

Gardner-Webb University

Digital Commons @ Gardner-Webb University

GWU-Today

9-23-2014

GWU Professor Writes About His Hidden Family Secrets

Jonelle Bobak

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.gardner-webb.edu/gwu-today>

Recommended Citation

Bobak, Jonelle, "GWU Professor Writes About His Hidden Family Secrets" (2014). GWU-Today. 23.

This Book is brought to you for free and open access by Digital Commons @ Gardner-Webb University. It has been accepted for inclusion in GWU-Today by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ Gardner-Webb University. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@gardner-webb.edu.



- [HOME](#)
- [ABOUT](#)
- [NEWS](#)
- [FEATURE](#)
- [CLUBS AND ORGANIZATIONS](#)
- [SPORTS](#) ▾
- [STUDENT LIFE](#)
- [CONTACT](#)
- [ALL PHOTOS](#)

GWU Professor Writes About His Hidden Family Secrets

🕒 September 23, 2014 👤 GWU Today 📁 News 💬 5

SIDEBAR

Please navigate to Appearance → Widgets in your WordPress dashboard and add some widgets into the *Sidebar* widget area.



Joseph Webb, Ph.D., professor of Communication and New Media. Photo by: Kanisha Fowler

By: Jonelle Bobak

Joseph Morris Webb, a Communications professor at Gardner-Webb, has recently published *Home to Tunnel Hill*, a book revealing a part of his family's religious history, that was hidden from him for

more than half his life.

During his childhood, Webb was always familiar with seeing his mother's side of the family and never questioned why his father's side of the family was never in the picture.

In
2006
he



Joseph Webb, Ph.D., professor of Communication and New Media.

Photo by: Kanisha Fowler

received an email from a high school friend, Leigh Henson, asking if he had been back up to Illinois, where he grew up, to visit the Webb Cemetery. Webb later replied bringing the realization that he did not even know the cemetery existed.

After this exchange with Leigh, he was brought back to a distant memory in his childhood which included a conversation with his Aunt Cynthia. He remembers her stating, "There are a lot of Webb Mormons, but they are not us."

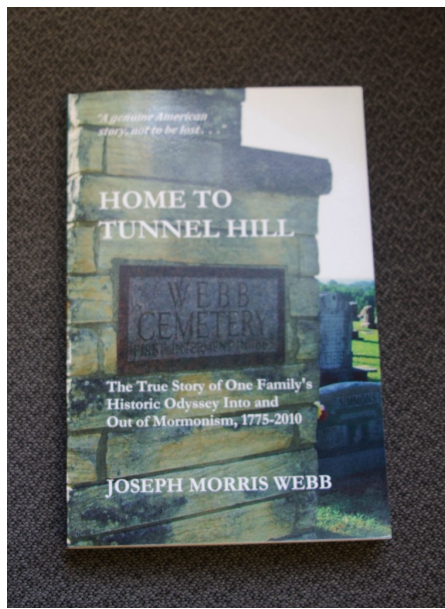
He found out that before his mother accepted his father's proposal of marriage, she made him swear that their children would never know about their Mormon ancestry or the place that he almost took up within its ministry.

He began his research in 2006. His curiosity was sparked because he wanted to know who the Webb's were, if they were related to him and why he never knew them. He then contacted Glenn Webb, a high priest of a Mormon Church in Southern Illinois, to see if they could meet.

"We made the trip in late spring, and for the first time I saw Tunnel

Hill,” said Webb. They pulled up to a house built in the 1890’s that belonged to Dr. Webb’s great-great grandfather; Glenn Webb and his wife live there now.

In 1830, the founder of Mormonism, Joseph Smith, sent Parley Pratt, a member of the Mormon Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, out west to spread the religion that just began.



Webb’s new book entitled, “Home to Tunnel Hill.” Photo by: Kanisha Fowler

They were traveling by steamboat on the Ohio River and a freezing, bitter, wind blew through that froze the river. According to Webb’s book, “The Ohio itself a very wide river, was completely iced in, to the point that river traffic would not move again until well into January”.

Pratt and his comrades had to take an alternate route, which led them to the Webb House in southern Illinois. Pratt shared who they were, where they were going and why. This is how the Webb family was

introduced to Mormonism.

In 2000 the RLDS, or Reorganized Church of the Latter Day Saints, voted itself out of existence because they wanted to start over. They formed a new denomination called the Community of Christ.

“This book is about the intertwining of church and family,” said Dr. Webb.

In 2009, Webb and his wife Andrea traveled up to Tunnel Hill to attend a family reunion to meet their newly found relatives. They were graciously taken in and brought up to date with family matters.

*9/24/14 Revision: In 2000, part of the RLDS formed a new

denomination known as the Community of Christ.



« PREVIOUS

Bulldogs Squeak by
Terriers in Thriller
Victory

NEXT »

Banned Books
Week at Gardner-
Webb



5 COMMENTS



Alma Allred

SEPTEMBER 24, 2014 AT 3:40 PM

This article is somewhat confusing. It appears that Dr. Webb's ancestors were adherents of the RLDS faith (given the Illinois environs); but the most I can discern from the article—except for the paragraph that seems to come out of nowhere explaining that the RLDS Church started over as the Community of Christ.



GWU-Today

SEPTEMBER 24, 2014 AT 5:43 PM

We understand how that section of the article was somewhat confusing. We have added a revision to the originally posted article. Part of the RLDS Church created a new denomination which is known as the Community of Christ; the whole church did not start over as this new denomination. Thank you for your comment. If you have any further questions or concerns, feel free to email us at gwutodaystaff@gmail.com .



D. Leigh Henson

SEPTEMBER 30, 2014 AT 5:03 PM

This URL is a link to a webpage that tells more about Professor Webb's life in Illinois and his book Home to Tunnel Hill.

Kathleen Webb



MAY 25, 2017 AT 9:05 AM

My husband is a descendant of the Webb family in Tunnel Hill and we joined the Church of Jesus Christ in 1982...I am fascinated by his research as we did know about the Webb cemetery and the link to the RLDS church. I would love to purchase Dr. Webb's book. How may I get a copy?



GWU-Today

JUNE 1, 2017 AT 5:51 PM

Mrs. Webb, Thank you for your interest. I would encourage you to reach out to Dr. Webb at jwebb@gardner-webb.edu

Comments are closed.