



# Middlesex Genealogical Society

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Darien, Fairfield County, CT

December 2009

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

As I write this message, the year of 2009 is quickly coming to a close. I am sure each of us feels that there is much that we did not get to do. We do, however, have to be thankful for all the genealogical blessings that we have been given. There have been more opportunities both online and in the programs that the various genealogical organizations have offered to learn where and how to do research. What we do with this information is the key to how much we enjoy doing research and putting it in some form so that it continues to interest you and excites others.

As I get the privilege of helping others to start I find that the genealogy bug gets to those who have success in finding information early. I see the joy and excitement they display when they find a record that tells them who their ancestors were and where they came from. Seeing this reaction builds my desire to reach out and give more opportunities to more people.

When I started to do my own genealogy research, I was only looking for the relationship ties. In others word, who begot whom. I went from child to parent. But in my family, which was large, I found there were lots of aunts and uncles and cousins. Then there were the stories, some of which I only learned later because I was considered "too young" at the time. These stories intrigued me, Guess what. This is what makes family history exciting. This is what drives me and others to keep on hunting for information about our ancestors.

The time to start on this quest is **now**: Now, when there are more of the older generations around to chat with and listen to, to hear what



they can tell you. They can tell you about Aunt Jane, reunions of the past, going to grandma Holly's each summer, picnics, trips to the fair. They can tell you about the pictures you see hanging on the walls, in the picture albums, or hidden away on a closet shelf. They can tell you about the worn and dusty item you found in the attic or an old cellar. Recently, at a funeral, I listened to a son talk about his father who had been an inventor. He had a model of a tool that he found among his father's things, and he had learned that it was the beginning of the tool used by electricians to bend pipes. His father had showed his device to a supplier that took it and had it made. Then there are the stories that you can get from newspapers, libraries and historical societies, and the list just continues to go on and on. All of the research helps you to know your ancestors better, and the knowledge that you are part of the continuing progression of our society generates excitement and encourages you to learn more. You are part of a very large group of people that goes back a long way.

Happy holidays and happy hunting!

Lloyd Sturges Jr. ■

## COMPARABLE VALUES

If you are interested in the current equivalent of monetary values found in your U.S. research, visit the Inflation Calculator at:

<http://www.westegg.com/inflation>

Canadians will find help at:

[http://www.bankofcanada.ca/en/inflation\\_calc.htm](http://www.bankofcanada.ca/en/inflation_calc.htm)

And covering the pound in the UK, as well as the dollar in the U.S. is:

<http://www.measuringworth.com/> ■

## MIDDLESEX GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY

### 2009-2010 OFFICERS

Lloyd Sturges Jr.	President
Robert E. Kenyon III	Vice President
Dale Pollart	Treasurer
Joan Rinaldi	Secretary

### BOARD MEMBERS AT LARGE

Jim Baker  
Virginia Banerjee  
Peter Biggins  
Leonard Christie  
Philip Morehouse

Donna Moughty	Past President
Charles Scribner	Librarian
Dorothy Shillinglaw	Newsletter Editor

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 (ISSN 1936-3494). Annual membership dues are \$25 per individual and \$30 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

**Website:** <http://mgs.darien.org>

## UPCOMING MGS MEETINGS

### MARK YOUR CALENDARS

**ALL MEETINGS SATURDAY, 2 PM, CONFERENCE ROOM (on the mezzanine, above the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor, elevator button "M"), AT THE NEW DARIEN LIBRARY, 1441 POST ROAD. COME, AND BRING A FRIEND.**

**23 JANUARY 2009. UNCLE SAM WANTS YOU—20<sup>th</sup> CENTURY MILITARY RESEARCH** will be presented by **LARRY FERMI**. He will discuss what records of genealogical value exist documenting individuals who registered for and/or served in the military and were wounded, killed, taken prisoner, buried, naturalized, etc. during the primary military conflicts of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, specifically World War I, World War II, Korea and Vietnam.

Larry has been performing in-depth family history research since 1989, with a focus on European immigration during the peak periods of the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, and is a popular speaker on basic and advanced genealogy-related subjects in the greater New York metropolitan area. He has been a member of the Monmouth County Genealogical Society's Education Committee since 2001, and is also a member of the Association of Professional Genealogists, the National Genealogical Society, the Genealogical Speakers Guild, and the Genealogical Society of New Jersey.



**Larry Fermi**

**20 MARCH 2010. MAXIMIZING CENSUS RESEARCH** will be presented by **VIRGINIA BANNERJEE**. Census records are a must for genealogical research. This program focuses on how to mine census records for all the data and clues they offer. It is vital to examine the entries for each of your ancestors for every census when they were alive. Going beyond once-over-lightly will often reveal valuable information and leads.

Virginia is a professional family historian with 40 years experience. She is a member of the MGS board and of the Connecticut Professional Genealogists Council. Virginia is also a member of the board of the Frisbie/Frisbee Family Association, and she has documented ancestry on both sides of her family. She recently completed a major archival project at the Connecticut State Library and Archives. Virginia also teaches and lectures frequently at local, regional and national levels, and has been published by several genealogical societies.

**15 MAY 2010.** To be announced



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# USING ROOTSWEB A GENEALOGIST'S NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS

by Joan Young  
joan@volunteer.rootsweb.com

You've probably made the usual New Year's resolutions in the past. You know—the ones about eating less and losing weight, exercising more, cleaning out the attic and garage. If you are like most of us, those resolutions are soon broken or forgotten—until a new year rolls around again.

This year give some thought to resolutions you could make for the New Year (ones that might be easier to keep than the above) that would help you to progress in your genealogical research. I have a list of genealogical resolutions I'm going to make for the New Year; perhaps you would like to adopt one or more of them for yourself.

## **Document Your Sources**

At the top of my list is being more meticulous about documenting where I found information—always listing a source for each event I've found and listing what records I've used to reach my conclusions.

Your source is where you learned your information. It might be a birth certificate, tombstone inscription, information your grand-aunt Susannah told you, or even Sally JONES's research files. Don't list a document as your source if you didn't actually see the document. If Mary SMITH told you she saw a document, then Mary SMITH is your source unless or until you also see the document.

Documenting sources and then sitting back and reviewing them can help you determine whether your sources are good ones that you can readily accept, or whether you might want to dig a bit deeper for more reliable documentation. Mary SMITH may be an excellent researcher but if you have taken her word for the evidence you might want to obtain the original document she claims to have seen. You might find something in the document that Mary overlooked.

## **Record Negative Results**

If you have searched the local newspapers looking for an obituary for Uncle Harry, or checked the local cemetery records where you think he might have been buried, and you have come up empty-handed, make sure you record the fact that you have searched these resources and

list the date on which you performed your search. This is an error I made in my early days of research, and I can tell you it has led me to repeat searches unnecessarily in places I've already looked. Of course, recording the date you did your search is important, as you might later find that new records have been discovered for the cemetery you previously searched.

## **Revisit Dead Ends**

If you have been researching for any length of time, you have probably come to a dead-end on one or more of your ancestral lines. Among my brick walls is my Irish McCONNELL line, mostly because I have been unable to ascertain where they lived in Ireland before immigrating to America.

The New Year is an excellent time to pull out all of the information you have gathered—clues and hints and family stories, and also the leads you eventually ruled out. Revisit the research with a fresh look. Also take into consideration that new information may have become available online that was not there when you last checked. Don't forget to search the archives of the RootsWeb mailing lists and message boards as well as look for new Web pages and family trees that have been posted by others since you last looked.

- <http://archiver.rootsweb.com>
- <http://boards.rootsweb.com>
- <http://wc.rootsweb.com>

## **Check Offshoots of Your Brick Walls**

When you reach a dead-end, sometimes the best approach is to try to "move sideways" rather than back another generation. By this I mean you might want to attempt to learn more about the dead-end ancestor's spouse's family or the ancestor's siblings. You might be able to learn information about these other people connected to your ancestor. And through that research you may, in turn, learn about your ancestor.

In one instance in my research I was unsuccessful in obtaining a death certificate for my ancestor, but I was able to find one for his brother and their parents' names were listed on his certificate. In another case, I found the tombstone for my ancestor's brother and later learned my ancestor was buried in the same cemetery. By searching for a spouse's or sibling's family, you might also find another researcher studying that family who holds the information you need.

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## Clean Out the Attic

Yes, I know, you vowed in other years to clean out the attic and never got around to it; but maybe you haven't thought of that chore in light of your genealogical research. If you (or your grandma) has an attic in need of attention, it could turn out to be a family history goldmine rather than just a place where "junk" is gathering dust. Consider making that resolution again and, this time, sticking to it and following through. You might be surprised at the treasures you find.

### Share What You Learn

Share with others when you do make new discoveries and you will find that others will be willing to share with you. The greatest resource in genealogical research is other people interested in the same families. Remember that RootsWeb provides the resources where you can meet and share information with newfound cousins.

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## NAVIGATING SHIP'S MANIFESTS, RESEARCHING IMMIGRATION RECORDS . . . LIKE A PRO

21 November 2009

by Joan K. Rinaldi

Toni McKeen returned to the Middlesex Genealogical Society on Saturday, 21 November 2009, to discuss how to decipher all the notations found on ship's manifests. Like the pro she is, Toni set the tone by starting off with a slide show about Ellis Island, where 17 million people were processed, of whom three percent were denied entrance to the United States. On one day in 1907, 11,747 people were processed. One anonymous immigrant was quoted as saying: "There is hope from the ocean, but none from the grave," reflecting some of the reasons (e.g., poverty, starvation, plague) our ancestors immigrated—not to find streets paved with gold, but to preserve life for themselves and their children.

Ship's manifests are a primary source of information. They can give us a name, address, names of traveling companions, occupation, age, marital status, town from which the immigrant

comes, relatives which may have been left behind and clues to naturalization. The first thing the family researcher must do is ensure he or she understands the database.

These records fall into three major divisions:

- **Prior to 1820:** There were hundreds of ports at which the ships docked and the records are primarily local. Few exist outside of museums and historical societies. Shipping companies were not required to keep passenger lists.
- **1819–1891:** Philadelphia was the main U.S. port until 1825 when New York replaced it as the busiest port. The bits of information increased to six: name, age, occupation, the place from which the immigrant came, the place to which the immigrant was going, and the last column was reserved for notations on those who died on board ship during the crossing. Sailing ships, whose schedules were dependent on the weather, were replaced by steam ships about 1850 and the schedules became regular.
- **1891 to present:** An Act of Congress was passed regulating the number of immigrants admitted into this country. Shipping companies were required to complete standard manifests printed in English by the Bureau of Information at the point of embarkation. There were five major ports of entry: New York, Baltimore, Boston, Philadelphia and New Orleans. These forms asked for name, age, sex, occupation, if the immigrant could read and write, where from, last residence, destination, amount of accompanying baggage.

When New York became the major port of entry, Castle Garden (called Castle Clinton after DeWitt Clinton) was the point of disembarkation. From 1855 to 1892 it was a major processing center. For its history, log into [CastleGarden.org](http://CastleGarden.org). When it became too small to handle the hordes of immigrants, Ellis Island was built.

Ellis Island opened on 1 January 1892, burned on 14 June 1897, reopened 17 December 1900, and then closed 31 December 1924. It was reopened and used as a detention center during World War II, and closed again in 1954. It reopened in 1990 as a national historic site.

Bear in mind that no records are kept at Ellis Island. Passports were not required by the United States until 1941, so information on the [EllisIslandRecords.org](http://EllisIslandRecords.org) site comes from ships' manifests. The following helpful hints on understanding the

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manifests were given:

- The US didn't keep emigration (outgoing) records, but Germany did. Some can be found on the Internet.
- Italian women came over using their maiden names. Sometimes they are listed with their first name and the word "moglie" which translates to "wife."
- Families sometimes came over several times (having returned to their country of origin for a visit).
- Older and potentially ill relatives may have traveled in second class while their relatives came in steerage because inspections in second class were more lax. This would prevent frailer members of the family from being deported and avoid the possibility that the entire family or an older grandchild would have to return to the country of origin with them.
- Use the old spelling of the name of your ancestor, not the name they used when in the U.S.

Use other documents to find and/or confirm what you are looking for:

- The census will give you the year of immigration and naturalization.
- The naturalization papers will give the name of the ship on which they arrived.
- Military records/registration cards will give you the name of the town of origin.

Additional information can be found at the end of the ship's manifests:

- List of aliens employed on the vessel as members of the crew. They worked their way over and some stayed.
- List of those detained. A small "X" preceding the name on the main passenger list indicates the person was detained for one of a number of reasons, e.g.:
  - Women not claimed by a male relative—single, widowed, or whose husband just didn't show up.
  - LPC—likely to become a public charge—not having sufficient money, for example.
  - Senility—confusion after a long sea voyage.
- Numbers handwritten over the occupation indicate date of petition for naturalization or naturalization.
- Name listed twice with the same information—perhaps one who was detained. The last

column would indicate the number of meals they ate, thus giving a clue as to the length of the detention.

Hints to make your search easier:

- Delete some search parameters.
- Look for others who may have traveled on the same ship.
- Check alternate spellings of names.
- Expand the years of the search.
- Check abbreviated names (Chas for Charles, Wm for William, etc.).
- Remember, married Italian women traveled under their maiden names.

Toni concluded her presentation by comparing two major Internet sites:

- [Ellislandrecords.org](http://Ellislandrecords.org):
  - Free.
  - Records available from 1892–1924.
  - Can't print out manifests.
- [Ancestry.com](http://Ancestry.com):
  - Subscription costs about \$150 plus tax per year.
  - Records available on many ports.
  - Can print out both pages of the manifest. ■

## UPCOMING SEMINARS

**National Archives & Records Administration**, 700 Pennsylvania Ave., Washington, DC 20408-0001, has scheduled its **Sixth Annual Genealogy Fair** for Wed. and Thurs., 14-15 April, at the Pennsylvania Avenue Plaza and Research Center. The fair showcases federal records located at the National Archives and also professional genealogy organizations' resources for doing research on family history. The fair will provide information and guidance for experienced genealogy professionals as well as beginners. Visit [www.archives.gov/dc-metro/know-your-records/genealogy-fair/](http://www.archives.gov/dc-metro/know-your-records/genealogy-fair/) for more information.

**National Archives and Records Administration, Northeast Region**, 380 Trapelo Rd., Waltham, MA 02452-6399. Lectures are free, but space is limited. Register by calling 8 6 6 - 4 0 6 - 2 3 7 9 or e-mailing [waltham.archives@nara.gov](mailto:waltham.archives@nara.gov)

- Tues., 5 Jan. 2010, 2 PM, "Preserving Your Permanently Valuable Records."
- Tues., 2 Feb., 2 PM, "African-American and

Under-Documented Populations.”

- Wed., 17 Feb., 10 AM, “Genealogy for Kids” (Gr. 3-8 and chaperones).
- Tues., 2 March, 2 PM, “Census, Passenger Lists & Naturalization Records.”
- Tues., 6 April, 2 PM, “Genealogy Research: What’s Online; What’s Not Online.”
- Wed., 21 April, 10 AM, “Genealogy for Kids” (Gr. 3-8 and chaperones).
- Tues., 4 May, 2 PM, “Records Related to Military Service in the 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup> & 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries.”
- Tues., 1 June, 2 PM, “Finding Your Ancestors in Maritime Records.”
- Tues., 6 July, 2 PM, “Census, Passenger Lists and Naturalization Records.”
- Tues., 3 Aug., 2 PM, “Introduction to Genealogy.”

**New York Genealogical & Biographical Society**, 36 W. 44th Street, 7th floor, New York, NY 10036-8105; telephone 212-755-8532; FAX 212-754-4218. The Education Committee of the NYG&B again offers tours to the Federal and Municipal Archives, the New York Public Library, the New-York Historical Society, and the Brooklyn Historical Society.

- **The New York Public Library**, Fri., 12 Feb., 2010, 9:30 AM-12:00 PM. Staff of the Milstein Division of United States History, Local History and Genealogy, will give an overview of genealogy resources, including the NYG&B holdings that have been incorporated into the collection. Milstein Division 9:30-10:10; Overview of the Map Division 10:15-10:35; Microforms 10:40-11:00; Hands-on access to e-resources 11-noon.
- **National Archives Northeast Region**, Tues., 16 Feb. 1:30-4:30 PM. Patrick Connelly will provide an overview of some of the lesser known, genealogically pertinent holdings of the Archives. Attendees will be assisted in their research by Education Committee members and NARA staff.
- **Brooklyn Historical Society**, Tues., 23 Feb., 1-4 PM. The Brooklyn Historical Society’s library is a wonderful resource for Brooklyn and western Long Island. Registrants will be given a detailed orientation to the collection and time for research on their own.
- **New York City Municipal Archives**, Fri., 12

March, 1:30-4:30 PM. Leonora A. Gidlund, Director, will welcome registrants and provide an introduction to the large assortment of vital records, city directories, photographs, voters’ records, etc. The otherwise closed archives will then be available for assisted research.

- **The New-York Historical Society**, Wed., 18 March, 3-5 PM. Joseph Ditta, Reference Librarian, will provide an orientation on the genealogically pertinent holdings at the Historical Society. Registrants will have time for research on their own.

Registration: Each program \$25 members/\$40 nonmembers. Any three programs \$65 members/\$110 nonmembers. All five programs \$100 members/\$160 nonmembers. Registration begins 4 Jan. 2010. (*Note:* NYG&B is moving to its new offices during the week of 18 Jan., so you may experience some disruption in contacting the organization via phone or the online store. Any glitches or problems in communication should be cleared up by the last week of January.)

**New York Public Library and The New York Genealogical & Biographical Society** will once again be co-sponsoring a series of free lectures at the New York Public Library, for which no registration is required. These lectures will be accompanied by PowerPoint presentations, and will run about 50 minutes with time for questions afterwards. There will be handouts for the attendees. Lectures will be held at 5:30 PM at the NYPL, 5th Ave, between 40<sup>th</sup> & 42<sup>nd</sup> Streets, in the South Court classrooms, first floor (off Astor Hall).

- **17 Feb. 2010:** “Beyond the Basics: Newspaper Research for Family Historians.” This presentation explores the variety of exciting new opportunities presented by newspaper research in the digital age, examines newspaper development and the evolving view of “public” and “private” information over time, and discusses the often-overlooked types of genealogical clues that can be found in both mainstream and specialty newspapers. In addition, the presentation discusses some shortcut techniques for locating newspapers (in original, microform, or digitized/searchable formats) and the limitations of the online search engines found on most digital newspaper sites. Meldon J. Wolfgang III, a member of the

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NYG&B Education Committee and owner of Jonathan Sheppard Books, will be the speaker.

- **24 March:** "Of City-Slickers and Straphangers: Researching Urban Ancestors." Researching urban ancestors is fraught with difficulties. Dealing with large populations, multiple people by the same name, and the tendency of many city-dwellers to move frequently demands a unique approach to research and an understanding of which records will be most useful. Laura Murphy DeGrazia, CGSM, a member of the NYG&B Education Committee, and president of the Board for Certification of Genealogists, will be the speaker.
- **13 April:** "Trace Your Roots with DNA." DNA is the latest in a growing number of tools to find your family origins and connections. Learn how DNA testing may help advance your research. Megan Smolenyak Smolenyak, a member of the NYG&B, and Chief Genealogist for Ancestry.com, will be the speaker.

**New England Historic Genealogical Society,**  
101 Newbury St.. Boston, MA 02116:

- **Winter Research Getaway,** Thurs., 4 Feb. to Sat., 6 Feb. 2010. a guided program with one-on-one consultations and expert reviews of your research.
- **Technology Seminar,** Fri., 26 Mar to Sat., 27 Mar.—the relationship between technology and genealogy explored with NEHGS experts.
- **Spring Research Getaway,** Thurs, 8 April to Sat., 10 April, a guided program with one-on-one consultations and expert reviews of your research.
- **Irish Genealogy Research Tour,** Sun., 23 May to Sun., 30 May. This weeklong guided research tour will give you access to a treasure trove of records in Dublin and the benefit of consultations with some of the foremost experts in Irish genealogy. The tour features guided research at various repositories in central Dublin, including the General Register Office, National Library, National Archives, and Registry of Deeds, among others. Daily programming includes tutorials, research tips and techniques lectures, personalized consultations and group dining events.
- **Come Home to New England I,** Mon., 14

June to Sat., 19 June. During a week of guided research, you'll have access to personalized one-on-one consultations, morning lectures, and special participant-only admission hours. The week's lectures include an orientation to the NEHGS collections, methodology seminars, and daily topical discussions of understanding record sources. The program includes group social events to meet other members, discuss research, and share stories.

- **Summer Research Getaway,** Thurs., 15 July to Sat., 17 July, a guided program with one-on-one consultations and expert reviews of your research.
- **Come Home to New England II,** Mon., 9 Aug., to Sat., 14 Aug. During a week of guided research, you will have access to personalized one-on-one consultations, morning lectures, and special participant-only admission hours. The week's lectures include an orientation to the NEHGS collections, methodology seminars, and daily topical discussions of understanding record sources. The program includes group social events to meet other members, discuss research, and share stories.
- **Salt Lake City Research Tour,** Sun., 31 Oct. to Sun., 7 Nov., NEHGS's 32<sup>nd</sup> annual research tour to the Family History Library in Salt Lake City, Utah. This is an intensive week of guided research aided by the expert staff of NEHGS. Daily programming includes computer tutorials for accessing the library card catalog, research tips and techniques lectures, personalized consultations and group dining events.

For more information visit the NEHGS Website at [www.newenglandancestors.org](http://www.newenglandancestors.org)

**Westchester County Genealogical Society,** P.O. Box 518, White Plains, NY 10601, presents speakers on genealogical subjects on the **second Saturday of each month** at 10 AM. (Premeeting networking starts at 9:30 AM.) Meetings are at Aldersgate Memorial United Methodist Church, 600 Broadway, Dobbs Ferry, NY (across from Mercy College on Route 9). A \$3 donation is asked of nonmembers. You can visit the society's website at <http://www.rootsweb.com/~nywcgs>

- **9 Jan. 2010,** "20<sup>th</sup> Century Probate Research: Confirming Relationships and Finding Family," by Debra Braverman.

- **13 Feb.**, "History of the Hudson River and Henry Hudson" by Dr. Raymond E. Phillips.
- **13 March**, "Cemeteries of Westchester County" by Patrick Raftery, Assistant Librarian at Westchester County Historical Society.
- **10 April**, "What's Up Doc?" by Jo Heffernan.
- **8 May**, "Who Were the Parents of...?" by Joe Lieby.
- **12 June**, "Writing the Family Narrative" by Tony Lauriano.

**National Genealogical Society**, 3108 Columbia Pike, Suite 300, Arlington, VA 22204-4304, 800-473-0060, <http://www.ngsgenealogy.org>

- The **2010 NGS Research Trip to Salt Lake City** will take place **Sun., 24 Jan.—Sun., 31 Jan. 2009**, directed by Marie Varrelman Melchiori, CG, CGL, and Shirley Langdon Wilcox, CG, FNGS. For more information, visit: [www.ngsgenealogy.org/cs/research\\_trips](http://www.ngsgenealogy.org/cs/research_trips)
- The **2010 NGS Family History Conference, Follow Your Ancestral Trail**, will be held

Wed.-Sat., 28 April, to 1 May, in Salt Lake City, Utah. The online searchable conference program is now available at <http://members.ngsgenealogy.org/Conferences/2010Program.cfm>. To register online, visit the NGS website, click on Conferences & Events, Annual Conference, and then Attendee Registration. You can also choose to mail-in your registration by downloading the form, filling it in, and mailing it to NGS. ■

**DID YOU KNOW?**

**NARA celebrated its 75<sup>th</sup> birthday this year. After decades of debate, Franklin Roosevelt signed legislation creating the National Archives as a repository for the nation's most important records on 19 June 1934.**

**Deadline for next newsletter  
16 February 2010**

Peter Biggins  
230 Old King's Highway North  
Darien, CT 6820

MEETING  
23 JAN. 2010, 2 PM  
DARIEN LIBRARY

Middlesex Genealogical Society  
PO Box 1111  
Darien CT 06820-1111

