



# Austin Families Association of America

## Newsletter

Look for us on the Web:  
<http://www.afoa.org/>

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## A Collective Family Tree

Immigration is both an ongoing chapter in the story of America, and a thread running through the family stories that have been posted on the Internet since the launch earlier this year of "My History is America's History," a national millennium project. "We feel like every American is a historian at heart," says William R. Ferris, chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities, which is sponsoring the project, and these family stories are "a microcosm of the history of our nation Ferris wants

"My History" to help make America become alive for students from kindergarten through 12th grade. "It animates history when you can see your own family lodged in it, whether it is the civil rights movement or World War II. All of us have had loved ones, family, neighbors that we felt very close to. When they die, we realize the door is closed forever on knowing them."

The "My History Is America's History" web site (<http://www.myhistory.org>) yields a treasury of stories - stories about Native American ancestors, women who pioneered in the Wild West, soldiers who died in Vietnam, World War II heroism. There are stories of forebears who fought in the Civil War, of those who came to America seeking religious freedom, of those who fought for racial equality.

The web site is designed as a virtual "front porch" where families may exchange stories, post photographs and create family trees, using a link to the web site of Genealogy.com, a partner in the venture. The site offers searchers the tools and links to conduct their own research into their family trees.

Copies of the full-color 98 page guidebook, "My History is America's History," have been sent to

more than 16,000 libraries nationwide.

Some criticism of doing your genealogy on the web has surfaced, and this site, like others that receive data submitted by the general public, cannot verify the data or vouch for its accuracy. Too often, those on the Internet are just passing around information, taking whatever they get from some-body as gospel. (This is true also for AFAOA data that we present on our web site or on our research CD-ROM). Indeed, the defining motto for the researcher should be, "There's no truth without

proof."

The submissions, he adds, "are sort of like folk tales, stories that have been told in families. And you have the feeling of the dinner table conversation, an intimacy that is really very, very powerful."

Ferris quotes an African proverb: "When an old man or old woman dies, a library burns to the ground."



## 2001 National Austin Convention in Planning Stages

The 2000 convention attendees chose Pittsfield, Massachusetts to be the site for the 2001 National Austin Convention. The 2001 convention details are still being finalized by Dr. Michael Austin, Director of the Austins of America Genealogy Society with whom the AFAOA jointly sponsors the annual convention.

The convention will be held at the Crowne Plaza Pittsfield, 1 West Street, Pittsfield, MA 01201, telephone 1-800-2-CROWNE (1-800-227-6963) on July 27, 28 and 29, 2001. To enable genealogical

Please see "Convention," page 4



## New Members Welcomed

### Evelyn Austin Tuttle

14710 River Forest Drive  
Houston, TX 77079  
evybilltex@aol.com

*Lawrence Hamilton Austin, b. 1886 Denver, CO; d. 1968 CT*

### Mysta Austin Ward

116 Bannock Place  
Missoula, MT 59803  
hosso@montana.com

*Lawrence Wesley Austin, b. 24 Oct 1899 OR  
Merchant Austin, sp. Mysta Rice*

### Marty Austin Miller

80 Beech Street  
Milford, NH 03305-4403  
millem4@aol.com

*Abraham Austin, b. 1762; d. 1853 nr. Finchville, NY*

### Paul Sullivan

304 Newbury St. #319  
Boston, MA 02115

*Callie M. Austin, b. 10 Jun 1882 Senath, MO; d. 28 Dec 1927*

## Renewal of the AFAOA Web Site is Now Underway

There is excitement all over cyberspace (well, at least we hope so). First, we will soon be introducing a new Web site address: [www.afoa.org](http://www.afoa.org). We hope that the new address will be easier for everyone to use, and also harder to forget. But don't use it yet - we'll tell you when.

Second, we have been hard at work trying to create an updated Website. Our main goals are to make the site easier to use and to facilitate communication among AFAOA members. We also hope to become more visible to visitors and to hopefully recruit some new members.

Among the new features we are including are:

- 1) An Internet Query Board
- 2) A bulletin board to provide up-to-date information on such items as the convention, database updates, etc.
- 3) Easier navigation to the Austin databases.

So please send me any queries that you would like to have posted. This will make your queries visible in cyberspace and should yield more replies.

Any Web site is under constant revision, and this one will be no different. We hope these changes will benefit everybody. Remember that this is YOUR site -- we want to make it as useful as possible. Once we become operational, I welcome your comments, criticisms, and suggestions.

**Joy Davis**

Don't forget - our current web site address is:  
<http://www.afoa.org>

### George Estes Partin

3141 Scotland Road  
Memphis, TN 38128  
gpartim@beanison.com

*Verna Ellen Austin, b. 1893 Decatur Co., TN; d. 1990  
Memphis, TN*

### Diane Gunter Borgman

110 Bruns Place Court  
St. Peters, MO 63376-5251  
dborgman@mail.win.org

*D. S. Austin, b. 1827 TN; d. 1880 Obion, TN*

### Virginia Jaynette Austin

1246 Scenic Drive  
North Muskegon, MI 49445  
gingeraustin@webtv.net

*Thomas Wilson Austin, b. MD; d. 30 Jul 1876 IN*

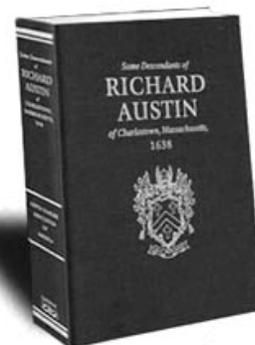
### Ralph A. Austin

4141 Birchwood Drive  
Liverpool, NY 13090  
rav1013682@aol.com

*Ira B. Austin, b. 1841(44) Vergennes, VT; d. 1907  
Plattsburgh, NY*

## AFAOA Items for Sale

The AFAOA has published a hard cover book on Richard Austin of Charlestown, 1638, and offers it for sale to members at the price of \$55 + \$5 for shipping and handling (\$65 + \$5 for S & H for non-members). The book starts where Edith Austin Moore stopped in 1968 in her documentation of this descendency, and updates, corrects and adds newer Austin generations. An 18 page supplement listing additions submitted to the authors after publication will be shipped with all book orders. The 18 page supplement is also available to owners of the book for free via e-mail attachment or in hard copy form (please remit \$2.50 for repro & post-age).



Also being offered by the AFAOA is the Research CD-ROM (in PC versions only). It contains searchable Word and Acrobat files for 35 Austin lines, the 70 field notebooks of Edith Austin Moore, portions of Janet Austin Curtis' research, and past *Newsletter* editions. The cost for the disk

is \$5 which includes the costs of production, and S & H. Please send your order letter and your check for either or both items to Lois Cody, 336 Pleasant Hill Dr., Cincinnati, OH 45215-

## Gathering Genealogical Data

(From Ancestry.com Daily News, 9 August 2000, courtesy of AFAOA member Kathi Kobel)

For centuries, genealogy was an oral tradition among the peoples of the world. In virtually every region, tribe, or clan, at least one person had the responsibility of memorizing the genealogy of the group, sharing it when necessary (at a birth or marriage, for example), and passing the genealogy on to the next generation. Quite often, the individual entrusted with this duty was a highly respected member of the community.

While this tradition may not continue in much of the western world today, we are fortunate that vestiges of this practice have survived in most families regardless of their ethnic heritage. Usually at least one person in every family (referred to as a gatekeeper or flamekeeper) knows a significant amount of that family's history. These people are perhaps the best source of a family's genealogical information.

In Step Three we will suggest ways that the beginning genealogist can utilize this outstanding source of information. We realize that some families do not have a "flamekeeper" and we want to share some tips on gathering information from other family members even if they feel they know little about the family's history. Also, we will suggest some methods of gathering information from people who are not a direct part of your family, yet who may prove valuable in providing information for your research.

There are six basic methods of collecting information from your family members or others who may have information useful to your project. Each of these will be examined in detail in a continuing *Newsletter* series. We cover items 1 and 2 in this issue.

1. Formal personal interview
2. Informal personal interview
3. Telephone interview
4. Letter writing
5. Querying
6. Electronic correspondence

### 1. FORMAL PERSONAL INTERVIEW

While this title sounds somewhat stuffy, we are referring to a process where your primary goal is meeting with a family member to gather information. There are several books on the market that cover this topic, including "How To Tape Instant Oral Biographies" (New York: Guarionex Press, 1992) by Bill Zimmerman, but the basic rules are the same.

First, be certain to contact the person you wish to interview well in advance. Explain the nature of your project and the type of information you are seeking. This is especially important if you will be interviewing someone with whom you have had little or no contact in the past. The person being interviewed must be comfortable with you and the topic(s). In our own experience we had several opportunities to interview my paternal grandmother, but she was never comfortable discussing her family's past. Unfortunately, she would not supply us with any information on her father's family—the one we needed most at the time.

Please see "Data Gathering, page 5



## PRESIDENT'S CORNER

The year 2000 is rapidly coming to a close and the time has come to reflect on the highlights of the year and the status of AFAOA. Are we continuing to accomplish our objectives?

We definitely are continuing to "gather, preserve and disseminate Austin genealogies". New Austin lines have been presented on the AFAOA web site, as compilers were found, and more databases are being prepared. Liz Carlin assumed responsibility for materials pertaining to the Southern States, leaving Bonnie Bigolin free to concentrate on the Northern States. A major effort has been made to update existing Southern Austin lines.

The production of an Austin Research CD-ROM was a significant advance in establishing "a specialized database of Austin information". By this means, the transcribed research notes of Edith Austin Moore and Janet Curtis, in addition to all the compiled databases, have been made easily available for digital search. This productive research aid is now available to all AFAOA members.

Another interesting National Austin Convention brought many of us together in August, "fostering friendships" both old and new. There were several exciting success stories as attendees searched our computer databases.

Membership remains healthy – 331 at last count.

In the coming year, remember that volunteers are still needed to transcribe manuscripts and compile databases. Be generous with your time; contact Bonnie or Liz to say you'll help. (Many thanks to those who have!) Stories about your interesting Austin ancestors and how you found them would be appreciated by all of us. Send them to Jim, our newsletter editor. Continue digging for your Austin roots; share what you find with others; and begin now to make plans for the 2001 gathering in Pittsfield.

**Happy New Year!**

**Alice Austin Martin  
AFAOA President**

**The deadline for the Newsletter  
Spring Issue is Saturday, 17 March  
2001. Please send all articles to the  
Editors.**

## Convention

Continued from page 1

research both before and after the weekend convention, a block of 30 rooms has been reserved for the interval starting Sunday, 22 July through Thursday, 2 August. These rooms will be held for attendees until 27 June. The quoted room rates are \$109.00 for Sunday through Thursday, and \$139.00 Friday and Saturday. All rooms include HBO, AM/FM clock radio with alarm, 2 telephones with data port, coffee maker, hair dryer, iron and ironing board. Consisting of 179 rooms, the hotel has designated 9 entire floors as non-smoking.

The 2001 National Austin Convention will start with a lobby reception and sign-in from noon to 5:30 PM on Friday the 26th. We usually gather together for dinner in a local restaurant and continue to meet with old friends and to catch up on where everybody has gotten in their Austin research. The regular sessions are held on Saturday and on Sunday with speakers both from within the two sponsoring Austin organizations and from local genealogical research libraries.

Ample time is provided for computer access to the extensive Austin resources, for individual help in research from our genealogists, or computer help from experts. There is also a time for scanning valuable photographs of our ancestors, thereby preserving them in digital format. On Sunday evening all attend the annual banquet with a keynote speaker, awards, and a final goodbye until next year.

Located in surrounding communities are a multitude of historical and cultural institutions. Besides the Berkshire Athenaeum, there is the Berkshire Museum in Pittsfield, the homes of authors Herman Melville in Pittsfield and Edith Wharton in nearby Lennox, the Stockbridge home of Sculptor Daniel Chester French who did the statue of Lincoln in the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, DC, and the wonderful Americana paintings in the Norman Rockwell Museum. There are concerts at Tanglewood in Lennox, the summer home of the Boston Symphony, and the Hancock Shaker Village which has 21 restored buildings on 1200 acres in Pittsfield, and which was the home to the Shakers from 1790 to 1960.

The Berkshire Athenaeum is the public library for the city of Pittsfield, Massachusetts. Incorporated in 1872, it is a non-profit organization which, like many New England libraries, started as a private organization. Operating solely as a library for thirty years, the Athenaeum assumed the responsibility for the Berkshire Museum, located a block away on South Street, in 1903.

With the help of the Berkshire Family History Association, the Athenaeum has built one of the finest collections of genea-

logical research materials available on New England forebearers. Their greatest strength is in Massachusetts, Connecticut, Vermont and early Rhode Island resources, and they are working hard to strengthen their collections of Maine and New Hampshire materials while updating and filling in as many gaps as possible. In addition, they have materials on adjacent New York counties east of the Hudson River, Quebec, and other areas from which New Englanders came and to which they moved on.



### Summer Hours:

Mondays, Wednesdays & Fridays  
9 - 5; Tuesdays & Thursdays 9 - 9;  
Saturdays 10 - 5. There are no fees  
other than nominal reproduction costs.

### Local Research Centers in the Berkshire Hills Area follow:

#### The Berkshire Athenaeum Local History Room

1 Wendell Avenue  
Pittsfield MA 01201  
(413) 499-9486

Pittsfield's Public Library:

Local History, Genealogy & Berkshire Authors

#### The Berkshire Family History Association

Post Office Box 823  
Stockbridge MA 01262

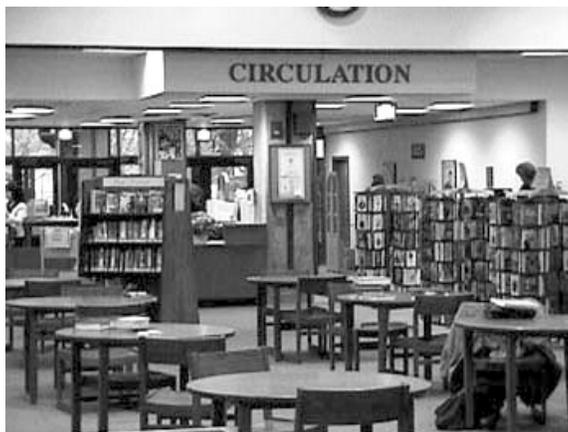
#### The Sheffield Family History Center

Main Street  
Sheffield MA 01257  
(413) 229-3682

#### The Silvio O. Conte National Archives and Records Administration

100 Dan Fox Drive  
Pittsfield MA 01201  
(413) 445-6885

[www.nara.gov/regional/pittsfie.html](http://www.nara.gov/regional/pittsfie.html)



#### The Stockbridge Library Association Historical Collections

Main Street  
Stockbridge MA 01262  
(413) 298-5501

### Important Notice to all AFAOA Members who are On-line

Please e-mail AFAOA Secretary-Treasurer Lois Cody at

your up-to-date e-mail address  
Thank you

## Data Gathering

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Second, take the time to be well prepared before the actual interview. Make certain you are clear in your own mind of information you hope to gather from the interview. Time spent on preparation will pay off in the long run. It is a good idea to write down the questions you plan on asking.

Third, make the interview session as comfortable and relaxing as possible. Do not jump right into the questions; take time to talk. Show the person the equipment you might be using (such as tape recorders, video cameras, etc.) and make sure they are not intimidated by it.

Fourth, give the person ample time to answer the question you have asked, and do not interrupt if at all possible. Should they mention something you had not thought of before, make note of it and go back to it later. Also, have a time limit in mind and adhere to that limit. Conversations such as this can be tiring, especially for an older person. Try to schedule another session rather than continue beyond a reasonable point.

Remember that peoples' memories are not infallible. Confirm the information you gather in one of these interviews with vital records whenever possible. Also, record the specifics of the interview on your research log. The interview is a source of information just like a book and should be noted accordingly.

## 2. INFORMAL PERSONAL INTERVIEW

The informal interview is our favorite means of gathering information from family members because the opportunity presents itself so often. Every family gathering becomes a potential source of information. After a while, family members know of your interest in genealogy and will bring new information with them to these gatherings. This has worked well for us because we come from large families and the informal interviews have allowed us to remain current with births, marriages, and deaths of cousins and second cousins, even those from different generations. We carry copies of our family group sheets and ask an individual from a particular family group to look over the sheet and provide us with any updates.

Obviously, family reunions are the best type of family gathering because they present the opportunity to see family members you may not have seen for some time. But weddings, holidays, baptisms, and visits offer the same potential. As with any information gathering session, the better prepared you are the more success you will experience. Remember to record the source in your research log.

NOTE: This article will be continued in the Spring 2001 Newsletter.



## JOURNAL OF THADDEUS MORON NICHOLS AND GEORGE WHITFIELD NICHOLS

Thaddeus M. Nichols, born January 18, 1806, son of Ebenezer & Mary (Moron) Nichols, married Parmelia Austin, June 2, 1835 in Suffield. Parmelia was the daughter of Thomas Austin (of the Richard Austin of Charlestown line) and Parmelia Loomis, born February 16, 1806 in Suffield. Thaddeus died July 27, 1882, Parmelia died September 27, 1882 both in Suffield. They had a daughter Jane Amelia Nichols, born April 17, 1846, died April 18, 1846. They had a son George Whitfield Nichols, born March 27, 1849, married Julia Emma Wilson September 12, 1878.

There are several accounts of the families of many Nichols and Austins including dates of births, marriages and deaths. A family reunion held in Suffield, CT on 14 Jul 1860 has been excerpted here by Art M. Sikes, December 2000.

### An Unusual Family Gathering

A gathering of an interesting character took place in Suffield on Saturday July 14th 1860 on the premises known as Capt. Thomas Austin, deceased, now occupied by T. C. Austin. Four generations belonging to the family of Thomas and Parmelia Austin – comprising 61 present and 8 absent ones, three in Chicago five in New York State, together with a few specially invited guests, met for the purpose of commemorating the anniversary of the Great Grandmother 88 years of her age.

An ample table was spread under the trees, in the open air, which, afforded an agreeable and cooling shelter from the rays of the sun which had scoured down upon us throughout the day. And at this table over 76 seated themselves to partake of the refreshments provided, most being members of the above family.

Each generation had it's representative from the Great Grandmother seated at the head of the table, with two aged sisters of said T. Austin. One in the 93rd year of her age, the other in her 79th year, both in comfortable health. Down to the great grandchildren, such a gathering as this, I have never witnessed before, and may never behold the likes again.

All were apparently enjoying good health, and most of them in comfortable circumstances and doing well. Thus has divine blessings followed, not only to the third, but forth generations.

A blessing, over the plentiful variety furnished for the occasion, was given by the Rev. J. P. Miller. A suitable and very appropriate address on family government was offered by the Rev. D. W. Ives, Pastor of the Baptist Church in the place.

After brief addresses by the Rev. J. R. Miller of the Congregational Church, in the place, and by the Hon. Samuel Reid, and after a short prayer and benediction by Rev. D. Ives, this pleasant and interesting gathering dispersed, leaving us highly gratified and with a wish and desire that such gatherings might be more frequent, for they tend to unite the family circle in love and friendship.

A descendent:

(Signed)

T. Nichols

PLEASE NOTICE THE RENEWAL DATE ON YOUR ADDRESS LABEL. YOUR MEMBERSHIP DUES OF \$15 PER YEAR SHOULD BE SENT TO LOIS CODY, 336 PLEASANT HILL DR., CINCINNATI, OH 45215-2040

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**Best wishes to all for a happy and  
prosperous New Year from the  
AFAOA Executive Board**