



# Middlesex Genealogical Society

Vol. XXV, No. 2

Darien, Fairfield County, CT

May 2009

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

I do believe that we might see warmer weather arriving, thereby bringing back to us opportunities for traipsing out into the real world of the genealogist. That world includes the visiting of town and city halls, libraries, cemeteries and historical societies where the excitement of finding real, live clues sets our hearts on fire. We go to lecture and workshop programs and, not only listen to speakers tell us what they have experienced, but have the opportunity to converse with others in this great field of people dedicated to family research and to each other in sharing their experiences. These experiences are sometimes what send us down another path on our search, when we think we are at a dead end.

We at Middlesex Genealogical Society are still excited about where we have been and where we are going. This new facility has given new opportunities to contribute to the community and to continue to offer aid to help the people of Darien and the surrounding towns to locate and learn about their ancestors.

Last month we had the opportunity to learn from Dr Kathleen Lenerz something of the secrets of the Internet and how we can benefit from the gold mine of information that is there. She explained how to prepare to look for and use what is there and emphasized the importance of analyzing all of the information we obtain and what to do with it.

Our next program will feature Larry S. Fermi who will discuss immigrant origins and

the strategies and directions in which we will have to go to find our ancestors' information "across the pond" in the country from which they came.

I would encourage each of you to visit our Website, at [mgs.darien.org](http://mgs.darien.org). This will keep you all up to date on a daily basis.

Well, let us all enjoy the summer and *do genealogy*.

Lloyd Sturges Jr. ■



## LIBRARY NEWS

by C. Scribner

The inventory of the MGS genealogical collection is near completion. All of our books have been done. A little more work on the periodicals is needed. There are 80 volumes on 13 reels of the *Register* on microfilm still in storage at the library. They cover Volume 1, 1847, to Volume 80, 1926. The book collection begins with Volume 81. The contents of our filing cabinet are also still in storage. I am working with library staff to get these items into our inventory.

We have inherited more books from shelves elsewhere in the library. Some pertain to genealogy and some to history. We have our own copies of several and in the interest of saving space, extra copies will be listed but kept separate from the rest.

The computer is up and running and is being used. ■

## MIDDLESEX GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY

### 2008-2009 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  
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 \$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

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.**

**16 MAY 2009. CROSSING THE POND—FINDING IMMIGRANT ORIGINS** will be presented by **LARRY S. FERMI**. This presentation will discuss how to use United States country-of-arrival records to determine the city and country of origin of an immigrant ancestor or relative.



Larry S. Fermi

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.

A brief business meeting will precede the program. There will be a vote on two candidates to begin three-year terms as directors:

- Peter Biggins, who has so impressively resuscitated our Website. If you have not visited it lately, drop by.
- Leonard Christie, who shares with us on page 5 of this newsletter some experiences from his genealogical journey.

As always, nominations from the floor are welcome.

**FALL MEETINGS** have been tentatively scheduled for 3 October and 14 November, subject to library approval. Program details will be worked out when dates are firm. ■

**48. Every Inhabitant of the Countrie shall have free libertie to search and veewe any Rooles, Records, or Regesters of any Court or office except the Councill, And to have a transcript or exemplification thereof written examined, and signed by the hand of the officer of the office paying the appointed fees therefore.**

*from Massachusetts Body of Liberties, adopted December 1641*

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## GETTING STARTED

by Virginia Banerjee

Virginia Banerjee is a member of the board of MGS and is a professional genealogist. A version of this material was presented at the 21 February 2009 MGS meeting.

Searching for information concerning ancestors is an increasingly popular activity. Getting started right—using sound techniques, proven methods and tools—will make your research more productive. If you are new at this, these suggestions will help you get started. If you are more experienced, consider them a refresher.

Genealogy is *names, places, dates* and *events*. These facts are the building blocks. *Family history* is putting the facts into context, turning data into real people.

Don't just look for direct ancestors. Get to know their families, siblings, and neighbors. Who "stood up" for the baptism of their children, witnessed their wills, or posted a bond to administer their estate? Who went to the same church? Finding answers to these questions will help you to understand better your ancestors as people. And these other folks may provide the clues that lead to missing pieces for which you are searching.

Current thinking refers to the *genealogy proof standard* which requires a thorough search, careful evaluation of records, examination of information that doesn't "fit" as well as that which does. The *standard* also encourages a written explanation of the rationale for decisions reached.

Be sure to document *each* fact with a complete statement of the source. You or someone else should be able to repeat your work. "Vital records" or "deed" is insufficient. Record the name of the record, the place the record was located, the book, page, etc. *Evidence! Citation and Analysis for the Family Historian* by Elizabeth Shown Mills provides sound guidance on this subject.

There are some basic charts for recording data and systems which number children and generations that have stood the test of time. *Use them; do not reinvent the wheel!* Free blanks and charts and explanations of the accepted numbering systems are widely available in books and on the Internet.

The **Pedigree** chart is a basic form for recording vital data about you and your ancestors. Or

start with your children and you will be able to record both the paternal and maternal side of their ancestry. There are places to enter vital information: dates for birth, marriage and death of each individual. This chart provides a quick reference to a lineage. Don't worry if there are blanks; searching for data to fill in the blanks is what research is about!

A *Family Group Record (Sheet)* records a father and mother and their children—one chart for each family. Over time, you will have many of these.

If you use computer software to manage your data, the computer will make these charts for you and update them as you add data to your database. There are several good genealogy software packages: *FamilyTreeMaker*, *Legacy*, *Master Genealogist*, *PAF* (Personal Ancestral File), *Reunion*, and others. Each offers the same basics plus varied options for data management and display. In all cases...they provide templates and capacity to print a variety of charts and forms using the data that *you* enter.

**Organize your files as you go.** Make it simple; just so it works for you. In the beginning, a file folder for each surname works very well. In time, as your research continues, you will need to expand your system.

As you gather information, work back from the *known* to the *unknown*. Start with yourself, then your parents and grandparents. Gather *all* records that you can as you work back. It may be tempting to start with some long-ago famous person from whom your family folklore says you are descended. Don't do it! Work your way *back* to that person.

Start by **talking to your relatives**, especially the oldest ones. They may have vital information about your family. *Get copies of any records and documents* that they have. If you acquire original records along the way, store them in archival safe materials. Archival supplies are available at office supply stores, photo shops, by mail and on the Internet.

Search for **work of others** that relates to your family. The **IGI** (International Genealogical Index) maintained by the Church of Latter-day Saints (Mormons) is a worldwide index. The IGI permits a quick view of millions of records that can offer a "starting point" for detailed searching. **County and local histories** as well as **compiled genealogies** (books written about a family or those

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of a geographic area) offer *clues and leads* to be followed in your search for records. *Finding clues is not the same as finding the records!* **Seek documents** made as close as possible to the event, by someone who had an obligation to make the record, and no reason to be inaccurate (i.e., town clerk). Look for **relevant articles** in the many genealogical magazines and scholarly journals. You will learn about good research even when it does not pertain to your ancestors. **Join a genealogical society (or several)**, in the geographic area of interest, as well as the one where you live. You will meet other researchers and you may connect with persons researching the same families

After you have gathered information from your family, reviewed previously done work and gathered vital records, it is time get acquainted with the **US Population Census**. Censuses have been taken every ten years since 1790 and are publicly available through 1930 (except for large portions of 1890 which are no longer extant). Different information was collected in each census. While there are some mistakes—missing persons, examples of frightful spelling, and other errors—the censuses are a critical and widely accessible source of genealogical information. Working from your pedigree chart (and expanding to extended family members and neighbors), locate your ancestors (and older relatives) in every census in which they would have been alive.

Now that you have located your folks in time and place, you should look for other records such as *land, tax, church, and probate. Newspapers*, increasingly available and searchable, offer many clues in published *court notices, social columns, and news items. Published indices and finding aids* to various kinds of records are valuable tools.

Most of your early research can be done in many places before it becomes necessary to visit the area where your ancestors lived. Libraries offer many resources for research including the *Middlesex Genealogical Society's Genealogy and History Collection at the Darien Public Library*. Visit the new library building on the Post Road and browse the many resources there. In addition to shelved materials, there are numerous CDs and DVDs. Access to Ancestry.com, a very large subscription site, is free to MGS members. The MGS web page, [www.mgs.darien.org](http://www.mgs.darien.org) also offers

links to additional sites and information. The *Internet* is an amazing and ever growing source. It includes access to uncounted resources and digitized original records, but you cannot do *all* your genealogy on the Internet (or any other place), no matter what you have heard or read! On the Internet, you can search the catalogs of most libraries including the big ones: the *Family History Library in Salt Lake City*, the *Library of Congress*, and the *state libraries* of most states. In Connecticut, the *Godfrey Library* in Middletown, the *Connecticut State Library* in Hartford and those in *Bridgeport, Southport, and Newtown*, as well as many others, have valuable collections that interest genealogists.

There is much to be aware of as you seek information about your ancestors. Keep in mind that just because the spelling of a name is the same as your ancestor's, it is not necessarily the same person. It is a rare name that is not duplicated somewhere—often in the same town! Spelling variants are not a valid way to sort individuals as phonetic spelling was common and literacy less common than to-day.

In summary, work from the known to the unknown, get information from relatives, document your findings, be orderly about your research and be wary of “free-floating” and undocumented information.

A few well-documented generations are a far finer legacy than hundreds of names of mismatched folks!

*Happy hunting!* ■

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## DONNA MOUGHTY

Our past president Donna Moughty, who is a professional genealogist, speaker and consultant specializing in Irish research, will be visiting Ireland for twelve days in late June and early July. She will be taking a limited number of commissions and encourages those requiring specific records or information to contact her for evaluation and suitability for this trip at [moughty@mac.com](mailto:moughty@mac.com). You can follow her preparation for this trip on her blog at the website, <http://www.moughty.com>. ■

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## MY GENEALOGICAL JOURNEY, SO FAR

by Leonard H. Christie

Approximately two years before being retired, I became interested in genealogy. It started with a request made by a cousin who lives in Spain. She asked my brother to obtain the death certificate of our common great-grandfather. After viewing it, I was hooked. I realized that I didn't know much about our family and its origins except for the lineage recorded by my mother in a baby book. As a result, genealogy quickly became an obsession. It has been a journey to find out who my ancestors were, where they came from, when, why and how. It has meant relearning my American History through them from its beginnings through today because they were a part of and shaped by it in a personal way that you will not find in any history book. It has also meant learning the history of other nations as well, such as Ireland, England, Scotland, Germany, Holland and others.

It has now been more than 10 years since my journey began. It has been a joyous and wonderful hobby, even at times obsessive. I have met a few cousins. We shared data and explored graveyards together. Through bulletin boards and e-mail, I have made genealogical friends who have helped me and whom I have helped. It has taken me throughout New England, New York and New Jersey exploring graveyards, court houses, libraries, museums, historic locations, archives of many types, DNA testing and even a family home-stead. I have been fortunate also to have been able to share these experiences with family members.

I believe in the importance of proving and documenting findings (citing sources). I have found some errors in my existing family genealogy and have had also to correct some of my own assumptions along the way. I have found it helpful to record why I believe something is so, based on my findings so far, even though I cannot yet prove it. This should prove useful to anyone who follows me.

When I started, I never thought I would have the success that I have had, but it happened because we are in a golden age of genealogy with the confluence of record availability, digitalization, Internet communications, software record management (I use The Master Genealogist) and

genealogy organizations (member of the New England Historic & Genealogical Society and Middlesex Genealogical Society). Since I have been fortunate to have much success, I value the opportunity to help and educate others who are just beginning and to support the efforts of MGS. ■

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## MAGIC: FADED CENSUS RECORDS TO REAPPEAR

by Richard W. Eastman

The following article is from Eastman's Online Genealogy Newsletter and is copyright 2009 by Richard W. Eastman. It is republished here with permission of the author. Information about the newsletter is available at <http://www.eogn.com>

This is about as close to magic as I can imagine. Picture in your mind original census pages that have faded so badly that the enumerators' handwriting is no longer visible. I am not talking about ink that has faded a bit. In this case, the ink is gone, not even visible on the page. All you can see is the page as it was printed and given to the enumerators (census takers) with the pre-printed text and boxes. These pages look as if they were never filled out, and yet you know they were.

Now, add in a mix of digital photography and different lights. Shake well with some computer enhancements. The result? Readable images!

If this isn't magic, I don't know what is.

Jack Reese at The Generations Network started working through the 1851 Manchester, England, census. He kept finding himself staring at a bunch of nothing. Ink had faded. Water damage left mold that was eating away at what was left of the paper. Some pages were just fragments. Others? Completely blank.

For Jack, it was a fun problem. After all, he is an engineer with two areas of special expertise: computer imaging and family history.

He started with a Nikon digital camera, disassembled it, replaced filters, and added specialized lenses. Next he built a box, "a complete light-controlled enclosure that we could house our custom lights and camera in." He then used a mix of light sources: infrared, ultraviolet, fluorescent, in-

candescence, and more.

You can see magician Jack's results on the Ancestry Magazine's web site at <http://www.ancestrymagazine.com/2009/04/genea-Logic/preserving-genealogical-records>

The site includes sample before-and-after images of the pages. The results are amazing.

For the next few months, the camera will prove its mettle at The National Archives in London, capturing images of that 1851 Manchester census. Once snapped, keyed, and indexed, pages containing some 200,000+ names that might have been lost will be available at your fingertips on [Ancestry.com](http://Ancestry.com).

*Editor's note:* Before the Church of Jesus Christ of Latterday Saints completed its superb 1880 U.S.-Census index, I manually went through page after endless page of the census schedules for New York City in an effort to find a great-grandfather's family. What I found was a very large section of blank pages for the area of the city in which he lived, and I am sure that many of you have had similar experiences. Can we hope that Jack Reese's innovations will ever be used here? ■

## A LANDMARK REACHED!

FamilySearch recently announced that in the effort to make digitized historic records available on the Internet, volunteers had passed the *quarter-of-a-billion* mark in indexing records. You can help, too. Visit: [http://www.familysearch.org/eng/indexing/frameset\\_indexing.asp](http://www.familysearch.org/eng/indexing/frameset_indexing.asp)

## NEW YORK CITY RESTRICTS ACCESS TO VITAL RECORDS INDICES

The New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH) has restricted access to the indices for vital records (birth, death) effective April 8, 2009. Only authorized personnel are now permitted to research the indices.

You may still send a request, along with \$15 for a three-year search for a vital record for a specific name, which DOHMH personnel will look for in the indices. Your editor's experience with that option has not been happy. A request by mail for a death certificate with the correct name, date and

place of death was rejected. When I was able to check the index myself, I found the record easily. Only one letter in the surname had been mistranscribed, but that was enough to place the record out of reach by DOHMH personnel. ■

## UPCOMING SEMINARS

**National Archives and Records Administration Northeast Region** is offering free programs at **Waltham, Mass.**, 380 Trapelo Rd. Programs at this location run from **2 to 3:30 PM on Tuesdays**. Behind-the-scenes tours of the archives precede the programs and run from 1:30 to 2 PM.

- 2 June, Introduction to Genealogy.
- 7 July, Census, Passenger Lists, and Naturalization Records.
- 4 Aug., Saving Your Heritage: Scrapbooking With Marcia Melnyk.

For more information or to register, e-mail [waltham.archives@nara.gov](mailto:waltham.archives@nara.gov) or call 866-406-2379.

**Friends of the National Archives and Records Administration, Northeast Region.** Pittsfield, Mass., will hold its annual full-day genealogy conference, **Life in the Past Lane VI, Sat., 19 Sept.**, at the Williams Inn in Williamstown, Mass. For more information, visit [www.narafriends-pittsfield.org](http://www.narafriends-pittsfield.org)

**National Genealogical Society**, 3108 Columbia Pike, Suite 300, Arlington, VA 22204-4304, 800-473-0060: **NGS Fall Research Trip to Salt Lake City, Sun.-Sat., 27 Sept. to 3 Oct. 2009**, with Shirley Wilcox, CG, former NGS president, and Sandra MacLean Clunies, CG. Space is limited and registration closes 30 June, so early registration is recommended. For more information, visit:

[www.ngsgenealogy.org/cs/research\\_trips](http://www.ngsgenealogy.org/cs/research_trips)

*Please note:* Plans are already underway for the **2010 NGS Conference in the States**, which will be held in Salt Lake City **28 April-1 May 2010**.

**New England Historic Genealogical Society**, 101 Newbury St., Boston, MA 02116 (Website [www.newenglandancestors.org](http://www.newenglandancestors.org)) is offering four educational opportunities:

- The **English Family History Tour to London, Sun.-Sun., 17-25 May**, is an essential research trip for genealogists with British ancestry. Based at the Society of Genealogists



(SoG), researchers will be offered daily classes providing historical context and research methodology tips for working with the extensive record collection of the SoG.

- **Come Home to New England**, intensive week-long program in Boston; two sessions scheduled: **Mon.-Sat., 22 June to 27 June** or **Mon.-Sat., 10 Aug. to 15 Aug.** Throughout the week of guided research, you will have the opportunity for one-on-one consultations, daily lectures and special extended NEHGS library hours.
- **Atlantic Canada Family History**, St. John's, Newfoundland, **Sun.-Sun., 12 July to 19 July**. Explore St. John's premier facilities, including the Provincial Archives: "The Rooms," the Maritime History Archive at Memorial University, the Registry of Deeds, and A.C. Hunter Library. Together these repositories hold vital records, church records, all census records, voter lists, probate, and land grants, the Keith Matthews collection (list of all people who worked in the fishery from the 16<sup>th</sup> century to 1850), ship lists, crew lists, logbooks, Irish and English parish records and original newspapers of Newfoundland.
- **Scottish Family History Research Tour**, **Sun.-Sun., 20 Sept.-27 Sept.**: This inaugural, weeklong, intensive research program will be based out of Scotland's two premier genealogical repositories: the National Archives of Scotland (NAS) and the General Register Office for Scotland (GROS). Together, these neighboring repositories in Edinburgh house the major collections of government and vital records for more than 700 years of Scottish ancestry.

For more information on NEHGS programs, contact Ryan J. Woods, Director of Education, at 617-226-1226 or email [rwoods@nehgs.org](mailto:rwoods@nehgs.org)

**Federation of Genealogical Societies**, P.O. Box 200940, Austin, TX 78720-0940; telephone 888-FGS-1500: **The 2009 FGS Conference, Passages Through Time**, featuring management workshops for organizational leadership training and genealogical lectures by nationally recognized speakers and regional experts, will take place **Wed.-Sat., 2-5 Sept. 2009** at the Little Rock Statehouse Convention Center, Little Rock, Ark. More information is available at the conference

Website: <http://www.fgs.org/2009conference/>

**Connecticut Ancestry Society** will hold its annual meeting on **Sat., 30 May** at 1:30 p.m. at the Connecticut Historical Society, 1508 High Ridge Road, Stamford. Frederick C. Hart, Jr., CG, FASG, will present *Beyond Deeds and Mortgages: Surprises and Stories in the Land Records*.

**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 a.m. (Premeeting networking starts at 9:30 a.m.) 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>

- **13 June**, NYC Police Census by Debra Braverman.

**Genealogical Society of New Jersey** will have its Spring 2009 all-day program on **Sat., 30 May**, at the Raritan Valley Community College Conference Center, Route 28 at Lamington Road, North Branch, NJ. Focus will be on the collections of the Somerset County Historical Society, Hunterdon County Historical Society, the Morris County Archives and the NJ State Archives.

**Genealogical Society of Rockland County** will have **Genealogy Day, Sat., 30 May**, starting at 10 a.m. at the New City, NY, Public Library, 220 North Main St. Demonstrations will be given of how to use genealogy databases and give workshops on the basics of genealogical research, including cemetery records, vital records, censuses, etc. It is recommended that attendees bring lunch. For more information call Sally Pellegrini at 845-634-4997, ext. 197.

**Massachusetts Genealogical Council Annual Seminar & Meeting**, will take place **Sat., 18 July**, 9:15 a.m. to 4:15 p.m., in the LaCava Center, Bentley University, 175 Forest St., Waltham, Mass. The featured speaker will be Paula Stuart Warren, a nationally known genealogy and historical researcher. Paula is a course coordinator for the Salt Lake Institute of Genealogy and has lectured at the NGS and FGS conferences since 1993. Her topics for the day will include: **Using the Resources of the Family History Library; What Next? Developing Step-by-Step Research**

**Plans; Why Do I Descend from THESE Families?; American Indian Research (Panel Discussion); and Becoming a Professional Genealogist (Panel Discussion).** Highlights of the seminar will include updates on legislation affecting genealogists' access to records on a national and state level. Other topics will include **DNA and genealogy, Irish Research, Internet research, and using the website of the New England Historic Genealogical Society.** For more information e-mail [mbrophy@brophygen.com](mailto:mbrophy@brophygen.com)

**Westchester Italian Cultural Center** at the Depot Square (near the Tuckahoe station of the Metro North Railroad) in Tuckahoe, NY, on **Sat., 27 June**, at 10 a.m., will be the site of a lecture on **Searching Cemetery Records.** You will learn how to prepare for a cemetery trip, how to find where relatives are buried, and what you can expect to find. The program is free, but you must register by calling (914) 771-8700 or by e-mail to [info@wicny.org](mailto:info@wicny.org)

**Wholly Genes** invites you to attend their **2009 Genealogy Conference and "Land Cruise,"**

Wed.-Sat., 26-30 August 2009, which will be held at the Shrine Mont Conference Center in historic Orkney Springs, VA. This rural setting provides a very inexpensive (\$379 for 4 days or \$309 for 3 days, double occupancy, including meals and all conference events) venue for their genealogy presentations. Its proximity to Washington, DC, offers the opportunity to follow preparatory lectures with an all-day research trip to the extraordinary research repositories of the nation's capital. Speakers include John Philip Colletta, Ph.D.; Marie Varrelman Melchiori, CG, CGL; Patricia O'Brien Shawker, CG; and Craig Roberts Scott, CG. For more information or to register, visit the conference Website at: <http://www.whollygenes.com/Merchant2/merchant.mvc?screen=CRUISE>

**Ancestor Seekers September 2009 Salt Lake City Research Trip**, Mon. to Sat., 31 Aug. to 5 Sept. (10% discount for early registration). For more information call 877-402-6846 toll free. ■

**Deadline for next newsletter  
September 2009**

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

**MEETING  
16 MAY 2009, 2 PM  
DARIEN LIBRARY**

*Middlesex Genealogical Society  
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