



# Middlesex Genealogical Society

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Darien, Fairfield County, CT

April 2005

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

This is my last letter to you as president of Middlesex Genealogical Society. Over the last few years the organization has grown, and I think the quality of the programs offered, as well as the frequency, is the best in the area. I thank Pete Kenyon for his hard work as vice president and program chair, which has made that possible.

I also have to thank our entire board for its support, especially our treasurer, Dale Pollart, and secretary, La Verne Burzynski who took over from Nancy Malling. I would be remiss if I didn't mention board members Chick Scribner, Phil Morehouse and Dick Sarr who set up the coffee for each meeting, as well as those who bring the "goodies."

And last, but definitely not least is our superb newsletter editor, Dorothy Shillinglaw, who works the hardest of all. Dorothy puts together the MGS newsletter that keeps you informed of what's going on, not only in our own society, but in the area as well. She is always looking for articles by our members, but when they don't arrive, she will write them herself, or find other interesting information to fill in. This is a labor of love, and I know I, as well as all of the members of the society, are thankful for her.

The issue I need to address, however, is not a happy one. Our nominating committee has been unable to find people who are willing to step up to a position on the board, especially as officers. Most of our board members have served on the board for many years, and because of retirement, moving or health, many cannot continue. With over 120 members and a regular attendance of 30-50 people at each of our meetings, we need some new people to step up and take on a leadership roll within the society. You can contact either me at [moughty@mac.com](mailto:moughty@mac.com) or Dave Mordy (chair of the nominating committee) at [DMordy2@yahoo.com](mailto:DMordy2@yahoo.com) if you have any questions about the positions. Won't you consider being a leader?

Happy hunting!

Donna Moughty

## LIBRARY OF CONGRESS VETERANS HISTORY PROJECT

A new collection of 20 fully digitized collections of materials submitted by war veterans is now available on the Library of Congress Web site at [www.loc.gov/warstories](http://www.loc.gov/warstories). This is the fourth set of individual stories—comprising interviews, letters, photographs and written memoirs—to be featured on the site, which is entitled "Experiencing War: Stories from the Veterans History Project." This new release marks National POW/MIA Recognition Day on Sept. 14 and brings the total of stories available on the online searchable database to 630.

The Library launched the Experiencing War site last year organized around themes such as stories of courage, the effects of war on relationships, life-altering moments and D-Day experiences.

This fourth online presentation of personal narratives includes moving remembrances from former POWs held captive in Germany, Japan, Korea and Vietnam. The digitized materials are part of the continuing effort by the library to make its collections accessible online. The Veterans History Project of the American Folklife Center plans to make available in the future other stories from the 20,000 submissions the project has received to date.

"Anyone interested in America's history can learn it firsthand from those who lived it. The Veterans History Project Website features stories in the veterans' own voices as well as photographs and other materials from those who served in combat and on the home front," said Diane Kresh, director of the Veterans History Project.

Veterans from World War I, World War II, and the Korean, Vietnam and Persian Gulf wars, and the civilians who supported them, are coming forward to record their

*(Continued on page 8)*

**PLEASE SEE PAGE 2 FOR AN IMPORTANT MGS CALENDAR CHANGE.**

## MIDDLESEX GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY

### 2004-2005 OFFICERS

Donna Moughty	President
Robert E. Kenyon III	Vice President
Dale Pollart	Treasurer
LaVerne Burzynski	Secretary

### BOARD MEMBERS AT LARGE

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Dorothy Shillinglaw	Newsletter Editor

### TRUSTEES

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Grant Radmall

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!**

**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.

**PLEASE NOTE** that our 12 March meeting was canceled because a snow storm made travel impossible for our speaker. It has been rescheduled:

**11 JUNE 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](mailto:tvhowsearch@snet.net)). ■

**NEED HELP WITH RESEARCH? Make an appointment through the Information Desk at Darien Library for a personalized consultation with an MGS volunteer.**

## TWENTY WAYS TO AVOID GENEALOGICAL GRIEF

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British Columbia Genealogical Society

Here are some suggestions to help beginners prevent misfortune when learning how to do genealogical research. Many of these tips are "old hat" to experienced genealogists, but it is always worthwhile to remind ourselves of the basics of sound research.

1. Always note the source of information that you record or photocopy, and date it too. If the material is from a book, write the name, author, publisher, year of publication, ISBN or ISSN (if it has one), and also the library where you found it (or else photocopy the title page). Occasionally you'll find that you need to refer to a book again, or go back to great aunt Matilda to clarify something she told you.
2. Talk to all your older-generation relatives before they're all gone and you're the older generation! Even a distant relative can be a goldmine of information about your ancestors.
3. Make photocopies or keep backups of all letters and e-mail messages you send. This will save you from wondering which of your correspondents' questions you've already answered, and which of your questions they have or haven't answered.
4. Don't procrastinate in responding to letters or messages you receive. If you don't have time to write a detailed reply, send your correspondent a quick message or postcard to acknowledge receipt and tell her/him approximately when you'll send them a more complete reply. Then be sure to write back as you've promised.
5. Make frequent backups of your computer disks. Store your backups and photocopies of your irreplaceable documents where you work or at someone else's home.
6. When searching for relatives in records, don't pass over entries that are almost (but not quite) what you're looking for. For example, if you're searching for the marriage of John Brown and Mary Jones in 1850, make a note of the marriage of John Brown and Nancy Smith in 1847: this could be a previous marriage in which the wife died shortly after.
7. When writing to libraries or to genealogical or historical societies in your areas of interest, ask them for the names and addresses of out-of-print booksellers in the area. Write to the booksellers and ask if they have any old local histories or family histories pertaining to the area.
8. Remember that just because information is on computer or in print, it ain't necessarily fact! Information in recent family histories is often based on that from older published works. If the older books are incorrect, the wrong information simply gets repeated and further disseminated.
9. The earlier the time period in which you're researching, the less consistent our ancestors were about the spelling of their surnames. Also, some of them were illiterate and couldn't tell a record keeper how their names should be spelled.
10. Family traditions of close connections to famous people are usually false, but there may be a more obscure relationship involved. For example, perhaps the famous person spent a night at your ancestor's inn instead of (as the legend goes) marrying into the family.
11. Try not to let your research get behind. Establish a filing system for your papers (using file folders or 3-ring binders) and file each page of notes, document, photocopy, etc. as you acquire it. There are few things more disheartening than contemplating a foot-high stack of unfiled papers, wondering if the birth certificate you desperately need to refer to is buried somewhere in it.
12. Double-check all dates to make sure they are reasonable, for example, a woman born in 1790 could not have become a mother in 1800.
13. Be on the lookout for nicknames. A request for a birth certificate for Sadie White may be rejected by a record office if the name in their files is Sarah White.
14. Beware of mail-order promotions offering what might purport to be a personalized genealogy of your surname with a title like *The Amazing Story of the BLANK Family*, *BLANKs Since the Civil War* or *Burke's Peerage World Book of BLANKs*. These books are not properly researched and documented genealogies; instead they are often little more than lists of names from phone directories or other readily-available sources. Notify the Better Business Bureau, postal authorities and consumer advocate agencies if you receive one of these. For more about these, see the *ROOTS-L* FAQ file *FAQ SCAMS*. If you're looking for occurrences of a particular surname, national and international phone listings are widely available on CD-ROM and can be viewed in many public libraries or purchased.
15. Don't assume modern meanings for terms used to describe relationships. For example, in the 17th century a step-child was often called a "son-in-law" or "daughter-in-law," and a "cousin" could refer to almost any relative except a sibling or child.
16. Remember that indexes to books rarely include the

names of all persons mentioned in the book and, in addition, occasionally contain errors. If it appears that a book is likely to have valuable information, spend some time skimming its contents rather than returning it to the library shelf after a quick glance at the index.

17. Be precise when making notes and especially when sharing information with others. Write dates using an unambiguous format: Americans interpret 5/6/1881 as 6 May 1881, but in many other countries it would be read as 5 June 1881. Always capitalize or underline surnames, some of which can be mistaken for given names, e.g., HENRY, HOWARD. Note place names in full, including parish or township, county, state or province, and country.
18. You'll often encounter conflicting information, for example, you might discover that your paternal grandmother's birth date on her gravestone is different than her birth date as told to you by your father. Note the source for each piece of information, but don't feel you have to decide immediately which date is the correct one. In fact, both of them may be wrong! Further research may reveal a more credible birth date, for example, the one on her birth certificate. Take time occasionally to review and verify the conclusions you've reached concerning each of your ancestors' lives: this will prevent you from wasting time following blind alleys.
19. Boundaries and place names change constantly over the years. Always verify them in historical atlases or genealogical texts pertaining to the area. For example, the boundaries of Lancaster County, Pennsylvania have changed four times since it was first colonized.
20. Whenever you can, advertise the surnames you're researching by posting them electronically (for example, on the RootsWeb Surname List) and submitting them to genealogical directories and surname lists published by genealogical societies that you belong to. This will put you in touch with others who are researching the same surnames—possibly for a much longer time—and save you from reinventing the wheel. After all, the most rewarding genealogical research is the kind that no-one else has already done!

The original copy of this article is located at <http://www.rootsweb.com/roots-1/20ways.html>.

This article first appeared in *The British Columbia Genealogist*, Vol. 17, #1, Mar/88. It was reprinted with some changes by the Florida Genealogical Society in their *Journal*, Vol. 24, #2, Oct/88, and in the Canadian Federation of Genealogical and Family History Societies *Newsletter*, Vol. 6, #2, Oct/93.

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## GENEALOGY SEMINAR 2005

Genealogy Seminar 2005, sponsored by Connecticut Ancestry Society, the Stamford Historical Society, and the Historical Society of the Town of Greenwich, took place at Christ Church Parish Hall in Greenwich on 26 February.

Patricia Law Hatcher gave three presentations:

**“Look Again! What Did You Miss?”** We often already have answers to questions that we did not know were going to come up when we filed the papers away. After all, we have grown more knowledgeable and skilled in the interim. Perhaps we've learned about new methods and sources. We may be better able to read old handwriting and know more about old word meanings. We bring greater perception and analytic skills to our tasks. Even if an exact answer is not in the files, previously unrecognized clues may help us find one. It is, therefore, well worth our while to periodically review our files.

**“Monographs: Reviving a Respected Publishing Format.”** According to Patricia Law Hatcher, “Monographs are an appropriate medium for smaller publishing projects: research-in-progress, limited pedigrees, and items that don't fit well into the family-history-book format, such as extended biographies, documentary transcriptions of diaries or business journals, or families that turned out not to be attached to your family tree.” This means that you can produce a manageable printing project (30-150 pages camera-ready pages) focused on a limited area of your research and have it copied at your local copy center. (You should probably include an index.) After it is bound, it can be shared with family members and mailed to interested repositories, such as the Family History Library in Salt Lake City, New England Historic Genealogical Society in Boston, New York Genealogical & Biographical Society in New York City, National Genealogical Society in Arlington, VA, Daughters of the American Revolution Library in Washington, DC, Library of Congress (they will bind for you) in Washington, DC, and local libraries that would have an interest.

**“Evaluating Evidence: A Methodology for Every Day.”** Patricia Law Hatcher said, “Genealogists often wait to evaluate their evidence until *after* they have col-

lected all information, *after* the research is “done,” when they are ready to publish. That’s *too* late. Each new piece of information should be systematically evaluated *as it is received*, so that the evaluation can direct further research.” In order to accomplish this:

- Separate information into components and choose the component you wish to analyze.
- Ask if this an original record or if you can get closer?
- Consider the person who provided the information and the person who recorded it, and ask *Who, When, Why* and *How* questions about each.
- Consider the record itself—its medium, condition, readability, and legibility.
- Consider the time and the geographic area in which the record was created and what effects those factors might have had.

Then record your evaluation. Pat’s “Personal Comfort Factor” is a chart with six levels:

- 0 = “This is just plain wrong.”
- 1 = “I have serious doubts.”
- 2 = “I am uncomfortable about this.”
- 3 = “This might be correct, but I need more information.”
- 4 = “I am comfortable and willing to proceed based on this.”
- 5 = “I believe this is correct and am willing to proceed based on this.”

**John Konvalinka’s** talk was entitled “Are We Using the Internet to its Full Potential?” John’s answer was that no one can use it to its full potential because it has been estimated that to date there have been 10-15 *billion* Webpages made available on the Internet—and probably as many messages and postings. John also urges a few cautions:

- Do not expect to find everything you want to know on the Internet.
- Do not assume that something is true just because you found it on the Internet—even if the information was repeated many times.
- Do not include information on living people in your posts or inquiries.

If you are just starting to use the Internet, you might get started by “lurking” at sites of interest to you to learn what others are posting or discussing. As you feel more comfortable, you might want to post your own interests on a message board and hope for answers some time in the future. Or you might see a query asking for information that you have and decide to respond to the query.

John mentioned *GenSmarts*, a utility that uses artificial intelligence to analyze a genealogy file and recommend Websites that might be helpful. More information and a demo are available at [www.gensmarts.com](http://www.gensmarts.com)

Many people create their own Websites to share family information and ask for help with “brick walls.” (Most Internet service providers will help you to do this without incurring additional costs.) John has a Website at [www.konvalinka.com](http://www.konvalinka.com) that has acquainted him with a new cousin and elicited answers to some of his research problems.

The number of genealogical Websites is daunting. Make use of those sites that will help you to sort out what will be helpful. Cyndi’s List at [www.cyndislist.com](http://www.cyndislist.com) with links to almost 250,000 genealogy Websites is a good place to start. Among other useful sites are:

- RootsWeb at <http://rootsweb.com>
- LDS (Mormon) Church at [www.familysearch.com](http://www.familysearch.com)
- Ancestry.com at [www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com) is a huge collection of databases. This is a paid subscription service, but it can be used without cost at one of the many local libraries (e.g., New Canaan, Greenwich, Fairfield) that subscribe to it.
- Ellis Island at [www.ellisland.org](http://www.ellisland.org) provides access to over 20 million records of people that arrived in NYC from 1892 to 1924.
- Social Security Death Index, with more than 70 million records, is available free at [www.rootsweb.com](http://www.rootsweb.com) and [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org)
- Family bible records are at [www.biblerecords.com](http://www.biblerecords.com)
- For military records: [try.home.att.net/~wee-monster/military.html](http://try.home.att.net/~wee-monster/military.html)
- A major source for property records is the U.S. Department of the Interior’s Bureau of Land Management at [www.blm.gov](http://www.blm.gov)
- To learn which passenger, immigration and emigration lists are available online, visit <http://home.att.net/~wee-monster/onlinelists.html>

John recommends that we think of the Internet as a finding aid where you may find references to a document or an original record. It is a way of getting closer to an original record, but is usually not the original record itself. Census records are an exception. Ancestry.com and HeritageQuest (available at Darien Library) have linked the original U.S. Census schedules to their census indexes, so if you find the right person in the index, a click will take you to the original record. ■

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## UPCOMING SEMINARS

The New York Genealogical & Biographical Society, 122-126 E. 58<sup>th</sup> St., New York, NY 10022 (tel: 212-755-8532) is offering:

- “Reaching Back Across the Pond: British Isles Research,” a day-long, four-lecture program on Saturday, 30 April, for those whose ancestors come from

England, Scotland, Wales, or Ireland. Presenters will be two of Britain's best-known genealogical lecturers, Paul Blake, FFSG, and Maggie Loughran.

- **"DNA for Genealogists—How to Learn About Your Ancestry Through DNA,"** Saturday, 18 June, 10 AM to 4:30 PM. Family Tree's president Bennett Greenspan and genealogist Megan Smolenyak will offer a practical, understandable, step-by-step guided journey into how DNA testing can advance genealogical and anthropological knowledge of your ancestry. DNA testing (or testing kits to take home) will be available during the workshop at a substantial discount (\$99 instead of \$167).

For more information on these programs contact Lauren Maehrlein at [education@nygbs.org](mailto:education@nygbs.org) or visit the NYG&B Website at: <http://www.newyorkfamilyhistory.org/>

**The New England Historic Genealogical Society**, 101 Newbury St., Boston, MA 02116 (toll-free telephone 888-286-3447, e-mail [membership@nehgs.org](mailto:membership@nehgs.org)), is offering **Come Home to New England** twice: 19-26 June and 31 July to 7 August. Each session will be a week of guided research in the NEHGS library, personal one-on-one research consultations, morning lectures, and special access to the library when it is normally closed to the public. For more information visit the society's Website at [www.newenglandancestors.com](http://www.newenglandancestors.com).

**New York Irish History Roundtable** is presenting its eighth all-day genealogy workshop Saturday, 7 May, 9:30 AM to 3:30 PM at the National Archives and Records Administration in Manhattan, 201 Varick St., 12<sup>th</sup> floor. Speakers will be Trish Little Taylor, professional librarian and genealogist; John Celardo, NARA archivist; and John Kemp, Director, Godfrey Memorial Library. Their subjects will be "Getting Started in Irish Research," "Onsite and Online Resources of the National Archives," "Online Research," and "Using Irish Records." For more information and to register, visit:

<http://www.irishnyhistory.org/workshop>

**Freamh Eireann** (Gaelic-American genealogy group) will host a comprehensive seminar on Irish genealogy entitled **"Tracing Your Irish Ancestry"** Saturday, 14 May, 8:30 AM to 3:30 PM at the Gaelic-American Club, 74 Beach Road, Fairfield, CT 06824. Speakers will be Fintan Mullan, Executive Director, and Dr. Brian Trainor, Research Director, both of the Ulster Historical Foundation. They will address topics related to *all* of Ireland. Subjects covered will be:

- Introduction to Scots-Irish Family History Research;
- Landed Estate Records as a Source for the Family Historian in Ireland;



- The Importance of Place, Identity and Administrative Divisions in Irish Research; and
- Using the Internet and CD-ROMs for Irish Genealogy. A video, "Searching for Your Ancestors in Ireland: A Professional Guide," will be available for viewing during lunch.

Registration is \$20 and includes morning coffee and a cold buffet lunch. It should be mailed to Kay Goyette, 261 Ruane St., Fairfield, CT 06824 and must be received by 1 May. For more information call 203-255-0767.

**Westchester County Genealogical Society** will present a talk entitled "The Philipse Family in America: Lords & Loyalists" at 10 AM on Saturday, 14 May, at the Philipse Manor Hall State Historic Site, 29 Warburton Ave. at Dock St., in Yonkers, NY. The speaker will be Joanne Passa who is the program director at Philipse Manor Hall. For more information telephone Harriet Archibald at 914-478-1655.

**Summer Camp for Family Historians 2005.** The Genealogical Society of Pennsylvania, 215 S. Broad St., Philadelphia, PA 19107 (telephone 215-545-0391, e-mail [gsppa@aol.com](mailto:gsppa@aol.com)) is offering their sixth annual Summer Camp for Family Historians 19-24 June. Daily instruction will be at the Genealogical Society of Pennsylvania, the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, the National Archives, Philadelphia City Hall, the Philadelphia City Archives and the Free Library of Philadelphia. For more information visit the Genealogical Society of Pennsylvania's Website at <http://www.genpa.org> ■

## NYC TRANSIT GUIDANCE

The Website <http://www.hopstop.com> provides guidance (in nine languages: English, Chinese, French, German, Greek, Italian, Russian, Spanish and Swahili) on using the New York City transit system

Enter your starting point and your destination, and a route will be planned for you. You can choose to travel by subway or bus or a combination of both. You can also choose more transfers and less walking, or more walking and fewer transfers. Train and bus numbers will be provided, as well as a list of points that you will pass and estimated time to reach those points. Small maps will show you the locations of subway stations and bus stops near your departure and destination points. This is a marvelous tool for those visiting archives (or anyplace else) in New York City. ■



**VETERANS' HISTORY PROJECT** (Continued from page 1)

personal stories and contribute personal documents to a growing archive at the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress. The goal is to collect, preserve and share with future generations the stories of all American war veterans.

Authorized by legislation passed in 2000, the project is being carried out in the way that Congress envisioned: with grandchildren interviewing grandparents, veterans interviewing each other and students conducting interviews as part of classroom assignments. This program is the only nationwide oral history and documentation effort that relies completely on volunteers rather than professional oral historians to collect stories and artifacts. AARP is the founding sponsor of the project, with hundreds of other organizations also participating.

Those who are interested in becoming involved in the Veterans History Project are encouraged to e-mail the office at [vohp@loc.gov](mailto:vohp@loc.gov) to request a project information kit. The kit is also available on the Veterans History Project Website at [www.loc.gov/vets/](http://www.loc.gov/vets/) or by calling the toll-free message line at (888) 371-5848. ■

**GOOGLE MAPS**

Google Maps has added a satellite option to its map site at <http://maps.google.com>. Search for a U.S. address—or longitude and latitude—among several other options. When the map displays, click on “Satellite” in the upper right corner to bring up the satellite view. Although you cannot yet zoom closer on the satellite view for every location, this could be a useful way to check on an ancestor’s farm, home, business or school. ■

**Deadline for next newsletter  
August 2005**

**MEETING**  
**2 PM, 7 MAY 2005**  
**DARLEN LIBRARY**

**Middlesex Genealogical Society**  
**PO Box 1111**  
**Darien CT 06820-1111**

