

Finding Family – March 2021

## **Hidden treasures at the Napa Valley Genealogy Library**

By Sue Ziemski

A library is like Aladdin's cave, filled with hidden treasures. The Napa Valley Genealogy Library has a large collection of family histories. Some of them are publications prepared by professionals on historically well-known families. But many of the volumes represent the efforts of family members to document their own family history. And many of them are local Napa County families.

While browsing through these books, I discovered some interesting things. A set of books on the Martin Family consisted of four volumes compiled by Lillian W. Wilt. She created a comprehensive overview of her Martin family from colonial times through the 1800s. She completed her work in about 1932. Much of the material in these volumes referred exclusively to the Martin family and related families. But there is also some general and useful information on others.

There is information on military activities, government formation, tax lists, land purchases, and much more. This research was done at a time when none of this information was available on the internet. That meant that all the documentation had to be obtained in person at separate locales. This must have taken years to compile and organize four bound volumes.

In many cases, the complete document that mentions a Martin member has been transcribed, so other peoples' names are also included. This type of documentation makes research by others easier. For instance, one volume includes a list of Kentucky counties as they existed in 1810. As the names of counties continually change over time, this kind of information can be invaluable. This volume also includes some military history of Kentucky's role in the War of 1812.

A volume on Virginia also lists the Virginia counties in 1810. An interesting item is the history of Brandon, Virginia, which includes the raid of Benedict Arnold during the Revolutionary War after he had defected to the British Army.

The volume titled "Northwest Territory: Ohio" consists of territorial papers and petitions from territorial residents of the territory northwest of the Ohio River to various governmental agencies regarding such issues as land titles, borderline disputes, road and infrastructure needs, tax issues, and appointments.

Each transcribed document has the names of all the signers listed. Other territories are also covered: Southwest Territory, Mississippi Territory, Indiana Territory, Orleans Territory, Michigan Territory, and Louisiana-Missouri Territory. These documents start in 1799 and continue through 1836.

A notation by Lillian Wilt in this volume states that this information was obtained from original documents located in Washington, D.C. The documents were discovered in an old warehouse on Florida Avenue where the Roosevelt administration had discarded

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them. Due to her efforts, they have now been returned to the Library of Congress. In 1932, she was given an award for research by the National Genealogical Society and an award from the Library of Congress for her research on the Martin line.

A second volume on Ohio includes a census of people residing in Columbia, Ohio in December 1789, a list of forts in the early history of Ohio, a list of Martin men from New Jersey that settled in Ohio, the formation of Ohio counties, militia lists and orders, and sketches of prominent men of Ohio. Much of this information is from the very early history of the territory.

This article is only a brief recap of some items of interest; there is too much information to include it all. Even if you are not related to a “Martin,” there is so much here of value. Each volume is a great asset for researchers on genealogy. A great achievement by a dedicated genealogist. What a hidden treasure that might have been lost except for a library.

For the time being the Napa Valley Genealogical Society is open by appointment only. You may call 707-252-2252 or email to [research@napagensoc.org](mailto:research@napagensoc.org). to leave a message. A staffer will contact you to make arrangements for your visit to the library.

Visit our website at [napagensoc.org](http://napagensoc.org).