



# ROOTDIGGER

1st Quarter: January – March 2011

The Rootdigger is a publication of the Marion County Genealogical Society, a division of the non-profit Historic Ocala Preservation Society. Annual membership fee is \$15.00.

## Why Did he Save that Obituary?

By Joel R. Swanson

After my parent's and my older sister's passing, my niece was so kind to ship to me all of the pictures and articles that our parents had saved over many years. In going through some of the papers, I came across an obituary for Thore Swanson. As was typically done, the obituary included the normal names of his parents, siblings spouse and children.

At that time, being an early documenter in Family Tree Maker, I quickly sat down at my computer to add the newfound member of our family tree. But then came the big problem, how was he related to my father? I already had most of the information about my dad's brothers and sisters, as it had been common for us to have annual family reunions to a farm in southern Minnesota where my dad grew up and where most of his family still lived. But who was Thore? I never remember hearing his name among the uncles in Minnesota yet the obituary stated he was a lifelong resident of Cannon Falls Minnesota.



Was one of these bicyclists Thore Swanson? My dad is on the right.

It became quite obvious that I had to do some research. And so I began to look for the Swanson name through his father Ernest Swanson. Ernest was born in Cannon Falls and his father Joseph Swanson was born in Sweden but I could not find any direct ties to my grandfather (Swan K. Swanson, born in Denmark) and great-grandfather (John H. Swanson, born in Sweden). Sure they probably were distantly related somehow in Sweden but that would not be a reason for my dad to save his obituary. I had come against a brick wall by following the Swanson line, but what about Thore's mother? All I had in the obituary was that her name was Agnes. But what was her maiden name?

I started to search online. Using all of the various databases available I took a chance on the Minnesota death index, even though I had all the information about Thore that I needed from his obituary. There in the death index was the report of his passing and the date confirmed the date (October 4, 1977) my

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- Why are we so vain in not showing current obituary photos?
- A slaves efforts to save his owners property
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## Why Did he Save that Obituary?

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dad had written on the obituary, but more important Minnesota reported his mother's maiden name, Bloomberg!! Success, I knew that my dad's mother was Emily Bloomberg, so Agnes and Emily probably were sisters and There would have been my dad's maternal 1<sup>st</sup> cousin.

Now all I had to do was to prove it. I started searching online in the census for Agnes and Emily Bloomberg. I found Agnes to be the daughter of John Bloomberg and Mary Soule along with an older brother Emiel Bloomberg in the 1995 Minnesota state census, but no Emily. Remember, the 1890 census was lost, so all I had to work with was either the 1880 federal or the 1895 Minnesota. All of the searching I did for **Emily** Bloomberg came out blank. Now what was I to do? Why was I able to find Agnes in the census but not Emily? I then took a stab in the dark and searched for Emiel Bloomberg. Of course I found him in the 1895 Minnesota but also found him in the 1880 federal census along with his twin sister **Emmilly**, their parents John and Mary along with an older sister Jenney. (*Agnes was born in 1881 and therefore not in the 1880 federal census*). I now found the proof that tied the two Swanson families together.

Why wasn't Emily (or Emmilly) in the 1895 census? Emily and Swan K. Swanson were married on March 10, 1894 and therefore she was included with him in the 1895 census. I think that two important lessons in genealogy can be learned from this exercise in relationships. First, there must be a reason why our ancestors saved certain records and second, if you find yourself up against a brick wall, see if you can find a different route to use to get around it. It might work!

*Now all I had to do was to prove it.*



1880 Federal Census

## Obituary Photos are Getting Younger!

*Article courtesy of Genealogy in Time*

An interesting genealogy study from Ohio State University suggests that obituary photos are showing a growing bias against aging faces. The study conducted by Keith Anderson, assistant professor of social work at the university and his graduate student Jina Han examined newspaper obituary photos in Ohio over a thirty year period from 1967 to 1997. What they found was that "age-inaccurate" obituary photos had increased significantly since the 1960s. An age-inaccurate obituary photo was defined by the authors to be one where the deceased was more than 15 years older than the estimated age in the obituary photograph. Interestingly enough, women were more than



Old Tintype Photo

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# A True Story of a Slave

By E. P Coleman

*(Ed note: We must realize that this article was told, transcribed to a typewritten page and then signed and attested to be true.)*

As a prelude to this story I think it best to describe the conditions existing at the period 1863 and 1864. The territory between Memphis and my father's plantation, about fifty miles, was a 'no man's land'. Alternately raided by Yankee Cavalry and Confederates, and infested with robbers, gorillas and so on. My father had two plantations, Angle Hall, residence and a delta plantation. Surrounding this delta plantation was an almost impenetrable jungle.

The writer at this period was twelve years old. My father, who was blind, my sister, a young woman, and Jeff, the negro wagon driver. We would carry cotton into Memphis, sell it for about \$1.00 a pound and buy as a return trip such groceries as the Yankee's would permit us to bring out.

We started from my father's plantation one day with a load of cotton to Memphis. We got to Coldwater River about half way when my father was attacked with rheumatism. He and my sister had to return home. That left Jeff and myself to go on to Memphis with the load of cotton. This we did without interruption.

Arriving in Memphis Jeff sold the cotton for about \$2,000 and purchased a return load of such groceries as the Yankee's would permit us to bring out to the extent of about \$500. *(Ed note: Just remember as you read this article that \$2,000 would be \$28,000 in today's money. Would you have done all that Jeff went through?)* Jeff did not forget to include a jug of whiskey for his own use, and carefully hid it in the load of groceries. Already loaded up and ready to go we discovered we had no food. Jeff and I went back up into the business portion of Memphis to buy some bread. The first thing we knew a Yankee soldier tapped Jeff on the shoulder and said, "Come with me". The Yankees were impressing all able bodied negroes into their army. He took Jeff before the provost marshal for examination. There were a few negroes being examined before Jeff giving him time to get his wits together. When Jeff's time came he was perfectly stolid, not understanding anything. A lot of set questions were directed to him by the provost marshal. He never opened his mouth until quite a number had been ignored by him. Then he pulled from his pocket a twist of Confederate tobacco and said, "I hate to offer this backer to a gemmen, but it's all I got". The provost marshal said, "Turn this negro alose, he is deaf and unfit for military service".

We started to return to our wagon when arrested the second time by

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*Cotton Bales heading to Market*

*When Jeff's time came he was perfectly stolid, not understanding anything.*



*Civil War Union (Yankee) Soldier.*





# A True Story of a Slave

*(Continued from page 3)*

another Yankee soldier. This time he had no trouble. The provost marshal said, "Don't bring this negro here any more. He is not fit for duty".

We started home, passed through the Yankee lines and this infested "no man's land" and got within about fifteen miles of home. And at Senatobia we were arrested by two Confederate Cavalrymen who confiscated our load of groceries.

The wagons in those days did not have the nuts on the end of axles like they do now, but had a vertical hole through the end of the **axle into** which was put an iron pin called a lynch pin. This prevented the wheels from coming off. As usual Jeff used his wits and took one of the iron lynch pins out and slipped it in his pocket. The wheel rolled off and the axle of the wagon dropped down. The two soldiers with Jeff went back to look for the lynch pin, but of course could not find it. They came back and prised the wagon up and put in a wooden lynch pin. Jeff, an expert driver soon broke this wooden inch pin and down dropped the wagon again. This process continued all day. We finally arrived near Como at dark, and drove up to a farm house with a long veranda in front. The wagon about on a level with the floor. The soldiers ordered Jeff to take the old mules out. This Jeff did but did not take the harness off of them. The soldiers laid down their blankets and were fixing to go to sleep. Jeff concluded he would take a drink out of his whiskey jug and was careful to see that the soldiers saw him do it. They immediately took it away from him and drank a considerable quantity of whiskey themselves. The effect of this whiskey made them either drunk or so nearly so they slept very soundly. In the meanwhile Jeff hitched his old mules to the wagon and quietly drove off.

He carried the wagon and groceries down to my father's bottom plantation and hid them in the jungle. The next day he came up to my father's home plantation, Angle Hall, and paid him all the money he had received for the cotton above the amount the groceries amounted to, something like \$1500 and told him where the wagon and groceries were. The next day he brought the wagon and groceries up to Angle Hall and delivered them to my father.

This illustrates the faithfulness and honesty of the negro slave and loyalty to his master. All Jeff had to do in Memphis was to take possession of the money and groceries and that would have been the end of it.

*E.P. Coleman*



*Confederate Cavalrymen!*

*As usual Jeff used his wits and took one of the iron lynch pins out and slipped it in his pocket*



*A Southern Plantation Home.*

*(Article furnished by David Gay)*

# Genealogical Society

*(This article was published in the January 2011 issue of the Rolling Greens News)*

Hello fellow Rolling Greens Residents! I would like to share with you something that might interest you. If you are just curious or an avid genealogist, I have great news for you! Did you know that our own Marion County has a Genealogical Society? Not only do we, but it is excellent! I have been a member for over a year now. We meet at the library here in Ocala on the third Thursday of the month September through June from 1-4 pm. A nicer, more accepting group of people you will not find anywhere else! Besides that, they are helpful and encouraging. I really am a novice after only four to five years of consistent research. However, I have leaped forward a hundred-fold by what I have learned at the MCGS meetings. The format is simple, we have a round table question & answer or a quick, mini teaching on something new for about 30 min. We break for 10 min, then have a very short business meeting. This is an uplifting time as the various committee heads report on what they have accomplished and/or on upcoming events available around the state and the south east. The last hour is a formal teaching. Sometimes it is one of the local leaders or a guest speaker. We have use of a huge wall screen with wifi. So, when you are being shown a new procedure or web page, not only do you have a hand out telling you how, but also you see it on the wall & are shown exactly how to proceed. All people are invited to attend for three months to see what we are about. After that it is suggested that membership is acquired at only \$15/year. Some of the committees do the following: (1) Research for people wanting info about ancestors who once lived in Ocala and/or Marion County; (2) Documenting local grave yards by getting the gps info, photographing the graves, & putting the info on the computer and on find-a-grave.com; (3) Documenting present and past Obituaries from the Star Banner; (4) Reporting on local, state and national conferences and events. Florida has quite a few societies that share with each other; (5) programming- seeking new and interesting people, places and ideas; I can't tell you how much smoother my family info is to use and retrieve now that I am using the free Genealogical Charts from the internet; Info that I can use my Marion County Library Card to get one free from the Lady Lake Library which gives me more access from home via their library card to sites I would normally have to pay to see; (6) Volunteers to aid genealogical searches in the Genealogy Room at the library; (7) Workshop meetings where everyone pitches in and helps you do something like make a cd of your scanned photos. I could go on and on. Why don't you check us out? You can visit our web site at <http://MarionGenealogy.tripod.com> which includes access to our very professional quad annual Newsletter, or simply come to a meeting. There is a calendar on the web page. By the way, we have some members who are snow birds that we welcome back each winter. Some have flown in already and came to our Christmas Party where we shared some of our family heirlooms.

Andrea Jenkins



*Marion County Main Library.*

*So, when you are being shown a new procedure or web page, not only do you have a hand out telling you how, but also you see it on the wall & are shown exactly how to proceed.*



*Lady Lake Library*



# Obituary Photos are Getting Younger!

*(Continued from page 2)*

twice as likely as men to have an obituary photo that was age-inaccurate.

Obituary photos are typically chosen by either the spouse or adult children of the deceased. Traditionally, obituary photos are chosen by family members to show the deceased at the peak of their life. The fact that obituary photos are getting younger suggests that “we were less accepting of aging in the 1990s than we were back in the 60s” according to Anderson. Age-inaccurate obituary photos have steadily risen from 17% of all obituary photos in 1967 to 36% in 1997. Furthermore, the researchers found that the odds of having an age-inaccurate photo increased with the age of the deceased.

In most societies across time, prestige often came with age and growing old was something to be celebrated by the few who were able to achieve such a status. Consider the image below. It is a marble funerary head of a Roman citizen from the First Century B.C. Notice the aged, bony structure, deeply etched wrinkles, tight-lipped mouth and intense frown. The image prominently shows both the age and the personality of the deceased. Although the technology has evolved over the millennium from carved marble to photographs, the concept of an obituary image is very old and those cultures that exhibited images of their dead usually did so in a realistic style that accentuated individual features and the effects of age.

The researchers have pointed out that in modern times people are living longer with chronic illnesses and the family may wish to show the deceased as they appeared in younger, healthier times. However, they also point out that this is unlikely to account for all of shift towards younger obituary photos. The creeping anti-ageism identified in the US study of obituary photos suggests from a genealogical perspective that society may be evolving the definition of a person’s peak year towards an age much younger than the year in which the person died.



*Roman Funeral Head*

*Obituary photos are typically chosen by either the spouse or adult children of the deceased*



*Confucius*

## The Longest Family Tree

*Article courtesy of Genealogy in Time*

Here is a good trivia question for genealogists: According to the Guinness Book of Records, who has the longest continuous family tree? A bit of reflection would suggest it is probably somebody famous and somebody who came from a culture that valued written records. The answer is Confucius, the ancient Chinese philosopher. Confucius (551-479 BC) was revered even in his own time as a great thinker and educator. His descendants now number in the millions and his family tree extends to 80 generations.

Confucius’ descendants had a vested interest in keeping proper family

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## The Longest Family Tree

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records. Successive generations were often honored with official positions and titles of nobility by various imperial governments. This practice ended with China's cultural revolution of the 1960's, which frowned upon genealogical practices as a means of perpetuating and entrenching old customs and families. However, as reported at the China Internet Information Center, genealogy has come back into favor and the Confucius Genealogy is once again being written. It has taken over ten years to prepare, and the genealogy is expected to be printed in several volumes sometime in 2009.

One interesting lesson we can learn from the Confucius Genealogy is that it provides the longest continuous data set of descendants (over 2,500 years). This long baseline can be used to calculate the average length of a generation. So, here is another interesting trivia question for genealogists: How long is a generation? Based on Confucius' family, the best estimate over the long run is that a generation is 32 years.

## Genealogy Volunteering

by Darlene Vaillancourt Suite 101.com

Do you have a copy of a rare, old or generally hard-to-find history book that has genealogical significance? Or even just a modern-day copy of such a book on CD-ROM? Or perhaps you live near a large library or cemetery that would be of interest to other family tree researchers?

If this described you at all, you might want to consider joining up with one of the online genealogy volunteer services. There are different ones out there, ranging from general look-ups in books to taking requests from people to photograph grave markers for them.

Though these people are volunteers, that doesn't mean they will pay for phone calls, photocopies, film or postage. You are expected to reimburse for all expenses. Make sure you read the rules, policies or instructions for any of the sites you wish to use.

Random Acts of Genealogical Kindness - Volunteers are listed by area, and most people do local library look-ups, house photographs and cemetery visits.

Books We Own - This volunteer group revolves around the various books that members own. This site allows you to search for the book titles you are looking for, and make requests to have something researched from it.

Genie Angels - Not a volunteer service, but a message board for genealogical research. Post your requests and offer up your own help if you can. Also a good place for general genealogical discussion, as long as it stays on the topic of research.

Lookups from Privately Owned Resources and Publications - A list of volunteers who own very unique, individual and privately published history resources. Many of these are for specific families or very limited regions.



GENEALOGICAL TREE OF THE QUEEN AND HER DESCENDANTS

A Family Tree

*This site allows you to search for the book titles you are looking for*



Recording of Gravestones for Others!



**Marion County  
Genealogical Society**

*Mission Statement*

*The Marion County Genealogical Society is dedicated to creating and promoting an interest in genealogy, focusing on research in Marion County, Florida and in supporting members in their research.*

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**We're on the web:  
Mariongenealogy.tripod.com**



*4 girls and 2 boys!*

## Your Family Tree Can Determine a Baby's Gender

*Article courtesy of Genealogy in Time*

Many studies have been conducted over the years to determine what factors influence the gender of a baby. The father effectively decides the gender by passing either an X chromosome (making a girl) or a Y chromosome (making a boy), but what influences the father to pass either an X or Y chromosome?

A new study suggests the father's family tree can have a significant influence on the gender of a baby. As reported by the BBC, researchers at Newcastle University in the UK studied 927 family trees going back as far as 1600 and containing over half a million people. They found a statistical link between the gender of a man's siblings and whether the man was more likely to father girls or boys. A man who had more male siblings tended to father more boys, while a man with more female siblings tended to father more girls. Yet one more reason to encourage people to study their family tree.