

THE MESA DWELLERS

EVENTS CALENDAR

June

- 10 Dennis Shaw will give an update on the status of Y2K. NOTE: this meeting will begin at 6:30 p.m.

July

- 8 Share Session. Bring your successes - or your problems - and help someone else in their search for elusive ancestors.

August

- 12 Annual Picnic. Place and time will be announced later. Door prizes will be given away.

Note: Due to remodeling at the C.D. Smith building it may be necessary to move our meeting place. Check with Donna Roberts [REDACTED] to be sure. Otherwise, all meetings are at 7:00 p.m. at the C.D. Smith Building, 5th. and Ute.

Try the Society Website for more information on events, links and membership.

[REDACTED]

"No one ever injured their eyesight by looking on the bright side of things." Unknown

Mesa County Genealogical Society
P.O. Box 1506
Grand Junction, CO 81502

Substitute Census

by Carolyn Howard [REDACTED]

The 1790 - 1880, 1900- 1920 Federal Censuses are among the basic research tools for genealogists. Often the census provides the first information about a newly discovered ancestor and furnishes clues to other sources. But what do you do when your ancestor "vanishes" between one census and the next? Records that can be used as a substitute for the census are always welcome finds. Many tax lists and voter registers have been published with this use in mind. Other records that can be used to unearth information about an ancestor are militia rolls and journals.

After the Revolutionary War, Congress refused to pay for a standing army and the Revolutionary Army, composed mainly of militia units from all the colonies, was disbanded. Most of the citizen soldiers went home to their families. The lack of a federally maintained army meant that the new states were left to protect themselves with small, poorly trained and equipped, volunteer militia units. Indian attacks on the frontiers created problems that local militias were not able to handle. Laws were needed to build, train and maintain a citizen army capable of defending and protecting the citizens and frontiers of the new country.

In 1783, the Commonwealth of Virginia created laws mandating that the governor commission militia officers and that they meet certain criteria. **All able-bodied men over the age of eighteen were required to enlist in the militia.** Any eligible male residing in the county for a year was subject to military duty. The only exemptions to service were age, illness, disability, extreme hardship, and one of the designated essential occupations. Militia members and officers who missed meetings, training sessions, drills, or who failed to obey orders could be fined for these lapses.

Each county was required to keep rosters of their militia units, naming all members of the unit. In effect, these rosters are a census of the men in that county. Names and locations of those who provided meeting rooms for the militia are also mentioned. Many militia rosters included the names of fathers, sons, and brothers in the same company. Other information

MESA COUNTY GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY

Vol. 19

June, July, August, 1999

No. 2

which can be found in the roster books includes birth dates, a man's departure for another county or state, health, and ability to pay (or not pay) the fines levied. Deputy sheriffs were detailed to collect fines and their reports give reasons why a man could not be found or could not pay the fine. Some roster books described officers' uniforms in detail. The content of the rosters varies from unit to unit but they can be a valuable source of information about the men who lived in the county.

Excerpts from a Militia Journal of Loudon County, Virginia, 1797:

- * Ordered that Wm. H. Harding be allowed the Sum of 20 Dollars for his services as Clerk the last year.00
- * Ordered that Capt'n Wm. H. Harding be fined according to Law for not returning the strength of his company as per the return of Maj'r. Elgin.

Sheriff's Returns, List of Insolvencies

- * Edward Smith, 1 fine, 75 cents.....no property that I know of.
- * Daniel McCarty, 1 fine, 75 cents.....Inhabitant of Fairfax County.
- * Christopher Myers, 1 fine, 75 cents.....Dead no property that I know of.
- * Jesse Williams, 4 fines, 3.00.....There is one Jesse Williams lives near Sugarland Run whom I demanded these fines and he says he is not the person.
- * Jno. McNeley, 1 fine, 75 cents.....No property that I can get ahold of.
- * **Aaron Foster, 1 fine, 4.00.....Removed I am informed to Kentucky.**
There is one Jesse Williams lives near Sugarland Run whom I demanded these fines and he says he is not the person.
- * Asa Bacon, 4 fined,3.00.....Runaway
- * Alex'r. Williams, 1 fine, 75 cents.....Removed to Alexandria.

How do you locate these militia materials? Look in the Family History Library Catalog under *state*, *county*, *military* for militia rosters or journals. You may find journals or rosters for the post-Revolutionary War era, War of 1812, or the Civil War, to name a

few. Many militia journals can be found in the County Clerk's office or at the State Archives. Some have been abstracted and published in book form. Check "source" books for further clues. One such source book is *The Confederacy, A Guide to the Archives of the Government of the Confederate States of America*, by Henry Putney Beers, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, DC.

Aaron Foster is my "vanished without a trace" Revolutionary War Virginia ancestor. Hope you find yours. Good luck!

Attention German Researchers

German researchers at the Kelberg School are building a database to track descendants of emigrants from Kelberg and its surrounding villages in the Rhineland-Platz. For more information contact Karen B. Witmer, 7627 Blaisdell Ave., Richfield, MN 55423 or visit the School's home page at: <http://home.t-online.de/home/Schule.Kelberg/index~1.htm>.

The 2000 Federal Census Controversy

All of us who do genealogical research are aware of the importance of the Federal census records as a source of information on individuals and families. Where would we be without them? How many researchers bemoan the loss of the 1890 census? How many future researchers will agonize over the loss of information which will result if the Census Bureau conducts the 2000 Federal census as planned?

The Census Bureau plans to count only 90% of the population for the 2000 Federal census. It will then statistically estimate the remainder of the population. This means that while 90% of those living in the United States will appear on the census, 26 million people will not. Do I hear you groaning?! You can learn more about the Census Bureau's plans for the 2000 Census by writing to the Foundation to Preserve the Integrity of the Census or by visiting the Foundation's web site.

Foundation to Preserve the Integrity of the Census
Box 7188, Silver Spring, MD 20907(301) 589-1340
<<http://www.fpic.org>>