

Life in LAMORINDA

Quest for Stories Leads Local Resident to Uncover the Past

By Jennifer Wake



Dale Turner Photos provided

sent home telling about the trip and how terrible it was, being seasick for two weeks," Turner said.

Turner visited relatives in Illinois, and came home with a box filled with photographs and old documents. The result of her efforts is a 627-page volume (the first of ten) that includes relative's stories, photographs, census information and even historic facts from different periods, such as the use of the rotary dial phone. Turner even found a patent of her great-great-grandmother's, who liked to invent things, and included a picture of the invention (a contraption used to lift long skirts out of the mud).

Turner started her research before she had a computer or Internet access, and

structional videos on the New England Historical and Genealogy Society Web site (www.newenglandancestors.org/services/30.asp/), or reading "getting started" guides on sites like Ancestry.com (<http://learn.ancestry.com/home/hmind.aspx>) and Family Search Resources (www.familysearch.org/eng/Home/Welcome/frameset_information.asp).

She has also found great information from genealogy message boards, which are organized by surnames, locality, and topic. "I most enjoy getting stories and sharing photos with living relatives, both in my immediate extended family and also very distant relatives, some of whom I've 'met' on message boards."

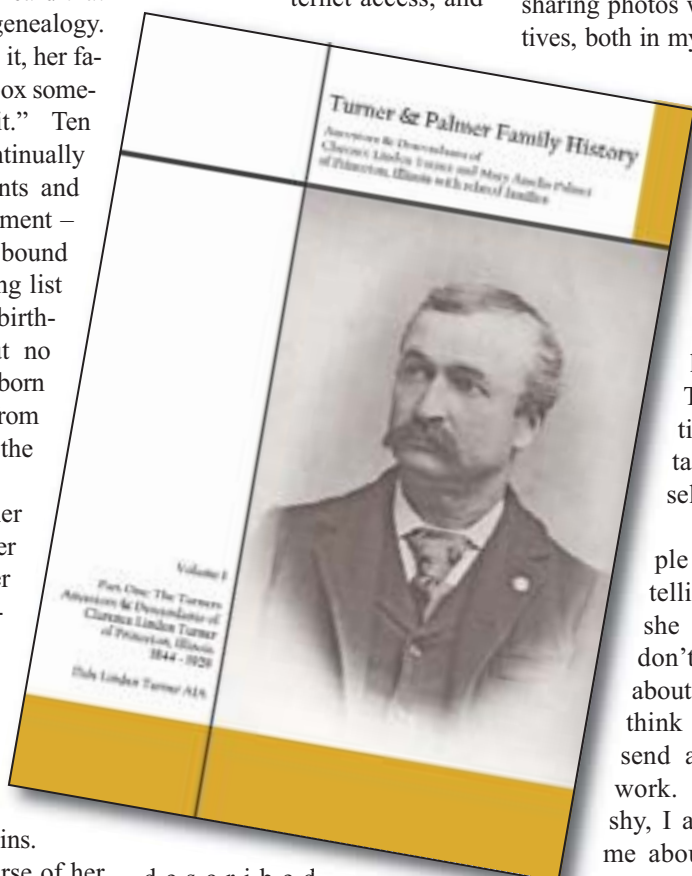
One challenge, says Turner, is getting people to talk about themselves. "A lot of people are shy about telling their story," she said. "People don't like to talk about themselves and think they have to send a great literary work. If they're too shy, I ask them to tell me about someone, or ask one question at a time. I asked my dad, 'Tell me about the war?' Then he got all excited."

In her book, Turner quoted a great aunt as saying, "Getting people to talk about themselves is like pulling hen's teeth." Turner recently spoke to her local Rotary club about her genealogy research. Her talk, entitled "Genealogy: Get 'Em While They're Hot," focused on asking your family questions while they are still around. "See these four people listed as sources?" Turner said, pointing to a page in her book. "They're all gone, now."

described spending countless hours scanning microfilm page by page, taking handwritten notes, and culling through 50th wedding anniversary announcements or obituaries.

"Everything has changed with computers, the Internet, scanners and digital cameras," she said. "It is easier to obtain information through genealogy Web sites and even through Google. If I had access to the Internet in 1988, what took me 20 years to discover could have been found within a few."

For novice genealogists, Turner recommends watching in-



Most people might define genealogy as a detailed family tree. For Lafayette architect Dale Turner, however, it is much more; genealogy is about the stories those ancestors tell.

In 1977, after Turner's grandfather died, she heard that there was a Turner genealogy. When she asked to see it, her father replied, "It's in a box somewhere; I'll look for it." Ten years later - after continually asking her father, aunts and uncles about the document - Turner was shown a bound copy chronicling a long list of descendants, with birthdates and names, but no cities where they were born - and it wasn't even from the Turner-side of the family.

Thus began her quest for the Turner clan, which has led her to sleepy towns in Vermont, grassy graveyards in Illinois, message boards on the Internet, and one-on-one conversations with great aunts, and distant cousins.

Through the course of her research over the past 20 years, Turner has found gems such as a land grant signed by Ulysses S. Grant, items purchased at the Chicago World's Fair, and even documents from the Civil War. "Most people's genealogies are just a list of names," Turner said. "The stories are what make them interesting."

For example, Turner's mother was a war bride and came to the United States by herself at the age of 17, crossing the seas on a ship from the Philippines to San Francisco, before boarding a train alone to the Midwest.

"I have the first letter she

Cut it back so the Trucks Can Get Through

... continued from page 1

He also notes overhanging limbs and shrubs can break off the emergency lights on the MOFD vehicles which requires the vehicle to be out of service until the lights can be repaired.

The MOFD guideline for the maintenance of vegetation on or near roads is the provision of a three-foot clearance

from the shoulder extending upward to a 15-foot clearance off the ground. Property owners are responsible for maintaining vegetation, trees, and shrubbery on their property and in the public right-of-way abutting their property.

"With the narrow roads we have, keeping the vegetation trimmed back extends the

usable roadway," he explains. This extra road space can be critical in a number of emergency scenarios, for example, if two vehicles need to pass or in the event an evacuation is necessary. "Trimming back vegetation is an effective way to ensure access to your property in case of an emergency," states Mentink.

Good Samaritan Mailman Strikes Again

By Cathy Tyson



Futures Explored Community Service Class shows off a few of the collected coats Photo Cathy Tyson

After experiencing how great it felt to give, I came up with the idea to start a local fund within the Lafayette Post Office to collect winter clothes," said Jeovani Abenoja. Readers may recall that a few months ago he gave first aid to an injured older gentleman on

his route. His plan was to collect winter clothing, especially coats, from Postal employees, encouraging them to clean out closets, and donate them to Futures Explored Incorporated, a program for adults with developmental disabilities. The

consumers (participants) in instructor Cindy Redinger's Community Service Class washed and sorted the donations and passed them on to Nifty Thrift, the thrift store the organization has run for over 35 years. Not only does revenue from sales go back to Futures Explored programs, but the shop serves as a "living classroom" for participants in their vocational programs.

If some of the adults look familiar, you may have seen these hard workers on sidewalk crew in downtown Lafayette or at the Moraga Commons on park crew.

"Oldies but goodies" used men's women's and children's clothing is always welcome at Nifty Thrift, 3467 Golden Gate Way. For more information on other programs, go to www.futures-explored.org.

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