



# NORTH HILLS GENEALOGISTS

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## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Happy New Year! I trust you all had a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. I also hope that you didn't eat too much since it seems like the older you get, losing weight becomes more difficult. I've made my genealogical New Year's resolutions and I think I'll be able to knock a few off the list in the coming months.

I find something new every time I go to Northland Public Library. I was very pleased to find that ANCESTRY.COM has added additional immigration records. It appears that one of my ancestors had gone to Europe in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Since there are several trips and his family was wealthy, these must have been vacation trips. While I don't know where they went or what they saw, at least I know when they returned.

I also find that you can't always believe everything you find. This statement was just as true before the Internet as it is now. The Internet has made it faster to find data. Before the Internet you'd go to a library, look up a name on the census index and then go to the microfilm and find your ancestor. An hour or two, if the library had the census index and the microfilm in question. Today, you can look up the indexes on line in a matter of seconds and go directly to the census image. But the same issues then, still apply. The census index was done by a human and may or may not be correct. The census itself was written by a human, done by a human and may or may not be correct. The census itself was written by a human who may have written what he thought he heard but not was said. The point of all this is just because it is written, either in a book or on-line, doesn't mean that it is correct. Did the individual who posted the information include the sources of that information so you can separately validate that information? What are the sources? If I believed everything I read online, I could trace my ancestry back to Adam and Eve.

Time marches on. My father just turned 80 and his oldest surviving cousin just turned 90 this past month. I plan on sending them oral family history questions for them to consider. While I might not get to see my cousin, I plan on asking my father some of the questions so as to better understand how he grew up as a youngster. And to learn more about his parents and grandparents. I will be sending my second-cousin the same questions so she can question her mother.

As always, should you have any suggestions for speakers or topics for upcoming meetings, please let me or any board member know.

Steph

## **WHERE GENEALOGISTS MEET**

**Tuesday, February 7, 2006 – 7:00 pm - NHG Board Meeting – UPMC Passavant Hospital Cafeteria.**  
Everyone welcome.

**Tuesday, February 21, 2006 – 7:00 pm – Regular NHG Meeting – Researching England, Wales and Scotland records in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries at the LDS Family History Center – Linda Johnson**

### **Other Meetings**

**Thursday, January 19, 2006, 7:00 pm – Lawrenceville Historical Society – Rivers of Steel by Jan Dofner of the Rivers of Steel National Heritage Area. Canterbury Place, Fisk Street, Lawrenceville**

**Monday, January 23, 2005 – 7:00 pm – Greater Pittsburgh Civil War Round Table – “The Vicksburg Campaign” – Donald R. Rigone – The Babcock Meeting Room – Babcock Boulevard.**

**Wednesday, January 25, 2006 – 7:00 pm – Northland Public Library – “The Granger Brothers: In Their Own Words” – two Civil War soldiers in Company A of the 57<sup>th</sup> Pennsylvania Volunteers – Presented by Lou D’Angelo. Please register at the adult reference desk of call 412-366-8100 ext.113 (free program)**

**Sunday, February 12, 2006 – 2:00 pm – Genealogical Society of Southwestern PA – Citizen’s Library, Washington, PA – “Publishing for Fun and Profit: Your Project Should be Fun and Future Generations Will Profit” – Elissa Scalise Powell**

**Saturday February 18, 2006 – 10:00 am – WPGS Monthly Meeting – Ronald V. Deiger, VP, Union Dale Cemetery (Carnegie Lecture Hall, Oakland)**

**Saturday, February 18, 2006 – 10:00 am – Cranberry Genealogical Club – “Windows to the Past: Newspaper Research” – Elissa Scalise Powell - Cranberry Municipal Offices, Rochester Road.**

### **Future Events**

**April, 2006 – The 10 Days That Unexpectedly Changed America” - The story of the strike at the Homestead Mill - The History Channel**

**September 29-30, 2006 – Genealogical Conference – Pittsburgh, PA – Hosted by WPGS and The Genealogical Society of PA**

### **Genealogy Class**

**Genealogy from A to Z – Course #YCA-110-1450) – CCAC North Campus – 6 Wednesday evenings beginning February 15 from 6:30 to 9:30 pm - \$89.00 – Call 412-237-2670 and go to the website to register ([www.ccac.edu](http://www.ccac.edu))**

**The New Genealogy**  
**by Joanne Joyce Hughes © 1993**  
**submitted by Steph Valentine**

[Editor's note: While this was written before the onset of the Internet, it is still as timely as when it was written. Electronic Bulletin Boards were the precursor to the Internet for electronic information exchange.]

Once again, genealogical research stands at the crossroads. There are some major and exciting changes which have taken place, and which have affected the way in which we pursue our research.

In order to understand these changes and accept them as a new and exciting addition to a very old subject, we need to look back and review the history of this, the most interesting of pursuits.

In the twelfth century, monks were employed to manufacture elaborate, fictitious pedigrees for noble families, most of whom named as their antecedents, Adam and Eve. The Esterházy's for instance, traced their lineage back to the grandfather of Adam, under whom God created the universe!

Genealogy began to play a major role in our own cultural past when the right to bear arms and proven lines of succession made it necessary. From the College of Arms evolved peerage books published by Burke, Debrett, and Walford, which listed armigerous families, with their pedigrees. Though varying in content and accuracy, they have generated a great deal of interest, not only among students of heraldry, but especially among those who are interested in proving a connection to "blue blood".

Many 'nouveau riche' families in England had arms created for them. The ignorance about the study of heraldry contributed to the misuse of family crests and coats of arms. Charlatans appealing to people's desire to connect themselves to these families have produced a flood of "authentic" coats of arms and contributed to the notion that anyone who finds a coat of arms with the same surname has a right to display it as their own. What was once a record of one family has been usurped by a host of strangers who have plagiarized their family heritage.

To the heraldic expert, a coat of arms is not just a pleasing collection of pretty symbols. He "reads" the arms, and by doing so can trace the history of a family.

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in the United States many of the early settlers were descended from old European armigerous families, and pride of station and blood was not extinguished by their revolutionary spirit.

The establishing of patriotic societies provided the catalyst which resulted in an extraordinary interest in family history and genealogy amongst the general population.

The new nobility were the "patriot" ancestor, or the "immigrant" ancestor. They were looked upon with as much pride as the armigerous families of the old world.

In Canada, the United Empire Loyalists were given a mark of distinction and this generated a great deal of interest in family history. Many of the members, like their American counterparts seldom moved to trace their lineage further than the illustrious ancestor who inspired their research. Genealogy was however, not looked upon as a serious pursuit by historians. The pursuit of family history was considered to be more appropriately pursued by maiden aunts and local antiquarians.

I have had several male students in my classes who were somewhat shy about admitting their passion for family history.

Early family researchers were not taken seriously by the historian, and were barely tolerated by the offices of officialdom, and actively despised by archivists who considered their extraordinary curiosity in their holdings as impudent and frivolous.

Historians viewed genealogists as they did antiquarians, collectors of information about people of obscure origins whose lives had no place in the panorama of "real history".

The great wealth of sources that exist for the study of social history has long been ignored by all except the genealogist. Through the efforts of many professional records researchers and genealogists, many major collections have been salvaged and access to records has been safeguarded. As narrative history gave way to quantitative history, local history which had been left almost entirely to the antiquarian began to flourish. Family researchers have an intimate knowledge of antiquarians. They have had to struggle with their writings for years, because they were the only ones writing about local events which are so important to their research. They were well intentioned, but lacking the discipline of the historian, most local histories written by them were devoid of the documentation that the family researcher is seeking.

The admonition by the elders of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints to members of their congregation to seek out their ancestors to fulfill religious duties was a major impetus to the study of family history and local history.

Technological changes enabled them to copy major collections of records all over the world. Due to the agreement with the holders of the collections, they were made available to the public. It was an information explosion.

They have continued to keep up with technological changes, and we owe a great debt to them for helping not only to make these records available to all, but in helping to preserve them for generations to come.

The number of genealogy societies has steadily risen. They have had varying degrees of success in making information available to their members. Their publications range from mediocre to excellent, depending upon the enthusiasm, knowledge and dedication of their members.

Genealogy classes are now available in many areas. Most beginning family researchers are anxious to get to source material, but underestimate how important it is to learn the basics of good research first.

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"How To" books on genealogical research, and learning from more experienced members of genealogy societies has been the route which many have had to follow.

Now, exploding upon the scene, are the electronic bulletin boards. A wonderful "stew" of people from all walks of life.

There are those who are absolute beginners. There are those who have "looked" for rather than "researched" their families, and though they have learned something along the way over a period of time, would resent someone suggesting that they take a beginner's course in learning the basics of good research.

There are those who have a natural interest in history and are out there "just having a ball". These are the quick learners who will learn easily and go on to a wonderful life long interest.

There are those who quietly lurk. They download files, learn, and carry on without making the acquaintance of anyone.

There are those who are quite "thin skinned" and become very defensive at the slightest hint of criticism towards their views, their country, or their methods.

The ones who have the most fun, are those that want to learn, don't mind making mistakes, can take suggestions offered by more experienced users and are willing to share.

Then, there are those wonderful people who run the boards. We can show them our appreciation by abiding by the rules that they set, and make running the board a pleasure for them.

A word about genealogy societies. There will always be a need for genealogy societies. Many people cannot afford computers, or will never have the expertise required to use them. There will always be the need for dedicated members of societies to seek out and make available to all, information of genealogical interest. There will always be a need for genealogy societies where members, using all methods of genealogical exchange can meet.

Genealogy societies must take the lead given by the Mormon Church. I have been inspired when visiting the local FHC (family history center). I have watched people of advanced age as they use the computers with as much enthusiasm as any child in a modern classroom. I have felt great joy as I have met with former students there who took my classes as far back as 1979, who are using technology that didn't even exist when they attended my classes.

Now we are standing at the crossroads again. The information explosion is here, and genealogy societies must adapt to the new technology.

There is no information that any genealogy society has that is not already recorded elsewhere, or which is not available elsewhere. The proliferation of finding aids, indexes, inventories, manuscripts, lists and sources, from which they take their information is not the preserve of any one society or institution.

For genealogy societies to survive, they must fulfill the needs of their members. That is what they came into existence for. They will survive if they fulfill those needs.

I believe that the concept of the genealogical electronic bulletin boards is the single most important development in genealogical research today. If we abide by the rules of good social conduct, of fair play and usage of material, and willingness to help others, we will all benefit.

## BOOK REVIEW: PENNSYLVANIA GERMAN PIONEERS.

By Jack Sanders, © 1992

submitted by Steph Valentine

The port of Philadelphia was the entryway to Pennsylvania for tens of thousands of Germans who were lured to New World by the promise of religious peace and material prosperity. William Penn himself, granted title to the 40,000 miles of what was to become his namesake state, traveled to the Rhine provinces "whose once-peaceful valleys, thriving fields, and vine-clad hills had become the hunting ground of political and religious fanatics," writes Ralph Beaver Strassburger. Personally and through his agents, Penn invited the Rhinelanders, "the suffering Palatines," to "help him found a state in which religious and civil liberty would prevail." And beginning with the Germantown settlement in 1683, Pennsylvania became a bastion of freedom-seeking Germans.

In 1934, Dr. Strassburger put together "Pennsylvania German Pioneers," a compilation of the original lists of passenger arrivals in the port of Philadelphia from 1727 to 1808. The two-volume set, published originally by the Pennsylvania-German Society, was out of print when Genealogical Publishing Company reissued it in 1966. The set has continued to sell out of editions, and the latest has just been come off the presses.

Pennsylvania German Pioneers contains data on 38,000 people. According to the introduction, it is "the basis of the ancestry of hundreds of thousands of Americans, enabling them to determine with certainty the time of their ancestors' arrivals in Pennsylvania and the place ... whence they came."

In some cases, especially with later arrivals, other details are available, such as the ages of the immigrants, relationships to others on board, occupations, and even their height and color of their hair! The index is particularly comprehensive, running some 450 of the set's 1,564 pages, and including many variant spellings of surnames and even given names.

No serious researcher into the roots of the Pennsylvania Germans should be without access to this basic reference. Most good libraries covering the subject even peripherally have it or may be ordering the latest edition.

## GENERAL INFORMATION

### Price Increase for film at LDS

As of January 15 the price of film orders will increase to \$5.75 at the Pittsburgh, PA Family History Center in Greentree. This covers \$5.50 for the film and \$.25 for the cost of postage to notify patrons and the cost of printing the post cards.

(submitted by Laura Kunig)

### Obit Index for Butler Area

Check out the obit index for the Butler area which is now available online at [www.bafis.org/butler](http://www.bafis.org/butler).

(submitted by Barbara Guffey)

### Pennsylvania Genealogy Conference

**"The Keystone to Your Heritage"**

**September 29-30, 2006**

**Pittsburgh, PA**

This conference is being sponsored by WPGS and the Genealogical Society of Pennsylvania. It will be held at the Sheraton Station Square Hotel. There will be sessions on Advanced Genealogy, Pennsylvania Genealogy and Internet Technology. Some of the speakers will be Patricia Law Hatcher, FASG, John Humphrey, John Kovalinka, Roger Minert, PhD, AG, Christine Rose CG, Rick Sayer, Jonathan Stayer and Curt Witcher. The keynote speaker will be Pittsburgh's own Rick Sebak. There will also be vendors available with genealogical books, etc. If you are a member of WPGS, GSP or NHG you will be receiving a conference brochure and registration forms in the mail. To read more about the conference there will be a special website for the conference [www.pagenealogyconference.com](http://www.pagenealogyconference.com). Don't miss this opportunity to hear some of the nationally-known speakers right in your own backyard.

## HANDBASTING

Reprinted from "Gleanings" published by the Beaver County Genealogical Society, Spring and Summer 2005, Vol. 29, Nos. 3 and 4

H/F after a person's name on birth and marriage records means "Handfast." Basically it is a sign of the confirmation of a type of "uncanonical, private or even probational form of marriage." Handfasting was for announcing a union between a man and woman who wished to live together as husband and wife before receiving the blessing of the church. The couple would stand before a group of their peers, hold their clasped hands above their heads and state their intentions. The agreement was good for a year and a day or until the preacher came to perform the rites of the church. If at the end of the specified time, each wished to go his/her own way, they could do so with no ties. No matter what happened, any child born of a Handfast would inherit.

## SURVEYORS' TERMS

A 'perch' equals 16.5 feet for one rod. It is sometimes called a 'pole.' Surveyors speak of a 'chain' which is 66 ft or four rods (or perches). A link – from the 1/100<sup>th</sup> part of a chain is 7.92 inches.

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**FIRST CLASS MAIL**

**DATED MATERIAL**

**TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 21, 2006 – 7:00 PM**  
**RESEARCHING ENGLAND, WALES & SCOTLAND RECORDS AT**  
**THE LDS FAMILY HISTORY LIBRARIES**  
**LINDA JOHNSON**

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.

### **QUERIES**

NHG accepts queries from both members and non-members for publication in the newsletter at no charge. Submit your queries to the Query Editor at the address on the front page. Please include as much information as possible (names, dates, locations and your contact information) Queries are NOT limited to Pennsylvania.

### **MEMBERS STORIES**

Submit your research stories for publication in the newsletter. Let NHG members know about your success (of failure) in your research. Let us know about websites, libraries, etc. that you found helpful in your research. Half the fun in genealogy is sharing with other researchers.

See you at our February meeting