Highlander News

Highlander News, Number 1

It has to begin somewhere, eh?

John Sutherland

Highlander's View of History

I have delayed writing this first Highlander news report, waiting until a most desirable news document format would reveal itself, and not having one 'pop-up' yet, this one seems to work for the moment. So, let's get on with it, shall we?

Background:

This implementation of ***Highlander.com*** is the third use of the domain name that I am aware of. The first use was as a web site for an electronics company on the east coast of the United States that was eventually bought out by a larger company, and the new company had no further business need for the domain. I took over the domain and used it for two businesses thereafter, neither of which were very successful. So, I parked the domain for a few years during my early retirement.

Then, after some years of doing family research I started to see some recurring problems with people wanting to start their family research and not knowing how to do the job. While helping people on an ad hoc basis, I was getting frustrated because I found myself saying the same things over and over.

So, in the summer of 2018 I wrote a short book (about 185 pages) dubbed '***ABCs of Family Research***) summarizing what I knew about genealogical research, and created a PDF version of the book that I could offer online or simply mail to other family researchers. But then the idea of taking Highlander.com active again arose in the back of my mind.

After two false starts, caused by my being a novice in a new and rapidly changing technical world, I found a great web designer that could (and did) take my ideas into fruition in a bit more than two week's time. The new Highlander.com finally came alive seriously on January 9, 2019.

The first task with the new web site was two-fold. First I had to shake out the initial bugs and determine if the site did what I wanted it to do. The second task was to upload a new library of documents and books that online visitors could read and download if they chose. I should note that these two tasks are ongoing, so they have no yet finished their process, and knowing me, they never will be completed.

Today:

As of today, March 26, 2019, most of the initial bugs and changes have been resolved, and there are now several hundred (probably more than 300) books and documents uploaded on the website.

A few words about the library. There are 9 categories of subjects in the library, including ***American History, Constitution, Family, Genealogy, Government, Legal Documents, Location, Military,*** and ***World History***.

While every section has at least a few documents uploaded, I have really been focusing my attention on the family documents, and when I upload a specific family document, I include some related family names and location data in the search tags. As a result, you can search on more than several hundred names and get a hit, probably because either the primary family name is uploaded, or because the family name you searched for is intermarried with a primary family and is found in their family book. I'll add another

section in this newsletter that discusses the subject of family names.

Note that I have also uploaded a copy of the ABCs of Family Research for users. The document is in PDF format and is free to registered members of the website.

The process I use when seeking out new books and documents is that I first do a search for older documents and public documents. I am concerned about document copyright protection and typically either obtain the author's permission to publish their book or document, or I upload books and documents whose copyright protections have long expired.

The object to all uploads is that the uploaded docs should be the valuable and hard to find books and documents, and they should be available in PDF format with the searchable text layer included. The docs are of no value if you cannot search the document contents. In my opinion.

This finding, normalizing, and uploading process consumes a fair amount of time, and since there is only me doing this research at this time, it will be slow going for a while. But the end result should be a website with a pretty robust library that can help many people doing their own research.

You will also note the website has both a blog section and a forum section. Both sections allow for users to read posted articles and to comment interactively if they choose. In this way I'm hoping the website becomes interactive and popular. The blog section is the only one that is set up to send out e-mail notices and article links to registered users, so the blog section is rapidly becoming my favorite.

Some of the startup problems with this website have included registration problems. Because

this is a WordPress and MSQL based website, only ASCII characters can be used for data entry, especially for e-mail addresses. If, for example, you try to use the underscore character ("_") the software will not allow your entry to be made. Frustrating, eh?

Also, your addressing data is being requested because there is a commerce plugin module set included in the website, not for present uses, but in case we start to offer products for sale at some time in the future. Correct addressing will be required for credit card and banking information in the future.

For everyone's sanity, and because you cannot see what others enter in the registration process, they cannot see your entries either.

As a side note, I and/or we, will never sell or give away your data, so your information should be safe from me and/or us. I do rely on the website service provider to prevent hacking efforts, and that seems to work in all areas except for illegal snooping and hacking performed by some of the federal government agencies like the NSA, the CIA, Mossad, the FBI, DHS, etc. I can't protect you from their eyes.

So, be aware, I don't care whether the data you enter is true and accurate, or not. Enter what you think is appropriate for your own security needs.

Well, that's the news from Lake Wobegon, *"the little town that time forgot and the decades cannot improve ... where all the women are strong, all the men are good-looking, and all the children are above average."* 😉

Inasmuch as he has been a somewhat controversial figure, I applaud Garrison Keillor for his great story telling talents.

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What's in a family name?

Family names invariably mean something to someone

John Sutherland
Highlander's View of History

An individual's surname (or family name, or last name) is that portion the individual's full name that refers to the individual's family, clan, tribe, occupation, or community, depending on where and how the surname came into existence. Usually, all individuals inside a specific family unit will have the same surname, although alternatively, depending on culture, there may be some variations.

For example, in the English-speaking world, a surname is commonly referred to as a 'last name' simply because the surname is usually placed at the end of a person's full name, immediately after any given name(s). Surnames in England have generally evolved from four major sources, namely patronymic and matronymic surnames, occupational surnames, physical characteristic surnames, and locality surnames. The United States, an English colony, reflects mostly popular English originated surnames.

In other, mostly Spanish-speaking and Portuguese-speaking countries, the surname convention is different. Two surnames are often used as family names, and in some families even three or more may be used (sometimes due to a family's claim to nobility). Spanish surnames for children often include the first of their father's two surnames and the first of the mother's two surnames as their own last name. Spanish women sometimes add their husband's surname to the end of theirs or in place of their mother's surname, sometimes with a "de" between the two names. As a result, a Spanish husband and wife will often

have different sets of double surnames, as will their children.
Surnames have not always existed, and today they are not universal amongst all cultures. The surname tradition has arisen separately in different cultures around the world. As an example, in Europe, the concept of surnames became popular during colonial rule by the Roman Empire [Approx. 200 BC to 476 AD], and this tradition also expanded throughout the Mediterranean and Western Europe as a result. Then, during the European Middle Ages, aka dark Ages, [about 476 – 1400 AD] this Roman practice died out as Germanic, Persian, and other influences took control of European countries.

During the late Middle Ages surnames gradually re-emerged, first in the form of bynames (typically indicating individual's occupation, or his/her area of residence), which gradually evolved into many of our modern surnames.

However, in China, the use of surnames has been the norm since at least the 2nd century BC, and interestingly enough, in many parts of Asia, as well as in some parts of Europe and Africa, the family name is placed before a person's given name. Confusing, eh?

With all of this in mind, in the United States (which started out as English colonies), ranking the popularity of common American family can sometimes be helpful while performing family research. One late 20th century listing of the most popular American surnames is found below (next page). Note that there are other lists that add or swap names around, and government lists often do the shifting around in order to promote one ethnicity over another. The following is a list of the top 21 most common names in the United States.

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These lists should be viewed subjectively, and may or may not be completely accurate.

The approximate number provided below is the estimated number of individuals with that family name known to be resident in the United States in the late twentieth century. The numbers have obviously changed in the last two or more decades.

Surname	Approx #	Origin
SMITH	2,501,922	English
JOHNSON	2,014,470	English, Scottish
WILLIAMS	1,738,413	English, Welsh
JONES	1,544,427	English, Welsh
BROWN	1,544,427	English, Scottish, Irish
DAVIS	1,193,760	English, Welsh
MILLER	1,054,488	English, Scottish, German, French, Italian
WILSON	843,093	English, Scottish
MOORE	775,944	English
TAYLOR	773,457	English
ANDERSON	773,457	Swedish, Danish, Norwegian, English
THOMAS	773,457	English, Welsh
JACKSON	770,970	English
WHITE	693,873	English, Scottish, Irish
HARRIS	683,925	English, Welsh
MARTIN	678,951	English, French, Scottish, Irish, German
THOMPSON	669,003	English, Scottish
GARCIA	631,698	Spanish
MARTINEZ	581,958	Spanish
ROBINSON	579,471	English
CLARK	574,497	English, Irish

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Here are some quotes for you to ponder.

"History will be kind to me for I intend to write it." — Winston S. Churchill

"The best moments in reading are when you come across something – a thought, a feeling, a way of looking at things – which you had thought special and particular to you. Now here it is, set down by someone else, a person you have never met, someone even who is long dead. And it is as if a hand has come out and taken yours." — Alan Bennett, The History Boys

"If you don't know history, then you don't know anything. You are a leaf that doesn't know it is part of a tree." — Michael Crichton

"The most effective way to destroy people is to deny and obliterate their own understanding of their history." — George Orwell

"The first duty of a man is to think for himself" — Jose Marti

"We'll be remembered more for what we destroy than what we create." — Chuck Palahniuk, Invisible Monsters

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