



March 2017

By Lydia O'Connor

Did you know that many of our ancestors who came from Great Britain in the 1600 to 1700 timeframe may have been convicted criminals? At the February meeting of the SaddleBrooke Genealogy Club, Katie Gertz from Mesa, AZ delivered an in depth lecture on the resettlement of convicted criminals to the American Colonies prior to the Revolutionary War.

Between 1600 and 1776, Great Britain experienced great challenges with their population. One-fourth to one-half of the population lived in poverty. Because there was little work to be had, many people turned to crime for survival. Additionally, there were not enough police to enforce laws and few prisons to hold the convicted criminals when lesser crimes such as robbery, forgery, petty theft or pick pocketing were committed. The answer was to send these convicts to the Colonies.



Convicts were sold to ship owners and shipped off to the Colonies for seven year or even fourteen year sentences. The Transportation Act of 1715 passed by Parliament somewhat regulated this process. The conditions on the ships were deplorable. Convicts were chained together with little air or light for a six to eight week trip across the Atlantic Ocean. Approximately 10-15% did not survive the trip. For the survivors of the long ocean trip, treatment upon arrival in the colonies was often cruel. Convicts found themselves treated much worse than slaves or indentured servants.

Club members and guests found Katie Gertz's lecture eye opening and most informative. According to British court records one in four arrivals from Great Britain in the 1600-1776 period was a convicted criminal. The United States is truly a "Melting Pot"!

The meeting was well attended with 2 new members and 6 guests many of whom joined before leaving. We have many members who will gladly help anyone interested in beginning the exciting journey of researching their family.

Desert View Library has many books donated by the Genealogy Club and they are being enjoyed. One does not have to be a Genealogy Club member to use the library resources. We also have a small library available to club members at our regular monthly meeting.

The two Special Interest Groups meet at specific times and locations. Gloria Quigg has her DNA Group on the 3d Monday of every month from 9 to 11 starting in April at the Mountain View Clubhouse in the Cactus Room. Bonnie Lucas heads the Irish Group which meets at her home. Future meeting dates that will be posted.

If you are interested in joining our group and finding out about your roots, please join us the first Thursday of each month at 1:00 in the Coyote Room at HOA1 Clubhouse. All SaddleBrooke residents, SaddleBrooke Ranch residents and winter visitors are welcome.

Next month's meeting on March 2nd, features Dr. Barbara Vander Leest giving a presentation on "Researching Collateral Lines", including relatives such as cousins, nieces, nephews, aunts and uncles, etc.