



• THE • POLLEY *association*

June 2023

Message from the President

Katherine Goldberg

There is almost nothing I love more than digging into family history and finding little gems of stories and connections that bring our ancestors together with the larger history of our nation. I get energized at events like our Polley Family Reunion last year, hearing the stories and meeting so many wonderful people that help uncover those gems. I go home full of questions to explore, with books to read through, and artifacts to investigate; but then, life inevitably gets me busy focusing on other things. I can put away the books and notes for months at a time (or longer, if I wasn't pulling them back out again for newsletter ideas). Does that happen to you, too?



We are in the midst of what I am calling an in-between year. The memories of the Polley Family Reunion last year are still bright in my mind, and we are not yet planning another major reunion. So we are in the between times; a quiet place. Carrying for a small family cemetery does not create too many tasks to accomplish, and our finances for the Polley Association are in good order, so our organization is in a good place.

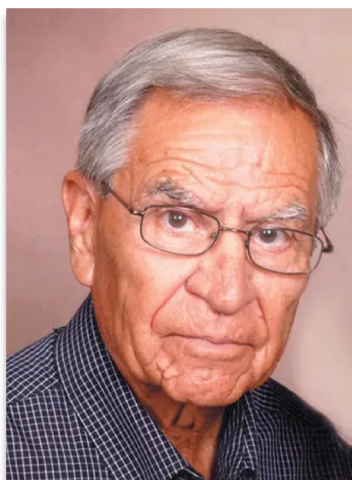
As for business, you will read on Page 2 about how we have had a change in mowing services for the Polley Family Cemetery following the death of Mr. Lupe Campos who cared for the cemetery grounds for many years. And I would be remiss in my duties as President of the Polley Association if I didn't remind you of the importance of using the enclosed card to send in your membership dues for the year.

Being a family organization, I like to keep everyone in the loop, and not edit our mailing list based on who is

current with their dues payments. That being said, our newsletter readership is over 120 copies each year, and we receive in the range of 20-30 dues submissions each year. We want to be able to continue to care for the cemetery and provide a family connection through our website, newsletter, and gatherings for years to come, and your membership dues are what make that vision possible.

I often get asked at events like the Polley Reunion, "What can I do to help out?" Honestly, in the in-between years, there isn't a whole lot that 'needs' to be done. However, it does provide us with a good opportunity to pull out the books and the photos once again; to tell the stories which light the spark of that excitement to learn more. So I challenge you to flip through the photo album and ask about who those people are; ask your mom and dad a question about their parents, or tell your own grandchildren about the person who first took you to the Polley Mansion. The quiet times are good times for stories.

Polley Cemetery Caretaker Passes



Guadalupe "Lupe" Campos

For many years, the mowing, maintenance, and care for the Polley Family Cemetery were handled by Mr. Lupe Campos.

After his retirement from the local C-Willow Dairy, Lupe was the grounds-keeper and custodian at St. Ann Catholic Church in La Vernia, Texas. He was also good friends with

John and Shirley Grammer. This friendship led Lupe into his position keeping the grounds at the Concrete Cemetery in La Vernia, and the Polley Family Cemetery. It was John and Shirley who spearheaded the cleanup of the Polley Family Cemetery and founded the Polley Association to connect descendants of the family so that the cemetery would always be under good care. Lupe Campos is an honorary member of the Association for his dedication in maintaining the Polley Family Cemetery so nicely for so many years. Lupe passed away in November of 2022, and we want to remember him for his years of service. May he rest in peace.

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.

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

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 July 15th. You can do this by credit card online by going to 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.



Lawn Medic to the rescue!

With the passing of Lupe Campos, the Polley Family Cemetery was in need of a new caretaker. As of May of this year, the Lawn Medic, a lawn maintenance company, will be mowing the cemetery once a month. This is a company local to La Vernia, Texas, owned by an off-duty firefighter and paramedic, Jeremy Powers. After their first service this year, the cemetery is looking great! We look forward to working with Jeremy and his company to keep the cemetery in top shape.

Updates from Polley Mansion

In the last year, the Polley Mansion has been a busy place!

- Over 30 photography sessions (from families and bridal portraits to high school senior portraits and local businesses) have brought many to Whitehall.
- Guadalupe County Master Gardeners held a plant sale in April during a community open house at the mansion. Guadalupe County Master Gardeners, a non-profit, volunteer organization serving both Guadalupe and Wilson Counties.
- In May of 2022 **Sutherland Springs Historical Museum's** banquet and auction was held on the grounds of the property. About 100 people attended this banquet and included local government officials from Wilson County.
- Later in May, two busloads of participants from of the **Vernacular Architecture Forum** toured the house and grounds of Polley Mansion. The Polley Mansion was also featured throughout the conference's book, ***The Field Guide to the Vernacular Buildings of the San Antonio Area*** by Brent Fortenberry and Kenneth Hafertepe.
- There was a day-long metal detector event (with all artifacts returned to the house for display and preservation
- And finally, the **Guadalupe Valley Electric Coop (GVEC)** featured the Polley Mansion in the 2022 annual calendar (June) of interesting and historic sites in their operating footprint.

A huge thank you and congratulations to Keith and Robin Muschalek for not only restoring such an important historic landmark, but for creating a beautiful and vibrant space that benefits the community and helps people continue to mark family milestones in such a special way. Well done!

Friends of the Polley Mansion

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.



Glass House Project

One of the big projects for this year at the Polley Mansion has been the construction of a glass house on the south side of the property. The Muschaleks carefully saved the old windows when they installed new windows in the Mansion in 2017-18. They also saved shiplap boards from the demolished modern bathroom that was once attached to the back of the mansion. Those materials, along with donated beams from the Old Lone Star brewery in San Antonio, were repurposed into a beautiful glass house.

As the Muschaleks were going through the windows to be installed, they discovered Mattie LeGette's signature etched into the glass of one of the windows. Joseph Benjamin Polley married Mattie LeGette, and they named a daughter Mattie LeGette. It seems likely that it would have been the younger Mattie who made her mark on her grandparent's home.



Whitehall Cemetery Update

The parents of Joseph Henry Polley were Jonathan and Rachel Polley of Whitehall, New York. They are buried in the Wood Creek/Kinner Cemetery, located off US Highway 4, just south of the town of Whitehall. Several folks have visited the cemetery over the years, and noticed that the neighboring gravesites have some cracked headstones piled up. Also Jonathan Polley's Revolutionary War marker is no longer attached to his headstone.

We reached out to Mr. Dan Giroux of a local monument company. He graciously visited the site and checked on the status of the headstones. He was not able to clarify to whom the cracked stones belonged, but he declared that Jonathan and Rachel's headstones are in surprisingly good shape for monuments of the time, albeit a little crooked.

Mr. Giroux explained that colonial tablets of that time often extend into the ground as much as what is visible above the ground. In this case, it is likely that these memorials shifted as the grave deteriorated and left a void. It is unlikely that the stones will shift further, and straightening them involves deeply digging and fully removing the long stones in order to completely reset them...an expensive undertaking.

As for the Revolutionary War marker, Mr. Giroux did not know to look for it, though he thinks it likely that the plaque is still there. The plaque was originally placed at a ceremony in 1994 by the San Antonio de Bexar chapter of the Daughter's of the American Revolution, in conjunction with the local Jane McCrea Chapter of the DAR in New York. Many of our Polley family were in attendance at the event, including Mrs. Sandy Coggins, Mrs. Mary Lou Featherston, Mrs. Susan Tiner Mitchell, Mr. Wayne Douglas Tiner, and Mrs. Glenna Hamley.

If you or a family member has any connections to the DAR, and would like to help us get this marker located and re-secured, please let us know!



Jonathan & Rachel Polley stones

Photo courtesy of Dan Giroux.

DAR Plaque Photo courtesy of Keith Muschalek



Ongoing Polley Research

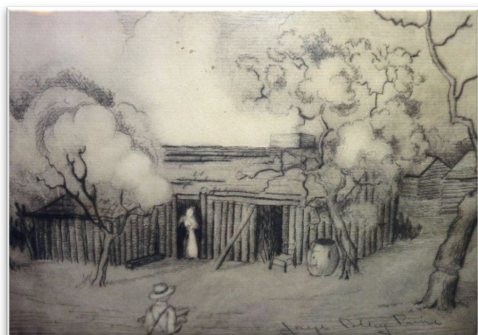
Melinda Creech is an independent scholar who wrote her Master's Thesis on The Material Culture of the Polley Mansion. She continues to research areas of interest, including delving further into the full story of the Polley Family.

- Melinda continues to learn more about the freed slaves in Wilson County, Texas from 1870-1890, and she presented a display on the Freedom Colonies at the Wilson County Courthouse.
- In the letters of John James (Joseph Polley's son-in-law and associate), Melinda has found reference to a potential source for the stone used to construct the Polley Mansion. A man named Jose Cassiano may have overseen the work on the stones which were taken from nearby Olmos (Elm) Creek.
- Melinda, her husband Robert, and the Muschaleks walked the area along the Cibolo Creek where they think the Polley Stake House might have been.

According to Melinda,

It is 40 feet above the Cibolo, just like J. B. describes in his "Historical Reminiscences." It's a lovely spot with ancient live oak trees, trailing Spanish moss, a leveled off area, and remnants of things Mrs. Polley may have planted, including Crape Myrtle trees. An article in the Frontier Times, written by "Hub" Polley, indicates that they may have built some kind of stone building down on the Cibolo to protect them from the Indians. We didn't find any remains of that building. Those stones were probably incorporated into the big house.

Artist Rendering of the Polley Stake House by Joseph Polley Paine, a descendant.



Jonathan Polley, of Whitehall, New York

Jonathan Polley was born in Windham, Connecticut on October 26, 1760 to Jonathan Polley, Sr. and Prudence DeWolf. His father passed away when he was just 16 years old, in the year 1776, leaving Jonathan to follow his older brother into the Revolutionary War. He joined several colonial militias for short terms, joining up with a different militia after the previous enlistment expired. In his pension application, Jonathan Polley testified that at different points in the war, he saw General Washington, General Arnold (yep, *that* General Arnold), and he was even involved in the Battle of Saratoga and witnessed the British General Burgoyne surrender.

His travels with the patriot militias took him through a town in New York called Skenesborough which was named for Philip Skene, a loyalist who moved back to England during the Revolutionary War. The townsfolk, not having a high view of the Tory, renamed the town Whitehall. It was in this town that Jonathan Polley chose to settle down with his wife Rachel. The couple married in 1791 and together they had nine children. Our Joseph Henry Polley was the second child, and eldest son. Rachel passed away in May of 1821 (at the same time that Joseph Henry Polley was meeting up with Stephen F. Austin in Texas to secure Austin's empresario rights). Jonathan Polley married Mehitable Metcalf sometime later.



"Lake George"
by John William Casilear, 1860
From the Hudson River School of Art

Right: Inset of 1756 Survey of Lake Champlain including Lake George
by William Brassier
(note the large 'Skenesborough')



INTERESTING FACT:

Jonathan Polley left home at age 16 to join the Revolutionary War. His two oldest sons, Joseph Henry and Benjamin Polley would leave home in their teens for the War of 1812.

Whitehall, NY lies at the south end of Lake Champlain in the Hudson River Valley, with the Champlain Canal running through the center of town. Jonathan was a ferry boat operator along those waterways. In 1817 New York Governor, DeWitt Clinton decided to create a canal system across New York State, connecting the Hudson River to Lake Erie, the project included expanding the canals north to Whitehall, New York.

It is said that Jonathan Polley ran passenger boats on "Clinton's Ditch" as it was colloquially known, from Whitehall to Buffalo, New York, a journey that would take about two weeks. These longer trips were likely only in the last years of his career. The Project was begun in Whitehall in 1817, and the full Erie Canal system was finished in 1825. Jonathan would have been 65 years old at the completion.

(Continued on Page 6)

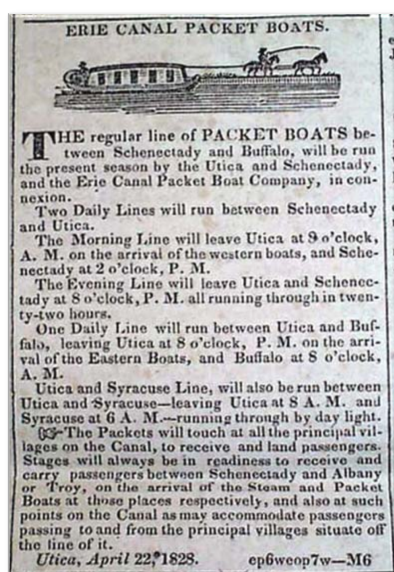


"Early Days of Rapid Transit"

by Edward Lamson Henry

(notice the mule team along the far bank, and the sun deck on top of the boat)

Left: Packet Boat Advertisement from 1828



Jonathan Polley (Cont.)

The boats that ran on these New York canals were called 'packet boats,' and they were actually guided by a driver of horses or mules that would walk a path along the canal bank. The boats would float along the middle of the canal. This allowed for a greater number of passengers per ride, and a smoother ride than the conventional horse and buggy over rutted roads. These packet boats had a cabin and full sun deck on top of the cabin for travelers to catch some fresh air along their journey. There is a famous folk song about the Erie Canal, written by Thomas Allen in 1905, the chorus of which cautions passengers "Low Bridge, Everybody Down," lest they hit their heads as the boat passed under the many bridges along the canal.

Jonathan passed away in 1840 and is buried just south of Whitehall, NY. So if you ever hear about the Erie Canal, just know that your ancestors are a part of that history!

"The Erie Canal Song"

Scan the QR code to the left with your cell phone camera, and it will take you to a video of this song.

Got a Polley Story?

One of the best parts about the Polley Reunion last year was getting to hear stories from the various branches of the family. We are more familiar with the legends about Brit Bailey or Joseph Polley, but what stories do you know about the Polley children and their families? We would love to hear what you know about your branch of the family tree.

You can send us an email, or post to our Facebook page to share a story or photos. We would also love to open the newsletter to more contributions from family members. If you are interested in a newsletter submission, please email us to get the details.

Most importantly, I encourage you to share your family stories with the next generation. You never know if a family tale might light a spark in the eye of a budding Polley family genealogist!

Great Ways to Connect



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