



**MTGS Messenger**  
**Vol. 21, No. 1**  
**January 2025**  
**Jim Long, Editor**



### **Show Us What You've Got!**

It's time for our annual show-and-tell meeting: "[Ancestors, Antiques, and Artifacts](#)." Everyone who has an interest in family history is welcome, whether a member or not.

The meeting will be held **Saturday, January 18, 2025 at 1:00pm Central Time**, both in-person at the Tennessee State Library and Archives, and online via Zoom.

Attend in-person or virtually, and see how some of our members became interested in genealogy. Share your own family history by sharing photos, artifacts, or heirlooms from your ancestors. We enjoy seeing photographs, clothing, jewelry, family history books or other books that talk about your family history.

*We kindly ask that you select just 1 or 2 items to share, and try not to exceed 5 minutes, just to allow time for everyone to participate.*

The Zoom link for this meeting is [here](#).



[Rootstech](#) returns March 6-8 in Salt Lake City. This year, 1-day in-person passes to the world's largest genealogy conference are just \$79, and the 3-day pass is \$129, if purchased prior to the conference. Online attendance is still free (with 200+ new online sessions), but there will be 250+ sessions that will only be available to in-person attendees.

Attending RootsTech in person is genealogy-bucket-list experience, and more so when you combine it with research at the nearby [FamilySearch Library](#) (formerly the Family History Library). Who wouldn't want to be surrounded by thousands of fellow genealogy buffs and millions of reels of genealogy microfilm?



## Full-Text Search, the Next Big Thing in Genealogy?

I have used the [online microfilm at FamilySearch](#) for the past 10 years, with almost-daily glee. To the chagrin of many libraries and archives, being able to access original records from my comfy couch has nearly *halted travel* to do my research (other than traveling between my comfy couch and my coffee pot).

Reading online microfilm is just like sitting at a reader at your favorite research library. If you're lucky, a record book you're researching has an index, and you can quickly crank - digitally- to a record of interest. If you're unlucky - but persistent - you sometimes have to read page-by-page, looking for that next clue.

I never imagined that some other technology advancement could astound me as much as online microfilm. But may I introduce you to [Full-Text Search](#)?

Full-Text Search is currently an experimental "lab" linked from the [FamilySearch Labs page](#). It does all the cranking-through-the-online-microfilm for you **by making handwritten records searchable**. Instead of you reading page-by-page looking for a name of interest in an un-indexed, scribbly, one-million-page record book, Full-Text Search lets the magic genealogy AI gremlins read for you, and presents you with links to specific pages in specific record books matching your search criteria.

Start your search

Keywords

Ex: "Jane Lee" or Car\*

Name

Place

City, County, State, Province, or Cou

Year (Range)

From

To

Image Group Number (DGS)

SEARCH

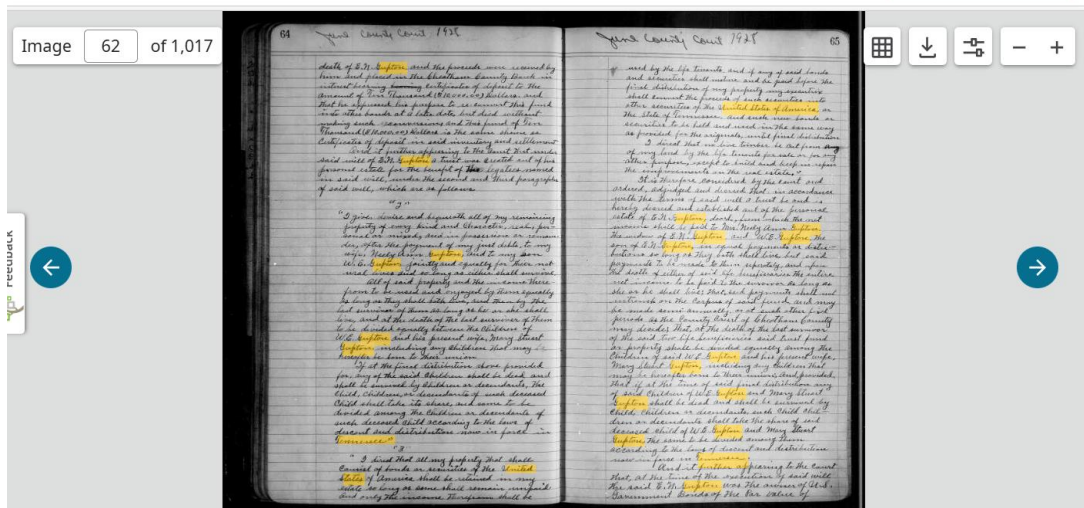
You can search by Keyword, Name, Place, and Year or Year Range.

If you make a too-broad initial search, you can easily filter the search results by Collection, Year, Place and even Record Type, to concentrate on a specific location or date range.

Results (38,640)

Filters: Collection Year Place Record Type

Once you choose a specific record in the search results, Full-Text Search shows you a side-by-side view of the original record (in the familiar FamilySearch microfilm viewer), with your search term(s) highlighted in yellow, next to a transcription of the entire image. (In the example below, I had searched for the surname Gupton, in Tennessee records.)



## Full Transcript

Court minutes: Cheatham. Court Minutes January 1928–October 1930, October 1930–April 1934, May 1934–August 1938



Show Keywords

Summarize the document

64 and County Court 1926 death of E. N. **Gupton**, and the proceeds were received by him and placed in the Cheatham County Bank in interest bearing being certificate of deposit to the amount of Ten Thousand ( \$ 10,000.00 ) Dollars , and that he expressed his purpose to re - convert this fund into other bonds at a later date , but died without making such reversion , and this fund of Ten

You can download the images found, as well as the transcription. There's a Citation link above the image that gives you a good record citation which you can copy/paste and save with the image. And this being FamilySearch, you can also easily attach the image to your FamilySearch family tree.

The transcription technology is quite remarkable, though not perfect.

Tip: If you see one of your search terms on the image that was not highlighted, look over at the transcription of that word to see how the word was transcribed, then use that word (however spelled) in a new Search, to find any other records that might have been mis-read in that same way.

When Full-Text Search debuted last year, the tool mainly searched **will and deed books**. A few months ago, **court minute books** were added to the search results. (This was especially significant to me, as court minute books are often unindexed). And very recently, **newspapers** were added to the search results.

This new tool has caused me to start a new genealogy project: I am going A-Z through my family surnames, trying each one in the tool. I have found records that would have taken me forever to find by cranking through microfilm reels page-by-page. I've also found **counties of origin** of my Tennessee families - something that has always been a challenge.



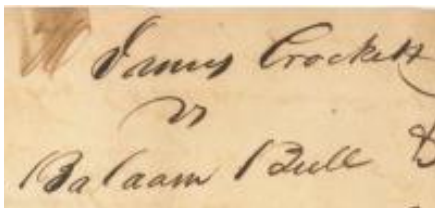
## Looking for family of PFC Floyd Truman Johnson (1923-1944)

Our MTGS President recently received an email from Kerkrade, Netherlands, from someone researching the U. S. soldiers buried at the [Netherlands American Cemetery](#) at Margraten, Netherlands, for a project called [The Faces of](#)

[Margraten](#). He was seeking to connect with the family of [Floyd Truman Johnson](#), who died 1 Dec 1944 from a bomb dropped on a U. S. Army mess hall at Eygelshoven.

Floyd Truman Johnson was from Hermitage, Davidson County, born 13 Oct 1923. A search of Newspapers.com returned a notice of a memorial service for PFC Johnson that was held at [New Hope Baptist Church, Hermitage](#) - a church that is still active. I was also able to contribute newspaper obituaries of PFC Johnson's family members, in case a living family member might be reached and share a photo.

It's wonderful to learn about these kinds of genealogy projects, and it's great that there are tools that make such searches easier.



---

### Check the Neighboring Counties...Just in Case There's a Case

My friends Kat and Carol at the [Bedford County Archives](#) called me the other day on behalf of a visitor there who had family connections in Montgomery County, where I live. The visitor was specifically interested in leads on a **Wall family cemetery** in Montgomery County. I grabbed the county cemetery books off my shelf, but didn't find the specific cemetery being sought.

We soon discovered that the Wall family cemetery was on [Find-a-Grave](#), but in talking to the visitor, she said, "My great-great grandfather James Balaam Bull is also buried there," to which I replied, "Did you say *Balaam Bull*?"

Montgomery County lost its Circuit Court records in a 1900 courthouse fire, but some court cases do have change-of-venue orders to **adjacent counties**, which should give hope to researchers.

I told the visitor, "I volunteer at the Stewart County Archives, and we hold a *huge* Circuit Court case file that was transferred from Montgomery County involving a Balaam Bull (who was being sued in 1823 by James Crockett for assault). It's likely that this Balaam Bull was the grandfather of her James Balaam Bull.

Do you check the court records of the counties *adjacent* to where your ancestor lived?

---

### When Public Records are Still 'Private'

I recently received a call from an exasperated-but-sweet older lady, calling the Archives where I volunteer and seeking a copy of her [divorce decree from 1975](#). She was in the process of trying to get that 'gold star' ([Real ID](#)) on her driver's license.

She told me that she had contacted the [Circuit Court Clerk's office](#), who told her that their records from that date were at the County Archives and that it would take a bit of time to search for the divorce record and make her a copy. I told her that the Archives records were quite well-organized, so it shouldn't take long to locate the record.

I had to call her back the next day with some bad news - that I could find no evidence that her divorce was obtained in the Circuit Court. I suggested that she contact the [Chancery Court Clerk's office](#), which also processed divorces at the time (and whose records are not held in the County Archives). She later called me back to tell me that the Chancery Court Clerk's office denied having divorce records of that time period, and that the person who answered the phone even seemed bothered by the request.

That day, *and by absolute coincidence*, a storage room near the County Archives, used by the Circuit Court and Chancery Court for offsite storage, was open for some electrical maintenance work. I had never been in the room, so I peeked inside, and saw the Chancery Court Minute Book that held the sweet lady's divorce record. I called her back and told her that the record was definitely in the Chancery Court records, and to tell the Clerk in the courthouse that the record could be found in their offsite storage location.

The sweet lady called me back to share that the office was indignant at being told they had given her incorrect information, and said that it would be "days" before they could retrieve the record from that offsite location. Even though she has every right to request a copy of her own record, I fear that she may never get it.

---

## Full-Text Search Fun

I mentioned that I'm using the Full-Text Search tool on all of my family surnames. Well, I've made it up through "F" so far, and found a wonderful new (to me) record on one of my earliest Middle Tennessee ancestors, Samuel Feland (c. 1755-1811) of Davidson County. The Full-Text Search led me to a *typescript* of the original record, but with the Book and Page number reference, I was able to locate the original record as well.

The record is from Davidson County Court Minute Book B, p. 8, dated 13 October 1791. But the record puts my Samuel in "Nashboughrough" in 1781.



# Records of Davidson Court October Term 1791

Sanders & Felin sworn } Personally Came into Court Julius Sanders and Samuel Felin and being Solemnly Sworn in due form of Law.  
Declared upon there Oath that About the year One thousand Seven hundred and Eighty one the People then Resident  
in the Cumberland Settlement at Nashboughrough, Since called Nashville Made Choice of James Shaw to Supply the place  
of a Justice of the peace in Marrying of People there being then Neither any Gospel Minister or Justice of the peace Legally  
Commissioned Amongst us Courts of Justice not being then Established here.

(p 8) SANDERS & FELIN SWORN

Personally came into court Julius Sanders and Samuel Felin and being Solemnly Sworn in due form of law. Declared upon there oath that about the year one thousand Seven hundred and Eighty one the people then Resident in the Cumberland Settlement at Nashboughrough, Since called Nashville Made Choice of James Shaw to Supply the place of a Justice of the peace in Marrying people, there being then neither any Gospel Minister or Justice of the peace Legally, commissioned Amongst us courts of Justice not being then Established here.