

# ROOTS AND BRANCHES

Genealogy News from Linebaugh Library's Historical Research Room

Issue 5

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## HR HAPPENINGS

January has come and gone and the infamous groundhog has seen his shadow. February also celebrates Black History Month, and I have set up a display in the showcase located outside the entry to the Historical Research Room featuring African-American genealogy research.

If you are a Channel 3 viewer, you may have seen a familiar face. I was recently interviewed by Channel 3 to spotlight the Historical Research Room and its resources available to our community. To my knowledge, it is still being aired at this time.

The theme for this newsletter issue is "searching for female ancestors." Tracing females can be difficult and challenging, but should not be neglected. Your foremothers were just as much a part of your heritage as your forefathers. Your female ancestors have a story worth telling---and with a bit of creativity and patience you can uncover the hard-to-find information and tell the story.

## RESEARCH KNOW-HOW

According to "Discovering Your Female Ancestors" by Sharon DeBartolo Carmack, "There are two basic categories of sources you will seek in the course of researching your female ancestors: those created by a woman herself and those created about her." The first basic category includes things like letters, diaries and journals, family bibles and legislative petitions. An example of the latter would be The Women's National Loyal League, which sought to abolish slavery and collected 400,000 signatures by 1865. Sources created about women would include original records like census, marriage, divorce, cemetery, church, military records and pensions, as well as city directories, passenger lists and published family histories. The top 10 places to find maiden names are:

1. **Marriage Records** – These can include not only the marriage license, but also the marriage certificate, marriage announcements, marriage banns, and marriage bonds. You will need to know the spouse's name, marriage location and approximate marriage date to find these records.
2. **Cemetery Records** – Tombstones may list women under their maiden names, with "wife of so and so" as the record of their married name, or may include the wife's maiden name as a middle name or initial. For those with no mention of the female's maiden name, check nearby plots for possible family members.
3. **Census Records** – Check every census year available for your female ancestor up until the year she died. Young couples may be found living with the wife's parents; an elderly parent may have been added to the household; or brothers, sisters or other family members may be found living with your ancestor's family. Clues may also be found in the names of families living nearby.
4. **Land Records** – Land was important, and often passed down from father to daughter. Examine deeds for your ancestor and/or her husband which include the Latin phrases "et ux" (and wife) and "et al" (and others). They may provide the names of females, or names of siblings or children. Also keep your eye out for a man or a couple selling land to your ancestors for a dollar, or other small amount. The ones selling the land are more than likely the parents or relatives of your female ancestor.
5. **Church Records** – Churches are a good source for birth or christening records which usually include the names of both parents, including the maiden name of the mother. Church marriage records will usually include the spouse's maiden name, and are an alternate source for marriage information for periods where civil registration was not in effect.
6. **Probate Records & Wills** – If you have a possible set for parents for your female ancestor, search for their probate record or will. Surnames of female children, along with the names of their spouses, are often listed. Since estates often involved the division of the land, deed indexes for your female ancestor may be able to lead you to probate proceedings.
7. **Newspaper Records** – Check newspapers for the locality where your ancestors lived for birth or marriage announcements or obituaries. Even if you can't locate an obituary for your female ancestor, you may find notices for siblings or other family members that provide helpful clues. Combining a list of your ancestor's siblings with census research can help determine potential families.
8. **Death Records** – If your female ancestor died recently enough to leave a death certificate, this is one of the few places where her maiden name may appear. Since death certificates can often include inaccurate information, check the certificate for the name of the informant. The closeness of the relationship between informant and the deceased can help you assess the likely accuracy of the provided information.
9. **Military Records** – Pension applications and military service records often include good biographical information. Family members also often signed as witnesses.
10. **Naming Patterns** – It is only a clue, but the maiden name of a mother can sometimes be found buried somewhere among the names of her children. Unusual middle names might be the maiden name of a mother or grandmother. Or the eldest daughter might be named for her maternal grandmother.

## GENEALOGY GEMS

From *Discovering Your Female Ancestors* – “Be cautious when dealing with colonial marriage records. You may find a man married a Mrs. Mary Smith. This does not necessarily mean she was married previously. The term Mrs., which is originally an abbreviation for mistress, was used for both married and unmarried women and girls. It denoted a social position.”

Also from *Discovering Your Female Ancestors* – “In some circumstances, a woman chose to keep her maiden name instead of using her husband’s name. Lucy Stone (1819-1893)...was one of the first women to insist upon keeping her name when she married. Those who followed her lead were called *Lucy Stones*.”

## HISTORICAL HIGHLIGHTS

In 1920, the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the Constitution is ratified, giving women in the U.S. the right to vote. Republican Harry Burn of McMinn County was the youngest man in the Tennessee legislature at the time and heeded his mother’s advice to “be a good boy.” So he supported the amendment and gave suffragists the vote they needed for ratification. In 1869 in Wyoming, however, the Suffrage Act in that territory gave women complete suffrage including eligibility to hold public office and in 1925 Wyoming became the first state to elect a female governor.

## SPEAKING THE LANGUAGE

Dowry – property the bride brings to the marriage

Relict – a widow

Consort – companion; term for when the woman predeceased her husband  
et ux – and wife

Daughtered out – lineage that has no male heirs to carry on the surname

Lying in – colonial term referring to childbirth

Concubine – a woman who lives with a man to whom she is not married

## WEB CONNECTIONS

Try [www.genealinks.com/female.htm](http://www.genealinks.com/female.htm) to search for female ancestors over the internet.

## PERIODICALS AT-A-GLANCE

“*Identifying Female Ancestors*” in May/June 2001 issue of Heritage Quest Magazine.

“*Looking for Female Ancestors*” in the Sept. 2000 issue of NGS Quarterly.

## GENEALOGY GATHERINGS

February 13 – March 26 the East Tennessee Historical Society will feature the exhibit “Windows on the Past: The Cultural History of Vardy, Hancock County, TN.” This exhibit features photographs of Melungeon daily life during the early to middle 20<sup>th</sup> century. DruAnna Overbay is the exhibit’s creator and current secretary of the Vardy Community Historical Society. She is a direct descendant of Vardeman Collins who is recognized as a patriarch of the Newman’s Ridge Melungeons and for whom Vardy is named. For more info call (865) 215-8824.

## HR BOOKSHELF

The following is a partial list of new books added to the Historical Research Room collection:

Jackson County, TN Cemetery Inscriptions 1801-2003

1850, 1860 & 1870 Sullivan Co., TN Census

Sullivan County, TN Marriage Bonds 1880-1899

Sullivan County, TN Marriage Records 1863-1893

Sullivan County, TN Marriage Records 1899-1906

1930 Census of Overton County, TN

Sullivan Co., TN Adm. Bonds & Letters 1875-1904

1930 Census of Clay County, TN

## HR MEMORIALS

The following books were added to the Historical Research Room collection through our memorial book program:

1. *Biographical Sketches of the Cumberland Region of Tennessee*

Given in memory of Elizabeth Cable McLean

2. *Confederate Soldiers of Williamson County, TN Final Resting Places*

Given in memory of Mary Fletcher Lee

3. *Tennessee’s Radical Army: The State Guard and It’s Role in Reconstruction 1867-1869*

Given in memory of Larry Nelson

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Linebaugh Public Library  
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Hours:  
Mondays-Thursdays 9-9  
Fridays & Saturdays 9-5  
Sundays 1-6