

# Postcards Magazine

*Piney Woods*

POSTCARDS MAGAZINE  
Celebrating  
**15**  
Years  
of  
Community



February 2025

WC Genealogical Society • Chaser Crouch • Huntsville Physical Medicine Institute

# Walker County Genealogical Society



## The Circle Unbroken: Still Alive and Well after 60 years

SPECIAL TO POSTCARDS | PHOTOS BY KATHERINE E. STEPHENS

In June 1965, Virginia Humphrey organized eleven of her friends and formed the Walker County Genealogical Society. Nearly sixty years later, the organization is still fulfilling the role Virginia and her friends envisioned. WCGS is continuing to provide help to those researching their family history with presentations, member help, and a partnership with the Huntsville Public Library. The Society has survived when most genealogical societies have not—even a pandemic

couldn't slow it down. Faces have changed, but the society is still going and growing and offering free events to the community throughout the year.

In 1967, two years after the organization of the Society, Huntsville built a small library. The Society donated a three-shelf bookshelf to the library and filled it with their own genealogical books. That is how the current genealogical room got started. The Society then changed their by-laws to read that yearly membership dues would include

either a genealogical book donation to the library or monetary donation to help buy a book. Those conditions have never changed. The dues currently are \$10 a year for an individual and a donation of some kind to the genealogy room.

As time went on and the genealogical donations continued, a small Local History/Genealogy Room was created in the Huntsville Library. In 2004, the Huntsville City Council renamed the Local History/Genealogy room

Opposite page pictured left to right:  
Clara Malak, Deta Rogillio, Sam Massey,  
Glynda Tuner & Debbie Womack



## Walker County Genealogical Society - 1970

photograph by J. D. Dickenson

Front row - left to right:

Ynette Boyce, Opal Hollis, Willie Costilow & Estella Stewart

Back row - left to right:

Ruth Morgan, John Morgan, Dorthea Tarver, Lucy Alice Stewart, James Tarver, Virginia Humphrey, Linda Peters - Huntsville Public Librarian -, O'dell Hall, Ernestine Felder, & Jimmie Aden



Dickenson

Above: Some of the early members of the WCGS.

Below: Deta Rogillio looks through some of the "family history" of the organization itself.

to honor longtime Society President Johnnie Jo Sowell Dickenson. With the opening of the new library in 2012, the genealogy room was given much bigger quarters and room to grow. The room currently houses over 10,000 books

and 70,000 vertical files and is the premier genealogical room in the state for a city the size of Huntsville.

Throughout the years, the Society has endeavored to bring the best of genealogical programming to the community for free and with open arms to all. By December of 1965, the Society was offering programs to help members with their research. Genealogical research from the 1960s well into the 1980s was by letters and personal visits to a government repository. Ancestry.com did not come along until 1983, and FamilySearch did not get started until the 1990s. Genealogical research was much more difficult and occurred at a much slower pace until recently. Help to genealogical researchers was needed much more, and friend-helping-friend was absolutely necessary. WCGS fulfilled that role.

By October 1967, the Society was holding their meetings at the Huntsville Public Library and giving presentations. In 1969, the Society

donated the first microfilm reader to the library and started organizing trips to other places to attend genealogical programming. The first Society organized trip to the Clayton Genealogical Library in Houston, Texas, was in April of 1971. This tradition has continued, with the most recent trip being in July of 2023 and another trip being planned for the summer of 2025.

Because of the dearth of genealogical records available about Walker County, the Society began compiling and writing their own books. The Society has written books on all the cemeteries, on probate records, on court records, on marriages, and many others. In 1984, in conjunction with the Walker County Historical Commission, the Society helped compile and publish "The Walker County History Book," which contains over 1,000 family histories and is one of the first "go to" books for Walker County genealogical research.

In August of 1994 in conjunction with the Huntsville Public Library, WCGS hosted its first Library Lock-in. For this event, the Library closes its doors at the normal closing time but the genealogy room remains open for WCGS members and their guests. The Lock-ins allow WCGS members to help other researchers and each other as well as being a quiet time to work on their own research. These Lock-ins have continued. The Society now has one every February, combining an "Open House - Learn About WCGS" with a Lock-in; and one is held each

August in conjunction with the Friday events of the annual two-day Summer Genealogy Weekend.

In 2000, to celebrate the new century, WCGS instituted three unique lineage registries - First Families of Walker County, Century Families of Walker County, and Waverly Emigration Society. To belong to one of these registries, you must meet a few eligibility requirements. To belong to First Families of Walker County, you must be able to support a direct descendency from someone named in the 1850 United States Federal Census of Walker County. To belong to Century Families of Walker County, you must be a direct descendant of someone named in the 1900 United States Federal Census of Walker County. Waverly Emigration Society is particularly unique. To belong, you must a direct descendant of one of the 143 individuals who traveled from Poland to New York City and arrived on 9 April 1867. This remarkable voyage occurred because of twelve planters in Waverly, Texas, who, after the Civil War, needed a labor force to help them work their farms. Meyer Levy, Waverly store owner and Polish immigrant, agreed to make the trip and recruit his countrymen. Forty-five families, totaling 143 people, agreed to make the trip, and come to Waverly, Texas. These lineage registries are still available for new members.

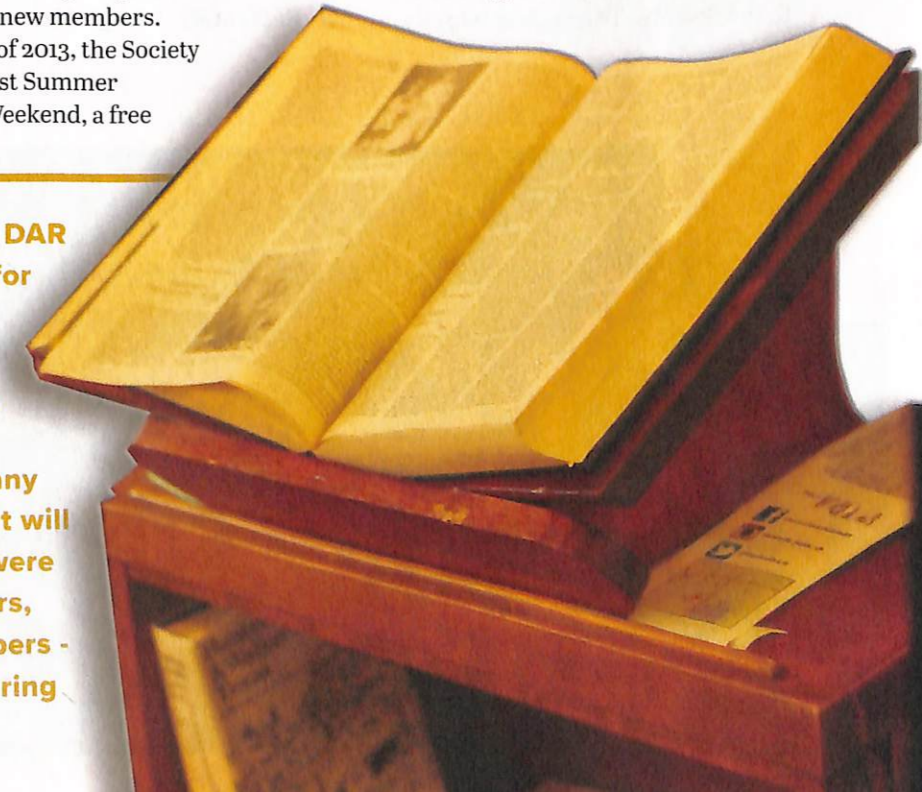
In August of 2013, the Society hosted its first Summer Genealogy Weekend, a free

two-day event held the first weekend in August with presentations, a lock-in, and Silent Book Auction. It has been held continuously since with co-host Huntsville Public Library. Refreshments are provided by the Mary Martin Elmore Scott Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution and by the President Houston Chapter of the Daughters of the Republic of Texas. This last August saw the event hosting internationally known speaker, author, podcaster, genealogist Lisa Louise Cooke, along with Faye Jenkins Stallings, Jim Thornhill, and Mary Bailey. Two days of exceptional speakers, great information, and wonderful comradery.

Ten years ago, the Huntsville Public Library and the WCGS had an idea for a fundraiser that would help both groups - an annual book sale. In 2022, the sale expanded into a twice a year week-long Silent Auction. The Silent Auctions are the culmination of WCGS/HPL events. In February, the Auction ends with the WCGS Genealogy Room Open House/Lock-in and the August Auction ends with the Summer Genealogical Weekend.

The proceeds of the Silent Auction are dedicated completely to the needs of the Genealogy Room. In the last year using Silent Auction proceeds, the Genealogy Room has received a

**The WCGS and the Huntsville chapter of DAR have joined together to produce a book for America's 250th Anniversary in 2026. The book will allow anyone in Walker and contiguous counties to submit biographies about their ancestors who participated in the American Revolution in any form. It will not be limited to patriots but will also be open to those whose ancestors were loyalists, British soldiers, Hessian soldiers, enslaved, indigenous, farmers, shopkeepers - basically anyone who was in America during that time.**



new genealogical database, a makeover of the scanner/ microfilm area with new scanners purchased, a new book cart, and over \$2500 worth of new genealogical books. Toni Herrington, Genealogical Librarian, came to the WCGS with a desire to have at least one genealogical book from all 254 counties of Texas. The library was over 75 county genealogy books shy when Toni started her county plan. Using Silent Auction funds and WCGS donations, the library is now within 3 counties of realizing that dream.

In addition to the Texas collection, WCGS has helped ensure all 50 states are covered. Genealogical "How to" books for researchers on Irish, German, and England research have been purchased as well as "How to" books on research methodology, writing family histories, and understanding DNA. WCGS and HPL are proud of our African-American collection. Thanks to Dorothy Hightower, a collection of funeral celebrations, composing 20 volumes, is available to research. We are proud of our collection of family histories which cover not only local families, but families from all over the United States.

The Silent Book Auction is built on book donations to the Society. For many years, former member families have been donating their collections to the Society. The Society happily

accepts any donation – whether genealogical or not. If the donation is genealogical, we first check to see if we have the book in the Genealogy Room. If not, the donation goes to the Genealogy Room to increase our collection. Non-genealogical books go straight to the Silent Auction, which gives the auction books from every genre imaginable. Every donation of any size – from one book to 50 boxes of books – is gratefully accepted. The last Silent Auction raised over \$2300.

WCGS and the Genealogy Room have been working for over fifteen years to make digitized archives possible. Thanks to the new equipment purchased through the Silent Auction, digitization is underway and will continue until all archives are processed. Making genealogical information easily accessible is what Toni, WCGS, and the library do.

Interested in joining a lineage society? WCGS is happy to help you with that! The Society has been hosting a Lineage Society Fair/Workshop each June since 2017 to introduce the different lineage societies and give help to people who wish to join. (However, you need not wait for June for help - come to a Society meeting and ask for help. That's what we do!)

The Society meets monthly from September through May and then has a

Lineage Society Workshop in June and the Summer Genealogy Weekend in August. Additionally, the Society has a Writers Circle group meeting every third Wednesday from September through May in the Genealogy Room. This group meets to encourage the recording of family stories as well as to share advice and help each other. Other courses are offered through the year as well. You can find a schedule of events and more information at the Society's website [wcgstx.org](http://wcgstx.org).

The Society also publishes a monthly Newsletter which will keep you updated on Society events and happenings. It offers information on electronic research sources and unusual sources, trivia, new books in the genealogy room, and other snippets of genealogical interest. The Newsletter is free, and you may sign up by sending your email address and request to [wcgensoc@yahoo.com](mailto:wcgensoc@yahoo.com).

Psychologists are finding more and more evidence that telling, hearing, and sharing family stories help give children a firm emotional base and help older persons retain sharpness and hope. Genealogy is family stories—whether of how a great-great-great-great grandfather came to America or how you and your significant other met. The Walker County Genealogical Society wants to help you pass those stories and information to generations to come. 📖

*Every Step and Every Movement Deserves a Little TLC*

**DIRECT PT**  
Huntsville Tx

3200 Robinson Creek Parkway • Suite B • Huntsville • 936-439-4770



Cassie Fry, PTA



Tommy Brabham, PT, DPT