

Roots & Branches
Tuscaloosa Genealogical Society Morning Group



Roots & Branches

Tuscaloosa Genealogical Society
The Morning Group
NEWSLETTER

Volume: XXX III ISSN: 0893-4150 The Morning Group November 2008 Number 3
President: Charles Sewell; 1st VP: Betty Jean Weaver; 2nd VP: Charles Sewell, Secretary: Jane Drake; Treasurer: Kay Blakeney; Corresponding Secretary: Kay Blakeney; Historian: Open; Parlementarian: Gracie O. Swartz;

Message from:
Charles E. Sewell, President
Morning Genealogy Group
P.O. Box 20565
Tuscaloosa, AL 35402

Hello

Since October was family history month, I hope that you have all found a new ancestor or at least a new story or source to cite on one you already know.

In this newsletter we will look at family reunions. I hope that you find an idea that you can implement in your next reunion.

My information on large reunions came from my sisters Rebecca Homan and Deborah Naugher. Other sources are Nan and Wayne Sewell of Alexander City and brothers Stan and David Sewell of Atlanta. Email addresses: rebecca.homan@gmail.com, dnaugher@tds.net, rwsewell@yahoo.com, & website: <http://troy.gc.peachnet.edu/www/rhoman/default.ht>. They planned the "Great Sewell Reunion" August 2008 for descendants of Samuel Sewell of Lavonia, GA. The reunion included a DAR/SAR dedication of Samuel Sewell Junior's Revolutionary War service and grave site.

We recently had the privilege of attending a reunion at Mt. Gilead Methodist Church, Sykesville, Clay County, Alabama, about 7 miles from Wadley, Alabama. This was not so much a reunion as a homecoming for families who founded and attended church here or that have relatives in the cemetery across the street. Some of the families were McJunkin, Caldwell, Drake and Bishop. The oldest marked grave in the cemetery was Thomas M. McJunkin, the brother to my mother's grandfather, (we believe). The speaker on the Caldwell line is Chuck Caldwell of Tuscaloosa. Quite a surprise. I have invited him to our November meeting and hope he can attend.

Good luck hunting ancestors and hope to see or hear from you soon.

Charles E. Sewell

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REUNIONS

As genealogists, we enjoy a good reunion to renew acquaintances with relatives and friends, old and new. We share stories, photographs, and family trees, hoping to find another photograph, story, recipes, ancestor or source of information to verify. The fellowship and sometimes great food are also important.

There are at least 3 types of reunions: the mega family reunion, community/family reunion, and church (or other organization) homecoming.

Mega Reunions

The Stanley family has reunions including the international, national and local. Their web site has books with complete family lines for sale. This is one of the best family web sites that I have visited. Another good web site is the Germana Colonies of Virginia.

My focus will be on our family reunion from August.

The "Great Sewell Reunion" August 2008 was held in Lavonia, Franklin County, GA. Planning, organizing and execution took over nine months. The primary leadership included Wayne and Nan Sewell of Alexander City, Rebecca Sewell Homan of Commerce, GA., Deborah Sewell Naugher, Cherokee County, AL. Becky Black, Wanda Wilhelm and Delayne Wells. Wayne is a long time Sewell family researcher, Rebecca is a college librarian and Deborah an elementary school teacher. My sisters, Rebecca and Deborah are members of the DAR and Wayne the SAR.

With maps and local relatives, the gravesites were found and cleared. Franklin County sites were found for the Friday and Saturday meetings. Family members were invited to stay through Sunday and worship in local churches where their families had attended. The local Chamber of Commerce was contacted and assisted in finding a meeting place. The North Georgia Technical College, Currahee Campus was selected for size, location and the fact that they taught commercial restaurant classes. They catered the two meals on Friday. Saturday, you were on your own for meals. Once the attendance was estimated the college was contacted and a price for attendance with two meals included was decided upon.

Wayne collected the funds and those attending were asked to provide sponsorship.

Wayne, Deborah and Rebecca had planned the program, invitations/advertising, meals and Wayne provided a written program. The program included genealogical information, directions, maps, and other information. Those who were able to sponsor the gathering were thanked by name.

Advertising included emails to those on our email lists, the Sewell message board on Rootsweb, local and regional newspapers and other media, printed ads for posting on local message boards at libraries and community meeting places. The email lists were probably the most effective and those contacted were encouraged to share the information with their relatives. Sewell family members from California, Oklahoma, and Texas joined those from Georgia, Alabama and the Carolinas.

Upon arrival, each family member was given a color coded badge and meal tickets for those who had pre-paid. The color of the badge indicated which one of Samuel Sewell's children was your direct ancestor. If I remember correctly, only one son and two of the daughters had no descendants attending. This was mostly due to having no known descendant in these lines known to contact. If you had pre-registered, your name and relationship to Samuel Sewell Senior was in the program under the family line.

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Friday's program included speakers who were recruited from family members who were familiar with areas that were of interest to the family. A local theater group presented the story of the settlement of Franklin County called 'The Land of Spirit'. The presentation included a slide show about the theater group and their community.

A local television crew interviewed some of the attendees late Friday afternoon. I was not able to see the interview.

Tables were provided for those who wanted to share their family lines, photographs, books and other items of interest. A reprint of the Worley Levi Sewell book, 'A History of the Sewell Family in America' and others were available for purchase. The tables displaying old family photographs were very popular. It was amazing to see the resemblance to living attendees and several thought they had found photographs of their own family members.

My brother, Lawrence and I were amused by the similarities in temperament and tone of voice used by several of the ladies, definitely family.

Information on the Sewell DNA project was shared. The director of the project was unable to attend. He was in Afghanistan. One of the speakers on DNA had been the director of another families' DNA project. She shared experiences and problems related to DNA genealogy. Those interested in DNA genealogy were encouraged to have the 67 marker test rather than the 12 or 25 marker test. You can look for discounts, from time to time, on the 67 marker test price of nearly \$200.

This type of DNA test can not be used to prove paternity or used as evidence in a criminal case. The cells used are referred to as junk cells, coming from the cheek inside the mouth. The "chain of custody" necessary for criminal prosecution is not maintained. The cells used can have mutations or be damaged by chemicals. The information provided can only be used to identify those descended from a common ancestor.

A family member who is also a professional photographer made family group photographs with a digital camera. Groups were easily identified by the color of their badges. These photographs were placed on a cd and given to those who wanted one. Duplication and the cd's were provided by my brother. There was no copy right problem and the photographer provided waivers. Wal Mart and other photography providers may not make copies if the date of the picture is less than 75 years, without the waiver.

Several groups of the Sons of the American Revolution and Daughters of the American Revolution were involved in researching, planning and organizing the Saturday morning dedication and placement of the Samuel Sewell Junior grave marker. The service was well done and Rebecca Homan had a professional video the entire service and copies of the video were pre-sold for delivery after the reunion. The presentation of the marker was accompanied by a color guard in colonial dress and two flintlock rifles were fired in salute with a highland piper providing music. The thirteen colony flag and a current flag were used. It was an emotional and inspiring service as the marker was unveiled and the wreaths were laid. Those veterans in attendance were also recognized. Family members who had joined the Sons of the American Revolution and the Daughters of the American Revolution were honored.

Saturday, after lunch, a local Methodist Church's Family Life Center was available for those interested in sharing family trees and other information. Sewell family members had been among the founders or early members of this church. Two copy machines, paper and other supplies were available. One of the copiers was a color inkjet printer/copier. These proved to be very popular. Maps and color photographs kept the color copier busy.

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Those attending were encouraged to tell stories about their branch of the family or share something about an ancestor. This proved to be very popular.

Stan Sewell shared information about his grandfather, Jack Sewell who had been mayor of Miami, Florida. Jack had been in the clothing business in Miami during the 1920's. One day a man came in and purchased silk shirts and underwear, spending \$1,000.00 in \$100.00 bills. Jack was grateful for the business and threw in a \$100 straw hat. He placed the hat on the man's head and tilted it to cover a scar. The man told Jack that no one had ever given him anything. This began a friendship between Jack Sewell and "Scarface" Al Capone. Al Capone's car broke down near Jack's house one day and Al came to his door asking to use the phone. He was there for several hours waiting on his car to be fixed and made genuine Italian spaghetti and meatballs for the family. Jack's memoirs have been published; but, they are currently out of print.

Local Reunions

These are the most common and often take place during the holidays. They can be over a Thanksgiving dinner or Christmas party, depending on the family. My wife's family usually met on Thanksgiving Day, after 3 p.m. The location rotated each year. Each family group brought a specialty dish. Aunt Jo Bob brought the macaroni and cheese, the host provided the meat and others their own favorite dishes. Drinking the homemade custard was a tradition I could never enjoy. At last year's get together, no one touched the custard; but, they had to have it available. Recipes are often exchanged. The results never quite seem to match the taste of the original.

My stepfather's family still meet at his house, near Piedmont, on Christmas Eve to eat, visit and exchange gifts. Since my stepfather's passing, the original family is growing smaller and the attendance has dropped some. My sisters, my brother and I help with preparations and house cleaning or repair. Occasionally one of my sisters will attend to help serve. We all help with cleanup on Christmas Day. I have talked about our own Christmas celebrations in past newsletters and will not repeat that here.

The first Sunday in December is the Descendants of John Asbury Sewell reunion held at Shiloh Baptist Church in the Pollard's Bend community of Cherokee County, near Leesburg, AL. Family members and guests meet after the morning services and start eating around 12:30 p.m. in the Christian Life Center. My brother is the photo editor and computer expert. He usually has at least one lap top computer continually playing family photos.

I answer family tree questions and usually have a several different books or trees to offer information from. I am a generalist, not limited to my immediate family line, and can usually give an idea of where a new visitor fits into the family tree. John Asbury Sewell had twelve children by his first wife, Martha N. Polk (second cousin to President James Knox Polk) and saw no reason to have less with his second wife. She was a widow with two children from her first marriage. Neighbors have told of hearing her call, "John, your kids and my kids are beating up on our kids." He'd yell back, "They'll work it out", and they usually did. Of the nine Sewell's from his second wife, Hannah Nash Morgan Sewell, we have lost contact with most of their families. Hannah raised 16 of these children to adulthood.

My great grandfather was a founding member of this church. Most of the families attending today are related to my Sewell family. One story of my grandmother was that a visiting preacher started in on Methodists and grandmother gathered her daughters, got up and went across the street to the Methodist Church. As far as I know, she did not go back.

Keep the story of your family gatherings alive in your descendants.

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Reunion Planning Outline

Leadership

If you have several take charge types, form a committee and delegate tasks to those best equipped to handle them.

Type gathering

- Reunion of descendants of a common relative
- Memorial Day or homecoming of church or other organization
- Business related, commercial booths with products for sale
- Meet and greet
- Meal
 - Covered dish
 - Catered, estimate cost and take bids
- Formal program with speakers on several topics of common interest

When and where

- Community, based on where an ancestor lived
- Facilities available
 - Dining/Kitchen
 - Restrooms
 - Seating
 - Parking
 - Easy to find and access from good roads
- Date where most of those interested in attending can be there.
 - Do not wait for everyone to be able to attend, that will never happen.
 - Weekend, most people are off on a Saturday or a Sunday
 - The area or building must be open and available
 - Do not schedule at a time the building or area will be used for another activity

Decorations

- Know the rules for your facility
- Keep as simple as possible and easily taken down or removed
- A large family tree printed on butcher paper or other wide paper
 - Many copy businesses or drafting businesses can print from a pdf file
 - Copies of documents can be attached, census, birth and death certificates
 - Photographs of the older ancestors
 - Hand printed, keep neat and readable

Invitations

- Open to all or restricted to "family", current or former members of the organization
- Word of mouth
- Email lists
- Snail mail lists
- Phone calls by committee
- Newspapers, local and regional, under community activities section
- Libraries, genealogical or historical societies and their newsletters
- Posters or fliers

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Local television or radio shows

Directions

Maps, Mapquest, gps coordinates, double check

Written directions, including the address

Contact person to call or email

Sign in sheet or roster

Have someone in charge

A young person can man the table or circulate the notebook

Laptop computer, power available?

Will this be made available to those signing at a later date? How?

Id badges,

Color coded for descendants of the common relative or sir name.

Can be simple labels or pre-printed to include the name of an ancestor

Will they be used to identify access to selected events or meals?

Setup

Who, committee or depend on volunteers

Serving area for meals

Tables and chairs for eating, if needed

Tables or designated areas for

Family Trees

Sharing Photographs

Bring cheap copies to display or share

Loose stacks of photographs may become scattered or mixed with those of other attendees

Photos from scrapbooks may be lost

Computers

Copiers/printers with supplies

Laptop computers, power available

DVD/VCR and television, power available

Photographers

Professional

Set costs and how to pay

How delivered

Back drop and/or lighting

Time

Others

Prepared area, as above

Catch as Catch Can

Will amateurs be allowed to follow professional

Restrictions

Some churches may not allow eating or photography

Copy right

Program

Meet and greet

Formal

One speaker or several, on topics of interest

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Professional

Commercial

Family members with specific knowledge or experience

Keep to a reasonable time, those attending may loose interest or have to
leave if coming from a distance

Tour of cemetery, place of interest or homeplace

Meals

Set time to begin

Blessing

Do not ambush a family member or assume that someone will step up

Serving lines, use both sides of the table or counter, if possible

Put beverages and desserts in their own area, if possible

Informal gatherings are not as time sensitive

Have plan for setup, serving and cleanup

Have trash cans available for disposable items

Family related items, as included in admission cost, for sale or trade

T shirts or other clothing

Photographs

Pens or pencils and paper

Outlines of family trees

Books or stories written by family members

Recipes

End

Your own experiences at similar activities may lead you to other tips, please share them.

One thing about directions, they may not be accurate. We recently attended a homecoming reunion at Mt. Gilead Methodist Church in Sykesville, AL. The directions given by email included the County Road number. The directions we got from Google caused us to turn onto a road just 100 yards from the church. This road turned into a dirt road, one lane, through a valley with hunting clubs on each side and over two very small wooden bridges. Fortunately, the road turned back to blacktop after about 5 miles. We stopped at the first house for directions. The man, who spoke up first, was from Florida and he did not know the area. His wife cut him off and got her brother. He did not know where Sykesville was; but, he told us to continue the way we were going. This community in the valley was called Mountain Top. We turned toward the main road and went through Mellow Valley, a plain well above Mountain Top. We passed the church and then recognized the area where we had made our wrong turn. No sign was visible on the church or cemetery. This unexpected tour only cost us about 25 minutes. The program was under way when we arrived. The food and fellowship were exceptional. There were about 40 attending, all adults.

I am still shaking my family tree, I don't think all of the nuts have fallen out.

I hope that you had the opportunity to see our Vice President, Betty Weaver and me on the Kip Tyner show at noon and 5 p.m. last Monday. Please give us some feedback on information to share, if we are invited back.

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John Asberry Sewell descendants

Reunion and covered dish lunch

Dec 7, 2008 about 12:30 p.m.

Shiloh Baptist Church

120 County Rd 37 Leesburg, AL

Pollard's Bend community, Cherokee County

Contact Deborah Sewell Naugher 256-526-8333 for directions
Or e-mail Rebecca Sewell Homan Rebecca.homan@gmail.com

John Asberry Sewell m. Martha Polk (she died 1864 Coweta Co., Ga.)

He is buried in Pollard's Bend, Leesburg, Al.

Levi Francis b. 15 NV 1840 d. Ap 8, 1925 Carroll Co. Ga.

John Richard b. 14 JA 1842 d. Apr 8, 1892 Cherokee Co. Al.

Mary Elizabeth b. 29 MY 1843 d. bet.1876-1943.

Catherine Ophelia b. 9 OC 1844 d. 1920.

Milton Newton b. 20 JU 1846 d. 8 NV 1925

William Edwin b. 19 JL 1847 d. Cherokee Co. Al.

Sarah Demeris b. 4 SP 1849 30 Ja 1883.

George Washington b. 17 NV 1852 d. 17 AP 1909

Harriett b. 14 FE 1854 d. 27 FE 1898 Cherokee Co. Al.

James Henry b. 9 JU 1855 d. 1933 Cherokee Co. Al. m. Louisa Wmma Gholston

Charles Toliver b. 9 NV 1856 d. 15 JI 1931.

Jane Victoria b. 9 JL 1860 d. 12 Ap 1881, Centre, Al.

He married a neighbor who had lost her husband, Hannah Nash.

Marriage 2 Hannan Reed NASH b: 28 JUL 1838

Married: 3 OCT 1865 in Coweta County, GA

Children

Rufus Marion SEWELL b: 3 JUL 1866 in Coweta County, GA

Julia Everela SEWELL b: 31 JAN 1868 in Coffee County, TN

Gabriel Warner SEWELL b: 19 NOV 1869 in Coweta County, GA

Marcus Asbury SEWELL b: 13 APR 1872 in Coweta County, GA

*Addie Reed SEWELL b: 3 APR 1876 in Coweta County, GA m. Francis Marion Bishop 20
JL 1906 Leesburg, Al*

Willie Anna SEWELL b: 9 MAR 1879 in Coweta County, GA

Brotus Hamilton SEWELL b: 11 DEC 1881 in Cherokee County, AL

Donna Dot SEWELL b: 15 JAN 1883 in Cherokee County, AL

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Records of the Commissioners of Claims
(Southern Claims Commission)

1871-1880

Geographical List of Claims

Tuscaloosa County

11,881	Francis B. Appling	150	
9,843	Richard Appling	745	
6,086	James Baker	183	
11,526	James C. Baker	262	
6,085	Wiley G. Bagwell	145	
15,567	William W. Bennett	167	
6,013	Elizabeth A. Braselton	150	
15,569	Daniel Carroll	177	
6,017	Estate of Gabriel Clements	300	
6,015	David A. Collins	520	
11,882	William M. Crump	520	
11,528	John H. Cummings	2,294	
18,702	Absalom Deason	270	
6,018	Estate of Mordecai F. Doughty	200	
15,570	James Dowdle	330	
6,096}			
20,126}	James T. Dunn	840	
20,125	Thomas D. Dunn	250	
6,024	Sarah E. Faught	126	
8,252	Benjamin F. Freeman	325	
11,883	Reuben A. Garner	200	
8, 855	Elizabeth Gilbert	225	
6,025	Susan Goin	200	
11,632	John Hamner	474	
12,228	William T. Hamner	1,581	
6,026	Isaac Hewitt	550	
11,081	Jacob Jackson	467	
8,255	Squire A. Johns	242	
7,107	Cullen H. Lunceford	196	
11,885	Susan Lee	275	
11,884	Thomas P. Lewis	325	
11,886	Moses McGuire	325	
6,035	Amon McMillion	385	
18,703	Rebecca Mayfield	200	
6,634	John Miles	195	
8,260	Wiley J. Miller	175	Disallowed Allowance "150.
12,229	Louisa F. Moore	340	
7,110	R. D. Mullenax	232	

This partial list is from the book. Check out possible claims of your ancestors.

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2008 Membership/Renewal Application

\$8.00 Single Membership: () New Member: ()
\$14.00 Two Member Household: () Renewal: ()

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Telephone: () _____ - _____ Email: _____

Surnames you are researching (up to eight): _____

Make checks payable to: "Morning Group, T.G.S." and mail to P.O. Box 20565, Tuscaloosa, AL 35402

Please invite friends and family. Growth is essential.

2009 dues are due before 1 January 2009

THE MORNING GROUP
TUSCALOOSA GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY

Mr. Charles E. Sewell – President
P.O. Box 20565
Tuscaloosa, AL 35402

