

Message from the President

Katherine Goldberg

As we finished off the second can of spray paint on the Polley Cemetery gate, I realized we are going to need to go to the hardware store to pick up more paint to finish out the fenceline on the road frontage. Then we should also get some white paint for the letters on the sign, and maybe...I stopped. As my ideas grew bigger, the look on my kids' faces grew wearier. It was a sunny day in late June which, in Sutherland Springs, Texas, meant the mercury was about to bust through the top of the thermometer. My estimate that the project would take "just about an hour," was a gross understatement, and cold sodas and hamburgers in an air-conditioned diner were calling our names.

I have often wondered why I care so much about our family history. Many folks seem not to care. So, I have pondered if it is important to care. Do I care too much? Should I focus my attention elsewhere in this world full of current and modern things going on?

But I know in my bones that our family history is an inheritance. Some may feel that it holds little value, like a knick-knack from an old aunt that no one remembers. But I would argue that our family history is an inheritance of far more value than what mere dollars could buy. It is an inheritance that belongs to us in a way that cannot be spent. The family heirlooms of our shared history are in our very being. We are made of the stuff of our ancestors, both in our DNA, and in the traits we carry down that were forged in those who came before us.

The funny thing about family history, though, is that it is fleeting. It is so much of who we are, and yet we can lose track of it so easily. We all have thousands of ancestors, and yet, we do not have surviving houses and relics and known cemeteries for all of them. Many people can't trace back farther than a generation or two. So, it is a precious gift to have access to a wellspring...a house, a story, a cemetery, a crazy aunt that knows everyone's birthdays and takes way too



many pictures. These are the places that our inheritance is preserved and passed down.

It is through the care and maintenance of these stories, properties, photographs, and people, that we understand our own strand in the thread of life. We come to know where we fit...in the family, in our community, and even our nation's history.

In order to give our children that same rich, rooted inheritance, we must properly steward and shepherd the resources that we have available to us, to make sure that inheritance can be understood, and truly felt by future generations. It isn't just a photograph that we scan or a cemetery gate that we paint. To loosely quote Wendell Berry, it is the art of keeping tied all the strands in the network that sustains us.

And don't worry about the kids. They got their cold sodas and hamburgers, but through the hard work of those who care, in the end, they will get so much more.

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.

The Lawn Medic crew from La Vernia, Texas keeps the cemetery mowed once a month, and the headstones and fences are looking good.

This June, we had a couple of workdays to...

- *Reseed some bare dirt patches with native, drought-tolerant, low growing grass.
- *Trim dead branches out of the trees.
- *Level and reset one of the benches.
- *Paint the front fence line that was showing some weathering to protect it from rust.

A BIG thank you to Candy Hager, Melinda and Robert Creech, and the Goldberg family for working hard in the heat and keeping the site in good order!

We thank all our members for your generosity and commitment to the Polley Association. It is only through your help that we can keep this historic cemetery and landmark of Wilson County, Texas in great shape as a fitting honor for our ancestors.

****For pictures of the workday, see Page 6.****

For a list of who is buried in the Polley Cemetery, visit www.PolleyAssociation.org/polley-family-cemetery

Join Us in Membership!

Your membership is important 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 31st. You can do this by scanning the Zelle QR code on the enclosed card, or you can mail a check to:

Melissa Lingwall
3326 Dunes Circle
Montgomery, Texas 77356

Share this newsletter with family who might be interested in joining the Polley Association. We would love to share stories and updates with all descendants!



The current practice of our Polley Association is to pay for the care of the cemetery out of the money paid in membership dues each year. While this, plus some additional generous giving from members, has sustained our mission, we are looking ahead to the future with a goal of maintaining the cemetery in perpetuity. As future generations feel increasingly more removed from our common ancestors interred at the cemetery, we may see a fall in membership commitments. With this in mind, our Polley Association Board has begun the process of building an endowment fund that will serve to provide the funds needed to maintain the cemetery far into the future.

Our ancestors entrusted this cemetery to us. We now have the opportunity to ensure that future generations never face the burden of wondering how the cemetery will be maintained. The Polley Association is establishing a perpetual care fund with a goal of \$30,000. Every contribution, whether through annual dues, memorial gifts, or legacy giving, helps preserve this sacred place for generations to come. Together, we can ensure that the cemetery remains cared for forever.

If you would like to discuss ways to contribute to this fund, please contact Katherine Goldberg at PolleyAssociation@gmail.com, or (970) 393-0218.



Tiner House: An Exciting Update

In our 2025 Polley Association newsletter, we introduced the effort to save the Tiner Hendrick House in Sutherland Springs, Texas. The home, built in 1887, had been added to Preservation Texas' list of Endangered Sites that needed saving. The landowner where the house sat wanted it removed. Dr. Melinda Creech spearheaded a committee with a goal of moving the house before the demolition deadline. The project would take a good amount of effort, and whole lot of fundraising.

I am very pleased to announce that just one year later, all that fundraising was accomplished, and the Tiner Hendrick House has been moved! Keith Muschalek, owner of the Polley Mansion, has generously allowed the Sutherland Springs Museum (new owner of the Tiner Hendrick home) to place the house on the land just a few hundred yards south of the Polley Mansion. This is a beautiful location near a grove of oak trees and so fitting that the historic home of a Polley granddaughter will sit near the historic Polley Mansion.



Scan the QR Code to find out more about this preservation project, the history of the house and family, and a link to donate.

The house was moved on May 29, 2026, in five pieces, to allow it to fit under powerlines and on the trailers necessary to travel the 3.5-mile journey to the new site. Currently the process to fit the pieces back together and rebuild the porches and chimneys is underway. The future is bright for this farmhouse that was so near to destruction. The location next to the related Polley Mansion overlooking the beautiful Cibolo valley will allow us to tell the story of this proud Texas family throughout multiple generations.

Now that the home has been saved from destruction, phase two begins for the committee as they plan for the restoration and future of the Tiner-Hendrick Home. You can assist with the restoration through a donation to the *Friends of the Tiner-Hendrick House*. All donations are used directly to fund the restoration of the home. If you have any expertise (woodworking, plumbing, electrical) and would be willing to donate your time to restoring the Tiner Hendrick House, please contact Melinda Creech at mjcreech@mac.com, or 832-978-8501.



Top Left: Tiner Hendrick House before the move.

Top Right: Back "Cabin" section built in 1882 on Hwy 87 in Sutherland Springs, Texas.



Bottom Left: Robin Muschalek and Melinda Creech taking the staircase down to prep for the move.

Bottom middle: One of three roof sections being lifted off the house and onto a trailer for the move.

Bottom right: The large two-story portion of the house as it sits with roof sections newly reattached.



Updates from Whitehall

While there is always ongoing work to maintain a beautiful historic structure like the Polley Mansion, after eleven years of careful restoration and



Front Porch Restoration

stewardship, the Muschaleks have the Whitehall property in excellent shape. When they first began to restore Whitehall, we were using this space in the newsletter to give updates about major projects that strongly impacted the home's outlook for the future.

I am happy to say that while projects continue at the property, the Polley Mansion is in great shape and she is a beautiful testament, not only to her own history, but to the amazing love, talent, care, and hard work that Keith and Robin Muschalek have poured into her over the years.

Some highlights from the past year:

- *The front porch decking was replaced with a better-suited wooden decking that will hold up stronger over the coming years.
- *The Muschaleks gave a presentation about the Polley Mansion restoration to the Wilson County Historical Society, and they hosted a booth at the Wilson County History and Heritage Festival.
- *The Polley Mansion has hosted tours as part of the African American Story-Telling Event, the Jaguar Car Club, the Guadalupe County Master Gardener's Sale, along with other private tours.
- *In sad news, a large branch of the iconic post oak tree in the front yard of the Polley Mansion broke during a May storm. The tree is still standing, though a little thinner than before. The Muschaleks have planted many trees around the property and continue to plan the landscape around the mansion with the future in mind.

Thank you to Keith and Robin for being excellent and thoughtful owners and stewards of the home and land at Whitehall!

Happy 200th Anniversary

On October 24, 2026, we mark the 200th anniversary of Joseph and Mary Polley. While they were famously married more than once (to appease the Mexican authorities that required a Catholic wedding to receive land rights), the first wedding for the couple took place as a double wedding, along with Mary's sister Elizabeth who married early Texas settler and merchant David Milburn. As the shipments of fine goods and cloth from outside Texas were not yet regular, the sisters wore dresses made from the fabric of their stepmother's wedding dress when she married their father, the famous Brit Bailey. The wedding was held at the Bailey home, and guests feasted on barbecued pork, beef, turkeys, and other game, with cakes made of cornmeal, honey, and molasses (as flour and sugar were scarce), followed by dancing through the night. *Bailey's Light* sets the scene for us...

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...It was only when daylight began to remind the guests that their feet were tired, even if their hearts were not, that they decided to depart.

So set a reminder for October 24th, to look up at the moon, and listen for distant echoes of an old fiddle playing through the night under the low hanging oak trees to celebrate the marriage that began it all.

Right: Large fallen limb of post oak tree

Below: Jinx the cat, who likes to give tours of the mansion. She literally follows people through the rooms and meows...but only while in the mansion.

Good work, Jinx!



Polley Descendant Spotlight: George Bert Everts

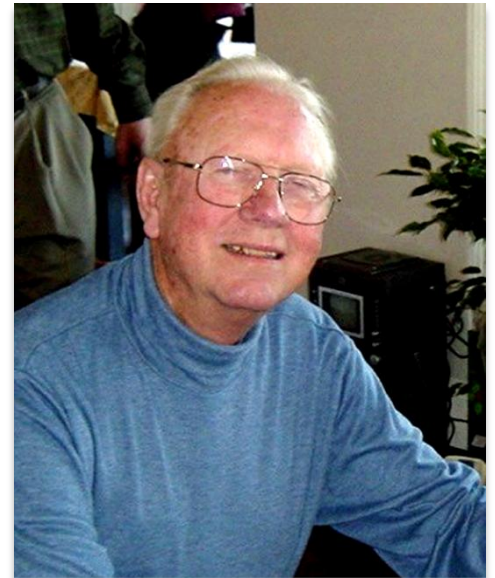
By Claudia Goldman

A descendant of Mary Augusta Polley, Bert was the 5th child of Richard and Adelia Everts. His mother, Elenora Adelia Polley, who married Richard Ford Everts, was thought to be born in the Polley home (Whitehall Mansion). She spent her young years living in the mansion until she was married.

Growing up in Sutherland Springs, Bert was deeply proud of his ancestry, conveying that feeling by passing down its history on every opportunity. He went on to marry Margaret Mary Ellis - they had: 6 children (5 surviving); 16 grandchildren (15 surviving); and 22 great grandchildren.

As Bert's 5th child, I enjoyed many stories about his family and our lineage. I loved going to visit his mother in Sutherland Springs (except for the sulfur water) and hearing the family talk about their ancestry. Top on our list of places to visit was the Polley Mansion and the cemetery.

Bert continued his family research in earnest by traveling to Utah visiting Family Search (the world's largest free genealogy organization). Family was his love, and he wanted to know all that he could to carry on the knowledge. His joy and enthusiasm became contagious to me: I am the family "memory." I've continued to document as much as possible and have scanned photos with names attached. My most cherished item is the video of my father holding each photo while relating each family memory that he experienced or was told. All of this is posted on Google Drive for family members to access at any time.



George Bert Everts

Bert gave us the wonderful gift of our family history as he marveled at the grit, determination, and courage of his ancestry in pursuing their life's dreams. His legacy is of a beautiful, loving family man which must live on through each of us. I do hope that all future generations will access this information and continue to add their history to it.

Mary Augusta Polley Baylor

Mary Augusta Polley Baylor was the first-born child of Joseph and Mary Polley. She is the matriarch of many Polley family descendants, having had nine children (seven surviving to adulthood), and 32 grandchildren. Some prominent descendant surnames from her line include Polley, Everts, Stevenson, Tiner, Hooks, and Parker, among others.

Mary Augusta was first married to her cousin, Joseph Egbert Polley, who came to visit the family from up north. They were married in 1842, and had their first child, Eleanor Adelia Polley in 1843. Tragedy would strike the young family in 1845, when Joseph Egbert Polley would die on October 1st, from "congestive fever," and the couple's second child, Joseph Egbert Polley II, was born only thirty days later.

Mary and the two children were thought to have lived with the Polley family at their home in Brazoria, and when the Polley's moved west to the Cibolo Valley in 1847, Mary and her children came with them. The two

Polley grandchildren were treated like the rest of the children in the family, as Eleanor was only one year younger than Harriet Roxanna Polley, and Joseph Egbert was only 26 days younger than Abner Hubbard Polley. Joseph Polley listed his grandson Joseph Egbert Polley in legal documents, like his will, right along with his sons.

In 1852, Mary Augusta Polley married Walker Keith Baylor, nephew of Baylor University founder, and cousin to controversial figure, John R. Baylor. The two had seven children, named: Sarah Stark Baylor, James Belger Baylor, Mary Augusta Baylor (died in infancy), Mary Augusta "Millie" Baylor, Lucy Katherine Baylor, Laura Agnes Baylor (died in childhood), and Blanche Josephine Baylor. The family lived in Sutherland Springs, where Mr. Baylor was a stock raiser, postmaster, and merchant.

Mary Augusta Polley Baylor was an excellent letter writer, and two volumes of her writings are held at the Dolph Briscoe Center for American History at the University of Texas. Check www.PolleyAssociation.com/news-1 for samples of some of her letters.

A Polley Legend Passes

Joseph Maurice Golson Jr., grandson of Josephine Polley Golson, passed away in Tampa, Florida this past year. In iconic form, he left this mortal coil on November 15, 2025, his 100th birthday, after spending the day celebrating with family and friends.



Joe Golson next to the safe that belonged to his great-grandfather, Joseph Benjamin Polley.

Born in San Antonio, Texas, Joe moved to Torreon, Mexico with his parents as an infant. He returned to San Antonio, Texas at the age of 10 to learn English, and lived with his grandparents, Josephine and Edward Golson. He had memories of

early days of riding horses to and from school and living through the Mexican Cristero War.

Joe was a devout Catholic and proud World War II Marine veteran, enlisting in March of 1943 at just 17 years old. During the war, he received training and saw action in Guam, Guadalcanal, Okinawa and Naha. At Okinawa he was one of seven survivors from his company. He truly embodied the spirit of Semper Fidelis, remaining steadfast in his faith and commitment to excellence in every endeavor.

After completing his service in 1946, he attended St. Mary's University in San Antonio, Texas where he earned a bachelor's degree in business administration. He went on to pursue a career in agriculture, holding global leadership roles which led him to travel & live around the world, including Venezuela, deep in the Amazon of Brazil, and, Lima, Peru. His life was filled with adventure, and he had an indomitable spirit.

Joe had a love of his family history and visited the Polley Mansion on multiple occasions. He is survived by a loving and devoted family that includes 7 children, 15 grandchildren, and 16 great-grandchildren.

Cemetery Workday Photos



Top: Polley Cemetery sign, before and after.

Right and top center: Courtney Goldberg leveling the bench

Left and center: Jonathan Goldberg trimming dead branches from the tree, before and after.

Right bottom: Nathan Goldberg hauling branches.

Bottom left: Jonathan Goldberg, Robert and Melinda Creech, Candy Hager, and Katherine Goldberg hauling tree limbs.

Polley Association Officers

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Co-Vice President – Cassandra Hager

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