



the Gann Gazette

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THE UNANSWERED QUESTION

by

William R. "Bill" Gann, Independence, Missouri

1936...

As a young boy five years of age, I had never experienced a death in our immediate family.

On November 9th, 1936, my parents and my grandfather Ousley came from the hospital crying and sobbing like I had never seen before. I did not know what had happened. And, I was not really sure what that kind of crying and sobbing meant.



Hattie A. (Degen) Ousley, c. 1920
at the farm home, Peculiar, MO.

Sadly, I was soon told that grandmother Hattie, my maternal grandmother Ousley, had died suddenly, at the age of 57. Later, when the funeral home men brought her casket to my grandfather's house, I was soon to realize that "being asleep" meant that she was not going to be with us anymore, but that she had "gone to Heaven."

My mother's grief was simply inconsolable...I had never seen my loving, happy and kind-hearted mother crying as she did then. Slowly, she took me into the front parlor and we stood at the casket where I saw my grandmother looking very much like she was, indeed, asleep. At this time my mother held me close to her and began to explain, and somehow, I began to realize what had really happened, but I still did not totally understand.

Soon, I, too, began to cry little-boy tears.

Cynthia Jane -?-, 1848-1917...

The family's reaction at the loss of my beloved grandmother Hattie Ousley was a sharp contrast to their reaction to the death of my great-grandmother, Cynthia Jane Ousley, about 14 years previous. This occurred before I was born.

From the time I can remember, my mother always talked about her grandmother Ousley, her father's mother. As I was always told, this lady's name was Cynthia Jane Ousley, and "her maiden name was Cook." My mother would tell me that Cynthia married an Ousley; my grandfather was born in June 1872 in Union County, Tennessee, and then Cynthia's husband had died.

In the 1880 U.S. census of Union County, Tennessee, Cynthia and her son were living in the Baite Ousley House (built in 1840 and now on the National Register of Historic Places) with her cousin Alfred Sharp Ousley and his young family. Sometime in early 1881 with her brother, Jonathan, his wife, Martha, and their young family, Cynthia and her young son, William Lafayette Ousley, moved from Union County in East Tennessee to west-central Missouri, settling in the West Union community in Cass County. —Continued on page 6



Cabinet photo of
Cynthia Jane Ousley, c.1898

President's Message



Greetings from Tennessee where the leaves are changing and there is a definite chill in the air. I think we are going to get near freezing this week. I wish we could have a few more weeks of this beautiful fall weather. We have a great *Gazette* for you with several very interesting articles. I hope you enjoy them and that they give you some ideas for your own stories. William Robert Gann (Bill) has given us our cover article about finding out that he (and many generations back) is NOT a genealogical member of his mother's family! I'm sure this was a shock and unwelcome surprise. In this first of two parts, Bill "sets up" the situation for us in his search for the real maternal side of his family.

During our meeting in Natchez, the Board members discussed the ways to increase communications with all Ganns, with an emphasis on social media. That evening, our copy editor, Jean Harris was checking out the GHS&L Facebook page. She saw a post from a woman by the name of Sara Mason Tomerlin. There was posted a wonderful photo of her father, as a young soldier, and the story of his experiences during World War II. Jean immediately contacted Sara, obtaining permission to print his story, in his own words, in this issue (see page 10). This is an excellent example of the articles we always look for to publish in the *Gazette*. If you have something to share, please contact me or Jean Harris. We will be glad to help you put it together.

I have some exciting news. I received the results from my autosomal DNA testing from 23 and ME this past week. After years of speculation, I am 100% European. I have no significant Native American DNA. In fact 57% of my ancestors are from the British Isles and Ireland. The remaining come from France, Germany, and Norway. I have 978 matches to investigate and have already made contact with several individuals. I have had contact with someone who has Gann-Penney connections and who descends from Malinda Gann Penney. My research into the Rhea county Ganns suggested a connection and our DNA matches. I also have been communicating with a woman whose family has been in Washington County, Tennessee, for over 200 years. We have not yet figured out that connection. Wouldn't it be wonderful if it would lead to the wife of Thomas Gann or Adam, Sr? Anything is possible, and that is the reason why I wanted to do this testing. It opens up leads on our maternal lines. So far, I haven't learned anything conclusive. I am aware of five of us who have completed the testing. It will be interesting to compare our results. Through a process called triangulation, we can compare our results and develop areas of research. If you would like to be included in our analysis, let me know. I have also sent my DNA to Ancestry and am waiting on the results.

I received an email yesterday from a total stranger. He noticed a response to a query that I posted many years ago. He googled me and found my email. He hoped that he had the right Kay Silkey. (I think I am the only one in the world, so it would be pretty hard to get it wrong). He proceeded to tell me that he has a tintype photograph of my 2nd great grandmother and her sister that he wanted to share with me. I wrote him back and he sent me a link to his web page that contained many old photos of my Watkins, O'Bannon, and Creek family. Most of them I had never seen before. I am absolutely thrilled to have this collection of photographs. What a thoughtful gesture. He has no idea how much it means to me to have these.

We are also announcing the passing of a couple members of the Gann clan, John Vernon Gann and W. G. Willis (see page 14).

Charlie is working on the Gathering in June. I have already requested vacation time and am planning on having a great time in St. Louis. We have included a nice listing of sights in St. Louis (see page 3). I hope you will be able to join us.

Kay Silkey



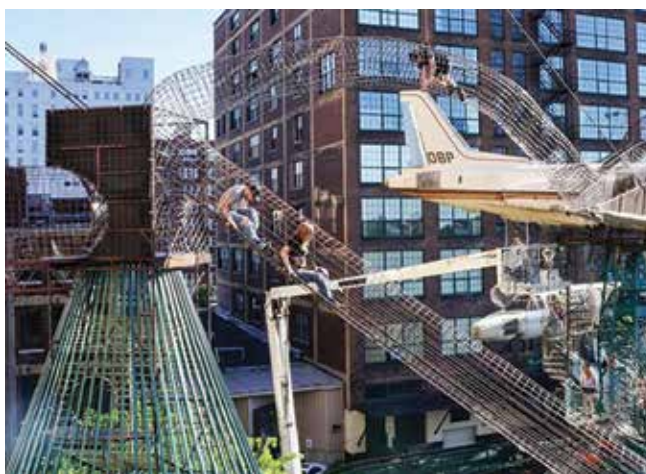
The Old Courthouse was built in downtown St. Louis from 1839 to 1856 as the second purpose-built county courthouse for St. Louis County.

The Missouri History Museum seeks to deepen the understanding of past choices, present circumstances, and future possibilities; strengthen the bonds of the community; and facilitate solutions to common problems. This facility and its website contain amazing exhibits, tours, family activities, and dining at the main building, located at Lindell and DeBaliviere in Forest Park, and genealogical research online and at the Library and Research Center at 225 South Skinker, across from Forest Park. Plan your visit at www.mohistory.org. Admission is free except for special exhibits.

MISSOURI HISTORY MUSEUM



CITY MUSEUM IN ST. LOUIS



Look close! Yes, you are seeing people crawling through wire tunnels in mid-air past real aircraft and various other not-to-be believed objects! This is MONSTROCITY, just one interactive part of the City Museum in St. Louis. It is the giant playground you wish you'd had when you were a kid. You can crawl through secret passageways, run in a human-sized hamster wheel, play in inflatable ball pits and even climb through a shaky wire tunnel attached to an airplane 50 feet in the air! See an amazing video at <http://www.citymuseum.org/pages/about-us-creative>. This place has more to explore (and ensure a good night's sleep for all) than we can possibly tell you!

—Continued on page 4

—*St. Louis Attractions, Cont'd from page 3*

THE ANHEUSER-BUSCH BREWERY (FEATURING GRANT'S FARM)



Adorable! Grant's Farm, named after President U.S. Grant who once lived on the land, is part of the Anheuser-Busch Brewery area. Free tram rides through the farm include both exotic and domestic animals, including the famous Anheuser-Busch Clydesdale horses, and many historical buildings. Tour the Old Lyon Schoolhouse building, which has been transformed into a museum housing hundreds of Anheuser-Busch artifacts. This is a great group activity for a lovely summer day. Download a map:



http://anheuser-busch.com/includes/images/GF_Map.pdf

The World's Fair of 1904 in St. Louis brought with it a walk-through flight cage commissioned by the Smithsonian Institution. St. Louisans fought for it to remain in the city once the Fair concluded, and it would later become a cornerstone for the Zoo. See special features, such as the Penguin & Puffin Coast, Sea Lion Sound (at right), Fragile Forest, Rivers Edge, the Insectarium, the Herpaterium, the Bird House, the Primate House, Big Cat Country, Bear Bluffs, and Antelope Area. Download a map, check admission and hours, and arrange for groups at: www.stlzoo.org.

SAINT LOUIS ZOO



MISSOURI BOTANICAL GARDENS



Founded in 1859, the 79-acre Missouri Botanical Garden is the nation's oldest botanical garden in continuous operation and an oasis in the city of St. Louis. Today, 153 years after opening, the Garden is a center for science, conservation, education and horticultural display. The beautiful features include the Japanese Garden (see left), the Magnolia Grove, the Sensory Garden, the Hosta Garden, the Dry Steambed Garden, the Maze, the Koi Fish Feeding Bridge, the Dwarf Conifer House, and many more! For a map and ticket information, go to:

www.missouribotanicalgarden.org

Agriculture, aviation, biology, chemistry, dinosaurs, energy, earth sciences, engineering, health, math, physical sciences, space, and technology are the subjects thoroughly covered in this one building. With available activities aimed toward various age groups and interests, including a planetarium and an IMAX theatre, there is something for all visitors. Download a map, ticket information, a list of events and workshops from the website at www.slsc.org.



ST. LOUIS SCIENCE CENTER



Can you look at this view from the top of the Gateway Arch (right) without your knees wobbling? You can't list the attractions of St. Louis without the city's most visible structure. See 30 miles in every direction and 200 years into the past, when Lewis and Clark set out on their great journey. Today, the Gateway Arch stands as the iconic monument symbolizing the westward expansion of this country. If you've never seen the grandeur of this architectural wonder or the breathtaking views of St. Louis 630 ft. in the air — now is your chance.

THE GATEWAY ARCH



THE ST. LOUIS MUSEUM OF TRANSPORTATION



From horse to horsepower, this mostly outdoor museum houses one of the largest and best collections of transportation vehicles in the world. It was founded in 1944 by citizens who had acquired the mule-drawn streetcar "Bellefontaine." It features over 70 locomotives, collections of automobiles, buses, streetcars, aircraft, horse-drawn vehicles, and riverboats. Talk about your planes, trains, and automobiles! For information, see:

www.transportmuseumassociation.org

While in Gateway Park, explore a significant part of U.S. history with a visit to the Old Courthouse, built between 1839 and 1862. Tour this architectural masterpiece with restored courtrooms and experience a time and place where Dred and Harriet Scott sued for their freedom and Virginia Minor fought for women's right to vote. Through special exhibits, learn about St. Louis' role in early settlers' movement into western America. You may also purchase your tickets to the Arch in this location. See www.gatewayarch.com.

THE OLD COURTHOUSE



THE ST. LOUIS ART MUSEUM



With collections ranging from African to Textile arts, the Saint Louis Art Museum collects, presents, interprets, and conserves works of art of the highest quality across time and cultures. The museum was founded in 1879, developing collections of original works of art spanning five millennia and six continents. Admission is free. Go to: www.slam.org. ■



Unanswered Question, Cont'd. from page 1

Since her son was a young boy of nine years, Cynthia worked in various homes as a “housekeeper” to support them.

At age 28 and in March 1901, my grandfather married Hattie A. Degen of Belton, Missouri, and Cynthia lived with them as part of their household. My mother was born in January 1902 in Peculiar, just a few miles from the West Union community.

Cynthia Jane was a stern woman, and my mother told me that she and her mother did not really like this “old lady” who demanded to be catered to day and night. When cold weather came, she would “take to her bed” upstairs in the family’s farmhouse, and the family had to bring her meals, carry the white china chamber pot up and down stairs, and also carry up warm water for bathing and then take away the used water afterwards.

Several times in later years, my mother told me that she and her mother actually laughed and jumped up and down the day that Cynthia Jane died in March 1917, since they would no longer have to cater to her constant demands. Cynthia was laid to rest in the Peculiar Cemetery where my grandfather had purchased several plots. My mother also told me in later years that her mother, Hattie, had said several times before her untimely death that she “did not want to be buried next to ‘that woman.’” When my grandmother Hattie was laid to rest in 1936, she was buried so that there was a vacant space between her grave and Cynthia’s. My grandfather was eventually buried in that space, to the right of my grandmother.

Ousley Cousins...

Over the years while growing up, I met several Ousley relations. Mary Ousley, a daughter of Jonathan, and her husband, Ralph Clark, from California would come to visit for a day or so in our hometown of Odessa, Missouri. My mother and I were never exactly sure just how we were related to these other Ousleys. Mother simply said that we were “just cousins.”

One day I came home from school and was told that Jim Ousley and his mother, Amy, had been there for a short visit; they were from Oregon. Jim’s father, Abner, had died in 1944 in Lake County, Oregon. However, my mother had known him as a young man in Cass County, Missouri. Abner was a son of Jonathan, the brother to Cynthia. As a young man about 25, Abner left Missouri and migrated to Oregon, where he met Amy E. Heryford in 1913, and they were married in 1915. Their son, James, was born there in 1917.


Another time coming home from school, my mother told me that a man had come by the house, wanting to know about the Cook family of Union County, Tennessee. My mother told him what very little she knew. He was from Alabama and was writing a book on the Cook family. That was the last we ever heard about that. I hope to identify and locate a copy of the book he wrote, but have little information on which to base a search, and there are many ‘Cook books’!

1948...

A few more years went by—it was now probably in the Fall of 1948. I clearly remember sitting in our living room one Sunday about noontime with my grandfather Ousley, waiting for my mother to finish Sunday dinner. I think my dad was outside working on his truck; it was just my grandfather and me in the room. I do not really know where this question came from, but I looked at my granddad and simply asked, **“Who was your father, Grandad?”** As our eyes met and to my complete surprise, he gave me a stone-cold look like I had never seen from him; then he turned and looked the other way. He never answered my question. The silence was absolute!

I knew I had asked something that should not have been said! For years afterwards, I always wondered why his response was so quick, so tense, so silent. Unfortunately, about five years later in January 1953 and at age 80, my grandfather Ousley died suddenly of a heart attack. I often wonder if I could have talked with him about his early life...would he have been more open, would he have answered some questions that were not too personal?

1957...

In May 1957, I moved to southern California to attend graduate school at UCLA. It was there where I eventually met Jim Ousley and his mother, Amy. Since their last visit with my mother, they had relocated 

from Oregon to Los Angeles. Through them, I quickly met several other “cousins” who lived in southern California. Unfortunately, cousin Mary (Ousley) Clark died in September of 1958 and her husband, Ralph, followed just over one month later, but I did have the pleasure of meeting them again before their deaths.

Over the next 26 years, I became close friends with Amy and Jim. We visited back and forth several times a year. Whenever my parents came for a visit, we always got together with Amy and Jim for a visit and for dinner at the Jonathan Club in Los Angeles. Amy was a very sociable and talkative person, with a great sense of humor and always seemed to enjoy laughing. Jim was cordial, friendly, but reserved; he just did not like to share any personal details about himself!



Jim and Amy Ousley in 1979 at the home of Bill Gann, Claremont, California.

The mystery begins to unravel...

In the fall of 1979, I invited Jim and Amy to my home in Claremont, California, for dinner. As we sat in the living room before dinner, I said that I wanted to get a piece of paper and make a chart of “just how we are related.”

As I left the room, I heard Amy, who was hard of hearing, say to Jim in a loud voice,

“Shall we tell him, Jim? Shall we tell him?”

As I sat down next to her with the coffee table in front of us, she turned to me and said,

“I will tell you the truth since you asked, but I never wanted to tell your mother.”

She then stated that her husband, Abner Ousley, had told her this information many years ago. Abner was born in 1887 in Cass County, Missouri, and his parents, Jonathan and Martha (Lay) Ousley, had lived for many years near Cynthia and my grandfather, first in Union County, Tennessee, and then in Cass County, Missouri, so Abner would have been familiar with family relationships and family stories from Tennessee.

Amy went on to say that Cynthia was “born an Ousley and had never married; that she had your grandfather out of wedlock.” My quick response to this statement was that I had “always been told that Cynthia was a Cook.” All of what Amy had just said was totally contrary to what I had been told for over 45 years as “family history.”

Amy continued to say that this family story of Cynthia’s purported marriage and widowhood was not true according to Amy’s husband, Abner. It was simply a pretense created to mask the truth and maybe to protect Cynthia’s young son from the social stigma of being illegitimate.

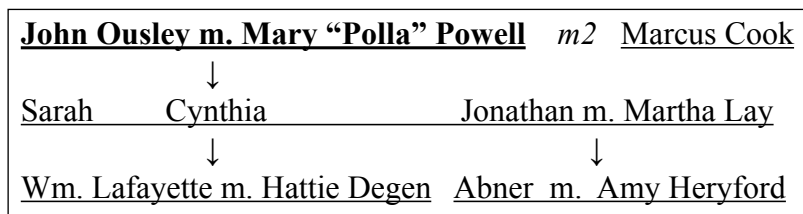


Chart of Cynthia and son as told by Amy Ousley. Abner was a first cousin to William Lafayette, making Jim and my mother, Audrey, second cousins.

—Continued on page 8

Unanswered Question, Cont'd. from page 7

What is genealogy?...

At this point in my life, I barely knew what genealogy meant. But I knew that I had to find out which story was factually true. I went to the local library and found the 1850 U.S. Census of Tennessee. There, I found an entry for a Mary A. Ousley with her three children: Sarah, Cynthia, and Jonathan, living in the Jonathan Powell household in Union County. According to the 1850 Mortality Schedule, their father, John Ousley, died of fever on 27 March 1850, and that was the reason Mary and her children were living with her parents. Well, there it was...just as Amy had said!

Next, I found the marriage of a Marquirus [Marcus] Cook to a Mary Ousley on 23 May 1852, just two years after the death of John! I quickly looked at the 1860 census of Union County, Tennessee, and found that these three Ousley children were then living in the Marcus Cook household with their mother, Mary, now Mrs. Marcus Cook. So, now I knew that their mother (Mary A. "Polly" Powell Ousley) had subsequently married a man named Cook. Here it was, recorded in black and white in a primary source document, actually written on the spot where they lived! This made it obvious that Cynthia was the stepdaughter of Marcus Cook and that she was actually born an Ousley from her mother's first marriage. Cynthia did not marry an Ousley; and there is no record of a marriage for her to anyone, either in Tennessee or later in Missouri.

With this "new" information, I looked in the telephone directory of the Maynardville, Tennessee, area and found a number of entries for Ousleys. I immediately wrote to several and got a very quick response from a woman named Grace A. Ousley (1904–1993). Grace's letter was so warm and welcoming that I knew I had to meet her in person. I quickly arranged to fly to Knoxville from Los Angeles.

Upon meeting Grace in May 1980, she and I both immediately and totally "fell" for each other. We just felt like family. She was the most wonderful, kind-hearted lady. She was totally open and honest. As we sat down in the living room of her small farmhouse, she quickly said,

"Bill, I will tell you the truth about your family, but I do not want to tell your mother!"

Grace went on to repeat the same story that Amy Ousley had told me. Grace was absolutely positive that she had the complete details, except she did not know who the father was of my grandfather. As I spent time with Grace over the next two days, I realized that she was an encyclopedia of information on the people and families of Union County. Grace was born and raised there—some 77 years of age at the time of my visit—she knew everybody! Unfortunately, Grace died in March 1993.

Also, while in the Knoxville, Tennessee area, I met with Edith (Ousley) Reed, a family researcher whose files were outstanding, but she did not have anything on my Cynthia or her family. Unfortunately at that time, Edith had not had the opportunity to meet and talk with Grace, even though they lived only about 30 minutes from each other.

Upon joining the Owsley Family Historical Society, I was impressed with the amount and quality of research that had been completed by various competent researchers, especially by Ronny Bodine. If it was there, Ronny could find it, write it up and publish for all of us to read and be amazed! Yet, the surprise was still to come!


The BIG change in 2005 ! ...

In 2005 at the annual OFHS meeting, it was announced that John Owsley, the Virginia-Tennessee ancestor of many of us in the Society and heretofore believed to be the birth son of Thomas II and Ann, his wife, was not actually the birth son of Thomas II. This fact was established through Y-chrom DNA testing of the other five known sons of Thomas II and his wife, Ann. The roar of disappointment and disbelief was deafening in the room. Some cried; some yelled; some almost fainted! This was a day not to be forgotten in American Owsley history!

Or, should we say, "non" Owsley history?

A two-times, non-DNA Ousley...

Suddenly, I was without any Ousley DNA! I had just lost hundreds of wonderful ancestors; I felt bereft, lost...so who am I? I needed some DNA, a real "DNA fix!" So where to go?

The John [Hudson] Owsley, the birth son of Ann (Hudson) Owsley, had died in 1764, and his bones would probably not be viable for DNA testing even if we knew where he was buried in 

Loudoun County, Virginia. However, my grandfather William Ousley, who died in 1953, is buried nearby in Cass County, Missouri. . . and the forensic scientists in two different DNA testing labs told me that if his remains were in dry conditions, the DNA would probably be in good condition, and hence, yield a positive result for a Y-chrom DNA profile.

Can I have his remains “dug up?” ...

I called the Peculiar Cemetery and asked, but got next to zero information. I quickly called a funeral home in Cass County and spoke with the owner/director who was absolutely clueless! I then called a funeral home director in my hometown of Odessa, and he had lots of information to share. He had actually participated in a number of grave removals.

Next, I called the School of Law Library at the University of Missouri. The reference librarian there gave me the full Web address to the *Missouri Revised Statutes*. There, we found the exact Statute about exhumation, etc. From this Statute, I learned that as a half- or full-blood descendant of the deceased, I have the authority under State law to exhume the remains. This was good news! A staff attorney in the State Attorney General’s office later confirmed that my reading and interpretation of this *Statute* was correct.

OK...where do we go from here?

In talking with the funeral home which handled my grandfather’s service in 1953, I found that he was buried in a vault, but the kind of vault was not specified. How easy is it to open a vault? And how was the vault sealed?

These were questions that eventually came up in the discussion with the funeral director who is now committed to working with me. I also learned that sufficient space is needed for digging around the vault so that it can either be lifted up or some working space will be needed to remove the vault lid if the iron handles are usable, then open the lid of the casket to retrieve specimens for DNA testing. All of this is not an easy task!



Charcoal-enhanced portrait from an original tintype of William Lafayette Ousley as a young man, c. 1900. This type of portrait, popular in the latter part of the 19th century and into the early 20th century, could be purchased from many sources and made from a photograph.

—To be continued in the next issue.

Burial site of (left to right) Hattie Ousley, her husband William Lafayette Ousley, and his mother, Cynthia Jane Ousley. Cynthia lived with Hattie and William Lafayette Ousley. She engendered such strong dislike from her daughter-in-law, that Hattie insisted on being buried away from her mother-in-law, resulting in William being placed—or ‘caught’—between them, much as he was in life.

That placement also poses a problem for the prospect of opening William’s grave to retrieve a DNA sample. Since there is little open space on either side of his grave, and the graves in this old cemetery are closer together than in many newer cemeteries, there may not be enough room to get lift equipment in place to raise the vault.

Cynthia by her actions in life toward Hattie and the enmity she caused may have just reached out from the grave to stymie the process, and thus protect her secret once again.

Ousley family plot in Peculiar Cemetery, Cass County, Missouri.



Clyde Mason: “We Won our Territory Foot by Foot”

submitted by Sara Kay (Mason) Tomerlin

The great-grandson of Cornelius Gann, Clyde Mason was Missouri born and raised. The following story of his World War II military service is in his own words. Permission to print and all photos were kindly provided by his daughter, Sara Kay (Mason) Tomerlin.

“In 1925, I was born near Elkland, Missouri. Years later, after moving to Springfield, Missouri, I attended the Springfield Public School System. During my high school years I was drafted out of high school at the age of eighteen to enter the U.S. Army in August of 1943.

“My basic training was in Camp Fannin, Texas where I spent four months under the roughest infantry training that could be imagined. After Camp Fannin, I was sent overseas and landed in Hawaii for four months. I was assigned to the 38th Infantry Division. We trained very hard during that time, before moving on to New Guinea, where I was for about six months.

“In New Guinea we were camped in the jungle where the heat and the mosquitoes were so unbearable. One day we were listening to a short wave radio and Tokyo Rose was on telling us that the 38th Infantry Division was getting ready to leave New Guinea for the Philippines and saying, *Boys, you will never reach your destination.*

“We did not know we were headed for the Philippines, but we found out in about two weeks when we were in a large convoy headed for Leyte. We arrived in Leyte and were there about six weeks during the rainy season preparing for the invasion of Luzon. The big war was about to begin.

“It was January, 1945 when we got our orders to move on. We went to the docks and boarded the *U.S.S. Baxter* with all our equipment. We were then in a large convoy. We were told that we were going to invade Luzon and we were going to hit it with full force and attack a heavy armed force of Japanese. We were told, *Battles will be won, but expect many casualties. This is the real thing and we will accomplish and fulfill our mission.*

“We were a complete armed force and very tense. One night we were given word that we would make landing about dawn the next morning. We then made a huge landing. We went down the side ropes and entered the landing



Clyde Mason, left, with an unidentified fellow soldier, was a rifleman and front line combat radio operator.

crafts. We were about two hundred feet from shore when the gates opened and we waded the water up to our waists, holding all our equipment above our heads.

“We landed at La Paz, Luzon. What a surprise to have found a large number of Filipinos waving little American flags. They told us that the heavy Japanese armed forces knew we were coming and had went inland about twenty miles near Subic Bay. We began marching all day in the hot sun to catch up with them. We were exhausted walking so far.

“We reached Subic Bay and dug in for the night outside the town of Subic, knowing we were about to face the Japanese Army. This was the area where the Japanese tortured and marched the American forces through Bataan, after they invaded the Philippines. This was known as the Bataan Death March.

“After a horrible night in our fox holes, scared to death we started our battle of Zig-Zag Pass and on into Bataan. We began to see dead bodies of the American and Japanese soldiers as we were now at war against a very strong army. I was in the 152nd Infantry Regiment and was a rifleman and combat radio operator on the front lines with the line companies supplying communications.



“One of the main targets of the Japs was to knock out communications, which I experienced many times. Snipers were everywhere and bullets were going past my ears. I hit the dirt, nobody knows how many times. The jungle conditions were so rough, as you could not see the enemy. The dead had begun to appear and increase. Digging foxholes was a continuous thing. We always dreaded for night to come. We would always hear strange noises as the enemy used code sounds, sounding like birds.

“We won our territory, foot by foot. It was slow going in the jungles. Fighting increased very heavily as we went through Zig-Zag Pass. Casualties were mounting up. Our artillery was a great help as they shot over us to soften up the enemy so we could go in. Our mortar and machine gunners inflicted heavy casualties on the Japanese.

“Our flame-throwers were a deadly weapon as they burned whole hillsides and brought the enemy out of their caves, pillboxes, and other concealed places. The enemy would not surrender, but we did take a large number of prisoners.



Clyde Mason with his sweetheart and future wife, Pauline (Clayton) Mason

“We saw great numbers of Japanese dead. There were so many dead they had to be piled up in large numbers. After a few days they were so decomposed. That had to be the worst smell that anyone could ever

imagine. The flies off the dead would get on your food when it was brought to us.

“We fought the battle with three regiments, the 149th, 151st, and the 152nd Infantry. The 34th Regiment was a very excellent fighting force that fought with us all throughout the war.

“The 34th Infantry was fighting along with us and one night the conditions were so terrible. The next morning, we crawled out of our holes and searched for the dead. Each day we would have a count of the dead and wounded. A little later we saw what was not a pretty sight. Body parts were all over the road. It looked like our

dear boys had been slaughtered by enemy mortar shells. Later we saw some U.S. Army trucks leaving the area, loaded with body parts. These sights are still in my mind today.

“One day I misplaced my M-1 rifle and did not know what to do. I was so scared. I found it leaning against a tree and never did let that happen again. One

afternoon a scout plane radioed a message that he had spotted approximately one thousand fully armed enemy soldiers coming down the road, heading our way. We were advised to move back several hundred yards and re-dig. It was very hard to give up territory we fought for that day. We formed a perimeter and placed our machine gunners in different locations.

“Darkness came and the strong enemy attack began. That was the worst battle that I was ever in. Three mortar shells hit the side of my foxhole and shook rocks down on me. Flares were going up and lit up the area. We could hear the screams all night from both the Japanese and Americans. Our machine gunners piled the Japs up in large numbers and our gunners also lost their lives defending our position. There were many casualties.

“Everything was quiet toward morning. Many enemy soldiers escaped because we could not account for all that had been reported. We began to regroup and advance again. Going down the road, we heard the sound of fresh running water. We were about to fill up our canteens when someone yelled, “Leave that stuff alone, they may have poisoned it.” Water was very precious.

“Most of us were beginning to get very sick with dysentery. Flies were all over us and it was very hard to take. We heard running water down below and found a little river flowing. There were about forty men in our group and we pulled our clothes and shoes off and got in that water. We washed our clothing and ourselves. What a relief! We were in sniper territory, but the way that we felt, we just didn’t care anymore.



Clyde Mason's Military Portrait

—Continued on page 12

Clyde Mason, Cont'd. from page 11

“An older fellow was with us and spoke up saying, *Fellows, I am your new Regimental Commander. I am Colonel Ives.* We didn’t know why he would be with us, but he was a real soldier. He would show up with different units at any place and time. A great commander he was!

“The fighting seemed to have ended, but we had to be careful in times like this. The next morning something strange happened. Our regiments linked up as the war in Bataan had ended. One of the big battles of the Pacific area had now ended. The liberation of Bataan was complete and the once powerful Japanese 16th

Imperial Army had been defeated. The Bataan and Zig-Zag Pass Battles lasted sixteen days and nights under conditions that are very difficult to fully describe.

I want to thank all those brave and gallant men who gave all they had of themselves to fight for and protect freedom. Above all, I want to thank God for the Victory that he allowed us to achieve and the supernatural strength he gave all of us to endure. Amen.

Clyde Mason
38th Infantry Division
U.S. Army”



Above left, Clyde Mason’s military service plaque and, above right, the cemetery stone for he and his wife, Pauline,



Above (l-r) Clyde Mason; daughters Janice Mason, Sara (Mason) Tomerlin, Joyce Mason, Carol (Mason) Reed, and wife Pauline (Clayton) Mason

At right is a photo of Sarah (Gann) Ray and her family. The two adults seated are Sarah “Sally” (Gann) Ray and her husband, Noah H. Ray. The children in the front row are (l-r) Cora Emaline (Ray) Mason, Laura Ray, and May Ray. The children in the back row are (l-r) Lyda Ray, James Ray, and Minnie Ray.

Sarah’s father was Cornelius Gann who served in the Union Army 1861–1862.

A Life of Sharing

Memories submitted by Nathan Woody Gann and Tom Gann
from a Baylor University publication.



that shaped Houston both then and now.

But one picture in particular would stand out. It's a photograph of Benegene Gann Kring (BA '66) — a rare woman among all the men. In life, just like in that yearbook, Benegene couldn't help but stand out.

"She was a trailblazer," said her brother, Tom Gann (BBA '68, MBA '72), "but you can't describe her with one simple word. She was amazing."

Natalie Gann Crowson (BA '74), Benegene and Tom's sister, describes her as "unbelievable. She was adventurous. She wasn't afraid of anything."

Remembering their sister, Tom and Natalie use words like generous, spirited, organized, role model, leader, teacher, and humble to describe her. Only a year after a long battle with breast cancer claimed Benegene's life, in October 2012, it's clear that her life continues to resonate.

"Anything that she loved, she shared," Natalie remembers. "Her enthusiasm, her travel, her love, even her monies and assets, she shared. She was always taking friends and family on trips, organizing parties and inviting people to share."

Benegene's career with Exxon Mobil — where she was one of just three women geophysicists when she arrived — was marked by many significant projects that took her all over the globe. The impact she had on individuals she worked with during her career and the many friends she made and cherished caused

an overflow crowd at her memorial service. But as important as her professional achievements were, she also had an impact on the people in her hometown of Lufkin, Texas, where she was a charter member of Denman Avenue Baptist Church, helped with her high school class reunion and organized the annual gatherings of her Girl Scout Troop.

"She kept up with everyone," Tom said. "Old friends from Baylor, family, co-workers — she connected people. It was a thrill for us to see them all show up for her memorial service."

The outpouring of love was a fitting tribute to someone who gave so much. When Benegene died, she left gifts to numerous surprised friends and family members, including cousins, college roommates, nieces, longtime nail technician, and even her loyal lawn maintenance man.

A LOVE FOR BAYLOR

In addition to bequests to Angelina College, to more fully fund an endowment established in her mother's memory, and to the Lufkin High School Alumni Association, to fund an endowment in her grandfather's memory, she also gave to Baylor, establishing with the bulk of her estate the Benegene Gann Kring Endowed Fund for General Operating Expenses. The fund is designated for Baylor's use wherever there is the greatest need, as Benegene wanted to give Baylor maximum flexibility in applying her gift to the University's priorities and opportunities.

"Even now, she's teaching us how to do things, teaching us how to give," Tom said. "She wouldn't give money to an organization she didn't believe in. And she loved Baylor throughout her whole life — shared that love with us and modeled it."

While reading the tribute, Tom and Natalie both had tears in their eyes as the letter drew to a close: "Benegene loved to travel and chose some out-of-the-way places, but I think I know where she is now. I think she's organizing Baylor alumni and singing 'That Good Old Baylor Line' in heaven." ■

In Memoriam

Johnny Vernon Gann

November 22, 1937 – August 23, 2014



John Vernon Gann, Jr, 76, died on Saturday, August 23, 2014 at his home on Lake Ft. Gibson, Oklahoma surrounded by family. He was born and raised in Muskogee, the son of John Sr. and Edith Joy (Green) Gann. He was a graduate of Central High School in Muskogee and earned a Bachelor of Science degree at Northeastern State University.

John and Wilma (Lane) Gann married in 1958. He was proud to serve his country in the United States Air Force Reserve and the United States Air Force. John enjoyed a long, 36-year career with Oklahoma Natural Gas in Muskogee, that included promotions and moving to both Enid and Alva, Oklahoma, until his retirement.

John then settled into his long awaited home on the lake. John loved Bluegrass Music and for over 30 years traveled to festivals and shows. His Bluegrass friends became his second family, sharing his passion for the traditions of Bluegrass Music. John was honored to be elected as Chamber President for several terms, was the President of the Muskogee Jaycees, and an active member of the ONG Retirement Organization. He was buried in Greenhill Cemetery.

W. G. “Dub” Willis

August 11, 1929 – September 7, 2014



W. G. “Dub” Willis, 85, of Adair, passed away on Sunday, September 7, 2014 in Vinita, Oklahoma. Dub was born August 11, 1929 in Salina, Oklahoma; the son of Virge and Minnie (Gann) Willis. He married Elizabeth “Betty” Arko on April 25, 1955 in Spavinaw, Oklahoma.

They lived and raised their children (Tommy, Donnie, Dusty, and Sherrie) in Big Cabin, Oklahoma. Dub was a cattle and dairy farmer and raised AQHA horses. He would always look forward to roping and baling hay. Dub especially loved spending time with his family and friends and enjoyed each moment he had to spend with them. He leaves behind many wonderful memories and will be missed by all who knew and loved him.

Dub was buried in the Big Cabin Cemetery in Big Cabin, Oklahoma.

*Minnie Gann was the daughter of Gillis Gilbert Gann and Maggie E. Rockwell. Her RIN in the registry is RIN 29585. ■

Editor’s Note

A mistake was made in the article covering the life of Temple Houston in the Summer, 2014, issue. Temple’s father, Sam Houston, was never involved with the Confederacy but he was Commanding General of the Republic of Texas Army, twice President of Texas, Governor of Texas and Tennessee, State Representative to the United States from both Texas and Tennessee, U. S. Senator from Texas among others. I apologize for the incorrect information. — Tom Gann and Jean Harris

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Membership Renewals: If you're not sure if you need to renew your GHS&L membership, check the address on the back page of this issue. If you have not yet renewed, you'll see the year "2014" printed. If you have renewed, the year designation will be "2015." If your membership has lapsed, send payment to Cathie Schoppenhorst at the address listed below.

Annual Meeting Registration: Members will soon receive registration packets for the GHS&L Meeting in St. Louis, Missouri.

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Membership in GHS&L runs July 1st to June 30th. \$25 per year for an individual or library; \$35 per year for a contributing or family membership (all members of an immediate family at one address). Membership is open to researchers, family historians, librarians, archivists, professional genealogists, or anyone associated with the field of genealogy and family history.

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TO:



St. Louis Zoo visitors in the interactive tunnel with sea lions.

**Please plan to attend the 2015 GHS&L Meeting
to be held June 18 – 21, in St. Louis, Missouri.**