

## Cheyenne Genealogical & Historical Society

Jan-Feb 2017

Vol. 14 Issue 1

# Cheyenne Genealogy Journal

### Message from the CGHS President...

I just want to thank you for all the good things you have done and are doing. As an organization we have been going in the Cheyenne community for sixty plus years! Quite an achievement. I am a relative newcomer... just into my fifth year, but many of you have been around much longer and have seen the great service offered by so many of our members. I



have discovered that many of you are involved in more than one club or service organization in Cheyenne. Kudos to you! I am especially grateful to the many of you who have served CGHS through the years on the board, as officers, or in various assignments. I would be so lost without the kindness and service of those presently serving with me in so many capacities. I know that I am better for knowing all of you, and that the community of Cheyenne is also better for citizens who come together in common causes and

interests. So, take a minute to feel good about yourself, and then....get back to it :-)) because there is always one more thing that needs to be done! Thanks again!

*Gloria Milmont, President*

### "OldNews-USA" App Wins RootsTech Innovator Showdown

Old news, it seems, is actually "new" news. At RootsTech, [OldNews-USA](#) took top honors in the [2017 Innovator Showdown](#), walking away with \$95,000 in cash and in-kind prizes. OldNews-USA is an android app designed to help users quickly discover their family in historical US newspapers. The app uses the Library of Congress *Chronicling America* collection of more than 11 million newspaper pages from 1789 to 1922 to deliver its results. In front of a crowd of close to 14,000 live and online viewers, the six RootsTech Innovator Showdown finalists battled for \$199,000 in cash and prizes and bragging rights in the rapidly-growing, multi-billion dollar family history industry. An experienced amateur genealogist, Bill Nelson of Auburn, Massachusetts, designed the program as a solution to tedious, difficult online newspaper searches. The OldNews app was designed to simplify and streamline the search process. Using keywords, users can look for

newspaper accounts of a person or topic with the option to look at articles of historical events. In a person search, you type names and dates into your mobile device and choose a location on Google Maps which produces a list of newspapers in the targeted geographic area for a time period. It brings up images of the actual newspapers with the name or event you are seeking highlighted so you can quickly locate it on the page. Images can be enlarged for easier access to detail. Nelson is a software developer by trade.

"I was new to android and needed something to practice on. I had felt the pain points of newspaper research and thought 'this would be a good project,'" he said. Initially he developed the app for his own use, then realizing it could help other researchers, he expanded it into a mobile app. OldNews is compatible with Android devices, but Nelson is working to create an app for IOS devices and comput-

ers. With his winnings, he can now get business and technological assistance to accelerate development. While OldNews USA is designed to search US newspapers, he hopes to adapt the app for other countries. The five finalists were whittled down from more than 40 applicants from the US and Europe. Each took three minutes to convince the panel of five judges and live audience that their product was deserving of a chunk of the winning cash. After each presentation, there was a four-minute question and answer period between each contestant and the judges, who then selected the top three winners. The viewing audience selected the People's Choice Award, which was an app—*Kindex*—designed to help users create searchable, shareable archives of family letters & documents using tags to help users easily locate information.

This article is reprinted from *Eastman's Online Genealogy Newsletter*, 11 Feb 2017, <https://blog.eogn.com/2017/02/11/oldnews-usa-wins-top-honors...>

### Upcoming Events:

**14 February 2017**  
"Exploring Historic Records For Your Own Family History"—Research Night with Genealogy Volunteers  
CGHS Monthly Meeting 6:15-8:30 p.m.  
Sunflower & Special Collections Rooms  
Laramie County Library

**16 February 2017**  
"Adding Sources to Family Search-Family Tree" 10:00 a.m.-12:00p.m.  
Family History Center  
Registration required at 307-634-9536

**7, 14, 21, 28 March 2017**  
"Introduction to Family Search-Family Tree" (Intro, Adding Photos, Adding Sources, Merging Duplicates) 7:00-9:00 p.m.  
Family History Center  
Registration required at 307-634-9536

**19-21 May 2017**  
**Kelly Clan Gathering**  
Armada Hotel  
Spanish Point  
County Clare, Ireland  
For more information visit: [www.kellyclans.com](http://www.kellyclans.com)

**28-30 July 2017**  
**International German Genealogy Partnership (IGGP) Conference**  
Minneapolis, Minn.  
Marriott Northwest  
[Registration](#) now open



**Newsletter Note:** Hyperlinks (in blue) in this newsletter are all live and can be activated by holding down your "control" key and clicking on the typed link—the site should open momentarily.

A glimpse back at the past...

## The "Underground Railroad" Operated From early 1800s to 1865

Information in this article is from Wikipedia [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Underground\\_Railroad](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Underground_Railroad) under its Creative Commons Attribution.

The Underground Railroad was a network of secret routes and safe houses established in the United States during the early-to-mid 19th century, and used by African American slaves to escape into free states and Canada with the aid of abolitionists and allies who were sympathetic to their cause. The term is also applied to the abolitionists, both black and white, free and enslaved, who aided the fugitives. Various other routes led to Mexico or overseas. An earlier escape route running south toward Florida, then a Spanish possession, existed from the late 17th century until shortly after the American Revolution. However, the network now generally known as the Underground Railroad was formed in the early 1800s, and reached its height between 1850 and 1860. One estimate suggests that by 1850, 100,000 slaves had escaped via the "Railroad." British North America (present-day Canada), where slavery was prohibited, was a popular destination, as its long border gave many points of access. Most former slaves settled in Ontario. More than 30,000 people were said to have escaped there via the network during its 20-year peak period, although U.S. Census figures account for only 6,000. Numerous fugitives' stories are documented in the 1872 book [\*The Underground Railroad Records\*](#) by William Still, an abolitionist who then headed the Philadelphia [Vigilance Committee](#).

At its peak, nearly 1,000 slaves per year escaped from slave-holding states using the Underground Railroad - more than 5,000 court cases for escaped slaves were recorded - many fewer than the natural increase of the enslaved population. The resulting economic impact was minuscule, but the psychological influence on slaveholders was immense. Under the original [Fugitive Slave Act of 1793](#) (an Act of the United States Congress to give effect to the Fugitive Slave Clause of the U.S. Constitution—Article 4, Section 2, Clause 3 superseded by the Thirteenth Amendment, which guaranteed a right of a slaveholder to recover an escaped slave), officials from free states were required to assist slaveholders or their agents who recaptured runaway slaves, but citizens and governments of many



Map of various Underground Railroad escape routes in the Northern United States and Canada.

free states ignored the law, and the Underground Railroad thrived. With heavy lobbying by Southern politicians, the Compromise of 1850 was passed by Congress after the Mexican-American War. It stipulated a more stringent Fugitive Slave Law; ostensibly, the compromise addressed regional problems by compelling officials of free states to assist slave catchers, granting them immunity to operate in free states. Because the law required sparse documentation to claim a person was a fugitive, slave catchers also kidnapped free blacks, especially children, and sold them into slavery. Southern politicians often exaggerated the number of escaped slaves and often blamed these escapes on Northerners interfering with Southern property rights. The law deprived suspected slaves of the right to defend themselves in court, making it difficult to prove free status. In a *de facto* bribe, judges were paid a higher fee (\$10) for a decision that confirmed a suspect as a slave than for one ruling that the suspect was free (\$5). Many Northerners who might have ignored slave issues in the South were confronted by local challenges that bound them to support slavery. This was a primary grievance cited by the Union during the American Civil War, and the perception that northern states ignored the fugitive slave law was a major justification for seces-

sion. The escape network was not literally underground nor a railroad. It was figuratively "underground" in the sense of being an underground resistance. It was known as a "railroad" by way of the use of rail terminology in the code. The Underground Railroad consisted of meeting points, secret routes, transportation, and safe houses, and personal assistance provided by abolitionist sympathizers. Participants generally organized in small, independent groups; this helped to maintain secrecy because individuals knew some connecting "stations" along the route but knew few details of their immediate area. Escaped slaves would move north along the route from one way station to the next. "Conductors" on the railroad came from various backgrounds and included free-born blacks, white aboli-

(Continued on page 3)



The Underground Railroad, painting by Charles T. Webber.



(Continued from page 2)

tionists, former slaves (either escaped or manumitted—given freedom by their owners), and Native Americans. Church clergy and congregations often played a role, especially the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers), Congregationalists, Wesleyans, and Reformed Presbyterians, as well as certain sects of mainstream denominations such as branches of the Methodist church and American Baptists. Without the presence and support of free black residents, there would have been almost no chance for fugitive slaves to pass into freedom unmolested.

### The Route

To reduce the risk of infiltration, many people associated with the Underground Railroad knew only their part of the operation and not of the whole scheme. "Conductors" led or transported the fugitives from station to station. A conductor sometimes pretended to be a slave in order to enter a plantation. Once a part of a plantation, the conductor would direct the runaways to the North. Slaves traveled at night, about 10-20 miles to each station. They rested, and then a message was sent to the next station to let the station master know the runaways were on their way. They would stop at the so-called "stations" or "depots" during the day and rest. The stations were often located in barns, under church floors, or in hiding places in caves and hollowed-out riverbanks. The resting spots where the runaways could sleep and eat were given the code names "stations" and "depots," which were held by "station masters." "Stockholders" gave money or supplies for assistance. Using biblical references, fugitives referred to Canada as the "Promised Land" and the Ohio River as the "River Jordan," which marked the boundary between slave states and free states.

### Traveling Conditions

Although the fugitives sometimes traveled on boat or train, they usually traveled on foot or by wagon in groups of one to three slaves. Some groups were considerably larger. Abolitionist Charles Turner Torrey and his colleagues rented horses and wagons and often transported as many as 15 or 20 slaves at a time. Routes were often purposely indirect to confuse pursuers. Most escapes were by individuals or small groups; occasionally, there were mass escapes, such as with the [Pearl Incident](#). The journey was often considered particularly difficult and dangerous for women or children. Children were sometimes hard to keep quiet or

were unable to keep up with a group. In addition, female slaves were rarely allowed to leave the plantation, making it harder for them to escape in the same ways that men could. Although escaping was harder for women, some women did



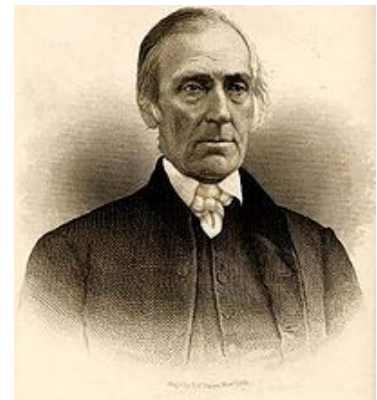
*Harriet Tubman c. 1870 (photo by H. B. Lindsley). A worker on the Underground Railroad, Tubman made 13 trips to the South, then leading people to the northern free states and Canada. This helped her gain the title "Moses of Her People."*

Southern newspapers of the day were often filled with pages of notices soliciting information about escaped slaves and offering sizable rewards for their capture and return. Federal marshals and professional bounty hunters known as slave catchers pursued fugitives as far as the Canada-US border. Fugitives were not the only black people at risk from slavecatchers. With demand for slaves high in the Deep South as cotton was developed, strong, healthy blacks in their prime working and reproductive years were seen and treated as highly valuable commodities. Both former slaves and free blacks were sometimes kidnapped and sold into slavery, as was Solomon Northup of Saratoga Springs, New York. "Certificates of freedom," signed, notarized statements attesting to the free status of individual blacks also known as free papers, could easily be destroyed or stolen, so provided little protection to bearers. Some buildings, such as the Crenshaw House in far southeastern Illinois, are known sites where free blacks were sold into slavery, known as the "[Reverse Underground Railroad](#)," (the term used for the pre-American Civil War practice of kidnapping free blacks from free states and transporting them into the slave states for sale as slaves. The Reverse Underground Railroad oper-

ated for eighty-five years, from 1780-1865.) find success in escaping. One of the most famous and successful abductors (people who secretly traveled into slave states to rescue those seeking freedom) was Harriet Tubman, an escaped slave woman. Due to the risk of discovery, information about routes and safe havens was passed along by word of mouth.

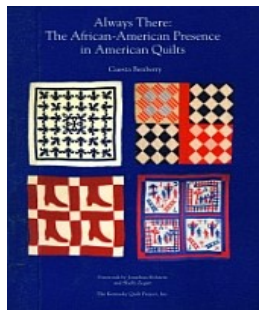
ated for eighty-five years, from 1780-1865.)

The [Fugitive Slave Act of 1850](#), was passed by the United States Congress on September 18, 1850, as part of the Compromise of 1850 between Southern slave-holding interests and Northern Free-Soilers. This was one of the most controversial elements of the 1850 compromise and heightened Northern fears of a "slave power conspiracy." It required that all escaped slaves were, upon capture, to be returned to their masters and that officials and citizens of free states had to cooperate in this law. Abolitionists nicknamed it the "Bloodhound Law" for the dogs that were used to track down runaway slaves. Under the terms of the Act, when suspected fugitives were seized and brought to a special magistrate known as a commissioner, they had no right to a jury trial and could not testify in their own behalf. Technically, they were guilty of no crime. The marshal or private slave-catcher needed only to swear an oath to acquire a writ of replevin for the return of property. Congress was dominated by southern Congressmen, as apportionment was based on three-fifths of the number of slaves being counted in population totals. They passed the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 because of frustration at having fugitive slaves helped by the public and even official institutions outside the South. In some parts of the North, slave-catchers needed police protection to exercise their federal authority. Opposition to slavery did not mean that all states welcomed free blacks. For instance, Indiana, whose area along the Ohio River was settled by Southerners, passed a constitutional amendment that barred free blacks from settling in that state.



*Quaker abolitionist [Levi Coffin](#) and his wife Catherine, of Ohio, helped more than 2,000 slaves escape to freedom.*

## "Secret Quilt Codes"— Have No Basis in History



Since the 1980s, claims have arisen that quilt designs were used to signal and direct slaves to escape routes and assistance along the Underground Railroad. The **slave quilt code** was the idea that African American slaves used quilts to communicate information about how to escape to freedom. According to advocates of the quilt theory, ten quilt patterns were used to direct slaves to take particular actions. The quilts were placed one at a time on a fence as a means of nonverbal communication to alert escaping slaves. The code had a dual meaning: first to signal slaves to prepare to escape, and second to give clues and indicate directions on the journey. The quilt design theory is disputed. The idea was introduced and popularized throughout the 1980s, but most quilt scholars and historians consider the "code" to be completely lacking any basis in fact. The first known assertion of the use of quilts in connection with the Underground Railroad was a single statement in the narration of the 1987 video *Hearts and Hands*, which stated "They say quilts were hung on the clotheslines to signal a house was safe for runaway slaves." This assertion does not appear in the companion book and is not supported by any documentation in the filmmaker's research file. The first print appearance of such a claim was *Stitched from the Soul*, a 1990 book by folklorist Gladys-Marie Fry, which states — without providing any source — "Quilts were used to send messages." Giles Wright, a now deceased university history professor who wrote a book about the Underground Railroad, was the first to publicly discount the slave quilt code theory. No extant quilts, quilt blocks, nor written or oral testimony have been found to support such a theory. This includes documentary evidence, such as slave memoirs, Works Progress Administration oral history interviews of escaped slaves, and abolitionist accounts of the Underground Railroad. The conclusion of many professional historians and quilt historians is that the secret quilt code is utterly without basis in history or fact.

## FamilySearch Announces Plans for New Genealogy Projects, Services and Discoveries in 2017

Worldwide interest in online genealogy services and activities will continue to grow solidly in 2017, and FamilySearch plans to play a major role in creating millions of new, fun family discoveries and online connections. Here are some of the exciting developments to look forward to from FamilySearch in 2017:

### 1. Personalized Dashboard

Now available in 2017, if you log in to your free [FamilySearch](#) account today, you will be greeted with your own, customized home page full of interesting, relevant activity feeds, notifications, and suggestions on your personal dashboard. The more you work on your personal FamilySearch family tree, the more new, applicable content the system will automatically send to you through your dashboard throughout the year. In other words, it continues to work for you even when you're not. New features include:

—**Recommended Tasks.** "Next-step" suggestions for specific ancestors in FamilySearch Family Tree that can lead to new discoveries.

—**Ancestor Hints.** As millions of new historical records are added to FamilySearch weekly, the savvy search engine maps them against your Family Tree. High probability matches are presented for your consideration as "hints" on your dashboard. Keep checking back to see what new information it has dug up on your ancestors. Add it to your ancestor's source page.

—**Recent Ancestors.** Forgot what you did the last time you visited your tree? Your new dashboard will automatically keep track of the ancestors you are researching each time and create a list that makes it easy to pick up where you left off.

—**To-do Lists.** Make quick notes in this convenient new feature to help you remember what you want to do on your next visit to your Family Tree. Jot short reminder notes about records to search, people to contact, photos or documents to upload and add to an ancestor's profile, or personal and family stories you want to capture for posterity in the Memories feature.

—**To-do Cards.** See new photos, stories, and relevant documents about your ancestors that have been recently added by other family members and cousins to your collective family tree. It's a fun way to identify relatives who are currently working on your family lines and make new discoveries or con-

nections with extended family.

### 2. New and Improved Mobile Apps

FamilySearch's two mobile apps—FamilySearch Family Tree and FamilySearch Memories—will see cool new updates. Users will be able to search Ancestry.com from the convenience of the FamilySearch mobile app. Imagine being able to search the two largest online sources of family history records from your mobile device. A new descendant view feature will provide the ability to create notes for specific ancestors, easily see a log of any changes made by others, and download user-contributed memories (Memories app). Multiple windows in the Family Tree app will significantly increase the speed of research from mobile devices.

### 3. Improved Searching

The [FamilySearch.org](#) search engine is already best-in-class, but in 2017, users will notice even faster search results from newly published historic records worldwide, and quicker hints from those new records and user-contributed trees.

### 4. New Indexing Tools

They will launch the web-based version of their successful indexing software in 2017, which will be easy to use and will work on any digital device with a web browser (excluding cell phones), eliminating the need to download the indexing software. That means more volunteers worldwide will be able to contribute to making more of the world's historical records searchable by name online, and more quickly. Additional innovations to the tool in 2017 will include more rapid completion of tasks, improved help, and even automated indexing for some record sets (obituaries), which means more searchable records.

### 5. More Free Historic Records

Over 330 FamilySearch digital camera teams worldwide will digitally preserve 125-150 million historical records in 2017 for free online access. Another 200 million images will be added from FamilySearch's microfilm conversion project that uses 25 specialized machines to convert its vast microfilm collection at its Granite Mountain Records Vault for online access. FamilySearch's online community of volunteers will be focused on creating searchable name indexes to two major U.S. collections (marriage records and immigration records that will include passenger lists, border crossings, and naturalization petitions).



## Genealogy News You Can Use...

### Federation of Genealogical Societies Announces Project With National Park Service to Develop Database of U.S. Mexican War Soldiers

The Federation of Genealogical Societies (FGS) and the National Park Service's Palo Alto Battlefield National Historic Park recently announced a partnership to develop a searchable database of more than 130,000 soldiers of



the U.S. Mexican War. The database will allow descendants of U.S. soldiers to connect to their personal history and help Palo Alto commemorate and tell the stories of these soldiers. After the database is developed, unit histories, digitized documents, and information on U.S. Mexican War soldiers will be add-

ed. Efforts will also be made to include names and information about Mexican soldiers in this war.

FGS President, D. Joshua Taylor said that the society is "thrilled to partner with the Palo Alto Battlefield National Historic Park for this important preservation project" and they look forward to working with member societies and volunteers to provide new access to records for those researching the Mexican War. To help bring these soldiers' stories to life and to be a part of this momentous preservation project, indexing volunteers should contact Project Coordinator Patricia Rand, at [projects@fgs.org](mailto:projects@fgs.org).

The Federation of Genealogical Societies and the National Park Service previously partnered together in 1999 for the Civil War Soldiers and Sailors System database project where FGS volunteers completed data entry for more than five million names accessible at [NPS Civil War Website](http://NPSCivilWarWebsite).

### Genealogical Publishing Company Announces Its New e-Book Site

Genealogical Publishing Company has launched a new e-book site: [library.genealogical.com](http://library.genealogical.com). In January, they had slightly over 500 titles, and were expected to have 800 in place by early spring, and have stated that they hope to have the majority of their nearly 2,000 titles available as e-books before the end of 2017. They also assured users that they will continue to print good old fashioned books, but noted that e-books do have some advantages, and one of them is financial. All of their e-books are priced at least 30% below their print counterparts. Similarly, there are no shipping costs associated with e-book delivery. That means that e-book buyers will save from \$5.50 to \$7.50 on each e-book they order. The benefits of visiting their site:

- The site can be searched by locality, subject, time period, and other categories.

- The "look inside the book" feature of the site enables the researcher to view actual pages from the publication. You can even do a name search for your ancestor in a book that looks promising before you buy.

- The purchase of e-books is simple, done via Google, Facebook, or e-mail.

- The site affords flexibility for reading e-books. You can read them on their site, or you can download them to the reader of your choice.

### FamilySearch To Debut Its New Library Discovery Center

In February, 2017, FamilySearch will open a state-of-the-art [Discovery Experience attraction](http://DiscoveryExperience.attraction) on the main floor of the Salt Lake City Family History Library. The new feature will enable guests to have fun, large-as-life personal discovery experiences with their family history using the latest technologies. Similar discovery experiences will be implemented in select locations worldwide in 2017.



### "Historic Map Works" Features One Million-Plus Worldwide Maps

by Cynthia Theusch, from "Our Ancestors"

Recently, I was searching for historic maps from where my ancestors lived in Gratiot County Michigan, and came across a new website of plat maps entitled "[Historic Map Works Residential Genealogy](http://HistoricMapWorksResidentialGenealogy)." The site has more than one million historic maps and images in its digital map database of North America and the world, which can be browsed or searched. You can view an entire county plat map for a particular year. When you click on that map, you will see images of the townships. Just above the images are two tabs, *Map* and *Directories*. By clicking *Directories*, you will get images of all pages within the plat book. The Directories list patrons or subscribers who help offset the cost of printing the atlas. Upon viewing the 1889 map for Gratiot County, I located some ancestors and other family members who owned land in Arcadia, Pine River, and Seville townships. The best find was locating the estate of my second great-grandfather, J. Ludwig Muhn, in Arcadia Township. Ludwig died in September 1865 on his way home from the Civil War (he was discharged in Little Rock, Arkansas). Approximately 24 years later, his estate had not been settled. Another find in the 1889 map for Seville Township (Gratiot County) was Ludwig Muhn's brother-in-law, Michael Koffenberger. He owned 50 acres, and the plat map showed where his saw mill and home were located. Koffenberger paid to have his name added to the Directory of Patrons, and it included his name (M. Koffenberger), post office (St. Louis), occupations (farmer and saw mill operator), nativity (Germany), and the year he settled in the county (1864).

The Historic Map Works Residential Genealogy site is designed for individuals, offering three options for membership with three payment choices. The first option is free with a Basic Pay-Per-Use print and download cost. The second has a monthly charge of \$29.99 with limited print and download capability. The third option includes a yearly fee of \$124.99 and allows users to download unlimited watermarked prints. See the [Membership Benefits and Pricing](#) chart. Another option is to purchase the image license. This web site is a wonderful resource for locating where your ancestors lived and how much land they owned. By viewing maps from various dates, you can compare and document changes in these holdings. (Reprinted from the August, 2016 Natrona County Genealogical Society Newsletter, "Our Ancestors.")

**Cheyenne  
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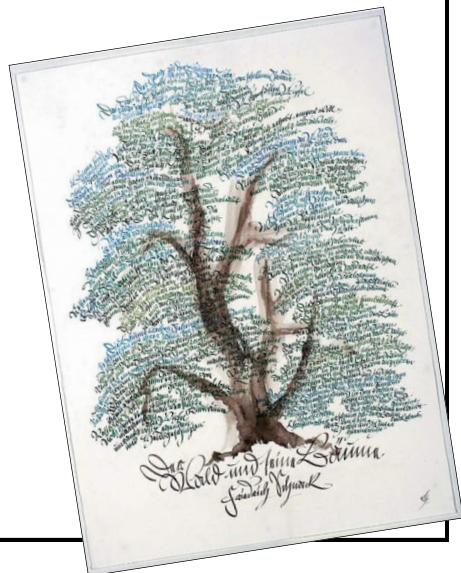
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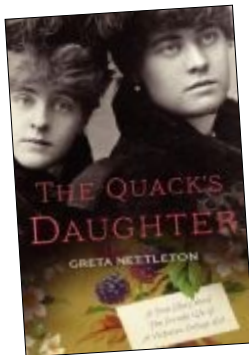
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The Cheyenne Genealogical &  
Historical Society welcomes this  
new member who has recently  
joined the organization:  
—Suzanne S. Roe



## "Check This Out"

Family history-related fiction & nonfiction  
book reviews by CGHS members & others



### *The Quack's Daughter*

by Greta Nettleton c 2012  
University of Iowa Press—Memoir

Greta Nettleton's great-grandmother, Corize "Cora" Keck, was a student at Vassar College from 1883 through 1885. *The Quack's Daughter* is a fascinating story about Vassar College history (at the time, Vassar was going through a major financial crisis) and about what the life of a college-age girl was like during this era. Cora kept a diary and scrapbooks that gave Ms. Nettleton basic information to start with, and although it helped that the author started out with a lot of the story in Corize's own words, she also did a huge amount of research to flesh out the stories of both Corize and her friends. The author inherited her great-grandmother's memorabilia and diaries and has a written memoir of her, but her book includes many more details that she found out through her own research, showing that writing about one's ancestors doesn't have to be dry and uninteresting. Her use of black and white photos makes the people and places even more relatable. She did a fantastic job of pulling together historical facts, a personal perspective, and engaging characters all while telling a good story. The book flows easily, like a historical novel but not so stiff as some "historical nonfiction," because we know the characters are all real documented people in documented places and times. Easy to follow, nicely organized, the book shares a rich history of life in the Victorian era with focus on two vastly different parts of our country. Anyone interested in Victorian times, Vassar College, feminism, the Quad Cities (Iowa-Illinois), women's education, medical history, life stories, or genealogy should enjoy this book. It is a well-written personal story not only about the discovery of the every day life of an ancestor, but also the story of how to dig deep to find historical treasure about your family's history and why this is important. It is a trip back in time and a tribute to the research process and the ways we can uncover our life stories. Often information about our great grandparents is ignored or thrown out, but this author takes the time to really find out what their life was like. She also did extensive research in finding out what society was like, which gives insight into the behavior and attitudes of the times documented in *The Quack's Daughter*.

—Book Review by Leslie Vosler

### Did You Know...

Many researchers know how valuable probate documents can be for identifying family members and learning their whereabouts, but don't overlook relatives who had no descendants or those with no known property. Even small estates could require probate, and executors/administrators sometimes searched the deceased's effects or otherwise conducted enough genealogical research to locate relatives, however distant, to ensure that the estate went to someone in the family.  
(Source: National Genealogy Society)

**"My family coat of arms ties at the back...is that normal?"**