



**MTGS Messenger**  
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**Jim Long, Editor**



**MTGS May 17 Meeting: Research Methods and Findings for *Runaways, Coffles, and Fancy Girls***

**After-Topic: War of 1812 Pensions**

Middle Tennessee author and researcher **Bill Carey** will talk about the research he conducted for his book [Runaways, Coffles and Fancy Girls: A History of Slavery in Tennessee](#). He researched every newspaper printed in Tennessee from 1791 until 1864, including newspapers on microfilm held at The Tennessee State Library and Archives. Advertisements that appeared in newspapers provide family historians with details about the people named.

Bill Carey has a background in journalism as a reporter for The Tennessean, Nashville Scene, WPLN, and NashvillePost.com. He is the co-founder and executive director of the nonprofit organization [Tennessee History for Kids](#) and has [authored six books](#) on history and biography. He also writes a history column for Tennessee Magazine.

Bill will also present our annual Writer's Award for the best-judged article in the previous 4 issues of our *Journal*.

**Special Note: In-person attendees will be eligible for a special door prize from our speaker, Bill Carey.**

After Bill's program, longtime MTGS member **Livy Simpson** will host a discussion of [Fold3's freely-accessible War of 1812 pension applications](#).

The meeting will be held **Saturday, May 17, 2025 at 1:00pm Central Time**, both in-person at the Tennessee State Library and Archives, and online via Zoom.

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

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## 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>

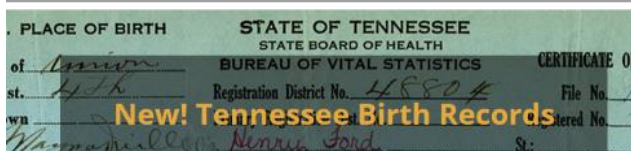


## New MTGS Website Coming Soon!

We haven't talked about the new MTGS website yet, but it's coming soon! The new site will offer features that we have been dreaming about for a while:

- Surname Share (allowing members to connect with each other through shared family)
- Online membership management
- Easier to maintain

There are other features with our new website provider that excite us too, and we hope you'll appreciate them. Stay tuned.



## Birth Records on TeVA, and Soundex Codes

Birth records in Tennessee are private for 100 years. But after those 100 years, the Tennessee State Library and Archives jumps into action! Their [Tennessee Virtual Archive website](#) has a growing set of images of Tennessee birth certificates and birth indexes from 1918-1924. For some years, only the index is posted, but that's still a great tool for either locating a specific birth certificate to view on your next trip to TSLA, or for [ordering a copy of it](#).

The yearly birth indexes are alphabetized by Soundex code. If you're old like me, you know what the Soundex code is. But just in case you need a refresher, [here's a website that explains the system and converts a surname to a Soundex code for you](#).

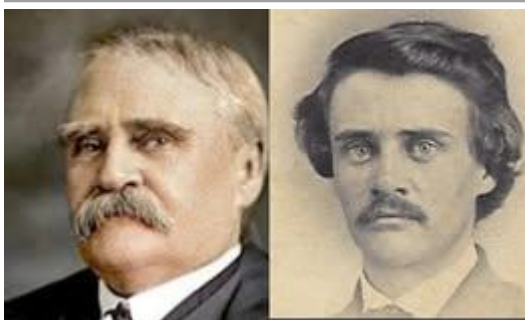


## The Rangers from...Tennessee?

In the last newsletter, I wrote about using AI to help a friend research his grandfather, E. A. Tucker, who had been shot in 1916 in Stewart County (by his 1<sup>st</sup> cousin, no less). He also shared that his grandfather had been a deputy, and asked me to help him find the documentation of his appointment as Deputy. But I could find no such documentation in county records.

He came back a week later with newspaper clippings he found online showing that his grandfather was appointed deputy in the *Tennessee Rangers* in 1915. Neither of us had heard of that organization, but he found quite a lot of information, and reached out to the current group of [Tennessee Rangers](#) that is re-forming the organization. The command staff of the Tennessee Rangers visited us at the Stewart County Archives, and it was a special meeting.

Do you have Tennessee ancestors who were involved with the Tennessee Rangers?



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## AI Again, for a Supreme Win

In my town (Clarksville's) local history group on Facebook, someone posted an unidentified photo – the man at the right here.

Using the facial-recognition feature on Ancestry (which I wrote about in the May 2024 *Messenger*), I got a hit on the gentleman at left, who was born in Kentucky and died in New Jersey. But this wasn't just any *random* gentleman of New Jersey.

Judge [Horace Harmon Lurton](#) (1844-1914) was an attorney in Clarksville from 1867-1875, served as Chancellor in Chancery Court for several years, sat on the Tennessee Supreme Court from 1886-1893, and worked his way up to the U. S. Supreme Court, serving there from 1910-1914.

This is the only known photo of him as a younger man, and AI is responsible for that accomplishment.



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## July Meeting at Fort Negley

Our July 19 meeting will be a field trip to [Fort Negley Visitors Center and Park](#), just south of downtown Nashville. Dr. Angela Sutton, Vanderbilt professor and creator of the [Fort Negley Descendants Project](#), will give a program on that project. Living History interpreter Gary Burke, a Fort Negley descendant, will also present. Following the programs, we will take a tour of the park grounds and visitor center.

It is unknown at this time whether or not we will be able to broadcast the meeting live on Zoom. Stay tuned.



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### November Seminar with Julie Merrill, AG

We are thrilled to announce that our speaker at this year's **37<sup>th</sup> Annual Genealogical Seminar** is national speaker **Julie Merrill, AG**, presenting these four great topics:

- Research Strategies for the Colonial Southern United States
- Intermediate Research Skill Building
- How do I use DNA to Breakdown Brick walls in my Family tree?
- Find all the Records! Alternative methods to documenting your family in a burned county

Julie Merrill is an Accredited Genealogist and is employed as a Research Manager at [Ancestry ProGenealogists](#)®. She has been the main researcher for episodes of *Who Do You Think You Are* and other high-profile media projects. Before working for Ancestry, she served a five-year service mission at [FamilySearch](#), serving in Historical Records, Research Assistance, and Early General Authorities Research departments as well as a FamilySearch Library trainer for onboarding missionaries.

Having a passion for finding families has driven her more than thirty years of experience. She is a frequent lecturer at national and local genealogical conferences and seminars and specializes in Southern United States, African-American, and Scandinavian research.

Registration for the November Seminar will open in late Summer, and will include a boxed lunch and snacks. As always, MTGS Members will receive a discount on the cost to attend.