

# WCGS NEWSLETTER

Washington County Genealogical Society of Texas

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

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## Information

mailing address:  
2211 South Day St.  
Suite 105  
Brenham, TX 77833

1.979.633.4848  
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## 2017-18 Officers

President:  
Jan Kelm

Vice-President:  
Geraldine Johnson

Secretary:  
Vanessa Smith

Treasurer:  
Lu Hollander

Newsletter Editor:  
Susan Lake  
genealogy@susanlake.net

## What You Missed

### April 2018

On April 2, WCGS enjoyed a program given by Gary Rothermel who related the troubled history of Arabella Jemima Gray Harrington of Washington County. After losing her father in the Revolutionary War, when he was 35, she and her siblings and widowed mother suffered further, as all their possessions were looted in North Carolina by vengeful Tories. Her mother lost her mind for a time and all the children were bound out to neighboring families. Arabella eventually married Nathaniel Deaver, who had also been a revolutionary soldier. Nathaniel was employed as an Indian interpreter after they moved to Illinois Territory in 1810. Tragedy struck again, as her husband died the next year. She married John William Harrington in 1814, but he and one of her sons were killed in a mill accident. After a two year journey, in 1827, she arrived in Washington County, Texas, where one of her sons had previously migrated. Arabella was part of the second group of Stephen F. Austin's settlers and received a large land grant. Two local business men bought 100 acres of her property and donated them to the city of Brenham for a town site. Arabella lived out her days in the dog run house that she built and is buried in the Walker Cemetery off of Mustang Road.

### *Business Meeting:*

**Adopt a Cemetery:** It appears that for now, the George Family is cleaning up Old Washington Cemetery, so we will have time to regroup to decide what we will do.

**Cemetery Tour.** The group met and it was decided to make another attempt at doing a tour of Prairie Lea and to address the concerns of their board. We are working on a set of questions and the answers to them and will meet

## Looking Forward

The next meeting will be May 2 at **7:15 P.M.** in the Blinn Student Center. The program is going to be given by Susan Lake on ways to break down research brick walls. She will be using WWI veterans from Washington County as a model.

## Meeting Time

Our meeting time has been adjusted to 7:15 (from our previous 7 pm) to allow the class using the room ahead of us to leave and to allow time for our speakers to set up.

## New Members

If you know of someone with a genealogy interest, tell them about us. They can join at any time.

## Memberships

Texas State Genealogical Society

Washington County Chamber of Commerce

## Dues Reminder

Please give Lu Hollander your 2018 dues or mail them to 2211 South Day St. Suite 105 Brenham, TX 77833. The cost is \$12 for a single person or \$18 for a couple living at the same address. [Click here for the 2018 form.](#)

again on April 23.

**Other projects:** We are discussing a bus trip to Clayton Library and volunteering to digitize local records. We will continue to scan obituaries. We are partnering with the NCRM Library in offering a Family History Fair for young people in conjunction with the Genealogy Lock-In in October. We are also discussing providing volunteers to the NCRM Library to provide needed genealogical indexing and scanning.

## Genealogy Time

Vanessa Smith discussed an article in the March edition of AARP Bulletin, written by Sid Kirchheimer, who cautioned against putting birthdate, full name, home address, mother's maiden name, and names of survivors in obituaries because scammers use that information in a number of ways to defraud the unwary.

Vanessa also did some research on one of the queries that appeared in the last newsletter concerning the burial place of Nancy M. Escoe. Many sources were searched and much was learned about Nancy, but not where she might be buried or her date of death. Vanessa sent Mr. Rutherford two marriage documents. He was so grateful for the research that he is sending WCGS a check for \$200 as a donation. Maybe more members might like to assist as queries come in?

## Tidbit

Gesine Koether told the story of Santa Anna's Vest. It seems that a Joel Robinson unknowingly allowed Santa Anna to ride behind him on his horse and probably saved the general's life. Some of Santa Anna's men recognized him and Santa Anna was not a stranger any more. Joel took him to Sam Houston and the captured general asked permission to give Mr. Robinson his brocaded vest as a thank you. A tradition was begun for grooms to wear the vest at their weddings. After many years, the vest became too deteriorated to be used any longer, and it was stored by a clergyman and forgotten. Perhaps in the 1970s, the vest was rediscovered but its significance was unknown and unfortunately it was burned and buried. Maybe someone has a photo of this historic vest?

## Sites of Interest to Researchers

<https://www.amyjohnsoncrow.com/find-millions-of-genealogy-websites/>

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<http://www.goldenarrowresearch.com/>

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## Queries From Visitors to our Website

*If You Can Help With any of These, email us and we'll send you details.*

### Mar 19, 2018

I have copy of a death certificate from 1952, burial indicates Burton Colored Cemetery, Burton Texas. Can anyone tell me what the name might have been? Annette Kerr

Jan Kelm response: I believe it is Hewett Cemetery. Some that are buried there show Burton Cemetery on their death certificates.

### April 7, 2018

Yesterday my wife and I were Bluebonnet Peeping and noticed Willingham Cemetery as we were driving by. I had not seen gravesites for five people buried outside the fence line for Willingham, but did see them as I walked back there. These are:

St Elmer Benford (1917-1976)

Emma Johnson (1877-1959)

Birdie Meyers (1893-1975)

Johnnie Meyers (1901-1976)

Mack Santee (1877-1968)

These are shown on the right hand side of this snip of Amy the Spirit Seeker's photograph at <https://www.findagrave.com/cemetery/7672/willingham-cemetery/photo> and in Google Satellite view, where you can clearly see St Elmer's gravesite if you drill down ...

My question is, has the area where the five folks listed above are buried ever been given its own name (e.g., Annex, Colored Section, etc.)? It seems as if there should be one b/c they are well outside of the Willingham fence.

On an unrelated matter, you folks in Washington County have done an excellent job with your cemeteries. OTOH, Burlson County is not quite as organized IMHO. We also stopped at Snook Cemetery yesterday, where there are five other cemeteries (they report four) in close proximity ... immediately northwest. I've identified three cemeteries, but the other two remain a mystery to be solved. If you could offer a person who could help in that regard, I'd be most appreciative.

PS: Mack's bio

REST IN PEACE. DIED AT ST JUDE HOSPITAL. BRENHAM, TEXAS. AGED 90 YRS.OLD.

According to a family story, Mac [sic] Santee, a black man was sold land by George Washington

Newman and later land by Alfred Jackson Willingham adjoining the Willingham tract. Santee was buried outside of this fence on his land across from and at the foot of the graves of John H. Willingham and wife Julia Ann Murdock Willingham upon his death. Numerous other graves of Mac's family members have since appeared along the fence with him. Santee, as he was called by the Willingham family, and his wife were life-long devoted friends of this Willingham family. I remember when John's wife, Julia Ann Murdock Willingham died in 1959, members of Santee's family and other friends attended the funeral, standing outside the fence in tears and later proceeding past her casket to say goodbye to one they loved.

Additional Observation: Mack passed in 1968, Emma Johnson in 1959. IMHO, the article implies that Mack was the first one buried outside the Willingham fence. If so, Emma's situation begs to be explained.

Buddy Leech

Response: Jan Kelm

I've been working on this off and on since I received your email. Thanks for the nice words about the Washington County Genealogical Society's work on cemeteries. We are trying, but it is a slow process. I have not been to Willingham Cemetery although I have driven by it. We have it listed as Willingham (white) and Willingham (AA).

I did find, just as your bio reads, that Mack Santee owned the property next to the fenced cemetery at one time. There is a deed for the current owners north of the portion where Santee is buried and it does reference that area as a cemetery although there is no name for it and there are no boundaries given. However, in researching death certificates, I found that Birdie Meyers death certificate says she is buried in "Mack Santees" and Johnnie Meyers says he is buried in "Santee Cemetery." So....I would suspect we can call it Santee Cemetery. Santee bought the property in 1924. Interesting that there are only the later graves, although there could be some unmarked ones.

I'll be interested in hearing from you after you study my information. I'm going to work on a story for the Santee Cemetery so we can get it on our website. I think I will also separate it from the Willingham Cemetery on Findagrave.