



Middlesex Genealogical Society

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Darien, Fairfield County, CT

December 2010

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

"Genealogy," according to Webster, "Is a history of the descent of a person or family from an ancestor," or "The study of family pedigrees." "Family History" is the systematic narrative and research of past events relating to a specific family. What we really want to promote, is the gathering of stories and facts that will make our ancestors come alive for us. This way, we will feel that we are a part of them.

All of us in our searching for information reach that dead end and probably experience frustration. The past few months have produced some of that frustration for me. Most of this is due to a realization that the past does not seem to interest or be important to some people.

I had a friend whose mother had passed away, and he was clearing out her home to get it ready to sell. In the dumpster were going old photos, and boxes and boxes of records and books. I picked out a large three-ring binder that piqued my curiosity and found that it contained pedigree charts, pictures with stories attached, birth certificates and other documents. When I showed him what he was throwing away he remarked: "What do I need those things for? It's only dead people." I was stunned. It's these kinds of things that we family history buffs really get frustrated about. All that information was being lost forever.

What we need to do is get bolder and ask questions of our older and wiser relatives while we can still receive information from them. Question them about their childhood—where they lived, what they did for a living, what fun things they did and where. See a picture on the wall. Ask who is in the picture. Once these older relatives are gone a lot of information is lost forever.

What do you do now? It is not easy, but there are some avenues. Newspapers may tell you if your ancestors were involved in the community in any way, perhaps involved in sports, charitable organizations, fraternities, volunteer fire departments, Boy Scouts, or other youth organizations. Church records may give you some clues through membership records, minutes of meetings, etc. Most of all, we need to see that our stories and memories are given to someone that will care and do something with them.

Here at the Middlesex Genealogical Society we are dedicated to helping you to find a way to get the information you need to bring your ancestors into your life,

Lloyd Sturges Jr. ■

2011 MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

Membership renewal is due 1 January 2011. *Please consider this to be your renewal notice.* You may use the application form on page 7 of this newsletter if you wish, or a plain piece of paper, marked renewal, with your name and address. Please note that while you do not have to provide us with any information that we already have, we would like to receive any significant changes, e.g., new e-mail address. You may bring your renewal to our 29 January meeting, or drop it in the mail addressed to Middlesex Genealogical Society, P.O. Box 1111, Darien, CT 06820. Annual dues are \$25 per individual, \$30 per couple or family.

MIDDLESEX GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY

2010-2011 OFFICERS

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

BOARD MEMBERS AT LARGE

Jim Baker
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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 2nd floor, elevator button "M"), DARIEN LIBRARY, 1441 POST ROAD. COME, AND BRING A FRIEND.

29 JANUARY 2011: MGS president **LLOYD STURGES** will present "A WALK THROUGH THE NEW FAMILY-SEARCH.ORG"—new and improved with images and new technology.

Lloyd Sturges Jr. is a family history consultant with the Church of Jesus Christ of Latterday Saints, a member of the board of directors and current president of Middlesex Genealogical Society in Darien Conn. He served as the administrator for the Family History Library in New Canaan, Conn. from 1987 to 2004 and has been doing genealogy research since the early 1950's. He has given genealogy lectures in Fairfield County for the last 10 years. Lloyd is also an active commissioner with the Powahay District, Boy Scouts of America and director of operations for Connecticut Wing Civil Air Patrol Aux. of the U.S.A.F.

19 MARCH 2011: LESLIE ALBRECHT HUBER will present "BEYOND NAMES AND DATES: UNCOVERING YOUR ANCESTORS' STORIES." Are your ancestors destined to live on only as names and dates on your family charts? No! Dig deeper in the records and learn to place them in their historical context, and you can gain a new and fuller understanding of their lives.

Leslie Albrecht Huber is an award-winning freelance writer and speaker who has written nearly one hundred articles that have appeared in more than 20 different magazines. Her recently published first book, *The Journey Takers*, has been a project-in-the-making for nearly ten years. Leslie has given dozens of lectures to genealogy and history groups throughout the country, including national conferences.

15 MAY 2011: NORA GALVIN will speak to us about **MITOCHONDRIAL DNA (mtDNA)**, the kind that is inherited from our mothers. Nora, the descendent of nine immigrants from eight counties in Ireland, has lived in Ohio and Virginia, but now makes her home in New England. She has been a secondary-school science teacher and a research scientist at a major pharmaceutical company where one of her roles was using DNA as a drug discovery tool. She brings a scientist's intrinsic curiosity and attention to detail to her genealogical research. ■

A GENEALOGIST'S NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS

by Joan Young

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 grandaunt 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 the future 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 or sibling's family you might also find another researcher studying that family who holds the information you need.

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:

<http://searches.rootsweb.com/share.html>

Previously published in *RootsWeb Review*: 2 January 2008, Vol. 11, No. 1. ■

RESEARCH THAT MAKES MY EYES CROSS—and how I solved the problem

by Joan K. Rinaldi

The irrepressible Toni McKeen paid a return visit to MGS on Saturday, 20 November, to share with us some of the techniques she uses to find those illusive ancestors. Sometimes it seems as if you have enough information on hand to easily locate them, but they remain hidden.

The first thing Toni advises is never give up. She warns that family stories are unreliable. Genealogy without documentation is only mythology. Her first starting point is always the census (remember the 1890 census burned, but city directories may be available). If you can't go any further on a vertical line, go sideways. To illustrate, she related several case histories.

Case #1—Ethnic Name

The first was of a man with a long ethnic name which could be easily misspelled either by a census taker or by the person who recorded the data on the computer. Using Ancestry.com Toni was unable to find this person's name in the census for the year she was sure he was living in New York. Step one was to input known data (name, birth

date/year, location). Realizing that a little more information will usually get better results, she then added his spouse's name. Again, no results. She then put in a request using only this man's first name, omitting his surname. There were many pairings of people with the same first name and the same named spouse, but none was the person she was searching for. Had his first name been anglicized, she wondered? She then searched using all the information she had, but not the surname. Her persistence eventually paid off when she found a good match by looking at the actual handwritten census records. The recorder had misread the last name mistaking the first initial of the surname as an "S" instead of a "D".
Lessons learned:

- Begin search by a specific year.
- Search by first name with name of spouse.
- Include date of birth, location of birth, and location of residence in the census year.
- Often an ethnic name will give results if an "Americanized" form is used.

Case #2—Common Name

There is a new feature in Ancestry which allows you to put in family members such as siblings. When you have an ancestor with a common name and get too many results—and whose spouse also has a common name—try looking for a child with a more unusual first name (making sure that child had been born by the time the census was taken), inputting first names only of the child and those of the mother and father. Lessons learned:

- Choose child with least common first name.
- Input the first names of the mother and father without the surname.
- Use location and birth date.

This will usually also give you a hint as to how the surname was misspelled.

Case #3—No Hits

In this case, no hits were forthcoming, but you have some additional information—you are sure this ancestor was naturalized. Using Ancestry, look in the Immigration and Travel Records. Try the surname, then the first name without the surname, and narrow by category. Lessons learned:

- Always start with the census.
- Use facts from other records to lead you to what you are looking for.
- Naturalization documents may hold information re immigration (possibly name of ship).

Case #4—No Hits

As in Case #3, no hits were forthcoming from the census search. You have the name of the man and his wife and their children and believe you know generally where they were living during a specific census year. Go to the city directory and look for someone whose name can't be misspelled who lived on the same street (Smith or Jones perhaps). Then locate that friend or neighbor in the census records. Scrolling up and down you may find the person for whom you are looking. Lessons learned:

- Maps are available which will give you the enumeration number of the section of the city where you believe your ancestor lived.
- Locate the appropriate city directory.
- Use the name of someone else who lived on that street to locate your ancestor by scrolling up and down from that address.

Case #5—No Hits

As in Case #4, even using the city directory didn't help much. Don't stop at just the specific census year, but check all years of the city directory. You may find your ancestor with the notation "rem." This means "removed," or moved as we say today, and may even include a place such as "Bronx" or "Brooklyn." If you are looking in a Connecticut city directory, for instance, the person who gave the information may not have been accurate. "Oh, they moved to New York." "Where in New York?" "Oh, the Bronx or Brooklyn I think." Lessons learned:

- Check all years of the city directory.
- Check a wide selection of census locations.

Case #6—Single Man

Uncle Joe was single, never married, no children. How can you find him? With no hits on his name in Ancestry, try HeritageQuest. Do an advanced search using his first name and specify the county in which he lived. (Remember that Manhattan is not a county. Use "New York County" instead.) Lesson learned:

Be creative and never give up.

Case #7—Common Name

Using the tips in Case #2 hasn't helped, so what next? Supplement your Ancestry research by using HeritageQuest. When you get a lot of hits, sort (Heritage allows you to sort in several ways) by age and by specific county. Remember, Man-

hattan is not a county. Use "New York County" instead. Lesson learned:

With too many hits, keep narrowing search.

Case #8—No Hits on Surname

Your grandfather has always spelled his name the same way. You know he has always lived in Manhattan (New York County). Why doesn't he show up on a census when you know he lived there that specific year? Don't get stuck; think outside the box. Lessons learned:

- Check all possibilities.
- View all handwritten census records.
- Find a neighbor and scroll up and down.
- Inspect the list of first names of family members.

Perhaps you will find that the surname was misspelled. If the first initial is misspelled, the computer cannot find it for you.

Recap

Mrs. McKeen summarized her entertaining and informative presentation:

- Be careful about relying on family stories.
- Be careful in accepting results.
- Use other family members in search.
- Try searching without a surname (last name), but using location and birth date.
- **And never give up!**

Note: You may have noticed that Mrs. McKeen relies heavily on Ancestry in her searches. This is not a free service, but members of MGS have access to it on the MGS computer on the second floor of Darien Library. ■

UPCOMING SEMINARS

National Archives and Records Administration, Northeast Region:

Waltham, Mass., 380 Trapelo Rd. Lectures are on Tuesdays at 2 p.m., except for "Genealogy for Kids" lectures, which are on Wednesdays at 10:30 a.m. All are free, but space is limited. Register by calling 866-406-2379 or e-mailing waltham.archives@nara.gov. *Please note:* The schedule may be affected by upcoming renovations, so be sure to call ahead.

- 1 Feb. 2011, "Researching African-American and Under-Documented Populations."
- Wed., 23 Feb., 10 a.m. "Genealogy for Kids"

(Gr. 3-8 and chaperones).

- 1 Mar.: "Genealogy Research—What's Online; What's Not Online."
- 5 Apr.: "Introduction to Genealogy."
- Wed., 20 Apr., 10 a.m.: "Genealogy for Kids" (Gr. 3-8 and chaperones).
- 3 May: "Genealogy Online: Using the Online Resources of the National Archives."
- 7 June: "Finding Your Ancestors in Maritime Records."
- 12 July: "Introduction to Genealogy."
- 2 Aug.: "Census, Passenger Lists and Naturalization Records."

New York Genealogical & Biographical Society, 36 W. 44th Street, 7th fl., New York, NY 10036-8105; telephone 212-755-8532; FAX 212-754-4218. The NYG&B's Education Committee will once again offer tours to the Federal and Municipal Archives, the New York Public Library, and the New-York Historical Society. For the first time this year, they are also offering a visit to the Westchester Historical Society.

- **New York Public Library**, main branch, Fifth Ave. at 42nd St., on Thurs., 24 Feb., 2011 from 9:30 a.m.-12:00 p.m. Maira Liriano, Manager of the Milstein Division of U.S. History, Local History and Genealogy, will give an overview of genealogical resources at the library, including the NYG&B holdings that are now in the NYPL. Kate Cordes, Manager of the Lionel Pincus and Princess Firyal Map Division, will provide an overview of the division's holdings. Participants will then explore, hands-on, the e-resources available at NYPL in the South Court classrooms.
- **National Archives Northeast Region**, 12th floor at 201 Varick St., NYC, on Tues., 1 March, from 1:30-4:30 p.m. Archivist Patrick Connelly will provide an overview of naturalizations, ship's manifests, court documents and other genealogical holdings of the Archives while taking participants on a behind-the-scenes tour. Research assistance will be available.
- **New York City Municipal Archives**, at 31 Chambers St., NYC, on Fri., 4 March, from 1:30-4:30 p.m. On a date when the archives are closed to the public, Leonora A. Gidlund, Director, will introduce you to vital records, city directories, photographs, voters' records and other unique genealogical resources. You will

then have an opportunity for independent or guided research.

- **New-York Historical Society**, 170 Central Park West, NYC, on Thurs., 10 March, from 3-5 p.m. Joseph Ditta, Reference Librarian, will introduce you to the genealogically pertinent holdings of the New-York Historical Society in its library.
- **Westchester County Archives**, at 2199 Saw Mill River Rd., Elmsford, NY, Thurs., 14 April, from 1-5 p.m. Prepare yourself to conduct research at any county archive by joining NYG&B for this behind-the-scenes tour where you will experience probate, land, court, and other records hands-on. This is a valuable opportunity for all researchers to gain new skills and learn how to use county records; Westchester ancestry is not required.

Registration:

- Each program \$20 members/\$35 non-members.
- Any three programs \$55 members/\$95 non-members
- All five programs \$80 members/\$140 non-members

You can register for these programs at NYG&B's online store: newyorkfamilyhistory.org; or by calling 212-755-8532, ext. 211.

New England Historic Genealogical Society, 99-101 Newbury St., Boston, MA 02116, 888-296-3447. NEHGS is offering:

- **A Winter Weekend Research Getaway**, "Effective Use of Technology," from Thurs., 27 Jan., 9 a.m. to Sat., 29 Jan., 5 p.m. There will be a variety of lectures surrounding "best practices" in using technology, including researching online, software, and other topics relevant to any genealogist.
- **English Heritage Long Weekend**, 22 Feb., 3 p.m., to 28 Feb., 12 p.m. in London, Eng. Discover the rich heritage of London with NEHGS. The weekend will feature memorable events led by renowned scholars George Redmonds and John Titford, including talks, a guided tour of historic London churches, a visit to the College of Arms, optional side visits, special guests, and dinner at an exclusive private club. Also included will be up to three full days at Who Do You Think You Are? LIVE!

(Continued on page 8)

MIDDLESEX GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY

Post Office Box 1111

Darien, CT 06820

APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP

Annual dues: \$25/individual, \$30/couple or family. Photo I.D. (e.g., driver's license), required. If joining/renewing in person, show photo I.D.; if via mail, send copy of photo I.D. Please consider adding a contribution to support our genealogical resource expansion.

Code of Ethics: In consideration of being accepted as a member(s) of the above society and in order to protect the integrity of Public Records and Library Books, I/we am/are ethically bound and hereby agree that I/we will research Vital Records for Genealogical or Historical purposes only. I/we also agree:

1. That I/we will treat with the greatest care and respect all Public Records and Library Books that may be made available for my/our use;
2. I/we will respect the privacy of the individuals whose information I/we may encounter in my/our research;
3. I/we will respect the custodians of the records.

This pledge is freely made by me under penalty of forfeiting my membership in the society.

Signature of applicant

Date

Previous Member Yes No

Signature of co-applicant

Date

Previous Member Yes No

(Mr., Mrs., Miss, Ms.)
Full Name of Applicant

(Mr., Mrs., Miss, Ms.)
Full Name of Co-applicant

Street Address (mandatory): _____

Mailing Address: _____

Town: _____ State: _____ 9-digit Zip: _____

Telephone: _____ E-mail: _____

Date and Place of Applicant's Birth: _____

Date and Place of Co-applicant's Birth: _____

Occupation of Applicant: _____

Occupation of Co-applicant: _____

I/we belong to the following Historical Societies: _____

I/we belong to the following Genealogical Societies: _____

I/we belong to the following Lineage Societies: _____

Reason for interest in genealogy: _____

Dues enclosed: _____

Contribution enclosed: _____

MGS use only.
Photo I.D.

