

**Benton County Genealogical Society Newsletter**

**P.O. Box 1646, Philomath, OR 97370**

<http://www.bcgs-oregon.org>

**Volume 36 Issue 2**

**March 2018**



**From the Desk of the President:**

March 11th, Sunday, set your clocks for daylight savings time. Spring ahead one hour.


With spring almost here, I hope everyone is well after a long winter and a really bad cold/flu season.

**Free Family History Conference**

**RootsQuest 2018**

Forest Grove, Oregon

[www.roots.fgos.org](http://www.roots.fgos.org)



Learn research methodologies and techniques. Network with other researchers, genealogists and family historians. Discover your roots, discover you.

Date: Saturday, March 17, 2018  
Time: 9:00 am — 3:30 pm  
Place: LDS Chapel  
3661 Brooke Street, Forest Grove, OR 97116  
Pre-registration available Feb. 1 — Mar. 11.  
Walk-ins welcome.  
Lunch provided for all who pre-register online.



### **Connected by Genealogy and Coffee**

Early January 2017...I was standing in line at my favorite coffee shop. Behind me was a man I've seen for years in various coffee shops around town but had never spoken to. I wished him a Happy New Year. We had a pleasant interchange and I took my coffee and sat down at my favorite table.

As he walked to a table with his coffee, he stopped and asked my husband and me if we had heard of the bombs that were used in Turkey on New Year's Eve. We said we had. He had received word that two of the victims were family friends from Tunisia, his own home country. We talked about how knowing a victim makes us more connected as human beings. The victims were no longer faceless numbers but real people. Later he reached out again and showed us photos of the young, vibrant couple who lost their lives and, again, we talked of being one world family.

For those of us who study ancestors and history, we know firsthand that we all are from somewhere else. Some of us could be related to these very people who were victims of terrorism. If we go back far enough, we all are. A genealogy lesson learned in a coffee shop.

### **Librarian's Corner, Sue Van Laere, BCGS Librarian**



We had a great start to the sale of our older newsletters from many states at the monthly meeting on February 10. They will be available for all of February and March. Whatever hasn't been chosen by the end of March will go to the recycling bin. So come by the library early and often to find a treasure for yourself! We're open Tuesdays and Saturdays from 1:00 to 3:30. We're looking for several members to be on a committee to recommend books or periodicals for the library. It won't take much of your time, and who doesn't like to discover new books anyway! If this sounds interesting, let me know. My email is in the newsletter. You'll also be doing your part to make our society even better than it is now. Thanks.

Sue Van Laere, Librarian

## March 10, 2018, BCGS Program Preview

### The Letitia Carson Story

To prepare for our March program by Jan Meranda, you may find the following online history and books quite interesting. Find out how she reclaimed her property, making her the first black woman to own a homestead in the Pacific Northwest.

Meet Jane Kirkpatrick, author, who will also speak at the March 10th BCGS program.

Linda Olsen

[http://www.orwww.org/History/Letitia\\_Carson/](http://www.orwww.org/History/Letitia_Carson/)

Homepage of the Letitia Carson Historical Website with images of original documents.

[http://www.nwmapsco.com/ZybachB/Articles/Magazines/DCHS\\_Umpqua\\_Trapper/20141200\\_Letitia\\_Carson/Zybach\\_20141200.pdf](http://www.nwmapsco.com/ZybachB/Articles/Magazines/DCHS_Umpqua_Trapper/20141200_Letitia_Carson/Zybach_20141200.pdf)

For information about Letitia Carson's life, read this article written by Bob Zyback for the Umpqua Trapper, a quarterly publication of the Douglas County (Oregon) Historical Society

### Books available in our BCGS Library:

1. The Brazen Overlanders of 1845 David Carson and Letitia (a black girl) are named in the wagon train roster of this book which is available in our BCGS library.
2. Benton County History of Soap Creek Valley authored by Bob Zyback. See photos and a map of the soap creek area where David and Letitia Carson lived in Benton County.

### Books:

1. Freedom's Light: The Letitia Carson Story Begins by author Janet Meranda. This recently published book is the first in her series of biographies on Letitia Carson. Jan Meranda will bring her book to sell.
2. A Light in the Wilderness by Jane Kirkpatrick, is a best selling author of many books, of which more than 25 have won literary awards. Her novel is based on known facts about Letitia and David Carson's lives. She will bring her books to sell.



## Meeting Times and Locations

BCGS General Meetings are held on the 2nd **Saturday** of the month, September through June. The March meeting will be on **Saturday, March 10th at 10 am** in the Social Hall of the College United Methodist Church, Philomath, everyone is welcome! At 11 am we will have our program, followed by refreshments at the Annex.

Board Meetings are held the **Wednesday** before the general meeting ; the Board meeting will be on **Wednesday , March 7th, 12:30 pm- 2:00 pm** in the Philomath Public Library meeting room , all members are invited.

## Monthly Programs

### 2018 Monthly Programs

**January:** Erlinda Gonzales-Berry will speak on “The History of Mexicans in Oregon” over the last century. She is a descendant of the first Spanish/Mexican colonizers to settle north of the Rio Grande in 1598.

**February:** Gail Downs from Depot Bay will present a program about “The Black Suitcase Mystery”. What do you suppose was in that suitcase?

**March 10:** Jan Meranda will present a program about the “Letitia Carson Story” with updates .

**April: 14** Ron DeYoung , past president , will present a program on his travels to Maine and his discoveries.

**May 12:** Keith & Darlene Pyeatt, GFO members, will speak on Immigration and Naturalization

**June 9:** Potluck

Summer Break for July and August

Our BCGS Library will remain open during the summer at the regular hours

Tuesdays and Saturdays 1:00 to 3:30pm.

**September 8:** Gathering Back together, sharing Genealogical research, Book Sale

**October 13:** Sandra Potter will present a program about Women in World War II

**November 10:** Lois will present a program on Ancestry and DNA

**December 8:** Annual Holiday Auction and Potluck



## January 13, 2018, BCGS Program Review

### Mexican History in Oregon

Our speaker in January was Dr. Erlinda Gonzales-Berry, founder of Casa Unidos Latinos de Benton County and former Chair of the Department of Ethnic Studies at Oregon State University. She is the author of *Mexicans in Oregon: Their Stories, Their Lives* published in 2010.

Dr. Gonzales-Berry is descended from the first Spanish/Mexican colonizers who settled north of the Rio Grande River in 1598. She brought along a large binder with a family genealogy prepared by a relative for members to peruse.

Her talk was entitled “Sojourners, Settlers and New Immigrants: Mexicanos in Oregon”. Much of her talk described the events that drew Mexicans to Oregon.

Up until 1920, the census showed few people living in Oregon who were born in Mexico. By 1930, the largest concentration was in eastern Oregon near Nyssa, drawn by work in the sugar beet industry. The World War II-era Bracero program, established by the US government to meet labor shortages, attracted more. The first workers arrived in Oregon in 1943. Oregon farmers liked the Mexican laborers and began recruiting them as seasonal laborers on their own from Mexico as well as Texas.

By the 1950’s and 1960’s, concentrations of Mexicans settled in Washington County, Independence, Woodburn and Medford in addition to Nyssa. Woodburn began a Mexican Fiesta in 1964 that continues today. Workers liked the natural beauty of Oregon and were lured by letters sent home as well as a desire to escape the “Jim Crow” laws in Texas.

In the early 1960’s, churches and government began to focus on the Mexican community. The Valley Migrant League was formed to provide language classes and to foster self-sufficiency. Workers began to self-organize as well and took pride in their heritage. These efforts resulted in the formation in 1977 of PCUN (Pineros y Campesinos del Noreste), the first Oregon-owned labor union. It is the most vital Hispanic organization in Oregon today.

Mexican men continued to come to Oregon in the 1970’s and 1980’s for seasonal work. But, this migration was interrupted during the Reagan presidency when the border became the focus due to terrorism, national security concerns and the Cold War. In 1986, the Immigration Reform Control Act (ICRA) was passed. The Act eliminated the attractiveness of U.S. jobs through sanctions on employers, set deterrents to entering illegally and granted amnesty for 2.7 million people, 75% of them from Mexico. By 1987, 36,000 seasonal workers were coming to Oregon.

Globalization began to change the economic structure in the U.S. and economic integration occurred with the creation of NAFTA which created jobs in Mexico, especially along the border, and curbed illegal immigration. But, ten years after ICRA, not much had changed. Circular migration had become riskier and it was hard to bring family members. This then encouraged settlement and bringing family illegally.

Dr. Gonzales-Berry described the current situation as a “disconnect” when there is a need in the United States for labor and sound economic policies. She believes the current state of undocumented immigration has been created by economic forces. She concluded her talk with the question: “What is the moral responsibility of developed countries regarding the phenomenon of global migrations which they have created?”

Susan Hayes





## February 10, 2018, Program Review

### The Black Suitcase Mystery A World War II Remembrance

Gail Downs, our February speaker, presented a heart-warming program developed over time from nearly 200 letters, photographs, and military decorations collected in a small black suitcase. This suitcase had belonged to her great aunt, Hazel. George Elliott Rich was Hazel's son and wrote letters to his mother who was recovering in a tuberculosis hospital. The letters connected mother and son over long periods of separation. After high school, George joined the Army Air Corp, married in 1943 and was assigned as a waist gunner in a B-24 Liberator.

Towards the end of World War II, soldiers were required to fly 50 missions before rotating back to the states. Gail told us on George's 50th mission his plane was shot down over Germany and he was killed on August 22, 1944. George's wife, Wanda, continued to write to George's mother updating her on the communications she received about George before and after his death was confirmed. George's mother kept Wanda's letters in the little suitcase too. George's life story stayed in the little black suitcase like a time capsule until Gail inherited it and used it as a fifth-grade genealogy library research class project that kept growing into a broader vision, more than she had ever imagined. Her fifth graders in 1991 became detectives reading the letters with enthusiasm, asking questions about George's family history which required research and letter writing all before the use of computers was common. Later the children wanted to know if George's wife, Wanda, was still living and the project took off again. Wanda was located and through the tenacity of the students and Gail, Wanda was able to visit George's grave. In May 1992, Wanda visited the Mark Twain Elementary School to visit with the students and the teacher who had worked so diligently on this amazing project.

The students planned Veterans Day celebrations and invited veterans as guest speakers. Their school received local awards, community awards and still the project grew like it had a life of its own. By 1995 the project had achieved national recognition. Gail's slide presentation included videos of several honors and recognition awards for the little black suitcase educational project. Veterans organizations and the news media loved the story and the students received recognition also. The project culminated in a 3-day fly-in of a B-24 Liberator to St. Louis near the Mark Twain Elementary School. The children worked hard to raise the money to bring the B-24 to them. Through help from local organizations and many fund raisers the \$12,000 goal was met and the students and the Brentwood community saw an actual World War II B-24 Liberator.

Gail shared her book with her former students who would now be in their late 30s. Her book tells an intriguing story with excerpts from the original letters, newspaper articles and photographs-a moving story you won't soon forget. Today, Gail supports the Spirit of '45 organization to promote the 75th anniversary of the end of World War II in 2020.

By Linda Olsen

## Upcoming Conferences for 2018

Feb 28 - March 3, 2018, Roots-Tech 2018 Salt Lake City.

This year's theme: Connect-Belong.

<https://www.rootstech.org/blog/whats-new-at-rootstech-2018>

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April 14 & 15, 2018, GFO Spring Seminar featuring Michael Strauss, A G, who will focus on Military Records.

<https://gfoorg.presencehost.net/learn/seminars.html>

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May 2-8, 2018: Paths to Your Past.

Family History Conference of the National Genealogical Society in Grand Rapids, Michigan

<http://conference.ngsgenealogy.org/register/>

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### Benton County Genealogical Society Officers:

George Davidson, President, 928-205-2121 [gid1943@gmail.com](mailto:gid1943@gmail.com)

Ron DeYoung, Past President, [ron.deyoung@gmail.com](mailto:ron.deyoung@gmail.com)

Kathryn Moss, V. P. [mosskathryn@gmail.com](mailto:mosskathryn@gmail.com)

Linda Olsen, Secretary, [thekeeper@ronsarchive.com](mailto:thekeeper@ronsarchive.com)

Lois Courtney, Treasurer, [loiscourtney@cmug.com](mailto:loiscourtney@cmug.com)

Connie Patterson, Membership [connie.eckart.patterson@gmail.com](mailto:connie.eckart.patterson@gmail.com)

Sue VanLaere, Librarian, [vanlaere@proaxis.com](mailto:vanlaere@proaxis.com)

### Family History Daily Sites

Which Genealogy DNA Test is the Best? A Detailed Comparison Guide to Help You Decide.

<https://familyhistorydaily.com/genealogy-help-and-how-to/ancestry-dna-tests-comparison-guide/>

Family History Daily

50 Free Genealogy Sites to Search Today

<https://familyhistorydaily.com/genealogy-resources/50-free-genealogy-sites/>

### King Family Group

<http://kingfolk.co/>

## Enjoy the Benefits of 2018 Membership

Benton County Genealogical Society P.O. Box 1646 Philomath, OR 97370

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Membership dues are \$20.00 per year. The newsletter can be sent by E-mail or US mail (for an additional fee).

Please indicate your preference.

\_\_\_\_\_ New

\_\_\_\_\_ E-mail

\_\_\_\_\_ Renewal

\_\_\_\_\_ US mail\*

\* Add \$10.00 to cover printing and mailing costs

Enclosed is: \$\_\_\_\_\_ for membership dues \$\_\_\_\_\_ library donation

For family memberships please list all names:

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