



# Middlesex Genealogical Society

Vol. XIII, No. 5

Darien, Fairfield County, CT

November 1997

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

During the last five weeks, which I have spent in China and Tibet, I have not given a great deal of thought to genealogy. Perhaps once or twice genealogy crossed my mind in relation to reincarnation. How does reincarnation affect genealogical research? Which computer programs are prepared to deal with reincarnation? Just kidding, of course.

We are fortunate to have as our speaker again, at the 15 November meeting. Steve Kyner who edits *The Computer Genealogist* (see page 2). Do not miss this opportunity to learn about "Researching on the Internet and the World Wide Web."

Much genealogical research does not, of course, require computers. Family events prompt me to remind our readers of the value of newspaper items. Three weeks before his death in 1867 my great-great-grandfather published this item regarding his second wife: "Whereas Eliza Kirkland, my wife, has left my bed and board without just cause or provocation, notice is hereby given forbidding anyone to trust and harbor her on my account, for I will pay no debts of her contracting after this date. A. Kirkland" (Freeport, Iowa, 9 May 1867).

Among other newspaper items that I have discovered recently was an account of my paternal grandparents' wedding in the *Belle Plaine* (Kansas) *News*. Of course, it is somewhat laborious reading microfilms of old newspapers, but it is wonderful that Darien Library makes such resources available through its interlibrary loan program. Those of you who have not used old newspapers as a source may want to consider it.

I look forward to seeing you all and hearing Steve Kyner's talk at our 15 November meeting.

David L. Mordy

## MGS AT DARIEN LIBRARY

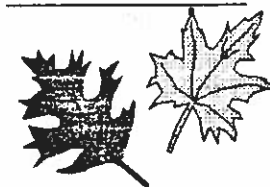
by C. Scribner

On 8 December 1882 the United States Senate passed a resolution requiring that a list of pensioners on the Federal Roll as of 1 January 1883 be recorded and published. There were 277,702 pensioners recorded in five volumes of this Congressional Roll. This very important list, the Pension Index 1883, is now in our possession on a CD.

The list is not an index per se because the pensioners were not alphabetized within a county or state, but only within small districts where the pensioners lived. Nevertheless, it is an excellent tool for locating a person or family that disappeared after the Civil War or after the 1870 or 1880 Federal Censuses.

This CD will be cataloged by the library and placed in a caddy for use with our computer.

Another item, new to our book collection, is the *General Index of the Townlands and Towns, Parishes and Baronies of Ireland*. It is based on the Census of Ireland for the Year 1861. This book will also be processed by the library and placed on our shelves. ■



## ROBERT E. KENYON, III

The membership joins in wishing MGS Vice President Pete Kenyon a swift return to vigorous health. Mail to Pete should be addressed to Robert Kenyon, Yale-New Haven Hospital, Room 5199, 20 York Street, New Haven, CT 06504. ■

## MIDDLESEX GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY

### 1997-1998 OFFICERS

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| David L. Mordy       | President      |
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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 Darien Library, provides research assistance on Saturday mornings (10 am to noon) at Darien Library, and publishes a newsletter at least four times a year. Annual membership dues are \$15 per individual and \$20 per couple or family.

Original articles, notices of genealogical interest, and queries are welcomed for publication in the *Newsletter*.

Middlesex Genealogical Society  
P.O. Box 1111  
Darien, Fairfield County, CT 06820

Homepage: <http://www.darien.llb.ct.us/mgs>  
E-mail: [dbowley@concentric.net](mailto:dbowley@concentric.net)

## UPCOMING MGS MEETINGS

### MARK YOUR CALENDARS

**15 NOVEMBER 1997:** STEPHEN BASSETT KYNER, editor of *The Computer Genealogist*, will talk to us about **RESEARCHING ON THE INTERNET AND THE WORLD WIDE WEB.**

A 1970 graduate of the College of Letters at Wesleyan University and Junior Fellow of its Center for Humanities, Steve Kyner received an MBA from the Harvard Graduate School of Business in 1974 and is currently Director of Finance at Rogerson Communities, a nonprofit developer and manager of housing for the elderly in Massachusetts. In 1992 he founded New England Genealogists and began editing its newsletter, *The Computer Genealogist*. Since 1995 this newsletter has been a publication of the New England Historic Genealogical Society, but Steve Kyner continues as its editor. He is also Director of GENTECH, Inc., a nonprofit organization devoted to encouraging the responsible use of technology in genealogical research.

**14 FEBRUARY 1998: ANNUAL WORKSHOP MEETING.**

**18 APRIL 1998: ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING.** Return visit of SUZANNE McVETTY.

**16 MAY 1998:** Speaker to be announced.

**17 OCTOBER 1998:** Speaker to be announced.

**14 NOVEMBER 1998:** Speaker to be announced.

**ALL MEETINGS: SATURDAY, 2:00 PM, DARIEN LIBRARY. COME, AND BRING A FRIEND!** ■

## N.Y. PUBLIC LIBRARY RENOVATIONS

Long-awaited renovation of New York City's Central Research Library has begun, and as a consequence its main reading room will be closed for some time to come. Nevertheless, the U.S. History, Local History and Genealogy Room (315-S), usually reached through the main reading room, can still be accessed from the central corridor and remains open to library users. ■

## NATIONAL ARCHIVES' GENEALOGY PAGE

*Prologue* reports that information on how to use records of the federal government in genealogical research is now available on NARA's Genealogy Page at:

<http://www.nara.gov/genealogy/>  
which includes an automatic "Soundex Coding Machine." ■

## PUTTING THE PIECES TOGETHER<sup>1</sup>

### Part 1

by Donna Moughty

My maiden name was Mitchell. Family tradition told me that my paternal grandfather had come to the United States from Austria prior to World War I and that his name was changed at Ellis Island. No one in the family knew the original name.

I had a problem. My paternal grandfather died in 1942 and my paternal grandmother in 1985 -- before I began this project. My father remembered his father's saying, with a very pronounced accent, that he was from Austria, but knew little else. Here is how I searched for the missing pieces of the puzzle.

First, I obtained a copy of my grandfather's death certificate (a primary source) from Town Hall in Greenwich, CT, where he died. It stated that: his name was Frank John Mitchell; he was born on 19 September 1886 in Vienna, Austria; his father's given name was Frank, last name "Unobtainable"; his mother's given name was Ann, last name "Unobtainable"; and both parents' birth places were also "Unobtainable." The informant named on the death certificate was my grandmother.

I knew that my father was born in 1920 in Greenwich, so the next primary source I sought was the 1920 federal census<sup>2</sup>, which contains a wealth of information. I found that Frank J. Mitchell, along with his wife Minnie and son Frank, lived in rented quarters at 43 Sherwood Place in Greenwich. (My father did not appear on the census schedule because the enumeration was done in January and he was not born until September.) Frank J. Mitchell was 31 years old (indicating an approximate birth year of 1889, which differed

from information on his death certificate), his wife was 25, and their son Frank was 4 years, 8 months. Although the year of immigration was not given, the schedule showed that Frank J. was naturalized in 1918 and that both Frank J. and Minnie could read and write. Frank J.'s birthplace was listed as Austria, and his primary language as Polish (interesting). Minnie's birthplace was given as Scotland (I thought she was born in Ireland!) and her primary language as English. The census also gives the birthplace and language of each individual's parents. Frank J.'s parents were both listed as having been born in Austria, with Polish as their language. Scotland was given as the birthplace of Minnie's father, Ireland as the birthplace of her mother, and English as the language of both. Frank J.'s occupation was "private chauffeur."

These three census schedule lines provided a number of new pieces, although not all of them could yet be snapped into place. I realized that I did



not know very much about Austria in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Before World War I the Austro-Hungarian Empire consisted of parts of what we know as Poland, Slovakia, Romania, Croatia, Czech Republic, Ukraine, Austria, Hungary and part of Italy. Did the fact that my grandfather's native language was Polish tell me something about where he was born? Perhaps he wasn't born in Vienna. Since this was peripheral to my main search, I moved these puzzle pieces aside and concentrated on the next primary source that I hoped to locate, naturalization

records. A visit to the National Archives Regional Branch on Varick Street in New York City, however, did not turn up a naturalization record for Frank John Mitchell. My father said he really didn't know anything more and suggested I call his brother.

<sup>1</sup> Copyright 1997 Donna Moughty. For an independent studies project on genealogy, Donna Moughty produced a lengthy paper that may be published in book form at some time in the future. She has agreed to share her work with us through the *Newsletter*. Additional segments will appear in future issues.

<sup>2</sup> Because of privacy issues, census records are not released in the United States for a period of 72 years from the date of the census. The 1920 census became available in 1992 and contains the latest census data available.

Sometimes family members have information that they have neglected to share or that they feel is of little importance. Or, perhaps, no one has ever asked! I approached my uncle and found that he was holding a key piece of my puzzle. He sent a letter telling me that in 1977, after being named Conservator for his mother who had been moved to a nursing home, he was cleaning out her house prior to sale and discovered two strongboxes under her bed. (Don't neglect the attic, the basement, or any shoe boxes when looking for family history clues!) Among the documents in this box were a marriage certificate, insurance applications and a formal change-of-name petition signed by both my grandparents and filed with the Supreme Court of the State of New York! My grandfather's name had been Fedor Mylytczuk.

There truly is a paper trail for our ancestors if we look in the right places. Court documents, including deeds and wills, can frequently provide clues about them. This particular court document told me that Fedor Mylytczuk was born 19 September 1886 in Kolimea, Austria, which is now in the republic of Poland. He arrived in the United States in 1907 and petitioned for naturalization in 1912. The document further stated, "At the time this petitioner applied for his certificate of landing and sent his application to Washington he stated in said application that it was his desire to change his name to Frank J. Mitchell, which name he had assumed and used shortly after his arrival in the United States. So much for the theory that his name was changed at Ellis Island!

Armed with the correct name and date, I found the naturalization certificate for Fedor Mylytczuk at the National Archives in New York City. Additional information from this source told me that his height was 5'6" and that he had a dark complexion with brown hair and brown eyes.

With his correct name and the year of his immigration, I was able to locate a copy of the ship *Amerika's* manifest for the voyage that left Hamburg, Germany, 6 June 1907 and brought Fedor Mylytczuk to New York 17 June 1907. This told me that he was single, 21 years of age, and from Liski, Galicia.<sup>3</sup>

My uncle provided me with two other pieces of primary source materials. One was my grandparents' marriage license from 1914, which listed his parents as John Mitchell and Mary Prokow. It showed my grandmother's birthplace as Aberdeen, Scotland, and her parents as James H. Sprague and Rachel Mackay. Had this document not been given to me, I could have obtained it from Town Hall in Greenwich in the same way that I obtained my grandfather's death certificate. Birth, marriage and death records are "vital" records and can be found in the Vital Records office of the jurisdiction (town or county) where the event took place.

The other item provided by my uncle was their voter registration cards from 1924. Frank J. listed his birthplace as Liski, Austria. Minnie listed her birthplace as Ballyshannon, Ireland, and her birth date as 12 December 1894.

You may have noticed a number of discrepancies in my grandmother's information as we've gone along. Her apparent unreliability may have something to do with the Irish part of her heritage. I was once told by another family historian that you could always count on dates and places being accurate for Germans, but, if you were doing Irish genealogy, any date could be "give or take five years." Family stories provide wonderful color and background to your family history puzzle, but remember to document the facts from primary sources whenever possible.

This gives you an idea of how to work from what you know to what you need to know using primary sources and interviews with relatives. I now believe that my grandfather Fedor Mylytczuk was born 19 September 1886 in Liski, Kolimea, Austria (in the region of Galicia). This area is currently part of western Ukraine. Using the marriage certificate, since this is the earliest document for which my grandfather gave the information, I am confident that his parents were John Mylytczuk and Mary Prokow. Confirmation of this will only come through a birth/baptismal certificate which will not be available for about two years, by which time the Mormon church should have completed its micro-filming in L'viv, Ukraine. ■

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<sup>3</sup> Early 20th century passenger arrival records are available at many major libraries, including the NYC Public Library, as well as from the National Archives and the Family History Library -- and are Soundex indexed.

## COLD SUMMER<sup>4</sup>

Submitted by Charles Scribner

It was the year 1816. It was to become known as the year without a summer. Cold, winter-like weather lingered through the summer months, bringing with it frost, snow and ice. Farms were devastated. Corn, grain and vegetables were black and frozen. The disaster was as keenly felt here in Fairfield County as it was in the rest of New England and the other northern states.

The year started with a mild January. February was also mild with the exception of a few days. Most of March was cold and very windy, much like the first three months of 1997. April started out warm, but ended up with snow, ice and winter cold. Ice formed half an inch thick in May, freezing and killing buds and flowers. Frost, ice and snow were common in June. Upper New York and Massachusetts saw three inches of snow and Maine had 10 inches. More frost and ice as thick as window glass came in July. A cold northern wind prevailed nearly all summer. Corn had to be cut down and dried for fodder. The fruit crop was nearly destroyed. September was mild for the first two weeks, but ended cold, windy, and with enough snow for sleigh riding. Oddly enough, the year ended with a mild and comfortable December.

As you may well imagine, food was scarce and what was obtainable was priced exorbitantly high during the following winter. Many cupboards were bare. The old farmers used to refer to it as "1800 and starve to death." For their spring planting needs the farmers had to travel long distances south to purchase the seed for the summer crop. They had to pay prices so high that many of them were unable to make a profit for that year. ■

## NATIONAL GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY CONFERENCE IN THE STATES

Join thousands of genealogists in learning, exploring and sharing the adventure of unraveling the mysteries of family history at this national conference scheduled for 6-9 May 1998 in Denver, CO. For more information contact NGS, 4527 17th Street North, Arlington, VA 22207-2399. ■

## COMPUTER CORNER

by David V. Bowley

My success in finding Canadian cousins via the Internet, which I reported in the last issue of this *Newsletter*, whetted my appetite for genealogical searching on the Internet and I have been busy exploring all avenues available. Every day something new pops up. For instance, Broderbund's Family Tree Maker, some of whose CD ROM disks we have in the Fatherley Collection, has a wonderful homepage at:

<http://www.familytreemaker.com>

where you can use a "search agent" to do a word search on a name. In seconds it will check the hundreds of CD ROM disks offered by Family Tree Maker and tell you which disks contain the name you are looking for. If you order the disk there is a 30-day satisfaction guarantee, so that you can get a refund (shipping excluded) if it is not what you want! Or, if you are in a more generous mood, you can donate the disk to the Fatherley CD ROM Collection at the library. Furthermore, if you don't want to trek to the National Archives Branch on Varick Street in Manhattan to eyeball a referenced record, you can order and pay for a Family Tree Maker search person to send you a copy of the record. Now, you might say that this is taking the fun out of genealogy, but it surely saves time and shoe leather!

For those searching for roots in England and Wales, the Public Record Office at Kew will answer e-mail questions that do not require extensive search. In addition, the Welsh National Library at Aberystwyth has given me answers to three e-mail requests in the last week, the most recent one within 24 hours. The queries involved christening and marriage records, and library personnel have searched the parish records and told me exactly what registers they have at the library, by year, for a given place.

Another place with outstanding service is the Channel Island of Jersey from which my wife MaryEllen's grandmother came. They will search censuses for a given name without charge. In my wife's great-grandfather's case, they gave her a listing of all the vessels on which he served as a merchant seaman by year, name of vessel and the period spent at sea.

<sup>4</sup> Reference: *Romance of Norwalk*, Elsie N. Dannenberg -- Darien Historical Society.

In another search for Clara Piquet, an aunt of mine in Jersey, the Channel Islands Genealogy homepage, which has people working for it all over the world, found out that her father and grandfather were chemists (pharmacists) in St. Helier, the capital town, and sent me a history of him and other Jersey chemists. Finally, a man in Canada who sells postcards on the Internet saw my e-mail and said he had an old postcard (circa 1907) with a picture of Piquet's chemist shop on it. I now own the postcard.

Another good resource, which has started up again this week, is *Ancestry HomeTown Daily for Genealogists*, produced by Ancestry HomeTown at: [www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com)

This organization produces PERSI, among other useful resources, and they claim to get over 20,000 hits on their homepage daily. The last newsletter that came into my e-mail tray (24 October 1997) had a very good article on prioritizing your search so that you don't waste time on such sources as shipping lists which often produce limited and sometimes inaccurate information after many hours of searching.

Closer to home, I was finding my Compaq 486/33 computer slow and limiting with only a 200 Mb hard drive, so I convinced my wife that it was time for an upgrade. I fell in love with a Compaq 1210 which is a laptop that I will now be able to use to access my genealogical data base while on the road. I still find Parson's Technology's *Family Origins 6.0 for Windows* the best software on the market and a great value at \$30. It has a neat feature that helps you write a homepage that you can mount on the Family Origins server if you are running on a Windows 95 platform. The family homepage facilitates adding photographs to your page and also allows you to include your GEDCOM file which a visitor can download using the link provided. ■

## ARCHAIC MEASUREMENTS

*The Highpoint*, Summitt County, OH, has discovered an 1859 book, *Corner Cupboard*, that defines archaic measurements sometimes found in old wills and documents: 1 pottle = 2 quarts; 1 comb = 4 bushels; 1 wey = 4 bushels; 1 last = 80 bushels; 1 firkin = 9 gallons; 1 butt = 108 gallons; 1 puncheon = 84 gallons; 1 tierce = 42 gallons; 1 pipe = 2 hogsheads or 1 butt; 1 runlet = 18 gallons. ■

## TRACING YOUR GERMANIC ANCESTOR

Tom Peters's talk on this subject Saturday, 18 October, attracted an attentive capacity audience and generated a lively question period.

Mr. Peters explained that before trying to re-search abroad it is essential to know the full name(s) that the immigrant ancestor received at birth; the date, or an approximation thereof, for a specific event that took place (e.g., birth/baptism, marriage); religion (i.e., Catholic, Lutheran, Reformed, Jewish, etc.); and the name of the ancestral village (crucial).

American record sources that can be used to uncover the items listed above include: passenger arrival lists, vital statistics certificates, naturalization records, German-American church records, federal and state census enumerations, military records, passports, probate records, and deeds.

When you have the pieces of information listed in paragraph 2 above, particularly the ancestral village name, you are ready to research overseas using European primary record sources, principally civil copies of vital statistics (births, marriages, deaths) for events after 1876, and, for events before 1876 when civil records began, the records maintained by the various religious denominations.

The LDS Church has microfilmed many of these records, so a good place to start is at our *Family-Search* workstation in the Darien Library. Then, microfilms of interest can be ordered and viewed at a local Family History Center.

If you are looking at original documents or microfilms of original documents, you will, of course, need to be able to decipher German Gothic script. (*Editor's note: For this purpose you might find Ernest Thode's German-English Genealogical Dictionary useful.*)

Should you need to write to Germany, do so in German if possible, if not, in very clear English, giving your ancestor's name and the date of the event. Always enclose four International Reply Coupons (\$1.05 each at your local post office) and a contribution (\$5 per certificate), the size of which will depend upon the amount of information you have requested.

A local civil registry office can be addressed:

An das Standesamt  
Postal Code, Village Name  
Federal Republic of Germany

Religious records can be requested by writing to the individual church or synagogue, for example:

An das Katholische Pfarramt (for Catholics)

Or:

An das Evangelische Pfarramt (for Lutherans)

Postal Code, Village Name

Federal Republic of Germany

You may encounter some problems, such as boundary changes, missing records, gaps in records, name changes, poor handwriting, etc., but on the whole German records are accurate, meticulously kept and contain a remarkable amount of information. ■

## HALBERT'S and BURKE'S PEERAGE

Regular readers of this *Newsletter* will recall several articles on Halbert's (mail drop Bath, OH) whose direct mail marketing of spurious genealogy books ("World Book of [recipient's surname]") has been at the core of several legal actions brought against the organization by the U.S. Postal Service based on numerous consumer complaints. The parent company of Halbert's is Numa Corporation, 1566 Akron Peninsula Rd., Akron, OH 44313; telephone (330) 923-5000; FAX (330) 923-5595.

The saga of Halbert's continues. What follows is quoted from the 26 August 1997 issue of *Eastman's Online Genealogy Newsletter*<sup>5</sup>:

"Numa, operating under the name of Halbert's, has been flooding the United States with advertisements for their 'World Books' for years and has recently expanded their operations into many other countries as well.

"Burke's Peerage is a company in England that used to have impeccable credentials. Founded in the 1820s, the company was well-known for their scholarly publication of *Burke's Peerage and Baronetcy*. This book traced the ancestry of almost every person with a title in the United Kingdom and was updated regularly. But hard times arrived at Burke's, and the company was sold in the 1980s. The name 'Burke's Peerage' (without the words 'and Baronetcy') was sold to a Mr. Brooks-Baker and an associate in Brooks Marketing for use in 'genealogical and title research.' Mr. Brooks-Baker obviously is connected with Numa as he immediately started

advertising the British version of Halbert's mass-produced telephone listings under the Burke's Peerage banner. The Burke's Peerage 'books' selling in England today are almost identical to the Halbert's books sold in the U.S. and Canada.

"The London *Daily Telegraph* ran an article on 20 August 1997 about a new wrinkle in Numa's ongoing legal problems: The Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) in England has ordered Burke's Peerage to stop its false advertising. *Daily Telegraph* reporter Alison Boshoff wrote that 'Burke's Peerage was told to seek advice about its genealogical claims today after it offered a retired Wiltshire schoolteacher a family coat of arms which does not exist. [The retired Wiltshire schoolteacher has the unusual surname of Knee and had already traced his family back to the 1500s without finding a Knee with a coat of arms.]

"....A spokesman for the ASA, which has upheld three other complaints against Burke's Peerage recently, said, 'As with any direct mailing exercise where people are asked to part with money, we would always urge people to find out exactly what they are going to get. People should always do their own research wherever possible.'

"The London *Daily Telegraph* also reports that the Numa Corporation in Ohio holds the license to use the name Burke's Peerage in the Burke's Peerage World Book of xxx series. It was the Numa Corporation, trading as Burke's Peerage, which sent the direct mail to Mr. Knee."

*Editor's note:* Within the past six weeks yet two more sales solicitations have arrived at my household from Halbert's. We would all be wise to heed the ASA's very sound advice. ■

## JULIAN CALENDAR HOLDOUT

With thanks to *The Family Tree*, Moultrie, GA,  
Aug.-Sept. 1997

A remote Scottish island celebrated Christmas on Monday, 6 January, refusing to recognize the Gregorian calendar adopted by the rest of Britain nearly 250 years ago. Foula, 20 miles west of the Shetland Islands' main island, is the only place in western Europe still relying on the calendar formulated by Roman emperor Julius Caesar. ■

<sup>5</sup> Copyright 1997 Richard W. Eastman and Ancestry Publishing, republished with permission.

## Application for Membership

Middlesex Genealogical Society

P.O. Box 1111

Darien, CT 06820

Annual Dues

Individual (\$15) \_\_\_\_\_

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Deadline for next newsletter  
31 January 1998



*Middlesex Genealogical Society*

*PO Box 1111*

*Darien CT 06820-1111*

MEETING 15 NOV. 1997  
SATURDAY, 2 PM  
DARIEN LIBRARY

