



QUESTING HEIRS GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY *Newsletter*

Volume 45 ✦ Number 4 ✦ April 2012

Questing Heirs Genealogical Society, Inc., P. O. Box 15102, Long Beach CA 90815-0102
<http://www.qhgs.info>

Questing Heirs is a member society of the California State Genealogical Alliance and the
Federation of Genealogical Societies.

MONTHLY MEETING: third Sunday of the month at 1:15 p.m. Resurrection Lutheran
Church Parish Hall, 1900 East Carson Street, Long Beach

SUNDAY, APRIL 15, 2012

**1:15 Class INTERMEDIATE: Cemetery Research
by Loran Bures**

2:00 Business

2:15 Break Time for chatting, browsing, and refreshments

**2:45 General SPEAKER: Denise Spurlock
Meeting Digging for Clues in the Census**

**4:00 Class BEGINNING: Genealogy Adventures—Next
Steps, Part 1, by Linda Ivers**

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BUT WHO WILL READ THE RECORD?

By Carol Kostakos Petranek

Editor's Note: In past issues we've discussed the need to move your data to new media as it is developed (floppies to CDs to DVDs, etc.), but a much older medium is now threatened with extinction: cursive handwriting! With the extensive use of computers, email, texting, etc., students have to learn to type. Teachers don't have enough time to teach traditional cursive writing. The following article discusses this trend's implications for genealogists.

Last week, Gary's cousin, David, and I spent five days hunched over my twin computer monitors. His rapid-fire English, punctuated with a Czech accent, forced me to focus intently and type quickly. As he read the 17th century German Gothic script on the left screen, I entered data into a spreadsheet on the right one: name, birth date, parents. Page after page, hour after hour. Over 1,000 names later, we had reached the end of the line, my husband's seventh great-grandmother, Dorota Bublova (daughter of Jiri Bubla and Zazana) born July 10, 1657 in Helvikovice. Her record was on page 2 of the oldest register of births kept in the Zamrsk (Czech Republic) Archives.

Thanks to the incredible record-keeping of the Catholic Church, we traced one of Gary's pedigree lines back 355 years. Thanks to David, we were able to find and extract the information. Thanks to his grandmother, David learned to read the old script. What if he had never been taught?

There is a frightening movement underway to eliminate cursive handwriting from public schools...I label this "frightening" because the long-term implications for family historians is almost unthinkable. If today's elementary student is not taught cursive, who will read the countless documents that are being preserved for the next generation? Will your descendants be able to read grandpa's World War II letters to grandma? Or your mother's diaries? Or your journals?

Genealogists who have "crossed the pond" must learn to work in (or work around) the language of their ancestors' homelands. My personal family research has me delving into records of old Greek script, which I find almost impossible to read. Although I ache for more records, I lament my inability to read them. In essence, the information they hold is lost to me. Sadly, I don't have a David.

As a volunteer Citizen Archivist at the National Archives in Washington, DC, I assist in preparing Civil War Widows' Pension files for digitization. I must read every piece of paper in every file that I handle—letters, forms and notes that were written in the mid-1800's. Often, team members collaborate to decipher a name, a word or a phrase. Although we were not taught the old Copperplate and Spencerian script of these documents, we did learn 10th century Palmer handwriting. Knowing one form enables us to read another. This Project may take 50 years to complete. A genealogy treasure-trove, it is well worth every effort to finish. Who, in the next generation, will be able to read the records?

As my family's historian, this matter is of significant concern and weighs heavily on me. I want our family legacy to be available to my descendants. I don't want them to lose the opportunity to make personal and emotional connections with their ancestors. These priceless ties come from reading an old letter or inscription on the back of an aging photo, or seeing a signature on a page and recognizing it as that of a great-grandfather.

I've just added "transcribe documents of most worth" to my genealogy project list. Our records are part of our personal and collective identity. I don't want our family's to be lost.

The author is one of the Directors of the Washington D.C. Family History Center and a Volunteer at the National Archives in Washington, D.C. This article appeared in the Meridian Magazine (www.ldsmag.com) on 20 Jan 2012.

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Our March speaker, Jean Hibben, presented very interesting and informative material for us to learn from and employ in our own genealogical searches. What resonated the most with me was her Creating Stories from Stats presentation. Ever since I started my genealogical research I have wanted to do more than just collect names and dates. I wanted to “know something about my ancestors.” Watching the television program *Who Do You Think You Are?* and Penny Nugent’s presentation in January on Using Circumstantial Evidence to Solve Genealogical Puzzles has caused an idea to be fizzing around in my mind. All of these different types of searching stories are showing me that it is sometimes possible to tease out really interesting knowledge about our ancestors or at least about the times that they lived in.

Three out of four of my eight great-grandparents (my paternal line) present me with mysteries and contradictions galore. I totally know who their parents were with one intriguing exception. However, all the information about their later lives just doesn’t add up and make sense because of what appears to be their bizarre lifestyles. My father’s parents (children of these three people) came from what we would now call dysfunctional families. This is probably why they did not talk or reveal much about what they knew about their parents, and we are left with a big knowledge gap.

One thing that is always stressed in all the lectures about trying to understand our ancestors is to look at what is historically and socially happening around them. I feel that the three of them—2 great-grandfathers and 1 great-grandmother—were directly affected by the Civil War and its aftermath. The stories of all the unknowns about them would take too long to describe: running off with a traveling salesman; multiple marriages that in all probability were not dissolved before the next one took place; leaving small children behind to be cared for by others; totally disappearing without a trace; being disinherited by parents;

If you would like to help make the 1940 census freely searchable online, take a look at <http://the1940census.com>. There you will be able to sign up, download the necessary software, and learn how to index.

alcoholism; questions about actual paternal parentage because their mother’s husband (their father?) was gone fighting in the Civil War.

I would really like to gain more knowledge about some of the puzzles that these three particular ancestors left behind. In the months ahead I am going to specifically try to “create stories from stats,” “find out who do I think I am” and “use circumstantial evidence” to solve my genealogical puzzles. Maybe I will even be able to do a program for you??

About the time many of you read this, the 1940 Census should be available. Good luck to any of you who need this information to solve or clarify your knowledge of those pesky ancestors who on purpose, or perhaps unwittingly, hid their lives from us.



If you know of any Questing Heirs members who are not receiving our newsletter since the change to online viewing, please have them contact Terry Hamilton, our Membership Chairman. She may not have their current postal or e-mail address. She can be reached by e-mail at hammyt1@aol.com, by phone at 562-596-9382, or at one of our monthly meetings.





Stories from Stats: Turning Genealogy into Family History

Jean Wilcox Hibben, our March speaker, began by describing Genealogy as the stats and Family History as the who, what, where, when, why, and how behind those stats. While the facts are necessary, it's the answers to those other questions that make your family history interesting—particularly to those who aren't usually interested.

She suggested starting with information provided by relatives, especially those who knew the ancestors you're studying. You may find that cousins have differing versions of stories and events in the lives of now-deceased ancestors.

Then gather all the data you can from multiple sources: documents, photos, maps, newspapers, websites, letters or diaries, cemeteries, histories and "mug" books, and any artifacts you may have inherited. Create a timeline from this information and identify "chapters" in your ancestors' lives.

Next put your ancestors into the context of the time and place they lived by learning about the geographic location and events, such as wars, epidemics, elections, economic conditions, religious events, the weather, disasters, etc. Combine this information with the timeline to be aware of possible inter-relationships.

Write out the combination of the history you've discovered and your family data to show how your ancestor may have been affected by the various events.

Save your information and make it available in keepsake books for family members, create narrative programs for your family, add it to the "notes" section of your genealogy program, or write a book. Use these means especially to interest the younger generation in their family history.

Jean also provided an extensive bibliography of references for effective storytelling and validating stories. You can learn more at her website (www.circlemending.org) or her blog (<http://circlemending.blogspot.com>).

Researching German Records When You Live in America and Don't Speak German

Jean spent some time illustrating how to search using the LDS FamilySearch website and how to order microfilm rentals from home now (to be viewed at your local Family History Center). Images from more and more films are becoming available for online viewing, too; so check the Records Collection on the home page frequently. She also mentioned that the Meyers Orts gazetteer, which is available at Ancestry.com, is invaluable for German research.

Her first rule for German research is "Spelling Doesn't Count!" Letters may be added or omitted as the writer chooses and many vowels are interchangeable. (Examples: z=s, d=th=t=dt, pf=f, w=v, etc.) Names may be spelled in a variety of ways. (Examples: Ried=Rieth=Riet, Keinz=Cajens, Schmitt=Schmidt, Mayer=Meyer=Majer=Meier, Felten=Velten, etc.) This means you have to be creative in using indexes.

The history of Germany is complicated, too. The German Empire didn't come into existence until 1870. "Often census records will not declare 'Germany' as place of birth. The Census takers were to record this as follows:

- 1850-1880—German STATE (e.g., Prussia or Preußen; Bavaria or Bayern; etc.
- 1900-1910—'Germany'
- 1920—City or Province (e.g., Darmstadt, Hamburg, etc.)
- 1930—'Germany' (if birth locale is still in the German Empire) or the County in which the birth locale is situated in 1930 (e.g., the village of Edesheim was in Bavaria in 1850, but in the Palatinate - Pfalz - in 1930, so someone born there in 1850 would declare 'Palatinate' on the 1930 census.)"

Jean provided a bibliography of German research sources, too. Her two "must have" books are *If I Can You Can: Decipher Germanic Records* by Edna M. Bentz and *The German Research Companion* by Shirley J. Riemer.



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OHIO G. S. BOOK SALE

The Ohio Genealogical Society is selling some of its surplus books. City directories are available for Youngstown, Dayton, Cuyahoga Falls, Akron, and Canton on e-Bay. A few other books are also for sale on Amazon. Income from the sale of these items goes to the Ohio Genealogical Society Building or Endowment funds. (Buy from “ROMAR” on Amazon for money to go to the OGS.)

This information from Roger Marble on Eastman’s Online Genealogy Newsletter, 17 Mar 2012, at <http://www.eogn.com>. Copyright by Richard W. Eastman.

GOOD NEWS ABOUT THE SSDI

The following announcement was written by Casey Hopkins for <http://www.mocavo.com> on 22 Mar 2012.

“If you’re in the genealogy community, chances are you’ve read, researched or at least heard about the ongoing battle over the Social Security Death Index. Our own Michael Leclerc has written a series of blog posts about the matter, and many of you have asked us as a company where we stand.

“Today we’re answering that question by releasing a brand new, highly advanced and completely free feature of our site: the Mocavo Free Social Security Death Index Search. With this new search, we’re giving our users the ability to scour over 88 million death records with the most advanced SSDI search the web has to offer.

“Those of you familiar with Mocavo Plus will recognize the layout of the search, complete with various tools such as Sounds Like, First Name Alternatives and Wildcard Searching, and multiple data-specific search fields, such as Issuing State, Birth & Death Dates, Age at Death, Last Benefit, and Last Residence.

“So go ahead—test it out. Let us know what you think in the comments below or on our Facebook page. As always, we’re looking forward to your thoughts, feedback & questions.”

RootsTech VIDEOS

Videos of 16 sessions presented at this year’s RootsTech conference are available at: <http://rootstech.org/#video-player>. Four that were of interest to your editor were:

- * Effective Database Search Tactics by Kory Meyerink
- * Layers of Online Searches by Barbara Renick
- * Publish Your Genealogy Online by Laura Prescott
- * Do I Trust the Cloud? By Dr. D Joshua Taylor

WikiTree G2G

<http://www.WikiTree.com/g2g>

WikiTree is a “collaborative project [that] has been growing since 2008. As a community we are creating a single worldwide family tree. As individuals and family members we are connecting the tree with our private family histories. It’s all free, but new members need an invitation to join.”

WikiTree has started a new forum at the URL above “designed especially for genealogists who want to help other genealogists—regardless of whether they have a direct family connection.

“Help answer questions from the community or ask your own question.

- * Ask about how to use WikiTree.
- * Ask a general genealogy question.
- * Ask for help on a brick wall ancestor.
- * Ask if a fellow genealogist will invite you to join WikiTree.”



Continued from page 26...

three genealogy blogs: Denise’s Life in the Past Lane (pastlane.blogspot.com), Reflecting on Genealogy (reflectingongenealogy.blogspot.com), and The SoCalGenie (socialgenie.blogspot.com).



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UNOFFICIAL U.K. CERTIFICATES

In a press release by the Home Office in England dated 28 Nov 2011, consumers were warned about websites selling birth, death and marriage certificates that imply they were being supplied by the General Register Office (GRO).

Following a complaint by the Registrar General, the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) found that websites like 'UK official services' and 'UK GRO certificates' were misleading and in breach of the committee of advertising practice code. These sites may charge much more for certificates than the official GRO does.

ONLINE SAMPLER PROJECT

An article in the University of Delaware Research Online Magazine describes a national project to create a digital archive of historic American samplers.

"According to Ritchie Garrison, professor of history at the University of Delaware and director of the Winterthur Program in American Material Culture Studies, the work is all about enlisting technology to connect the public with its cultural legacy.

'This project brings together the University of Delaware and the University of Oregon—two great universities with deep strengths in American material culture and advanced digital technology. Joining the project is a consortium of museums, historical societies, and collectors passionate about the study of historic samplers,' notes Garrison, who is the principal investigator on the NEH grant. 'We hope to do for American samplers what has been done for American quilts, opening another portal into the nation's heritage.'

"The team currently is refining the process for collecting data about samplers and also programming an online database that will make information and digitized images available to the public. At the end of the two-year project, they will have digitized approximately 100 samplers from each of the three pilot sites."

For more information about the project and the history and significance of samplers, see http://www.udel.edu/researchmagazine/issue3_no1_humanities/stitches_in_time.html.

DOCUMENT RESTORATION

"One of the big losses to genealogists and to many others occurred on July 12, 1973, when a fire destroyed many records at the National Personnel Records Center in St. Louis. The records storage facility was operated by the National Archives and Records Administration and housed military service records. The fire destroyed approximately 16 to 18 million official military personnel records. While that is a staggering number of records, it still represents only about one-third of the 52 million official military personnel files.

"Sadly, the records had not yet been digitized for long-term preservation nor even copied to microfilm, the standard method of preserving paper documents at that time. The records existed only on fragile paper and were susceptible to fire, flood, mildew, and other dangers. The building was essentially a large warehouse, filled with filing cabinets. There were no firewalls or other fire-stopping devices to limit the spread of fire. No heat or smoke detectors were installed in the building, nor was there a fire sprinkler system to automatically extinguish a fire...

"In May 2011, the National Personnel Records Center completed construction of a new facility, located at 1 Archives Drive, St. Louis, Missouri. Surviving records have been moved to the new building that is equipped with the latest fire prevention technology.

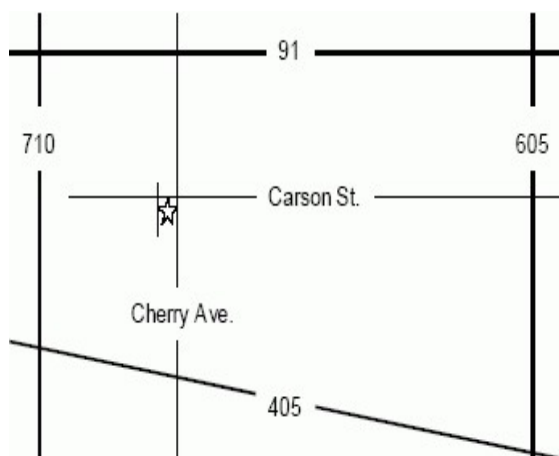
"While many records were destroyed, fragments of others survived and are being restored by National Personnel Records Center personnel. You can read more about this wonderful effort in an article by Steve Giegerich in the St. Louis Post-Dispatch at <http://goo.gl/VndXo>."

The above extracts are from Eastman's Online Genealogy Newsletter of 11 Mar 2012, copyright by Richard W. Eastman. They are republished here with the permission of the author. The newsletter is available at <http://www.eogn.com>.



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Sunday, April 15, 1:15-4:00 p.m. **Questing Heirs Genealogical Society** monthly meeting. Parish Hall, Resurrection Lutheran Church, 1900 East Carson Street, Long Beach. Parking and entrance on Gardenia Avenue, one block west of Cherry Avenue. See map below. For meeting information, please see page 26.



Wednesday, April 18, 7:00 p.m. **South Bay Cities Genealogical Society** monthly meeting in the Meeting Room at the Torrance Civic Center Library, 3301 Torrance Blvd., Torrance. Program: "Preserve Your Photos," by Tom Philo.

Wednesday, April 18, 7:00 p.m. **Genealogical Society of North Orange County California** monthly meeting at the Yorba Linda Community Center (Imperial Room A), Imperial Hwy. & Casa Loma, Yorba Linda. Program: "Clue to Clue: Tracking a Family Across Time and Miles," by Jean Wilcox Hibben.

Sunday, April 22, 1:00 p.m. **British Isles Family History Society-USA** monthly meeting at the Los Angeles Family History Library, 10741 Santa Monica Blvd., West Los Angeles. Program: "Ten Days in Ireland, Sights and Sounds," by Jim McNamara.

Saturday, May 5, 11:00 a.m.-12:30 p.m. **Orange County, California, Genealogical Society** monthly meeting at the Huntington Beach Central Library, 7111 Talbert Ave., Huntington Beach. Main speaker (Rooms C&D): "Organizing Your Genealogy," by Pat Chavarria.

Upcoming Events

Wholly Genes 8th Annual Genealogy Conference & Cruise

September 16-23, 2012

Participants will cruise on the *Star Princess*, leaving from Seattle on Sept. 16 and traveling to Ketchikan, the Tracy Arm Fjord and twin Sawyer glaciers, Juneau and Skagway, Alaska, and Victoria, British Columbia, Canada, before returning to Seattle on Sept. 23.

The nationally known speakers will be Thomas W. Jones, J. Mark Lowe, Debra S. Mieszala, Paul Milner, Craig Scott and Thomas MacEntee. They will provide approximately 17 hours of software-neutral genealogy and technology lectures and will also be available for a limited number of one-on-one 15-minute consultations.

Prices start at \$978.82 for an inside cabin with double occupancy, which includes food, port fees and taxes, shipboard entertainment, and attendance to all conference lectures and group events.

For more information, see the Wholly Genes website at <http://www.whollygenes.com>.

*FHC stands for Family History Center of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. FHCs are open free of charge to members of the general public interested in doing genealogical research. Volunteers are on hand and will gladly give you assistance. Regular hours for the Los Angeles Family History Library are Monday, Friday, and Saturday, 9 am to 5 pm, and Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday 9 am to 9 pm. The LAFHL is located on the grounds of the Los Angeles Temple, 10741 Santa Monica Blvd. in West Los Angeles; their phone number is (310) 474-9990. Their web page at <http://www.lafhc.org> provides details of their extensive collection. There are smaller FHCs nearby—in Long Beach at 3701 Elm Avenue in Bixby Knolls, phone (562) 988-0509; in Los Alamitos, phone (714) 821-6914; and in Cerritos, phone (562) 924-3676. We recommend calling the local centers before you visit, as their hours may change from time to time.