



## Message from the President

Katherine Goldberg

You know it is a great family gathering when the visiting goes on into the night and the goodbyes take a good long while. This year's Polley Family Reunion was just such an event. Five years ago at the last reunion, our group hadn't met up in a long while, and it was great to get to know everybody, many for the first time. At this year's reunion, it felt like meeting together with good friends.

I want to give a big thank you to the Muschalek's for hosting us at the Polley Mansion. They are such gracious and fun hosts and it wouldn't have been possible without them! Thank you to our Polley Association Board who all pitched in to make the event a success. We have a great team at the helm of our organization.

Lastly, thank you to all who attended. To those who brought family with them, and great artifacts and stories to share, you truly made it a great reunion. We missed all those who couldn't be there, but we will have other opportunities to gather in the future.

There is just something special about this Polley family. Maybe it is that the Polley Mansion is still standing (thanks very much to the wonderful efforts of Keith and Robin Muschalek), or that we have this great Polley Association (thanks very much to Shirley and John Grammer and the descendants who helped connect everyone together), or maybe it is because we have stories that survived the test of time (thanks to Josephine Polley Golson with her book *Bailey's Light*, or the many other talented storytellers in the family who passed down the traditions). Whatever the magic is, I can tell you that this is a great time to be a part of the Polley family and the Polley Association.



*Melissa Lingwall, Candy Hager, Katherine Goldberg, Claudia Goldman, Tammy Tiner*

At this year's Polley Family Reunion there was an excitement in the air for getting to know more about this family's legacy and joining together to help preserve it and pass our heritage on to the next generation. We are looking forward to increasing the ways that people can participate in sharing their own Polley family stories and increasing our membership as we include brothers and sisters, nieces and nephews, children and grandchildren.

I encourage you to share this newsletter with your relatives and persuade them to join the Polley Association. Check out our website at [www.PolleyAssociation.org](http://www.PolleyAssociation.org) for family history information and Polley family stories to share and stay tuned for ways that you can share your family stories and help us to preserve the Polley family legacy.

## Thank You Melinda!



*Melinda Kilian*

In 2008, Melinda Killian joined the Polley Association Board as our Vice President. She is a descendant of the Susan Rebecca Polley & C. F. Henderson line of the family and lives in Austin, Texas. For the last 14 years, she has dutifully served the Association with her time and efforts. She is a Texas History buff and her passion for

preserving our family history runs deep.

On a personal note, when I joined the Polley Association as President in 2015, Melinda made me feel like close family from the moment we met. Though we are really 2<sup>nd</sup> cousins once removed, I always felt like she was my aunt. Melinda takes care to truly learn about people's lives and makes people feel loved. She is a treasure.

We thank Melinda for her service and dedication to the Polley Association, and we wish her all the best!

## Polley Family Cemetery

The primary function of the Polley Association is to keep the Polley Family Cemetery in good order, and we are happy to report that the cemetery is in good shape. Mr. Lupe Campos continues to mow the grass regularly and take care of any small maintenance that arises.

We thank all of our members for your generosity and commitment to preserving our Polley family legacy.

For a list of who is buried in the Polley Cemetery, visit [www.PolleyAssociation.org/polley-family-cemetery](http://www.PolleyAssociation.org/polley-family-cemetery)

## Officers

President - Katherine Goldberg  
 Co-Vice President - Tammy Tiner  
 Co-Vice President - Cassandra Hager  
 Secretary - Claudia Goldman  
 Treasurer - Melissa Lingwall

## Join Us in Membership!

Your membership is important to us and your dues help the association to preserve the legacy of Joseph H. Polley and his family. Association dues remain at \$25.00 for the year, and we would appreciate payment by June 30th. You can do this by credit card online by going to [www.PolleyAssociation.org/get-involved](http://www.PolleyAssociation.org/get-involved), or you can mail a check to:

Melissa Lingwall  
 3326 Dunes Circle  
 Montgomery, Texas 77356

Now is the time to invite your family members to join the Polley Association! We have exciting things planned on the horizon and it is a great time to be a part of this group.



## Friends of the Polley Mansion

We at the Polley Association greatly admire and appreciate the work that Keith and Robin Muschalek have done in bringing the Polley Mansion back to life. We strongly encourage you to attend a future Polley Reunion, or contact Keith and Robin if you are in the La Vernia, Texas area, to be able to fully appreciate the wonderful renovations and care that the Muschalek's have undertaken in person.

If you would like to contribute to the ongoing restoration and care of the Polley Mansion, you may send a donation to the **Friends of the Polley Mansion**, a non-profit organization, set up by Keith and Robin Muschalek. This is a separate entity from the Polley Association. All donations are used for the care, maintenance, and improvement of the Polley Mansion.

*Optional donation card enclosed.*



## Welcome to our New Co-Vice Presidents!

*Tammy Harriett Ames Tiner and Cassandra "Candy" Tiner Hager*

We are the great great granddaughters of Susan Rebecca Polley. An interesting and touching bit of history is the following: In 1858 Susan Rebecca Polley married Connally Findlay Henderson who died at the Battle of Gaines Mill on June 27, 1862. Remarkably Susan Rebecca was with child when he died. She gave birth to our great grandmother on December 7, 1862. To honor her father, the baby was named Connally Findlay Henderson. She was our dad's grandmother, affectionately known to our generation as "Big Mama." She married Jesse Lane Tiner and they lived in Sutherland Springs, and later Uvalde, Texas, where their youngest child, our grandfather, was born. Our grandparents, Wayne Darwin Tiner and Harriett Rochon Tiner, lived in many places with San Antonio being their last place of residence.

We, along with our siblings Wayne Reynolds Tiner and Kenneth Henderson Tiner all grew up in San Antonio, Texas, about 35 miles from Sutherland Springs. We are the children of Wayne Douglas Tiner and Nancy Jane Reynolds Tiner. We have visited "Whitehall" or the Polley Mansion on the Cibolo Creek many times during our childhood and adult lives. We have many fond memories and have heard many stories about both sides of our family (the Polleys and the Tiners). It is with a sad heart that we must report that the Tiner House located in Sutherland Springs, Texas is in danger of falling down and in disrepair. That is why the Polley Association is so important to each of us. It is an honor to be part of the Association that honors and helps protect our family heritage. We will do our best to represent our family well.

### Tammy Harriett Ames Tiner

My husband, Kenn Harding, and I are retired from the Chemistry Department at Texas A&M University where we were faculty members for many years. We live in the home my maternal grandparents built in 1940, one block south of the A&M campus. With our daughter, Laura Ames Harding, we raise and exhibit registered Texas Longhorn cattle. We have learned that Joseph Henry Polley's herds of cattle were second in size to only the King Ranch in the years before the Civil War! We are proud of our ranching heritage. We enjoy researching all our family's history and learning the stories handed down from our ancestors.



*Tammy Tiner*



*Candy Hager*

### Cassandra "Candy" Tiner Hager

I have two sons, Aaron Reynolds Hager (wife Amy Byrum) and Joshua Alan Hager (wife Lindsay Robinson) and four grandsons Andrew David Hager, Aiden Paul Hager, Eli Christian Hager and Fate David Hager. I have lived in the Wimberley/San Marcos area for over 35 years and received my Bachelors and Masters degrees from Texas State University and became a faculty member in the Department of Engineering Technology at Texas State in 1998. After completing my Ph.D in Architecture from Texas A&M University I continued to teach at Texas State for the next 20 years in the Construction Science and Management program. I retired from teaching in 2018 after teaching computer-aided design and three-dimensional modeling to Construction students and Interior Design students. The Polley Mansion is a beautiful example of an antebellum "Four-Over-Four" with Interior Breezeways and front and rear porches.

## Polley Family Reunion 2022

On Saturday, March 26, 2022, Polley descendants from across the country gathered at the Polley Mansion in La Vernia, Texas. We kicked off the festivities the night before at The Den, a local restaurant in La Vernia. It was great to catch up with familiar faces and get reacquainted.

On Saturday, we began a beautiful sunny day with presentations on the lawn in front of Whitehall. We first heard from Dr. Melinda Creech, who has extensively studied the Polley family and their home on the Cibolo Creek. We learned about Joseph Henry Polley's brother Jonathan coming to Texas to help design the Polley Mansion, and then serving as a liaison for shipping fixtures and furnishings from New York to Texas. Dr. Creech wrote her master's thesis on the Material Culture of the Polley Mansion, and she is continuing her research with investigations into the lives of the slaves that lived at the Polley property.



*Heritage Garden behind  
The Polley Mansion*

*Claudia Goldman, Mary Dell  
Green, and Beth Everts.*



**Left: Siblings:**

*Daniel T. New, Gail  
New, Juanelle  
Linenberger,*

**Below: Ginger and Don  
Bourque Family**

**Lower Left: Sisters:**  
*Melissa Lingwall &  
Melinda Kilian*

**Lower Right: Isabel  
Golson, Valerie Gipson  
& sons**



We then had the pleasure of listening to a presentation by local historian, Allen Kosub, who gave a brief history of the various settlers of the area, who would have been well-known neighbors to the Polley family. Mr. Kosub memorably noted that the West was not settled by outlaws and cowboys, but by local county governments, who kept order and laws in the vast newly settled regions. Some of the prominent local people included sons and nephews of well-off families from the Old South, who were looking to make a name for themselves. One such group was the family of Ross Houston, whose son, David Hannah Houston, would marry Harriett Roxanna Polley. Ross Houston's brother, George Smith Houston was the governor of Alabama. David and Harriett Roxanna Polley Houston, would name one of their children after Uncle George. That child died at the age of four, and is buried in the Polley Family Cemetery.

Following the presentations, we all gathered at the steps of the Polley Mansion front porch for a large group photograph. As the sun was rising higher, and hotter, we all adjourned to the cool shade of the trees in the backyard of the mansion to enjoy some delicious Texas bar-b-que. There we played a fun round of Polley Family Trivia and awarded prizes to the youngest, oldest, and

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## Polley Family Reunion 2022 *(Continued)*

farthest traveled Polley family members. We had relatives crossing the country from Tampa, Florida to Gardnerville, Nevada in attendance, and our ages spanned from infancy to 96 years old! What a great group!

Several family members brought artifacts from the Polley family to share with others. It was a treat to view a wonderful video of George Bert Everts recounting his Polley family memories, a Civil War letter from Joseph Benjamin Polley to his father recounting the death of his brother-in-law, C. F. Henderson, and even a Bible that appears to have belonged to Mary Polley, among other wonderful items.



*Polley Family Reunion 2022*

Next up were tours of the beautiful Polley Mansion. Keith and Robin Muschalek have turned what was once a dilapidated eye sore back into the regal Whitehall on the hill overlooking the Cibola! They have worked tirelessly to restore and protect the mansion. Since our last reunion, the mansion has seen many upgrades. The upper front porch has been shored up. The two-story back porch has been built. The chimney of the cookhouse was straightened and made fast. The flooring inside the mansion was repaired and added to the rooms that didn't have flooring last time. The fireplaces have all been worked on by masons, as well. There is so much more, in and around the property that shows the care, consideration, and hard work of the Muschaleks. It is truly a pleasure to walk around and through the mansion to see the beautiful old home and really feel a connection to our family's history.

As the afternoon reached its peak, we headed to the Polley Family Cemetery across FM 539, to honor our ancestors at their final resting place. Candy

Hager and Tammy Tiner shared with us the history of the cemetery and read aloud the names of those buried in that hallowed space. Claudia Goldman then dedicated the new headstones for four ancestors buried there. The old stones were not original, and contained errors, or incomplete information. The new stones were ordered and placed thanks to Shirley Grammer. Claudia also led us in dedicating a new concrete bench in the cemetery that was placed this year in honor of John and Shirley Grammer. The Grammers have recently moved to East Texas, but their legacy in preserving local Wilson County history, including saving the Polley Family Cemetery from abandonment and overgrowth, will stay with us forever.

Another great site of local history is the Sutherland Springs Museum which resides just a couple of miles south of the Polley Mansion. There, family members were allowed to view old Polley artifacts and read Polley articles and stories. Several family members went on to local cemeteries in Sutherland Springs and Floresville, where some of the Polley children and their families are buried.

We ended the day under the trees at the Polley Mansion with a cookout in the backyard. We contentedly traded stories and relaxed into a cool evening as the sun set on a full and joyous day.

*Sisters: Jennifer Hamman & Georgette Laurence*



*Chris Lingwall & Paul Brady*



*Left: Jonny Goldberg  
Right: Courtney and Nathan Goldberg*

## How Many Polley Weddings?

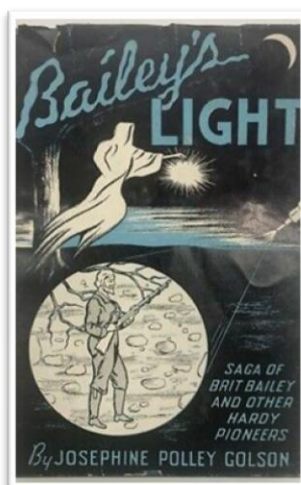
Was it two or was it three? Many of us have heard that Joseph and Mary Polley were married three times; the first time by the alcade, the second by a Protestant minister, and the third time by the Catholic priest. I even said there were three weddings during our Polley Family Trivia game at the reunion this year. However, after a little digging, I can only definitively say that there were *two* weddings.

*Bailey's Light* records that Mary Bailey and her sister Elizabeth had a joint wedding in October of 1826. Mary wed Joseph Polley, and the young widowed Elizabeth wed her second husband, David Milburn. This ceremony was officiated by the local alcade, a position akin to a mayor in 1820's Mexican Texas. The first child of the Polleys, Mary Augusta Polley, was born in December of 1827, so this wedding date being their first, makes sense.

The second verifiable wedding took place on July 12, 1831. This wedding is notable for several reasons. First of all, the Polleys had two children at the time of this ceremony. It was also a mass wedding, with many couples in attendance that day. In Mexican Texas, it was required that families be married in the Catholic faith in order for their children to receive headrights to land.

Father Michael Muldoon was an Irish priest appointed to Austin's Colony, who was happy to officiate baptisms and weddings for the colonists, for a fee, of course. Henry Smith, a fellow settler and neighbor of the Polleys had a famous hate of Father Muldoon, citing that he never held Mass, he only performed the more entrepreneurial services of a priest. Mr. Smith accused Father Muldoon of being an opportunist and he viewed the mass weddings with disdain as couples who had been married for many years lined up alongside couples with several children in tow, and even a mother nursing during the ceremony was reported. Yet, Father Muldoon was politically very well connected, and he served to clear up the issues that many Anglo Protestant settlers had in claiming clear title to their land in Catholic Mexican Texas, so most were happy to have him around.

So we have the official marriage in front of the alcade, and the Catholic ceremony to secure a headright for their children. However, I can find no records of a Protestant marriage ceremony. If you know of any records or details of a third ceremony, please do tell!



## Two Dresses out of One

As you might imagine, women getting married in the early days of Texas settlement had to limit their expectations for the finery that would typically adorn a bride in the 1820's. Mary Augusta Bailey and her sister Elizabeth were no exception. At the time, goods would travel by boat up the Brazos River to the settlements of Austin's Colony in southeast Texas. The settlers would wait for these shipments with great anticipation, hoping for flour, sugar, coffee, fabric, tools, and letters from back East. Shipments of silks and lace were uncommon.

*Bailey's Light*, by Josephine Polley Golson, recounts how the industrious ladies of the Bailey family created bridal fashions fit for the two eldest daughters of Brit Bailey.

*Mrs. Bailey [Dot Bailey, Brit's second wife and sister to his first wife, aunt of the two brides] had saved her own voluminous wedding dress and had brought it from Kentucky. Now she produced it and, with great care, she set about cutting gowns for the two girls. She had also saved yards of wide fine lace for just such an occasion. With much scheming and many long hours of labor, the pretty old light-grey silk, with the soft blue flowers covering it, was fashioned into two gowns of striking loveliness. Dot was capable of accomplishing almost anything that she decided must be done and resolved that the girls must be dressed alike, and in her wedding dress at that. So she pieced the silk and fitted the bands of lace to make up for the lack of cloth.*

On October 24, 1826, Mary Augusta Bailey married Joseph Henry Polley alongside her sister, Elizabeth, who married David Milburn, in "the big room of the house." Afterward, "guests were invited to the feast under the trees. A bright moon was shining and only a few candles were needed to soften the home-like picture. Lovely ladies and courtly men vied with each other in quiet repartee, for even if this gathering was in the remote "Wild West," the people composing it were by no means wild."

\*Excerpts from *Bailey's Light: Saga of Brit Bailey and Other Hardy Pioneers*, by Josephine Golson, The Naylor Company, 1950.

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[www.PolleyAssociation.org](http://www.PolleyAssociation.org)