



**QUESTING HEIRS GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY  
LONG BEACH, CALIFORNIA**

**Hybrid meeting: January 19, 2025  
beginning at 2:00 PM PDT**

**St. Thomas of Canterbury Episcopal Church  
or attend via Zoom**

**MONTHLY MEETINGS**

Our monthly meetings are held on the third Sunday of the month at 2:00 p.m.

**St. Thomas of Canterbury Episcopal Church  
5306 E. Arbor Road  
Long Beach, CA 90808  
Between Bellflower Blvd. and Clark next to Pan American Park or via Zoom**

**Speaker: Julie Huffman, Librarian  
Los Angeles Public Library**

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**MEMBERSHIP LEVELS**

Dues are \$30 per year for an individual or \$45 per year for a family.

Look for us on the Web:

<http://www.qhgs.info/>

or on Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/QuestingHeirs/>

[QuestingHeirs/](https://www.facebook.com/QuestingHeirs/)

E-mail: [questingheirs@gmail.com](mailto:questingheirs@gmail.com)

QHGS is an IRS recognized 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation. Donations are tax-deductible.



**Castle Garden**

**Wishing you a Happy New Year  
of Successful Ancestor Hunting.**

## QHGS President's Message Bob Prager



Since I first started pursuing my family history, I've known that none of my ancestors came through Ellis Island – they were all here before 1892 when it opened. I heard about its predecessor, Castle Garden. Given the size of the facilities at Ellis Island needed to process immigrants, I was expecting Castle Garden to be a large wooden structure on the Manhattan shore which no doubt would have long since rotted away. When we were in New York City, we did take the tour from lower Manhattan to the Statue of Liberty and then to Ellis Island, purchasing our boat tickets inside an open ring-shaped sandstone building at the tip of Manhattan.

Imagine my surprise when I later found that that sandstone structure was in fact Castle Garden! It was built as a defensive battery on a small man-made island just off the southern tip of Manhattan, and ceded to New York City in 1822. The structure was roofed over and converted to a large concert hall seating up to 6,000. It became the immigration depot in 1855 and served that function until 1890.

The central area was a waiting area with benches. Immigrants first had to pass a medical screening at facilities at Staten Island before being taken to Castle Garden. 7½ to 8 million people were processed there. The records were transferred to Ellis Island when that facility opened, but an 1897 fire destroyed many of them.

An article with many more details of the history of Castle Garden can be found on wikipedia.

For still more information (with a number of illustrations)

see <https://www.ggarchives.com/Immigration/CastleGarden/index.html>

(The photograph on Page 1 is one I took in 2014.)

## Welcome: Julie Huffman



### Getting the Most Genealogy Out of the Los Angeles Public Library

Julie Huffman has been the genealogy librarian at the Central Library of Los Angeles Public Library for 10 years as well as 23 years at LAPL as librarian to several departments.

Her Master of Library and Information Science is from UCLA and she has a Bachelor's of Journalism from the University of Missouri-Columbia.

She is the winner of the 2024 Richard S. Lackey Memorial Scholarship presented by Gen-Fed Alumni Association.

**Please mail in your membership dues or bring to our January meeting.  
Form will be a separate attachment in your email.**

**Thank you to those who have renewed and extra thanks for your donations.**



Hazel Lillian Estes, shown here in 1918, was photographed in case the Spanish Influenza caused her hair to fall out. In 1929 she eloped on her lunch hour with Alfred Augusta Klippel from Long Beach to Clearwater (now known as Paramount) and then both went back to work.

Photo and story courtesy of our QH member, Jerry Hardison.

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**Beneficiary Identification Records Locator Subsystem (BIRLS)**

**Database Now Online**

If you receive *any* genealogical newsletters or announcements, you’ve probably received an announcement about this, but Reclaim the Records announced a free on-line search engine for their copy of the Veterans Administration’s index of veteran’s benefits files. These contain records from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century to the present day pertaining to the files of deceased veterans.

The search engine is at [BIRLS.org](http://BIRLS.org), and allows filing of a Freedom of Information Act request for each full file, which the VA will pull, scan, and mail a CD with the image of the documents. (If someone isn’t in the database, you can still use the filing system to do the same thing anyway, but the chances of a successful data search are lower – but it’s free!)

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**Future QH Presentations:**

February 16, 2025: Megan Clark Young - Pruning Your Family Tree

March 16, 2025: Kate Penney Howard - Using AI to Amplify Your Genealogy

**April 20, 2025: Easter Sunday - No QH Meeting**

May 18, 2025: Sara Cochran - Photo Preservation

June 15, 2025 - Ice Cream Social



**St. Thomas of  
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Long Beach, CA**



**Questing Heirs Genealogical Society Board**

- President.....Bob Prager.....(2024-2026)
- 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President – Programs .....Diana Transue.....(2024-2025)
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President – Membership ..Sandy McDonald.....(2024-2026)
- Secretary.....Nina Gustin.....(2024-2025)
- Treasurer.....Cynthia Day-Elliott.....(2024-2025)
- Director – Hospitality .....Tina Yanis.....(2024-2025)
- Director – Acting Newsletter.....Christina McKillip.....(2024-2025)
- Director– Publicity.....Jerry Hardison.....(2024-2025)
- Past President.....Terry Hamilton.....(2024-2025)

**QHGS Volunteer Positions**

- Digital Archivist.....Christina "Tina" McKillip
- Research/Historian.....Tina Yanis
- Social Media/Facebook Coordinator.....Jerry Hardison
- Webmaster.....Mike Powers

**Submissions for the February newsletter  
must be received by January 25, 2025.**

The newsletter has been published since 1969 by Questing Heirs Genealogical Society, Inc. Submissions, including queries, corrections, or any questions regarding the newsletter should be sent to Newsletter Editor, QHGS, P.O. Box 15102, Long Beach, CA 90815-0102, or emailed to [Questingheirs@gmail.com](mailto:Questingheirs@gmail.com). We are not responsible for the accuracy of material published but will gladly print corrections. Newsletter illustrations: QHGS logo designed by Mike Powers. Photo on page 1 with permission from Bob Prager. Photos on page 2 with permission from Bob Prager and Julie Huffman. Photo on Page 3 with permission from Jerry Hardison. All other illustrations are in the public domain and come from New York Public Library, Library of Congress, Wikimedia Commons, Dover Royalty Free Clip Art, or through a subscription to Clip Art.com as cited.

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In order to receive the monthly newsletter, one must be enrolled as a member of the Society.

To join, please contact Membership Chairman at:

[Questingheirs@gmail.com](mailto:Questingheirs@gmail.com)