

Genealogists host free Weekend Event



FILE PHOTO

The Walker County Genealogical Society is hosting a silent auction fundraiser from Monday, Aug. 31 until Saturday, Aug. 5, Huntsville resident Jess Whitlock browses through the selection of classic books up for grabs at the Huntsville Public Library's Silent Book Auction in 2015.

KRISTIE STEVENS
FOR THE ITEM

The Walker County Genealogical Society (WCGS) is offering a chance to explore your family history free of charge at the Huntsville Public Library on August 4 and 5 with their annual Genealogy Weekend. Prior to the event, there will be a silent auction with more than 900 books beginning on Monday, August 31 that

will run until 1:30 pm on Saturday, Aug 5.

“The silent auction will have a little bit of everything,” said Deta Rogillio, President of the WCGS. “Many are genealogy reference books with birth, death and marriage records, and other vital records of families and counties. We also have quite a few history and how to books, collections on a wide range of subjects, romance and mystery novels.”

All proceeds from the silent auction go to the WCGS for supplies and genealogy books to add to the Johnnie Jo Sowell Dickenson Genealogy Room at the library. The society's main purpose is to educate people on how to research and to assist with using those resources. They have held their Genealogy Weekend for a number of years, with this year's event including guest speakers from other societies

and organizations presenting helpful information on specific subjects.

On August 4 and 5, complimentary coffee begins at 9:30 a.m., provided by the Daughters of the American Revolution and the Daughters of the Republic of Texas. At 10 a.m. on Friday, Bill Buckner, President of the Genealogy Center of the Waco-McLennan County

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Library will present two one-hour sessions. The first is Beginning Genealogy, which will help those new to this kind of research understand how to get started. The second session will cover maiden names and how to find them to locate information on your ancestors.

Lunch break is from noon to 2 p.m. on both days, which is a great opportunity for the public to check out the silent auction. On Friday afternoon, Faye Jenkins Stallings, President of the Board for Certification of Genealogists and Director of the Conroe FamilySearch Center will present two sessions. Stallings, who specializes in the genealogy of the South, will cover basic DNA research and best practices for conducting focused research.

WCGS President

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for our students to receive grants, scholarships and the promotion

Regillio will follow with a presentation on what's new in the genealogy room. A light supper provided by the WCGS will be served at 5:30 p.m. The day will conclude with a "lock in" from 6 to 8 p.m., allowing guests access to the genealogy room and computer lab for individual research with assistance from society members.

On Saturday at 10 a.m., Derrick Birdsall, Director of the Sam Houston Memorial Museum will give a talk on the Republic of Texas Presidential Library. A collection of artifacts, documents and an extensive number of letters written to and from Houston are housed in the museum, which received special recognition in 2017, designating the site as an official presidential library.

Birdsall is hoping to motivate people to donate items that relate to the life and history of General Houston in hopes of increasing the current collection. The museum staff is currently working to digitize this collection, which is expected to be attached to the museum's website later this year. The purpose is to connect all other collections across the nation that relate to



Houston's life under a program made possible by the Summerlee Foundation.

According to Birdsall, the research library located at Walker Education Center is an impressive resource for anyone who wishes to study Houston and his contributions to the Republic of Texas. The long term goal is to build a traditional library on the museum grounds to combine the research library and the physical items in one location.

At 11 a.m., Curtis and Carol Austin of Conroe FamilySearch Center will present what's new on the FamilySearch website. They represent a huge organization of volunteers that contribute their time and expertise

to 4000 genealogical research sites across North America. For more about the FamilySearch website, which has over a billion profiles.

The silent auction will close at 1:30 p.m., followed by a presentation by Johnnie Jo Dickenson called Researching: A Case Study. Dickenson will talk in detail about the process she used to locate the life history of her husband's grandfather, William Doran Dickenson.

"His death certificate and headstone were both inaccurate," said Johnnie Jo Dickenson, former President of the WCGS. "All I had was a photograph and a newspaper clipping.

W.D. Dickenson passed away in 1923 when his children were still quite young, so very little was known about him. He left Virginia as a young boy and never returned. My husband, J.D. was his first grandchild, and the first of his grandchildren to return to Virginia. It's a very interesting story about all the rabbit holes we went down and the trips we took to find out who he was."

Dickenson is a professional genealogist who served the WCGS for 40 years and is still actively involved in organizing local events to promote the work of this organization.

The genealogy room at the library is named

The Walker County Genealogical Society is hosting a silent auction fundraiser from Monday, Aug. 31 until Saturday, Aug. 5, plus a full week-end of free sessions and guest speakers at the public library on Aug 4 and 5.

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after her in honor of her countless hours of research and record keeping, and for amassing the vast resources that are available to the public. Her greatest wish is to pass along her love and curiosity for family history to the next generation. The event is free of charge, and advance registration is appreciated in order to provide adequate refreshments. Call Mary Kokot at 936-291-5471 or click on the link at <https://www.huntsvilletx.gov/789/Genealogy-Programming>, where you can also find the link to the weekend schedule. Guests are welcome to attend single sessions or the entire weekend.