



# Middlesex Genealogical Society

Vol. XXXI, No. 2

Darien, Fairfield County, CT

May 2015

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

We are approaching our last presentation of the season on May 16, 2015 at 2:00 pm. Our speaker, Laura Congleton, will discuss Civil War Research and how you can determine whether your ancestor participated in the Civil War on the Union or the Confederate side.

Laura Congleton is a Brooklyn-based professional genealogist with more than 30 years experience in family history research. She specializes in New York City and military records, and is one of the contributing authors of the New York Family History Research Guide and Gazetteer, published by the New York Genealogical & Biographical Society. Her writing has also appeared in the APG Quarterly, and in the Expert Series on Archives.com. She is a native of New Canaan, Conn.

Please join us at 1:00 p.m. on the 16th for our ongoing informal Round Table, to which you may bring your questions, issues and successes for further discussion.

Your survey responses indicate that you want to set up a number of informal interest groups. Topics mentioned were "DNA and Genealogy," "Colonial Genealogy," "Military Research," and the use of technology in genealogy. We will be setting up some programs in the fall, so be on the lookout for the announcements.

I will be retiring at the end of the summer. This means we can look forward to new leadership at MGS. I have enjoyed greatly my time on the board. This also means that each of you can

assist in the process of seeking out a new President. Each of you has a great deal to contribute to the success of the society. So-----consider yourself a candidate, if not for president, for the board of directors or the nominating committee. Clearly we will be discussing this more in the near future. Don't be shy; we need your help to continue the work of the society!

Steve Anderson

## MEMBERSHIP SURVEY RESULTS

by Leonard Christie

Our first membership survey results are in. Thank you to those who participated. Your input is very important and helps us determine the program selection and also provides a voice for your interests.

The Interest Group: of greatest interest is Genealogy Technology.

The Time Period of greatest interest is Colonial America.

The top ten requests for programs are:

- Historical Newspapers
- German Genealogy
- DNA Testing and Genealogy (**recent**)
- Identifying and Maintaining Historical Photos
- Irish Genealogy (**recent**)
- Organizing Your Family Search Documents
- Lineage Societies
- Scottish Genealogy
- Italian Genealogy
- The Immigration Process

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## MIDDLESEX GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY

### 2014-2015 OFFICERS

Steven Anderson	President
Leonard Christie	Vice President
Keeley Kriskey	Treasurer Secretary

### BOARD MEMBERS AT LARGE

Virginia Banerjee  
Peter Biggins  
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Lloyd Sturges Jr.	Past President
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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, DARIEN LIBRARY, 1441 POST ROAD. COME, AND BRING A FRIEND.**

**REMEMBER: PROGRAM MEETINGS ARE PRECEDED AT 1 PM BY AN INTERACTIVE DISCUSSION OF GENEALOGICAL CONCERNS AND PROBLEMS. ALL ARE WELCOME.**

**16 MAY 2015: "CIVIL WAR RESEARCH"** will be presented by **LAURA W. CONGLETON**, who has been doing family history research for more than twenty-five years. She is a member of Daughters of Union Veterans of the Civil War, the DAR, and several genealogical societies. She has access to a number of excellent repositories, and is currently compiling a book about Civil War veterans from Owego, Tioga County, New York. She specializes in Civil War research and preparation of lineage society papers.

**3 OCTOBER 2015 - "HISTORICAL NEWSPAPERS"** will be presented by **JANEEN BJORK**.

**14 NOVEMBER 2015 - "RESEARCHING YOUR GERMAN ANCESTORS"** will be presented by **JOSEPH LIEBY**.

**23 JANUARY 2016**—to be announced.

**12 MARCH 2016**—to be announced.

**14 MAY 2016 - "FINDING ITALIAN RECORDS"** will be presented by **TONI McKEEN**.



*(Continued from page 1)*

### MEMBERSHIP SURVEY RESULTS)

Meeting Time/Day selection is inconclusive, so meetings will remain the same.

Based on your input, recent presentations (in the last four years), and availability of speakers, we have scheduled three programs so far in the 2015-2016 season. They are "Historical Newspapers," German Genealogy," and Italian Genealogy." We will keep you informed as additional selections are made.

## HOUSES HAVE STORIES TO TELL

by John Driscoll

A house, like a person, has a story to tell. My wife and I fell in love with our home the moment we saw it 23 years ago. We came from Queens and Brooklyn and both worked in New York City, so Darien was a logical place to move to.



### 126 Holmes Avenue

From the beginning, we had heard stories about the Phillips family and how they were involved with the neighborhood. I live at 126 Holmes Avenue, one block away from the Noroton River. Directly behind Holmes Ave. and adjacent to the river is Park Lane. Both are off West Avenue. According to the tales, some of the houses were constructed by the Phillips family for its employees. These included some on Holmes Avenue, Park Lane and the apartment complex on the corner of Holmes Avenue and West Avenue. The Stamford Historical Society notes that the company *"also built a number of houses for their employees in the immediate neighborhood."*

Charles H. Phillips established his chemical company in Glenbrook in 1849. In 1873 he patented his most notable product, Phillips Milk of Magnesia. At the time this part of Darien was also known as Glenbrook, The Noroton River was the "brook" dividing the "glen."

After Charles died in 1882, the company was run by his four sons, including Dr. Charles Edmund Henry Phillips, who, with his wife Ella Francis, lived on the estate named *Denehurst*, which was situated on both sides of the Noroton River and was partly in both Stamford and Darien. It had ten houses and numerous other buildings on it. The low stone walls of the estate are still on either side of Glenbrook Rd. Denehurst itself was given to the Home for the Aged Inc. upon the death of Ella.

I set out to uncover the facts behind the stories. It turns out that my home was *not* built for the employees, but the story is still compelling for me, for I have uncovered a lot of history of my neighborhood and now look at it with a new appreciation. The key person was Ella Francis Phillips. Thanks to Pastor Blaine Edele of the Union Memorial Church, where Charles and Ella were parishioners, I have learned much about her. She was a philanthropist and very influential in local real estate. She built houses for her friends and the Phillips workers. Three of the homes she built, she sold to the then pastor of the church, his son and his daughter for \$1. The following is from Pastor Edele's introduction to his sermon of June 22, 2014: *"Dr. Charles Edmund Henry Phillips and his wife, Ella Francis, became members of the Union Memorial Church in the early 1900s. A decade later they constructed for the benefit of the New Hope residents a fire house and a community hall or recreational center, then remodeled a house into the Glenbrook Library, all located on the corner of Crescent Street and Courtland Avenue—close to where the present Glenbrook Fire Department is located. A few months after Dr. Phillips' death in September 1923, his widow, Ella Francis, deeded to the Union Memorial Church these same properties and buildings: the Community Hall, the Library and the New Hope Company Firehouse. She and her late husband had envisioned that the Union Memorial Church would continue their family's commitment to what she called the 'Welfare Work' in Glenbrook."*

*"The final transfer of property from Mrs. Phillips to the church in January of 1924 also included the Maple Court Apartment Houses, the Tudor style apartment complex on the corner of Maple Tree and Holmes Avenue in Darien. Mrs. Phillips expected that the revenues from the rentals in the apartment house would provide the church with sufficient income for the operation and upkeep of the Community Hall, the Francis-Phillips Library and the Firehouse. Mrs. Phillips also agreed to supply funds annually to make up any deficit in the church's operating expenses of these three community resources."*

Pastor Edele recollected that the Phillipses created *Burleigh Park*, a beautiful area with pavilions, bridges and statues, for the enjoyment of the neighborhood. It was a grand park on either side of the river, off Middlesex Ave./Glenbrook Rd. On the other side of the park, off West Ave. is Park Lane, which I imagine originally was a path through the park. Today, the entire area is developed. See the Stamford Historical Society's website for photos of the park. <http://www.stamfordhistory.org>. Click on Photo Archives and find March 2005.

Ella did in fact own my house, she probably had it built in 1926. She died on July 26, 1937. In her will, the house was part of the estate left in trust for thirteen beneficiaries. The rents from the house being paid to them until they died. The Probate Court of Stamford yielded more information about the disposal of the property. It was inventoried with the rest of her estate, which included 47 houses in the vicinity. In 1938, there was an "application for sale of real estate" in the index, but the records could not be found so it is a guess that it refers to 126 Holmes Ave. In 1944 there was a list of seven properties sold on Courtland Ave., Maple Ave., Park Lane and Holmes Ave. No. 126 Holmes was one of these seven. I suppose the trust was amended, because as of 1951, there were still seven survivors.

From the records of the Middlesex Genealogical Society's collection in the Darien Library and Darien Town Hall records, I discovered that the house was rented from the time it was built until 1944. Between 1928 and 1930, a construction engineer named Augustus Merry and his wife Mildred lived in the house. In 1937, the house was occupied by James and Gladys O'Donnell. James was a clerk. Between 1938 and 1940, Thomas Rounds Jr., a chief engineer at a bearing company and his wife Marjorie were renting. Then in 1941 an advertising man named William A Haupt. and his wife Magdalene moved in along with his possible brother Matthew and his wife Hannah. Matthew died on July 5, 1941, and his widow stayed on with the others. From 1943 until July 1944, Milton Harmon was the tenant.

In July 1944 the ownership of the house was transferred from the trust to Herbert and Beulah Fleigh. They lived there until 1964, first with their daughter Elizabeth, who became a teacher, married and moved out in 1950, then a student named Patricia Fleigh lived with them for a short time in 1955. Herbert was an electrician, who became an electronics engineer and finally a supervisor in 1963. In 1964 the house was sold to C. Robert Brown and his wife Nancy. Bob was in real estate with Kelsey Brown and Sherwood.

My wife, Joanne and I bought the house in June 1992 from Nancy. After a few months, I found a brief history she wrote and tucked away in a jar above the foundation wall in the basement, where I suppose she thought no one would find it for a long time. I have replaced it for future owners to find. In the note she describes her life with Bob and their children, Scott and Susan. She wrote in part, *"This was a great place to live. It was a great place to grow up. It was a great place for a family."* Each of the owners has left his/her mark on the house with upgrades and renovations, making it their own home. As I now walk through my home, I can envision the

past residents cooking, eating and enjoying the same space in a different time.

It is evident by the occupations of all the people I have found, that the story of the house being built for the employees of Phillips is not accurate. It does tie directly into the Phillips family, however, and I am sure that houses in and around Glenbrook do fit the stories better.

Our 23 years here have been the happiest of our lives. I hope that the families who live here in the decades to come will be as happy as we have been.

## AN ANNIVERSARY OBSERVED

by Dorothy Shillinglaw

April marked the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the assassination of President Abraham Lincoln. By April 1865 my paternal grandmother, Mary Ann Keenan Hanrahan, was almost 7 years old, and clearly an observant child. She noticed that all the local businesses were displaying black bunting. Not to be outdone, Mary Ann got out her mother's best black petticoat and hung it out a front window of her home.

Mary Ann was born in California in 1858, but by 1860 she and her family were living in Morrisania, N.Y., now part of the Bronx, but then in Westchester County. I have always wondered why, when most people were moving west, this family moved east.

## PUTTING FLESH ON THE BONES OF YOUR ANCESTORS—WRITING A FAMILY HISTORY

14 MARCH 2015

Toni McKeen gave her usual excellent presentation on this subject. She reminded us that whereas our grandchildren and great-grandchildren might lack the patience to wade through all the data we have so painstakingly

collected, they would probably find the presentation of that same data in book form, attractively illustrated, with touching stories about family members, quite compelling.

Write down what you know while you still can. As Toni says: "Every time a person dies, a library burns," because memories that have not been written down disappear.

Some people are intimidated by the thought of writing a book. As you would be doing it for your family, however, helping them to learn who they are and where they come from, gratitude is far more likely than criticism.

A book can be as long or as short as you wish to make it. It's your book, and you are in complete control. Choose one individual as the subject of your book and focus on that individual.

Write yourself into the book. How are you related to the individual subject? What do you know about the individual? How did you learn what you know?

At times you will be dependent on family stories and friends and neighbors' reminiscences. That's not a problem, but do specify where information came from and how reliable it is. If you do not have proof, but consider a statement probable, qualify it by such comments as "I think," "I believe," "Family stories suggest," etc.

The first page should contain a dedication, perhaps to the person you are writing about, or perhaps to the people you are writing for (grandchildren, great-grandchildren). You might want to indicate why you wrote about this particular person. What were the things about her/him that aroused your interest?

As you are doing research, take photographs of people, places, documents, etc. You may be able to use them in your book. Your book will be a mixture of documents, photographs, stories, and hard facts.

While you were researching, you collected assorted documents: vital records, perhaps a passport, military records, census records, immigration and naturalization records, church records. Look through what you have collected and choose items to copy as illustrations for your book.

You may wish you had more. You can fill in with photos of places or items that were important to the person you are writing about. Perhaps your grandparents' family visited a particular park regularly; you could take photographs in that park. Perhaps your grandmother had a favorite piece of jewelry that is in your hands; you can photograph that. There are collections of postcards that are offered for sale on the Internet. You might find one from a place where your relative lived or vacationed. Some years ago New York City photographed all the buildings in the city for tax purposes, and those photos are available today. If the city your relative lived in did the same, you might be able to use a photograph of his/her home as an illustration. Or photograph the town hall, or the library your relative used, or perhaps the schools the individual or her/his children attended. You might be able to find a picture of someone doing the same kind of work as your relative, and you can use that as an example of how she/he earned a living.

Think about how your relative spent his/her time. Was he an avid fisherman? Did he go to baseball games? Was she a skilled seamstress? Did she knit sweaters for family members? Did she have a kitchen garden? These are activities for which it is easy to find illustrations that will enliven your book and keep the interest level of your readers high.

How did your relative shop for groceries, vegetables, meat, clothing, hardware? How was laundry done? By hand, or did the family have a washing machine with a wringer that regularly pulled buttons off garments?

How were holidays celebrated in your house? What was Christmas like? Easter? July 4<sup>th</sup>? Describe them. Local newspapers can probably provide some hints about parties and parades.

You can also describe the principal occupations of town dwellers. Were they farmers or shoemakers? Did they dig coal or make steel? Was your ancestor a policeman or a sanitation

worker? A machinist or a teacher? Was he a cooper or a baker? Did she perhaps work in a garment factory? Might she have been a nurse? Illustrations for many occupations are not difficult to find. Whatever you can find, use.

Who was the president and/or governor when your relative was born or arrived here. What notable people were born the same year that she/he was? What songs were popular at that time? Can you discover the cost of some basic necessities? What was the cost of a loaf of bread? A quart of milk? A pair of overalls? All of this will add color to your descriptions.

Consider geography. Where was your relative from? Was he/she an immigrant? If so, what country did she/he come from? What language was spoken in the home? Did the children know English when they started school? Did the children translate for their parents?

Include a family chart in your book. You may not have the space for a complete family tree, but at least include the brothers and sisters of the subject of your book and his/her spouse and children. If your readers want more, they can always go into your records.

Remember to put yourself in the story, to think outside the box, to use a loose-leaf binder so that new or corrected material can be added to your book, and to enjoy both the process and the results of your efforts.

## UPCOMING SEMINARS

**National Genealogical Society**, 3108 Columbia Pike, Suite 300, Arlington, VA 22204; toll-free phone 800-473-0060; fax 703-525-0052. Website [www.ngsgenealogy.org](http://www.ngsgenealogy.org). NGS is planning research trips to three locations with excellent research facilities. These are:

- 18-22 Aug. 2015, Fort Wayne, Ind.
- 1-6 Nov., 2015, Washington, D.C.
- 24-31 Jan. 2016, Salt Lake City, Utah

For more information visit their Website (above).

**New York Genealogical & Biographical Society**, 36 W. 44<sup>th</sup> Street, 7<sup>th</sup> fl., New York, NY 10036-8105; telephone 212-755-8532; fax 212-754-4218.

- **NYG&B's 2015 Repository Tour: Greenwood Cemetery Archives**, Wed., 10 June,

starting at 10 a.m. This is a guided tour, led by Green-Wood Green-ealogy staff, which will feature samples of the original ledgers and documents covering more than 175 years. More information can be found at [nygb-programs/2015-repository-tour-green-wood-cemetery-archives](http://nygb-programs/2015-repository-tour-green-wood-cemetery-archives).

- **NYG&B's New York State Family History Conference**, Thurs., 17 Sept., 9:00 a.m., to Sat., 19 Sept. 2015, 5:00 p.m. at the Syracuse/Liverpool Holiday Inn, 441 Electronics Parkway, Liverpool, N.Y. NYG&B will also be scheduling a pre-conference research day.
- **NYG&B's Annual Research Trip to Albany** is Thurs. to Sat., 29 to 31 Oct.

If you need additional information please email [edu-  
cation@nygbs.org](mailto:education@nygbs.org) or call 212-755-8532, x211.

NYG&B also cooperates with other organizations in presenting **New York Family History School Programs**:

At the **New York Public Library**, Stephen A. Schwarzman Bldg., Fifth Ave., at 42nd St., NYC:

- **"Uncovering Your Family History: Researching Vital Records & the Census"** will be presented Sat., 13 June, 3:15 p.m.; Thurs., 9 July, 12 p.m.; and Sat., 22 Aug., 3:15 p.m.
- **"Uncovering Your Family History: Researching Immigration Records"** will be presented Wed., 17 June, 6 p.m.; Wed., 15 July, 3 p.m.; Wed., 12 Aug., 3 p.m.
- **"Who Lived in a House Like This? How to Research the History of Your New York City Home,"** Wed., 22 July, 6 p.m.
- **"Irish Genealogy Resources: Finding Records for an Irish Ancestor"** will be presented Thurs., 21 May, 12 p.m.
- **"Workshop in Family History & Memoir Writing"** will be presented by Charley and June Kempthorne Wed., 3 June, 10:30 p.m.
- **"Uncovering Your Family History: Using Handbooks to Develop Genealogy Research Plans"** will be presented Tues., 9 June, 12 p.m.

At **NARA**, Learning Center, on the 3rd floor of the Alexander Hamilton U.S. Custom House at One Bowling Green, NYC: **"Americans in the Great War"** will be presented by guest lecturer Jordan Auslander, Tues., 9 June, 12 p.m.

**New England Historic Genealogical Society**, 101 Newbury St., Boston, MA 02116-3007, toll-free telephone 888-286-3447, Website [www.NewEnglandAncestors.org](http://www.NewEnglandAncestors.org).

- **Belfast, Northern Ireland**, Sun. to Sun., 21 to 28 June, NEHGS's second trip to Belfast. Visit

the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI) and other repositories. Individual consultations, educational opportunities, and expert assistance available.

- **Great Migration by Sea and by Land**, Tues., 4 Aug. to Sun., 16 Aug 2015, begins with an Atlantic crossing from New York to Southampton aboard the Cunard Lin44e's *Queen Mary 2*. The crossing will be followed by a tour of historic sites in Hampshire and Wiltshire associated with early migrations to New England.
- **Research Getaway**, Thurs. to Sat., 15 to 17 Oct. Three days of research, consultations, lectures, and social events, while using the NEHGS Library.
- **Salt Lake City, Utah**, Sun. to Sun., 25 Oct. to 1 Nov., NEHGS's 37th annual research tour to Salt Lake City and the Family History Library.

**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, N.Y. (across from Mercy College on Route 9). A \$3 donation is requested of nonmembers. Visit the society's website at: <http://www.rootsweb.com/~nywcgs>.

- "Getting the Most Out of Digital Newspapers Search," 13 June, will be presented by Philip Hayes.

**Ulster Historical Foundation** is offering an extra weeklong program in Ireland entitled **"Tracing Your Irish Ancestors,"** Sun. to Sat., **4 to 10 Oct. 2015**. Expert genealogists will guide you at the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI) and the archives in Dublin, including the National Archives, the Registry of Deeds and the RCB Library. (Please note: This is **in addition** to the identical program in September, which is already sold out.)

#### GENEALOGY CRUISES

**Federation of Genealogical Societies' 2015 Alaskan Cruise** will set sail from Seattle, Wash., aboard Royal Caribbean's *Jewel of the Seas*, Fri., 28 Aug., to Fri., 4 Sept. Among the speakers will be Elizabeth Shown Mills, David E. Rencher, Judy G. Russell, and D. Joshua Taylor. Ports visited include Juneau and Skagway in Alaska, and Victoria in British Columbia.

(Please note: In addition to conference registration, cruise ship reservations are required.) For more information, visit: <https://www.fgsconference.org/cruise/>

**Unlock the Past cruises'** website is at: [www.unlockthepastcruises.com](http://www.unlockthepastcruises.com). Download their 16-page catalogue giving details of each of their 2015-2016 cruises at: [www.unlockthepastcruises.com/catalogue](http://www.unlockthepastcruises.com/catalogue).

- **Transatlantic cruise** (9th Unlock the Past Cruise), on the Celebrity *Eclipse*, Sun., 1 Nov., to Mon., 16 Nov. 2015—one way from Southampton to Miami visiting Boston, New York, Bermuda and Port Canaveral. Learn from Dick Eastman (USA), Else Churchill, Alec Tritton and Kirsty Gray (UK), Shauna Hicks (Australia), and others.
- **New Zealand to Australia** (11th Unlock the Past Cruise), on the Celebrity *Solstice*, 14 Feb. to 3 March 2016. The cruise commences in Auckland (New Zealand) and finishes in Fremantle (Perth, Western Australia), visiting many New Zealand and Australian ports. The cruise will have an in-

ternational team of presenters with Judy G Russell (USA), the Legal Genealogist, as the lead presenter.

- **Great Barrier Reef, Queensland** (12th Unlock the Past Cruise), a seven-night cruise, 6 to 13 March 2016 departing Brisbane on the *Legend of the Seas*. Carol Baxter (Australia) will present her highly acclaimed eight-lecture series on researching and writing history and genealogy; other presenters include Helen Smith, Judy Webster, and Eric and Rosemary Kopittke.
- **European river cruise** (13th Unlock the Past Cruise)—a seven-night cruise on the Rhine from Amsterdam to Basel, Fri., 31 July, to Fri., 7 Aug. 2016, on *Tranquility II*.

For more information on any of these cruises, visit their Website at [www.unlockthepast.com.au](http://www.unlockthepast.com.au).

**Deadline for next newsletter  
14 September 2015**

DARLEN LIBRARY  
16 MAY 2015  
MEETING

Middlesex Genealogical Society  
P.O. Box 1111  
Darien, CT 06820-1111