



MTGS Messenger
Vol. 18, No. 3
May 2022
Jim Long, Editor

May MTGS Meeting

Our Saturday, May 21 MTGS regular meeting will be **both in-person** at the Tennessee State Library and Archives (1001 Rep. John Lewis Way N, Nashville), **and on Zoom**. We are looking forward to seeing you, whether on the screen or in the flesh. The meeting starts at **1:00pm Central Time**.

This month's meeting is made extra special by being the **35th Anniversary of MTGS**. Our first official meeting was April 25, 1987, at which then-Vice President Shirley Wilson presented a program on the value of loose court records in genealogy. At the time, a whopping two counties in Middle Tennessee had County Archives facilities that were open to the public. Now, about 30 of Middle Tennessee's counties do.



Our May 21 speaker is **Allen Forkum**, Editor of [The Nashville Retrospect](#), presenting **Ink & Blood: Nashville's Fighting Editors**.

There have been at least six violent encounters involving Nashville newspaper editors, from 1841 to 1908. Shotguns, pistols, and even a cane sword were all used to settle disputes between editors and the targets of their editorials. In this presentation, Mr. Forkum will explain each incident and explore how they may have been connected to a larger, 19th-century social context. Nashville's two most famous editorial fights — one involving a former U.S. senator — will be examined in detail. Also to be discussed are the clashes between Edward Ward Carmack and African-American editor and journalist Ida B. Wells.

Allen Forkum was the editor of *The Nashville Retrospect*, a monthly newspaper published from 2009 to 2020. In 2018 he wrote and produced a podcast about local history. Today, he continues to explore Nashville history in webinars, presentations, and other projects, like The Retrospect's [Nashville History Map](#)."

Mr. Forkum will also announce the winner of our annual **Writer's Award**, for the best-judged article in our *MTGS Journal*.

If joining us in person and this is your first time to the new State Library and Archives building, remember that there is 15-minute parking along Rep. John Lewis Way in front of the building so that you can pop in and get your TSLA Researcher Card that will allow access to the (wonderful, spacious) underground parking garage beneath the building.

If you're attending virtually, the [Zoom link for this meeting](#) is <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/89123235809>



I am having a fun time exploring the new [1950 Federal Census](#). How about you? The census is free to explore on the [National Archives website](#), where a machine-generated index is...somewhat...helpful in locating specific pages. I'm also participating in an [indexing group](#) over on [FamilySearch](#), helping to improve the machine-generated census index via human eyeballs, and collectively getting group credit (bragging rights) for every name/page reviewed. Several of the subscription genealogy sites have images and indexes available to their subscribers now, too.

This past weekend, I met up with a cousin whom I had not seen in years. I had the idea to show her appearance in the 1950 census as a fun talking point. I was astonished to find that only her parents were listed – with incorrect information apparently given by a neighbor – and that my cousin and her younger sister were left out completely. That was a shock to me.

Can't get enough of the 1950 census and past censuses? Attend our [July 16 MTGS meeting](#), where [Trent Hanner](#), Reference Librarian and Supervisor of Library and Legislative Services at the Tennessee State Library & Archives, will present [The 1950 Census and Beyond](#).



Cumberland Gap's annual [Genealogy Jamboree and Pioneer Days](#) returns this year on [October 14-15](#). It's a free family festival where you can learn your family history and see a lot of living history displays. Exhibitors include genealogical and historical societies, surname tents, authors and crafters. For more information, visit <https://cgtghg.org/genealogy-jamboree>



MTGS member Barb Tsigotis of Irving, TX is [down-sizing her personal genealogy library](#). I have attached a list of her [genealogy books for sale](#). Please contact her directly if interested, via the email address inside the attached listing.



The county where I do a lot of my genealogy research has a [long out-of-print county history book](#), which was the first comprehensive collection of historical and genealogical material. When I saw that demand for the book was still out there, I decided to try and find [living descendants of the author](#) – which can be a bit tough. The author and her children were long gone, but I was able to track down *the author's only grandchild*, still living in Middle Tennessee, by the use of newspapers and online public records. The granddaughter wasn't able to find any remaining copies of the book, and graciously gave me permission to reprint the book. Since I have experience in [self-publishing](#), I was able to reprint the book quite easily, and so far dozens of people have been able to obtain copies of that beloved, old book.

I use newspapers and social media sites frequently these days to figure out [ancestries of living people](#), especially for my DNA studies. It's wonderful to be able to do that, and of course a bit scary. Over the weekend, the husband of my aforementioned cousin (who was missed in the 1950 census) said that he wanted me to do a bit of research on his paternal grandfather, and that he would "get me his information." I didn't have the heart to tell him that I didn't need the information to get started. Thanks to [online newspapers](#), I was able to learn his parents' names from obituaries, which was all I needed to figure out who his grandfather was.



The National Genealogical Society resumes its [in-person conference on May 24-28, in Sacramento, CA](#). They are also offering an Online at Home attendance option, as well as an On-Demand option for accessing the lectures via streaming until the end of the year.



If you missed registering for NGS and want to see what other conferences are coming up, visit <https://conferencekeeper.org/>, which has not only genealogy conferences, but also events, calls for papers, contests, grants, scholarships, tours/cruises, and more.

DESCENTS.

Last week I was helping a friend trace **ownership of a piece of Middle Tennessee land**, trying to make sense of the chain of custody of that land. It ended up being a discussion of one of my favorite aspects of Tennessee law as it relates to genealogy: the law relating to **Descents**.

Her ancestors, Eli and Mary Ann (Knighton) Rumfelt of Stewart County, sold a 110-acre tract to Willis Whitford in 1860 for \$100. The tract had a unique feature that helped us trace the property – one corner of the tract was “a few poles northwest of the Big pond.”

We then found an 1852 deed for 110 acres (including the Big pond) which referenced a County Court case, whereby the administrator of the estate of **William H. Knighton**, deceased, was suing the heirs of William H. Knighton, including Eli Rumfelt. That deed helped to establish that Mary Ann (Knighton) Rumfelt was an **heir of the estate** of William H. Knighton, deceased. We could then assert that she had inherited joint ownership in the 110 acres when William H. Knighton died, because of the Tennessee law of **Descents** (land ownership transfers automatically to the heirs of a deceased person, without the need for a deed or court involvement).

Tracing those 110 acres back further in time, we then found an 1829 deed from James Wofford to **Paul Aughton**, but no deed transferring ownership to William H. Knighton. That begged the question – **how did ownership of those 110 acres pass from Paul Aughton to William H. Knighton?**

I advised my friend to explore the *possibility* that the land also transferred from Paul Aughton to William H. Knighton by the law of Descents. I suggested that she seek out records that could establish that William H. Knighton’s wife was an Aughton.

You can read about the Tennessee laws relating to Descents – and about other Tennessee laws helpful to genealogists – by searching Google Books for the phrase “**Statute Laws of Tennessee**.” I downloaded the 1831 version, and use it often.



I'll close with some genealogical humor from my own, joke-loving family. Years ago, my mother was visiting a cemetery with her mother, in her mother's hometown. Mom thought she knew where all of the family members were buried in that town, and the cemetery they were in was not one of those cemeteries. Mom came upon the grave of her great aunt, and asked, perplexed, "Mother, what is Aunt Cora doing here?" My grandmother replied, "She's dead."