

Casto Connections

Volume 3, Issue 2

October/December, 1999

The Life of a Publisher....

I have discovered that one of the problems with being a publisher/writer/researcher/printer/correspondent is that when my other job of wife/mom/product sales manager/neighborhood cookie baker gets busy, I don't have time to get the newsletter out. And that's what happened this fall. My wonderful husband accepted a new job and moved to Huntsville, Alabama. My task was to fix, straighten, clean, organize, and paint the house before we could even put it on the market. Then it was a job keeping it spotless - with two kids and a dog around - since you never knew when prospective buyers would be coming along. And as fate would have it, as soon as we thought we were set for a long winter of this - who wants to buy a house and move in December, right? - the house sold! So then I was in charge of calling movers, packing things I didn't want movers to touch - my research must be protected! - calling utilities, schools, and friends, and looking for a house in another state. Needless to say, my poor little newsletter just waited and waited for me to free up the time to print it - it's been written, sitting in my computer for weeks! I just couldn't find time to do the labels and printing. But last night I said, this is it, time has run out, print it! So, for all it's worth, here it is. I've re-written the introduction so many times that one version ended

up as an article instead of an introduction - I got kind of wordy with that one anyways! The second part of the Casto genetic genealogy project is in here, too, but I didn't really get as much of a response as I had hoped, so it's not as long as I had originally planned. I've also included - thanks to Dru Falk for all her help! - a list taken from Jackson Co., WV Death Records which lists the cause of death for many Casto family members. The list starts in 1854 and ends in 1924. The last thing I've put in this time is an explanation of the current research I was working on before all this moving business came up and how I'm going to be including it in the next issue.

I hope you will all forgive my delay in getting this to you. The thought of canceling the whole newsletter project has crossed my mind once or twice but I think we've got a good thing going here and I am sure the communication among Casto researchers has never been better than what has been experienced by us all these last couple of years. I would like for this to continue and I hope you do, too.

Until Next Time!

Danita

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Casto Connections Newsletter

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Casto Genetic Genealogy - Part 2

by Danita H. Smith

In the July, 1999 issue of *Casto Connections*, I wrote an article explaining the growing popularity of genetics in genealogy and why genealogists, as the “family keeper of records”, are the perfect people to also keep track of the family’s medical history as well. In that same issue, I attached a form I had created asking questions about my reader’s specific medical histories as is known to them. This article is about what I have gathered after reading all the responses.

Heart disease was frequently mentioned as a related medical condition, as was **diabetes**. Another medical problem listed was **cancer** - breast and prostate cancer being named specifically. Other conditions our readers listed frequently included **high blood pressure** and **hypothyroidism**. Unfortunately, all of these conditions are fairly common and I don’t think the response was great enough to form any true conclusions about Castos or Casto descendants having a genetic tendency towards these conditions. Other things people mentioned, however, did catch my eye:

Several readers remarked on the long life spans of their Casto ancestors. An article I recently read entitled, “Is It In Your Genes? Aging and Genetics”,¹ stated that while the longest human *life span* — the length of time between birth and death — isn’t more than 120 years and hasn’t changed much over the course of history, *life expectancy* — the average length of time a person of a particular age may expect to live — has changed dramatically. A person born in 1900 in this country could have expected to live 47 years. A baby born today can expect to live almost 76 years. Better nutrition and clean drinking water as well as biomedical discoveries such as immunizations and medicines have all brought about this change.

The article then mentioned the part genetics and environment play in aging. I believe our last issue of *Casto Connections* explained pretty well how genetics play a part in determining a person’s tendency to develop certain medical conditions. However, one factor that came to my attention after I had written that article and that this article and several others I’ve recently read mentioned was the effect *environment* can play on your health. I had not taken into account how living and working conditions influence a person’s health. Certainly, many studies have been done specifically on the effects the coal mines of West Virginia, as well as the poor living conditions of many families earlier in this (last?) century, had on people. But those are topics that need not be gone into here except to mention that they, too, could have played a part in your ancestor’s health.

Going back to our Castos, specifically, I looked at the medical conditions people had mentioned and noticed several items that were rather unusual. One reader mentioned an illness of the lungs called, “Histoplasmosis”, which she described as being caused from being around birds - definitely an environmental factor. A couple of other readers made mention of “Alcoholism”. For many years this was not thought of as an illness but more recent studies have shown that a tendency towards alcoholism could indeed be caused by genetics. One item I found very interesting was the fact that one reader mentioned her uncle as having webbed fingers on both hands. Does anyone know of any other Castos with this trait? Vision problems also were mentioned - cataracts, near-sightedness, and one case of macular degeneration. For all the illnesses and health problems mentioned, though, it still comes back to most people remarked on the long lives of their ancestors. The following table shows the average life expectancy of humans²:

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Average Life Expectancy	
Date	Years
Prehistoric Times	25
Roman Empire (0 A.D.)	30
1870 (U.S.A.)	40
1915	50
1930	60
1955	70
1992	75.8
1997	76
2000 (Estimated)	80

Several readers mentioned their ancestors living well into their 80's or 90's. One person's great-grandfather even lived past 100. What amazes me is that this is not unusual but according to information like I found in the table above, it should be. I made mention of the fact back in the October, 1997 Casto Connections newsletter that William Casto, born 1717, had died in 1778 at an age of 61. This most definitely didn't fit the statistics for people living in that time period. If we were to believe these charts, a lot of the people who are living today are on borrowed time! So why do people seem to live so much longer than what these charts tell us they should? Well, not being a scientist or anything, my guess would have to be that it is because the charts take into consideration the infant death rate, too. Since there was such a high infant mortality rate before the discovery of many medicines used in immunizations today, I would guess many life expectancy tables are skewed. A better table would be one based on the life expectancy by age produced by the U.S. Health Department³. While the table was too large for me to print, it was broken down by years (1850-1997) and race and

sex. A white male born in 1997 has an average life expectancy of 74.3 years but should he live until the age of 70, his life expectancy is still 12.7 years, and at age 80, his life expectancy is 7.4 years. I guess the longer you live, the more practiced you are at it and the longer you plan to stay around!

In closing, I'd like to summarize some of what we've learned by this exercise in genealogy and genetics. As genealogists, we are the logical people to help keep track of our families medical histories as well as the other information we gather on our ancestors. While it may be difficult to access much information about the past, future generations will thank us for any information we gather about our ancestors and/or present families. By putting together a medical family tree, you could at least list cause of death for your parents, grandparents, etc. and list other relevant medical conditions you know of. It probably wouldn't hurt to list those conditions that, while not life-threatening, could be genetically caused, too, like webbed fingers or poor eyesight. And if you really want to go nuts, think about hair and eye color, big ears, freckles, or how about artistic talent? Is mechanical ability genetic? How about athletic ability? Just something to think about!

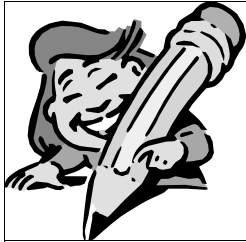
Sources:

- ¹ [ht://WWW.biorap.org/br8aging.html](http://WWW.biorap.org/br8aging.html)
- ² <http://www.grg.org/resources/extro/tsld022.htm>
- ³ Department of Health and Human Services, National Center for Health Statistics; Web: www.dhhs.gov. (<http://cbs.infoplease.com/ipa/A0005140.html>)

My Thoughts on Writing and Publishing a Book on My Family

by Danita H. Smith

One of the most frequent questions I hear as the publisher newsletter or serious about genealogy is, "Are you planning to write a book?" Since there are many thoughts running through my mind on this issue, I thought I might share them with you.

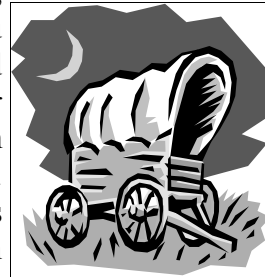


My first impulse is, "Well, of course, someday I'll write my history down in some sort of organized manner for my descendants to read". Immediately after that thought comes, "But I really don't have the time right now". Followed by, "Life is too short - wait too long and it will never get done!". And then there's, "Well, if I did write a book, no one would want to read it", "This family's line as already been published", or even "Let someone else do it". Now, hang with my ramblings here because I'm leading up to something. These are all valid points in anyone's life, not just mine. Some times our lives are like calm waters and you can sail into your genealogy work with no trouble and other times life interrupts and you've got to put research into the 17th century aside in order to deal with 20th (or 21st!) century matters. The point I'm getting at is we can do our genealogy without ever feeling guilty about not publishing our results or "finishing" our work. When are we ever really finished? We're researching people's lives and as long as a family lives, then the research continues.

However, I find myself thinking that I should write some things down because as a

genealogist, I know some information will never be found in a courthouse or public records. A good example of this is current events in our home. Four years ago, my husband and I, along with our two small children, left Ohio and moved to Tennessee. It happened between census years and if I were to still be in Tennessee in 2000, then I might show up there. However, since we are moving to Alabama soon, no one would ever know we lived in Tennessee. So, our lives in Tennessee are over, without any of my descendants knowing the hows or whys for all this moving about.

Have you ever wondered why our went from to another. greatest parts American the vast



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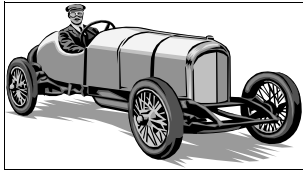
reasons for immigrants arrival in this country - religious freedom, opportunity, desire to see the new world, and so on. My husband's work has presented us with some wonderful opportunities to see different places and while the work that goes into moving to a new town can be quite frustrating - let alone disruptive to genealogy work! - we view it as a new learning experience for both us and the kids. This is what I would want written down.

I may not write a book and publish it for the world to see but I do keep a small notebook journal of some of the events in our lives and the happenings around us. I'm not a great writer - although my Aunt comments on how much better my writing is than my

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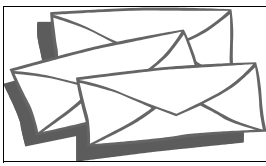
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grammar! - but I know if I just write down something, it's better than no attempt at all. I had never wondered until a couple of years ago why my in-law had Kentucky as man and Ohio. I'm took the ask so now I can put that into the Smith genealogy. There will come a day in the future when I will wish I had asked him a million other questions but didn't.



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Did you see what I just did? Most people think in terms of outliving their "elders" but that's not always the case. My father-in-law could outlive me but should that happen, he wouldn't be thinking in terms of what my descendents would want to know. I always felt that genealogy should be about more than just names and dates. These people not only were born, married, and died but laughed and cried, went through wars and depressions, gold rushes and potato famines. They founded towns and countries, started businesses, invented things we take for granted today. Now, I can tell you from experience that it is very hard sometimes to find out more about people that have lived before us than just names and dates. But with thought going into it, you can write something about your mother, an uncle, anyone you want, just to make them seem more than a name on a paper. I recently did this with my great-aunt Belle. She was the sister to my Grandfather and never had children. She genealogist, would write letters to everyone she could think



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of to track down information - believe it or not, before e-mail people really did that! - and the letters she wrote to my grandfather or father or the ones they wrote her have survived these many decades. I used the letters to write about Belle and was even able to quote her - my personal favorite phrase being, "I broke the blade of Bert's buck saw the other day. I can't keep house without a buck saw." She sounds like me! Now my children will know their great-great-aunt and I plan to do this with all the ancestors I can find out about. I'm going to take the time to extract information from those old letters. I'm going to ask members of my family about Grandpa's personality or why did so-and-so move before the war? Then I'm going to write it down and try and preserve it for my descendents. I'll work on it one ancestor at a time and not worry about if it's "good enough". And then, if I have done enough work and I have the urge, I can put all the ancestor pages together in a book and say, "Here's what I've learned about our family". And don't forget to include yourself!

If you could meet some of your ancestors, what would you like to ask them? I like to think about having conversations with people from the past and oh, what they would think of our world today! Here are some questions I would ask:

- ◆ What was the happiest moment of your life?
- ◆ Of all the places you lived, which did you like best?
- ◆ If you had the educational opportunities we have today, what career would you have liked to have had?
- ◆ How does the relationship you shared with your parents and grandparents differ from what we experience today?

Causes of Death - Casto Family

Our good friend Dru Falk recently sent me this list taken from Jackson Co., WV Death Records which lists the cause of death for many Casto family members. The list starts in 1854 and ends in 1924.

CASTO, NAMES	YEAR	AGE	CAUSE OF DEATH
Wm. G.	1854	not given	Flux
Martha E.	1857	5 1/2 years	Burnt to death
John	1859	6 months	Bowel Conpl.
Susan	1859	35 years	Confinement (above John's mother)
Jacob	1859	10 months	Sore mouth
M. Sucrelin	1859	8 1/2 years	P. sore throat
Elijah B.	1860	2 years	Diphtheria
Nancy	1860	4 years	Diphtheria
Gracy	1862	66 years	Dispipin
George W.	1865	9 months	Ayrisipulus
Anna Lee	1866	6 months	Pneumonia
Jonathan B.	1866	8 days	Convulsions
Sarah E.	1868	10 1/2 years	Brain Fever
Ruama	1868	8 1/2 years	Brain Fever (sister to above Sarah E.)
M.E.	1870	18 months	Brain Fever
Lucinda	1872	3 months	Liver Complaint
L.D.	1873	2 years	Fever
R.H.	1876	3 years	Diphtheria
Ida M.	1876	10 years	Diphtheria
Isabel	1877	56 years	Dropsy
Ella	1877	1 month	Bold Hives
Jemmetta	1880	5 1/2 years	Erysipalas
Mary L.	1880	5 1/2 years	Brain Fever
Phebe	1880	58 years	Bowel Inflammation
Ellen	1881	35 years	Fever
Florida E.	1881	9 months	Cholera Inf.
Margaret	1882	42 years	Consumption
Benj.	1883	86 years	Old age
Olva	1883	6 months	Fever

CASTO, NAMES	YEAR	AGE	CAUSE OF DEATH
John	1883	6 months	Croup
Louisa	1883	12 years	Measles
Brownie	1887	1 year	Cholera Inf.
Clayton	1887	7 months	Croup
George	1889	35 years	Consumption
Sarah R.	1890	29 years	Fever
Virgil A.	1890	11 months	Cholera Inf.
F.P.	1891	41 years	Typhoid Fever
Rebecca	1895	65 years	Consumption
John M.D.	1896	78 years	Dropsy
Herbert F.	1899	21 days	Bold Hives
H.N.	1898	————	Cold
B.C.	1898	2 months	Bold Hives
Goldie G.	1898	5 years	Empryena
J.R.	1898	1 year	Spinal AFF
Russel	1899	2 years	Croup
C.A. (Clora A.)	1899	23 years	Consumption
A.B.	1899	36 years	Consumption
N.O.	1899	1 year	Brain Disease
Mable	1900	6 months	Brain Fever
Anna	1900	2 months	Fits
Lucinda J.	1900	29 years	Consumption
Leota	1901	18 years	Bright Disease
Epha C.	1902	40 years	Consumption
Audrey	1902	2 years	Cholera Inf.
F.M.	1902	36 years	Consumption
John R.	1902	26 years	Typhoid Fever
P.A.	1902	35 years	Typhoid Fever
George R.	1902	76 years	Dropsy
Mary	1903	31 years	Heart Disease
James M.	1903	80 years	Grippe
Jemima	1903	53 years	Heart Disease

CASTO, NAMES	YEAR	AGE	CAUSE OF DEATH
Maudlin	1904	10 years	Eplepsy
Austin	1904	31 years	Consumption
—	1904	—	Consumption
James	1904	1 year	Miningitis
Marion	1904	1 year	Cholera Inf.
John	1904	8 years	Fits
Nancy	1904	76 years	Inf. of Bowels
Patra	1906	40 years	Strangulation
Freddie S.	1906	10 months	Cholera Inf.
A.E.	1906	60 years	Atrophy of the Liver
E.E.	1906	60 years	Liver Disease
J.R.	1906	76 years	Dropsy
Infant	1907	2 years	Miningitis
Charles	1907	79 years	Sun Stroke
Sarah	1908	69 years	Softening of the Brain
Minerva	1908	22 years	Meningitis
Holly H.	1908	5 years	Membrane Croup
Minerva	1908	22 years	Neuralgia
Orvil Estel	1908	2 1/2 years	Liver Disease
Hartford	1908	5 years	Diphtheric Croup
Wilma Dorcas	1909	2 months	Hives
Ernestine	1909	42 years	Neuralgia
Clora	1909	2 years	Double Pneumonia
Goldie	1909	4 months	Croup
Jonah	1909	—	Dropsy
Velma	1910	7 years	Dymengitis
Edgar	1910	1 month	Hives
Winnie	1910	82 years	Dropsy
J.	1910	70 years	Bright Disease
Celia	1910	79 years	Pneumonia
Dorothy P.	1911	1 year	Paoriasis
Isaac	1911	14 years	Acute Meningitis

CASTO, NAMES	YEAR	AGE	CAUSE OF DEATH
Ruth	1912	78 years	Heart Trouble
Offa	1912	20 years	Tuberculosis
Martin	1912	80 years	Complication of Disease (disease not given)
Dollie	1913	—	Pneumonia
Leota C.	1913	27 years	Tuberculosis
Bertha	1913	1 month	Membraneous Croup
Louise	1913	77 years	Bright Disease
Florence	1915	68 years	Dropsy
Frederick Jr.	1915	68 years	Lymphangitis
Robert	1916	67 years	Nephritis
Minnie	1916	36 years	Cancer of Stomach
Boyd	1916	24 years	Consumption
Okey	1916	6 months	Spina Bifida
Ves	1916	7 years	Diphtheria
Harold	1917	2 years	Membraneous Croup
Beulah	1917	4 months	Convulsions
Mason	1917	74 years	Hypertrophy of Heart
Jannett	1918	24 years	Pneumonia
Janet	1918	26 years	Influenza
Glendale	1918	1 month	Stomach
Lorane	1919	1 year	Pneumonia
Charles M.	1920	65 years	Nephritis
James C.	1920	90 years	General Debility
—	1920	2 hours	Premature Birth
Willie Leonard	1921	3 years	Croup
William R.	1923	60 years	Paralysis
Samuel	1923	76 years	Pneumonia
Sarah J.	1923	57 years	Bright Disease
P.M.	1923	50 years	Tuberculosis
Francis M.	1923	68 years	Disease (what disease not given)
Walter L.	1923	1 year	Measles
Elizabeth	1923	76 years	Pneumonia
Edward S.	1924	55 years	Heart Trouble
Emerita	1924	78 years	Heart Trouble

My Current Casto Research Project

by Danita H. Smith

This has been a busy summer and fall for yours truly, not only in terms of my home life but I actually worked quite a bit on an interesting Casto project. When I started this newsletter, I was already using the internet to communicate with other researchers but knew there were a lot of people who did not use a computer and felt that a hard copy item would be preferably to just e-mailing information. I still feel that way but that first year of publication I also created the Casto web site to list information that would take up too much room in the newsletter. The newsletter was always my main focus and the web site secondary. But I found myself devoted more time to the web site than the newsletter and it grew and grew and grew! It now contains over 100 pages of information on Casto cemeteries, Casto census records, Casto photos, and the first issue of Casto Connections. Because of the growing popularity of the internet and genealogists using the internet, I starting getting contacted by a lot of Casto researchers who didn't necessary want (or could afford) to subscribe to a newsletter but were willing to share information. This summer, I e-mailed over 150 people who had either researched Castos or whose names had been associated with Castos and started a project of making it easier for them to see who else was working on their same line. The start of this is already on the web site but I want it to also be published in hard copy. In some ways, it's similar to our annual April issue of lineages but not as detailed. My plans are to try and have this information in the January issue. Currently, my on-line lists includes the lines of 42 Casto researchers and several others with info but unaware of where they fit into the tree. Have patience with me and we'll see if I've planted a good seed which will blossom into something beautiful or end up like my houseplants!

The second Casto project I came up with this summer involved taking the Castos from the 1840-1900 census' I have and putting it in a chart tracking each family through the census'. The material is currently on the Casto web page but is over 50 pages of information. What I have created condenses that into four pages. This will also appear in the January issue. The format will look something like this:

Name	Spouse	1850	1860	1870	1880	1900	Children
Casto, Abram G.	Rebecca (Crites)	24, 21	35, 32	44, 40	54, 50		(Flora, Magdaline) (Clora, Magdaline, Albert, Barbara, Eliz., Leonard, Frieda [Reletta Victoria]) (Barbara, Albert, Elizabeth, Lenora, Lauretta, Cordelia, infant, Madaline [Weatherholt, Abraham's mother], Ellen [domestic servant]) (Leonard, Cordelia)
Casto, Abram	Boreanna (Roseanna Slaughter)	39, 28		59, 50	69, 60		(Nancy O.) (Jonah, Nancy, Barnard, Margaret) [Jonah is the son of Barnard R. Casto and Elizabeth Deweese. Nancy is the daughter of Abraham & Rosana. Barnard and Margaret are the children of Jonah & Nancy. On Jonah and Nancy's marriage record, they have the parents reversed.] (Nancy, B. Jackson, Morris, Louis Van, Hiram, Abram)
Casto, Absolom	None Frances P.			26	37, 28		(Forest, Willie, Ada)

Of course, I want to do a little more tweaking with it but even with the census taker's misspellings and the errors I may have made in putting it together, I think it will be a useful tool for Casto research.