Ancestry Tourism, Arkansas, and Sweden

Do Arkansas and Sweden have genealogy issues in common?

For about five years, AGS has promoted “ancestry tourism,” also called genealogy travel or roots tourism. Earlier and more recently, we have worked with the former Arkansas Department of Parks and Tourism and the former Department of Arkansas Heritage to explore this growing area that has been fueled by DNA testing and online research collections.

We already have evidence that genealogy tourists visit Arkansas for family reunions and as extensions of business trips, and use our Archives extensively.

Sweden and Arkansas

Sweden, too, is beginning to explore ways to enhance and capitalize upon growing genealogy tourism there, as both Ireland and Scotland have promoted roots tourism with measurable results. A Swedish university researcher is gathering information this year and next from those with Swedish heritage from America who have already traveled there.
It turns out that Sweden and Arkansas have some factors in common regarding genealogy tourism. One is that both entities have traditionally promoted nature and the outdoors as a primary draw for tourists. Though Arkansas and Sweden both have developed much heritage tourism and have serious interest in historic preservation, they have not focused on promoting genealogy travel per se in ways that could bring in more tourists.

Both locales’ visitors also identify residents as friendly and helpful, characteristics that are not always present in denser geographic areas. (Sweden has about 10 million residents, and Arkansas has about 3 million.)

Anecdotal and preliminary research information indicates that in both Arkansas and Sweden, rural areas of the state could potentially benefit most from increases in travel. Genealogy tourists like visiting historic churches, schools, cemeteries, and local historic sites in the countryside that provide context for their ancestors’ lives.

Retaining Authentic Atmosphere

Smaller cities and towns that like keeping the atmosphere personal often don’t want to expand in ways that will commercialize their areas, making living there congested and difficult.

It appears that both for Sweden and Arkansas, increases in genealogy travel could be gained by using the historic resources already present, but promoting them with families and sophisticated, prepared travelers in mind. This will also mean promoting libraries, historical societies, museums and archives that contain research treasures.

If you are interested in videos on parts of Arkansas to explore in connection with genealogy and heritage tourism, here is a web site of interest: http://garyjonesvideo.com/heritage--genealogy-tourism.html
Was great-grandmother a Civil War nurse? Service Records Discovered

Genealogist Angela Walton-Raji told genealogy enthusiasts at the annual CALS Butler Center genealogy workshop July 20 in Little Rock about a record group she discovered that documents females who served in the Civil War, some of whom eventually served in Little Rock hospitals. Walton-Raji located the record group while researching African-American soldiers from Helena.

Record Group 94 at NARA (not digitized or online yet) in Washington, D.C. is where you can find pension applications for women who served as matrons, nurses, laundresses, and cooks. Nursing had previously been a male-only job because women were perceived to be too physically weak to do it, especially in war circumstances with makeshift hospitals or floating hospitals that were on the water only. (Walt Whitman, the poet, served as a nurse in the war.)

Some of the women who worked in the hospitals were caretakers who would help wounded soldiers by taking dictation of letters they wanted sent home. More than 20,000 carded service records for women have been found, the speaker said.

Originally from Fort Smith and an expert on Native American and African American genealogy, she said this little-known collection holds the keys to many people's genealogies about female ancestors, and that war service was the first known time when women were encouraged to work outside the home for pay. Many of the war service women applied for pensions that are in the record group, and the pension files hold critical family information because the women had to prove and describe their service and their family connections such as marriages. Many of the nurses had been born into slavery, but escaped that to serve in the war.

Heroines of the war like Harriet Tubman, who served as a nurse, cook, and spy, have received attention in history. Likewise, Dorothea Dix received recognition for spearheading progress in mental health care, but the little-known group of other females who served has been largely unexplored in detail, Walton-Raji said. She charged her audience members: "Find Their Untold Stories."
Arkansas and Its People

Because of a partnership with AGS and Legacy Family Tree Webinars, webinar members can learn about how to research Arkansas families during the pre-territorial (1673-1819), territorial (1819-1836), and statehood (1836-present) eras. Record types, locations and examples are presented and discussed.

The webinar presenter is AGS board member and Archival Assistant at the Arkansas State Archives, Jane Wilkerson. Non-members of Legacy Family Tree Webinars may see previews whereas members will see the entire presentation. The company has 964 online classes in its genealogy education library and has subscriptions for ongoing viewing.
AR GENEALOGY SOCIETY FAMILY HISTORY WRITING

WORKSHOPS

In partnership with UA Little Rock’s Department of Rhetoric & Writing

All workshops are located at UA-Little Rock’s Writing Center from 1-4:30 PM

To register contact Sherry Rankins-Robertson at sjrobertson@ualr.edu

20 spots available in each workshop | $10 AGS registration fee per workshop

JUNE 29

Writing About Family Members, Places, and Events
This workshop will offer a writing activity about family members, places, or events, strategies for beginning the process of recording family stories, and practical tips to maintain daily writing practices. Bring a pen & paper or a laptop.

JULY 13

Celebrating Family and Food
This workshop will showcase writing about food-related memories and family celebrations. Bring a pen & paper or a laptop along with favorite family recipes!

AUG 17

Sharing Family History for Special Occasions
This workshop will teach participants to write stories that celebrate special occasions with family and friends such as birthdays, weddings, anniversaries, and holidays. Bring a pen & paper or a laptop.

SEPT 07

Writing Obituaries
This workshop will demonstrate strategies for writing tributes that are interesting, engaging, and perhaps even humorous. Bring a pen & paper or a laptop.

OCT 05

Publishing Your Family History
This workshop will cover various kinds of cost effective digital publishing methods that can easily reach a large audience.
Arkansas Genealogical Society
2019 Fall Seminar
Registration Form

October 18-19, 2019
Benton Events Center
17322 I-30 North Benton, AR

Name: ________________________________________________

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Registration Fee
A syllabus is guaranteed for those registered by September 17

_____ $20 Friday Night Only

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_____ $55 Friday & Saturday (includes Saturday’s box lunch)

_____ $25 (AGS Membership - New and Renewing)

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