



The Geneline

THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF

Amelia Island Genealogical Society

January 2010 - ISSUE 1

COMING UP!

AIGS General Meeting

Tuesday - January 19th at 7:00 pm

HELD: FERNANDINA BEACH POLICE DEPT. COMMUNITY ROOM

You CAN Teach an Old Dog New Tricks



There are many opportunities for Genealogists to learn about new techniques and resources in searching their family history. Seminars and annual conferences provide an information-packed experience, even for seasoned researchers.

Come to the Amelia Island Genealogical Society meeting on Tuesday, January 19th where Marie Santry, Gloria Toomey and Mike Toomey will share what they learned at the 2009 Florida State Genealogical Conference held in November.

As usual, the meeting will be at 7:00 pm at the Fernandina Beach Police Station Community Room on Lime Street.

Marie, Gloria, and Mike are longtime members of AIGS. Marie and Mike serve on the 2010 AIGS Board as President and Vice-President respectively. Gloria is the 2010 Publicity Chairman, having served as President and Program Chairman in recent years. Together, our three speakers have 50+ years of experience in researching their family histories. They have attended numerous genealogical conferences and seminars over the years and always come away with new and interesting tools and information to share with their fellow genealogists.

Please join us for this most informative program.

2010 AIGS
BOARD MEMBERS

MESSAGE FROM THE AIGS PRESIDENT

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Another year has passed so quickly and I can't believe it's already 2010. Looking back, 2009 was a good year for AIGS as we saw an increase in membership over the previous year. We also made progress on our Newspaper-Obit Project, adding new data to our website in our efforts to make Nassau County genealogical data more accessible to the public. AIGS members participated in the Amelia Plantation Chapel's Writing and Genealogy Colloquium, which brought us renowned genealogical speaker and author John Colletta. We have had another year of great Geneline newsletters and Nassau County Genealogist quarterlies, thanks to Frances Bartelt and Jean Mann, respectively. I also want to thank the Board of Directors for all of their hard work. Although leaving the board, Gloria Toomey continue to serve the Society as our Publicity Chairman; Frances Bartelt will continue as Editor of the Geneline; Kathy Nemaric will continue as Research Coordinator; Kenny Sturges has graciously offered to assist in organizing a Cemetery Tour project; Nancy Sturges will continue to offer her wise council to our Library Committee; and Judy Bouchard and Claire Shepherd will continue to assist our Society as we move forward.

I would also like to welcome our new 2010 board members:

Gus Reinwald is the new Treasurer, Charles Finnigan is the new Membership Chairman, Pam Manley is a new Director-at-Large and the Library Chairman; and Kay Watt is a new Director-at-Large. I know they will bring fresh ideas to the Board and serve our Society well. Mike Toomey (*VP*), Lori Miranda (*Secretary*), Bob Loveless (*Past-President*), Bob Keane (*new Program Chairman*), and I will continue to do our best for the Society.

Congratulations to Cheryl Lawson for submitting the winning "story" for publication in the Geneline. The story of Edmund Middleton, the maternal great-grandfather of Cheryl's husband, Bill Lawson, appears in this issue. (*see pgs. 3 & 4*) Cheryl has won a family membership in AIGS for 2010. I hope that Cheryl's story will spur other AIGS members to submit their family stories for publication in our newsletter or quarterly.

I really want to encourage all AIGS members to step up and personally promote our Beginning Genealogy Course which starts on January 30th. Information on the course is published on pg. 4 in this newsletter. Invite your family, friends, and neighbors who have shown an interest in your genealogical pursuits to take the course. It's the first step in a lifelong pursuit that will bring you the satisfaction of discovering your family history. And PLEASE think about volunteering for an AIGS project this year. Opportunities will be highlighted in next month's Geneline. Also, if you haven't yet renewed your membership in AIGS for 2010, please do so this month. Membership runs from January 1st through December 31st. Print out the membership form in this issue (*pg 6*) and mail it with your check to the address shown on the form. Timely payment of dues is necessary to meet the financial obligations of your Society.

**Wishing you a Happy New Year
and a fruitful year of family history research!**

Marie Santry

From CRIPPLEGATE, England to ASSINIBOIA, Canada

The Journey of Edmund Middleton - 1846-1919

BY CHERYL LAWSON

Near London in 1839 at St. Giles Cripplegate, the marriage of James Middleton, son of the cooper Edmund Middleton, to Sophia Kefford, daughter of coachman James Kefford is solemnized. It is the Age of Reform: the Whigs return to power, there are wars abroad, riots at home, repeal of the anti-Corn Law, and labor acts – especially on behalf of children. In 1837, Queen Victoria ascends to the throne and sets new precedents for “monarchical interference”.

By 1851 James and Sophia’s family has grown to include Elizabeth (10), James (7), Edmund (5), and Henry (2) – all supported by his work as a Cooper. At the death of his father, Edmund is apprenticed at the age of 11 to a business house. Making steady advances, he obtains by age 16 “a collectorship and a man’s position at the same time” with Kent and Company. At the age of 20, he takes a position with Messrs. W.H. Smith & Son, Booksellers—a firm still in existence in 2009. Promotion takes Edmund to the county town of Maidstone. He meets Elizabeth Priscilla Thomas and weds her at Hatcham, New Cross on 22 April 1871. This union is blessed by daughter Rosa Lizzie (1872), Elizabeth Laura (1875), James Henry (1876), Bertram (1878), Alice



St. Giles, Cripplegate 1830

(1881), and Walter (1883). Not only does Edmund advance steadily in his employment, but “a love of intellectual pursuits” also grows. Edmund said, “I have found myself positively hungering for knowledge with a fondness for committing my now deeper thoughts to writing.”

Everything seems lovely for this family residing now in the seaside resort of Ramsgate Sands. Elizabeth Thomas Middleton has a rented house well furnished, gas for heat and light, hot and cold water, and sanitary arrangements. She offers for fee a spare room with meals to visitors on holiday, as was the seaside custom in the 1880’s. In addition, she turns in a few shillings by the art of cleaning and curling ostrich feathers into plumes for a local milliner.

Doubtless, Edmund could hold his good position and retire under the good pension scheme of his employers, W. H. Smith & Son, Booksellers—which was the world’s first chain store and later

created the ISBN catalogue system. But Edmund hears a very alluring sound...of a generous area of good, productive land to be had just for the taking in a great new country— for only a small homesteader’s entry fee. Edmund succumbed to this sound in the winter of 1883, and within six months had “launched out into a most uncertain future and thrilling experience” by deserting his secure employment and sailing for Canada. With a generous gift of 200£ from his former employers, Edmund intended to prepare for a year then send for his family. “In the Spring of 1885 he sent for us,” writes Edmund’s son Walter. “And now you are to see her [Elizabeth Middleton] meeting a terrible challenge”. She must pack up her home and prepare it for shipment to the great, open southern prairies of Assiniboia, in Canada’s Northwest Territories. She must take everything possible to make a home in that new land, for my father had nothing there but a place he called a house. It is a mere shell of two by four studs with board and tar paper on the outside and a shingled roof [This house is located at approximately 49° latitude].

The floor and ceiling are of plain boards. There is a space above the ceiling under the roof, reached by a very crude stair. There is no inside finish at all.

Walter Middleton said the first house was “an impossible place...could not be heated in winter. So how we survived those first years I will never know. I am sure of this that my mother suffered great hardships together with her family.” A log house was soon built, and although it “was a very crude place” ...it could be heated in Winter. Now follow sixteen years of severe struggle and hardship.” “Becoming over-night farmers was hard for all the Londoners, each one from the heart of the city, but as Middleton was older and had a family, his road was more difficult.”



**BINDING WHEAT IN
SASKATCHEWAN**

Though they grew wheat and raised cattle on the prairies, Walter Middleton said his father Edmund was “a book man and not a farmer... [although] I am sure he did his best as he knew it.” The “greenhorn” Englishman was taken advantage of by rascally horse traders and others; mistakes were made through ignorance of farming. But the greatest mistake was made when he decided to leave the farm just when things were getting better for farmers—when the free use of more land had become available, and when he now had a work force of seven sons, young men who had grown up in farming.

Yet the intellectual pursuits beckoned to Edmund Middleton; by 1901 he had a lot in the town of Moosomin, built a house, moved his family there, and listed his occupation as author. Here he entered the real estate and agency business, wrote for the

weekly paper in Moosomin, lectured often, also writing essays on the subject of prophesy. He had become a proponent of British Israel, the belief that people of Western European descent are also direct lineal descendants of the Ten Lost Tribes of Israel. Edmund was active in the British Israelism movement in Canada, organizing a branch in Victoria, B.C. in 1907. He related his beliefs regarding prophesy in several books. One of these, *The Doomed Turk*, has been digitized by Google Books.

Edmund Middleton died March 6, 1919 in Victoria, his health failing “from real hardness of life”. Edmund Middleton was the maternal great-grandfather of Donald William (Bill) Lawson, Sr.—resident of Fernandina Beach 1953-1958 and current member of AIGS.

AIGS Genealogy Course Begins in January 2010

Once again, AIGS will be offering a five-session Genealogy Course Beginning Saturday, January 30, through Saturday, February 20, 2010.

The Course will consist of FOUR sessions on Saturdays from 9:30 am to 12 noon at the First Presbyterian Church Fellowship Hall on N. 6th Street. Those Saturday sessions will occur on Jan. 30th, Feb. 6th, 13th, and 20th. There will also be ONE evening week-night session (date not yet determined) from 7 pm to 9 pm at the FSCJ Nassau campus Computer Lab in Yulee. Topics for the course include Census and Civil Vital Records; Church and Cemetery Records; Courthouse, Military, Immigration and Naturalization Records; effective use of Libraries and Archives; Organizational techniques; Internet Research; and general techniques to maximize your research successes. **If you are just beginning your family history search, or have decided to ramp up your genealogical research and need a refresher course in order to become a more savvy researcher, this is the course for you.** If you are a member of AIGS, the fee for the course is just \$10, which covers the cost of materials you will receive. If you have a neighbor or friend who has expressed an interest in genealogy, help grow the society’s membership by letting them know about this course. The fee for non-members is \$30 for an individual (includes materials and a one-year single AIGS membership) or \$45 for a couple (includes materials and a one-year family membership). **You may register for the course by calling Marie Santry at 321-3460 or emailing her at mcsantry@comcast.net.**

Celebration of Bethlehem Lutheran Church's - 150 Anniversary

BY JUDY BORCHARD

On April 26, 2009 I attended the 150th anniversary service of the church that my great great great grandfather William Feagle and his brother John came to Florida to help establish. The group came with seven other families from Newberry County, South Carolina where they attended St Paul's Lutheran Church. The other families and their children included James and the Rev. S.W.

Bedenbaugh, Levi Haltiwanger, George Snelgrove, F. Hartwell Koon, William Shealy, David and John W. "Adam" Witt, and John Legrone. These eight farming families were attracted to the rolling farm land, good water supply and a nearby rail system. Bethlehem Lutheran Church and cemetery are located 12 miles south of Lake City on Highway 41/441 in a grove surrounded by tall oak trees.

April 26th was a beautiful day with bright sunshine and not a cloud in the sky. The church was packed to capacity and 300-350 people attended. People were seated and some stood in

the aisle, and many heard the service from the front lawn. The service was conducted by Bishop Benoway from the Florida-Bahama Synod, the Reverends, Wilbur Bock, Dennis Murrin and Patrick Lee, in the traditional Lutheran format. Dorothy Feagle played the organ and Lamar Witt played guitar and sang the most beautiful classical hymns I have ever heard.

After the service, dignitaries from Lake City were introduced many of whom worship at Bethlehem and who were descendants of the founding fathers. My favorite moment came next when the families of the founders were introduced by family. The Witts, Feagles and Haltiwangers had the largest assembly. All stood together as their family name were called. It is quite an accomplishment that these families have stayed and worshiped in the same church for 150 years. Collectively, they have survived the Civil War and just about every element God and man can throw at a group including a hurricane that destroyed the original

church in 1898.

Families filed out of the church as chimes played old hymns. A feast awaited and families brought their best dishes to share with others. Potato salad, cole slaw, bean and lettuce salads plus every kind of casserole imaginable were shared. Secret family recipes of fried chicken, ham and turkey were served and all the food was delicious. A special anniversary cake surrounded by pies and cobblers ended the feast. A carnival atmosphere was present as kids played and adults gathered with their friends and families. Photographers were present to take group portraits. Several people had brought family histories to share. It was a day I will never forget and I am so honored to have these friends in my family history.

If I had not taken the genealogy class, I would never have discovered or experienced my "new" Florida roots. I highly recommend the AIGS class and their monthly meeting held on the third Tuesday of each month.

About Judy Borchard's Story - Bethlehem Lutheran Church 150th Anniversary

Approximately one and one half years ago I had a fortuitous luncheon with a friend. During lunch she discussed her ancestors and her hobby of genealogy and her love of history. Her stories caught my imagination and I started to wonder about who my ancestors were. My friend suggested I take the Amelia Island Genealogy Society introduction to genealogy class. I signed up and took the class run by Marie Santry and Mike Toomey and the rest is history! Mine is not a Nassau County story but it is a Florida pioneering story. My ancestors left Newberry County, South Carolina to found the oldest Lutheran church in Florida. In the mid 1850's Florida was a harsh and cruel environment and if anyone group needed divine guidance it was these pioneers of the gospel.

Amelia Island Genealogical Society

Membership Application 2010

SINGLE DUES \$20 _____ or FAMILY (2) DUES \$25 _____

Place a check above indicating type of membership and fill in the rest of the form.
Make your check payable to Amelia Island Genealogical Society

MAIL IT WITH THIS COMPLETED APPLICATION FORM TO:

AIGS
P.O. Box 6005
Fernandina Beach, FL 32035-6005

FULL NAME: _____

MAIDEN SURNAME: _____ (Optional)

If applying for a family membership,
please provide the name of the 2nd Household Member

2ND HOUSEHOLD MEMBER NAME:

Street: _____ City: _____ State: ____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

(AIGS Monthly publication Geneline sent to your email address)

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Membership includes a monthly newsletter *The Geneline* that comes to you through your email address and a quarterly journal *The Nassau County Genealogist*, distributed at AIGS meetings.

If you cannot be present at the monthly meetings, all four (4) quarterlies will be mailed to you in December.

If you would prefer to get the monthly Geneline by mail, please indicate with X here. _____

Visit our Website: <http://www.aigensoc.org/>

Find Information about Amelia Island Genealogical Society

Access old and new GENELINES.

A special reminder to our members: GENELINE is your Society's publication.

Each member is encouraged to contribute material to it

All GENELINE articles are indexed by PERSI

Send GENELINE comments & submissions to Frances Bartelt - Francesbartelt@gmail.com

The Amelia Island Genealogical Society

P.O. Box 6005

Fernandina Beach, FL 32035-6005

The Society's Library Collection is housed in the Fernandina Beach Library

The membership packet includes AIGS information and all current year issues of Society's quarterly

The Nassau County Genealogist, and the GENELINE, AIGS's monthly newsletter.

Family history research training is offered through classes, workshops and ongoing programs

Membership dues are \$20.00 per person and \$25.00 per two-person family.

The membership year is January 1st through December 31st

To join, send application form, along with the appropriate fee to:

The Amelia Island Genealogical Society

P.O. Box 6005

Fernandina Beach, FL 32035-6005

To print an membership application or for more information check our web site:

<http://www.aigensoc.org/aigs/meetings.asp/>