



## JustaJoy.com Family Heirloom Exchange

Diane L. Richard looks into one business that reunites descendants with treasured family heirlooms

**J**OY SHIVAR, OWNER OF THE JUSTAJOY.COM Family Heirloom Exchange, has dedicated the last ten years to answering the question: "Is It Possible to Find Your Great-Grandfather's Civil War Sword?" She has handled many such artifacts, including Revolutionary War items, Civil War letters, WWI and WWII identified photos, and hundreds of other surname-related antiques in her business, and she is very focused on the need to make family historians aware of the existence of these items. Noticing there were not any genealogy sites, or auctions sites, specifically designed for this purpose, she created the JustaJoy.com Family Heirloom Exchange.

appropriate home for the heirloom in their possession. For more information, contact Joy at [joy@justajoy.com](mailto:joy@justajoy.com).

### Surname Notification Service

Members can also participate in the Surname Notification Service — an e-mail alert system that notifies members when items



JustaJoy.com regularly advertises at antique shows, as well as military and Civil War shows, to attract vendors who are then invited to add surname-related items to the website.

### How it Works

Once a member, antique dealers can list an unlimited number of items on the site for free. Joy then advertises the site to genealogists, and others, who know their family's history. Buyers and sellers negotiate directly, and there are no fees associated with transactions, such as commissions or buyer's premiums.

The site currently features original items, or Orphaned Heirlooms, associated with nearly 50,000 families. Participation is not limited to antique dealers. If you have an heirloom item that isn't important to your family, you are invited, and encouraged, to add it to the site. The site does accommodate free listings for those just trying to find an

I personally, have been fortunate to have had a childless, distant aunt who recognized the emotional, and historical value, of the items in her possession (related to her great-grandfather and my great-great-grandfather). She went to the trouble of mailing those items (a thimble and a shawl from the 19th century) from England to the US so that they would remain in the family upon her death. Additionally, upon my own mother's death, each daughter received some "china", passed down from our mother's grandmother, as received from the grandmother's wealthy aunt. I don't know the whole story behind all these pieces – but just knowing that my ancestors once possessed and used these items, makes them invaluable to our family. Wouldn't it be great if all heirlooms found a home with a descendant? – DLR

Similarly, and on a smaller scale, Megan Smolenyak, Honoring Our Ancestors, also attempts to connect heirlooms to those who care. If you have someone else's family treasure (e.g., an orphan heirloom), and would like to see it returned to an appropriate individual, please fill out the "Share Your Story – Orphan Heirlooms" form,

[www.honoringourancestors.com/apply\\_orphan.html](http://www.honoringourancestors.com/apply_orphan.html).


Read more about Megan and her quests here,  
[www.huffingtonpost.com/megan-smolenyak-smolenyak/  
 send-your-orphan-heirloom\\_b\\_922659.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/megan-smolenyak-smolenyak/send-your-orphan-heirloom_b_922659.html).

associated with the user's specific surname interests, are added to the site. This is an important service as there is usually only one of each item available — one family Bible, one Civil War sword, etc. This also saves the member from having to constantly check the site to see if anything new has been added, related to his or her specific family. Up to twenty surnames can be included in this service. Once an item is sold, the listing remains on the website. This can be really helpful since it provides a means to know that an item related to your family does exist, and there is a possibility that you can learn more about it.

Once on JustaJoy.com, getting started is as simple as searching on a surname, or a general term, via the search boxes on the left. Searching on the surname of Abbott resulted in 37 items found, including 20th century college year books, and a couple of 19th century newspapers. Next, I searched on "Wake County" as a general search, and 2 items were found. A search on "Raleigh" yielded 169 items, and a search on the term "slave" yielded 37 items, including a Civil War Oath of Allegiance, letters, deeds, newspaper articles, slave indentures, church registers and so much more!

Though you can search for FREE, remember that you will have to become a member to view the details for any found item that

may interest you. Annual membership for full access to the site, the surname notification e-mails and the option to list items is \$20.00 per year.

Whether you are seeking heirlooms, or just want to find a good home for the heirlooms you possess, check out [www.JustaJoy.com](http://www.JustaJoy.com) and maybe another special heirloom will be reunited with an appreciative descendant. To see the result of a recent amazing discovery, and return of a 200 year-old bible to a Virginia Beach, VA resident, view the story online at WAVY TV at [www.wavy.com/dpp/hr\\_show/whats-your-problem-orphan-heirlooms](http://www.wavy.com/dpp/hr_show/whats-your-problem-orphan-heirlooms). 



DIANE L. RICHARD has been doing genealogy research for over 25 years. She is currently a professional genealogist and can be found online at [www.mosaicrpm.com](http://www.mosaicrpm.com)

(Or scan the QR code with your mobile phone or table device.)



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