

Of course you can....

...Learn How To Trace Your Genealogy

By BARBARA BURKLO
Sentinel Staff Writer

Do you have a yen to become better acquainted with your ancestors — but find you are turned off at the specter of spending hours in dreary record rooms and cobwebby archives, leafing through yellowed documents?

That's how Jim and Helen Carden, formerly of San Francisco and now of Soquel, felt until a very few years ago.

By chance they took one small step into genealogy — and now are so immersed that Helen says, "We have less free time now than we did when both of us were working!"

Jim is a retired newspaper advertising executive and Helen is retired from her own business in which she helped place executives in new jobs.

Both are members of the Genealogical Society of Santa Cruz County — a group for which they have the highest enthusiasm and praise.

The two have evolved from persons who never had the slightest interest in either genealogy or history — to a couple whose rising excitement, as their research goes deeper and deeper, carries them into a rewarding mix of new places, faces and facts.

"My grandmother used to tell me all that family stuff, and it just went in one ear and out the other," Helen says, ruefully. "I wish I had asked her more."

The Cardens' first taste of tracing ancestors came when Helen's cousin, whom she had not seen for 50 years, came for a visit and showed Helen one of the ancestral lines she was tracing.

"I made the mistake of reading it," Helen says, and found it's like trying to eat one peanut — you can't stop, once you start."

Jim, whose family had earlier been partly traced by a relative, finds Helen's lineage more interesting, so they both concentrate on that.

How does one start?

Here is Jim's advice:

"First, question the oldest living member of your family about your line of ancestry. This will be the best information you can get. And be sure to get dates and locations along with the names.

"A family Bible — and you may find some third cousin has your family Bible — might give your direct lineal line."

(Note here that a lineal line is the direct line of descent and does not include uncles, aunts, cousins or in-laws — a collateral line does include these, regardless of degree.)

Jim says he works only with direct, lineal lines but Helen likes collateral lines — "They're fascinating, don't let him kid you," she says, smiling. In fact, she says she's dealing with about 49 direct and collateral lines at the moment — Jim prefers to follow just one direct line until he takes it as far as he can.

The next step, Jim says, is to start working on your mother's and father's lines, starting with them and going backward. Here you continue to ask for information from relatives, look up wills, deeds, birth, death and marriage certificates.

After you get these names, locations and dates, you go to a research library, where thousands of names are catalogued and there are books which give you more information.

The Genealogical Society maintains a genealogy room at the Branciforte Library, and the Cardens have found it an invaluable source of information.

It contains, among many other records, not only books of names but THE COMPENDIUM OF AMERICAN GENEALOGY, a seven-volume work which contains thousands of surnames and their direct line of genealogical descent.

Jim says you might find something familiar in one of the many books and records there — something to help you continue on to the next step.

It's easy now to see how the subject draws you in — the moment you find an ancestor's name, you are compelled to look still farther — and farther — and lo, you have a lifelong interest developing.

Also at the Branciforte Library is an index of every family whose history is to be found in the Sutro Library, which is the genealogical branch of the California State Library and located on the campus of the University of San Francisco.

Branciforte Library also has HANDY BOOK FOR GENEALOGISTS, listing every county and every state in the United States, and all the kinds of material available from each.

These materials all may be used by the public.

Turning to research a little farther from home, Jim says the next steps might be to go to the branch libraries in Santa Clara or Seaside of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

"The LDS Church has the largest single collection of genealogical material in the world," he says, and it makes it all available through its Genealogical Society in Salt Lake City.

"The records include everything you can think of — and at the branch libraries you can get the microfilms and read them there."

Other sources he mentions are War Department military records, morticians, and gravestones.

There is a friendly difference of opinion between Jim and Helen on how to conduct research.

He likes the scholarly approach — she likes the exuberant, catch-as-catch-can method.

"I gather in reams of material — he charts it," Helen says. "He doesn't approve of my methods, but he likes the results!"

One thing that Helen has found most successful but which her husband finds alarming is her use of telephone books.

"I have telephone books from the areas where I'm researching, and I find the right surnames and likely-looking first names and write, asking for information. I get whole packetsful back, with fabulous results!"

Jim is particularly eager to share the fact that the Genealogical Society has bi-yearly workshops led by expert Lelani Cross.

"It is indispensable to beginners," he says, and free to members — with a small fee for non-members."

Rewards along the way have included the discovery of three cousins living in the area — all tracing back to Helen's Virginia ancestor, Samuel Jordan.

Of course, there are other discoveries.

Jim says, "It's a study in depth of history — genealogy and history are practically analogous."

And Helen adds — "And you'll find some real lulus



Carmen Look

Paris designer Yves Saint-Laurent's

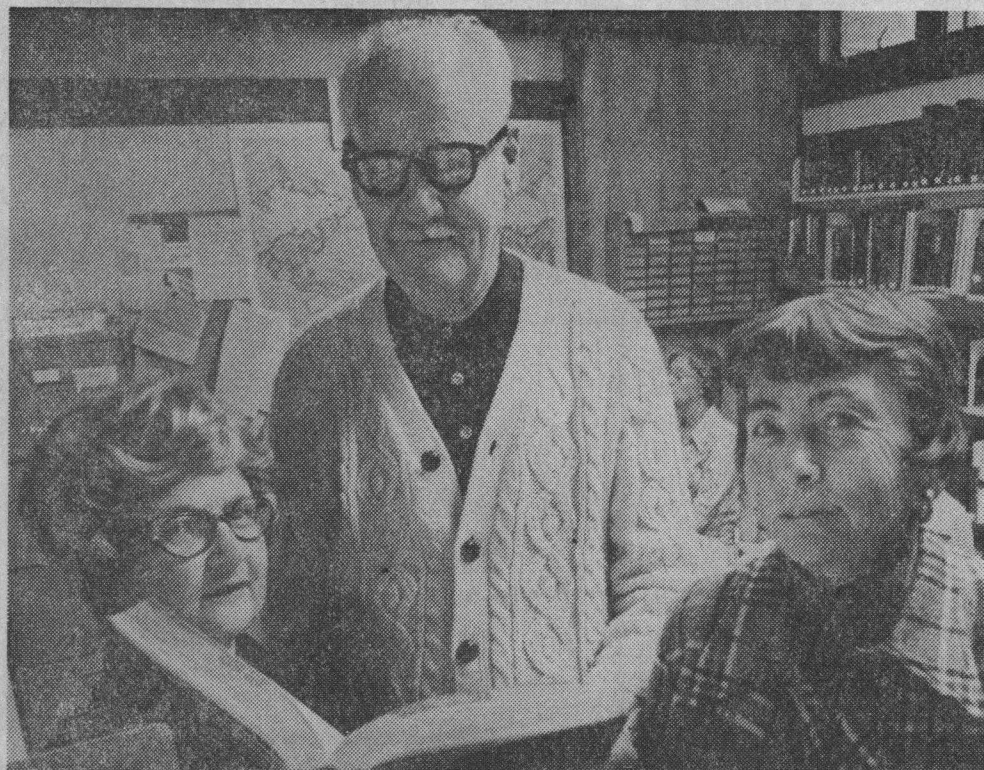
Carmen look shown in Paris for spring 1977 is sheer black blouse with the waist nipped by velvet corselet. A ruffled red silk shirt and gilt-thronged satin shoes complete the outfit. (AP Wirephoto).

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