

# Middlesex Genealogical Society

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Darien, Fairfield County, CT

November 2004

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Research now and then! When I think of all of the sources we have today for doing our family research, I'm glad I'm doing it now. I was updating my beginners' class on census records, and I was struggling with how much time I should spend on doing traditional microfilm-based census searches. You remember: AIS Indexes, Soundex, Miracode, indexes only for families with children under 10, only 13 states completed...the stuff that drove us crazy! Today, all of the Connecticut libraries have access to HeritageQuest's Census Index and linked images, and some (New Canaan, Stamford, Greenwich) have subscriptions to Ancestry Plus. It sure beats a trip to the National Archives in New York City, or waiting three weeks for films to arrive at the local Family History Center from Salt Lake City.

Although indexes have their own set of issues, the ability to search on various bits of information (i.e., surname, first name, place of birth) can help us to find people who sometimes aren't where we expect them to be. Take, for example, Owen O'Keefe, who had immigrated to the U.S. from Ireland and was found in the 1860 and 1880 censuses in the Buffalo area. My client could not find him in 1870, however. After searching for the standard O'Keefe, O'Kief, Keefe, and similar variations, I began to leave off the surname. Searching Niagara County for Owen, born in Ireland, brought the desired result. The indexer had misread the census record and indexed this lost soul as "Ruf," probably not a variation I would have tried. The ability to link to and check the scanned image identifying all of the other known members of his family gave me the confidence to cite the record. Although the image is a derivative source, in most cases it's going to be as close as we can get to an original.

I am a great fan of using the resources on the Internet that provide us with images of the original documents. When you think about our predecessors, many might never have had the opportunity to view these documents

because of the distance between them and the documents. In their research they might only have had the opportunity to see a transcription of the material, and we know that errors can creep into transcriptions!

The Internet, however, can be a dangerous place for those not willing to question what they find there. Anyone can publish information on the Internet, and we may have no indication of the quality of the information. This is clearly a "buyer beware" situation. If you find information about your family without source citations, be very careful. In fact, even if there is a source citation, make sure you understand the quality of that source!

Recently, I was handed a copy of a published book on a family that included information that contradicted what I had found. My conclusions had come from census, vital, land and court records. The book contained no citations, nor did it contain any reference to the name of the compiler. I contacted the publisher and asked to be put in touch with the author/compiler regarding the sources of information on one particular line of the family. The message I received was that no source information had been kept. That answered my question as to the reliability of the information in this book, but, unfortunately, other people have not questioned the information. I have found at least two dozen references to the incorrect information on various Internet sites, some citing this book, others with no citations, but clearly from the same source. If one was to weigh the evidence based on the number of references to the same information, one might ask, "Could so many people be wrong?" I think the answer is yes!

Therefore, even though we live and research in a time when there is so much information available to us, we must still question and confirm all of our research using good genealogical practices.

Happy hunting!

Donna Moughty

**MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL due 1 January  
2005. See page 5 for details.**

## MIDDLESEX GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY

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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 and publishes a quarterly newsletter. Annual membership dues are \$20 per individual and \$25 per couple or family.

Original 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://mgs.darien.org>  
E-mail: [mgs3@optonline.net](mailto:mgs3@optonline.net)

## UPCOMING MGS MEETINGS

### MARK YOUR CALENDARS

**ALL MEETINGS SATURDAY, 2 PM, PROGRAM ROOM AT DARIEN LIBRARY. COME, AND BRING A FRIEND!**

**13 NOVEMBER 2004: FROM ACROSS THE POND: RESEARCHING YOUR IRISH KIN** will be presented by **ROBERT LAW, JR.** This presentation will focus on how to identify, locate and access records on Irish ancestors through documents, microfilm and the Internet. It will be of interest to beginners and seasoned genealogy researchers alike. Even if your ancestors did not hail from Ireland, the techniques described may be applicable in your own personal research.

Bob has 25 years of genealogical research experience with particular focus on U.S.A., Canadian, German, Irish and English research. He is the Director of Genealogy at Ridgefield Historical Society and a librarian at the New Canaan Family History Center. He is a member of Ontario Genealogical Society, German Research Association, Immigrant Genealogical Society, Irish Ancestral Research Society, Ulster Historical Society, Scotch-Irish Society of the U.S., Society of Genealogists (London), Connecticut Society of Genealogists, New York Genealogical & Biographical Society, and New England Historic Genealogical Society.

**29 JANUARY 2005: REAL WORLD DNA TESTING** will be presented by **MEGAN S. SMOLENYAK.** With amazing swiftness, "genetealogy" (the marriage of genetics and genealogy) is graduating from pioneering research to standard practice. But what is it exactly and how can we use it to further our genealogical endeavors? Come hear a fellow genealogist discuss her own experience launching and managing a DNA project, including such considerations as test selection factors (e.g., Y chromosome, mtDNA, or both), vendor choice criteria (e.g., number of markers, cost, etc.), and convincing others to participate and/or contribute. Also covered are how a surname study evolved into a community project (based on descendants from a particular European village), some of the surprising results to date, and planned future initiatives.

Megan is the author of *Honoring Our Ancestors: Inspiring Stories of the Quest for Our Roots*; *In Search of Our Ancestors: 101 Inspiring Stories of Serendipity and Connection in Rediscovering Our Family History*; and *They Came to America: Finding Your Immigrant Ancestors*. She was the lead researcher for the PBS *Ancestors* series and developed much of the content for the companion Website. She also did most of the research for PBS's *They Came to America*. Since 2000 She has been a consultant with the U.S. Army's Repatriation project to trace families of servicemen killed or missing in Korea and Vietnam. Megan is also a contributing editor for *HeritageQuest* and recipient of the International Society of Family History Writers and Editors awards in 2003 and 2004. She has appeared on numerous television programs and is a frequent speaker at major genealogical meetings, such as NGS and GENTECH. Her articles have appeared in *Ancestry*, *Family Chronicle*,

*(Continued on page 8)*

## A FRAGMENTED JOURNEY

by Dorothy Shillinglaw

I am awed by the courage of our immigrant ancestors who left the only home most of them had ever known and faced an uncertain future in a distant land. This is the story of one small group of immigrants. The 193 passengers that gathered in Greenock (near Glasgow), Scotland, in late May of 1841 to board the sailing ship *India* must certainly have been fearful about their future. Although they could not possibly have imagined all that was about to happen to them, no voyage of the time was without its perils.

Most of the *India's* passengers were bounty immigrants, bound for Port Phillip, New South Wales, Australia. Economic conditions in Great Britain were poor at the time, and many people lived in severe poverty because work was so hard to find. For such people, acquiring sufficient funds to emigrate would have been difficult if not impossible. In the meantime, however, Australia had an extreme shortage of labor that it hoped to ease by attracting new settlers. Marriageable females were also in short supply. The Australian colonial governments sought to meet their needs by offering a bounty for suitable immigrants: £38 for a married couple, age 40 or under, with needed skills (e.g., farm laborers, shepherds, smiths, masons, domestics, etc.); £15 for each child over 15; £10 for each child between 7 and 15; £5 for each child 1 to 7; and £19 for every unmarried female domestic or farm servant between 15 and 30.

In Great Britain bounty immigrants were to be selected by shipowners with the advice of the Board of Immigration. The ship owners advanced the sums necessary for the voyage, and, in turn, the government in Australia would pay a bounty to them (or their representatives) for each healthy and suitable immigrant landed. Ship owners took considerable financial risk, but the potential rewards were great. One advantage for the passengers was that it was in the interest of the ship owners to keep them well fed and in good physical condition throughout the voyage.

My interest in this story derives from the fact that passenger Philip Shillinglaw was a first cousin four times removed of my husband's. Although a mite old to qualify for a substantial bounty, Philip, a widower, was accompanied by at least four of his children ranging in age from 16 to 28, all prime bounty candidates. (There was another Shillinglaw among the passengers, and I am sure he was related, but I do not yet know how.)

The *India* sailed from Greenock on 4 June 1841. Moving south through the Atlantic Ocean about a month later, she was accosted by the pirate ship *Gabriel*. While this must have been a terrifying experience for the passen-

gers and crew of the *India*, as soon as the pirates realized that the passengers were poor immigrants, they sailed away to seek richer spoils. (The *Gabriel* was caught in the act—preying on another vessel—several days later by H. M. Brig *Acorn* and captured.)

On 19 July (still in the Atlantic) sails were spotted at a considerable distance causing some excitement, but the ships sailed on virtually parallel courses and grew no closer to one another. About 1 PM two members of the *India's* crew, drawing off spirits in a storeroom, knocked over a candle that ignited rum spilled on the floor. (I suspect the floor boards were saturated with it.) Water was called for, but could not be delivered in sufficient quantities to douse the blaze. The *India* was quickly engulfed in flame, but managed to launch her jolly boat, long boat and gig, one of which was overturned in the panic. (The long boat had apparently been used as an on-board animal pen, probably for the *India's* meat supply, and had to be cleared before it could be launched.) In the meantime passengers and crew were falling and jumping into the sea and hanging on to whatever they could reach that might float. By this time, those on board the distant vessel had realized that the *India* was in serious trouble and were coming to assist. Initially about nine miles away and downwind of the *India*, it took about an hour for the ship to reach the site of the tragedy and launch its own boats to pick up survivors. This vessel was the *Roland*, a French whaler.

Survivors were brought on board the *Roland* with nothing but the clothing they wore—and some not even with that because their clothing had been burned off. Seventeen passengers and one crew member lost their lives. Had the *Roland* not been so near, loss of life would surely have been greater.

The 198 survivors were treated with great kindness by the crew of the *Roland*, who generously shared their clothing, food and sleeping spaces. Still, some had nothing to wear but a flannel shirt contributed by a crew member, and some had nowhere to sleep but the open deck until they arrived in Rio de Janeiro six days later and were turned over to the care of the British Consul, Robert Hesketh.

Robert Hesketh arranged lodgings for the surviving passengers and supplied them with food and clothing. (He placed surviving crew members aboard H.M.S. *Crescent* where they would be cared for (and no doubt put to work) and returned to Great Britain. He intended to arrange for the passengers to continue their journey to Port Phillip, but felt that widows of those who had perished should be given the option of returning to Scotland. Of the four women widowed in the disaster, three chose to return. One of them was childless; of the other two, one had a

single child, and the other had two. The cost of return passage for these six was £65.

Robert Hesketh contracted for the British barque *Grindlay* (of Liverpool) to complete the journey to Port Phillip with the rest of the survivors (171) at a cost of £1349. Victualling the ship would cost another £430. Providing medicines to be carried by the *Grindlay* and paying for lodging, clothing and feeding the survivors during their 29-day stay in Rio de Janeiro added almost £997.

The French Consulate requested that expenses incurred by the *Roland* in the rescue be reimbursed. These amounted to a little over £200, and payment was authorized by Robert Hesketh.

British Consul Robert Hesketh was clearly a compassionate man who took his obligation to aid distressed British subjects seriously. Mounting expenses (by now just over £3377) alarmed the British Government back in London, however, and there was considerable criticism of Robert Hesketh's "generosity." While Consul Hesketh's actions were considered "irregular," it was ultimately conceded that he had little choice and so official censure was avoided.

In Rio de Janeiro donations of clothing and money for the relief of the survivors came from a variety of sources. The British community in the city and British ships in port gave generously. Three American Men of War in the harbor contributed \$700, and the French Legation & Consulate donated almost £19. All of this added up to just under £1400.

From this sum, almost £69 was expended to present the master of the *Roland* with a suitably inscribed gold chronometer, and approximately £40 was divided among the *Roland's* crew members. The two mates and crew of the *India* were awarded a little over £153 for their actions in saving some of the passengers. A little more than £651 was used for cash supplements to widows, plus tools and clothing for the passengers, and medical instruments for the doctor. The balance was to be distributed as cash to the passengers upon their arrival at Port Phillip.

That left the British Government dependent on the bounty due on landing the immigrants in Australia to recoup its costs. The British Government was quite sure that this would be forthcoming. The colonial government in Port Phillip, however, decided that the *Grindlay's* voyage to Australia fell outside the terms of the bounty plan because the ship had been chartered in Rio de Janeiro by the British Government. The bounty was not paid. (This was a canny decision by the colonials as the British Government was hardly likely to increase its expenses by shipping everyone home to Scotland.)

In any event, the immigrants finally arrived in Aus-

tralia 22 October 1841—some four and a half months after leaving Scotland. Among them were Philip Shillinglaw and his family. According to the 1847 Port Phillip Directory, Philip was a market gardener, and his son William was a gardener, too. William married Jean Blemner (another survivor of the fire and sinking) in Melbourne, Victoria, Australia, on 23 May 1842. They had 13 children. Daughter Martha is listed in the same directory as a dressmaker. Martha married widower William Lilburne (one more survivor) in Brunswick, Victoria, on 10 August 1855, and they had four children. Daughter Caroline married released convict Edward Edwards in Melbourne on 29 May 1843, and they had five children. Daughter Elizabeth married William Henry Long in Melbourne on 22 October 1846, and they had four children. Descendants of Philip's are numerous in Australia and have spread throughout that distant land.

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I am indebted to two descendants of Philip Shillinglaw in Australia who first aroused my interest in this story. I am also grateful to Barry Biggar of Australia, whose great-grandmother Margaret Grieve was a survivor, for creating a series of linked Websites on the Internet that tell the story of the *India's* last voyage and the onward journey of the survivors in considerable detail. It is well worth reading and can be accessed at <http://www.home.gil.com.au/~bbiggar/india.htm> ■

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## MAGAZINE ARTICLE OF GENEALOGICAL INTEREST

The Fall 2004 issue of *Prologue*, Quarterly of the National Archives and Records Administration, contains an article entitled "A Gold Mine of Naturalization Records in New England" that begins on page 54. The article describes the gathering of court records to document U.S. citizenship at a time in the 1930s when many relief and employment opportunities were restricted to U.S. citizens. The Immigration and Naturalization Service used a Works Project Administration project to photograph "something of the fact of naturalization at all of the courts" in Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont. Clerical staff summarized critical data on cards, and an index was created to the photographs (called dexigraphs) of original records. Destruction of the dexigraphs was authorized in 1961, but, fortunately, the pulping mill to which they were delivered discovered with the very first batch that they were unsuitable for pulping and returned almost all of them. They are now at NARA's Northeast Region facility in Waltham, Mass., where they are described as the most heavily used collection of records, both by on-site researchers, and also those requesting copies via mail, e-mail, or telephone. ■

## MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

As you know, membership renewal is due 1 January 2005. Please consider this to be your renewal notice and fill out the enclosed membership application form. Then, either drop the completed form, your check, and a copy of a photo ID (e.g., a driver's license or passport) in the mail addressed to Middlesex Genealogical Society, P.O. Box 1111, Darien, CT 06820, or, better still, bring them with you to our next meeting on 13 November. (If you bring your renewal to the 13 November meeting, you may show your photo I.D. to one of the board members and will not need to make a copy.) Dues remain \$20/year for an individual and \$25/year for a couple or family.

You will notice that we have a new, lengthier and more complex membership application form. In an effort to reduce fears that the legitimate interests of genealogists might in some way conflict with the need to reduce or eliminate identity theft by terrorists or others, genealogical societies have been asked to require more information before issuing membership cards. Our new form has been designed in consultation with other genealogical societies and the Town Clerks—Genealogists Action Group and asks that an applicant submit a copy of a photo ID with the filled-in form. Also included on our new form is a "Code of Ethics" that any genealogist will find easy to approve.

You may recall Donna Moughty's article "Connecticut Record Access" on page 4 of our January 2004 issue (well worth rereading), in which she discussed a bill introduced in the Connecticut legislature that would severely compromise access to vital records. That bill was defeated, but the problem has not gone away.

Currently, House Resolution 10, introduced in September and now fast-tracked for passage by the U.S. House of Representatives before election day, is intended to reduce the threat of terrorism. However, it includes provisions that would require states and localities to tighten access to birth certificates. If the bill specified that only certified certificates would be restricted, it would not be such a problem. But the wording is sufficiently broad that states and localities in complying with the bill's provisions may equally restrict both certified and noncertified certificates, which would severely impact genealogical research.

Let your representative know of your opposition to this feature of the bill.

A Connecticut genealogical society membership card entitles you to access all vital records in the custody of any registrar of vital statistics within the State of Connecticut. (See page 1 of our September 2001 issue.) That important benefit of your membership is at risk.

Your Board of Directors hopes that the new form will not seem burdensome to you. Surely, making a little extra effort is worthwhile in order to protect our access to vital records. ■

## N.Y.C. & L.I. RECORDS INDEXES

In cooperation with the Genealogy Federation of Long Island, the Italian Genealogical Group continues to add to the number of searchable indexes of New York City and Long Island records available free at <http://www.italiangen.org> (click on Databases). Currently, or soon to be available are:

- Southern District Naturalizations for NARA covering Manhattan and the Bronx and recorded in Federal Courts—completed.
- Bronx Naturalizations—completed.
- Manhattan Death Index, 1891-1900—completed.
- All-Borough Death Index 1900-1911—completed.
- All-Borough Death Index, 1912-1919—completed.
- Manhattan and Brooklyn Grooms Index, 1895-1897—completed; not yet posted.
- All-Borough Grooms Index, 1908-1936—completed; not yet posted. 1897-1907—in progress.
- Nassau and Suffolk Counties Naturalization Indexes—completed.
- Brooklyn Brides Index up to 1937—nearing completion.
- All-Borough Death Index, 1920-1929—coming soon.
- Eastern District Naturalizations for NARA covering Brooklyn, Queens and Staten Island up to 1926—nearing completion.
- Eastern District Naturalizations for NARA from 1927 on—still to be started.

This is a very impressive effort that has been made possible by some initiative and the work of many generous volunteers. Anyone with a computer and a spreadsheet program can assist with the work from home. If you are interested, contact John Martino directly at [JohnM6881@aol.com](mailto:JohnM6881@aol.com) and let him know. He can also answer any questions you may have. ■

## STANDARDS FOR USE OF TECHNOLOGY IN GENEALOGICAL RESEARCH

Recommended by the National Genealogical Society

Mindful that computers are tools, genealogists take full responsibility for their work, and therefore they:

- Learn the capabilities and limits of their equipment and software, and use them only when they are the most appropriate tools for a purpose.
- Do not accept uncritically the ability of software to format, number, import, modify, check, chart or report their data and, therefore, carefully evaluate any resulting product.
- Treat compiled information from online sources or digital databases in the same way as other published sources—useful primarily as a guide to locating original records, but not as evidence for a conclusion or assertion.
- Accept digital images or enhancements of an original record as a satisfactory substitute for the original only when there is reasonable assurance that the image accurately reproduces the unaltered original.
- Cite sources for data obtained online or from digital media with the same care that is appropriate for sources on paper and other traditional media, and enter data into a digital database only when its source can remain associated with it.
- Always cite the sources for information or data posted online or sent to others, naming the author of a digital file as its immediate source, while crediting original sources cited within the file.
- Preserve the integrity of their own databases by evaluating the reliability of downloaded data before incorporating it into their own files.
- Provide, whenever they alter data received in digital form, a description of the change that will accompany the altered data whenever it is shared with others.
- Actively oppose the proliferation of error, rumor and fraud by personally verifying or correcting information, or noting it as unverified, before passing it on to others.
- Treat people online as courteously and civilly as they would treat them face-to-face, not separated by networks and anonymity.
- Accept that technology has not changed the principles of genealogical research, only some of the procedures.

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## UPCOMING SEMINARS

**Connecticut Ancestry** is celebrating its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary with an all-day genealogical seminar, to be held Sat., 26 Feb. 2005, 10 AM to 4 PM, at Christ Church Parish Hall in Greenwich, Conn. Speakers will be Patricia Law Hatcher who is coming from Dallas and John Konvalinka. The \$45 fee includes a box lunch. For more information, telephone 203-637-0437.

The **National Genealogical Society**, 4527 17<sup>th</sup> St., North Arlington, VA 22207-2399:

- Three-day Winter Warm-Up Conference, 20-22 Jan. 2005, in Phoenix, Arizona.
- Eight-day research trip to the Family History Library in Salt Lake City is scheduled for Sun.-Sun., 23-30 Jan. 2005.

For more information, contact NGS by telephone at 800-473-0060, or e-mail at [ngs@ngsgenealogy.org](mailto:ngs@ngsgenealogy.org)

**NARA, Northeast Region**, 10 Conte Drive, Pittsfield, MA 01201, is offering a series of free workshops in coming months. Call 1-413-236-3600 for more information or to register.

- **“Beginning Your Genealogy Research at the National Archives”** on Mon., 1 Nov., 12 noon; and Wed., 1 Dec., 5 PM. (Note: Because these workshops include a tour, they are limited to 20 participants.)
- **“Using Census Records”** on Mon., 8 Nov., 12 noon; and Wed., 8 Dec., 5 PM.
- **“Using Military Records”** on Mon., 15 Nov., 12 noon; and Wed., 22 Dec., 5 PM.
- **“Finding Your Immigrant Ancestors”** on Wed., 22 Dec., 5 PM.

### Presentations by MGS Members:

MGS board member **Virginia Banerjee**, an experienced speaker and researcher, will present a program at the Southington Library, 255 Main St., Southington, Conn., entitled “Wonder About Your Ancestors? Getting Started in Genealogy,” Saturday, November 6, 2004, 10 AM.

MGS president **Donna Moughty** has a presentation scheduled in Connecticut and will also be a speaker at the New England Regional Conference in Portland, Maine, next spring.

- “Internet Genealogists’ Toolkit: Ellis Island,” Seymour Public Library, Seymour, Conn., Mon., 1 Nov., 6:30 PM.
- “Lights, Camera, Action: Using Video to Enhance Your Family History”; and “Searching the Ellis Island Database,” New England Regional Genealogical Conference, Portland, Maine, 31 March to 3 April 2005. ■

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## WHAT DID YOUR ANCESTORS LEAVE YOU? PROBING INTO PROBATE

### 2 October 2004 Meeting

This is a subject that can seem intimidating, but Christine Crawford-Oppenheimer gave us an excellent explanation of the process and a hint of the riches for genealogists that can be found in a probate file.

“Probate” is the process by which an estate is administered. During this process the executor or administrator of the estate will collect the assets of the estate, pay any debts and taxes, and distribute the remaining assets to the heirs. In the process a lot of paperwork may be generated. Items that you may find in a probate file include:

- Will;
- Letters of administration;
- Widow’s renunciation of right to administer;
- Estate inventory;
- List of items sold at estate sale, perhaps a list of purchasers (called “vendu list”);
- List of heirs and relationship to deceased;
- Petitions for guardianship of minor children;
- Bills from creditors, e.g., doctors, funeral directors, etc.;
- Final account for distributions from the estate;
- Receipts from those who received anything from the estate.

Any one who died owning property left an estate. If the person had made a will, he or she died testate. If there was no will, the person died intestate. A holographic will is one that was hand-written by the deceased. A codicil to a will is an addition to the will after it was signed and witnessed. A widow’s dower rights were usually one-third of the land owned by the deceased and one-half of his personal property. Remember that odd spellings may be found in old wills. Be aware, too, that not everyone mentioned in a will was a widow/widower or a child. Others might have been mentioned, too, including grandchildren, nieces, nephews, etc.

Estate records will usually be found where the testator’s principal residence was located, even if he or she died elsewhere. Connecticut and Vermont have special probate districts, but some early Connecticut probate records are kept at the state level. In Rhode Island probate records are kept at the town level, but in most other states they are kept at the county level. There are books that will point you in the right direction:

- *The Handy Book for Genealogists*, Everton Publishers Inc., Logan, Utah, latest edition.
- Eicholz, Alice. *Ancestry’s Red Book: American State, County and Town Sources*, Ancestry, Salt Lake City,

latest edition.

- Bentley, Elizabeth Petty, *County Courthouse Book*, Genealogical Publishing Company, Baltimore, latest edition.
- Melnyk, Marcia D., *Genealogists Handbook for New England Research*, New England Historic Genealogical Society, Boston, latest edition.
- Remington, Gordon L. *New York State Probate Records: A Genealogist’s Guide to Testate and Intestate Records*, New England Historic Genealogical Society, Boston, 2002.

Remember that the disposition of land in an estate will also show up in land records and may be indexed under a variety of names, e.g., deceased, beneficiary, executor or administrator.

Insights into the life of your ancestor can be gleaned from a probate file. If the will was signed, the testator was literate, but if an “x” was used he/she was either illiterate or too ill to write. Wills are free-form, giving clues about an ancestor’s thinking, and perhaps even identifying the “black sheep” of the family. Items bequeathed can indicate the value placed on them by the testator, and the estate inventory can give you a picture of the way that your ancestor lived. ■

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## AMERICAN COLONIST’S LIBRARY

The American Colonist’s Library Website at <http://www2.pitnet/primarysources/> offers access to a truly mind-boggling number of books and documents that were relevant to early American colonists. According to the site, “If it isn’t here, it probably isn’t available online anywhere.” If you have an interest in the “why” of history, this site is well worth a visit. The listing is arranged chronologically from 500 B.C. to 1800 A.D., and can be searched using your browser’s “find” function. Bear in mind that every entry in the listing will give you access to every word of the original book or document.

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## ENGLISH AND WELSH HISTORICAL DIRECTORIES

The University of Leister is creating a digital library of searchable local and trade directories for England and Wales, primarily for the 1850s, 1890s and 1910s, but others, too, as far back as 1750. Use of this library is free, and it can be accessed at:

<http://www.historicaldirectories.org> ■

**MGS MEETING CALENDAR**

*(Continued from page 2)*

*Family Tree Magazine, NGS News Magazine, Everton's Family History Magazine, and APG Quarterly.*

**12 MARCH 2005: CLOSING THE CIRCLE: THE STORY OF GENEALOGISTS & ADOPTIVE PARENTS WHO FOUND THEIR CHILDREN'S BIRTH FAMILIES** will be presented by **THOMAS F. HOWARD**. Tom and his wife, Virginia, are professional genealogists who adopted two children more than 30 years ago. They have reunited both children with their birth parents. Tom will explain why and how they did this, and he will also illustrate the ups, downs and outcomes of these extended relationships.

Tom is President of the Connecticut Professional Genealogists Council, Coordinator of the Genealogists Coalition of Connecticut, and a Director of NERGC. He is also a retired high school history teacher and a National Science Foundation Fellow. He was a Project Director of a Federal Title IV project that examined and developed local historic records for schools. He and his wife run a small business, Search: Skeletons and Heirs (tvhowsearch@snet.net).

**7 MAY 2005: KEEPING UP WITH YOUR NEIGHBORS: LEARN ABOUT YOUR ANCESTORS FROM THE PEOPLE THEY ASSOCIATED WITH** will be presented by **JOHN KONVALINKA, CGRS, CGL**. One way to fill gaps in our ancestor and family research is to focus on the people to be found near or associated with our subjects in various kinds of

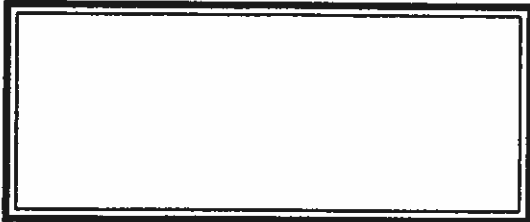
records. Learn how to identify neighbors and associates and explore those records that offer the greatest potential.

A professional genealogist who has been actively involved in genealogy for 25 years, John is particularly interested in effective use of computers and the Internet in supporting (not replacing) traditional genealogical research. He has worked extensively in the British Library, the Library of Congress, the New York Public Library, and other major genealogical libraries in the U.S., U.K. and other countries, as well as in the Public Record Office and Society of Genealogists (London), and the (U.S.) National Archives, New York City Archives, New Jersey State Archives, the NYG&B, and many smaller libraries, record offices, and private collections. ■

**MGS NEWSLETTER**

You have a story to tell about family and research experiences (both successes and failures) that would interest other members of MGS. Please write your story for these pages. Call Dorothy Shillinglaw, (203) 655-8350. ■

**Deadline for next newsletter  
4 January 2005**



**MEETING  
2 PM, 13 NOV. 2004  
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**Middlesex Genealogical Society  
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Darien CT 06820-1111**

