

# PANNEBAKKER FAMILY NEWS



NEWSLETTER OF THE PANNEBAKKER FAMILY ASSOCIATION

The Joy of Genealogy	1
Tips fo Cemetery Visit	2
President's Message	5

## THE JOY OF GENEALOGY

*While you're gathering data on your family tree, watch out for the seven sins of genealogy.*

By JOY NEIGHBOURS

The Catholic religion has a list of seven cardinal vices, the Seven Deadly Sins: wrath, greed, sloth, pride, lust, envy and gluttony. We genealogists have our own list of dastardly deeds to consider like refusing to share information because it is “ours,” or not verifying secondary sources.

### 1) Resentment - Just say no (Wrath)

There is always one “cousin” who resents anyone asking for family research help. They feel that since they’ve taken the time to research and compile the information, everyone else can do the same. Simply let this “cousin” know you respect their time and efforts, and let it be.

### 2) Selfishness - Mine! (Greed)

And please, don’t be “that cousin” who refuses to share. Let others learn from your research: publish a book on your family history; bequeath your records to a local genealogy library, or pass them on to a favorite family member who will carry on the research.

### 3) Laziness - I don’t wanna’ (Sloth)

We all get lazy from time to time, whether it’s citing sources, taking that needed trip to the courthouse, or just filing those stacks of papers. Take a deep breath, remember why you do this thing called “family history,” and plunge back in.

### 4) Arrogance - I’m related to ... (Pride)

At some point and time, if you dig deep enough, you will discover a “famous” (or infamous) person in your lineage. Every one does! It’s cool: it’s exciting: it’s fun – now, get over yourself. Share the information, if the situation and mood are appropriate; just don’t get uppity about it.

### 5) Demanding – NOW! (Lust)

“I’ll share with you if you share with me.” “I want everything this archive has on my surnames.” “I don’t care if this is private property, my ancestor is buried here.” These are the worst of the worst! Remember to treat others with respect and kindness, and word your requests politely.

## 6) Envy – I wish I ... (Envy)

Genealogy is a never-ending pursuit. Accept it. While you may envy, in a nice way, someone's research or writing abilities, don't take it to the point where you are discontent with your own skills. You're doing just fine.

## 7) More – More – MORE (Gluttony)

This is the bane of beginning genealogists. Whether it's gathering names from Internet websites and family trees that might be related to you, or over-sharing your love of family history, stop already. Both are sure signs of TMI - Too much (genealogy) information.

## **Tips for Your Cemetery Visit**

Cemetery visits are a common part of genealogy research. In the course of your research, you will undoubtedly come across an obituary, a funeral card, or other death record, which will indicate the cemetery where your relative was buried. You may also want to ask your family members if they know of cemeteries where relatives are buried. Perhaps the burial site is even nearby. If it is, you may wish to make a visit. You may discover other relatives in the process.

### **Planning your Trip**

While you may know the cemetery in which your relatives are buried, this is different from knowing where in the cemetery their graves are located. This can be especially problematic in large cemeteries, or, if there is no marker for your relative.

If possible, check with the owner or sexton of the cemetery. They usually keep good records of who is buried where. Remember, there are usually many people buried in a cemetery without a marker, so sexton's records may be the only clue as to the location of a particular grave. Many older cemeteries may not have a sexton, and in some cases, the owner of the land the cemetery is on is a private citizen who doesn't have records of the burials. If you are fortunate, the owner may be a relative, and may be willing to share with you information or relics related to your mutual family. In other cases, if the owner is not a relative, you may not be able to access the cemetery. If you don't have permission from the owner of a cemetery on private land, don't visit.

In general, active cemeteries have a sexton in charge of maintaining records. Inactive and abandoned cemeteries are less likely to have a sexton, and therefore, less likely to have records. Sexton records often have a wealth of information that may not be found anywhere else. In addition to the burial location, there is often information on the living relatives. You may also find information on your relative's cause of death, occupation, residence at the time of death, military affiliation, or plot ownership details.

# PANNEBAKKER FAMILY NEWS

When looking at these records, you want to gather enough information to be able to say with certainty that the "John Smith" you are related to is the correct "John Smith." In larger cemeteries, there may be more than one "John Smith." Tombstones may not be sufficient to figuring out which "John Smith" is related to you.

It is often possible to write to a sexton for records before you go. If you have the address of an active cemetery, you may wish to write them in advance or your visit to get records, maps or other details. This can be of remarkable help if you are traveling a good distance for the visit.

## **What to Wear**

If this is a rural or abandoned cemetery, wear long pants. You may have thick underbrush to walk through.

Bring a hat, especially if you are planning to be gone for a few hours. Sunburn is less than fun. Be aware that rural cemeteries may be home to insects, snakes, or other "critters" that hide in tall grasses or hollow trees, or other natural features in cemeteries that aren't regularly maintained. Wear practical clothing.

## **When to Go**

Spring can be an especially good time to visit. In spring, most people are itching to get out of the house and enjoy the weather. A visit to a cemetery is a lovely way to get out, and spend some time outdoors. Many modern cemeteries were built as parks, after all, and are designed to have good walking paths and peaceful grounds.

Most cemeteries are open from dawn to dusk. Some, however, are closed earlier, or have set hours when they are open. If you are intent on having the best photos, you may need to pick a time of day when the sun illuminates the stones as well as they can be lit.

If it is early spring, and you are traveling to a higher elevation, check to make sure the snow has melted. Snow can still be on the ground in the mountains as late as mid-May/June. As the snow melts, it leaves muddy patches, which may be tricky to navigate, so, plan to visit when things have dried out a bit.

## **What to Bring**

Plan to bring, at the very least, paper (notebook) and a pen or pencil. Use a clipboard for a firm surface.

If you have a GPS unit, take it with you (to record the exact coordinates of the gravesite). This is especially useful in older cemeteries where there aren't any sections or rows marked out. Bring a camera.

Bring a bottle of water, not only for hydration, but, for helping to clean tombstones. Bring a spray bottle filled with water. Hard-to-read tombstones can often be made more legible simply by spraying or pouring water on it.

You may wish to bring a mirror or a flashlight. A mirror can be like a low-tech flashlight, to help read inscriptions.

If the cemetery is somewhat remote, or in a dangerous area, it's a good idea to bring a friend along. You don't want to be stuck, all alone, if you injure yourself walking on the uneven ground that occurs in most cemeteries. Older cemeteries are sometimes located in "urban jungles" that have hazards of their own. Be aware of your surroundings.

# PANNEBAKKER FAMILY NEWS

## **During your Visit**

Cemeteries, especially older ones, may have rules governing what you can and can't do. Be respectful of these rules. Some cemeteries have rules against making gravestone rubbings. This is usually for a good reason. If you'd like to leave flowers or other tokens at your relative's grave, please make sure they conform to the cemetery rules.

After you have located the site of a relative's grave, spend a moment to record the information on the tombstone. In addition to birth and death dates, you may find a maiden name, family relationships (i.e. "mother" or "brother"), town of origin, and possibly a religious affiliation. All of this can lead to other discoveries and areas to continue your research.

Look around. You could see many other relatives that had been, previously, unknown to you. It is common for people to be buried near other family members, not only of their original family, but also a family they've married into.

It is not uncommon to find young children or infants buried in these plots. These small tragedies may have been unknown to you, and researching their death records may also provide valuable information about their parents.

If you find that the grave has been freshly decorated with flowers, you may have another unknown or long-lost family member. If the cemetery has a caretaker, they may know this person. If not, you could leave a note in a weatherproof container so that if the person visits the grave again, they can contact you. Be careful about the kind of contact information you leave, as you never know who might find the note.

If you take a camera, remember that the point of taking a photo of the marker is to be able to read it later. You may not know the condition of the stone before you go. In some cases, the writing on the stone maybe very difficult to read, so taking a photo that can be read may be a challenge. Squirting the stone with water is the safest way to help illuminate the writing, and is surprisingly effective.

Making a rubbing of the stone should only be done if the stone is in good condition, and solidly secure on the site. Again, remember to check the cemetery rules to see if this is okay.

Photographs are can help a researcher or other family member the feeling of visiting the cemetery. Visiting a grave is sometimes the closest you can get to meeting a relative. Many people don't get the chance to visit their relative's gravesite, and a photograph or two can be the next best thing to being there.

## **What Not to Do**

When visiting cemeteries, it is important to treat the headstones and markers with care. Many of these tombstones are very fragile, and even the pressure used to make a rubbing can damage the stones.

One method often recommended is to use shaving cream and a squeegee to temporarily "fill in" the lettering to make it easier to read. **DO NOT** apply shaving cream or any other chemicals to the stones. This can cause serious damage.

Unless you are an expert in preservation, leave the stones alone, and use nothing stronger than water on them during your visit.

Don't remove anything from a gravesite. This includes flowers, flags, small memorials and other items left by others. Take all of your trash with you when you leave.

## Message From The President

Greetings Everyone,

Here we are in autumn again. Not a lot happening around here except for football season. Strangely enough, the lawn looks more like May than September. Very green and lush. Leaves are beginning to fall from the many trees we have so it won't be long until it is leaf time.

We have received suggestions from some of the staff re what we might be able to add to your membership experience. I am fully aware of all the various sources of info available on the web. Some is excellent, some is merely someone copying other's data without worrying about what is actually correct. Governor Samuel W. Pennypacker's Genealogy is out there and in a couple instances has been proven wrong. All in all I think the Governor did an outstanding job long before there was Ancestry, My Heritage and the rest of them.

To that end, I would like to ask the members who may not be aware of their lineage back to either Hendrick or Weigand to let me know. My email is ronboy1@charter.net. I will do everything I can to establish your lineage as I have done many times for our members.

Also along that line, what else can we consider doing that will help ensure your continuing support for the PFA? Again, send me an email or mail to any of the staff (USPS addresses on the back page).

As you well know, I am continually on the hunt for people who will step up and offer your time to contribute to the operation of the organization. Sorely needed is someone to plan a reunion. There is considerable interest in attending one.

I would like to ask you to consider giving a membership to relatives to keep the PFA running. I would also welcome input as to how best to generate interest in belonging to the PFA.

Till next time.

Ron Mitchell, President Pannebakker Family Association, Inc.

## *Pannebakker Family Association Web Site*

If you would like a user name and password, you must contact Bruce Pennypacker at, [throwcoach@gmail.com](mailto:throwcoach@gmail.com) and the necessary information will be sent to you.

Below is the URL for the web site:

<http://www.pannebakkerfamilyassociation.com>

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## *Pannebakker Family Association*



The Pannebakker Family Association is an outgrowth of the family reunion held at Pennypacker Mills, Montgomery County, Pennsylvania on July 2-4, 1999. The reunion celebrated the 300th year wedding anniversary of Hendrick Pannebecker and Eve Umstat, in Germantown, Pennsylvania in the year 1699. In the words of the Steering Committee of the reunion, "We hope that the 1999 Pfannebecker-Umstat Reunion will lead to the growth of a family association, which will provide a forum for conversation, collection and preservation of information, and a sense of lasting community among the heirs of this rich cultural heritage."