



RAMBLERS' RAMBLINGS

Volume XXVI Number ONE SPRING 2016

Walking I am listening to a deeper way.

Suddenly all my ancestors are behind me.

Be still, they say. Watch and listen.

You are the result of the love of thousands.

Danville, Texas, Cemetery



MY PERSONAL STORY

BY JANE MAGILL

Recently Jane McGill's Writers' Group presented a program on writing personal stories for our children and grandchildren. Before reading her own personal story to her family, Jane stated, "Some applauded my stories, some reactions were varied and some probably thought, such as, "I can't believe Grandma did that!" In this issue of *Ramblings*, we've reprinted a few pages of Jane's personal story. In the next issue, **Virginia Aziz** will present her story and in the following issue, **Bobbie Middleton** will share

her Writers' Group story. Hopefully, other Ramblers will contribute personal stories so we can continue to publish a personal story in each issue of *Ramblings*.

I came to America the last week of June, 1963. My mother and I left London, Ontario, Canada and drove the 250 miles to Ithaca, NY, to what would become my new home, Cornell University. At the time, I was eager to start my life and excited to begin it in a place I had always admired, the United States.

My undergraduate degree had been completed about two months earlier at a small university in my hometown, the University of Western Ontario. I had been lucky enough to work for two months for my Genetics professor, an American who had gone to Cornell for his graduate training. He had given me many pointers on living in Ithaca, N.Y. and adapting to life in graduate school.

We spoke the same language so that wasn't a problem. Or was it. Right away we found some words that Canadians used that Americans didn't. My mother asked for a serviette in a restaurant and they didn't know what she wanted. Finally she pointed to a napkin on someone's lap. In Canada at that time, a napkin was a sanitary napkin. I made a mental note of that. At one store I asked the clerk if they took coppers and she didn't understand me. My mother quickly intervened here. She knew coppers were policemen in the US and pennies in Canada. Another word to file away.

After looking at several apartments I decided on a two-room apartment with a tiny kitchen and a bathroom that was out in the hall and was shared with the neighboring apartment. It seems so strange to me now, but I had always lived at home so my knowledge of apartment layouts was very limited. And this was America. Maybe this was not that unusual. The couple in the next apartment was very nice and I enjoyed living next to them for the two years I lived there except there was only a shower and no bathtub. I loved a hot bath and still do.

I started my assistantship in Genetics and learned the various techniques I was required to use in my experiments. The lab workers and graduate students were very friendly and I enjoyed working with them. As in all organizations there are some rules you must learn. One of the senior graduate students in Genetics was a Roman Catholic nun, Sister Anne. She was just finishing her Ph.D. and was headed to Seton Hall to take a faculty position in a few months. One morning, I took a can of her sterile pipettes by mistake. She was planning to use them and I didn't realize they were hers; I thought they were community property. It was a good thing she wasn't allowed to swear because she was very upset. She was on a tight schedule and my theft put her a day behind.

Again it was the language differences I noticed immediately. They were causing some minor problems not just for me, but for other foreign students too. One student, Gerry Kingma, a Dutch graduate student in Plant Breeding became one of my favorite students because he was not afraid to try out all kinds of words to find the one he was looking for in English. Gerry spoke

Dutch, German, Swedish, some French and very good English. One cold day in Ithaca, Gerry came into our lab. and announced "It is so cold I am going home and have a hot douche." At first we were shocked, but then we all started laughing. Gerry asked if it was the wrong word. After we said yes, he explained that he couldn't remember the English word and that "douche" is the Swedish word for what he mimicked as a shower.

A far more serious *faux pas* was the one Gerry made that first summer when he and Sister Anne and I were studying in the grad. student offices. Gerry had to write a short report for his research advisor and it wasn't going well. After writing a few lines he would scrunch up the paper, say a four-letter word beginning with *sh* and throw it into the waste basket. After he did this twice, Sister Anne walked out and I asked him if he knew what the word he was saying meant. He said of course. The field hands he worked with told him it was perfectly OK to say. It just meant waste product and they used it all the time. I told him the French translation was *merde* and I thought he would faint dead away. Gerry was a devout Catholic and had great respect for Sister Anne.



My own comeuppance in the language area was right around the corner. Clint Magill, my future husband, arrived at Cornell in mid-September 1963 to study Genetics. Since we were both assigned to beginner lab projects we often worked together at the same lab bench. Shortly after Clint started working in the lab, we were sitting at microscopes, side by side, and I was making notations. I needed an eraser so I asked Clint for one using the Canadian word. I asked, "Do you have a rubber?" Clint was shocked. The look on his face was priceless. I was unaware of the significance of what I had said and tried to explain that I wanted to erase something, rub something out. It wasn't until much later that he told me what that meant in American English.

A word that is used in all English-speaking countries, but pronounced differently is the word for a beige-like color. Khaki is pronounced *khawki* in Canada and England, sounding almost like *kharki* as opposed to *khaaaki* here. When I asked Clint about wearing his khakis (*khawkis*) he asked me what I was talking about. He thought I had asked about wearing his car keys.

That first semester at Cornell was a difficult one for me. There were many adjustments, both academically and culturally. The little language differences continued to plague me in strange places, such as in multiple choice exams. I passed all the exams and did well enough to maintain a B average, but I was not used to anything but essay exams. I was a native English speaker, but

sometimes there would be a phrase that seemed strange and I just had to guess. For anyone who has difficulty with English, multiple choice questions can be a nightmare.

After one such exam I came into the lab. and was rummaging through my purse for some headache pills. I always took the headache capsules I brought from Canada, but couldn't find any in my purse. In Canada everyone I knew took a brand of Tylenol called Frost 222. These capsules contain Tylenol, a tiny amount of codeine and caffeine and were sold over the counter and were called simply, 222s. They always got rid of my headaches. So I asked my friend Pat, do you know what 222's are? She looked at me strangely and said, 44. I doubted I wouldn't be able to get them in Ithaca, NY.

Another problem cropped up when I began teaching a genetics lab. in the fall. One lab exercise required explaining sex determination in chickens. In chickens, the letters ZW are used instead of XY. In most English speaking countries and in French, the last letter of the alphabet is pronounced zed, whereas in the US the last letter is pronounced zee. As I was going through the lesson and writing Z on the board, but saying zed the class became confused. Many asked what is zed and others asked how do you spell zed? When we straightened it all out, both the class and I had become enlightened as to yet another language difference between American English and Canadian/English English.

Even though all the Americans I worked with at Cornell were very friendly, I have never felt so alone in the US as the day President Kennedy was shot. Some of the students actually screamed and many cried openly when they heard the news. This isn't done in Canada or wasn't then unless there would be an emergency where you saw a lot of blood or fire. Even then we were always taught never to scream; screaming was only to attract attention not to help solve any problem. My Canadian reserve in this situation was not understood. My feeling of being excluded and wanting to go home was very strong at that time.



WILD PIGEON SOUP



REPRINTED FROM MISS LESLIE'S 1851 COOKBOOK

Pigeon soup's main ingredient is one dozen tame pigeons or two dozen wild ones. Wild pigeons may be made fat by catching them alive in nets, at the season when they abound;clipping their

wings to prevent their flying away; putting them into a field where there is a stream of water convenient for them to drink or into a large yard and feeding them twice a day with corn.

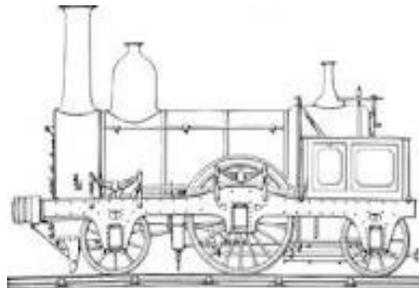
When fattened in this manner, they will also be found profitable articles for sale; the objection to wild pigeons being that they are usually so poor and lean. *Bon Appetit!*



Trivia Question:

Who was the first woman to vote in a U.S national election?

Answer Later



RAIL GAUGES AND HORSES' REAR ENDS

SUBMITTED BY PAM JOHNSON

The U.S. Standard railroad gauge (distance between the rails) is 4 feet, 8.5 inches. That's an exceedingly odd number. Why was that gauge used?

Because that's the way they built railroads back in England, and English expatriates designed the U.S. Railroads. Why did the English build them like that? Because the first rail lines were built by the same people who built the pre-railroad tramways, and that's the gauge they used.

Why did "they" use that gauge then? Because the people who built the tramways used the same jigs and tools that they had used for building wagons, which used that wheel spacing.



Why did the wagons have that particular **odd** wheel spacing? Well, if they tried to use any other spacing, the wagon wheels would break on some of the old, long distance roads in England because that's the spacing of the wheel ruts.

So, who built those old rutted roads? Imperial Rome built the first long distance roads in Europe (including England) for their legions. Those roads have been used ever since.



Roman war chariots formed the initial ruts, which everyone else had to match for fear of destroying their wagon wheels. Since the chariots were made for Imperial Rome, they were all alike in the matter of wheel spacing.

Therefore, the United States standard railroad gauge of 4 feet, 8.5 inches is derived from the original specifications for an Imperial Roman war chariot. In other words, bureaucracies live forever.

So the next time you are handed a specification, procedure or process and wonder, "What horse's rear end came up with this?", you may be exactly right. Imperial Roman army chariots were made just wide enough to accommodate the rear ends of two war horses.

Now, the twist to the story: When you see a space shuttle sitting on its launch pad, you will notice that there are two big booster rockets attached to the sides of the main fuel tank.

These are solid rocket boosters, or SRBs, made by Thiokol at their factory in Utah. The engineers who designed the SRBs would have preferred to make them a bit larger, but the SRBs had to be shipped by train from the factory to the launch site.



OLD TRAIN TUNNEL

The railroad line from the factory runs through a tunnel in the mountains and the SRBs had to fit through that tunnel. The tunnel is slightly wider than the railroad track and the railroad track is about as wide as two horses' behinds!

So, a major space shuttle design feature of what is arguably the world's most advanced transportation system was determined over 2000 years ago by the width of two horses' rear ends.



MIDDLETON PLACE, SOUTH CAROLINA, THE OLDEST LANDSCAPED GARDENS IN THE U.S.

In the 1730s, John Williams, a planter, acquired acreage on the Ashley River in Dorchester County, South Carolina and began construction of the main block of his house, selecting a lovely site near Ashley River. After Williams' death, the plantation became part of the dowry of his daughter, Mary Williams. In 1741, Mary Williams married Henry Middleton, whose father, an immigrant from Barbados, had established a plantation, "The Oaks," near the Williams' home.



AERIAL VIEW OF MIDDLETON PLACE GARDENS, S.C.



HENRY MIDDLETON

Following Henry's marriage to Mary and his land inheritance from his father, he continued acquiring acreage, eventually becoming one of South Carolina's wealthiest planters, owning 20 plantations with a total of 50,000 acres.

Henry Middleton, who in 1774 replaced Peyton Randolph for a few days as president of America's First Continental Congress, completed the Williams' plantation house and began work on Middleton Place's future elaborate gardens. After Mary Middleton's death in 1761, Henry gave Middleton Place to his son, Arthur, who in 1776 was one of the signers of our Declaration of Independence.

Arthur employed an English gardener named Simms. Unfortunately very little is known about this man. Middleton and Simms based their garden designs less upon Henry's own trips to England, where he was educated, but by following engraved plans in the translation of the popular garden book by Dezallier d'Argenville, *The Theory and Practice of Gardening*.

Henry Middleton's garden was a superb exercise in logic and geometry, perfectly adapted to the contours of the land. He and his gardener laid out what historian Samuel Gaillard Stoney called, "this premier garden of the thirteen colonies."

Four years later, at the height of the Revolutionary War, several thousand British troops invaded South Carolina, seized Charleston and ransacked Middleton Place. Many of the garden's statues were destroyed; the plantation's artwork and furniture were stolen. Arthur Middleton was captured and imprisoned until 1781.

Newly discovered plantation records present another interesting fact about Middleton Place: the Middletons imported water buffalo from Constantinople in the late 18th century, the first in the United States. They served as experimental draft animals, suited to the deep muck in which rice was grown.

And in the gardens, Arthur's son Henry Middleton's friendship with a French botanist resulted in the first camellias grown in an American garden, a house gift from the Frenchman during his visit in 1786. Three of the four planted at the corners of the main parterre survive: One is *Camellia Japonica*.

Henry Middleton (the second one) expanded and enriched the gardens, introducing the garden's first Asiatic azalea, and the crape myrtle, one of the oldest in America. He also filled greenhouses with exotics and imported plants and seeds for a his botanical garden. Henry Middleton's garden was a superb exercise in logic and geometry, perfectly adapted to the contours of the land.

Under the management/guidance of Henry and William Middleton's son and grandson, Middleton Place changed from a country residence to a more active rice plantation. But in 1865, during another war and another army, Union soldiers burned most of the house. Only a south wing and walls of the north wing and the main house survived. An earthquake in 1886 toppled the walls of the main house and north wing.

The restoration of today's Middleton Place began in 1916 when Middleton descendant John Julius Pringle Smith and his wife began several decades of meticulously rebuilding the plantation's gardens. During the same period the Middleton descendants transferred ownership of the historic district to the non-profit Middleton Place Foundation, which maintains the site, now a National Landscaped District with a museum *and the oldest landscaped gardens in the United States*.

Middleton Place is open daily from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.



MY GENEALOGY TRAIL

BY HENRY HANSON

My wife and I have been faithful fans of Gary Blair and his women's basketball team at Texas A&M since the second year he was the coach. We attend his noon day luncheons regularly and my wife plans to arrive early so as to get a table at the front so she can take pictures of guest speakers from her chair and not have to move around and block someone else's view.

Our seating arrangement became noticed as friends asked my wife to save them a seat at her table. One particular lady, a good friend that we go to church with, also asked my wife to save seats for some of her lady friends. We became friends and we began to learn more about each of them.

Being obsessed with genealogy, I began to notice their ethnic background was Sicilian, which drew me to investigate several families and how they were connected. One interesting fact was



that some early relatives were born in Sicily, the next generation was born in either Louisiana or Texas. Those born in Louisiana were from families that were drawn to the opportunity to work in that state's sugar cane fields, but later moved to Texas when they learned that immigrants to Texas had the opportunity to buy their own land and farm in the Brazos Valley. At the turn of the 20th century Brazos County had a larger population of Italians than any other area in Texas, including Houston.

Several times at Blair's luncheons we have discussed family genealogy and I have asked all these basketball fans if they would write a concise family history for our genealogy newsletter and when I mentioned writing, it brought a hush as if the Godfather had forbidden it. It was if it was *la cosa nostra* all over again.

On one occasion, I mentioned that I was born in Houston during WWII and my mother and grandmother and I lived in an Archer Street duplex, owned by Dominic and Francis (Virgadamo) Rizzo. One lady said she lived on Archer Street when she was very young, but did not know the address; she said she would ask her brother, another lady said her maiden name was Rizzo, but could not tell me if she was related to Dominic, who owned and operated Kri-Pax Bakery. She said her father was Anthony Rizzo.

Now it looks like I will have to do the writing, but first I will have to supply more facts to get the genealogy juices flowing.



UPCOMING RAMBLER PROGRAMS

BY SHELBY ROWAN

April 27, 2016 - "Fifty Flags of Texas" presented by Pam Johnson

May 25, 2016 - "Newspaper Genealogical Research"-video presented by Lisa Louise Cohen

June 29, 2016 - "Genealogical Research on Archaeological Projects presented by Prof.

Donny Hamilton



GENEALOGY COMPUTER USERS GROUP

BY JERRY MARKOWICH

April 20, 2016 - "Ten Years Between The Censuses"

**May 18, 2016 - "Death Certificates- "How You Can Learn More About Your Family"--Leader
Jane Magill**

September 21, 2016 - "Creating A Time-Line for Your Favorite Ancestor"



CENSUS UPDATE

BY HENRY HANSON

How many of you have used Heritage Quest Census database online via the Texas State Library in the past year? If you have then you've noticed a different screen after logging in using the library code and password. In place of a drop down box, you now find a screen with a picture of a mixed group of people wearing 1920-style swimsuits; below the picture is a list of census years starting with 1940 in reverse to 1790.

Once you choose a year and click on it, a different screen appears with a form to complete with your search options. I have had to learn how to use this method, which is very different from what I've been accustomed to using for the past 15 years.

I have begun to realize that this change different search engine, which is far no longer have to search by head of



in formatting goes along with a superior to the past search engine. You household.

Let me give you my most recent praise

ago, Nancy, my wife, was researching grandfather, Jeremiah Walter Bell, County, Texas. Jeremiah was three years old in 1880, living with his parents, Zachariah and Harriet, both age 30. Head of the household was William Bell, 59. But Nancy was unable to find these Bells in the 1860 or 1870 censuses.

for using this free site: Forty years her Bell line on microfilm, tracing her back to the 1880 census in Lavaca

Several years later, Nancy found William A. Bell with wife, Cynthia, and son, Zachariah, age 2 months, in the 1850 census in Santa Rosa County, Florida. William A. Bell was 28 years old and wife Cynthia was 32 years old; both were born in Georgia. And living next door was a widower, W. A. Bell, age 61, born in South Carolina.

The first week of March this year, we headed to Jacksonville, Florida for the women's SEC basketball tournament, traveling via Interstate 10. While driving through Santa Rosa County, Florida, our conversation turned to Zachariah Bell and the gap in the census from 1850 to 1880. Our conversation reminded me that we had not made the census search using Heritage Quest and its new search engine. Once we were settled in the hotel in Jacksonville and had read our most recent emails, we opened the Heritage Quest site and went to the 1860 census and entered Zach Bell, born in 1850. We did not enter a county or state.

In the list of Zach Bells born in 1850 was one living in Fayette County, Texas. A view of the document listed father, James Bell, age 38, born in Florida.

We have no explanation as to how the indexer came up with the name James Bell, but all the other information is correct. Apparently the mistake kept Nancy from tracing her Bell line

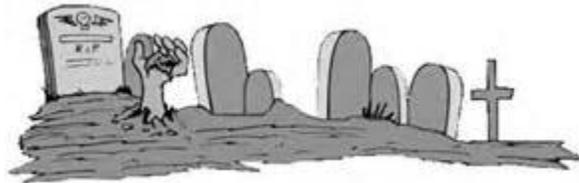
further back than 1880, but now with the new search engine, it might prove useful to try this old, improved tool.



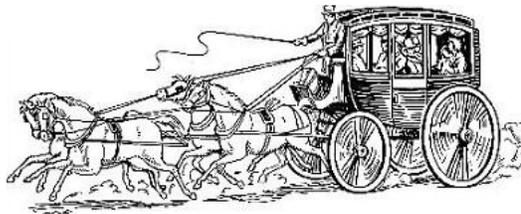
Tombstone Humor from London:

*“Here Lies Ann Mann
Who lived as An Old Maid.
But Died as An Old Mann.”*

Dec. 8, 1767



TRIVIA ANSWER.....



Western stagecoach companies were big business in the latter half of the 19th century. In addition to passengers and freight, stages hauled gold and silver bullion as well as mining company payrolls.

Robbery was a constant danger and bandits employed many strategies to ambush a stagecoach. Thieves rarely met with much resistance from stage drivers since they had passenger safety foremost in mind.

Robbers were usually after the Wells Fargo money box with its valuable contents. Passengers were seldom hurt, but they were certainly relieved of their cash, watches and jewelry.

Before the completion of the transcontinental railroad over Donner Pass, California, in 1868, the only transportation through the Sierra was by stage.

Teamsters held rein over six horses as they tore along dangerous mountain trails. The stagecoaches were driven by skilled, fearless men who pushed themselves and their horses to the limit.



CHARLEY PARKHURST

One of the most famous drivers was Charles Darkey Parkhurst, who had moved west from New England in 1852 seeking his fortune in the Gold Rush. Charley was only 5'6" tall, but he was a tough, card-playing, tobacco-chewing, sharp-shooter. Parkhurst smoked cigars, drank with the best of them. He spent 15 years driving coaches with up to six horses pulling on his reins.

One afternoon as Charley drove down from Carson Pass, the lead horses veered off the road and a wrenching jolt threw him from the rig. He hung onto the reins as the horses dragged him along on his stomach. Amazingly, Parkhurst managed to steer his frightened horses back onto the road saving all his grateful passengers.

During the 1850s, bands of surly highwaymen stalked the roads. These outlaws would level their shotguns at stage drivers and shout, "Throw down the gold box!" Charley Parkhurst had no patience for the crooks despite their demands and threatening gestures.

The most notorious road agent, a member of a highwaymen gang at that time, was nicknamed "Sugarfoot." When his gang stopped Charley's stage, it was the agent's last robbery. Sugarfoot was later found dead with a fatal bullet wound in his stomach.

In appreciation of his bravery, Wells Fargo presented Parkhurst with a large watch and chain made of solid gold. In 1865, Parkhurst opened his own stage station. Later he sold the business and retired to a ranch near Soquel, Calif. The years slipped by and Charley died on Dec. 29, 1879, at the age of 67.

A few days later, the *Sacramento Daily Bee* published Charley's obituary: "On Sunday last, there died a person known as Charley Parkhurst, aged 67, who was well-known to old residents as a stage driver. He was in early days accounted as one of the most expert manipulators of the reins who ever sat on the box of a coach. It was discovered when friendly hands were preparing him for his final rest, that Charley Parkhurst was unmistakably a well-developed woman!" Not like other men, but a.....woman?

Once it was discovered that Charley was a woman, people admitted they thought he wasn't like other men. Even though he wore leather gloves summer and winter, many noticed that his hands were small and smooth. And Charley always slept in the stables with his beloved horses.

Loose fitting clothing (he wore extra large shirts) hid her femininity and after a horse kicked her, an eye patch over one eye helped conceal her face. She weighed 175 pounds, could handle herself in a fistfight and drank whiskey like "one of the boys." Charley was actually *Charlotte Parkhurst*; her mother died following her birth and abandoned as a child, she was raised in a New Hampshire orphanage. Charlotte ran away from that institution when she was only 15 years old, discovering at that time that being a man in the working world was easier than being a woman. Thus began Charlotte's life-long masquerade.

The rest is history. Well, almost. There is one last thing: On November 3, 1868, Charlotte Parkhurst cast her vote in the U.S. national election, dressed as a man and thus, became the first woman to vote in the United States, 52 years before Congress passed the 19th Amendment giving American women the right to vote.

Editor's Note: Wonder which presidential candidate received Charley's vote? *Ulysses S. Grant* or *Horatio Seymour*?

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SPRINGTIME IN TEXAS--2016

