



## RAMBLERS' RAMBLINGS

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### THE GRIFFITH HOMEPLACE MUSEUM, TERRELL, TEXAS

BY SHELBY ROWAN

Today I'd like to tell you about just one Signer descendent or more to the point, about the museum this descendent is creating. Davis Griffith-Cox is a great, great grandson of Signer William Clark, Jr. and his wife, Martha Wall Clark, and a great grandson of their daughter, Sarah Jane Clark and her husband, Dr. Lycurgus Edward Griffith, Sr. And a personal friend of mine.

Davis lives in Terrell, Texas, about 30 miles east of Dallas. His house, built in 1883, was once owned by his grandparents, Lycurgus, Jr. and his first wife, Libby Grinnan. This Italianate-style Victorian house was a wedding present from Dr. Griffith and Sarah Jane to their son in 1890 for *one dollar and love!*

But Davis also owns and is restoring a home two doors down the street, the homeplace of Dr. Griffith and Sarah Jane. No generation of Griffiths has ever thrown anything away and the Griffith Homeplace Museum, as the more than a century-and-a-half-old home is now called, is full of delightful antique pieces. And I tell you all this because it might be that you're thinking about a weekend getaway or an upcoming summer vacation and wondering about quaint little places to check out.

Tours of this home are arranged by appointment only. Read on and let me tell you about this delightful little home museum that highlights 19<sup>th</sup> century architecture and furnishings and is dedicated to William Clark, Jr. and his daughter, Sarah Jane Clark Griffith. Most of the Griffith Homeplace was built in the early 1840s with a small alteration after Lycurgus, Sr. and Sarah Jane bought the home in 1882. The couple had eight children but by the time they purchased this home, two were deceased and the other six were young adults so any little children who grew up in this beautiful house were those of Lycurgus, Jr. and his two wives. Libby Lucinda Grinnan and Lycurgus had three children before she died in 1899; Netta Washington Morrill and Lycurgus had seven children.



**DAVIS ON THE PORCH OF THE GRIFFITH HOMEPLACE MUSEUM**

You can just feel the history as you enter the wrought iron gates and get your first glimpse of this Victorian house. The front door opens into the living room and its antique furniture, lamps, books and beautiful fireplace. The elegant mantle on the fireplace came from Italy and was the first such mantle imported to Texas. (The windows have valances on them designed by Davis and crafted by *Yours Truly*, but the amazing thing to me was the fact that the gold damask fabric I was given to use was well over 100 years old, had been drapes in one family residence but was in pristine condition having been carefully stored by the Griffith family for many years. I can tell you that cutting into it was stressful - *what if I made a mistake!!!!*). Floor to ceiling windows with interior half screens and Greek revival woodwork throughout the room complete the décor here. All the furniture and household belongings throughout the house are original with the Griffith family. Some items were willed or given to other family members in the past, but have been retrieved by purchase or gift in order to enhance the authenticity of this house museum.

Immediately to your left of the 'parlor' is the music room with its square grand piano that Lycurgus bought for daughter Katherine in the early 1880s. The red on red damask wallpaper makes the black lacquered furniture just stand out. Shortly after moving into the house, Dr. Griffith, traveling in Illinois, found a pier glass mirror that matched the furniture perfectly and he had it shipped back to Terrell. The family has the letter Dr. Griffith wrote to Sarah telling her of its coming arrival and the August 6, 1883 sales receipt for this lovely piece!

Just beyond the living room is a formal dining room set with 1842 Rockingham English china, sparkling crystal and sterling silverware as if the Griffiths were just ready to sit down to dinner, perhaps to entertain Sam Houston as they were friends. The furniture in this room is from the 1850s. The candles in the chandelier are blue, as they have always been, matching the color scheme in the room. Today it is easy to find blue candles, but when Sarah Jane was in need of more blue candles they had to be specially created with wax and indigo for coloring. A small room on the first floor was both an office and library and holds what I call the *music closet*. This 'music closet' holds a magnificent Edison cylinder phonograph with a morning glory horn. A must-see piece of antiquity.

Beyond the dining room is the *warming* room as the kitchen was originally outside. The restoration of this room is still in process. Perhaps this is a good time to tell you that this house has had some very interesting happenings within it, such as items in the warming room floating from one spot to another without being touched by human hand. The word is *paranormal*, and Davis also gives tours that specifically relate to the many paranormal occurrences that have happened throughout this house. This is a popular Halloween season tour!

An enclosed, somewhat narrow staircase leads us upstairs to three bedrooms, a nursery and a family sitting room. Toys in the nursery over a hundred years old, ladies' combs and brushes on the dresser in the master bedroom, an original potbellied stove, all speak of life more than a century ago. This room is set in an 1860 style. Wonder what exciting event Mrs. Griffith might have been dressing for?

Another bedroom, set in early 1880s style, a *man's bedroom*, as Davis calls it, has several wonderful sculpture pieces, a globe from ancient times, an original Eastlake bed, a plantation desk and another original old potbellied stove. Here the walls are covered with a soft chocolate brown fabric. (Again, my personal note here... stapling that fabric to the walls was a three-day job, not a job I intend to ever repeat!!).

The 1890s back bedroom is the one bit of change in the house as its original walls were raised to accommodate some large pieces of furniture. An interesting feature in this room is the bed that has cups around the feet that once held kerosene to keep the bugs away. This room also includes a stunning fireplace.

A small bathroom on the second floor was the first bathroom in Kaufman County with running water and a flushing toilet. The upstairs walls proudly display several framed pages of fashions from *Godey's Ladies' Books*, but some of the most interesting framed pieces are the scissor cuttings created by Davis' Great, Great Aunt Netta. Henrietta Gray Bedinger was well-known for her artwork, especially her *scherenschnitte*. These intricately-cut shapes of people, animals, and trees are unbelievably beautiful.

But a tour of this house is not complete without a trip to the basement. Or should I say, to the *fortress*! This is the oldest part of the house, the 1840s part, originally the everyday dining room with its massive door, a well that goes 28 feet below the floor (and still holds water) and its ceiling level clerestory windows. the kind that one could poke a rifle through should the need arise! There is a *punkah* over the table to shoo flies. (Punkah - a large cloth fan on a frame suspended from the ceiling, moved backward and forward by pulling on a cord. This fan is actually wooden.) And before we leave the grounds, we would need to check out the carriage house and the servants' quarters behind the house.

One should allow at least two or three hours for a tour here and an appointment can be arranged by calling Davis Griffith-Cox at 972-563-6536. If you have to leave a message, do repeat your phone number twice and slowly! Count on not only hearing about the wonderful antiques in the house but stories about the people who have lived there and some of their friends, such as Sam Houston. And you can get a sneak preview of what you can see by going to Griffith Homeplace Museum on Facebook and checking out the photos there.



## MORE ON DAVIS GRIFFITH-COX AND HIS MUSEUM

BY MARY JANE MILLENDER

Several years ago, probably in 2008, I was tracing my Texas ancestors back to the Republic of Texas days for entry into the Daughters of the Republic of Texas. No problem until I hit a huge brick wall that that didn't allow me to find proof that my great, great grandmother, Margaret Wall Clark, was the older daughter of William Clark, Jr., one of the signers of The Texas Declaration of Independence. No proof, that is, until one evening when I was watching *Antiques Roadshow*, one of my favorite television programs. And right there on the screen was a man from Terrell, Texas, who was being interviewed and questioned about a very long, gold booklink chain necklace he had brought to the show that evening in Dallas. It was a necklace, he said, that had been presented by William Clark, Jr. to his daughter Sarah Jane in 1844 when Sarah Jane married Dr. Lycurgus E. Griffith. He added that Sarah Jane Clark Griffith was his great, great grandmother.



"Sarah Jane Clark"? He said her father was William Clark, Jr., a signer of the Texas Declaration of Independence, the same William Clark, Jr. who was my g.g.g. grandfather? I couldn't believe what I had just seen/heard. I quickly tried to find more information on this Davis Griffith-Cox. Who was he? Where did he live? Somehow I found Davis' address in Terrell, Texas and I wrote him a long letter identifying myself and my connection to William Clark, Jr. *and* to Clark's younger daughter, Sarah Jane Clark Griffith, who was my g.g.g. aunt.

### SARAH JANE CLARK'S NECKLACE

It wasn't long before Davis answered my letter and invited me to visit him in Terrell. I accepted his invitation very quickly and during my first visit to the Griffith Homeplace Museum, Davis showed me a page from the William Clark, Jr. Bible. And at the top of that old page was my g.g. grandmother's birth date! We had it scanned and my entry into the Daughters of the Republic of Texas was soon accepted.

I will always be grateful to Davis for helping me tear down my Clark brick wall, and for sharing family information and photo albums with me while I visited him and his Griffith Homeplace Museum. With those old, priceless albums I was able to meet many aunts, uncles and cousins for the first time.



## CATCHING THE "GENEALOGY BUG"

BY TOM AND LYNDA HENRY



LYNDA & TOM HENRY

**Our Story:** Howdy! My name is Tom Henry. Having joined the *Texas Research Ramblers* this past summer, my wife, Lynda Lanier Henry, and I are some of the newer members of this organization. I thought I would take a few minutes and introduce ourselves. We have found the Ramblers to be a very interesting group -- both the people and the programs -- and hope to be active members for many years to come. In just a short time, you have

already instilled in us the incentive to start writing our own stories to make sure they are passed down to our great grandkids.

After having lived about 55 miles down the road in Huntsville for the past three years, Lynda and I moved to College Station a little over two years ago. We love it here and probably should have moved here earlier! Between our church, all the local cultural and athletic events, as well as this organization, it was definitely the right decision.

We both grew up in Huntsville, Texas, and were high school sweethearts. I am a member of the A&M Class of '76. I was able to convince Lynda to marry me before she graduated from Sam Houston State University; we'll be celebrating our 44<sup>th</sup> anniversary this coming May so she didn't finish her college degree until six years later at UT-Permian Basin while we were living in Midland. We started the first four years of married life out in the Army while I served most of my time in the 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division, Ft Hood. Our first daughter, Chris Ann, was born in Darnall Army Hospital while we were stationed at Ft Hood.

Lynda spent many years teaching pre-school before finishing her career as the director of the preschool at First United Methodist Church in Huntsville. Upon completion of my four-year military commitment, I began a 30-year career with Exxon starting out in Midland and then Oklahoma City. Our second daughter, Traci, was born in Oklahoma City. I always tell people we have an Army brat and an Okie - that's a heck of a combination!

When the energy business went south in the mid-80s, my work moved from Oklahoma City to the downtown Exxon Building in Houston. A few years later as our older daughter was going into high school, we figured out how big Kingwood High School was (almost 1,000 kids in her freshman class). At that point, we decided it was time to move "home". We were able to sell our Kingwood house, relocate onto some land outside of Huntsville, and enroll both kids in Huntsville ISD by January of Chris Ann's freshman year. Even though it was a long commute to the downtown office, it was well worth it. Since we knew a number of the HISD folks, including the high school principal, who was one of our old teachers, and the assistant principal, who was our former band director, I always say that our kids went from being a "termite in the woodwork" to being able to walk down the hallway with people knowing them by name. I think both of our girls would agree with that, too.

So how did we get into genealogy? Thankfully, I had taken early retirement in 2009. That enabled me to help care for my mom, who had a stroke shortly after I retired and was bed-ridden for eight months before she passed away. While my three siblings and I were sitting around the table at the funeral home talking with the funeral director, we were asked for some information for the death certificate. The question of "what was the maiden name of your mom's mother" left us with blank stares at each other. In the back of my mind, the name Alexander popped up, but I wasn't positive and needed to double check. It was at that point it hit all of us that we knew just about everything about the large Henry side of the family, mainly due to my dad's cousins, former College Station residents John (Buddy) and Mary Henry. However, we knew practically nothing about Mom's side of her much smaller family, the Mathews and the Alexanders.

It was after my mom's passing that we caught the "genealogy bug". Due mainly to the online info now available, I've been able to add a few things to the Henry book, but it's mostly been my mom's side of the family, the Mathews and the Alexanders as well as Lynda's Lanier/Tucker family, that we've had the most success.

Genealogy fits nicely with our RV retirement travels during the past seven years. In fact, I can't think of a trip where we didn't include a search for a cemetery, old homestead, or such. It's added some spice to our travels as we started making a game out of seeing who could find the relative's grave first. What we learned was that my relatives tended to be buried on the cemetery peripheral with small markers. They were typically farmers that didn't have a lot of wealth. Lynda's family, on the other hand, tended to be buried more in the middle of the cemetery and would have some of the larger markers in the cemetery. They tended to be the store owners, the business folks, the ones that showed up after my family had settled the country and made it safe for everyone else (at least that's my explanation!).

One of the more exciting discoveries we made in our genealogy "diggings" is Lynda's connection to the Mayflower through her mom's side of the family. Lynda's 10<sup>th</sup> great grandfather was Stephen Hopkins, who was not only on the Mayflower, but who also visited Jamestown prior to the Pilgrim's voyage. Lynda's 9<sup>th</sup> great grandmother, Constance Hopkins Snow, was also a 12-year-old child on the Mayflower. We visited Plymouth two years ago on one of our trips. Plymouth Rock took on a whole new meaning than when we were there 20 years ago. With 2020 being the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Mayflower voyage, Lynda and I plan to take our two oldest granddaughters, ages 13 and 10, to Massachusetts this summer and give them the tour of the area. That includes seeing their 11<sup>th</sup> great grandmother Constance Hopkins Snow's garden hat that is on display at the Pilgrim Hall Museum in Plymouth.

As for my mom's side of the family, the Mathews and Alexanders, we've been able to fill in a lot of empty blanks with names, locations, and even photos, but we have also connected with some long-lost cousins. There are still questions to answer, but we at least have a better understanding of that half of my family. We're continuing to search for information on the Mathews family when they lived in the Normangee, North Zulch and Mart areas and the Alexanders, who were from the Ennis, Ellis County area.

The fruit is just a little harder to come by now! Thanks for taking time to read our story. We look forward to getting to know everyone.



## **WHERE IS "THE SUGAR ROAD" IN TEXAS?**

**(answer of a following page)**



## TRAVELING WITH HENRY HANSON to.....

### SAN FELIPE DE AUSTIN

Shortly after I retired in March 2001, a lot of press was being given to the excavation of one of La Salle's four ships, the La Belle, which sank in West Matagorda Bay in 1686. I tried to volunteer to help in the excavation, but was told that only professionals were doing the field archaeology. I later learned that was not true so I volunteered at the Gault site, a Paleo-Indian area in Bell County, Texas., which is about 40 miles north of Austin. It was here that I first met Texas A&M professor Michael Waters and later volunteered at A&M's on campus lithic lab, one day a week.

In the summer of 2003, I signed up for a "Field School," taught by Texas A&M professor David Carlson and I completed six hours credit in Field Archaeology. That fall I learned about a "dig" beginning at San Felipe de Austin. The principal investigator was Mary Ann Marek, who had been hired and funded by the Chamber of Commerce of Sealy to lay out the 1824-1836 town site of the "First Capital of Texas."



**HENRY ON A "DIG"**

I volunteered at San Felipe until 2006 when the local interest ran out of funds. A couple of years later, the State of Texas took over the site, as they should

have all along. Since that time, the State of Texas has built a Visitor's Center/Museum in an area where we found no culture evidence of early activity.



**SAN FELIPE DE AUSTIN MUSEUM/VISITORS' CENTER**

The Visitors' Center/Museum is located on the original site where Stephen F. Austin founded a town to be the capital of his colony. In 1823, John McFarland operated a ferry on the Brazos River not far from this location and with the help of Baron de Bastrop, Stephen F. Austin founded the town in 1824.

By 1835 there were about 30 buildings at San Felipe, one of which was a wood framed structure on the square, a tavern owned by Jonathan Peyton. One of my favorite units to excavate was that of Peyton's Tavern. It had thousands of pieces of artifacts, including blue decorated dishes, glass pieces of wine bottles, beer bottles, buttons, clay smoking pipes and multiple pieces of swine anatomy. The feature that stood out the most was the base of the hearth for the structure that was burned before the arrival of General Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna in March, 1836.

San Felipe was home to the first newspaper, the first Post Office and was second only to San Antonio as a commercial center in Texas. A trip to visit this visitor center and museum is well-worth the drive to Sealy., which is only 78 miles from Bryan/College Station.



## MAPS IN GENEALOGY, PART III

BY MARY ANN THOMPSON

### MAPS OF THE STATES

If you know the state where an ancestor lived, new or old maps may also show the county seat where useful data about your kin can be found. Old maps can be particularly useful since pinpointing the name of the place can be difficult. Many towns, counties, cities, and even countries have experienced numerous name changes over the years.

Constantly changing place names are not the only challenge; the boundaries of many political jurisdictions where early Americans lived have changed one or more times. Some American families lived in the same locale for hundreds of years. Yet their homes may have been swapped back and forth a number of times between different political jurisdictions -- towns, provinces, states, or counties. Fortunately, many resources are now available on the internet.

**1. Maps of Los Angeles, California, the United States and the World:**

<http://digital2.library.ucla.edu/viewItem.do?ark=21198/zz0002h48z>

Maps of Los Angeles, other parts of the United States, and various places in the world. You can browse the entire collection by language, name, subject or area of geographic coverage.

**2. Hargrett Rare Book & Manuscript Library, University of Georgia Libraries:**

<http://hmap.libs.uga.edu/hmap/search>

A collection of more than 1,000 historic maps spanning nearly 500 years from the 16th to the 20th centuries. You can browse through all the maps here by title, creator, facets, or century and also by keyword, title, author, or year of creation.

**3. Illinois Digital State Archives:**

<http://www.digitalstatearchives.com/illinois-state-digital-archives>

Interesting site with "some quite incredible genealogy resources as well as some deep content on more general history." Includes access to Illinois veteran records, vital records (marriage, death) and there is an Illinois Township Plats site, with detailed maps from the entire state. Digital State Archives offers links to all states.

**4. University of Louisville: Kentucky Maps:**

<http://digital.library.louisville.edu/cdm/landingpage/collection/maps/>

Features four atlases of Louisville and environs in the late 19th and early 20th centuries; 74 maps from the Lafon Allen Kentucky Maps Collection; and maps of Louisville, Jefferson County, and Kentucky from the University Archives and Records Center; Rare Books; and Photographic Archives.

**5. University of Maryland: Maryland Map Collection:** <https://www.lib.umd.edu/mdmap>

A comprehensive collection of more than 2,500 maps depicting Maryland, the Chesapeake Bay, and the surrounding region from 1590 to the present. **SOME** selected maps have been digitized and are available on this site.

**6. Online: Massachusetts Maps:** <https://www.masshist.org/online/massmaps/index.php>

The Massachusetts Historical Society has made 104 unique and rare manuscript and printed maps of Massachusetts available through 36 web presentations. These include twenty-four manuscript maps of local towns and counties dating from 1637-1809 and eight iconic printed maps of Massachusetts and Boston. Seventy-two meticulously drawn manuscript maps by Samuel Chester Clough (1873-1949) present a wealth of information about property owners in Boston during the 17th and late 18th centuries.

**7. Cartography: Historical Maps of New Jersey:** <http://mapmaker.rutgers.edu/MAPS.html>

Most of the map images on these webpages are from Rutgers' Special Collections. Permission is granted **solely** to view these images.

**8. Historical Maps of Pennsylvania:** <http://www.mapsofpa.com/>

This site shows images of the region and state from the 16th to the 21st century. It contains over a thousand map images and direction to where others can be found. Also, the site is organized as a "Checklist of Pennsylvania Maps to 1800" to provide a useful source tool. A little Pennsylvania history is woven into the descriptions and a list of cited references is included.

**9. Map of US: Maps of Tennessee:** <https://www.mapofus.org/tennessee/>

Interactive map of Tennessee County Formation History. Site includes links to old antique atlases & maps of Tennessee and a list of Tennessee map abbreviations.

**10. Texas A&M University Libraries:** <https://tamu.libguides.com/maps>

The TAMU Library houses maps in two locations: Maps & GIS, on the 2nd floor of Evans Library, and at the Cushing Memorial Library and Archives. The core collection, found at Maps & GIS, contains over 250,000 maps and 2,500 atlases. The majority of the collection at Maps & GIS can be checked out from the library, material can also be scanned on request. [If you go to the library you might want to check the Maps of Imaginary Places Collection!] There is a section on Online Map Resources [with URLs] that is quite handy: <https://tamu.libguides.com/c.php?g=491695&p=3363209>

**11. Statewide resources, Texas: Maps and Gazetteers:**

Linkpendium is a 10,000,000+ resource directory to everything on the Web about families worldwide and genealogically-relevant information about U.S. states and counties. The site offers links to resources provided by libraries, other government agencies, genealogical and historical societies, and individuals, with an emphasis upon free resources.

12. **Map Geeks: Old Historical City, County and State Maps of Texas:**

<https://mapgeeks.org/texas/>

A collection of old historical maps of Texas that span over 175 years of growth. View Texas Maps such as historical county boundaries changes as well as old vintage maps. Also includes a list of Texas map abbreviations.

13. **Printable Texas outline maps:** <https://www.waterproofpaper.com/printable-maps/texas.html>,  
<https://www.waterproofpaper.com/printable-maps/>

The website states: "Check out our free printable Texas maps!" These are .pdf files that download and print on almost any type of printer. These include: an outline map of Texas, two county maps (one with the county names and one without), and two major city maps. These maps are great for genealogy research. For other states check the second URL.

14. **Virginia Memory, Library of Virginia Digital Collections:**

<http://www.virginiamemory.com/collections/>

Collections, A to Z: From A to Z, the library of Virginia's digital collections reflect the diverse history of the commonwealth and its people. Photographs, archival records or maps are here: Alan M. Voorhees Map Collection, Civil War Project, Map Collections (All Items) and the War of 1812 Bicentennial Collection. (Note: Virginia Newspapers are part of the National Newspaper Digital Project. Search the online collection through the Chronicling America Website).



**Answer to.....**

## **"THE SUGAR ROAD" Question**

**BY MARY JANE MILLENDER**



**BBB&C LOCOMOTIVE**

In 1853 Texas welcomed its first railway, the Buffalo Bayou, Brazos & Colorado. It carried a few passengers but its primary job was to transport crops from plantations along the Brazos and Colorado rivers to markets in Houston and Galveston. The BBB&C was only 20-miles long in the beginning; it ran between the settlement of Stafford Point and Harrisburg (its terminal), but it needed a four-mile extension if several plantation owners nearby could

use it rather than loading their barrels of sugar onto flat barges and sending them downriver to Houston.

Plantation co-owners Benjamin F. Terry and William J. Kyle negotiated the needed rail extension by donating 2500 acres of right-of-way (this donation was estimated to be worth \$250,000.00 in 1853) for the railroad extension. Their right-of-way gift meant that the extended BBB&C railway would then pass by the Terry- Kyle sugar plantation, which they had named Sugar Land Plantation, and mill. A smart move.

The BBB&C depot then became Sugar Land, Texas, and the railroad was nicknamed "The Sugar Road." Sugar Land is located less than 20 minutes southwest of Houston.

**Editor's Note: William Jefferson Kyle was the great uncle of E. J. Kyle, Kyle Field's namesake...and also my great, great, great uncle, but that's another story. Even though I grew up in Houston and visited Sugarland many times, I never knew the Sugarland part of my Kyle family history until researching this newsletter question.**

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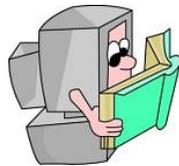
## UPCOMING GENEALOGY PROGRAMS

### JERRY NELSON

25 March 2020 - "Getting the Most Out of Wills & Probates" by Kelvin Meyers

29 April 2020 - "Government Land Office" by Clint Williams

27 May 2020 - To Be Announced



## GENEALOGY COMPUTER USERS GROUP

### JERRY MARKOWICH

18 March 2020 - "How to Trace Hard-to-Find Immigrant Ancestors"

15 April 2020 - "Roots Magic" by Henry Hanson

20 May 2020 - To Be Announced



## FAMILY HISTORY WRITERS GROUP

### JANE MAGILL

22 April 2020 - "Rebekah Cumings, Member of Stephen F. Austin's Original Colony" by Norman & Tim Cumings. (Tim has published a book on Rebekah Cumings.)



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