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# *The Livermore Roots Tracer*



*Livermore-Amador Genealogical Society*

P.O. Box 901, Livermore, California 94551-0901

<http://l-ags.org> & <http://facebook.com/Livermore.Amador.Genealogical.Society/>

# Membership Report

January 2020

Thanks to the generosity of the following L-AGS members:

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*Total L-AGS Members as of January 23, 2020: 117 memberships and 140 Members*

## Meeting News

**General Meetings** — Are usually held on the second Monday of the month at 7:30 p.m. at Congregation Beth Emek, 3400 Nevada Court, Pleasanton. Map: <http://www.L-AGS.org/maps/Pls-BethEmek.html>

**The L-AGS Writing Group** — Meets monthly in Livermore. The encouragement to write your ancestors' stories and your own comes from this enthusiastic group. To join the email list, please send a note to <mailto:changes@L-AGS.org> with "Add me to the Writing Group list" in the subject line.

**Let's Talk Genealogy** — Meets monthly in Livermore. To join the email list, please send a note to <mailto:changes@L-AGS.org> with "Add me to the Let's Talk Genealogy list" in the subject line.

**The Master Genealogist Group** — usually meets on the third Saturday of the month, from 9 a.m. to 12 noon. Location: Contact TV-TMG Chair (Duncan Tanner)

[tvmtg.chair@L-AGS.org](mailto:tvmtg.chair@L-AGS.org); TV-TMG Forum [tvmtg.group@L-AGS.org](mailto:tvmtg.group@L-AGS.org)

**Pleasanton Genealogy Center** — is jointly supported by L-AGS, the Friends of the Pleasanton Library, and the Pleasanton Public Library. A L-AGS docent is available each Wednesday from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. at the Pleasanton Public Library, 400 Old Bernal Avenue Pleasanton, California. Or by appointment, e-mail: [docents.chair@L-AGS.org](mailto:docents.chair@L-AGS.org).

**Livermore Family History Center** — Several L-AGS members, both LDS and non-LDS, volunteer as docents at the Livermore FHC. They are available to assist you in your genealogy research. The FHC has several subscription research sites not readily available elsewhere and is open Mondays 9 a.m. – 3 p.m., Wednesday and Thursday evenings 6 p.m. – 9 p.m. and Saturday 1 p.m. – 4 p.m. If the parking in front of the building is full, there is a large parking lot in the rear of the building. [Map](#).

## L-AGS Leadership for 2020

President	<a href="mailto:president@L-AGS.org">president@L-AGS.org</a>	Julie Liu
VP/Program Chair	<a href="mailto:program@L-AGS.org">program@L-AGS.org</a>	Tom Mathews
VP/Membership Chair	<a href="mailto:membership@L-AGS.org">membership@L-AGS.org</a>	Jim Stinecipher/Denise Barr
Corresponding Secretary		Ken Bredlau
Recording Secretary		Susan Davis
Business Manager	<a href="mailto:business.manager@L-AGS.org">business.manager@L-AGS.org</a>	Duncan Tanner

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# President's Message

We enter a new year and a new decade. What will this decade hold for genealogy? In addition to exponentially expanding records on the larger genealogy websites, DNA's importance in genealogical discoveries will also increase. Right now, GEDmatch has been a popular genealogical tool, you would get your autosomal DNA done by one of the several DNA websites and download the results to GEDMatch for free and possibly increase your possible matches with the ability to network with genealogists that had tested on other DNA testing sites.

This was great for genealogists and then GEDmatch became part of the story of uncovering the Golden State Killer. There were debates about privacy and could law enforcement access someone's personal genetic information to find someone else that may be a very distant relative, possible a 4<sup>th</sup> cousin. Curtis Rogers and John Olsen founded GEDMatch in 2010 for genealogists to upload their DNA results so they could look for relatives. I don't think they anticipated the attention they would receive following the Golden State Killer story. It has brought a lot of attention that GEDMatch was not interested in receiving and much more activity than they wanted. So GEDMatch has been sold to Verogen a DNA sequencing company that has worked with law enforcement in the past, a larger firm reportedly able to provide tighter security over the data and maintain the GEDMatch's policy that a DNA genealogist needs to opt-in before their DNA can be accessed by law enforcement. But the impact of this story and the impact that DNA has on the genealogical and law enforcement community is only emerging.



L-AGS will be sponsoring a 6 week seminar on DNA this spring

So how does DNA work and what does this mean for you as a genealogist? How can it be used by you to uncover your own genealogy? L-AGS will be sponsoring a 6 week seminar this spring led by Scott McLaren. I can promise it will be nominally priced in addition to being challenging and informative. I attended this seminar last year and found Scott to be very knowledgeable and enthusiastic about this subject.

My new year's resolution this year was to find more time for my genealogy. With that in mind, I have been doing some work on my nephew's wife's family. Some people would call it a rabbit hole. I call it discovering all about the French Canadian's. I was also reminded that Ancestry.com has Arizona's death certificates online from 1887-1960 in their card catalog section. Only 681,344 of them but they are not indexed so you have to pick the decade that the person died and browse the images, image by image. Yes, it is mind numbing but I have, to date, viewed 6,796 records. What I have been struck with is the painful reminder that in 1920, a lot of people died of diseases that we consider preventable. Bright's disease, T.B., and congenital heart disease just to name a few. So 100 years from today, what will future genealogists think was remarkable about 2020?

*Julie Liu*

## The Livermore Roots Tracer

The Roots Tracer is the quarterly publication of the Livermore-Amador Genealogical Society. The mission statement of the Roots Tracer is: **"Instruct. Inspire. Inform."**

We encourage members to submit articles for publication. Material can be e-mailed to: [rootstracer.chair@L-AGS.org](mailto:rootstracer.chair@L-AGS.org) or mailed to L-AGS, P.O. Box 901, Livermore, CA 94551-0901. Want ghostwriting help? Just ask!

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## Using Both DNA Results and Old-fashioned Genealogy to Resolve Family Connections

by Felicia Ziomek

Last year I was contacted via email by someone ‘Bob’ who, according to joint DNA results, may be closely related to me, a predicted 2<sup>nd</sup> cousin. Given the predicted relationships, 2<sup>nd</sup> cousin, with a couple other relatives who are also in the DNA database and who I know are in my tree, I hypothesized as to which branch of my tree the contact may be associated. Unfortunately ‘Bob’ only had a suspicion of the paternal surname. And you cannot base a genealogical conclusion on merely a surname. My paternal side has origins in both Ireland and England. And there were other members who were also in the DNA database whose ancestors were both Irish and English.

First I analyzed all my proposed DNA matches with ‘Bob,’ to determine whether those matches, whose names I recognized as known relatives, were (a) from my branch containing just Irish ancestors, or (b) from my other branch containing both Irish and English ancestors. This analysis would help me to focus on which branch ‘Bob’ may be associated. I recognized more than one shared DNA match between us whereby I propose we’re related only via our Irish ancestors. So that narrows the branch from which ‘Bob’ was descended to the Irish one. In addition,

one of these Irish DNA matches also had a predicted relationship of 2<sup>nd</sup> cousin. That further focused my analysis as to which branch of the Irish tree ‘Bob’ may be related. [Keeping in mind we don’t inherit exactly 50% of our DNA from each parent.] ‘Bob’ had also provided a DNA specimen for testing through another DNA organization but unfortunately the analysis has not yet been completed. Once the other DNA analysis is posted, given the large number of both Irish and English relatives who have tested through the other DNA organization, finalizing the relationship will hopefully be a slam-dunk.

My Irish tree is very large; my grandmother was one of 14 children, her eldest brother had 9 children and one of his sons had 16 children. If our tree were fully formed and printed it will likely spread across a full city block! I haven’t allocated the research time to build out all branches of my tree. By tentatively proposing which branch ‘Bob’ is likely descended from, I spent my available time building out this Irish branch to find the family member genealogists who are researching, also their likely relatives, so ‘Bob’ can contact them.

I started with my grandmother’s sister (Margaret, b. 1869), from whose branch I suspect ‘Bob’ is descended. I already had Margaret’s spouse and children in my tree. In the 1930 U.S. census, there were 2 male adult children still living with their parents (at ages 30 and 34), who were both listed as widowers. The female who I suspected was ‘Bob’s’ ancestor (who is also named Margaret) was listed as a granddaughter (born in 1920). So, I had to investigate which of the widowers was her father. Looking for birth registries for the child, Margaret, I found none that included the older brother as her father, so I focused on the younger brother, James. I couldn’t find a birth registration for Margaret on Ancestry.com, but I did find a wedding registration for James in 1923, wife was Joanna. Joanna died in early 1930 a couple months before the census date, which would explain why James and his daughter Margaret moved back in with James’ parents. However, why would James and Joanna give birth to a child in 1920 but not marry until 1923? I don’t



*Looking forward to adding another branch*

think that was common back then. And Joanna's obituary listed Margaret as her daughter, but that didn't satisfy me. So, I opened an account on FamilySearch.org and looked there for Margaret's birth certificate to validate who was her mother. [FamilySearch.org is a free site.] There I found Margaret's birth registration entry, which wasn't included on Ancestry.com. And sure enough, James had another wife, Hanna, prior to Joanna who James married in 1919. Hanna was Margaret's mother and died in 1922. Poor James had one child with Hanna, who died 3 years after they married, and then had one child with Joanna, who died in early 1930, 7 years after they married, and then had three children with wife #3, Ursula, who fortunately lived to age 90. I later found James and Hanna's 1920 census record, but the surname was misspelled.

Aside from understanding the technique to also use FamilySearch.org to search for genealogy docu-

mentation, I likewise learned the following procedure: if you can't find an obituary using Ancestry.com or Newspapers.com, perform a simple Google search such as: "Ursula Smith obituary 2016 in California". I found obituaries on websites hosted by organizations like TributeArchive.com and Legacy.com just by using Google to find them when I couldn't locate them in Ancestry.com or on the Newspapers.com websites.

Also, obituaries can help you discover the married surnames of the deceased persons female children, the first name of male children's spouses, and can indicate whether the deceased person's siblings have already died; they would be listed as "the late John Smith."

I'm still in the process of building the branch of the tree to which 'Bob' may be related. The final step will be to solicit contact names to give to 'Bob'. Welcome to the family, 'Bob'!

## Livermore-Amador Genealogical Society



*Today is tomorrow's history.*

*Preserve your family's past for  
future generations.*

The Livermore-Amador Genealogical Society was formed by students of a Livermore Adult Education class. On June 27, 1977 the charter members met to adopt by-laws and the organization was founded.

Purposes:

- ☉ To help beginning genealogists get started
- ☉ To exchange information with fellow members
- ☉ To learn more about sources available for genealogical research
- ☉ To undertake genealogy-related public-service projects

Our membership has a combined experience of many hundreds of years in the field of genealogy. All of us are willing to share our experiences and knowledge with you.

Through cooperation, the efforts of each individual are multiplied many fold.

**Your** family history is important!  
Share it publicly and with your family through  
**The Livermore Roots Tracer**  
*The Livermore-Amador Genealogical Society's Quarterly publication.*

## Grrr! Why Can We Not Find These Family Entries in the Census?

By Patrick M. Lofft with editorial assistance of Jane Southwick

All too frequently genealogy researchers struggle with locating family surnames that have been misspelled, poorly indexed or even in fact changed by mutual agreements among the family members. It now appears clear to my wife, Charlotte, and me that her maternal family's **Lair** ancestors reached some agreement among themselves as they, probably, experienced difficulties with their Swiss surname being mispronounced and misspelled by acquaintances and associates in this, their adopted homeland.

Years ago Charlotte's grandmother hired a local researcher in Fulton County, New York to establish that her husband's Stoller lineage qualified her daughter, Charlotte's mother, for DAR membership. As time went on neither Charlotte nor her mother were interested in joining DAR. In those days prior to the death of Joan, my first wife and Charlotte's first cousin, I was frequently stating my budding interests in genealogy at family gatherings. Charlotte provided a copy of the Stoller lineage. After I married Charlotte, she expressed an interest in researching the lineage of her, great-grandmother, Ella (Eleanor) **Lair**, daughter of Jacob and Elizabeth **Lair**, who was born on Sept. 7, 1865 in New York State at either Hope, Hamilton County or Northville, Fulton County. There are about 7 miles between the two communities. That geographical distinction is not relevant. We successfully located the census files for Stoller, Brookhiser and Lair.

The 1880 Federal census lists Ella, age 13, with her father, Jacob, 64, born in Switzerland and her two siblings, Emma, 21, and William, 11 living in Hope, Hamilton County, New York<sup>1</sup>. All three children were born in New York and the census indicates that both of their parents were born in Switzerland. Stepping back ten years to the 1870 census should have been a routine next step.

The **Lair** name was also found in two other counties in the 1880 Federal census. Sixteen miles to the south in the community of Mayfield, Fulton County two families were listed:

1. Barney **Lair**, 58, with wife Anna M., 55, who were both born in Switzerland and five sons ages 13 to 27<sup>2</sup>.

2. Jacob **Lair**, 32, born in Germany to parents born in Switzerland and wife Lucy E., 33, and 2 sons<sup>3</sup>.

A third **Lair** family was listed in North Hampton, Fulton County:

3. Albert **Lair**, 26, born in New York to parents who were born in Switzerland and his wife Almeda, 27<sup>4</sup>.

Stepping back ten years to the 1870 census should have been a routine next step to locate the Swiss predecessors. **Lair** is a clearly straightforward surname which should have been a stress-free effort to locate in the 1870 census, right? But that surname was not found.

How shall we track down the earlier generations? What might be possible alternate spellings of **Lair**? Maybe we should use combinations of the children's given names? How about not using the surname at all?

<sup>1</sup>Year: 1880; Census Place: Hope, Hamilton, New York; Roll: 837; Page: 399C; Enumeration District: 018

<sup>2</sup>Year: 1880; Census Place: Mayfield, Fulton, New York; Roll: 834; Page: 254D; Enumeration District: 011

<sup>3</sup>Year: 1880; Census Place: Mayfield, Fulton, New York; Roll: 834; Page: 254D; Enumeration District: 011

<sup>4</sup>Year: 1880; Census Place: Northampton, Fulton, New York; Roll: 834; Page: 283A; Enumeration District: 013

19	128 144	Lair Jacob	WM	64		1	Farmer
20		Emma	W	21	Daughter	1	Keeping house
21		Ella	W	13	Daughter	1	Makes gloves
22		William	WM	11	Son	1	At School

*In 1880, Ella Lair, age 13, glove maker with her widowed father Jacob, age 64*

Eventually we succeeded in locating the families in the 1870 census!

Jacob, age 54; his wife, Elisabeth, age 49 and his son, Jacob, 20, were all born in Switzerland; Elly, 2; and her 5 siblings were born in New York; the surname was indexed as **Laich**<sup>5</sup>.

Barney his wife, Mary, and their three eldest children are enumerated with their birthplaces as Switzerland; five children ranging in ages from 17 to 3 were born in New York; their surname was indexed as **Laird**<sup>6</sup>.

Surely the families were also enumerated in 1860. How many variations of the surname are possible? Which form is correct or was the Swiss spelling something else entirely?

In 1860 a **Leich** family was living in Mayfield, Fulton, comprised of Jacob, Mary and two children who were born in Switzerland while four younger children were born in New York<sup>7</sup>. Hence calculating that Amelia born 1843 in New York while Jacob born 1848 in Switzerland the family probably immigrated between those dates.

A second **Leich** family was living in Mayfield Corners, Fulton, consisting of Barney, Mary, and four children who were born in Switzerland while three younger children were born in New York<sup>8</sup>. Similarly calculating that John, born in 1853, and Louisa, born in 1855, the family probably immigrated between those dates.

Another **Leich** family was living in Jackson Summit, Fulton comprised of Joseph, 40, Mary,

<sup>5</sup>Year: 1870; Census Place: Hope, Hamilton, New York; Roll: M593\_941; Page: 416A; Family History Library Film: 552440

<sup>6</sup>Year: 1870; Census Place: Mayfield, Fulton, New York; Roll: M593\_938; Page: 266A; Family History Library Film: 552437

<sup>7</sup>Year: 1860; Census Place: Mayfield, Fulton, New York; Roll: M653\_755; Page: 570; Family History Library Film: 803755

<sup>8</sup>Year: 1860; Census Place: Mayfield, Fulton, New York; Roll: M653\_755; Page: 567; Family History Library Film: 803755

Charlotte Eleanora HECKMANN LOFFT  
is the 3rd great-granddaughter of  
Johann Jakob LERCH

Johann Jakob LERCH  
b. 2 NOV 1788 Brittnau, Zofingen, Aargau, Switzerland  
d. ?  
m. 11 FEB 1811 Wynau, Oberaargau, Bern, Switzerland  
+Anna Maria LIENHARDT  
b. 27 JAN 1782 Holziken, Kulm, Aargau, Switzerland  
d. 23 MAY 1847 Brittnau, Zofingen, Aargau, Switzerland

Johann Jakob LERCH  
b. 11 MAR 1816 Brittnau, Zofingen, Aargau, Switzerland  
d. ? Fulton Co., New York  
m. 11 NOV 1841 Brittnau, Zofingen, Aargau, Switzerland  
+Elisabeth MOOR  
b. 11 OCT 1821 Brittnau, Zofingen, Aargau, Switzerland  
d. 15 APR 1880 Fulton Co., New York

Eleanor (Ella) F. LAIR  
b. 7 SEP 1865 Hope, Hamilton, New York  
d. 1957 Johnstown, Fulton, New York  
m. 30 DEC 1885 Johnstown, Fulton, New York  
+Andrew BROOKHISER  
b. MAR 1855 New York  
d. MAR 1916 Fonda, Montgomery, New York

Lottie (Charlotte) Nancy BROOKHISER  
b. 26 DEC 1886 Town of Mohawk, Montgomery, New York  
d. 4 JUL 1975 Snyder, Erie, New York  
m. 27 OCT 1909 Fonda, Montgomery, New York  
+Chauncey J. STOLLER  
b. 12 DEC 1879 Johnstown, Fulton, New York  
d. 20 NOV 1947 Amsterdam, Montgomery, New York

Ruth Ella STOLLER  
b. 3 FEB 1912 Johnstown, Fulton, New York  
d. 24 OCT 1996 Williamsville, Erie, New York  
m. 2 JUL 1938 Johnstown, Fulton, New York  
+Blazes Edward HECKMANN  
b. 3 FEB 1909 Buffalo, Erie, New York  
d. 5 JUN 1994 Snyder, Erie, New York

Charlotte Eleanora HECKMANN  
b. Gloversville, Fulton, New York

L-AGS annual membership dues are due and payable now

Please complete the form at  
<http://www.l-ags.org/application.html>.

*Dues may now be paid either via PayPal or postal mail.*

32, and Jacob, 73 who were born in Switzerland while their four children were born in New York<sup>9</sup>. Likewise observing that Mary was born in 1854; the family probably immigrated prior to that date.

Have the census enumerators and the indexers reached an agreement as to the surname? We have found the surnames of **Leich**, **Laich**, **Laird**, and **Lair**. However now that we had adopted a keen interest in their surname we determined to locate a researcher in Switzerland.

Initially Charlotte wrote to the State Archives in Bern, Switzerland. In response she promptly received information that her **Lerch** ancestors were from the community of Brittnau in the canton of Aargau as well as the names of three researchers in Switzerland and information that the LDS Library in Salt Lake City had purchased complete microfilm copies of the pertinent registers. She chose to hire a local researcher who proceeded to provide abundant thoroughly documented details (the documentation is a very difficult to read script) regarding the **Lerch** ancestors extending back on the **Lerch** line with the marriage of Hans **Lerch** to Anna Cuentz before 1568.

While we have successfully located the ancestral village of the **Lerch** line we continue to yearn to learn the familial community of Michael Staller, aged 21, b. Germany, laborer, who was noted on a muster roll of Captain Stephen Schuyler's Company in Albany County on 3 May 1760<sup>10</sup>. Is this our next brick wall?

<sup>9</sup>"United States Census, 1860." Database with images. FamilySearch. <http://FamilySearch.org> : 24 March 2017. From "1860 U.S. Federal Census - Population." Database. Fold3.com. <http://www.fold3.com> : n.d. Citing NARA microfilm publication M653. Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, n.d.

<sup>10</sup>Muster Rolls of New York Provincial Troops 1755-1764, Edward F. DeLancey, editor; New-York Historical Society, Heritage Books, 1990, Bowie, Maryland

Genealogy is the art  
of immortalising  
everyday people.



Charlotte Eleanora HECKMANN LOFFT  
is the 4th great-granddaughter of  
Michael STOLLER

Michael STOLLER  
b. circa 1739 Germany  
d. before MAR 1783 Albany Bush, Johnstown, Fulton, New York  
m. before 1767  
+Dorothy KLYNE  
b. circa 1746  
d. 18 JUN 1824 Sammonsville, Fulton, New York

Philip STOLLER  
b. circa 1775 Albany Co., New York, British Colonial America  
d. circa 1816  
m. 20 DEC 1796 Fonda, Montgomery, New York  
+Elizabeth REES  
b. circa 1775  
d. before 1816

Michael Philip STOLLER  
b. 11 MAY 1810  
d. 3 MAY 1879  
m. 18 FEB 1836  
+Mary HOUGH  
b. 28 DEC 1810 New York  
d. 30 DEC 1873

Joel STOLLER  
b. 30 SEP 1843 Fonda, Montgomery, New York  
d. 24 DEC 1898 Johnstown, Fulton, New York  
m. 22 MAR 1876 Fonda, Montgomery, New York,  
+Maggie E. WEMPLE  
b. 21 DEC 1848 Town of Mohawk, Montgomery, New York  
d. 11 MAY 1928 Fonda, Montgomery, New York

Chauncey J. STOLLER  
b. 12 DEC 1879 Johnstown, Fulton, New York  
d. 20 NOV 1947 Amsterdam, Montgomery, New York  
m. 27 OCT 1909 Fonda, Montgomery, New York  
+Lottie (Charlotte) Nancy BROOKHISER  
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*From the Roots Tracer archives, volume XV number 4, October 1996*

## Moody & Sankey

By Wes Nelson

Nestling in amongst the paragraphs of Mark Twain's hilarious 1907 short story "Captain Stormfield's Visit to Heaven" is the comment: "This barkeeper got converted at a Moody and Sankey meeting, in New York...". This naturally stopped my reading immediately, for I recalled that my grandmother Effie Estella (Davis) Lamka had relatives of those names. It took only a few minutes to locate that branch of the family in my records. George Groves Davis was an older brother of Grandma's father (Jackson Davis) and thus was her uncle. George and his wife Minerva (Fleeman) Davis gave two of their sons those same names. Moody C. Davis, their fifth child and fourth son, was born 1877 or 1878, and their next child, Sanky Boyd Davis, was born 12 July 1879.

The hint was clear; almost surely, Moody and Sankey were evangelists during the latter half of the 19th century and exerted a strong influence on George and Minerva.



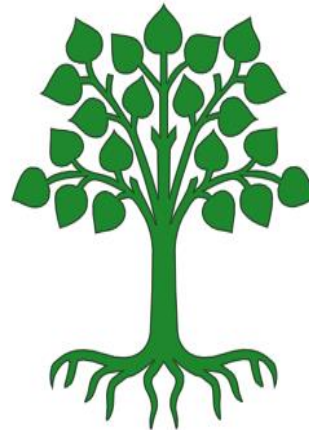
Gordon Langley Hall, in chapter 3 of his book "**The Sawdust Trail: The Story of American Evangelism**," Macrae Smith Company, Philadelphia 1964, tells us almost all of the story. Dwight Lyman Moody was born in 1837 at Northfield, Massachusetts. While still fairly young, he developed a strong religious bent, though his early years had been difficult and not particularly devout. He was becoming an important revivalist by 1870, when he met up with Ira David Sankey, who was a civil servant at the time, working for the U.S. Government. Moody, himself known as a less-than-mediocre singer, instantly recognized

in the honey-voiced Sankey a valuable asset, if he could but recruit him for the program. In 1870, Sankey left his secure job to join Moody, and the team moved into international prominence. Moody & Sankey became household words on both sides of the Atlantic in the great wave of religious revivalism which permeated the next two decades. Moody the preacher<sup>1</sup>, Sankey the singer<sup>2</sup>. They held a major campaign in New York during early 1876, and an extensive revival in Chicago from the autumn of that year into early 1877.

I have not pursued this subject to any depth, and so cannot say just how the Davis family might have been exposed to the evangelist pair. Whether this contact was through word-of-mouth, or by reading, or perhaps by attendance at a revival meeting, who knows? Did M&S swing through Missouri before the birth of Moody Davis? One might imagine that it would take much more than just casual or fleeting contact to lead George and Minerva to name their sons so.

<sup>1</sup>Dwight L. Moody, in full Dwight Lyman Moody, (born February 5, 1837, East Northfield, [Massachusetts](#), U.S.—died December 22, 1899, Northfield, Massachusetts), prominent American evangelist who set the pattern for later evangelism in large cities.

<sup>2</sup>Ira David **Sankey** (August 28, 1840 – August 13, 1908), was an American gospel **singer** and composer, known for his long association with Dwight L. **Moody** in a series of religious **revival** campaigns in America and Britain during the closing decades of the 19th century.



## The Campbells Are Coming? Every Family has Its Fables

By Gregory Winters

Like many families, my lineage has some gaps and mysteries. I can trace my paternal side to at least the 15<sup>th</sup> Century. The other side has a less clear lineage. My maternal family name is Walker and there in lies a mystery and the fables to explain it. The Walker line goes invisible after my great grandfather, John Walker, despite the best search efforts of my cousins and me.

I knew my mother, Gertrude Mary Frances Walker (1917-2009), and maternal grandfather, Charles Henry Walker (1888-1970), and lived with both. I'm pretty sure of their existence. My great-grandfather, John Walker (b. around 1840), fought for the Union Army in the Civil War after emigrating from England (or maybe Ireland). He listed his birthplace as Corby, Northamptonshire, England and was discharged as a corporal in San Francisco in 1865 to the California National Guard where he collected a \$500 bounty for re-enlisting as a sergeant and bought a wheat farm

in what is now downtown San Jose. He lived there until his passing on July 2, 1889. Family fable says influenza got him, but the death records say "Consumption."

There is support for John Walker's claim to Corby as home. The 1851, English Census records show John Walker, aged 15, as a member of the Walker household with a host of brothers and sisters and his apparently widowed mother Mary. That is a recent find and the search continues.

Aha, you say, mystery dispelled! Not so fast. In the 1870, and 1880, censuses he is listed as having been born in Ireland. His death records from 1889, list his birthplace as Ireland. In fact, everything save one enlistment record describes him as being born, or at least from, in the Olde Sod.

The main maternal family fable centers on the surname of "Walker." My mother insisted that the family name had originally been MacDonald and



*My great-grandfather, Sgt. John Walker and his Headstone in Calvary Catholic Cemetery, San Jose, California*

that we came from Scotland and specifically Glencoe. Thirty-eight of my forebears were slaughtered and the rest of the clan were driven from their homes in 1692 by the "Campbells" (in reality there was but one Campbell involved in that massacre and he was "just following orders"). Legend has it that the Campbells, who had allied with William of Orange, tired of the chronic and habitual sheep and cattle thievery of my dear ancestors. Rustling was not the true cause for the order from William and the real

## *Future General Meetings*

Congregation Beth Emek, 3400 Nevada Court, Pleasanton  
Visitors are always welcome.

**Note: 3<sup>rd</sup> Monday**

**Monday March 16, 7:00 pm**

*Linda Harms Okazaki West Coast Immigration in the  
20th Century*

Monday April 13, 7:00 pm

*Jeremy Frankel Researching Jewish Genealogy*

Monday May 11, 7:00 p.m.

*Ralph Severson Family Search Sources*

Monday June 8, 7:00 p.m.

*Lisa Gorrell German Research: Let's Get Started!*

General Meetings – are usually held on the second Monday of the month at 7:00 p.m. at Congregation Beth Emek, 3400 Nevada Court, Pleasanton.

spur was the tardiness of Alexander MacDonald of Glencoe in giving his oath of allegiance to the King.

There is a history of bad blood between MacDonalds, or McDonalds, or McDonnells, and Campbells that goes back to 1296 when a certain Colin Campbell was murdered by some McDougalls and the legend lived on until at least the 18<sup>th</sup> Century.

Dispersed and hunted by Campbells, according to this legend, some of the MacDonalds of Glencoe adopted the name "Walker." Walker was chosen for a new identity as these now-former MacDonalds had been weavers or "walkers of the cloth" before their expulsion. From the Highlands they fled for their lives to England and

Ireland and later to the United States.

There is a bit of support for this part of the tale in that the family name of Walker began when someone in that family worked as a **fuller**, whose job it was to scour and thicken raw cloth by beating it and trampling it in water. The surname Walker is derived from the Old English word *wealcere*, which means fuller.

There were and are lots MacDonalds in Ireland and some Walkers in Corby so the search continues to find which line is the real one. I get distant DNA hits from both sides of the Irish Sea.

As for Glencoe- the jury is still out as to whether my families really were cattle rustlers and sheep thieves in Scotland.

## Membership Renewal Form

L-AGS annual membership dues are due and payable on or before January 1<sup>st</sup>.

Please complete this form, attach your check, bring to the general meeting or mail to:

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