



MTGS Messenger
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Jim Long, Editor



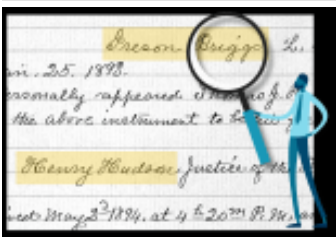
MTGS Regular Meeting: Going Local

Our next MTGS meeting will feature professional genealogist and MTGS member Julie Townsend Gontarek, with a session titled “**Going Local: A Step-by-Step Guide to Locality Research.**” Learn how she develops tailored research plans for locations of genealogical interest.

The meeting will be held **Saturday, March 15, 2025 at 1:00pm Central Time**, both in-person at the Tennessee State Library and Archives, and online via Zoom.

Julie is based in Williamson County. She has been researching family history for 25 years and is a graduate of NGS’ American Genealogical Studies study group, the [ProGen](#) study group, the [Research Like a Pro](#) study group, the Law School for Genealogists course at [GRIP](#), and [SLIG](#)’s Metes and Bounds Land Platting course.

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



Full-Text Search Live Demo

After Julie’s presentation on Saturday, I will give a **live demonstration** of how I use **FamilySearch’s Full-Text Search** feature, including the use of filters and transcriptions. I continue to be amazed at this new tool, and I hope you’ll feel energized to use it as well.



Dues Diligence

A reminder that MTGS is now in our annual membership-renewal cycle. **Current memberships expire May 31, 2025**; renewals will keep your membership current through May 31, 2026. Membership gets you a paper copy of the quarterly [Journals](#), email versions of the bi-monthly [Newsletter](#), discounts on our Seminars and Workshops, and access to the Members Only section of the website.

If you like to renew via PayPal, you can do so on the Join Us! Page of our website, at <https://mtgs.org/contact/default.html>



Virginia Chancery Records online

As if I needed another huge website to look for my family in, along comes the [Virginia Memory: Chancery Records Index](#) site. It's a project of the Library of Virginia to **digitize and put online Chancery case files** from the Circuit Courts across Virginia.

I love chancery cases, as they often involve family members dividing an estate – in either a friendly or unfriendly manner – which necessitates **every member of the family** being identified to the Court. (By contrast to Virginia, in Tennessee chancery cases have been heard in a separate Chancery Court instead of the Circuit Court ever since the Chancery Courts were established in the first half of the 1800s).

I started searching A-Z through my surnames of Virginia origin, and had only gotten to Bagwell when I found an amazing [1834 case from Brunswick County, Virginia](#). My ancestor, Keziah (Bagwell) Stamper and her brother Drury Bagwell had moved to Middle Tennessee 15 years earlier, but they filed a chancery suit in Brunswick County Circuit Court in 1834 when their unmarried sister died back in Virginia, seeking their legal share of her estate. The digitized case file, a 28-page color PDF now sitting happily on my PC, lists all of the heirs of that unmarried sister, including the children and grandchildren of other deceased siblings. This case file now becomes my genealogical proof for that generation of my Bagwell family.

See what discoveries you can make in the Virginia chancery case files, at:

<https://www.lva.virginia.gov/chancery/default.asp#res>



War of 1812 Pension Files on Fold3: S is for "Slowly"

Despite moving at a snail's pace, the addition of [digitized War of 1812 pension applications to the Fold3 website](#) has not stopped completely. A few days ago, Fold3 announced that it had added 600 newly-digitized pension application files to the site in the past month, most of which were for soldiers whose surname begins with the letter "S."

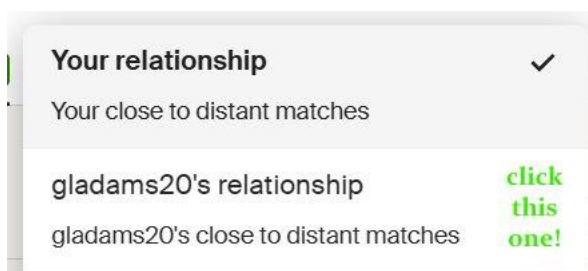
Thanks to a fundraising effort led by the Federation of Genealogical Societies over 10 years ago, the War of 1812 pension applications on Fold3 are free to access without a subscription.

The huge on-demand library of RootsTech 2025 recordings [is now online here](#). You can watch the keynotes, general sessions and even the live performances, with a variety of filters to tailor your content to specific areas of interest. Impressive!

DNA Matches with no Trees? No Problem with Pro Tools (Sometimes)!

Shared Matches **PRO**

I love trying to solve family brick walls with DNA. I'm a fan of Ancestry's Pro Tools – to me well worth the \$10 per month add-on to see how much DNA is shared among your Shared Matches. It used to be that when you found a DNA match on Ancestry with **no online tree**, you had little choice but to build out their family tree yourself, to see if you could spot the family connection. That was time-consuming, but often necessary.



But the Pro Tools has a game-changing Sort feature that I use often. By default, when you look at Shared Matches with a particular DNA match of yours, the list is sorted by people most closely related to your DNA kit. But when you're looking at a DNA match who has no online tree, sort the Shared Matches list by that

person's closest matches. You will then see that matches' closest relatives, and if one of their close relatives has an online tree, you may have just saved a lot of time in trying to build out a tree for your DNA match.

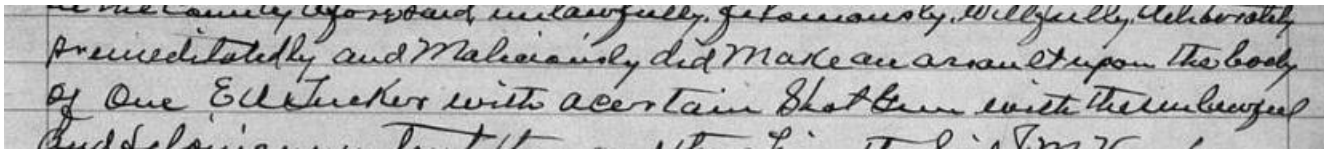
On a Lighter Note...

OK, AI Has Made Me Lazy

At the Archives where I volunteer, a patron came in yesterday with a 1916 newspaper clipping showing that his grandfather, E. A. Tucker, had been shot, and that the trial was to be heard in Circuit Court soon. We have the Circuit Court minute book from that time period, so I pulled it from the Records Room for the patron to see the original record.

Trouble was – we didn't know the name of the *perpetrator*, which is how the Circuit Court minute book entries are indexed. We could have browsed the minute book during the time period in question, looking for a Grand Jury indictment that mentioned his grandfather Tucker as the victim. We would have found it, eventually.

But I said, "Wait a minute, let's see if AI can find it for us. I jumped onto [FamilySearch's Full-Text Search](#) tool, and did a search on the name "E. A. Tucker" in that county for that time period. Within a few seconds, I was able to say to the patron, "Turn to page 189 in that minute book."



The image shows a snippet of handwritten text from a legal document, possibly a court transcript or indictment. The text is written in cursive and is somewhat faded. The visible portion reads: "I immediately and maliciously did make an assault upon the body of One E. A. Tucker with a certain shot gun with the intention of killing him." The text is written on lined paper.

Knowing now that the perpetrator was J. M. Vaughan, I was able to pull the Circuit Court case file on the shooting, which was a treasure trove for the patron to read. E. A. Tucker had been shot on Christmas Eve 1915 by a first cousin, J. M. Vaughan. J. M. Vaughan's brother, Plummer Vaughan, had recently been arrested for murder, and the deputy who took Plummer into custody was E. A. Tucker, his own first cousin.
