

# NORTH HILLS GENEALOGISTS

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10 Issues - August - June

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

This is the beginning of our new fiscal year. For those of you who have renewed their membership, thank you. Your dues go towards this newsletter and our next cemetery book. For those who have not renewed, this issue will be your last. I've taken the liberty to enclose a renewal application.

While not January 1st, as genealogists we need to constantly reassess our goals and objectives to review what we've accomplished so far this year and what we need to do. If you don't already have a task or wish list, please do so. A written list of tasks helps you focus your attention. And if the task itself is too intimidating, then you need to break up the tasks into smaller, easier to accomplish tasks. For example, I have to finish the restoration of the my grandparent's 1931 Model A Ford. While it is easy to say, the chores necessary to finish the restoration are numerous. The only way I can even approach this task, much less do it, is to break down what needs to be done into bite sized tasks and allocate the time necessary to do each one.

I'm looking into buying a laptop computer that I can take with me on my genealogical trips. We collect so much information that the sooner it is

scanned or entered into a PC the better. I also routinely backup my desktop PC just in case it crashes. No that this has ever happened, but a lot of my data is irreplaceable. If you don't already, I urge you to do this. You might consider getting an email account with Yahoo. They provide 1 gigabyte of mail storage. You can email yourself at Yahoo and attach your critical data to that email for off-site storage. While we are talking about personal computers, if you surf the web, you need to have an anti-virus program and firewall. The virus program is to prevent you from getting infected and the firewall is to protect you mostly from inbound threats.

Our cemetery project is ongoing. As of now we plan on publishing our third book late next year. If you are interested in helping out crosschecking all the data collected last year, please drop Jo Henderson ([Chens4th@aol.com](mailto:Chens4th@aol.com)) and Irene Dinning ([dinning1@earthlink.net](mailto:dinning1@earthlink.net)) a line.

We already have 38 people signed up for our September research trip to Washington, DC. We need a minimum of 40 to make the trip happen.

(see page 2)

## WHERE GENEALOGISTS MEET

**Tues., Sept. 6, 2005, 7:00 pm - NHG Board Meeting** - UPMC Passavant Cafeteria. Everyone welcome.

**Tues., Sept. 20, 2005 - 7:00 pm - Regular NHG Meeting** - Ruth Reiber - Overview of the new Family History Library in Cranberry.

### Other Meetings

**Sat. Sept. 10, 2005 - WPGS Meeting** - Finding African-American Ancestors, Char Bah McCargo - Location: Homewood Branch Library Auditorium - Carnegie Library (see page )

**Sun., Sept. 11 - Lawrenceville Historical Society** - Tour of Allegheny Cemetery. Tours start at 1:00 at the main entrance.

**Thurs., Sept. 15, 2005 - 7:00 pm - Lawrenceville Historical Society** - Battle of Grant's Hill - Ken Stiles. Canterbury Place, Fisk Street, Lawrenceville.

**Sun., Sept. 25, 2005 - Lawrenceville Historical Society** - Tour of St. Mary's Cemetery - Lawrenceville - Tours start at 1:00.

**Mon., Sept. 26, 2005 - Greater Pittsburgh Civil War Round Table - 7:00 pm** - Letters From the Gettysburg Battlefield" - Eric Campbell, Gettysburg National Military Park. The Babcock, Babcock Blvd.

### SAVE THIS DATE

**Pennsylvania Genealogy Conference**  
**September 29 & 30, 2006**  
**Pittsburgh, PA**

Watch for details in future newsletters.

Please contact Elissa Powell  
(Elissa@PowellGenealogy.com) for more  
information. Space is limited.

**Steph**

## JUNE NHG MEETING

The June meeting of NHG was held on Saturday, June 18 at Uniondale Cemetery. The following is some information on the history of Uniondale Cemetery.

Hilldale Cemetery was form in 1857. This old cemetery is now Divison 2 of Uniondale. Mt. Union Cemetery was form in 1846. This is now Division 1 of Uniondale. In the 1860's the two cemeteries were consolidated to form Uniondale. After this consolidation three small neighboring farms were purchased and added to the cemetery.

The cemetery welcomes genealogists who are researching their families. Naturally it helps if you have information to give them. They charge \$5 to research their records for the first name. They noted that due to privacy rules, they will not release a cause of death as recorded in their records. Also, the cause of death in their records comes from the burial permit, not the actual death certificate/record.

We were able to look at their book of alphabetical listings (by year) of deaths and they researched their other records for information on the burials (at no charge). You may find a place of residence in these records. In the alphabetical book you may find a cause of death for the older deaths. Many of the NHG members found information on family during this research. The staff at the cemetery were very helpful. If you think you have ancestors buried there, stop into their office and they will be happy to help you.

## **CASTLE GARDEN DATABASE IS ONLINE**

Ellis Island seems to receive all the publicity for immigrants arriving in New York City. Many people do not realize that Ellis Island did not begin operations until 1892. More than 73 million Americans can trace their ancestry to immigrants who arrived in New York City prior to that year. From 1830 until 1890, these new arrivals first stepped ashore at Castle Garden in lower Manhattan.

The site of Castle Garden remains as one of the oldest public open spaces in continuous use in New York City. American Indians fished from its banks, and the first Dutch settlers built a low stone wall with cannons, a battery to protect the harbor and New Amsterdam. The stone wall was later converted to a street that is now the well-known financial center called Wall Street.

The Castle Garden immigration processing center started operation in 1830. By 1890, Castle Garden was overcrowded by the arriving throngs and there was no room to expand the facility as the ocean and the city surrounded it.

After reviewing several possible sites, the United States government selected Ellis Island for the establishment of a new federal immigration center for New York. On the island, it would be easier to screen and protect the new immigrants before they proceeded out into the streets of Manhattan. Castle Garden processed its last immigrant in April 1890.

After the closing of Castle Garden in 1890, immigrants were processed at an old barge office in Manhattan until the opening of the Ellis Island Immigration Center on January 1, 1892. A huge fire at Ellis Island occurred during the night of June 14, 1897. The fire burned the entire immigration complex to the ground. Nobody was hurt and nobody knows why it happened or who

started it. However, many state and federal records were lost in that fire.

Immigration processing was moved back to the old barge office in Manhattan while Ellis Island was being rebuilt. In December of 1900, the new Main Building on Ellis Island was opened and 2,251 immigrants were received that day. In a single day in 1907, 11,747 immigrants were processed at Ellis Island.

Castle Garden was soon forgotten by almost everyone, with the exception of those who processed through the facility and later generations of family genealogists. Castle Garden was soon converted to other uses. A theater stood on the site for many years and was used by the likes of Phineas T. Barnum. Today it is a city park, called Battery Park, and is the departure point for the ferry to the Statue of Liberty. Today's Battery Park is actually bigger now than it once was, because it has been extended into the harbor over the years by landfill.

While the Ellis Island fire of 1897 did destroy some of the records of Castle Garden, the ship's manifest records of those years survived.

Now the Battery Conservancy has created an online database of information about 10 million immigrants for the years 1830 through 1892, the years before Ellis Island opened. All the records are extracted from the original ship manifests. If you are one of the more than 73 million Americans who are descended from those who entered at Castle Garden, you can probably find your ancestors in this database.

Besides Castle Garden immigrants, says Conservancy program associate David Bromwich, it includes passengers who were dropped off at the Battery before Castle Garden opened and 2,000 Ellis Island immigrants who aren't in that database. They expect to add

2 million more immigrants to the site's compilation.

The Castle Garden Site offers a free Quick Search that lets you look for a first and last name and arrival date. You can narrow your results by choosing a place of origin, occupation and ship. The search returns only exact matches so you'll need to try spelling variations on your ancestor's name. If you are prepared to pay you can take advantage of the Advanced Search option which permits more detailed information such as gender, age upon arrival and destination. The Advanced Search costs \$45.

The website is <http://castlegarden.org>.

**The above information was taken from Eastman's Online Genealogy Newsletter, copyright 2005 by Richard Eastman, and Family Tree Newsletter.**

The Castle Garden site is great, but it lacks the ability to do either a starts-with search or a sounds-like search. So, there is no way you can search for all the variants of your family name.

But, they have assigned PIDs (passenger IDs) to all of the records in alphabetical order. So Steve Morse of One Step Search Engines has just written another utility (a Castle Garden Browser) that lets you scroll through the records sequentially to see if names adjacent to the one you found matches your family. That browser is in the Castle Garden section of <http://stevemorse.org>.

(Ed. Note: I looked for my maternal grandfather, his parents and three siblings who landed in NY in 1867. Unfortunately I did not find them so maybe they are in the additional 2 million still to be loaded. Since I have copies of the passenger lists I know that is where they landed, given their date of arrival. I haven't tried Steve Morse's site yet.)

## NAME CHANGES AT ELLIS ISLAND

This information comes from the East Curahoga mail list and was submitted by Melinda Marn. It was written by Marian L. Smith.

I have friend who tells the story of her ancestor coming from one of the Slavic countries and he, of course, could speak no English. At Ellis Island, when he was being processed and any question asked, he would nod his head and smile. Since all he did was smile when they asked his name, the clerk wrote down "Smiley" for his surname. That was the family surname from then on.

Whenever I see one of these 'name change' stories, I'm reminded of the beautiful creation stories of the Native Americans, "How the Bear Lost his Tail" for example. These stories contain an important truth. They help us understand our world. But we are foolish if we take each one literally, without further investigation. The idea that all bears have short tails because an ancient bear's tail was frozen into the ice is not a very scientific explanation. Similarly, the idea that an entire family's name was changed by one clerk -- especially one at Ellis Island -- is seldom supported by historical research and analysis.

American name change stories tend to be apocryphal, that is, they developed later to explain events shrouded in the mist of time. Given the facts of US immigration procedures at Ellis Island, the above story becomes suspect. In the story, the immigrant arrives at Ellis Island and a record is then created by someone who cannot communicate with the immigrant, and so assigns the immigrant a descriptive name. In fact, 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. It is unlikely that anyone at the local steamship office was unable to communicate with this man. His name was most likely recorded with a high degree of accuracy at that time.

It is true that immigrant names were mangled in the process. The first ticket clerk may have misspelled the name (assuming there was a 'correct spelling' - a big assumption). If the immigrant made several connections in his journey several records might be created at each juncture. Every transcription of his information afforded an opportunity to misspell or alter his name. Thus the more direct the immigrant's route to his destination, the less likely his name changed in any way.

The report that the clerk 'wrote down' the immigrant's surname is suspect. During immigration inspection at Ellis Island, the immigrant confronted an inspector who had a passenger list already created abroad. That inspector operated under rules and regulations ordering that he was not to change the identifying information found for any immigrant UNLESS requested by the immigrant and unless inspection demonstrated the original information was in error.

Furthermore, it is nearly impossible that no one could communicate with the immigrant. One third of all immigrant inspectors at Ellis Island early this century were themselves foreign-born and all immigrant inspectors spoke three languages. They were assigned to inspect immigrant groups based on the language they spoke. If the inspector could not communicate, Ellis Island employed an army of interpreters full time, and they would call in temporary interpreters under contract to translate for immigrants speaking the most obscure tongues.

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 (and probably as common in Canada.)

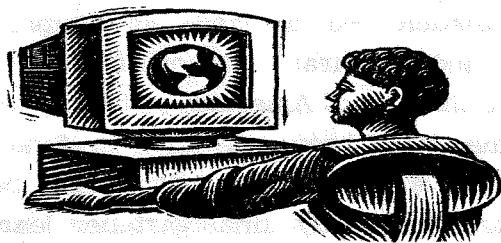
Why?

The explanation lies in ideas as simple as language and cultural differences, and as complex as the root of American culture. We all know names have been Anglicized in America (even the word 'Anglicized' has been Americanized!) As any kindergartener learns, we live in a world where people ask our name then write it down without asking us how to spell or pronounce the name. Immigrants in America were typically asked their names and entered in official records by those who had 'made it' in America, and thus were already English-speaking (i.e. teachers, landlords, employers, judges, etc.).

The fact that those with the power to create official records were English-speaking explains much about small changes over time, in the spelling of certain names.

Many immigrants welcomed this change. 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. Perhaps this was the case with Mr. Smiley. It was the case of another family from Russia, named Smiloff or Smilikoff, who emigrated to Canada at the turn of the century. By the time their son immigrated to the US in 1911, his name became Smiley. But some name changes are not so easy to trace. Rather than a different spelling of the same sounding name, and entirely new name was adopted. These are the most American stories of all.

"Who is this new man, this American?" asked deToqueville. He was Adam in the Garden, man beginning again, leaving all the history and heartbreak of the Old World behind. The idea that what made America unique was the opportunity for man to live in a state of nature, a society of farmers whose perception of Truth is unfettered by ancient social and political convention lies at the base of Jeffersonian



## **WEB WANDERINGS**

(Note: all start with <http://www> unless otherwise noted)

**Do you have a favorite website? Is there a specific place you would like to find a website for? If so, please send a note to the editor at the address on the front or by e-mail at [DJBooth@worldnet.att.net](mailto:DJBooth@worldnet.att.net).**

### **Military Roots [militaryroots.com](http://militaryroots.com)**

free database of information transcribed from sources such as military rosters, muster rolls and troop histories.

### **National Archives and Records Administration**

#### **National Personnel Records Center**

**<http://archives.gov/st-louis/>**

post-1912 military service records - 1.2 million military personnel files of enlisted US Navy and Marine Corps members who served between 1885 and September 8, 1939.

### **Alsace-Lorraine**

**[locom.org/loc\\_listcmd67.html](http://locom.org/loc_listcmd67.html)**

**Send along your favorite website for future newsletters.**

## **HISTORY REFERENCE CENTER NOW AVAILABLE**

This was provided by Amy Steele of Northland Library

The office of Commonwealth Libraries, together with the Access Pennsylvania Database Support Center, is pleased to announce the addition of EBSCO's History Reference Center Database to the External Resources Program.

History Reference Center is a comprehensive full text history reference database. The database features cover-to-cover full text historical encyclopedias and other non-fiction books.

History Reference Center also includes full-text for nearly 60 leading history periodicals.

Further, the database contains 58,000 historical documents; 43,000 biographies of historical figures; more than 12,000 historical photos and maps; and more than 80 hours of historical film and video.

Links to EBSCO's History Reference Center are available on the Access Pennsylvania Database website ([www.accesspa.state.pa.us](http://www.accesspa.state.pa.us)) under the link labeled Search Other Resources and on the POWER Library website. The History Reference Center is available to all participating Access Pennsylvania libraries. It is available to Pennsylvania residents at home through their public library's web site.

You can access it from the Northland website, then Online Reference Desk, Online Reference Center and the Access PA Power Library.



democratic theory. The New World became a place for mankind to begin again, a place where every man can be reborn and recreate himself. In such circumstances, the adoption of a new name is not surprising. Nor is it surprising in the case of immigrants who came to America to abandon a wife and family or to escape conscription in a European army. There were all kinds of reasons, political and practical to take a new name.

A newspaper in California recently ran a story of a Vietnamese immigrant with a long Cietnamese name so strange-looking to Anglo eyes. The young man came to this country and began to work and study. He began every day by stopping at a convenience store to buy a 'bonus pak' of chewing gum. Chewing all those sticks of gum got him through long days of working several jobs and studying English at night. When he finally naturalized as a US citizen, he requested his name be changed to Don Bonus - the surname taken from the 'Bonus Pak' and chosen to signify all his work and effort to become an American. He was a new man.

If not for the newspaper story, we would not understand this name change. Mr. Bonus' naturalization papers would simply record the name change but not the reasons behind it. If he had not naturalized, his Bonus family descendants generations from now would be at quite a loss to explain the origin of their name.

The documentation of name changes during US naturalization procedure have only been required since 1906. Prior to that time, only those immigrants who went to court and had their name officially changed and recorded leave us any record. Congress wrote the requirement in 1906 because of the well-known fact the immigrants DID change their names, and tended to do so within the first 5 years after arrival. Without any record, immigrants and their descendants are left to construct their own

explanation of a name change. Often, when asked by grandchildren why they changed their name, old immigrants would say 'it was changed at Ellis Island.'

People take this literally, as if the clerk at Ellis Island actually wrote down another name. But one should consider another interpretation of 'Ellis Island'. That immigrant is remembering his initial confrontation with American culture. Ellis Island was not only immigrant processing, it was finding one's way around the city, learning to speak English, getting one's first job or apartment, going to school, and adjusting one's name to a new spelling or pronunciation. All these experiences, for the first few years, were the 'Ellis Island experience.' When recalling their immigration decades before, many immigrants referred to the entire experience as "Ellis Island."

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Is there a story in your family about the family name being "changed at Ellis Island?" If so, you may have to do some more digging to find out what the 'real' name was back in the old country.

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I hope everyone had the opportunity to do some research this summer. Granted, it was very hot (too hot in many cases to roam through cemeteries) and that the gasoline prices did not hamper your research trips. It is always good to get out and do some research and have all that material to sort through, analyze and log into your database when the weather gets cold and snowy (when we will be wishing for this warm weather again).

*Saturday,  
September 10, 2005*

# Finding African- American Ancestors

*Time: 10:00 am  
to 4:00 pm*

**Location:** Auditorium,  
Homewood Branch,  
Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh  
7101 Hamilton Avenue  
Pittsburgh, PA 15208

A Genealogical Seminar

Co-sponsored by:

The Western Pennsylvania  
Genealogical Society  
and

The Afro-American Historical  
and Genealogical Society



**Keynote Speaker:**  
Char McCargo Bah,  
Genealogist, teacher,  
author, lecturer

## REGISTRATION REQUIRED

Courtesy lunch provided by  
The Afro-American Historical  
and Genealogical Society

\* \* \* \* \*

Call 412-622-3154 by  
September 2, 2005  
to register



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**QUERIES**

**Submit free queries to be published in the newsletter.**

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## **FIRST CLASS MAIL**

**DATED MATERIAL**

### **OVERVIEW OF THE NEW FAMILY HISTORY LIBRARY IN CRANBERRY RUTH REIBER**

**SEPTEMBER 20, 2005 - 7:00 PM**

North Hills Genealogists is a group of people who share an interest in genealogy and meet to share their knowledge. NHG does NOT maintain a library and does NOT do research for others. An individual member may choose to handle research requests, but NHG will not be responsible for the quality of the work performed or any fees charged.

If you have an interesting research story, please consider submitting it for publication in future issues of the newsletter. Remember, this is YOUR organization and YOUR newsletter. Your participation is important to make both a success. Send your story to the post office box, or by email to the Editor at [DJBooth@worldnet.att.net](mailto:DJBooth@worldnet.att.net).

#### **NEW BOARD OFFICERS 2005-2006**

President - Steph Valentine

Vice President - Laura Kunig

Secretary - Sylvan Kretz

Treasurer - Reed Powell

#### **Committees**

Cemetery - Jo Henderson & Irene Dinning

Membership - Steph Valentine

Program - Laura Kunig

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Newsletter - Donna Booth