

Spotlight

GFO Bible Collection

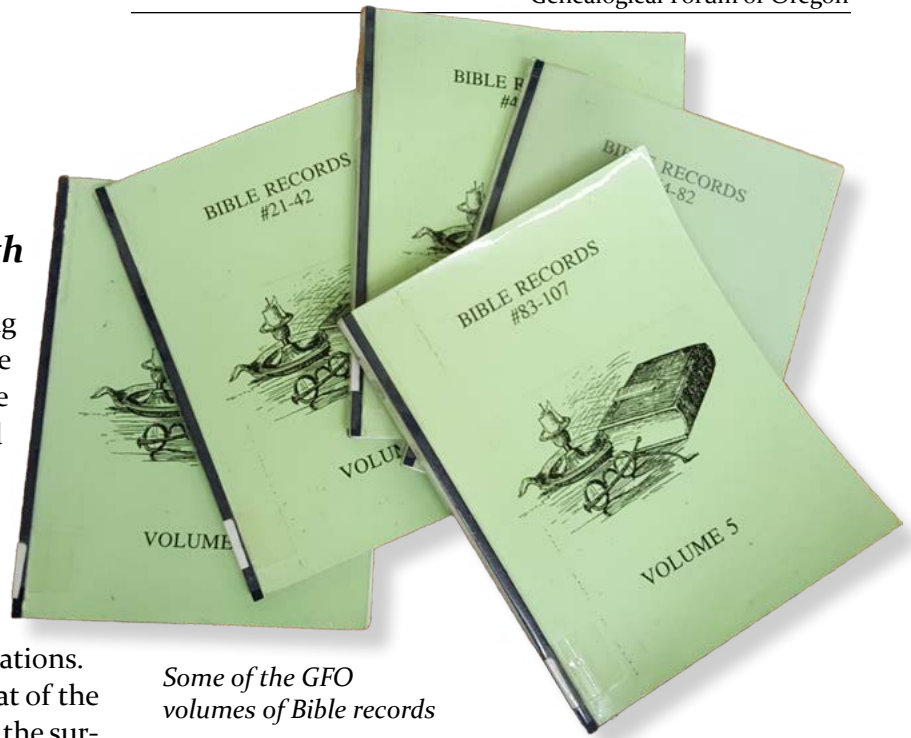
Laurel Smith

Since the 1950s, the GFO has been collecting Bible records and publishing them in the *Bulletin* in order to share these valuable sources of information with genealogists and family members. Over the years, various projects to preserve the Bible records have been initiated. Each was begun as a well-organized effort, then over time fell into neglect, and then were reorganized and promoted again, but that is often the nature of all-volunteer organizations.

The first Bible abstraction to appear was that of the Beer-Aten family in December 1954. It included the surnames Backhouse, Deborah, Ferguson, Hoey, McCrary, Owen, Owens, and Shreve, and provided vital information about some family members between 1756 and 1947. The information from another sixteen Bibles was printed in 1955, and the trend continued for some time.

Those early submissions may have omitted important information such as when the Bible was published, but they also saved precious data from loss and possible destruction. At first, contributors were sending in the vital data written in the Bibles and little else. Small ads and notices were run in the *Bulletin* encouraging members to include information from the title page of the Bible. Occasionally the editors would include the name of the contributor and information about where the Bible was at the time the information was collected. Sometimes, even a provenance for the Bible was provided. People sent in data from Bibles in their possession. Others browsed thrift shops and antique stores, taking the time to copy information from the Bibles they found. Robert Rolland Smith of Concord, California, was a frequent contributor. Noel C. Stevenson of Alhambra, California, sent in 158 records he had copied in second-hand shops beginning in 1932.

All of this made for some great content for the *Bulletin* over a period of 40 years, content that was very hard to find without extensive searching. Ruth Bishop and Stanley Clarke (and possibly others) noted the need to create a finding aid for all these hidden gems to bring them to light. Janice Healy was drafted to do the work. She was given some guidelines and an old copier, and



Some of the GFO volumes of Bible records

she began the work of creating an index. "I did the work the way I thought it would help researchers the most," Healy said in a recent conversation.

What came of all this work was a 15-volume set of alphabetical guides and an index. Each volume has a table of contents listing the name of the Bible as it was published. This is followed by an index of all the surnames in the volume. Also found in the guides are copies of the information as it appeared in the *Bulletin*. When original records were available, photocopies of those were included. Healy also produced a combined index of surnames which makes up the 16th volume, completed in 1994.¹

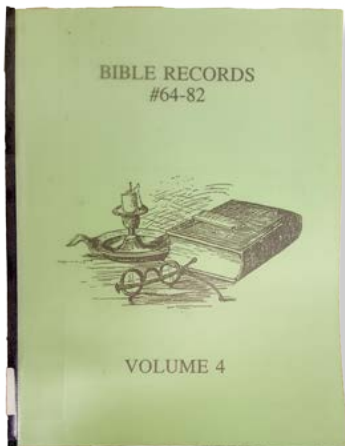
From 1954 through 2000, one or more Bible records were published by the GFO every year. Only one record was printed in 2003, but 2006 saw a resurgence of interest—for one year—when six records were included.

Eileen Chamberlin, during her tenure as data extraction chair, saw the value in getting the index of surnames in the *Bulletin's* Bible articles online². Using the guides created by Healy, Chamberlin and her team double checked the data, made a few corrections, and added the other surnames in the record after each Bible's name. This would provide researchers looking for Clark an association with Allumbaugh that might help to differentiate them from a Clark associated with a Bicknell. Once online, all the names would be searchable leading to more likelihood of their being found.

During the years between 2006 and 2014 the GFO did not publish any Bible records. Bibles, however, con-

tinued to be received from donors. Some arrived with donations of personal research. Others were rescued and brought to us for safekeeping. Healy also delivered to the GFO a collection of loose Bible records that she received after she had completed the original indexes. These had never been published in the *Bulletin*. Bibles and unpublished Bible records had piled up.

When the *Bulletin* staff sent out a call for articles in 2014, Nanci Remington answered. As the chair of the Manuscripts Committee, Nanci was familiar with the collection of Bibles and records that had accumulated. She extracted the information from one of the holdings and found that there was a story within the records just waiting to be written. Her first Bible article appeared in June 2014 and featured the records of the Blumenrother family. Since then, most issues have had a Bible extraction accompanied by an article written by Nanci and her co-chair, LauraDenise White. A new interest in Bibles has arisen. Bible data is being extracted and the families researched. With the extraction of the Bible data, high-resolution images are being created and will be included in the *Bulletin*.



Volume 4 of the GFO Bible Records

As Nanci has researched each Bible, an effort has been made to return it to a family member. To date these efforts have been unsuccessful, so the GFO has developed a plan to deal with the precious records. Because we do not have the space to keep dozens of these books, most will have key pages carefully removed including the

title pages, pages with any family information, and anything deemed significant. These will be retained and stored in archival folders and boxes.

While working through the collection to determine which family records had been published, a search was done on PERSI (Periodical Source Index). This revealed that the Bible extractions indexed for PERSI frequently include a date or dates as well as locations and given names. In the future, it would be of value to rework Healy and Chamberlin's records to include this information and to bring our indexes up to date from 1994.

So, as there is once again a resurgence of interest in Bible records at the GFO, you are asked to search,

transcribe, gather images, and submit what you find. If you have a family Bible or access to one, or if you happen to stumble across one at an estate sale or thrift shop, here are some guidelines:

1. Get high-resolution images of the cover, title page (and back of the title page if necessary to get the publishing date), any pages with family data, and any memorabilia found with the Bible. *Note: Sometimes when the publishing date cannot be found in front, it may be found on the New Testament page.*
2. Obtain close-ups of any handwritten text that is questionable.
3. Transcribe the data as exactly as possible including any misspellings, punctuation, and notes about insertions.
4. Submit a short explanation of where the Bible came from, how it came into your possession, where you found it or any other hints about its provenance (the history of the physical Bible itself).
5. You are encouraged to submit a story to accompany the images and transcription if you have information about any of the people in the Bible.

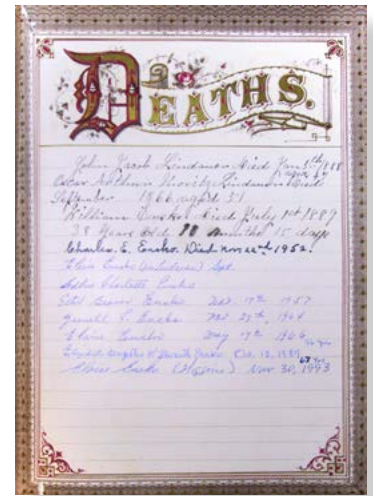


Photo by Richard Norton
courtesy of Wiki Commons

GFO is committed to preserving and adding family information to our resources whether through the *Bulletin* or via the manuscript collection, even if all you are able to do is obtain the images or the Bible.

Save the Bible Records!

ENDNOTES

1. The 16 volumes may be found in the GFO library, call number 979.50 .Bible GFO 1994
2. The online index may be found here: <http://www.gfo.org/bible/records.pdf>