PastFinder

SILICON VALLEY COMPUTER GENEALOGY GROUP

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Walking where they fought

Jericho Mills, Virginia, on the North Anna River, May 1864. Photograph by Alex Gardner; National Archives.

By Patricia Burrow
Walking the Civil War Battlegrounds

Private John Wesley Stallings, Company B, 45th Georgia Infantry of the Confederate States of America, was wounded 23 May 1864 at Jericho Ford, North Anna, Virginia. He died the following day.

He had been a soldier for only eight months. In the last 21 days of his life he witnessed the determination of Generals Grant and Lee and the terrors at the Battle of the Wilderness (17,000 Union casualties, 11,000 Confederate casualties in three days), the horrors of Spotsylvania (two weeks of continuous fighting, 32,000 casualties), and, finally, a two-day march south to defend Richmond, the Confederate capitol. Grant's army opened fire at the North Anna River, and the cannons caught up with the tired and weary.

John Wesley Stallings was born in 1819 in Barnesville, Monroe County, Georgia. He left a widow and five children. I found him in the 1850 and 1860 U.S. Censuses in Monroe County. Then, on Fold3.com, I found his muster records — 13 images with various names in the file, J. Wesley Stallings, J.W. Stallings, and John W. Stallings.

I had to make a table of notes from the images to sort out the identities of what was actually two different men. One was my third-great-grandfather, John Wesley Stallings, the other his son, John William Stallings. The only way I was able to distinguish the two was by the enlistment dates. The father died from wounds in battle, whereas the son was wounded, recovered, taken prisoner, and released at Appomattox.

Once I had the information on what regiment my ancestor served with, I was able to identify what battles he partici-

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Where they fought (continued)

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pated in. The National Parks website has much helpful information, stories, and photos: http://www.nps.gov/civilwar/soldiers-and-sailors-database.htm.

I learned that not only did father and son join the 45th Georgia Infantry, Company B, but that John Wesley's brother, nephew, and two cousins also fought alongside them. Of the six, two died of disease (two of every three soldiers' deaths were from disease), two were taken prisoner and ultimately released, one died in battle, and one died while a prisoner at Elmira Prison, in New York (referred to as "Hellmira" by Confederate prisoners of war).

We were in Virginia and recently took the opportunity to tour the Civil War battlegrounds where my ancestors fought. I thought that we would just visit museums, drive around, read plaques, and maybe walk the trails along the earthenwork fortifications that the soldiers dug.

Since we had just basic information on the unit and battle dates, that was all I was expecting. To my surprise we encountered a knowledgable young man (a volunteer, no less) at the Chancellorsville Visitors Center who offered to show us maps of *exactly* where the 45th engaged in battle.

These are wonderful maps that the National Park Service uses to show details, by the hour, of what happened each day. I now have my own map of when and where my grandfather was during each of the battles. In addition, we were told how to find the exact areas and just how far from the road the engagements were.

It was eerie to walk in the fields and woods and know that my grandfather had been there.

Yes, after 150 years, the trees are new, the old leaves have decomposed, and bodies have gone to dust. But I thought I could still imagine the sounds, the fears, and the heartbreak. Or, maybe I couldn't really.

The ground was wet from the morning's light rain, and the sun was beginning to shine through. I was warm and dry and safe.

No, I cannot imagine the terrors or the courage enacted here. This is hallowed ground. Too many young men, too many lives lost.

We must remember.

Further information

Virginia's Walk in Their Footsteps: http://www.walkintheirfootsteps.com

Civil War by the Numbers: http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/general-article/death-numbers/

The same day the author's ancestor died, a party of the 50th New York Engineers built a road on the south bank of the North Anna River, near Jericho Mills, Virginia, on May 24, 1864. Timothy H. O'Sullivan, photographer; Library of Congress.

Review: Ohana solves Family Tree migration issue

By Janet Brigham

According to the conjectural Moore's Law, computing capacity doubles every couple of years, moore or less. For genealogy enthusiasts who use computers, this translates into continual changes in hardware and software, along with the occasional firmware upgrade. It quickly can become confusing and even stupefying.

This follows an observed phenomenon I humbly call **Brigham's Conjecture: Nothing technological works the same way for long.** Newer printers don't work like older printers. (Ever heard of a serial cable?) Newer operating systems don't work like older operating systems (Ever pine for Windows 95?). Newer smartphones don't work like older cell phones. We had just learned to program a VCR (video cassette recorder) and then had to figure out how to program a DVR (digital video recorder) on the satellite TV system. Even my knees don't work like they did when they were a decade or two newer. The initial technology hasn't changed, but at least now the treatments are better.

To stay functional, we must continually adapt and learn. Fortunately, *homo sapiens* happens to be good at that — even those of us *homo sapiens* who have aging knees.

With this in mind, we often need to look for technology solutions to new problems. One problem that has emerged in recent years and months is the need to migrate genealogical information across platforms and modes.

Enter Ohana Software, the Hawaii software developers and programmers who have created various innovative solutions over the years. When Personal Ancestral File (PAF) database software could not connect directly with FamilySearch, Ohana developed PAF Insight, an inexpensive utility to link PAF files to FamilySearch. Now that other database software packages are readily available, Ohana has stepped in to solve newly emerging problems.

One recent issue has emerged as users build trees in FamilySearch Family Tree (for free) but then find they have no way to download the information to a database on their own computer. Ohana solves this problem (for free!) with its Get My Ancestors software for PC or Mac. Ohana will not request a credit card for Get My Ancestors, but you will need to check your email for a license key, and you'll be creating a user account at Ohana. You will need to enter the license key and your FamilySearch account login and password. Working in FamilySearch Family Tree in a separate browser window, identify a key ancestor and note the Person ID. Enter the key ancestor's Person ID code into the Get My Ancestors dialog box, with your FamilySearch login/password.

Get My Ancestors then will communicate directly with FamilySearch Family Tree and will download the ancestors into a PAF file (*.PAF), which you then can open in PAF or other database software that reads a PAF file. Remember that Get My Ancestors is at the mercy of FamilySearch's servers' speed, since it can't download any faster than it can access FamilySearch. As it downloads information from FamilySearch Family Tree, it pops up updates to let you know it's chugging away — "724 Individuals downloaded," for example. It will tell you when it is done. If the tree goes back many generations and has a lot of connections, this could take hours.

If you want to migrate Family Tree information to a Mac that does not readily run PAF software, you can access your Family Tree information on a PC with software that allows you to import a PAF file, save the file as a GEDCOM, and upload it into Mac genealogy database software such as Reunion, Mac Family Tree, or Family Tree Maker for Mac. If you need help, let SVCGG know (see contact info, p. 8).

(At the same time, perhaps we can start persuading developers to name genealogy programs after something other than trees. Family Turtle might better reflect the speed of much genealogy research. Or FamilyMyopia, or ISpendMyVactionsinLibraries. Dot-com.)

Ohana, like many other developers, has to hustle to stay current with the continual changes at FamilySearch. Its innovative Family Insight program communicated with new.FamilySearch.org but does not connect to FamilySearch Family Tree. A new product, to be called *AncestorSync for Family Tree*, will be released soon to enable communication between Family Tree and a variety of database software programs.

For now, *Mahalo* (thank you), Ohana!

How I found it Forrest at Wake Island

By Richard D. Rands

Last month I was invited to participate in a genealogy gathering to organize the research efforts of members of a large family. As I worked on the project, I was introduced to the amazing story of an ancestor, named Forrest, who had signed up to work for a civilian construction company that had been given the contract to build a World War II military base on Wake Island, in the Pacific, early in 1941.

The family farm was not providing enough income to support a large family, so the father, Forrest, decided to use his skills to bring home a bonus during the off-season. The civilian workforce consisted of 1,200 men who arrived on the tiny atoll in the South Pacific in early May, and needless to say, were there when Wake Island was attacked by the Japanese in the weeks following December 7th, 1941. After two invasion attempts, the island surrendered on 22 December, and the surviving military personnel and civilian workers remained prisoners of war (POWs) until the end of the war. Some were executed by their captors.

Memorial on Wake Island for civilian prisoners of war killed in captivity in 1943. Forrest was not among them, having survived as a prisoner of war before being released in 1945.

My hosts' ancestor survived a horrific POW ordeal and returned to his family in Idaho. Many years later, he told his story to family members, who supplemented it with interviews, collected at reunions, with dozens of other POWs. The result is an impressive, self-published book that is part of the proud heritage of the family. As I thumbed through the pages, it was clear that many of the stories recalled in the later years of the participants' lives called out for some verification from historical records, to add substance to the drama.

It is unlikely that the book will be revised to include new details, but I took it on as a personal project to see what could be found to grounding the accounts in historical detail. For example, the book states that Forrest left the farm in Idaho on 24 April 1941. A quick check of the passenger records of ships departing San Francisco for Honolulu lists Forrest sailing on the 2 May 1941 and reveals the name of the ship, plus the fact that Forrest was traveling in first class. Half a dozen pages later, the book recounted Forrest stating that one of their tasks on Wake Island was to refuel a group of B-17 bombers that were being sent to the Philippines. A website devoted to the history of the B-17 in the Pacific war tells of 24 B-17s that were refueled at Wake during the summer of 1941. Certainly this was a small detail, but the overall impact of having built a crude landing field on the tiny atoll capable of servicing B-17s was a major accomplishment for the construction crews.

As I read a few of the POW stories, it occurred to me that it would be interesting to locate records of the military's side of the stories, particularly the actual battles that lasted for three weeks on that isolated island before the surrender. I surmised that many of the POW stories would dovetail well with the military account, adding depth to the book. But where could such an account be found?

A powerful resource for adding historical and genealogical detail to our family histories can be found at **Archive.org**. Not related to the commercial site Archives.com, this free website is an immense collection of historical material including digital copies of old documents, audio recordings, videos, and much more. For example, when I was researching at Archive.org for the details of the military pension payment process, I found more than 2,500 reels of microfilm containing the images of pension payment cards for pensioners from 1907 to 1933. These records show when and how much each pensioner received over the duration of the pension.

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How I found it (continued)

(Continued from page 4)

A search at Archive.org for the military account of the role of Wake Island in WWII turned up a five-volume *History of U.S. Marine Corps Operations in World War II*, which included a 60-page account of the defense of Wake Island in December 1941. Not only did it contain the account of the B-17 bombers being refueled, but it described in detail how the Marines and the civilians had to struggle to hand-pump the aircraft fuel from tanks to 50-gallon drums and then then carry the drums to the planes and hand-pump the fuel into the aircraft, 3,000 gallons for each aircraft. It was slow, grueling work. No wonder it was significant in the memories of the POWs.

The military record contained a detailed map of the three islands that make up the Wake atoll, along with designations of where the civilians were housed, separate from the military. It explained the story as extracted and translated from Japanese records of battle plans and casualties.

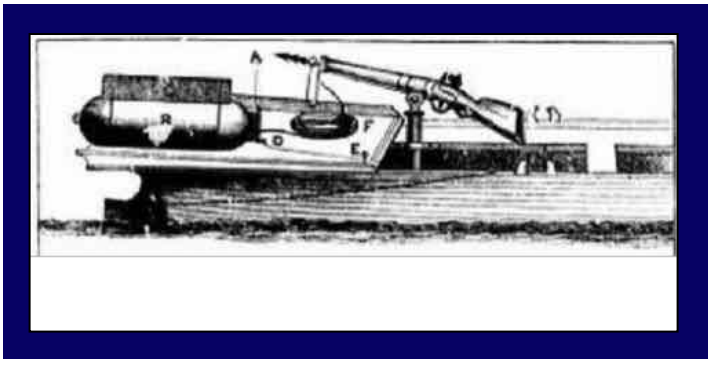
One footnote illustrated communication problems between the civilian workers and the military: "Backed by a written request from the Commander, Aircraft Battle Force, a request was made through the Island Commander to the Civilian Contractor's superintendent on the morning of 5 December, asking for the immediate construction of bunkers for the protection of aircraft, and outlining various other works to follow. Great emphasis was put on the fact that speed, rather than neatly finished work, was required. However, an inspection that afternoon revealed a young civil engineer laboriously setting out stakes with a transit and three rodmen. It required an hour of frantic rushing about and some very strong language to replace the young engineer and his rodmen with a couple of Swedes and bulldozers."

The family history version of the POW's stories implied that the attack on Wake Island on 8 December 1941 was a complete surprise. In fact, one account mentioned that when the Japanese bombers began dropping bombs, the civilians working on the beach thought the explosions were the sound of the surf pounding the reef. Also, they initially thought that the planes were dropping their landing gear. But historical account described weeks of frantic preparation and construction of defenses, with troops on readiness in case of attack. Word of the attack on Pearl Harbor reached Wake on the morning of December 8. Reconnaissance aircraft were in the air watching for signs of the impending attack.

I read about interactions between the civilian men and the Marines, about heroic efforts of civilians to fill in at gun batteries when Marines were killed. At one point orders were given to evacuate civilian workers, but the plans could not be carried out. The defenders, consisting of a few hundred Marines and the civilians, were able to repulse an enemy landing attempt on 11 December 1941. Unfortunately, the name *Forrest* never appears in the military account, but his later account indicated that he was nearby when Japanese bombs destroyed the civilian hospital buildings where many of the wounded had been taken.

(Continued on page 6)

Whaddya think this is? Flare launcher? Gun? Artillery? Torpedo?



We continue here a new feature in the *PastFinder,* "Whaddya think this is?" Each issue now includes an item, fact, photo, or document that is significant for genealogical and family history research. The correct answer is published on page 8 of this issue.

So, whaddya think this is?

A. Revolutionary War battle flare launcher
B. Whale tagging gun
C. Civil War river artillery
D. War of 1812 naval torpedo

How I found it (continued)

Civilian contractors were marched off to captivity after the Japanese captured Wake Island in 1941. Some, deemed important by the Japanese to finish construction projects, were retained there. The Japanese commander who ordered 98 of them executed in October 1943 was himself executed after World War II. (From Department of Defense pamphlet *A Magnificent Fight: Marines in the Battle for Wake Island,* from Archive.org.)

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The scope of Archive.org

On the home page of Archive.org is a statement that indicates what the site is all about:

"The Internet Archive, a 501(c)(3) non-profit, is building a free digital library of Internet sites and other cultural artifacts in digital form. Like a paper library, we provide free access to researchers, historians, scholars, the [print-disabled], and the general public."

You can access such diverse content as audio from a 1975 Grateful Dead concert, a PDF of Frances Hodgson Burnett's classic *Little Lord Fauntleroy*, or hundreds of family genealogy books. And, of course, you can access an extensive library of history publications — possibly history that affected your ancestors.

An unusual feature of Archive.org is The Wayback Machine. Archive.org has been preserving the Internet — for example, the SVCGG website has been preserved 10 times between 5 May 2009 and 9 August 2013. These save points are displayed on a timeline that allows a user to select a time point. It can be easy to forget that our current experiences are part of history. We are in our own little corner of history in this grand venture called the Internet.

To add to historical perspective of current times, look at the website CNN.com in the Wayback Machine. CNN.com has been saved 17,618 times by the Wayback Machine between 2000 and the present.

Many people save newspapers from important days in history. The Wayback Machine saves web views, including functional links from websites. To see how CNN.com reported the events of 11 September 2001, for example, use the site calendar to select the day and the time of day. Or select any other day within the history time span of the Internet.

The Wayback Machine can show how recent historic events were depicted on the web — or perhaps what was happening the day a grandchild was born.

Ask the Doctor My family says it's all done

Q I 've been assured by my family members that all of our family genealogy has already been done, and it has been entered onto a FamilySearch Family Tree (or an Ancestry.com Family Tree). Yet I keep hearing from you that millions of new records have become available since my family members have worked on our genealogy. What do you recommend I should do to check my family's tree?

For many reasons, family history is never finished. No matter how diligent your relatives have been, newly available information continually surfaces, requiring that you verify what already has been found and search for ancestors new to your tree. You always can go back another generation, and another after that.

We approach this two ways. For example, some decades ago an ancestor of The Doctor hired a genealogist in Norway to research the family's Norwegian lines. Several decades later, one of the ancestor's descendants had the good fortune to visit Norway's national archive and check the genealogist's research.

For this task, The Doctor and The Doctor's faithful sidekick conducted a somewhat random **spot-check** of the previously researched records. We did not have time to conduct the research name-by-name a second time, so we selected Norwegian records here and there throughout the family database and checked them against the microfilm/-fiche in the archive.

To our delight, each database entry we spot-checked matched the archive records. The genealogist whom Grandma hired had done a thorough, credible job of researching the Norwegian ancestors.

If your time is not as limited as ours was in Norway, you can **be more thorough in verifying the information in your database, starting with the first generation beyond you.**

First, look at the entries in the family database (or on family group sheets and pedigree charts, if your family does not already have a database).

This will help you decide what to do next. Try these steps:

1. If the information isn't already in a **database**, put it in one. Get help if you don't know how to do this.
2. Start **verifying** your family information. Get your own birth certificate, then work from that point. (The Doctor's birth certificate had several errors, by the way — discovered the first time The Doctor retrieved it to fill out a passport application.) As you retrieve information about your family of origin and the extended family, resolve any inconsistencies and discrepancies.
3. Look **beyond family records**. If your parents or grandparents were alive in 1940 in the U.S., you can start by finding them in the 1940 U.S. Census, then their parents in 1930, then 1920, and so forth. Remember that indexing may be incorrect, so check alternate spellings, or search by location if you know where the family lived. Check other public records, and verify names, places, and dates.
4. Look for **sources** to verify information and to fill in holes. Does the existing information include any indication of where it came from? Check any sources listed, and look for new sources that might not have been available previously. As you verify information, add documentation so that you know what you found and where you found it. All good database software programs facilitate source documentation. Refer to the SVCGG book *Family History Documentation Guidelines* for help.
5. Use your database to **check for duplicates, errors, and missing information**. Each genealogy software program has its own report features.

The illustration above shows some of the reports in Personal Ancestral File that can help you clean up your database and see where to start doing original research. Look for similar reports in your database software.

What didja think it was? And were ya right?

ANSWER to question posed on page 5: D. War of 1812 naval torpedo

This is the plan for launching a Fulton torpedo from the stern of a row boat. The harpoon would be shot into the hull of an enemy ship in a harbor, and the torpedo dropped into the water. After the row boat had retreated, the torpedo would drift into the ship and explode. (From a War of 1812 field guide.)

Viewing history, war in Google Earth

To get a sense of the scope and value of aerial photography, look at the Google Earth Historical Imagery, www.google.com/earth/explore/showcase/#v=3 . By selecting London, you can view damage to London during World War II, using the timeline bar at the top left of the image. Once you click a start button, the timeline moves from time point to time point automatically. Moving the timeline to more contemporary photos will show you the restoration and development that a location has undergone. The Berlin photo sequence, for example, starts in 1943.

Historic images in the Google Earth Historical Imagery for London are from 1945 aerial photography near the end of World War II. The Google Earth tutorial that can help you find historical images for other locations is at: www.google.com/earth/learn/beginner.html#tab=historical-imagery. San Francisco images date back to 1938; Alcatraz, 1946.

A website that assists with interpreting changes in aerial photographs from wartime to peace time: www.wired.com/wiredscience/2010/02/compare-aerial-images-of-wwii-destruction-with-today-in-google-earth/

Upcoming meetings

The group meets monthly except December, on the second Saturday of the month from 9 to 11 A.M. at The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 875 Quince Ave., Santa Clara, California (see map at right). The group is not affiliated with any church or other group.

9 November 2013, 9 A.M. – 4 P.M.

Military records seminar, Lest We Forget, free and open to the public. Learn how to access and interpret military records.

December 2013, No meeting

11 January 2014, 9–11 A.M.

- Dealing with Family Lore (Richard Rands)
- Database of the month (Janet Brigham)
- Reunion 10 for Mac Users (Pat Burrow)
- Research with Lesly Q & A (Lesly Klippel)
- Getting Started in Genealogy Q & A (Carleen Foster)

PastFinder

First place, Major Society Newsletter, 2013
First place, Local Society Newsletter, 2012
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Meeting site has ample free off-street parking, with a wheelchair-accessible entrance at the front.

About the Silicon Valley Computer Genealogy Group

SVCGG is the former Silicon Valley PAF Users Group, a nonprofit group of some 600 genealogy enthusiasts. We are based in Silicon Valley in the Bay Area of northern California; members live all over the world.

SVCGG offers classes, seminars, and publications to help family historians improve their skills in using technology for genealogy research.

PastFinder is published monthly except December. It is distributed at meetings to members and mailed to others after the meetings. Members can receive the newsletter digitally by emailed link.