



MTGS Messenger
Vol. 19, No. 3
May 2023
Jim Long, Editor



May Meeting – Post Office Records and Genealogy!

The next MTGS meeting will be **Saturday, May 20, 2023 at 1:00pm Central Time**, both in-person at the Tennessee State Library and Archives, and online via Zoom.

Our speaker is **Diane L. Richard**, Owner/President of [Mosaic Research and Project Management](#), presenting **Post Office Records:**

Geography, Politics, Religion & More.

Post offices aren't just about mail! Post offices used to define communities and people used their location, in records, to define where they lived. Post offices also handled newspaper subscriptions and related materials. How would you like to see great-great grandpa's subscription list?

A researcher since 1987, and professional genealogist since 2004, Diane focuses on the records of North Carolina and the southern states. She is a regular contributor to the magazine [Internet Genealogy](#), and has appeared on the TV show, "Who Do You Think You Are." Since 2016 she has been editor of the [North Carolina Genealogical Society](#) (NCGS) journal. In 2019 she published [Tracing Your Ancestors -- African American Research: A Practical Guide](#).

As always, our meetings are free and open to the public. Refreshments will served, and be sure to check out the "Freebie Table" of genealogy items. Hope to see you there!

The Zoom link for this meeting is <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/5231204981>.



MTGS Membership Season is Here

Current MTGS memberships expire on May 31. If you have not yet renewed your membership for 2023-2024, please consider doing so, to keep your Journals coming and to support the Society's programs.

Memberships have not suffered from inflation – still a great value at \$25! Renewal details (including PayPal) are on our website at <http://www.mtgs.org/contact/default.html>



Save the Date – July 29 – A Grand Day in Granville

MTGS will have a booth at the [Upper Cumberland Family History and Genealogy Festival](#) in historic Granville, Tennessee, on Saturday, July 29, 2023. In addition to booths from various societies, each year there are

family tables dedicated to specific surnames– this year including the Stidham, Dowell, Pippin, Cooke and Dudney families.

[Historic Granville](#) is located on the Cumberland River in Jackson County, a little over an hour's drive from Nashville.

If you've never taken the opportunity to visit "Tennessee's Mayberry Town," maybe the lure of a genealogy festival will take you there. There are plenty of stores, museums and attractions that will make your day a fun one.



Tennessee's Replevin Law – Bringing Public Records Back Home

Did you know that Tennessee has one of the nation's strongest *replevin* laws? When government records created in Tennessee end up in private hands, there are real, tested methods for recovering those records, since those records never cease to be public

property.

Under current Tennessee law (Tennessee Code Annotated, 39-16-504), it is a Class E felony to "Intentionally and unlawfully destroy, conceal, **remove** or otherwise impair the verity, legibility or availability of a governmental record."

A famous use of this law resulted from a [2005 episode of Antiques Roadshow](#). A visitor showed an unexecuted 1805 marriage license issued in Jefferson County to David Crockett (yes, that David Crockett). The county soon brought a lawsuit to recover the document, arguing that the marriage licenses issued before and after this one were all still in the Jefferson County Courthouse, and that this license had, therefore, been removed illegally. After a few years and appeals, the Tennessee Court of Appeals ruled in favor of the county, and the license was returned to the courthouse.

As someone who volunteers at a county Archives with missing records, I wonder how the Replevin Law might aid us in determining whether any of our missing records might be out there...



Finding the Finding Aids

Recently someone visited the archive that I volunteer at, asking whether or not we had a photograph of “Miss Orlean,” a well-known (but apparently not-well-photographed) county personality from decades ago. At first, I looked in the usual places we think of when we visit an archive, looking for information on a specific person:

- Family history books
- County history books
- Newspapers
- Vertical files

But then it occurred to me that we held a group of **Manuscript collections** that contained a wide variety of materials – one of which might be a photograph of Miss Orlean.

In a perfect world, archival collections have **Finding Aids** – detailed descriptions of the items in the collection, and where to locate the items in the collection. I then browsed the Finding Aids that existed at our archive, but ultimately did not find a photograph of “Miss Orlean.”

The experience made me wonder how many of us think to **ask about Finding Aids when we visit an archive for research**. Some Archives also have their Finding Aids available online, which can be a great time-saver ahead of a research visit (and can be good ‘bait’ for the archive to attract visitors).

I often use the [Tennessee State Library and Archives Catalog](#) for searching its Finding Aids. Keyword searches on family surnames or place names are a great time-saver. My local [Montgomery County Archives](#) has its growing collection of Finding Aids online, which is great

for my local research. Universities have Finding Aids for the special collections – items you won't find in the county archives of those counties.

Try a Google search on [Tennessee archives finding aids](#) and see what area repositories have items that you need to look at for your research.

On a Lighter Note...

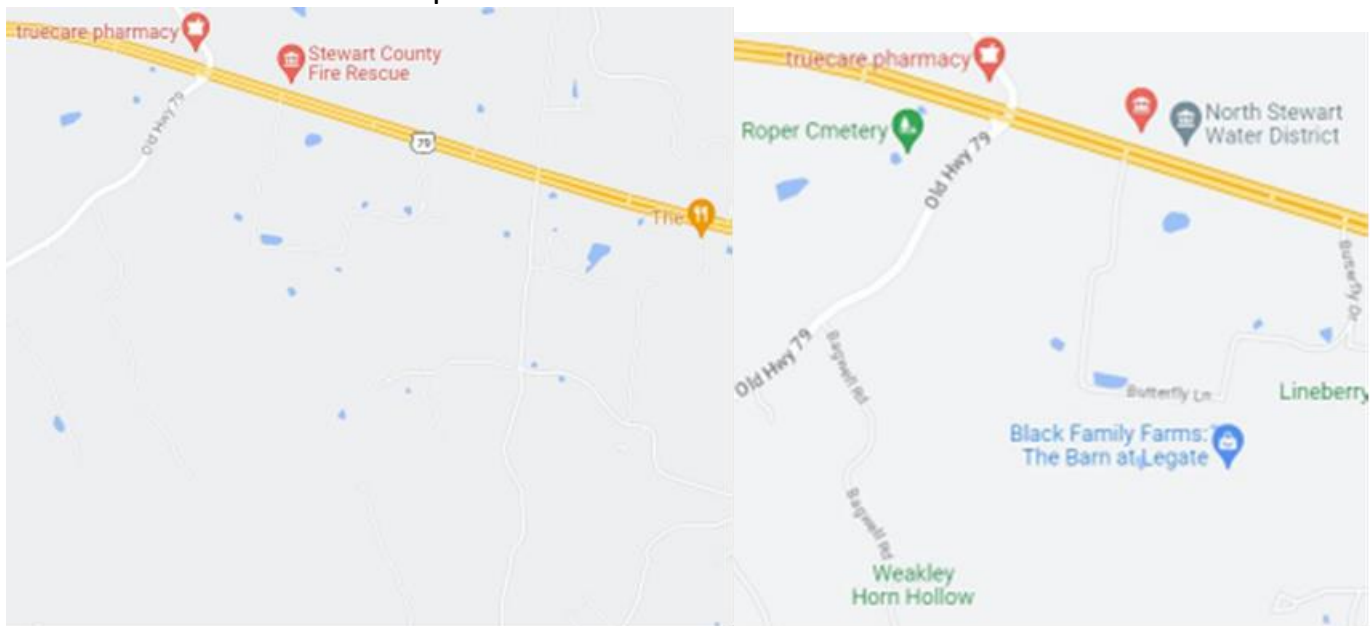
Google Maps For Genealogy (or Instead of Genealogy)

Several weeks ago, I wanted to figure out where the farm of my great-grandfather J. W. **Weakley** was, in hopes of going and 'standing on the land.' I knew that it must be near Cub Creek in Stewart County, as that's where he's buried. My grandmother lived on that farm from ages 4-10, and both her parents had died there by the time she was 10.

But of course in Tennessee, land descriptions are hurtfully vague for genealogists (trees and rocks as corner markers, typically).

But I platted the deed for the J. W. Weakley farm, tracked the later owners of the farm, and all the neighbors, and prevailed, and learned that I can drive to the spot today. It's at the end of Bagwell Road.

Lastly, I decided to look at the spot on Google Maps. I slid over to that area (see the first picture), and zoomed in closer once...maybe twice...to be greeted with the label “**Weakley Horn Hollow**” in the second picture.



Next time, before I spend hours platting deeds, I think I'll just wander around Google Maps for a while.
