

Serving family history of the Livermore, Pleasanton and southeastern portion of Alameda County, in the beautiful San Francisco Bay Area of California



Livermore-Amador Genealogical Society P.O. Box 901, Livermore, California 94551

Web: <http://www.L-AGS.org>

Facebook Page: <https://www.facebook.com/Livermore.Amador.Genealogical.Society/>

Facebook Group: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1142643925760388/>

HELP NEEDED!

September 2024



ROOTS TRACER EDITOR

Our illustrious Roots Tracer Editor, Patrick Lofft, is retiring from the Roots Tracer at the end of the year. We need someone to come on-board asap to begin the transition. Have you wanted to learn publication and work with a publisher? Are you wanting to assist members in telling their stories? This may be your opportunity! We need YOU!

While we work to find a new editor, this newsletter will begin featuring articles by L-AGS members. To kick this off, I've posted a story about Sourdough Walt.

SAVE THE DATE: Heritage Happenings

Heritage Happenings, a L-AGS' semi-annual event at the Livermore Civic Center Library will be held on October 15 and 24 from 2:00 – 5:00 p.m.. Volunteers are needed to assist individuals in family research. To sign up to help, please visit:

www.L-AGS.org/tvvh

General Meeting: Scotland and Northern Ireland Research

With: Mark McLaren

Date: Monday, September 9, 2024 7:00 p.m. (Zoom chat starts at 6:30 p.m.)

Location: Congregation Beth Emek, 3400 Nevada Ct., Pleasanton, CA and via Zoom- Preregister via ZOOM below:

<https://us06web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZYscOyrrD4pGdI88N7xDMAS1gextKvMAsJ6>

Chair: Program Chair, <mailto:program@L-AGS.org>

Cost: No Charge - Visitors welcome

Details: Please see page 2

Other Special Interest Groups and Meetings

Brickwalls

Topic: *Let's Chat is changing! You can come to chat about genealogy, but we are especially asking you to come with a brickwall or help with a brickwall.*

Date: September 15, 2024 at 3:00 p.m.

Location: Contact Chair for the Link

Chair: Debbie Mascot,

<mailto:bulletin.manager@L-AGS.org>

Board Meeting

Date: **NOTE CHANGE:** Tuesday, October 1, 2024 at 7:00 p.m.

Location: Contact Chair for the Link

Chair: President, <mailto:President@L-AGS.org>

The Master Genealogist Software

Topic: Reports and Problem Assistance

Date: Friday, September 13 and Saturday, September 28, 2024 at 9:00 a.m.

Location: Contact Chair for the link

Chair: Duncan Tanner,

<mailto:tvtmg.chair@L-AGS.org>



General Meeting: Scotland and Northern Ireland Research

With: Mark McLaren, Kilted and In-Person!

The population of Scotland and Northern Ireland today is less than 7 million combined. Yet, the number of people worldwide with an ancestry from those areas is estimated between 70-90 million. Chances are you or someone's genealogy that you are working on has roots from there. This presentation will provide information to assist in Scottish genealogy research and will cover the origin of Scottish surnames and naming conventions, the intertwined history of Northern Ireland and Scotland, the impact of Scottish emigration throughout the British empire, primarily to Australia, United States, and Canada, and more.

Mark McLaren's interest in genealogy began in the early 2000s and has expanded over the years. His current areas of focus are genetic genealogy and Scottish research. He is currently a member of the National Genealogical Society, California Genealogical Society (CGS), Oregon Genealogical Forum, and the San Ramon Valley Genealogical Society (SRVGS).

He is a Fellow in the Society of Scottish Antiquities and a member of the Caledonian Club of San Francisco holding a position of Trustee. He is also a member of several Scottish Clan societies; Clan MacLaren Society of North America (CMSNA), Clan MacLaren Society of Scotland, Clan Douglas Society of North America, and Clan Ross America.

In 2017, he developed an "introduction to genetic genealogy" class and has taught it for numerous Genealogical societies in the Bay area including L-AGS and the California Genealogical Society.

For additional information contact: Tom Mathews, Program Chairperson, email: program@L-AGS.org



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<https://us06web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZYscOyrrD4pGdl88N7xDMAS1gextKvMA5J6>

Chair: Program Chair, <mailto:program@L-AGS.org>

Topics of Future General Meetings		
Month	Topic	Presenter
October 14, 2024	The Picture Bride Era: The Gentlemen's Agreement of 1907 between U.S. and Japan	Linda Harms Okazaki
November 11, 2024	Bagging a Live One	Mary Kircher Roddy
December 9, 2024	Comparing Plats of Land with Deeds and Grants	J. Mark Lowe

Board Meeting Summary

August 2024 Board Meeting Summary

There will be Heritage Happenings at the Livermore Civic Center Library on October 15 and 24 from 2:00 – 5:00. Volunteers are needed to assist individuals in family research; sign up at www.L-AGS.org/tvhh.

We are still in need of a Roots Tracer editor (contact Julie Liu (president@L-AGS.org) if interested. In the meantime, Debbie Mascot, e-Bulletin manager, has agreed to add your stories to the bulletin. Send articles to Debbie at bulletin.manager@l-ags.org.

Duncan Tanner, L-AGS Business Manager for several years, is retiring. The Board welcomes Felicia Ziomek who will be taking on the Business Manager duties upon his retirement.

Members are welcome to attend Board Meetings (held by Zoom, usually on the 4th Tuesday of the month). Due to scheduling conflicts, there will be no Board meeting in September. Board meetings through the end of 2024 will be held on the first Tuesday of the month (October 1, November 5, and December 3). If you would like to attend the Board meeting, contact JulieLiu at president@L-AGS.org.

Research Locations

Livermore Family History Center

Location: 950 Mocho Street, Livermore, California

Phone: (925) 443-2750

Web: https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/Livermore_California_FamilySearch_Center

Special Notes: The entrance is in the front of the building on the right—there is a sign on the door. If the parking in front of the building is full, there is a large parking lot in the rear of the building.

Pleasanton Genealogy Center

Location: 400 Old Bernal Avenue, Pleasanton, California

Email: docents.chair@L-AGS.org for appointment with docent

Special Notes: The Pleasanton Genealogy Center, jointly supported by L-AGS, the Friends of the Pleasanton Library, and the Pleasanton Public Library, contains the largest collection of genealogy books, CDs and online databases in the Tri-Valley. Access to Ancestry.com (Library-edition) and Heritage Quest (also available at home with your library card)

L-AGS Publication: The Roots Tracer

We are actively seeking articles and photos for the Roots Tracer. Please see ideas below or submit your own:

- What are your current genealogy activities?
- Who are you researching? In what locations? What time period?
- What other genealogy related activities are you pursuing? Are you travelling? Indexing? Writing? Speaking? Instructing? Volunteering?
- Do you have an old article to update?
- Do you have any famous (or infamous) ancestors?
- Have you overcome a brickwall? How?
- Have you traveled your roots?
- Do you live in or have an ancestral home?
- Do you have any special family heirlooms with a story?
- Have you used technology in an interesting way to find your roots?
- Have you read a book, poem or found a photograph that inspires you?
- Updated, previously published Livermore Roots Tracer articles

Please submit articles or ideas to rootstracer.chair@L-AGS.org.

Elected Leadership

Role

President.....
First VP and Program Chair.....
Second VP & Membership Chair.
Corresponding Secretary.....
Recording Secretary.....
Business Manager.....

Name, Email

Julie Liu, president@L-AGS.org
Tom Mathews, program@L-AGS.org
Denise Barr, membership@L-AGS.org
Penny Couser
Susan Davis
Duncan Tanner, business.manager@L-AGS.org

Sourdough Walter

By Deborah Conner Mascot

Walt: Thanks, it will be on its way Wednesday if my old truck makes it to town.



He's been in my life for as long as I can remember. He's not family by blood, but he's family and I'm so lucky to have him. Walt has always driven an old truck and has always had a camper or the like and travels to places he wants and stays until he doesn't want. Walt is the first genealogist I ever met and researched his DNA for genealogy long before I heard of it elsewhere. He knew we were Irish before we did and was a great friend to my dad and family; he was part of the village that raised me.

Walt: I've always fed my starter lightly, to the consistency of lumpy cupcake batter. It froths slightly on top and doesn't rise because it is thin. For that reason, it appears to peak quickly. It turns smooth and flows about like ranch dressing.

Walt would visit us at the Mariani Ranch and point out wildlife to me. When we moved to Platina, California, 50 miles west of Redding, it was to Walt's ranch. He let us live there for nearly a year and it was the best place to be ten years old. He'd visit and teach me about the Native Americans that used to live there and we'd find the arrowheads and mortars and pestles around the meadow.

Walt: Yep, just go with the basic. In 60 years of sourdough, I have never measured anything. Nor did your dad.

That upside down pizza video that I sent in email, I will adapt to sourdough. Lately I've been just making plain, large pancakes and using them as bread. They are addictive.



As an adult, I've the love of genealogy to share with Walt. It's been fun to research his Ohio family and break down some brick walls with him. He got me to gather my grandfather's DNA and now we have that to lean on when we run out of other secrets to uncover. We have spent hours over all-you-can-eat buffets, emails and texts chatting about everything and nothing and without Walt, my life would be radically different.

On YouTube, they mix it stiff and watch it rise and fall as indication of peak activity. Then they thin it to stir into dough. I think mine is at peak when smooth. It takes off immediately when fed but don't rise because it's thin. Those little guys are very resilient. I guess many different ways will work. Like the English said about Americans, "they make hot tea, then put ice in it to make it cold, then put sugar in to make it sweet, then put lemon in to make it sour, then they say, "here's to you", and they drink it themselves.

As he noted in his text to me, he climbed in his old truck and set off to the post office with a gingerly-wrapped package of sourdough starter. Sourdough starter can be kept indefinitely by drying it, refrigerating it, or even tending to it on the counter. In order to activate it again, you hydrate it and feed it. I like to keep mine at a 100% hydration, meaning that the amount fed is equal parts flour and water (by weight).

Walt: First, when putting it to sleep in fridge. Do just like when setting it out to use. Thin with distilled water then add unbleached flour to consistency of regular pancake batter except you

don't let it ferment at room temperature. Put it in sealed jar, into fridge. It can stay like that for a year or more. It will form a yellow liquid on top. That is acid. Keep an eye on that liquid periodically to watch for color changes. Any change to green, black or red should be poured off with some white batter. Set it out and sweeten the pot for one or two days.

Dad met Walt when they worked together at Pan-Am as mechanics on graveyard shift. There was also Rich, Dale, Dave and Denny. They all deserve stories, too, but this story is about Walt, sourdough, and generations of yeast that cross over with my dad and now me.

Walt: If it looks active, then feed it and use it or put it to sleep. When I'm using the batter on a regular basis, I just keep a quart of finished batter in the fridge and when I use some, feed it and put it back in fridge.

Growing up, my dad always had sourdough going and on weekends after coming home from his Pan-Am graveyard shift, he'd bake bread. It was the most amazing smell to wake up to and one that will forever remind me of home. What I didn't know then, was the history of sourdough—I didn't know the history of sourdough in general or the history of Dad's sourdough.

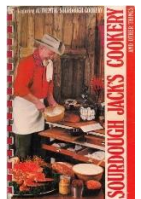
Walt: Yep, when the lumps are gone and it's like cream, is how I see it's ready for pancakes or waffles. I keep a separate jar of batter in fridge for instant pancakes or baking powder biscuits, etc. Baking soda for pancakes, baking powder for levin of skillet breads.

Sometime around 6,000 years ago, the Egyptians moved from flatbreads and crackers to a leavened bread, risen high with wild yeasts, possibly found by accident when letting the dough sit out. Switzerland featured sourdough bread 3,000 years ago and then about 150 years ago, bakers' yeast was first levied from brewers. Between those times, for thousands of years, sourdough was the way to go.

In 1849 French bakers brought sourdough technology to San Francisco during the Gold Rush. In 1898, sourdough moved with the Klondike gold rush to Alaska and the Yukon territory of Canada. In fact, "sourdough" was the name for these gold miners—as in our Sourdough Sam of the San Francisco 49ers. No one thought of bread and it really lost its way after about 1900 until "our" pandemic (COVID-19) when much of the world picked it up again.

Walt: You can use it at any stage of ferment. Thin batter is more tart and that's how I prefer for those wonderful, rubbery pancakes. I even like them cold, later the day. When I make Belgian waffles, I use a thicker batter so it doesn't run all over and it gets crispy, yum!

Around 1970, my dad and Walt sent away for a cookbook and dried sourdough starter and that was the starter that made up my childhood bread. At the time, the sourdough was over 50 years old. Now? More like 100.



Jack Mabee (“Sourdough Jack”) was a San Francisco man, who’d gone to Alaska with the National Guard in 1941 and after the war, he became a trader with the Innuits and Native Americans. He lectured on Alaska and its plea for statehood. In 1909, he was gifted sourdough by a friend, Jim Sellers. He eventually dehydrated it and sold it as an Alaskan souvenir along with his cookbook, Sourdough Jack’s Cookery & Other Things. The first printing was in December 1959, but my copy was ordered from eBay and was the 13th edition from April 1970. This book and Sourdough Jack are what brought sourdough to my family, bound in the red-plastic spiral-bound way of old community cookbooks with a few pages in the middle upside down. You can read the 1965 edition for free here: <https://www.scribd.com/document/668193002/Sourdough-Jack-s-Cookery-1965-edition>

Walt: One more thing That acid on top can be stirred in if it is not red or black. Light yellow or clear is good. That acid is the sour in sourdough. It reacts with the baking soda to make the bubbles. Reference Jacks book about that. Have the griddle hot when dumping in the dissolved baking soda. It doesn’t take much. I’ll explain the technique if needed. Jack says mix in oil and sugar. I use only dissolved baking soda. Always return starter to pot before putting anything in it except flour and water. I hope I haven’t confused you. ❤️

At one of the gatherings after my dad passed away, I heard Walt mention that he still had the starter. I begged for some and then the pandemic happened and I never followed through until a couple of months ago. I asked for some and Walt delivered. The sourdough came wrapped in multiple zip-lock bags and wrapped in bubble wrap and boxed and delivered by the post office. Such care and love put into the cultivating and then shipping of this starter. I had a wild yeast starter from a few years ago that my daughter named Yeasty Boys. So this starter also needed a name. And what better name than Walter.

Walt: Back in the 70s, I was on my way to visit friends in Australia with my sourdough in a jar. A security check exposed my sourdough because I was hand carrying it. The female agent took issue with me because I didn’t want the starter to go through x-ray. She was insisting that a visual exam was unacceptable and I was insisting that x-ray was unacceptable. She said I would not board the flight. Then I went to the Pan Am agent and explained my sourdough. She laughed and removed the block to my boarding. Today, I would have been tased and cuffed.



Don’t mess with my starter! It’s a very old friend.



I parceled batches out to my brother and a close friend who also loves sourdough. Like Walt, I mostly make pancakes. My daughter in particular loves to have them through the week, so on Sunday mornings, I usually make a big batch and freeze them. My bread comes out delicious, but more dense than I like. It’s all in the timing of every single step. But feeding my starter? That’s one of my favorite things to do.

Walt: You will develop your own technique as did I. Started following Jacks recipes then eliminating what I consider unnecessary to my taste. So now my pancakes and waffles are basic, using starter with a last minute shot of dissolved baking soda. Then immediately into a hot skillet. You will get a kick out of reading Jacks stories. BTW, I always keep a pint of Meyers Jamaican rum for adding to my real maple syrup for pancakes and waffles. Heat it to boil off the alcohol.

I wrote down all of Walt's text messages and told him that I was going to write a story about the sourdough. He said:

Walt: I'd be interested in seeing that.

And here we are.

Thank you to Yeast Walter and real Walter. My world is better with you in it.

Sources:

- "The Story of Sourdough Jack and the World's Oldest Yeast." Sausalito News, Sausalito, California, 18 March 1955, page 3, column 6; digital images California Digital Newspaper Collection (cdnc.ucr.edu: accessed April 2024).
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- Ganzle, M.G. "BREAD: Sourdough Bread." Encyclopedia of Food Microbiology (2nd Edition). www.sciencedirect.com. Page 309-315.
- Mabee, J. (1970) "Sourdough Jack's Cookery and Other Things." Argonaut House.
- Prior, J. "What Does 100% Hydration Sourdough Starter Mean?" Living Bread Baker. www.livingbreadbaker.com: accessed June 2024). February 2024.