



QUESTING HEIRS GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY *Newsletter*

Volume 45 ✦ Number 5 ✦ May 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, MAY 20, 2012

**1:15 Class INTERMEDIATE: Open to the Public—DAR
Online Resources, by Connie Moretti**

2:00 Business

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

**2:45 General SPEAKER: Connie Moretti
Meeting Understanding Land Records**

**4:00 Class BEGINNING: Genealogy Adventures—Next
Steps, Part 2, by Linda Ivers**

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MAY MEETING

INTERMEDIATE CLASS

DAR Online Resources

Our speaker will explain what resources the Daughters of the American Revolution have available on their website and how they can be useful in your genealogy research.

MAIN PRESENTATION

Understanding Land Records

This presentation will focus on the information that is found in deeds and how to use the many types of indexes you may find when you research land records. Resources for further study will also be provided.

SPEAKER:

CONNIE WALTON MORETTI

A Torrance native and third-generation Californian, Connie Moretti claims to have done genealogy all her life due to a story-telling grandmother who enrolled her in the Covered Wagon Club at Knott's Berry Farm in the 1940s. Retired from 30 years as an educator, Connie is the former editor of the South Bay Cities Genealogical Society Newsletter, has taught beginning internet and computer genealogy classes for South Bay Adult School, is a member of the Association of Professional Genealogists, National Society Daughters of the American Revolution, United States Daughters of 1812, and is past President of the California Division and past Historian General of the United Daughters of the Confederacy. She learned about land records, one of her particular genealogical interests, while earning a California Real Estate license. She is the author or co-author of four genealogy or history related books, including the award winning *Brigadier General Tyree H. Bell, Forrest's Fighting Lieutenant*. Now working as a genealogy professional with a specialty in American lineage, she has traveled extensively for research, especially in Virginia, Louisiana, Mississippi, Indiana, Tennessee, South Carolina, and California. She lectures on a variety of genealogical topics for genealogy organizations and on a variety of genealogical and patriotic topics for civic groups.

REFRESHMENTS

Penny NUGENT (562) 290-0416

Thanks to our April hosts:

Kathy AKAU Polly & George JOHNSON
Terry HAMILTON Barbara NICHOLSON

Our May hosts will be:

Linda IVERS Kathy LATHAM
Frances LIEBZEIT Kathy SHERMAN

MEMBERSHIP REPORT

Terry HAMILTON (562) 596-9382

MARCH MEETING ATTENDANCE

Members: 33 Guests: 14

NEW MEMBER

Dave KOEGEL Individual 9/12

FINANCIAL REPORT

David WERTS (562) 431-7790

March Income:	\$ 145.64
March Expenses:	\$ 356.65
F&M Bank balance:	\$ 4,158.74
Operations balance:	\$ 390.72
Special Projects balance:	\$ 3,768.02

**Submissions for the
May Newsletter
are due May 27.**

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NO, FAMILY NAMES WERE NOT CHANGED AT ELLIS ISLAND by Dick Eastman

There is a family myth amongst tens of thousands of American families: “The name was changed at Ellis Island.” The stories claim the immigrant arrived at Ellis Island and was unable to communicate with the officials. A record was then created by someone who assigns the immigrant a descriptive name.

This fairy tale refuses to die. Let’s look at a few simple facts:

1. Passenger lists were not created at Ellis Island. They were created abroad, beginning close to the immigrant’s home, when the immigrant purchased his ticket. In 99% of the cases, the clerk filling out the forms and creating the passenger list in “the old country” knew how to speak, read and write your ancestor’s language. That clerk filled in the proper name. In the case of Eastern European or Oriental languages, those forms even included the correct non-Roman characters. To be sure, spelling variations were common as the immigrants usually were illiterate and often didn’t know their own alphabets or how to spell their own names. The clerks wrote what they heard, which may or may not be the same spelling used elsewhere. In fact, there might not be a “correct” spelling. However, what was recorded **ALWAYS** sounded correct, especially when pronounced in the immigrant’s language.

It is unlikely that anyone at the local steamship office in “the old country” was unable to communicate with the immigrant or his/her family. Names were most likely recorded with a high degree of accuracy at that time. Those lists of names were later delivered to immigration officials at Ellis Island.

2. The idea that the immigrant was unable to communicate with officials at Ellis Island is ludicrous. In fact, one third of all immigrant inspectors at Ellis Island in the early twentieth century were themselves foreign-born, and all immigrant inspectors spoke at least three languages. In addition, Ellis Island and other

ports of entry also hired an army of interpreters, most of them as part-time employees. These interpreters always (repeat: ALWAYS) could speak, read, and write the languages of other immigrants. If a new immigrant arrived and no interpreter was available for his or her particular language, that immigrant was detained at Ellis Island until a qualified interpreter was located and brought in for the interview. Most immigrants were processed through Ellis Island within a day or two but there were cases where immigrants were detained for several days until an interpreter became available and proper documentation could be completed. Nobody passed through the process without being interviewed by someone in a suitable language.

3. The passenger lists were always prepared in “the old country” by steamship company officials. If any immigrant arrived at Ellis Island and provided a different name to officials, he or she was always denied entry. If a brief investigation could not clear up the mystery, the immigrant was shipped back to the old country on the steamship’s return trip.

NOTE; Many immigrants were refused entry for a variety of reasons and were returned. Estimates seem to vary from 12% to 18% of all would-be immigrants were denied entry into the United States and instead were sent back to their originating countries. The fates of most of these returnees has not been well documented.

4. Later immigrants had to verify their correct names every year. Starting in July of 1940, the Alien Registration Act required every alien resident in the United States to register at their local Post Office in January. As part of the registration process, the immigrant had to provide **ALL** names by which he or she had ever been known, including his or her full name as used in “the old country” as well as the name used currently. Alien Registration

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PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE

The first speaker at our April meeting, Denise Spurlock, gave a very interesting and informative presentation about available census material and how we can use it to further our research. The last part of her material was on the 1940 census. She asked how many people had looked and found anyone on the census. I was surprised that so few of you answered yes. I was going to wait for the indexes to become available, but remember when I confessed to you in the March newsletter that I sometimes showed addictive tendencies when it came to genealogical research. A few evenings ago my addiction reared its ugly head.

Who should I look for? Even though I surely will be listed (yes, I am that old), I was not totally sure about the address my parents were living at, and it would have necessitated a long and difficult address search. I chose my paternal grandparents because I felt I knew the most precise location of where they were living in the city of Denver, Colorado. I knew their exact address and the cross streets. I found the 32 pages of their enumeration district very quickly, and there they were on page 14. The census taker had very clear handwriting—not fancy but dark strokes that were very easy to read. I was surprised by a few things and noticed a few discrepancies.

My grandparents had a large house which in those days was known as a Rooming House (not a Boarding House because no meals were served), and my grandfather’s principal occupation was maintaining this house. There were 11 people listed under my grandfather’s name with the relationships being: his wife, son, son, daughter, son-in-law, and 6 lodgers. There was a great deal of information that had to be provided for all those people—about their education, occupation, work history, and salary—and almost all of it was filled in. The little x was next to my grandmother’s name as having provided the information. My grandmother, the original strong career woman, was perfectly capable of

knowing all these facts about the people and being able to supply them for the census taker.

Much of this information was fascinating to me, as I had just read a small piece in the New England Genealogical Society Newsletter written by Philip Hermann giving information on how to convert and compare the value of 1940 dollars to 2012 dollars. He took his basic information from the website www.thepeoplehistory.com/1940s.html. The basic conversion rate is \$1.00 in 1940 equals \$16.26 in 2012.

The average home price was shown as \$3,290.00. The census showed my grandfather’s home valued at \$2,500.00. It gave some other 1940 average prices as: bananas 11 cents per lb., nylon hose 20 cents a pair, coffee 42 cents per lb., and gasoline 9 cents per gallon. The census showed how many hours per week were worked and yearly salary. Strangely, it showed my grandfather worked 50 hours per week but had made no money in 1939. My grandmother, a seamstress supervisor in a large factory, made \$780.00 per year; their son, my young 19-year-old uncle, made \$260.00 per year as a chauffeur; my grandparent’s son-in-law made \$1,560.00 per year as a rate clerk for the railroad; a 20-year-old lodger made \$320.00 per year as a waitress in a restaurant.

Check the above website out as you find your census families and make some money comparisons. I know you are all going to enjoy finding your family in the 1940 Census. It might be fun to share during the Christmas Program what we have found out about our “1940 Census Families.”

J.J.



DIGGING FOR CLUES IN THE CENSUS

There has been much publicity lately about the 1940 census, but at our April meeting, Denise Spurlock reminded us of all the information provided in earlier census returns.

Some limitations to the early censuses include the length of time it took to complete them, some have been lost or destroyed, some enumerators were not conscientious, and some informants gave incorrect answers. Still, the censuses place your ancestor in a family in a particular place, and they provide clues pointing to other records.

From 1790 though 1840 less information was requested and the name of only the head of household was given. You need to transcribe the information you find to forms or spreadsheets with headings and track a family from year to year.

Denise provided charts in her handout listing what data was requested on which census. Make it a point to look at two or more pages in the census before and after your ancestor to identify others of the same surname, as well as neighbors. Modern censuses provide more information, but be careful not to infer family relationships before 1880.

Examples of clues to note in censuses are family size and the ages of members (for birth/marriage/death records), insane (guardianship records), home value (property records), Civil War service (military records), and foreign status (naturalization records).

If you have a “lost” ancestor, be creative with spelling variations in searching and use wild cards. If all else fails and you’re sure he should be in a census, look page by page and line by line.

Don’t forget to check the special censuses when they’re available: slave, mortality agricultural, territorial, and state.

In conclusion: search for clues, follow leads, pay attention to details, think critically, look at all relevant records, and be sure the evidence supports your conclusions.

CEMETERY RESEARCH

Loran and Tricia Bures presented an informative lecture on cemetery research.

After discussing the difference between primary and secondary source information, Loran pointed out sources you can use to identify the cemetery you’re looking for. They include death certificates, obituaries, funeral notices, biographies, a genealogical record such as a Family Group Sheet, published cemetery transcriptions or indexes, and a cemetery’s website if it has one.

Then you need to research the cemetery. What kind of cemetery is it? What is its current name? Is there another with the same or a similar name? Where is the cemetery located?

Once you’ve identified the cemetery, you need to find out where its records are located. How and when can they be accessed? When are the burial areas open to the public? What is the watering schedule for the section of the cemetery you want to visit? (That can save you time and/or a drenching.)

What you need to bring with you to research the cemetery records are a printed list of the full name(s) and date(s) of death, paper and something to write with, and a digital camera with an archival setting. The types of records you will find are burial records, a plot book or map, and sales records or deeds.

Your goals in researching the cemetery records are to identify the burial location, obtain a map of the cemetery, learn the date of burial, the names of anyone else buried in the same grave, the names of anyone else with the same surname buried in the same lot, the name of the funeral home, and purchase information.

When you visit the burial site, check for headstones and footstones, clear away all grass and dirt covering the grave marker, and do a complete 360° search around the burial site for other burials of interest. Take photos of the burial site and make a transcription of the grave marker(s) including any symbols you find on them.



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FAMILY HISTORY BOOKS

Have you checked out the Family History Books available at www.familysearch.org? Just click “Books” on the main page and then “Family History Books.”

You can search this collection of more than 40,000 digitized publications from such libraries as the Allen County Public Library, the Brigham Young University Harold B. Lee Library, the Houston Public Library, and the Mid-Continent Public Library, as well as the Family History Library. It includes family histories, county and local histories, genealogy how-to books, genealogy magazines, periodicals, and gazetteers.

And, of course, the collection is free.

CALIFORNIA RECORDS

FamilySearch announced in March that among its new additions were over 24 million indexed records of the California Birth Index from 1905-1995, as well as more than 52 thousand browsable digital images of San Mateo County Records from 1856-1967.

UNION SERVICE RECORDS

In February, Fold3 <<http://blog.fold3.com>> started placing online the alphabetical card index to compiled service records of Union troops. The first four states to go online were Massachusetts, New York, Ohio, and Pennsylvania.

Each index card gives the name of a soldier, his rank, and the unit in which he served. Anyone looking for a Union soldier in the Civil War will find these cards useful in identifying the state and regiment in which a man served and how his name appears in the military records. You can then locate his records to learn about his service in the war and battles in which his regiment fought.

The National Park Service has placed the data from these cards online in its Civil War Soldiers and Sailors System. However, that data was transcribed, while Fold3’s images allow users to view the original card to determine the accuracy of the transcription.

FRENCH SURNAME MAPPING

“Those of us who conduct German research know that there are ways to track current residents by surname across Germany through the online telephone directory. But did you know that the same kind of tool is available for France as well? Access the website <<http://www.geopatronyme.com>> and enter the surname of interest in the Votre nom search box. Click Valider. A map then appears showing where people of this name were born in France, by Département. Click the list of Départments to see a list of the towns where births of babies with this surname occurred. Thanks to Earl F. Charve (2008), who has granted permission to freely distribute this info in electronic form.”

This tip appeared in the April 2012 issue of the Immigrant Genealogical Society Newsletter, p. 3.

OTHER SITES OF INTEREST

<http://www.findmypast.co.uk>

This British site is in the process of publishing online baptisms, marriages and burials from **Welsh** Archives. The first records were for the counties are Cardiganshire, Carmarthenshire, Denbighshire, Flintshire and Glamorganshire. Others will follow.

<http://www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk>

The Valuation Rolls for 1915-1916 provide a detailed picture of **Scotland** during the First World War. They record the names of owners, tenants and occupiers of each property with a value of at least £4.

<http://www.dekalbgenealogy.com>

DeKalb County, Illinois, has recently launched a website with birth, death and marriage records that are older than 75, 20 and 50 years, respectively.

<http://www.ancestry.com>

Ancestry.com recently added The Holbrook Collection of **Massachusetts** vital records to its databases. It includes birth, marriage, and sometimes death, records that were kept by the town clerk from a town’s founding until about 1850. That’s a total of 315 cities and towns over a period of 330 years.



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1921 CENSUS OF CANADA

The 1921 census of Canada was taken on June 1st and is now in the custody of Statistics Canada. The law states that, after 92 calendar years have elapsed, the records will be opened for public use and transferred to Library and Archives Canada.

On June 1, 2013 custody will be turned over to the archives, but the records will still have to be cataloged and the images scanned in order to make them available online. Archives personnel plan to make the census available to researchers as soon as possible after June 1, 2013.

From the Library and Canada Archives Blog of 27 Mar 2012 at <http://thediscoverblog.com/2012/03/27/1921-census-countdown>.

KIDS' GENEALOGY TEXTBOOKS

Generations published six new genealogy textbooks for kids in April. The series is called Branching Out and was written by Jennifer Holik, a Professional Genealogist. The books provide parents and educators with tools to teach genealogical research skills to children and teens. They cover:

- Genealogy for 1st-3rd Grade Students, Lessons 1-15
- Genealogy for 1st-3rd Grade Students, Lessons 16-30
- Genealogy for 4th-8th Grade Students, Lessons 1-15
- Genealogy for 4th-8th Grade Students, Lessons 16-30
- Genealogy for High School Students, Lessons 1-5
- Genealogy for High School Students, Lessons 16-30

The books are available in paperback and also in PDF and PowerPoint files. For more information and pricing, go to: <http://generationsbiz.com/products.html>.

WAR OF 1812 BICENTENNIAL

QH member MaryEmma Hargrave brought to our attention the fact that 2012 is the bicentennial year of the War of 1812. Having been

born and lived 25 years of her life less than a quarter mile from Fort McHenry, she is particularly interested in the Battle of Baltimore (12-14 Sep 1814).

The "Star-Spangled Sailabration" will launch the national bicentennial. U.S., British and Canadian naval vessels, tall ships from around the globe, and an air show, featuring the Blue Angels, will take place in Baltimore on June 13-19, 2012.

You can find more information about the war and bicentennial celebrations by Googling "War of 1812 Bicentennial."

Continued from page 35...

requirements applied to all aliens over the age of fourteen, regardless of nationality and regardless of immigration status.

Despite these facts, the Ellis Island name-change story (or Castle Garden, or earlier versions of the same story) is as American as apple pie. However, there is little to no truth to these stories.

When Did the Names Change?

After processing through Ellis Island and settling within the United states, many immigrants DID change their names. In numerous cases, the names were changed for them by public officials, schoolteachers, shopkeepers, and neighbors. Anyone from Eastern Europe, with a name LONG on consonants and short on vowels, learned that his name often got in the way of a job interview or became the subject of ridicule at his child's school. Any change that might smooth their way to the American dream was seen as a step in the right direction. In many cases, these later name changes were made without court papers or any other official recognition.

In any case, the records at Ellis Island and other ports of entry always contained the original names, although with frequent spelling variations.

This article was published in Eastman's Online Genealogy Newsletter of 17 Apr 2012, copyright by Richard W. Eastman. It is republished here with the permission of the author. The newsletter is available at <http://www.eogn.com>.

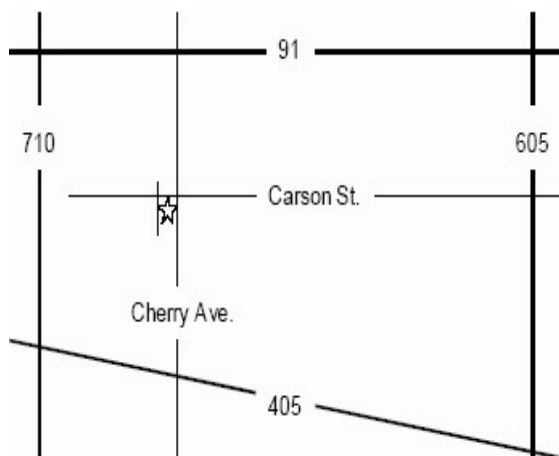


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Sunday, May 6, 2:00 p.m. Immigrant Genealogical Society monthly meeting at 1310 Magnolia Blvd., Burbank. Program: “Crossing a Continent: Migration Between the Revolution and the Civil War (1783-1861),” by Jean Wilcox Hibben.

Wednesday, May 16, 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: “The Hamburg Passenger Lists and Other German Emigration Sources,” by Joan Lowrey

Sunday, May 20, 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 34.



Sunday, May 27, 1:00-3:00 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: “Story of the Scots-Irish,” by Linda Serna.

Orange County, California, Genealogical Society - No meeting in June.

Upcoming Events

NATIONAL GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY RESEARCH IN WASHINGTON D.C. November 12-17, 2012

This National Genealogical Society hands-on research trip will include the following:

- Five days of research at the National Archives, the Library of Congress, and the Daughters of the American Revolution Library,
- Orientation and dessert get-together on Monday,
- Research consultations with group leaders throughout the trip,
- Friday evening group meal, and
- Five nights at the Holiday Inn Rosslyn.

Hosts for the trip are two seasoned experts in conducting research. Marie Varrelman Melchiori, CGSM, CGLSM, specializes in NARA records. Patricia Walls Stamm, CGSM, CGLSM, is Education Manager of NGS.

For more information about the trip and costs, or to register, go to http://www.ngsgenealogy.org/cs/conferences_events/research_tips/dc_research_trip.

*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.