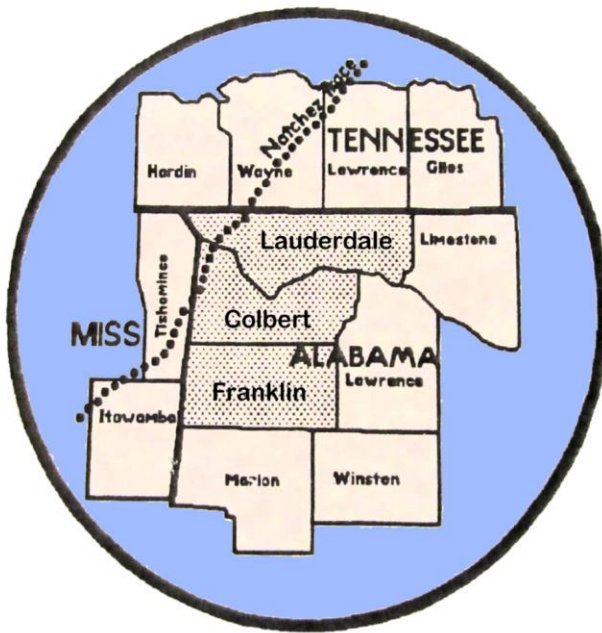


Vol. 43, No. 3



NATCHEZ TRACE NEWSLETTER

PUBLISHED QUARTERLY BY THE NATCHEZ
TRACE GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY

THE SOCIETY IS DEDICATED TO UNITING THOSE PERSONS
INTERESTED IN THE STUDY OF FAMILY HISTORY AND
GENEALOGY, TO THE PRESERVATION OF RECORDS USEFUL
TO GENEALOGISTS, TO THE PROMOTION OF PROGRAMS OF
EDUCATION WITH FURTHER GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT
OF THOSE FIELDS, AND TO THE PUBLICATION OF
GENEALOGICAL RECORDS RELATED TO NORTHWEST
ALABAMA.

August 2024

SUNDAY AUGUST 4, 2024 PROGRAM

2 p.m

Florence-Lauderdale Public Library
350 N. Wood Ave., Florence

“Historical Markers and Other Signs of the Past”

Dr. David Curott, author



About the Speaker and Presentation

Dr. Curott will talk about the prevalence of historical markers in Lauderdale, Colbert, and Franklin Counties and show maps of their distribution, including the Florence Walk of Honor plaques. David will describe his book and how it developed and suggest future markers that are needed. He will answer the question of who erects them, why, and discuss why they are important. Time will prevent him from showing all 320 markers found in the three counties but he will include several lesser known but very interesting examples.

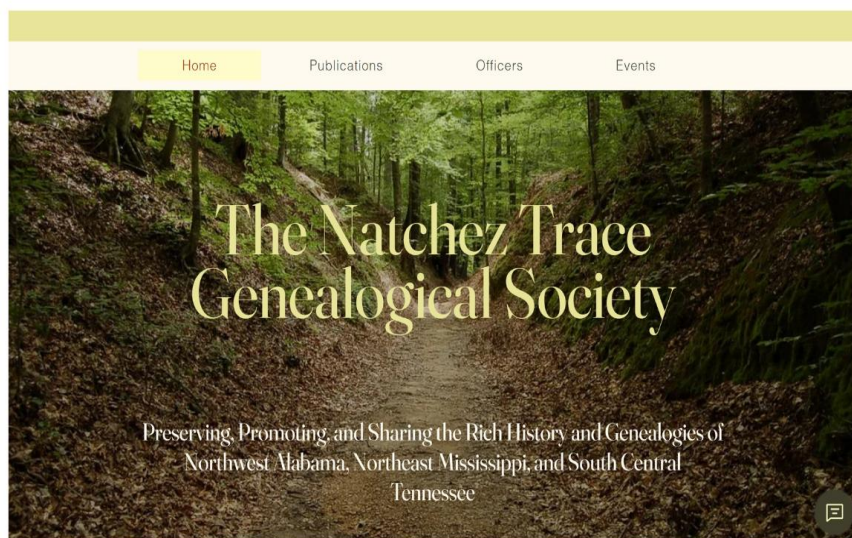
David was born in New Jersey but eventually found his way to Florence to teach at UNA. In retirement his interest in local history blossomed and he is a Board member of the Tennessee Valley Historical Society and the Natchez Trace Genealogical Society.

CHECK OUT OUR NEW WEBSITE!

WWW.THENTGS.ORG

VISIT THE SITE TO:

- SIGN UP FOR MEMBERSHIP
- REGISTER FOR UPCOMING EVENTS
- CONTACT MEMBERS
- ACCESS PUBLICATIONS
- LEARN ALL ABOUT NTGS
- AND MUCH MORE COMING SOON!



A Letter from the President

Hello, everyone!

First, I want to say I appreciate each and every one of you. You are all important to our society. I love the comments that I get and am always open to your suggestions on how we can be better. One of those who has helped shape our society was Lloyd (Bill) Clemmons who was also a charter member. Bill passed away recently and we all will miss his thoughts, suggestions, attendance, and kind words. Please see his obituary later in this newsletter.

Fall is rapidly approaching and your board is excited about all the things we have going on. Our new and updated website is running. You need to go visit it if you haven't yet. [https:// www.thentgs.org](https://www.thentgs.org)

Our Fall seminar which will be held the first Saturday in October, October 05, 2024 at First United Methodist Church. See a flyer for it here. We have excellent presentations lined up that are sure to help your research. Even if you're not from the Shoals Area, the things we discuss in our seminar will be applicable all over the country!

Our journal should be ready for publication soon. Our consolidated index for ALL issues of the Natchez Trace Traveler is almost complete and will be posted to our new website before our seminar this fall. The Generations Basic Genealogy Seminar in July was great. If you missed it, you missed a lot. You should make plans to attend next year. This year is going great but we still need your help. We will be making a decision very soon regarding a speaker(s) for our 2025 seminar so need your input ASAP. We also need your attendance at our events so tell your family and friends about our meetings and encourage them to come with you. We also need your input for our quarterly meetings. What do you want to learn more about? How can the NTGS help you in your research? Has there been a meeting sometime in our long 44-year long history that you would like to see an update to? Let us know what you need so we can better help you. We are here for you.

Speaking of our journal, do you have information you would like to see published in the Journal? Have you written something about a local family or happening that you would like published in it? Have research on something local that you would like to see published but need help writing it? Or do you have some original documents or Bible records from the area that we could copy and then publish so they can help others as much as they have helped you? Then contact us and tell us what you have. We are looking for suitable information and yours might be what is needed! Everything will be evaluated and considered.

I hope to see you soon!

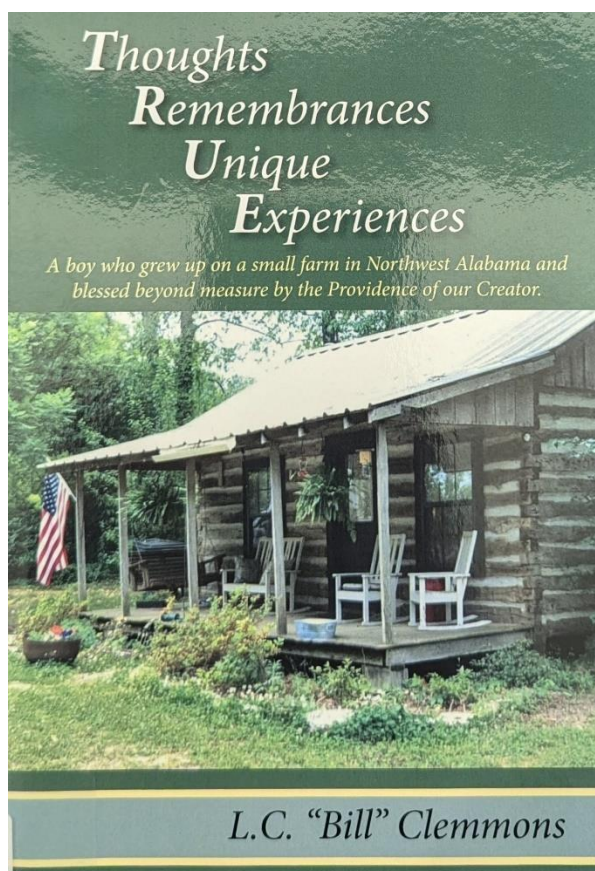
-Brian

In Memoriam

The Natchez Trace Genealogical Society wishes to offer a word of tribute in memory of one of our beloved and esteemed members. Lloyd Clyde “Bill” Clemmons was a native of Lauderdale County who along with his wife Mary Young Clemmons were formative members of NTGS. Though his career took him away from northwest Alabama, he and Mary returned later in life and established a homestead that they cherished. Bill collected his memories of growing up in Lauderdale County into a memoir called *Thoughts, Remembrances, Unique Experiences* imbued with genuine wit, charm, and exuding gratitude for the “providence of the creator.” Bill was a natural storyteller, and his memories were a living treasure chest of the cultural heritage of northwest Alabama. He will be missed by all who knew him, but his legacy as a historian and chronicler of our region’s heritage will live on for generations to come.



Lloyd “Bill” Clemmons
(1937-2024)



NATCHEZ TRACE GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY
2024 SEMINAR

Researching Your Roots

HOW TO TRACE YOUR FAMILY'S HISTORY
USING LOCAL RESOURCES



**Saturday, October 5, 2024
9 am to 4 pm**

First United Methodist Church
McDowell Hall Auditorium
415 N. Seminary Street, Florence, Alabama

***GENEALOGICAL EXPERTS & LOCAL HISTORIANS
WILL SHARE THEIR TIPS, TRICKS, AND SECRETS FOR
TRACING YOUR ANCESTORS IN OVERLOOKED AND
UNEXPECTED PLACES CLOSE TO HOME***

**REGISTER AT WWW.THENTGS.ORG
\$25 NTGS MEMBERS | \$35 NON-MEMBERS
INCLUDES BOXED LUNCH + DOOR PRIZES**



“DNA Sleuthing”

The increasingly widespread availability of DNA sequencing kits through services such as Ancestry and 23andMe has completely revolutionized the capabilities of genealogical research. Law enforcement working with forensic genealogists have been able to solve decades-old cold cases, giving names back to John and Jane Does, and bringing perpetrators to justice. But for most of us, who have our own tantalizing unsolved “cold cases” in our family tree (that admittedly are less a matter of life and death, but still of great importance to our own family heritage) how do we make the most out of the vast body of genetic information available to the general public for the first time in human history?

I can only speak from my own experience, but I’d like to share how I used AncestryDNA to go beyond an otherwise unbreakable brick wall in my family tree, and the methodology I used to do it.

For context, the identity of one of my great-grandparents is a complete mystery. One of my grandparents (not saying *which* one, just for privacy) was raised by their maternal grandparents. Their mother never revealed the name of the biological father, and no documents exist which provide an answer as to his identity. And now, more than 75 years

later, the name of the biological father (if it was ever definitively known in the first place) has been lost to time. My loftiest and fondest goal when I sent off my sample for testing was that perhaps I could solve the mystery and put a name in the space on my family tree that had always just been a question mark.

When I got my results back, I wasn’t sure where to begin. A few key aspects of the results proved especially crucial in solving the mystery. First of all, Ancestry arranged my DNA matches with other users based on whether we were related on my paternal side, maternal side, or both. This allowed me to search for possible relatives only on the same side of my tree as my unknown great-grandparent. Second, Ancestry displayed my genetic matches with closer relatives at the top of the list. This is actually measured in a unit called centimorgans (cM). Generally speaking, the more centimorgans you share in common, the closer you are related. And you can use the number of centimorgans in common with someone to estimate your kinship relationship. This is important because I knew I was looking for another AncestryDNA user who either descended from my unknown great-grandfather, or shared a *common ancestor* with my unknown great-grandfather. It could be one of my grandparent’s half-siblings, an aunt or uncle, one of their children, or perhaps a first or second cousin.

I quickly ran into a problem, though. *Many* users who matched as my relatives never bothered to build family trees. This meant that I had no way of knowing *how* I was related to them. Ancestry might approximate our relationship to be a second or third cousin, for example, but without their family tree, it was impossible to know if we shared a common ancestor through

any of my other *known* great-grandparents or through my mystery great-grandfather. I reasoned that if I was related to a DNA match through my unknown great-grandfather, then I wouldn't be able to account for our relationship through any other known common ancestor in my tree.

After scouring through all the matches I could find with family trees going back at least 3 or 4 generations, I began to notice a pattern. I found several matches who, even though I couldn't identify a common ancestor I had with them, all seemed to share a common ancestor *with each other*. I reasoned that if all of these users had this particular ancestor in common at different points in their trees, and genetically I'm related to them all, but I can't account for our relationship to 4 or 5 generations somewhere else in my own tree, then I am likely *also related to them through that same common ancestor*. Some of these related matches were in Indiana, Kentucky, while others were in Limestone County, Alabama, where my grandparent was born and raised. I was getting somewhere! I now had a name. The same name that kept appearing in all my apparent relatives' family trees: James Monroe McMahan, along with his wife Lydia York.

I did some research on Mr. McMahan – he is buried at the *exact same cemetery* in Elkmont, Alabama, as my great-grandparents who raised my grandparent as their own. This seemed too close to be a coincidence. There was a problem, however. My grandparent was born in the early part of 1945 and James Monroe McMahan died in 1929. He did, however, have 10 sons – one of whom was very likely my missing great-grandfather. But could I get any closer than that?

A few of the 10 could be eliminated as possibilities because they died before 1944. Others, though they were living, were less likely candidates because they were already old men in 1944. Still others had moved away and were not living in Limestone County where my great-grandparents resided in 1940 and 1950. So while this didn't *eliminate* them as possibilities, it did reduce the likelihood. And it left me with 3 strong possibilities, all of whom lived in Athens in 1944 when my grandparent was conceived.

At this point the only way to whittle it down to an exact match would be for my grandparent to take a DNA test of their own and ideally compare their DNA with one of the descendants of each of these 3 McMahan brothers and see which is the closest match. My grandparent, however, lived their entire life without knowledge of who their biological father was, and has long since made peace with the unknown, focusing instead on the great blessing it was to receive the love and support of their maternal grandparents, growing up calling them “mom and dad.”

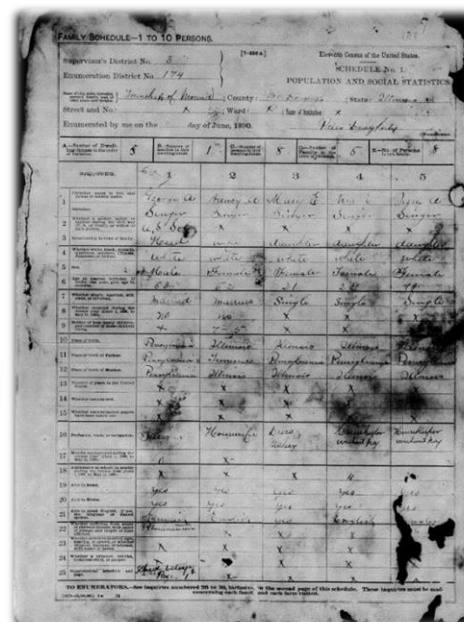
Still, it was an unexpected delight to at least be able to recover a surname: “McMahan;” and to say with a high degree of confidence that, even though the exact father's identity may not be known, the grandparents are almost certainly James Monroe and Lydia York McMahan. They are laid to rest in the same cemetery in Elkmont with my grandparent's other grandparents – they were always there all along. So perhaps I didn't break down that brick wall, but I *did* climb over it!

Jordan Collier



WHY IS THERE NO 1890 CENSUS?

A January 10, 1921 fire at the U.S. Department of Commerce building in Washington, DC, destroyed the majority of the population schedules from the 1890 Census. All was not lost, however; three rolls of census records on microfilm were rescued, as were schedules of Union Civil War veterans or widows, Oklahoma territorial schedules, lists of selected Delaware African-Americans and statistics of Lutheran congregations. Visit www.archives.gov/research/census/1890 for details and how to access these records.

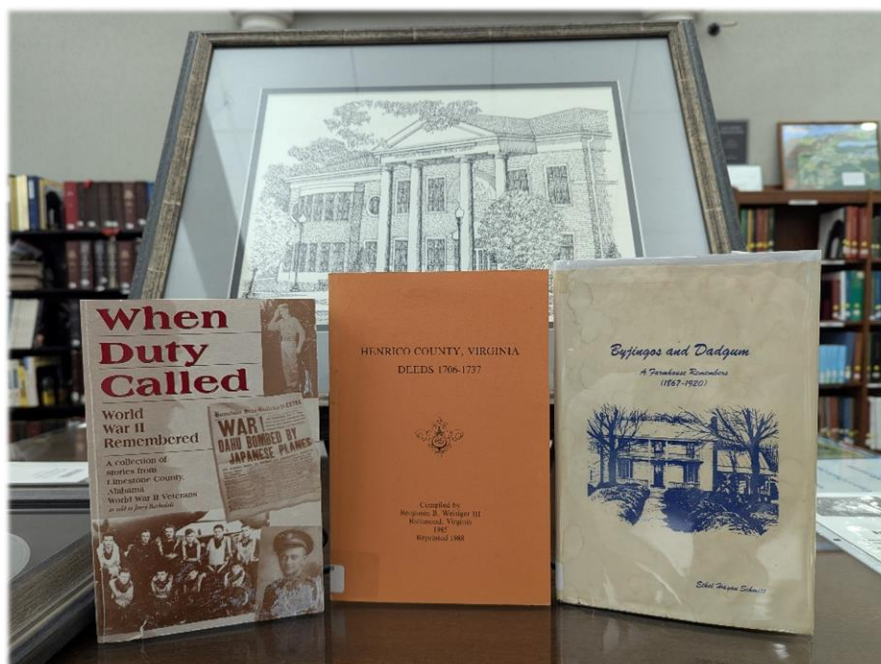


Left: aftermath of the fire of Jan. 10, 1921; right: charred 1890 census schedule (source familysearch.org)

Some ***New Arrivals*** in Florence-Lauderdale Public Library's

Local History and Genealogy Department:

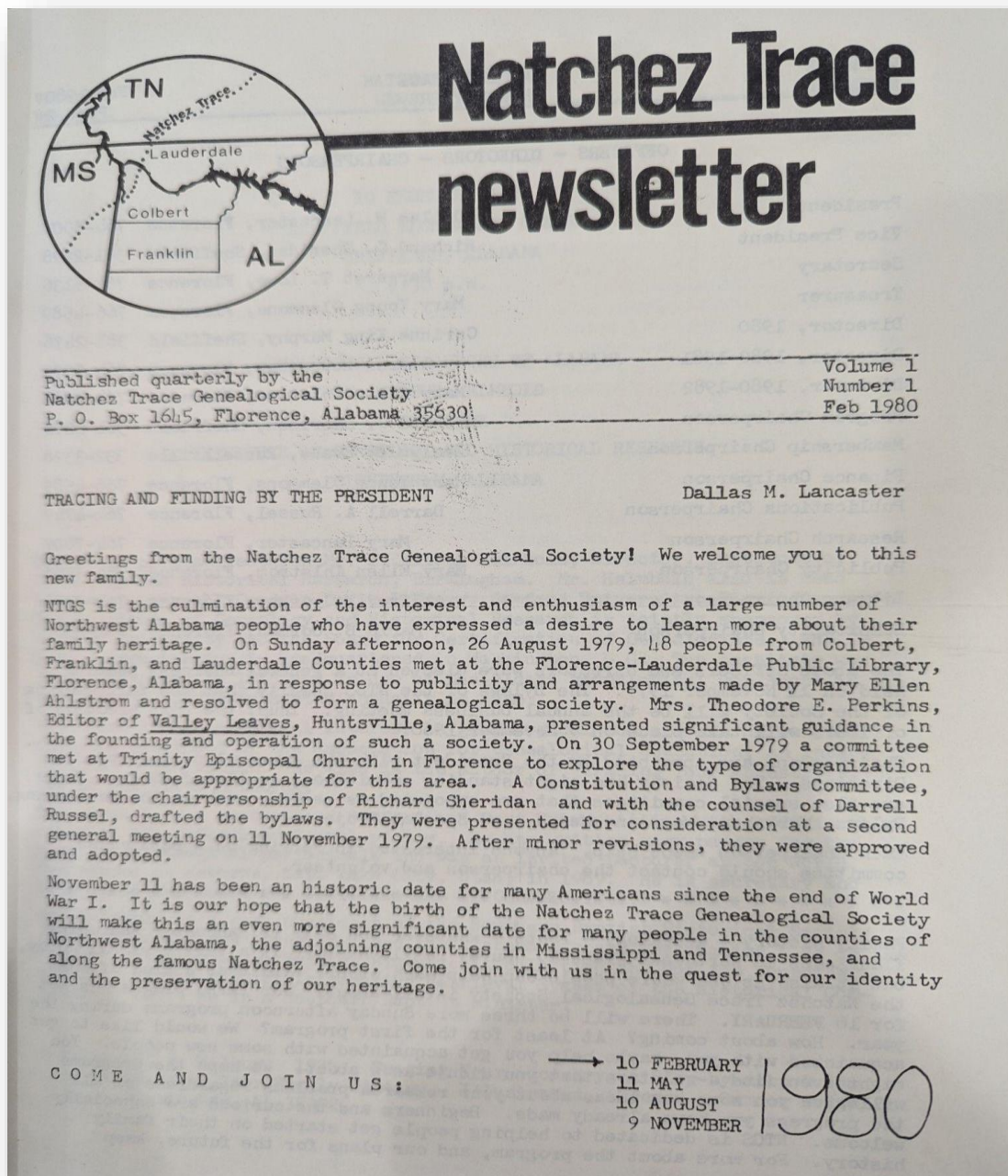
- ❖ Bible Records of Early Edgecombe – Williams, Ruth S.
- ❖ Byjingos and Dadgum: A Farmhouse Remembers - Schmitt, Ethel H.
- ❖ East Lauderdale County Historical Sites and Markers - Steen, Robert S.
- ❖ First Families of Louisiana, Vol. II - Conrad, Glenn R.
- ❖ Henrico County, Virginia Deeds 1706-1737 - Weisiger, Benjamin B. III
- ❖ Historical Markers and Other Signs of the Past - Curott, David
- ❖ Images of America, Lauderdale County - Hartley, Patricia Bryant
- ❖ Inhabitants of Frederick County, MD, Volume I 1750-1790 - Shaffer, Stefanie R.
- ❖ James Winchester, Tennessee Pioneer - Durham, Walter T.
- ❖ Three Years with the 92nd Illinois - King, John M.
- ❖ Warrior Mountains Folklore - Walker, Rickey Butch
- ❖ When Duty Called, World War II Remembered - Barksdale, Jerry R.



A look back.... To NTGS's *first* newsletter

Who could have imagined way back in 1980 things like PDFs, social media followers, GIFs, emails, and *bottled water*? We sure have come a long way!

Here's a look inside our first ever newsletter published in February 1980!



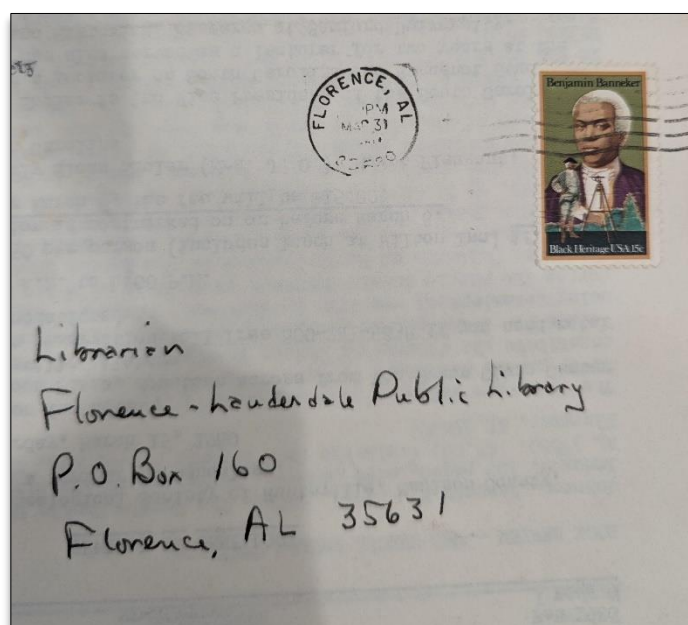
The newsletter was a tool to keep the local genealogical community organized, engaged, and unified (literally “on the same page”). It provided information about upcoming programs, offered professional contacts and genealogical resources, and served as a forum to ask queries to the rest of the community.

OFFICERS - DIRECTORS - CHAIRPERSONS		
President	Dallas M. Lancaster, Florence	764-7007
Vice President	Richard C. Sheridan, Sheffield	381-2298
Secretary	Margaret T. Lowe, Florence	764-5136
Treasurer	Mary Young Clemmons, Florence	766-4589
Director, 1980	Corinne King Murphy, Sheffield	381-2476
Director, 1980-1981	Alfred McCroskey, Florence	764-7773
Director, 1980-1982	Mary Ellen Ahlstrom, Florence	764-3988
Program Chairperson	Richard C. Sheridan, Sheffield	381-2298
Membership Chairperson	Evelyn B. Evans, Russellville	332-3328
Finance Chairperson	Mary Young Clemmons, Florence	766-4589
Publications Chairperson	Darrell A. Russel, Florence	764-4749
Research Chairperson	Mary Lancaster, Florence	764-7007
Publicity Chairperson	Mary Ellen Ahlstrom, Florence	764-3988
Library Chairperson	Alfred McCroskey, Florence	764-7773
Hospitality Chairperson	Marie B. Gorman, Florence	764-2505

The board of directors shared their phone numbers with the community (nowadays you can just DM us on Facebook!)

This issue was sent by mail to FLPL. This digital newsletter can travel anywhere around the world in an instant! Still, there's nothing quite like the charm of a real postage stamp that's been postmarked.

Florence-Lauderdale Public Library has a collection of vintage NTGS newsletters spanning several decades.



... And a look ahead

Join us at one of our upcoming public meetings!

Aug 04	Florence Lauderdale Public Library, Speaker: David Curott	350 N Wood Ave, Florence Topic: Historical Markers of Lauderdale, Colbert & Franklin Counties
Nov 10	Florence Lauderdale Public Library, Speaker: TBD	350 N Wood Ave, Florence Topic: TBD

And be sure to register for our seminar!

Oct 05	Florence First United Methodist Church Speaker: Various	415 N. Seminary Street, Florence Topic: NTGS Fall Seminar Local Resources for Research and Networking
--------	--	--

Have a topic you'd like to hear about or a speaker you'd like to recommend? Let us know!



A look back at our most recent public meeting with Kurt Vettters on May 5, 2024

Natchez Trace Genealogical Society Officers:

President: Brian J. Newton

Vice President: Kitty Cox

Secretary: Patricia Hartley

Treasurer: Janice Curott

Board Members:

David Curott

Jordan Collier

Lee Freeman

Hugh Pritchett

Stephany Wingard

Newsletter Subcommittee:

Lee Freeman, Jordan Collier, Patricia Hartley, Brian Newton

NATCHEZ TRACE GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP DUES FOR 2024

Here is my check for my dues in the Natchez Trace Genealogical Society:

_____ \$20.00 for a full yearly membership

_____ \$ 3.00 for _____ 2nd family member living at same address

_____ \$300.00 for lifetime membership, or in installments:
(\$100 initial payment & the remaining \$200 to be paid within 2 years)

Receive the Traveler (Journal) by Email _____ or Paper _____

Name _____

Mailing address _____

City, state, and 5+4 zip code _____

Email address _____

Home phone _____ **Cell phone** _____

Mail this form with your check to:

Natchez Trace Genealogical Society
P. O. Box 420
Florence, AL 35631-0420

Join our community! And follow us for more genealogy any time!

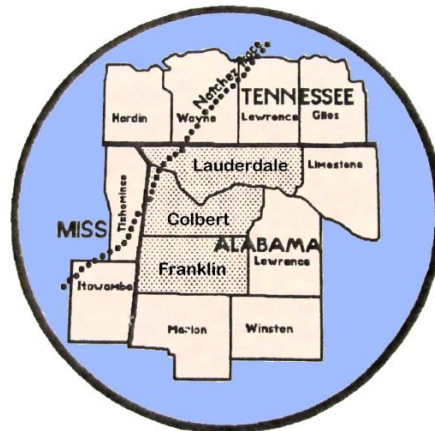


The Natchez Trace Genealogical Society



natcheztracegenealogy

<https://www.thentgs.org/>



See y'all next time!