



Middlesex Genealogical Society

WINTER 1992/93 NEWSLETTER

Vol IX, No. 4

MGS WORKSHOP

The Middlesex Genealogical Society's Fourth Annual Workshop will be held on Saturday, January 30th, 1993 at the Darien Library from 1 to 4 PM.

This year's workshop features Henry B Hoff, well known professional and certificated genealogist. The workshop will begin with a lecture, "When One Record Is Wrong, But you Don't Know Which One." The speaker, Henry B. Hoff, has participated in prior workshops of MGS and is a Trustee of the Society. He is a Certified Genealogist and a Fellow of The American Society of Genealogists. He is Editor of The New York Genealogical and Biographical Record, one of the leading genealogical journals in the United States. Mr. Hoff is also a partner in the Darien firm of Reiner & Hoff, Certified Public Accountants.

Marianne Sheldon, a librarian at the New Canaan Mormon Church's Research Library, will be demonstrating and answering questions about computer programs for genealogists.. She will be assisted by Monty Higenlooper and David Bowley, who will be talking about "downloading" genealogical records from resource files and computer bulletin boards.

And for those just starting out and who wish individual help, members of the Saturday morning Darien Library Committee, will be standing by to provide assistance. They include Charles Scribner, Bob Fotherly, Lynn Hanks, Florence Wyland, Charles Cotter, Eversley Odgen and Grace Clarendon. During the afternoon, tours will be conducted to the Library upstairs, where our genealogy collection and the Mormon international Genealogical Index (IGI) is located. Patricia Flowers and Raymond Gross will take you through and help familiarize you with our expanding collection of books and research material. Henry Hoff will be available after his talk to answer questions and solve problems for the advanced researchers. Bring your charts and ask the expert.

The workshop lasts from 1 to 4pm and refreshments will be available and served by Em Fotherly.

The Darien Library is located at 35 Leroy Ave. just off Exit 12 of I-95. Everyone is welcome and for more information please call 325-3471 or 655-9630. Plan to come and bring a friend, there is something interesting for everyone.

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

Happy new year to all M. G. S. members, friends and staff. By the time you receive this we hope the effects of the current celebrations will have subsided and that normalcy prevails.

1993 is here and we have many interesting events planned. The Workshop Meeting at the Darien Public Library is the first on the schedule for JANUARY 30th from 1 pm to 4pm. This and other general meetings for the year will be scheduled for afternoons at the Library. Those DATES are MARCH 13TH and MAY 8TH, (our ANNUAL MEETING) Please mark down those dates.

The M.G.S. Board of Directors Meetings for 1993 are January 14th, March 3rd. and April 28th in the Darien Library conference room from 7 to 9 pm. Please note that we have to vacate the Library by 9 pm!!!

We have also reserved the Silvermine Tavern for Saturday, February 13th for our George Washington's Birthday Luncheon. This great event is dedicated to Leo Dunphy, our initial first vice president and a founder of MGS. In addition to the camaraderie of the social hour and the fine luncheon, we will have entertainment of a historical nature. These people have added considerable color and history to our luncheons. Don't miss this fine occasion. In order to share the tasks for publishing our Newsletter, we plan to change the method of production. Instead of one person as the Editor for Newsletter, we will establish a revolving Newsletter Committee. (Note to former Editor Sherrill--Did you ever envision it would take a committee to attempt to continue your excellent work?). In this way it should be fun without being burdensome. Volunteers to help with collecting data, editing input for the computer, printing and mailing will be welcomed.

Our next Publication, completing the listing of Veterans interred at the State of Connecticut Veterans Cemetery which has been mistakenly referred to as the Veterans section of the Spring Grove Cemetery, is ready to be printed. More news about this Publication should be available by the January 30th Workshop Meeting. Also see the article in this issue by Chic Scribner, clarifying what is what in the Spring Grove Cemetery area.

Please note that the Stamford Historical Society's Genealogy 1993 Seminar "Elusive Ancestors-New Views from the Exports" will be held February 27th from 9am to 4pm. at Christ Church Parish Hall in Greenwich, Ct.. Early

MIDDLESEX GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY

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The Middlesex Genealogical Society was established for the purpose of helping those interested in genealogy to pursue the investigation of their family heritage and to provide guidance in research to that end. The Society holds at least four meetings with a program and speaker during the year, has established a Genealogy section at the Darien Public Library, provides research assistance on Saturday mornings (10-12) at the Library and publishes a quarterly Newsletter. Annual membership dues are \$10/individual and \$15/ couple or family.

Original articles, notices of genealogical interest, and queries are welcomed for the newsletter.

Middlesex Genealogical Society
45 Old Kings Highway North
Darien, CT 06820

registration fee is \$40., including lunch.--late fee is \$45. If you don't receive a mailing call the Stamford Historical Society. One of their speakers, Meldon J. Wolfgang III, was our guest speaker in April 1991 on "The DARK SIDE c Urban Research". He is very knowledgeable and a n excellent speaker.

Again I'd like to invite all of you to submit anecdotes on the interesting facets of your genealogical research, tombstone rubbings, photograph's, family histories, etc. to put some local color and personal flavor into our Newsletter for all to enjoy. Please do; we'd greatly appreciate your contributions and help. --Seasons Greetings--Ray Bartlett.

A clarification of the Darien Spring Grove Cemetery .

A publication about the Spring Grove Cemetery would not be complete without a brief history of the cemetery and its governing body.

On January 3, 1888 the Spring Grove Cemetery Association was organized. This Association was comprised of 26 prominent Darien citizens, many of whom were descendants of the early settlers of this area. A Certificate of Incorporation was drawn up and Articles of the Association were written on this date and approved by the Connecticut Secretary of State on January 23, 1888.

The purpose of the Association, as quoted from the orig. Articles, was to "purchase the land now belonging to George W. Smith, situated at the 'plains', so called, in said Darien, and also so much of the lands adjoining as may be deemed necessary, and to lay out the same into suitable ways, roads and plots; and the same to establish as a cemetery or place of sepulture."

Although January 3, 1888 is the official date of the forming of the Association a search of the cemetery land records, deeds, and notes indicate that the Association was active several months prior to this date. In fact, records show that the land mentioned in the Articles of the Association had been purchased on October 12, 1887. This tract of land, containing 16 acres, was "bounded on the north by land of John W. Hecker, east by the Connecticut Turnpike (now the Boston Post Road), south by land of Edward A. Weed, deceased, and west by Stony Brook." It was sold to the Association by George W. Smith for the sum of \$2,000. The first burials occurred in 1888. The Association purchased 13 more acres in August of 1897 on the "Connecticut Turnpike (Post Road) and adjoining the original land along a private road owned by John V. Hecker." This road is now called Hecker Avenue. The two tracts of land combined to make one large cemetery. Maps were drawn up, roads were laid out, and grave sites established in the new section. Another parcel of land w: purchased on May 16, 1923 from the estate of Richard F. Skelton. This land is located on the north side of Hecker

Avenue across from the main gate where presently stands the Cemetery Office and equipment barn. The Office was erected in 1958.

From the very beginning the Association has kept the Cemetery non-sectarian, offering burial plots to any person without regard to race, creed or religion. Through the more than 100 years of its existence the Cemetery has been well maintained with many improvements as time went by. The office is the business center for the Spring Grove Cemetery. Here accurate records are kept of the owners of each plot and each interment. Burial sites are sold as single grave plots or multiple plots containing two or more graves. Back in the early years the cost of owning a cemetery plot was \$4.00 per grave with an additional maintenance fee of 50 cents per year. The maintenance fee was used to keep the grave sites mowed and trimmed. When it became apparent that this arrangement was not working the Association eventually changed to another system. Since 1940 all plots are sold with the cost of perpetual care included in the purchase price.

During the Civil War the Fitch's Home for Soldiers was established in Darien. It was incorporated by an act of the Connecticut General Assembly in 1864. It was maintained by the State of Connecticut and was the first home of its kind in the United States. The State, from time to time, would purchase grave sites in Spring Grove Cemetery for interment of deceased residents of the home. As the years went by resident deaths occurred more frequently creating a need for a separate burial ground for the Fitch's Home and other veterans of the State. In 1907 the Spring Grove Cemetery Association agreed to sell a parcel of its land, approximately 300 feet square, to the State of Connecticut for this purpose. The State, in a quit claim deed dated June 21, 1907, agreed to abide by all regulations and bylaws of the Association. This parcel of land lies directly across Hecker Avenue from the Darien Police Station. It is marked at the entrance by a beautiful archway which was erected in 1932. It was soon to become the resting place for veterans of all wars from the Civil War to Vietnam. By the year 1968 this Veterans' Cemetery was filled. The State again approached the Spring Grove Cemetery Association, which in turn agreed to sell them another parcel of land along Hecker Avenue, adjoining the land of the State's original purchase. The burial spaces in this second section were completely filled by 1980, whereupon, the Association offered more land to the State. This offer was rejected. This State Cemetery is still owned and maintained by the State of Connecticut under the direction of the Department of Veterans Affairs. A common misconception exists concerning the name of this cemetery. It is properly called the State of Connecticut Veterans Cemetery. For many years it has been mistakenly referred to as the veterans section of Spring Grove Cemetery, or just Spring Grove Cemetery. Both are incorrect. At the outset of World War II the residents of Fitch's Home were transferred to the State Veterans Home

and Hospital at Rocky Hill, Connecticut. The facilities were taken over by the United States Navy for use as a Radio and Signal School. Following the War they served as temporary housing for returning veterans until July 1951. The buildings were razed and replaced by the present day Allen-O'Neill homes.

NEW YORK CITY CENSUS OF 1816, 1819, and 1821

This article was Contributed by Roger D. Joslyn, C.G., F.A.S.G. in the NYG&B Newsletter Vol 3 No.4 Winter 1992.

Are you having difficulty tracing someone in New York City in the early nineteenth century? Maybe city census records now available on microfilm at the Municipal Archives and the NYG&B Library, will help.

Beginning in 1795 and for several subsequent years through 1829, a "census of the inhabitants" was taken to determine "an accurate list of Jurors qualified to serve in the different courts." Few of these censuses seem to have survived, but portions do for 1816 (wards 1-3, 5, 8, 10) and 1819 (wards 1, 2, 4-6, 8-10). In addition, several statewide electoral censuses were taken between 1790 and 1821 to provide a basis for reapportioning Senate and Assembly districts. For New York City, part of the 1821 electoral census survives (wards 1, 2, 5-7, 9).

The censuses on printed forms, contain information of great genealogical and historical value. For 1816 and 1829 were listed name; number and street of residence; occupation; freeholder of \$150; personal estate of \$150; age; reason for exempt from jury (see below); total number of jurors (in the household) number of inhabitants, broken down by sex and white, alien, and colored persons not slaves; slaves; free holders of 100 lb. value and upwards; freeholders of 20 and under 100lb value; tenants renting at \$5 a year; total number of inhabitants; and remarks. Although not eligible to serve on juries, women are frequently listed in these censuses. Examples of others exempt from jury duty include persons of color, aliens, the very old, those in the military, journeymen, firemen and professionals (such as attorneys).

The 1821 electoral census returns list the name of head of each family; number and street of residence; and number of males eligible to vote, recorded in four different columns depending on basis of eligibility. Other columns give numbered of improved acres and counts of cattle, horses, sheep, yards of manufactured cloth, mills, factories, distilleries, asheries, and machinery.

Need News Input!!

HITHER & THITHER

The following article was thoughtfully provided by Lynn Hanks. Do you have something to share? Please send input relating to Genealogy to MGS c/o Darien Historical Society, Old Kings Highway N., Darien Ct., 06820.

THE FAMILY NAME

A side line to family genealogy is collecting any article about people with your own family name; especially if the name is not so common. I have in my files a copy of the Readers Digest of September 1967. In that issue is an article "Try Climbing Your Family Tree" which included an interesting and humorous reference to a Sylvester Hanks. A professor at a university stated it was a lot more fun to solve mysteries in your own family than to read concocted fictional ones. A scrawled entry in a family Bible first aroused his curiosity. "Sylvester died suddenly today of a neck injury. May God rest his soul." Sylvester was the son of the professor's great - great grandparents. Eventually the professor's research took him to a remote ghost town in Arizona. In a forsaken cemetery he found a weed choked tombstone which read "William Sylvester Hanks 1836-1863.

Armed with the year of Sylvester's death, the professor leafed through the musty pages of the onetime community newspaper at the local library. Under the heading "Notice of Departure", he discovered poor Sylvester's fate:

THOUGH BORN OF WOMAN, HE DIED BY MAN
HIS NAME WAS SYLVESTER HANKS
LOVE OF MONEY GOT THE BEST OF HIM
AND HE WAS HUNG FOR ROBBING BANKS.

One can understand the short notice in the family bible, as several generations ago the seamier side of families was hush-hush or outright denied. Today it is accepted and adds color to the family lore. After all the family that has no skeletons in the closet probably doesn't exist.

HANDBAST

Do you know the meaning of "H/F" after a person's name? This may be found in marriage and birth records, the letters stand for "handfast". It is basically a sign of the confirmation of a form of "uncanonical, private or even probationary form of marriage". Handfasting was a form of announcing a union between a man and a woman who wished to live together as husband and wife before receiving the blessing of the church.

The couple would stand before a group of their peers, hold clasped hands above their heads and state their intentions. The agreement was good for a year and a day, or until the preacher came to perform the rites of the church. If at the end of the specified time both wished to go their own way, they could do so with no ties. No matter what happened, any child of a Handfast was considered legitimate and would inherit. (from Rabbit Tracks Vol. 9, No. 4, Winter 1991)

The Social Security Administration plans to destroy 37 million records. Genealogists and other researchers are asked to write Social Security Admin., 6401 Security Blvd., Baltimore, MD. 21235 to ask that these records be turned over to the National Archives for preservation. Write additional letters to your Congressman requesting help in the transfer of these records.

NOTES

Society Genealogist Ray Cable reports that recent studies indicate the Judson surname comes from the north country of England - most likely West Yorkshire. Furthermore, according to Ray "our" Judson's were the descendants of invading Norsemen from Scandinavia

Angelo-German Family History Society

The Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society Library is the repository for records concerning the "Pennsylvania Dutch" Germans who were among the early settlers in the United States. The Library staff can do research for members at a distance for a fee, or you can visit and research in the Library in person. 2,585 researchers visited the library last year. For more information write 2215 Millstream Road, Lancaster, Pa. 177062-1499.

National Gravestone Studies Conference

The Association for Gravestone Studies will hold its sixteenth annual conference at Connecticut College in New London, Ct. on June 24-27, 1993.

The program will include scholarly lectures, guided cemetery tours, workshops, and exhibits. Attendees include those interested in folklore, history art history, genealogy, anthropology, religion, commemorative art, and historic preservation.

For more information, please contact Miranda Levin, Executive Director at 30 Elm St., Worcester, MA 01609, or telephone (508) 831-7753. Preregistration is required.

DUES ARE DUE!!

DOOMSDAY BOOK

(Thanks to Kinship Kronicle, Exeter, NH)

"Domeeday" or "Doomeday" Book sounds rather ominous and perhaps that is the reason why its title is well known. Along with the Bible and Koran, it is probably one of the most well known books in the world.

While it is so very well known by title, most people know little of what it contains. It is an itemized inventory of the entire country of England which had come under the rule of the Normans through their conquest in 1066. It was the beginning of official registration and documentation for the country.

In 1086, clerks were sent into each district to take down each landowners testimony of what they owned, including the number of peasants who lived on their estate, since they were also considered possessions. Land holdings were measured to insure that their worth could be properly computed for tax purposes.

All this data was then condensed into two manuscript volumes which have become known as the Domesday Book. The first volume of 900 pages is in the same handwriting, which appears as if it had been printed by a press. The second volume was apparently prepared in a rush and is written by a number of individuals. Unfortunately, the everyday person can not sit down and read the pages, as it is in Latin. However, it has been translated and is available in everyday English.

DON'T MISS

GEO. WASHINGTONS BIRTHDAY

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CALL BOB FATHERLEY 655-1678

Mr. David V. Bowley
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PRAY FOR
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Application for Membership



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