Linking YOU to

Family Reunion Planning Guides

Clayton Library Center for Genealogical Research
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Book Review
by Melissa Hayes
Jackson, Robert Moseley, Jr.  
**The Ships Locator: A reference to over 2,000 ships, schooners, and other vessels of the nineteenth-century New England and Atlantic seaboard**  
Clayton call number 387.5 J13 USA

With an almost self-explanatory title, *The Ships Locator* is a book which informs the reader about newspaper mentions of ships that sailed from overseas and locally circa the 1840’s through the 1890’s. The table of contents breaks down the data collected by a few noted newspapers. Reports from the U.S. Life-Saving Service are included as well as other useful sources. The appendix section is divided into seven (7) different areas including Life-Saving Stations, passenger lists from a shipwreck in 1852, and more. Schooners (schr), ships, brigs, barks, ships rigged for sailing, and steamers are listed with abbreviations for each vessel type. The book ends with an index to vessels and an index to masters.

So, why is the book useful in your research? Browsing the pages could help you find information on family member(s) who were lost at sea. Was your person on a ship or schooner, maybe a bark? Did the steamer blow up or take on water in a storm? Were all hands lost at sea or rescued? Some entries have details of the shipwreck and/or who were lost at sea as opposed to rescued. Newspaper sources abstracted with reports can lead you to more details not mentioned, like advertisements and supplies transported with success.

The book does not include the full story, but the newspaper articles can be located by researching the name of the vessel, date, and place of departure or arrival. Try the search terms “shipwreck,” “ship wreck,” or “ship sinking.”

For example, I searched for shipwrecks in the New York Times. Search Topic: ship wreck, Maryland.

The article snipped below is not about an entry in the book.

Using the search tools I learned from exploring the book, I found this and other ship happenings not included in this book. The full article gives all the details of the accident and the search for the remains of T. Harrison Garrett.

So, when you find yourself looking for a family member lost or rescued at sea, read *The Ships Locator* book and you might just add to your family’s narrative.

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**Family Reunion Planning Guides**  
by Mitch Clendening
Americans have progressively become more mobile over the last century. Advances in transportation and instant communication lengthened, and then snapped the leash of family. Finding oneself amid a pack of unfamiliar faces often sharpened the desire to connect with “our people.” The family reunion serves that purpose, as well as so many others. If the idea of a reunion with aunts and uncles, cousins (removed or otherwise), grandparents, or great-grandchildren is suddenly appealing after so many months of isolation, then maybe a guide to planning a reunion event is what you need to seek out. Here’s a rundown of what we have for you at the Clayton Library Center for Genealogical Research.

**A Family Affair: How to Plan and Direct the Best Family Reunion Ever**  
by Sandra MacLean Clunies

This guide from the National Genealogical Society approaches the idea of a family reunion as a theatrical production. Just as a successful theater production is made possible by the imagination and production design of a lot of people behind the scenes, an enjoyable reunion is the product of planning and scheduling. The chapters continue the theatrical theme, while also serving as a guide to the necessary steps in reunion-planning. Book sections include “Production Design,” “Backstage Preparations,” and “Getting the Show on the Road.” The book is full of short sidebar examples and ideas. It provides numerous internet references, but due to the age of this edition, some links may prove long dead.

**Family Reunion: Everything You Need to Know to Plan Unforgettable Get-Togethers**  
by Jennifer Crichton

The author approaches the reunion as a celebration of family in a time when home is less about place and more about relationships. Crichton wants to celebrate the ties that make us family. The author also asserts that the realization of a large, extensive family web is comforting for children, who often see the fragility of the nuclear families around them.

The book provides lots of tips and examples as it steps through the reunion-planning process. Each chapter finishes with a “profile,” or case illustrating that chapter’s focus. There is an appendix which provides planning timetables for different types of reunions, blank budget forms, and even contact information for national parks around the United States.

**Your Family Reunion: How to Plan It, Organize It, and Enjoy It**  
by George G. Morgan

This volume was published by Ancestry and written by George G. Morgan (also known as one-half of The Genealogy Guys). Morgan has a background in large event planning, and it shows. This guide contains a lot of information, which includes both practical advice and online resources. Most chapters end with a list of questions to ask yourself regarding your event planning.

The guide attempts to be comprehensive in its presentation, and mostly succeeds. The book leans heavily into online resources and computer software to plan and manage an event. Publishing a book about online resources is like striking a moving target. Where the
author makes up for this shortfall is in outlining for the reader how to find and update resources for themselves.

**Celebrating the Family: Steps to Planning a Family Reunion**
by Vandella Brown

This straightforward guide was published by Ancestry and offers very little on the “why” of family reunions. The author instead launches directly into the “how,” with short topic sections and lots of supplements. This slender volume tops out under 60 pages, with a third of those pages devoted to blank forms and lists designed for the reader to use. This book is a guide designed for the planner looking to work from a checklist.

**Reunion Planner**
by Phyllis A. Hackleman

First-hand knowledge is the focus of this planning guide. The author brings years of experience managing reunions on a national level.

The book is focused on four (4) different types of reunions – a backyard picnic, picnic at a park, a resort weekend, and a weekend at a historic family site. Hackleman provides guidance and examples taken from actual events she planned, with the adjustments necessary to fit each type of gathering.

Most sections contain a list of questions that should be answered along the path to a successful family reunion. The information is somewhat dated, in that it encourages the use of self-addressed, stamped envelopes, and makes no mention of email or other online resources.

**A Practical Guide to Planning a Family Reunion**
by Emma J. Wisdom

A guide for small, simple events, intended for the novice, and the veteran, planner. While most of the advice is solid, this book also suffers from some outdated contact information. There is an appendix listing state tourism boards, which is useful; but be prepared to search online for updated contact information. Wisdom is thoughtful in supplying a five-year advance planning calendar; unfortunately, it covers the years 1988-1992.

**Family Reunion ABCs**
by Sharon Hamner and Nancy Rudolf

An aide to planning a family reunion that is presented as a glossary of terms and ideas. The slim pamphlet doesn’t offer much in the way of details. It does provide a quick list of ideas and considerations that could be useful, especially in the planning stages of your reunion.

**Family Reunion Planning Guides - Bibliography**

Brown, Vandella.


Hamner, Sharon and Nancy Rudolf. Family Reunion ABCs. Charlottesville, VA.: FOREBEARS and friends, 1981. Clayton call number 394.2 H228 USA.


Black in Appalachia, Black Community History Project
by Rodney Sam

The Black Community History Project is a digital archival collection of materials related to African American history in Eastern Tennessee, Kentucky, and Southwestern Virginia. The Black Community History project is one of several projects created by Black in Appalachia; a regionally based organization created in 2012 to highlight the contributions and presence of African Americans within Appalachian history and culture. The digital archives consist of sources gathered from local churches, schools, Universities, newspapers, and community leaders from different counties in these states.

Some of the materials include church histories, school registration cards, elementary school or college yearbooks. Newspaper articles and manuscripts mentioning the founding of African American social organizations and the names of early African American educators in the community are also included. There are databases of names of free persons of color and formerly enslaved African Americans abstracted from the 1860 and 1870 U.S. censuses in different counties. Voter lists of African Americans during Reconstruction were also abstracted, digitized and uploaded as databases accessible to researchers.
The records reveal names, places, biographical details, and even faces that not only provide a rich source of material relevant to local historians but are an excellent source for African American genealogists with deep roots in Appalachia looking to learn more about their family history. The digital collection consists of 40 collections containing 1,842 items. African American genealogists with origins in Appalachia can also come into the Clayton Library Center for Genealogical Research and explore our vast book collection which includes histories of African Americans from different states that encompass the Appalachian region, such as “Black Huntington: an Appalachian story” (Clayton call number F162 W VA). This book by Historian Cicero M Fain III explores the history of African Americans in Huntington, West Virginia from the Post-Civil War period to the mid-1900s.

The Black in Appalachia Black Community History Project can be found here.

Have fun exploring this site and come on into Clayton Library to explore more of your African American Appalachian roots.

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