr.					
Johnson	Loren & Barbara	326 E. Kent	Missoula	MT	59801	(406) 549-9564	barlor@marsweb.com
Kaufmann	Fern	P.O. Box 1012	Condon	MT	59826	(406) 754-2238	svlibrary@blackfoot.net
Martinich	Linda	728 Longstaff St.	Missoula	MT	59801	(406) 728-6582	
McCormick	William R.	605 Speedway Ave.	Missoula	MT	59802-5561	(406) 543-6529	wrmcc@qwest.net
Morrison	William & Shirley	P.O. Box 460153	Huson	MT	59846	(406) 626-4277	spwwwmorr@in-tch.com
Newell	Evelyn	PO Box 489	Gates Mills	OH	44040-0489	(216) 317-7767	ebn49@earthlink.net
Parpart	Paulete K.	2206 1/2 W. Sussex	Missoula	MT	59801	(406) 728-8054	parpart@missoula.lib.mt.us
Porter	Marcia	2216 Kensington Ave.	Missoula	MT	59801	(406) 728-0594	mporter@bigsky.net
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Schuster	Bonnie	403 Evans Ave.	Missoula	MT	59801-5827	(406) 721-1549	bonnie.schuster@umontana.edu
Shrader	Nancy	375 Strand Ave.	Missoula	MT	59801	(406) 543-2886	najash@msn.com
Smith	Ruth	Box 1064	Superior	MT	59872	(406) 822-6949	peggys@bigsky.net
Stellmach	Peggy	2327 West Vista Dr.	Missoula	MT	59803	(406) 251-3085	
Stephens	Jean	610 South Ave. East	Missoula	MT	59801	(406) 728-9456	mrshezzie@blackfoot.net
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Tate	Blanche	317 Westview Dr.	Missoula	MT	59803-1527	(406) 549-2855	xxbrwxx@aol.com
Wanderer	Bridget	P.O. Box 8964	Missoula	MT	59807	(406) 541-4845 x322	iamfew@aol.com
Wilcox	Fern	567 Gramsie Rd.	Shoreview	MN	55126-7020	(651) 481-1296	theresiew@aol.com
Woomer	Theresa	313 South 2nd. West	Missoula	MT	59801-1839	(406) 549-4613	

(Family Fables—Continued from page 1)

Rochester, New York, from around 1849 through his death, 05 April 1861, I searched for information about any visits Abraham Lincoln may have made to Rochester. A website with a timeline of Rochester notes that in 1860, "Abraham Lincoln's train stops for five minutes at New York Central Railroad station as Lincoln travels to Washington, D.C., for inauguration."

Hmm, five minutes? Hardly enough time to go hat shopping. Perhaps Thomas took it upon himself to make the hat as a gift and present it to him at the railroad station? We'll probably never know, but we have put them in the same town at the same time, and it's a good example of how researching other participants in the event can provide clues.

The Names Have Been Changed...

Sometimes the story may have pieces of the truth in it, but over the years and through subsequent generations, the subject of the story may have been confused with another family member. It's also possible that the aunt who related this story had her Tobins mixed.

By visiting several biographical websites for Abraham Lincoln, I also turned up the fact that he was in New York City at the Cooper Institute delivering a speech on 27 February 1860. Searches for "Cooper Institute New York" listed the address as Astor Place near Eighth Avenue. Coincidentally, Thomas' brother Peter had hat shop less than a mile away at 25 Howard. Perhaps on this trip, Mr. Lincoln did have a chance to shop, and it was at Peter's shop that he found one of his beloved stovepipe hats.

I can't say for certain whether the story is true or not, and I most likely never will be able to definitively prove or disprove it. I can only document the facts that I have found. Although...I also found a site with some interesting anecdotes, including one that mentions that President Lincoln's ghost has been seen around the White House. Perhaps I can ask him personally? And if I do manage to get an answer, I'd have to cite "Abraham Lincoln's ghost" as my source. Who says source citations have to be boring?

Was it Newsworthy?

Another family story was that one of our ancestors was a policeman who had done some heroic things in the line of duty. In this case we were able to document that Edwin Dyer did indeed capture a murderer, and the story is related in dramatic fashion in the *Brooklyn Eagle* of 21 May 1867, page 3.

Other issues of the paper follow his career from patrolman to captain of the Twelfth Precinct, including a "Sketch of the Twelfth Precinct's Commanding Officer" that ran 22 February 1894 (page 7).

Think about your family story. Is there some aspect of the story that may have made it newsworthy? If so, a search of local papers may help you to verify it.

Explore All Options

A few years ago, I mentioned in an article one of my ancestors' father who was reputed to have come over with Lafayette, and the implication was that he had come over with the Marquis during the American Revolution. Some simple math told me that it wasn't likely that a young man who came over to fight in the Revolution, wasn't likely to have sired my ancestor in 1837, around sixty years later. After the article ran, several readers pointed out to me that it was possible that the ancestor came with Lafayette when he was invited to return to the United States in 1824 by President James Monroe. That was something I hadn't considered.

Searching the Immigration Collection at Ancestry.com, I was able to find an entry for General Lafayette, and his son, George Washington Lafayette, arriving on the Ship Cadmus, 17 August 1824. I did another search, leaving the name fields blank, but including the ship name, which allows me to see all of the individuals in the database that traveled on the Ship Cadmus in 1824. Unfortunately for this family legend, there doesn't appear to be anyone with a surname resembling that of my ancestor on the ship with him. Of course, I should also check the original manifest though because it's possible that the name was misread or missed entirely. It won't be at the top of my priority list, but I do get a kick out of finding pieces of history in our records, so I probably will check it out when the opportunity arises.

These are just a few examples of what can be done in researching the validity of family stories. The really cool part is that I was able to find all of this information sitting here in my jammies. Just think of what we can do when we take our searches further into libraries and archives. I hope that this holiday season you're rewarded with an interesting story or two to check out and wish you the best of luck with it!

Juliana Smith is the editor of the *Ancestry Daily News* and author of *The Ancestry Family Historian's Address Book*. She has written for *Ancestry Magazine* and *Genealogical Computing*. Juliana can be reached by e-mail at ADNeditor@ancestry.com, but she regrets that she is unable to assist with personal research.

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Dues & Queries

Dues are \$11 a year for individuals and \$13 for families, which includes a Newsletter (Sep, Nov, Jan, Apr, & May) and membership in the Montana State Genealogical Society. Queries are published free for members, \$2 for non-members.

We would appreciate any submissions of articles on genealogy for the Newsletter including *How You Solved It*, local pedigrees, book reviews of local history/genealogy books, and any genealogy news items.

FIRST FAMILIES AND EARLY SETTLERS

Vol. II of this series will be going to press sometime this spring or early summer. The project will continue, however, and you can submit entries anytime to: Al Stoner, 44 Wonder Rd., Clancy, MT 59634 or e-mail her at Alasto@aol.com if you have any questions.

Upcoming Conferences

2005 NGS Winter Warm-Up—20-22 Jan 2005, Wyndham Phoenix Hotel, Phoenix, Arizona. Cost is \$150 for members, \$205 for non-members + cost of workshops @\$25 (some free.)

2005 Montana State Conference - in Missoula at Ruby's Inn, September 16-17, 2005. The keynote speaker will be T. Mark Lowe, NGS/FGS Sate Liaison.

MONTANA DEATH INDEX CD

The Montana State Genealogical Society has created a CD of the deaths reported to the State from the 1800's through 2002. The CD has over 650 thousand death records in Microsoft Access format in 10 year searchable increments. It is being offered for \$20 (postage included) from: MSGS, % Robert Cummings, President, P.O. Box #5313, Helena, MT 59604.