

Genealogical Society hosts Lock in and Silent Auction

BY KRISTIE STEVENS
FOR THE ITEM

If you've ever wondered about your ancestry and don't know where to start, the Johnnie Jo Sowell Dickenson Genealogy Room at the Huntsville Public Library (HPL) is a great place to start. The Walker County Genealogical Society (WCGS) will host an open house at HPL from noon to 2 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 17, and offer individual research assistance from 2 to

6 p.m.

The lock-in is meant to engage visitors in learning about their family history with direction from members of the WCGS. The public is encouraged to bring birth, death and marriage records as well as land deeds and other documents that will help trace your family's origins and bloodlines. These can be scanned in with the holder's permission to help others across

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At the Huntsville Public Library, Toni Herrington, Head of Genealogy Reference and Deta Rogillio, President of the Walker County Genealogical Society, are hosting a silent auction through Saturday, with a free family history research event.

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the world locate their lineage.

To support these efforts throughout the year, a silent auction is underway during normal hours at HPL, offering hundreds of books from a wide range of genres. Some are duplicate history books from their research collection; the rest cover everything from fiction and finance to art and farming. The auction will run through 1 p.m. Saturday with bids in \$1 increments.

Proceeds from the auction help the WCGS purchase equipment and supplies as well as additional reference books that can be accessed in the genealogy room.

The room is named for a 7th generation Huntsville resident who served the WCGS for 40 years. Dickenson is a professional genealogist, still active in the planning of events that promote the work of this society.

“Many of the books we hope to acquire for our research library are very expensive, because there is a very small supply and a high demand. Our budget is small, which is why we hold this auction and encourage donations. You might not realize the importance of books that are stored in your attic or inherited from your family. It’s a travesty to trash them when they could be a rare and valuable resource,” said Toni Herrington, Head of Genealogy Reference and trusted advisor on the worth of such books.

Herrington’s main role at HPL is helping the public locate resources that trace family lines. She joined the HPL staff as a cataloguer 42 years ago, working alongside founding Library Trustee Helen Wheat.

“It was like getting a Master’s in Library Science,” said Herrington.

She was also inspired by the efforts of Dickenson, whose tremendous dedication took their initial reference li-

brary and meeting room through the transitional phase of the library’s expansion to build the impressive collection offered today.

The genealogy room houses thousands of historical records that include books, newspapers, and microfilm. HPL offers access to Heritage Quest, which is an online database of images and census records from 1790 to 1840.

This includes the Freedman’s Bank Records, which is a reputable source of African American family history research. The library also subscribes to Ancestry Library Edition, American Ancestors, and Fold3 Military History and Genealogical Archives.

Advance registration for the lock-in is required. Call Mary Kokot at 936-291-5471 or register [online](http://www.huntsvilletx.gov/789/Genealogy-Programming) at www.huntsvilletx.gov/789/Genealogy-Programming. For more information about the Walker County Genealogical Society, visit www.wcgstx.org/.