

President's Message

by Brenda Leyndyke

President's Report March and April

Every genealogist has that one place that they would give anything for to be able to visit and conduct family history research. I am no different. Ever since I found out I have deep roots in New England, I have wanted to visit there.

My husband and I have decided to go for it and are planning what I am calling "The Great Big New England Genealogy Tour"! My ancestry traces back to Colonial America and our trip will concentrate on Massachusetts, Vermont, New Hampshire, Connecticut and New York.

A trip of this magnitude is going to require a lot of planning; planning that I have already started. It is more than just maps and routes, which is the easy part. The hardest part will be deciding what and where to research. I have a lot of work ahead of me, I am glad I am starting early. My husband and I plan on combining our love of history with my love of genealogy. Hopefully, I won't spend all of my time in courthouses, libraries and archives.

I was looking online for tips on planning a genealogy research trip and came across an article, [Heritage Travel: The Next Big Thing](#), which I thought I would share with you (<http://www.travelpulse.com/news/>

[features/trend-alert-is-heritage-travel-the-next-big-thing.html](#)). I have never been accused of being trendy, but maybe this will be a first time for it.

Do you have a genealogical journey that you would like to take? Now that the weather is getting nice, make plans to get out and see those ancestral places. Visit a cemetery or the family homestead. Be sure to take pictures and enjoy the experience. I know I plan to enjoy every minute of my trip. If I find the answer to, "Who are the parents of Daniel Fenn, who married Huldah Rowley?" you will hear my yelling all the way from Vermont!

Brenda Leyndyke



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Calhoun County Genealogical Society

The purposes of the Calhoun County Genealogical Society (CCGS) are:

- To gather and preserve information of genealogical value.
- To encourage the deposit of such information in suitable depositories.
- To aid genealogists in the study of family history through the exchange of knowledge.
- To publish and promote Calhoun County and other genealogical materials.



CCGS is a nonprofit organization recognized as tax-exempt under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue code. Contributions are tax-deductible to the extent provided by law. Individuals, libraries or societies may join. Annual dues for the year, beginning September 1, are \$18 for members choosing to receive **Generations** through postal mail or \$15 for members electing to receive the newsletter via e-mail. Memberships are accepted year-round; dues received after May 1 will pay for the following year's membership. Members receive **Generations** newsletter six times per year. All are invited to submit articles to the **Generations** editor. Permission is granted to reprint articles unless otherwise noted. Please give appropriate credit to the source. Copies of pages from back issues of **Generations** are available for \$1.00 for the first page and \$.50 for each additional page. General meetings are held at 7 p.m. the fourth Tuesday of each month at the LDS Marshall Branch Church 16036 Old US -27, Marshall, *unless otherwise specified*. No meetings are held in July, August or December. Programs are free and open to the public.

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PART 2: Memoirs of Sheldon R. Curtiss (Great-grandfather of Art Adams)

As Dictated to his Daughter, Evelyn Curtiss Lowrey, December 1, 1920

In this limited account we have mentioned but a few days of encounter and soldier experiences while in active service. Compare these few days with the three hundred sixty-five days of three years' service and you will readily see that it would be imprudent, if not impossible, to relate much of our experiences.

Our brigade (Custer's Michigan Cavalry Brigade) had been ordered into the Shenandoah Valley to see what the army was doing there. Before we reached the valley we met the enemy at Haw's Slope and lost more of our men. We would have lost more but the rebel artillery firing was very poor, as they aimed too high and the shells burst above our heads. We got by the enemy and marched on until eleven o'clock a.m.

We met the enemy in full force, however, at Trevelyan Station. It seemed that it was the whole rebel army scattered all around us. Undoubtedly, it was the remnant of General Pickett's famous subdued army which made the charge at Gettysburg. They captured Custer's headquarters wagons, with all our brigade records and papers, and cut off large numbers of our men in different ways. General Kidd, of Ionia, was lost for two days, and I, with five or six hundred others, was taken prisoner. Levi, George, myself, and others were taken to Libby Prison, part of the way on foot and part of the way on canal boats. We were three or four days on the way and began to suffer with hunger. One man, O. T. Northern, said to one of the officers, "Are you going to starve us to death?" Whereupon the officer struck him over the back with the end of his musket. We put in a few days at Libby Prison and a few at Castle Thunder. These prisons were in Richmond, Virginia. Soon we were taken on cars to Andersonville Prison, Georgia. The filth of these cars cannot be told.)They were box cars and we were crowded in so we could not get to a door for a breath of air. After reaching Andersonville we first saw the notorious and inhuman Wirtz, who was the overseer of the prison. This man was a German and of the same stamp as the late Kaiser and his demonic followers. At his command we were stripped and searched for the third time. Although very much determined to find everything of value upon our person, they failed to find a very nice gold pen, which I had hid away in my mouth, and the holder of the same was hid in the seam of my underclothes, which after vigorous shaking stayed hid. This was one of my best friends and served me many ways in sending messages to my loved ones (although I learned later they never received a message from me during my stay of six months at Andersonville).

I had pictured in my mind the horrors of this prison, but when I stepped in through the inner gate I found its horrors and miseries were far beyond my imagination. The air was putrid with filth and the ground was covered with maggots. We were starved with hunger, thirsty, and with shelter. We believe that, in answer to our prayers, Providence Spring broke out in August of 1864, and without a doubt, saved the lives of hundreds of our men. We saw Wirtz very often, as he took delight in riding through on his horse every few days and would flourish his revolver around and very often knock a man over the head with it. A full account of this prison will be found in the Historical Account of Ionia County, as I was requested to write an account of Andersonville for that book.

In August 1864 there were about thirty thousand of our men there on thirty acres of land. Providence Spring supplied them with as pure water as I have ever tasted. Uncle George became ill at this time. We had asked for him to be taken to the hospital. We later learned that the so-called hospital showed no more mercy than the rebel prison. Uncle George died, as did about fourteen thousand other Union soldiers and are buried there at Andersonville. I found the number of Uncle George's grave, which is 9853.

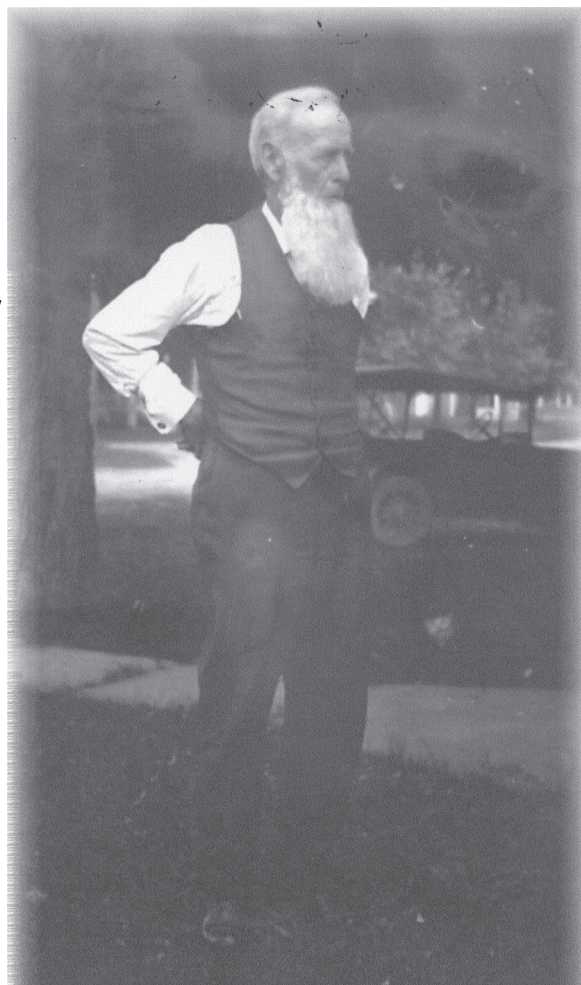
Soon after Uncle George left, prisoners were ordered away from Andersonville by car loads to the Mahlon Prison (Camp Lawton, Millan, GA?). It took one night and part of a day's travel. We were not told where we were going, perhaps that we might be more peaceable on our trip. At Mahlon we met a man by the name of Reed Taylor. He was formerly a Michigan man, but as that time he was in the rebel service in order to hold the property he had in Richmond, Virginia. He was in sympathy with the North, but dared not be seen talking with a Union soldier in daylight. Through his efforts we were relieved from prison to work for him in a rebel sutler house and bakery. During my first day out, while at work for Taylor, General Winder of the rebel army, came for me and asked with oaths what I was doing. I told him we had orders to work for Taylor and he informed me that the tent I was putting up belonged to him and, with another oath, "Nothing was to happen to it." Shortly after this Winder was taken sick and Taylor requested me to prepare and carry him some food. This I did as best I could. Toast, beefsteak, and black tea was his service. While I was placing it for him in his headquarters tent I told him I had prepared it the best I could with what I had to work with. It was not as good as my mother could do, but I hoped it would taste good to him. At this time he had got beyond swearing. I had made a bunk for Levi and me to sleep on under the tent I had put up back of Mr. Taylor's place of business.

A few days following, Mr. Taylor had orders to leave Mahlon. Sherman was on his famous ride from Atlanta to the sea and was very near Mahlon, so they were preparing to get away. We did not know where, but we loaded all of Mr. Taylor's supplies on the train and Levi and I went with him. We located this time near Savannah. In the middle of the night Taylor came to our tent and told us he thought he could work us through to our lines as nurses for some sick soldiers that were leaving. He hated to have us go, for he did not know how to get along without us. I talked it over with Levi and we decided to go. So we went over where the sick were and answered to our description papers. This took about one-half day for all who were to leave. We were then marched through the streets of Savannah to a large rebel flatboat and carried down the Savannah River to our lines.

We saw in the distance on one of our Union gun boats our flag, the grand old Stars and Stripes. It was the first time I had seen it since before I was taken prisoner, over six months previously. I shall never forget how blessed it looked to me. It made it seem a little more like we were being brought to God's country. When I see Old Glory now my mind so often goes back to that time and perhaps it seems just a little dearer due to that experience.

The heartless General Winder was one of the men who helped to plan the Andersonville Prison. He made his boast that they "would kill more men there than in battle." He had cursed at me as I was putting up his tent and making his bunk; but while he was sick at Mahlon I had fed him. Later I learned that while he was in Savannah he was taken sick again and died under the tent I staked out and on the bunk I made. "If the enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink."

(This article is part 2 in a series by Sheldon Curtiss, Civil War Veteran.)



Congratulations to CCGS member, research chairperson and MGC delegate, Chelsea Johnson, on her recent grant award. Chelsea applied for a genealogy grant to help offset the price of attending a national genealogical conference and she won! Chelsea will be attending the National Genealogical Society Family History Conference, “Exploring the Centuries: Footprints in Time” in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, in May. Chelsea is the Family History Librarian at the Marshall District Library in Marshall. Congratulations, Chelsea. I hope you have an enjoyable time.

2016 Lansing Family History Seminar is April 23rd

Saturday, April 23, 2016 the Lansing Family History Center will be holding their annual, Family History Seminar, at 431 E. Saginaw St., East Lansing, Michigan. This all-day excellent seminar will offer 45 classes and activities all centered around Family History.

Pre-registration is available online. More information, including class offerings, can be found online at <http://lansingfhc.org>. There is no cost to attend. Syllabi copies are extra and can be ordered at time of registration. You can bring a sack lunch as places are available to eat at the center.

2016 Calendar of Events

March 22-James Jackson, CCGS Past President, will be presenting “Researching the War of 1812”. He will provide an overview of the war as well as resources for finding records of veterans who served.

April 26-Archives of Michigan Archivist, Jessica Harden, will show attendees how to get the most effective searches using SeekingMichigan.org. The recent additions of the 1940’s death certificates are up at Seeking Michigan. Jessica will share what else is new on the website, as well.

May 24-CCGS President, Brenda Leyndyke, will present “Get Smart”. She will show attendees ways to improve your genealogical education by using free resources. These resources will help further your research.

June 28-Don Heider, a researcher with many years of experience in Germany and the United States, will provide tips and resources that are helpful in finding your German ancestors.

News from Lansing

The Library of Michigan has extended hours now. The main library will be open every Saturday, except for state holidays, from 10 a.m. - 4 p.m. This is in addition to their regular Monday-Friday hours of 10:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m. A bonus of visiting on Saturday is the free parking!

Family researchers will find the resources at the library helpful. Some of the resources include:

- Largest collection of Michigan newspapers
- Michigan specific periodicals, books, government documents, maps, etc.
- City directories
- Public internet access
- New digital microfilm scanners
- New reader printers in the newspaper room, allowing users to print, save to a thumb drive or email the image.

More information can be found at <http://www.michigan.gov/>

Generations

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Calhoun County Genealogical Society *Calendar of Events*

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Have ideas for future programs? Please contact President Brenda Leyndyke, whose contact information is on page 2.