

RFA Dispatch

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*An organizational communications medium addressed to members of the
Reynolds Family Association (RFA)*

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A Letter from the RFA President

Happy New Year to the Reynolds Family!

I would like to thank each and every one of you for your patience and understanding during our reconstruction over the past year and to give each of you a late Christmas present. The RFA Board has decided, during this period of continued organizational re-structuring, national economic uncertainty and few actual RFA membership benefits yet identified, to waive on a one time basis collection of annual RFA dues for Calendar Year (CY) 2013. (This means that we will not be collecting dues this year from members who were in good standing during CY 2012.)

The Reynolds Family Association is a completely volunteer organization and we are presently looking for some new blood. We need volunteers to help with this organization. At the present time, we are looking for an Editor of our newsletter. If you have any writing or publishing experience or would just be willing to undertake this task, then please let me know. We also need volunteers to help with the coordination of a Family Reunion. Hopefully in the near future we will also need lots of volunteers to help with data entry. There are many things that you may be able to help with, so just let us know.

I firmly believe that the success of any organization relies heavily on its ability to communicate, and this communication needs to be two-way. That said, I would love to hear from you as to what we can do to improve the Reynolds Family Association. What role would you like to see

the organization take? What information or service can we provide to make your research easier? What do we need to do to make the Association more attractive to current and new members?

I am in the process of completely redoing the RFA Website (www.ReynoldsFamily.org) and should have the initial site up sometime within the next 30 days. I eventually plan on creating a "Members Only" section that will be open to only paid members that will have more detailed and useful information. This is where more volunteers come into play. We will need volunteers to transcribe and do data entry for several data bases that we have in mind.

One additional request I have is that each of you look at your own research. We are always looking for interesting articles or facts for our newsletters and would love some additional information to share with our readers. Although we can't promise that we will include each and every article you might send in, we will make every effort to publish as many as we have the time and space to do so.

Joe Reynolds
President, RFA
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People Make Things Happen

Most of us know of or have come across family association websites that are loaded with interesting news and features on items we would like to read and learn about. Behind those news items and features are people who are willing and able to participate -- to voluntarily use a bit of their time for the benefit of their respective associations.

Throughout the past year, members of the RFA Board have received inquiries and good suggestions from some of our RFA members about doing this or that. But, so far, no one has offered to pitch in and help.

It takes people to make things happen. To do the things that you want us to do, we need people to do them. So, we ask all of you to take a look around your own families and acquaintances, find someone who can take a bit of their time to enrich the RFA with events and features that we desire to have. Encourage or sponsor their membership in the RFA so that they can help out. Please help us grow and nurture an organization we believe to be important and useful.

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Genealogical Research: Footwork or Instant Gratification?

As I am sure is the case with most of us, my interest in my family's history began long before anyone at all had envisioned an Internet. We lived in a small town which was hundreds of miles away from any library that had genealogical reference materials and many more hundreds of miles away from courthouses and newspaper offices in counties where we believed that our ancestors had probably left glimpses of their histories. We had to write letters, pay clerks to make copies of documents and mail them to us, hope that we might find a thread of some sort which might lead us to further knowledge of our predecessors. In the case of my family, the tough, dogged pursuit for knowledge on the part of an interested few was able to drive back the known frontier of our history by three generations. We had learned that our great, great grandfather was born in Indiana and that his father, our third great grandfather, who lived most of his life in Indiana, had been born in Tennessee. We found no clue from the records we could examine what locale in that state he was born. And there it remained, the new frontier, for some thirty years. It was the proverbial brick wall.

With the advent of the Internet, there began to be means to find connections. We found no useful evidence on familysearch.com (now FamilySearch.org) or Ancestry.com -- no mention at all of our Reynolds ancestors. (Later, I came to understand that was the case because no one had turned anything over to either of those websites concerning our line.) Free access family forums began appearing on the Internet and on one of them, after posting many speculations concerning our family's past, I was able to find an individual who had researched an earlier part of our family's history. He had spent years traveling from Tennessee, where he resided, to Virginia, looking in courthouses in several counties for the history of his wife's family. He was able to detect, from one of my luckier postings, what appeared to be a common thread. After he and I exchanged some cautious emails between the two of us (not on the family forum), he confirmed that we were interested in the same Reynolds line. He subsequently entrusted me with benefit of his decades of research notes, copies of pertinent documents he had copied at those courthouses and a copy of the family tree he had developed. And the thirty year old brick wall came tumbling down.

From that man's careful research and my own curiosity, I learned something of the necessary methods and techniques of verification and citation of sources so that any third party who examines the family history that I have developed can go to same sources and garner and verify that information I have recorded in my family tree. From subsequent research and many trips to remote courthouses and visits to genealogical libraries and data bases, I have been able to catalog and chronicle most of the descendants of my line down to at least the 1930 US Census.

Our Most Distant Known Ancestor turns out to be one Thomas Reynolds, identified as a School Master, who first appears in a glimpse from the remaining records of Caroline Co., VA, in 1772. By then, he was married to Ann, his wife, and they had eight of their eventual nine children. All efforts to find a record of marriage or proof of immigration have been unsuccessful.

By carefully tracing the descendants of Thomas Reynolds, I have been able to prove through the Reynolds Surname DNA Project that the genetic characteristics of the descendants of three (possibly four) of Thomas and Ann Reynolds' sons are alike, and, so, derive from the same father -- namely, Thomas Reynolds.

Since that time, I have also found snippets of this family tree posted on Ancestry.com. Most of those have usually presented limited information, contained many flaws in facts and have virtually no references as to source information. I have observed many of the flaws repeated in related family trees because the information has been copied without question from other trees posted on the same website. Yet, Ancestry.com maintains, in its advertising in recent years, that it is the single largest reservoir of family history information. And, as part of this advertising campaign, Ancestry.com insinuates that the information in their files is freely available. Both of these representations are questionable, especially since Ancestry.com solicits a subscription fee to view any further of the information they might have in their data bases.

Without the tough footwork of careful, at-the-source research, it remains impossible to have an accurate, thoroughly documented family history. Or, at least, that has been experience of this writer.

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Prepared and distributed by:
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