

# POLLEY

*association*



## Message from the President

Katherine Goldberg

I had the privilege of visiting the Polley Mansion this past March during the height of the wildflower season here in Texas, and I can attest that there is almost no sight lovelier to my eyes than the tan stone and white porches of Whitehall glowing in the golden light of sunset with the bluebonnets, Indian paintbrushes, and purple phlox blanketing the ground. The Polley Mansion is not just surviving, but thriving.

Our own Polley Association is also flourishing, as we welcome Claudia Goldman as our new Association Secretary. Claudia is descended from the Mary Augusta Polley Baylor line of the family, and we are excited to have her on board as we continue to plan for the future of the Polley Association.

This past year has been a wonderful year of sharing the Polley legacy with family and friends. In this issue of the newsletter you will read about Laura Weyrens donating her portrait of Mary Bailey Polley to be displayed at Whitehall, and about Joe M. Golson growing up with his grandmother, Josephine Polley Golson (treasured family historian and author of *Bailey's Light*, one of our finest family history resources). You will also meet Melinda Creech, a new Polley family historian, whose interest in all things 'Polley' is infectious.

What's more, we have witnessed the continuation of the wonderful renovations at the mansion as Keith and Robin Muschalek carry on with protecting and restoring the home site. They straightened the leaning stone chimney of the cook house and they have completed landscaping and irrigation work, as well as outbuilding improvements. This spring, the Muschaleks welcomed their favorite construction expert, John Polley from California, to assist with building the new two story porches on the back side of the mansion. You'll want to check out the pictures on page 4.

We are continually impressed with the outstanding work that the Muschaleks have done in preserving the



*Polley Mansion/ Whitehall  
March 11, 2019*

Polley Mansion. They take the time to do projects well, and with so much respect for the families that have called the mansion home. The improvements are not just well-constructed, but also thoughtfully finished with character and charm. If you would like to help support Keith and Robin in their restoration efforts, please use the enclosed card, as all donations go directly to the restoration of Whitehall.

For more Polley genealogy and stories, check out the Polley Association website ([www.PolleyAssociation.org](http://www.PolleyAssociation.org)). We are working to add more content in the coming year, and we look forward to sharing our research and the gathered stories from all Polley descendant lines.

I encourage you to be an active member of the Polley Association by sharing the story of your family line with your close relatives, and with all of us. By contributing the small threads that we all hold, we can weave together the incredible legacy of the Polley family, for ourselves and for future generations.

All the Best,  
Katherine Goldberg

## Thank You Pam O'Connor

After serving as our Polley Association Secretary for 10 years, Pamela O'Connor has relinquished her position as she enjoys her retirement with her daughters, and walking her pride and joy – a Shitz Zu, named Rockstar!

Pam still resides in the Alamo Heights/Terrell Hills area of San Antonio, where she was born in 1941 to Florence Koch Wright and Allan Russell Wright. She attended Alamo Heights High School and the University of Texas at Austin, where she was a Business major and member of the Alpha Delta Pi Sorority. Her business career led her from banking to real estate with BK Johnson Interests and on to The Zachry Foundation where she served as Executive Director. She has two lovely daughters, Kelly Kathleen O'Connor Haupt and Kerry Kristin O'Connor.

Pam's great-grandmother, Harriett Roxanna Polley, was one of the lovely daughters, and "pride and joy" of Joseph Henry Polley. Pam and her two daughters are also proud members of the Daughters of the Republic of Texas, and the Daughters of the American Revolution.

Thank you, Pam, for your service to the Polley Association!



*Pamela Wright O'Connor*

### Officers

President - Katherine Goldberg  
 Vice President - Melinda Kilian  
 Secretary - Claudia Goldman  
 Treasurer - Shirley Grammer

### Find Us Online...

- Family History & Biographies
- Whitehall/Polley Mansion History
- Membership Sign Up & Renewal
- And Much More!

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

## Meet Claudia Goldman



*Claudia Everts Goldman*  
*Polley Association Board Secretary*

Daughter of George Bert Everts, granddaughter of Adeila Polley Everts.

Born in Galveston, the fourth of five children, I grew up going to Sutherland Springs to visit my grandmother and we always included a visit to the Polley Mansion. My father Bert Everts passed on his pride in family history to me.

I grew up in Beaumont, Texas, graduated from St. Edward's University in Austin, with a BFA. Afterwards I met my husband in Houston, ending up back in Austin working as a graphic artist and later, developed the Graphic Design program at St. Edwards.

We have two children: Britton Bailey (son); Audrey Claire (daughter) - both are married and have graced us with 3 granddaughters with a grandson on the way.

I continue to feed my creative spirit through metal sculpture and glass fusion while bee keeping connects me to nature. Come visit us in Austin!

CHILDREN OF JOSEPH HENRY AND MARY AUGUSTA BAILEY POLLEY



## Growing Up with Josephine Polley Golson

By Joe M. Golson

I was born in San Antonio, Texas, at Rosemary Hospital, on November 15, 1925, and a big surprise to Mom, Dad, and Grandparents... all thought it would be a girl. This comment was made to me by “Me-Ma” (my Grandmother, Josephine) and repeated often.

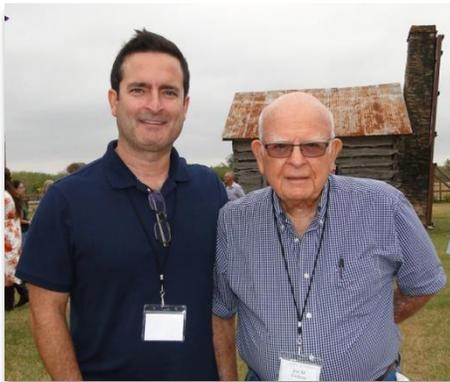
When Mother was released from hospital, we all went home to my Grandparent’s home in San Antonio, where it was a great gathering of family and neighbors. This also was where I first had the opportunity to know my “Me-Ma” (Josephine) as she assisted keeping me handy, safe, and clean. After about three weeks we made our trip back to Mexico (Torreon, Coahuila, Mexico) and our home. Only Mom and I got on train from San Antonio to Torreon, having arrived okay, Dad waiting there. I do not recall these days, but all went well for the next several months into Christmas of 1926 when Me-Ma came down for an extended Christmas visit. Me-Ma's leaving back to San Antonio was a difficult time for me, but I overcame this, and grew in size.

When I was about 4 yrs. old I was rushed to San Antonio very sick. With no good answers from local doctors, off we went. After arriving, within one week I had gone through an appendectomy, tonsillectomy, and a case of flu. Those days I do recall...painful, ice water, ice cream, and Me-Ma who was right there to help me and love me. I made it, and developed a better relationship with Me-Ma; it was great. I became well again and Mom and I went back home to Torreon.



*Josephine Polley Golson  
Daughter of Joseph Benjamin Polley*

*(Continued on Page 6)*



*Joe M. Golson with his son, Maurice Golson at the Polley Family Reunion in 2017.*

## Polley Pointers Now Available

In the mid-1990’s Dick Randt, of Maryland, began to publish a family genealogical newsletter called **Polley Pointers**. This newsletter provided a wealth of Polley family information in the days long before the internet had become a useful family history tool. Though Dick is no longer with us, his wife, Susan, has generously donated copies of the *Polley Pointers* for us to utilize in our mission to keep the stories and legacy of the Polley family alive. The newsletters cover many lines of the Polley family, going back to the original Polleys who came to the United States (British colonies at the time).

A huge thank you to John Polley of California for digitizing the newsletters so that we can make them available for all to access!

You can view the *Polley Pointers* through our website at: [www.PolleyAssociation.org/polley-pointers](http://www.PolleyAssociation.org/polley-pointers)

## Tell Us Your Polley Stories!

We are in the process of collecting Polley Family stories. We would like to be able to share more about the full lives of our ancestors, not just names and dates. So if you have any good tales that you would like to share about your Polley ancestor, a fond Polley-related memory, memories of the Polley Mansion, etc., we would love to hear about it!

As always, you can send in stories to:  
**PolleyAssociation@gmail.com.**

## Mary Bailey Polley Finds Home

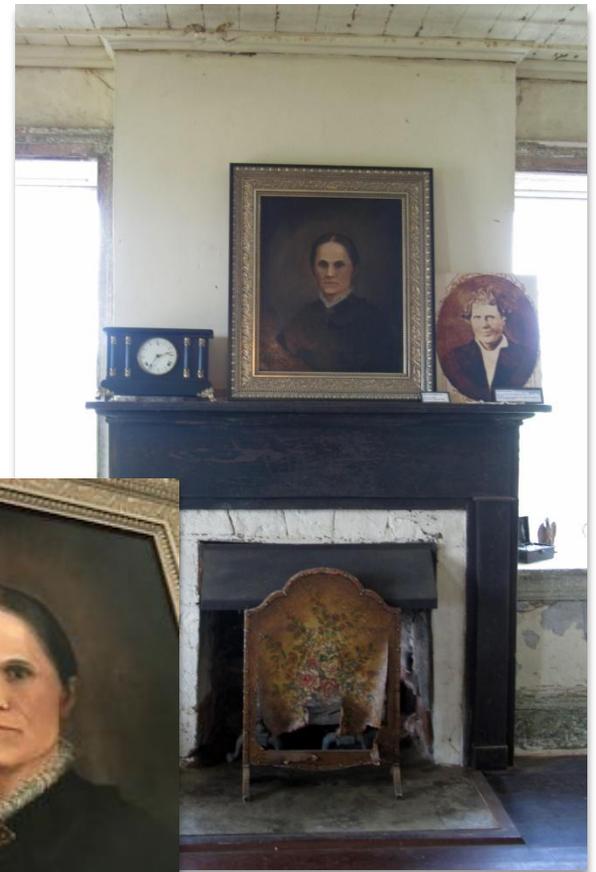
The only known surviving portrait painting of Mary Bailey Polley has found its way home to the Polley Mansion, courtesy of Laura Gassaway Weyrens who donated the painting to the Polley Association for display at the Polley Mansion.

Photos of this wonderful painting hardly do it justice. The detail and color, visible in person, really highlight the beauty of our amazing and tough Texas pioneer matriarch.

The piece will be stored in the climate controlled Linne House that sits behind the Polley Mansion, and will be on display at various events when the mansion is open to visitors and descendants.

We thank Laura for this wonderful gift, which all Polley descendants may now enjoy! It is so nice to see Mary presiding over her home once again.

If you, or any family members, know of the potential whereabouts of a Joseph Henry Polley portrait, please let us know! We love to share in family artifact finds.



*Painting of Mary Bailey Polley on the mantle in the front room of the Polley Mansion.*

## Updates from the Restoration at Whitehall



The stone chimney of the Polley Mansion cook house was leaning away from the house to a considerable degree. After major excavation and foundation work, and a good dose of pushing, the chimney is now upright and stable.

A visit from John Polley of California brought the Muschaleks just the help they needed to reconstruct the historic two-story back porch of the Polley Mansion. Following the guidance of photographs from the 1930's and 1970's, Keith, Robin, and John were able to set, construct, and paint the beautiful porches, including charming trim details. With the addition of a porch swing, barrel planters, and a Cibola valley sunset, the Polley Mansion's back porches sure are beautiful!



*Porch photos courtesy of John Polley*

## J. B. Polley's "Historical Reminiscences"

*There are a number of great resources that catalog the history of the Polley family in Texas, and the Polley Association would like to point any interested family researchers to some of the best known sources. In this and future newsletters, we will highlight selected sources and we encourage all to delve further into them to learn more about our great family.*

In this newsletter, I would like to highlight The Portal to Texas History. This is an online database that contains many rare and primary source materials from Texas history. Being that the Polley family was a prominent in Texas, searching family names or written works often comes up fruitful (including a digital copy of Bailey's Light, written by Josephine Polley Golson). Melinda Creech used The Portal to find many old newspaper articles written by our own Joseph Benjamin Polley for her master's thesis project (see "A New Polley Historian" ).

J. B. Polley wrote many articles for The Daily Express and other publications around Texas recounting his experiences growing up in the days of the Texas Republic (he was born in 1840), and on the Texas frontier, as well his time serving in the 4<sup>th</sup> Texas of Hood's Brigade during the Civil War. One such article is from the Sunday, April 21, 1907 edition of The Daily Express out of San Antonio, where J. B. Polley shared the text of a letter from his Uncle Jonathan to his father, Joseph Henry Polley.

The letter, dated August 14, 1836, detailed all of the happenings of the family back in New York, such as, "Father's health remains good for so old a person, but we must expect when he goes he will go suddenly." (Their father would not die until 1840.) Jonathan then went on to current events, stating, "Joseph, we hear a great many stories about your warring with the Mexicans. We hardly know what to believe, there are so many contradictions. However, the people here are generally wishing your independence." (A victory which was secured earlier in that same year...though news travelled slowly).

Following the text of the letter, J. B. Polley detailed just how slowly things did travel in his youth as he gave an account of his journey from Texas to New York with his uncle for schooling. *"From his home on the Cibolo near San Antonio to Whitehall, N. Y., which is at the head of Lake Champlain. Riding on horseback from his home to Brazoria, on the Brazos River, he went thence by steamship to Galveston, thence by another steamship around the mouth of the Mississippi, and up it to New Orleans. There taking a steamboat, he proceeded up the Mississippi and Ohio rivers to the little town of Beaver, on the line between Pennsylvania and Ohio. There, shifting to a canal, over its raging waters and in a narrow little boat drawn by horses,*



*which the passengers slept suspended from the roof of the cabin in regular tiers, he was conveyed to the town of Erie, on Lake Erie, where he took a steamer to Buffalo, N. Y. At Buffalo he again entrusted himself to the mercies of a canal and went to Albany, and there boarding the first railroad train he ever saw, proceeded to his destination. This trip took a month of steady travelling."*

Such incredible insight in just this one newspaper article! We learn about multiple generations of Polley ancestors and trials that they faced. We owe a debt of gratitude to our own J. B. Polley for dutifully recording all of his "reminiscences" and to The Portal to Texas History for cataloguing all of the rare and fascinating bits of Texas history for us to utilize in our quest to understand and preserve the legacy of our Polley family.

## A New Polley Historian

I would like to introduce you all to Melinda Creech. Melinda has just finished up her MA in Museum Studies at Baylor University. Her master's thesis is entitled, "The Material Culture of the Polley Mansion, Whitehall: Vernacular Architecture, Decorative Arts, and Domestic Arts." To complete this work she researched letters, receipts, newspaper accounts, courthouse documents, and more to fully analyze the home and domestic life of the Polley family at their Whitehall Mansion home overlooking the Cibolo in the 1850's.

Melinda is not related to the Polley family, but she and her husband inherited land near Floresville, Texas, just down the road from the Polley Mansion. After passing by the historic home on numerous occasions, Melinda decided to learn all she could about the mansion, and the family that called it home. She and her husband currently live in Waco, Texas but she is often spotted at events at the Polley Mansion. So introduce yourself the next time you are there. You will be glad you did!

If you would like to read Melinda's thesis, you can access it here: <https://baylor-ir.tdl.org/handle/2104/10499>

## Continued from Page 3 – “Growing Up with Josephine Polley Golson.”

Through all of this time, except for about ten words I spoke NO English, as all of the people I knew were Mexican, so I learned Mexican Spanish first. When I was 5 years old Mom and Dad set me up in a private school in our home, with a bilingual teacher, and here I learned some English words. At 6 years old Mother insisted I go to school and the only choice was a Mexican public school. I joined this activity happily with smiles. Then, at age 8+ I was taken to live with grandparents in San Antonio and attend a military school (Peacock). Except for school, this was great; being with my Me-Ma every day for the next two years and learning “Polley English” from her. Man oh man, what a time, as Me-Ma was hard on me to learn English, good “Polley English!!”

With Me-Ma and Papa Golson, on weekends, we would spend most of day riding the local bus for about \$0.05 each, for each trip. For example, downtown San Antonio to Randolph Air Base was a nickel, and to return another nickel. Papa Golson who knew San Antonio well, explained the areas we were visiting and names of friends living there. Me-Ma and I listened and learned.

My Grandmother was great, and in her way she kept me doing the correct things and mostly kept me out of trouble. She had a sweet voice that could erupt into “upset” growls. One knew the difference and must react to the situation to please her.

Me-Ma and Papa Golson had a very large house, with many rooms as I remember, and was the second house from the corner of Woodlawn Ave., next to a large church on the corner. I was not the Rector's favorite disciple, although he tried. Me-Ma and Papa did all possible to get me to Sunday School at the Episcopal Church close to town. I did go and enjoyed most days. After Church we all went out to eat lunch and passed the balance of Sunday visiting.

One of the places we would visit was Me-Ma's sister [ed.: Mattie LeGette Polley Paine] in San Antonio, she had two sons, one was Joseph Polley Paine, a painter and professor of art at the University in San Marcos, TX. And the other boy [ed.: Robert Paine], was a U.S. Navy Sailor, based in the Philippines, captured by the Japanese, placed on a Japanese boat and sent to Japan, but ----- sadly the U. S. Navy sunk this ship and this young man died. Permit me to enter these last few words to praise this young man with God's blessings. I have never heard his name mentioned regarding this subject, anywhere. Blessings.

Me-Ma was and is a precious star in my life. She made me a better man. Bless her.

## 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 15th. 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:

Shirley Grammer  
P.O. Box 234  
La Vernia, Texas 78121

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.

## Cemetery Update



*Headstone of Mary Henderson  
First child of Susan Rebecca Polley and Connally Henderson*

We are working to secure new and updated headstones for some of the Polley ancestors buried in the family cemetery in Wilson County, Texas. Some of the headstones are missing partial information or list incorrect dates, and we are placing new stones with complete and accurate information. Your dues and donations have helped to make this project possible, and we thank all of our members for your generosity and commitment to preserving our Polley family legacy.