



Middlesex Genealogical Society

Vol. XIII, No. 4

Darien, Fairfield County, CT

September 1997

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Hopefully, all our members have had a good summer and have made progress on their genealogical research. I hope you will share your work with the rest of us. A lot of the fun in genealogy is sharing the results or the research or the sources with others.

During the summer I have been researching one of my ancestral lines in Albany, NY, and have had the good fortune to work on this project with two distant cousins working on the same line. Working together has been more interesting, and we have certainly made more progress than we could have made working separately. Among other things, we were excited to discover an 1800 survey of a family farm.

Even though many documents did not survive the 1911 fire at the New York State Library, it was a pleasant surprise to learn that Albany still has fairly extensive genealogical resources, particularly at the New York State Library and at the Albany Hall of Records. It is intriguing to know that newly discovered documents sometimes still surface. For example, one of the things that we located this summer was a helpful 1788 tax list for the City of Albany, which recently became available after being unknown for many years.

Closer to home, Kim Paterson is organizing a group trip to the Connecticut State Library (Wed., 22 Oct.) which has a wonderful collection of Connecticut information (see page 7). I would encourage you to join in the trip, to learn more about the resources available and to use this library facility.

We can look forward to our next meeting, 18 October, at which Tom Peters will speak on "Tracing Your German Ancestry" (see page 2). Come to hear him and give him a good welcome.

David L. Mordy

MGS AT DARIEN LIBRARY

by C. Scribner

The schedule for Saturday morning workshops has been distributed, and we are up and running for the new season which began 6 September 1997. Volunteers report to the library on a rotating basis Saturday mornings, 10:00 am to noon. The purpose of workshops is to provide guidance and research assistance to those interested in genealogy and family heritage. Once again, we are asking for volunteers to help with this worthwhile project. If interested, please contact Charles Scribner at 655-4830, or any member of the Board of Directors.

Ann Smith Lainhart's book *State Census Records* is located on shelf 3 of the Darien Library collection next to our own collection in the Business Reference Room. Ms. Lainhart was the guest speaker at the 19 April 1997 meeting of MGS. ■

USING MAPS IN GENEALOGY

The U.S. Geological Survey has an interesting Web page devoted to the topic of "Maps Can Help You Trace Your Family Tree." The page lists a number of sources of old maps and geographical information for the United States. To take a look, point your Web browser to:

<http://info.er.usgs.gov/fact-sheets/genealogy/index.html> ■

WEST POINT ARCHIVES

An MGS member with an ancestor that attended the U.S. Military Academy sent an inquiry recently to the U.S. Military Academy Archives at West Point, NY -- and was rewarded with a sizable package of photocopied records. If there is a West Pointer in your background, do not overlook this source. ■

MIDDLESEX GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY

1997-1998 OFFICERS

David L. Mordy	President
Robert E. Kenyon III	Vice President
Ruth R. McGrath	Treasurer
Mary Ellen Gleason	Secretary

MEMBERS at LARGE

R. Geoffrey Blain
Charles Cotter
Emeline Fatherley
Philip Morehouse
Donna Moughty
Kim Paterson
Richard Sarr
Marianne Sheldon

David V. Bowley	Immediate Past President
Charles Scribner	Librarian
Dorothy Shillinglaw	Newsletter Editor
Florence Wyland	Newsletter Coeditor

TRUSTEES

Mary Freedman
Henry Hoff
Thomas Kemp
Grant Radmall

Middlesex Genealogical Society was established for the purpose of helping those interested in genealogy to pursue the investigation of their family heritage and to provide guidance in research to that end. The society holds at least four meetings with a program and speaker during the year, has established a Genealogy Section at Darien Library, provides research assistance on Saturday mornings (10 am to noon) at Darien Library, and publishes a newsletter at least four times a year. Annual membership dues are \$15 per individual and \$20 per couple or family.

Original articles, notices of genealogical interest, and queries are welcomed for publication in the *Newsletter*.

Middlesex Genealogical Society
P.O. Box 1111
Darien, Fairfield County, CT 06820

Homepage: <http://www.darien.lib.ct.us/mgs>
E-mail: dbowley@concentric.net

UPCOMING MGS MEETINGS MARK YOUR CALENDARS

18 OCTOBER 1997: THOMAS A. PETERS, a Certified Genealogical Record Specialist, will speak on "TRACING YOUR GERMANIC ANCESTRY USING HOME SOURCES AND AMERICAN SOURCES," much of which will have applicability to tracing other European ancestry. His presentation will include visual examples.

Tom Peters has been a genealogical lecturer for 15 years and has specialized in immigrant genealogy -- successfully tracing many immigrant ancestors back to their European villages and continuing research in European records. His full-time research in immigrant genealogy exposes him to many difficult cases, most of which are successfully concluded.

15 NOVEMBER 1997: Speaker to be announced.

14 FEBRUARY 1998: ANNUAL WORKSHOP MEETING.

18 APRIL 1998: Return visit of SUZANNE McVETTY.

16 MAY 1998: ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING.

ALL MEETINGS: SATURDAY, 2:00 PM, DARIEN LIBRARY. COME, AND BRING A FRIEND. ■

STYROFOAM WILL CLEAN TOMBSTONES

According to *YVGS Family Finder*, published by the Yucaipa Valley Genealogical Society of Yucaipa, CA, a block of Styrofoam from your local craft shop will clean moss and soil debris from tombstones without damaging the stone. ■

SO YOU THINK YOU HAVE DIFFICULTY RESEARCHING SMITH OR JONES!

In the 6 May 1997 issue of the Centre, PA, *Daily Times* an Associated Press release from Beijing, China, reported that the surname "Li" has now surpassed "Zhang" as the world's most widely used surname. This information was provided by China's state-run news agency, which said that 87 million people are named Li, Zhang, Wang, Liu, or Chen. Zhau, Shu and Kong, which topped name lists in ancient times, now rank seventh, 14th and 72nd.

The latest book on Chinese names, *The Great Dictionary of Chinese Family Names*, suggests that China introduce regulations on surname usage to ease problems caused by so many Chinese sharing surnames. ■

FOUND AT LAST

by Florence Wyland

Ten years or more of searching for our long lost Civil War soldier was successful at last. Communicating with our government bureaucracies can be frustrating at times, but they do keep good records. One just has to find the right bureaucracy and have patience.

Forty-four years ago we began hearing about Wyland family members who had served in the United States Civil War. We decided to find out all about them, but it wasn't easy.

We began by talking to any relatives who might have heard anything. When our grown children began retelling the stories that their great-grandmother had told to them when they were young, things started to happen. (The children were amazed to realize they had heard firsthand stories about relatives who had fought in the Civil War.) Great-grandmother was in her 90s, but her memory was very good. She told about her father-in-law, George Gilbert Wyland, who had served in the 125th Pennsylvania Volunteers, had fought in many battles and had been wounded at Antietam during that torturous battle. He survived the wound, but many years later died of Bright's disease. She told them she *thought* his death was the result of his war injury earlier in life, but he did live to return home, marry Sarah Chambers¹ and raise a son.

Great-grandmother also mentioned that her father-in-law had a brother Lewis who was killed in the war. His body was never returned to his mother in Centre County, PA, and no one knew where he was buried. Arlington National Cemetery was not then in existence, but so many men were killed early in the war that land had to be found for the burials. Six acres were donated in Washington, DC (now Soldiers' Home National Cemetery), and many of the first burials were there.

The search was on. Over the years I wrote to as many addresses of Civil War record keepers as I could find. I had written to the National Archives for George's records, as the family had some of his papers, but there was nothing about Lewis except a handwritten letter mentioning that he was killed at the age of 20. I wrote to Arlington National

Cemetery with no results. I wrote to Poplar Grove Church, Maryland, where his unit was mustered out on 16 October 1864, but he was simply listed as "not present" on the muster roll. I wrote to the U.S. Army Military History Institute, Carlisle Barracks, PA. They answered that I was welcome to come and visit, and that I could go through several hundreds of pages of records and photographs that they have. I wrote to Philadelphia. I wrote to the National Park Service in Petersburg, VA. I wrote to the U.S. Department of the Interior, Division of Archives and Manuscripts, Harrisburg, PA, and I wrote to the Register of Wills, Orphans' Court, Williamsport, PA, where he may have been born -- and still no luck.

Then, one day, I received a letter from the Department of the Army, U.S. Soldier's and Airmen's Home National Cemetery, Washington, DC. It said: "Reference to your letter dated 13 December 1987, forwarded to this office from Memorial Affairs, Veterans' Administration. Concerning burial location of Lewis A. Wyland, our records show one Wyland. Information is as follows:

Name: WYLAND, Lewis A.
Rank: PVT
Company: 'G'
Regiment: 51 PA INF
Section: 'D'
Grave #: 5512"

Enclosed with the letter was a cemetery brochure and a map marked with the location of the gravesite.

This was the best and most helpful news I had received -- good, solid information. Of course, I followed up and obtained copies of the company muster rolls, which recorded each month whether a soldier was present or absent, and whether or not he received his pay. The muster roll for January of 1863 said that Lewis Wyland was "Absent -- Sick in Hospital at Washington, DC."

It was then that I began looking for a pension record; perhaps someone had applied for one. To my delight I received a large packet of information; his mother *had* applied for a Mother's Pension. One document was a copy of a letter from the Surgeon General's Office, Record and Pension Bureau, Washington, DC, 16 June 1864, which reported that Pvt. Lewis A. Wyland, Co. G, 51st Regiment, PA Vols. died 6 January 1863 at Campbell General

¹ Sarah Chambers was a descendant of one of the four Chambers brothers who had settled Chambersburg, PA.

Hospital, Washington, DC, of typhoid fever. That 134-year-old letter answered our questions: where Lewis died, what he died of, where he was buried.

It would be another 10 years before we were able to visit the gravesite on a trip we made toward the end of last winter. We found what is called the Soldiers' Home National Cemetery in Washington, DC. Twisting along narrow roads and around sharp corners in our RV (recreational vehicle) was difficult, but we finally came to the cemetery gate, squeezed through, and parked our vehicle down the hill, among rows and rows of memorial headstones.

I went to the superintendent's house, introduced myself, and told him the name I was looking for. Incredibly, he said, "Oh, yes, I know that name. Let me get my file." He pulled out an old, tattered, yellow file card with Lewis's information on it. "Follow me," he said. "I'll show you where it is." Trembling with excitement we followed, and, as we reached the right area, he turned into one of the rows. There it was, four stones in: Lewis A. Wyland, PA Vol., died 6 January 1863. Even though this was my husband's relative, I felt very moved. This small stone, standing among thousands of others, seemed so sad and alone. I wondered if anyone else had visited here in the last 135 years. All his family and relatives were deceased, of course, except for us. I asked the superintendent if he had any records of other visitors to this gravesite, and he said no.

We took photos, although I felt somewhat intrusive doing so. I asked if that was the original grave-stone, and the superintendent said yes, except for the very first one which was wooden. There were so many deaths early in the war, all of a sudden, that graves were hastily dug, covered with dirt mounds, and marked with wooden headboards for identification.

The present superintendent is Lincoln Berry, U.S. Army, who served in Vietnam and received many decorations. He watches over these well kept grounds and ordered



Lincoln Berry & Alan Wyland

rows of white marble headstones where the first burials occurred 3 August 1861.

More than 12,000 interments have taken place in the Soldiers' Home National Cemetery since its establishment in the dark days of the Civil War. In 1874 Col. O. A. Mack, Inspector of National Cemeteries, reported 5,612 interments in this cemetery, including 278 "unknowns," 125 Confederate prisoners of war, and 117 "citizens, employees, etc." From 1861 through 1864 more than five thousand interments took place on these six acres of land.²

Should anyone want more information about this cemetery, I would be happy to help. ■

GRANT'S TOMB RESTORED

The 175th anniversary of Ulysses S. Grant's birth, 27 April 1822, was marked this year by completion in March of a three-year restoration project for his tomb located alongside Riverside Drive in Manhattan. Although construction of the tomb took some \$600,000 in privately donated funds 100 years ago, restoration has cost the federal government \$1.5 million. Nevertheless, the effort is paying off handsomely in increased visitor traffic at the monument. ■

RECORDS LOST TO MIDWEST FLOODS

Eastman's Online Genealogy Newsletter, April 1997, reported that the Grand Forks, ND, *Herald* suffered extensive damage to its offices and archives during the great flood of 1997.

From the *Herald's* Web page: "The physical structure is only part of the loss. The past was lost, too. The *Herald's* archives were destroyed. For decades librarians here have clipped the newspaper, recording the comings and goings of the mean and the mighty, the haughty and the humble. For decades, beginning with W. P. Davies, editors of the *Herald* have kept a file of important dates in the community's history. Some issues may be salvaged on computer or on microfilm...but everything else is gone."

The Grand Forks and University of North Dakota Libraries were *not* flooded, although some circulating materials were lost. Across the river, however, the East Grand Forks (MN) Library was completely inundated and lost everything. ■

²

Source: Commanding General, Military District of Washington, U.S. Army, Washington, DC 20315.

A VISIT TO THE FAMILY HISTORY LIBRARY

by Dorothy Shillinglaw

Vacation plans for a June bus tour starting in Salt Lake City presented the welcome opportunity to spend a few days at the Family History Library, so we booked in early at the Hilton (used by the tour group) and immediately walked the five blocks to the library. Salt Lake City blocks are huge, however, and after that first afternoon we made use of hotel vans when available and free downtown bus service while we adjusted to the altitude. (There are four hotels within one block of FHL!)

The library, just west of Temple Square in downtown Salt Lake City, is a treasure box that contains over 258,000 books, about 523,000 microfiches, and over 1.9 million microfilms. With the exception of Sundays and certain holidays, it opens every morning at 7:30 am and stays open until 6:00 pm on Mondays, 10:30 pm Tuesdays through Saturdays.

The library's most surprising feature is its openness as almost all of the library's holdings are on exposed shelves or in accessible cabinets. (Admission to a small Special Collections Room containing Mormon documents is restricted to LDS members with a temple recommend or bishop's letter.) Researchers may go directly to the shelves and cabinets that contain items of interest, remove and use them, make copies when desired, and then replace the material used. (Return microfilms to their place in the proper cabinet; deposit books on red shelves at the end of the shelving area from which they came -- where library volunteers are constantly reshelving.) The amount of data that can be reviewed under these circumstances is truly astonishing.

Although it is generally easy to find what you want at the library on your own, if you have questions or need direction knowledgeable help is available at a reference information desk on each of the four floors. Volunteer helpers can be found elsewhere as well. A case in point is the U.S. census area. Just outside this section is a workstation where all U.S. census indexes in print can be consulted. Within the area, microfilm cabinets line the walls. Soundexes are filed by year, state, code number and given name; and census schedules are filed by year, state, county, and enumeration district. At the center

of this area is another workstation, with still more reference books, staffed by three or four volunteers whose cheerful "May I help you?" seems to be generated by any puzzled facial expression -- or even a pause.

Facilities are excellent. The number of reading tables is adequate; and the number of microfilm readers is so large that users can be choosy about location -- and even includes readers designed for the left-handed and the disabled. A power rewriter is available in each copy room, easing that chore.

Careful preparation before reaching the Family History Library can make time spent there even more productive. It does not make sense to use precious FHL time consulting the library's catalog, which is part of *FamilySearch* software, when that can be done at Darien Library or at a local family history center before leaving Connecticut.

Darien Library was my choice. At home I wrote down names and places of interest to me and organized a light-weight, three-ring binder containing basic family information that would help identify individuals found in examined records. Then, at Darien Library I put together a five-page list of relevant citations that I could easily carry in my binder -- or in a pocket. (As a matter of fact, I carried three copies of my list in different places, all labeled with my name and address, because loss would have been disastrous.) I also brought with me a three-hole-punched tablet for making notes that could then be inserted in my binder.

Incidentally, there is a useful book on the circulating shelves of Darien Library that I recommend highly, even though the library's copy is not the latest edition available: *Going to Salt Lake City to Do Family History Research* by J. Carlyle Parker. It is enormously helpful and contains some information that users of FHL are unlikely to learn elsewhere, e.g.: • if lines are long at copying machines on the floor you are using, you may carry your book or film to one of the other three floors where traffic might be lighter; • guest passes for the LDS cafeteria (first lower level, 50 East North Temple Street) can be obtained by library patrons at the reference information desk on the first floor of FHL.

Naturally, each person's search will be different. My own focus was broad as I could examine profitably records from California, Connecticut, Iowa,

Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New York, and Vermont, as well as European records from Germany, England, Ireland, and Scotland. I spent most of my time in the U.S.-Canada area on the 1st (books) and 2nd (microforms) floors, but reserved a large portion of my final day for the British Isles area that fills the 2nd basement floor. I ran out of time before I ran out of tasks, of course, but still managed to find a number of family members in long-ago census, town, church, cemetery and vital records, and in some published genealogies.

Note: New Hampshire vital record citations that I found in the *FamilySearch* library catalog here in Darien contained the statement, "RESTRICTIONS: No paper copies may be made without written authorization from the State Registrar of New Hampshire. No circulation to family history centers." Somewhat dismayed, I wrote to New Hampshire in the hope of getting such permission before departure for Utah and learned that information is only restricted for birth records *after 1900*, and death, marriage and divorce records *after 1937*. Then, when I got to the Family History Library, I found that the early 19th century New Hampshire microfilms on my list were freely available among all the other U.S.-Canada microfilms -- with no restrictions whatsoever. As a matter of fact, the only restricted microfilm I came across at FHL was one that would help me identify the 1871 Scottish census enumeration district for an Edinburgh address. When I inquired about this empty box heavily marked in red "RESTRICTED" at the reference information desk on that floor, I was sent to the library attendants' window against the wall where I exchanged my driver's license for the film, which was returned to me when I brought the film back. Why that particular film was restricted is a complete mystery as I had used comparable films for the 1851 and 1861 censuses and they were *not* restricted, nor were the census films for 1851, 1861 and 1871.

From time to time while I was at the library, classes on a wide variety of subjects -- from the use of PAF to Swedish customs laws -- were announced over the loudspeaker system. All who had an interest were invited to attend. Knowing the subject matter and class times in advance would be useful to visitors who might like to take advantage of this valuable bonus, and a free copy of the schedule of

classes can be obtained by writing to the Family History Library, 35 North West Temple Street, Salt Lake City, UT 84150, or by telephoning (801) 240-3702.

About the weather: We *thought* we were going to a very dry area, but it rained at least once every day that we were in Salt Lake City. At times rainfalls were extremely heavy and of extended duration, and some included hail. As always at high altitudes, air cools quickly when the sun disappears.

Overall, my visit to the Family History Library was a pleasant and extremely productive one -- an experience I would most definitely like to repeat. ■

GERMAN CARD FOR GENEALOGICAL RESEARCH

The *German Card for Genealogical Research* is a simple but effective resource devised by the Sacramento German Genealogy Society. It is actually five laminated, fan-folded cards, each roughly the size of a business card and printed on both sides.

On one side, across all five cards, the entire German alphabet appears in both cursive and printed "Fraktur," together with our own familiar alphabet, arranged so that the researcher can place each letter under a German word for comparison.

On the other side: One card contains the titles of eight of the most basic German genealogy resources, e.g., *Meyers Oats* gazetteer. Another card provides the English equivalents of terms that frequently crop up in German research, such as "Krebs," "kirchenbuch" and "Standesamt." The mysteries of the soundex system, so vital in the use of U.S. censuses, is explained, as are the censuses themselves. What to look for in German genealogical records is briefly discussed. This little card will also decipher the symbols on German pedigree charts for you.

If you are interested, see Florence Wyland for an order form. The cost is \$3.00. Yes, three dollars! ■

ARIZONA OPENS RECORDS

The Aug./Sept. 1997 issue of *Family Tree* reports that an Arizona law that took effect the end of July opens vital records for genealogical research. This is, indeed, good news, but, unfortunately, microfilms of the records will not get to the library, archives and public records departments until 30 June 1998. ■

COMPUTER CORNER

by David Bowley

Using the Internet to Find Relatives:

Early this summer I posted a homepage³ on the Internet where I listed the earliest person known for each of the 11 lines that I was researching. Among the entries were William Rapley and Ruth Court, Sussex, 1750-1800, my third great-grandparents on my father's side. I also posted the address and name of the homepage at Ancestry Home Town, which is an excellent genealogical homepage on the net with the address: <http://www.ancestry.com>

Richard Eastman, who has now joined with Ancestry in the publication of his weekly newsletter for computerized genealogy, was good enough to mention my homepage in his newsletter. Imagine my surprise when I got an e-mail letter from a Jane E. Thompson about two weeks later which said, "I am a descendant of William Rapley and Ruth Court's son James who came to Canada in 1832."

The chances of this happening seemed astronomical until I learned that earlier she had been searching the LDS Ancestral File for Rapleys and found William Rapley on the file that I had submitted to the LDS showing my name as contributor.

As my newly found cousin also uses Parsons Technology's *Family Origins 5.0* software, I was able to send her a GEDCOM file with all my Rapley information. She, in turn, as well as giving me all the information on the Canadian line back to 1832, had also done research in Sussex and was able to take that line back another generation to Ruth Court's parents who were born in 1721.

As you can imagine, I soon found other Canadian Rapley cousins, the nearest of whom was third cousin in Charlotte in Strathroy. She was about to turn 96, so I sent her a birthday card and ancestral sheets for our common relatives William and Ruth. Next, Jane Thompson put me on to what she called my double cousin, a Kenneth Rapley, my age, who lives in Montreal. I telephoned him and told him that I thought we were cousins and that I had his ancestors back to 1721 in Sussex. Now, you may think that this is very boring stuff, but, to me, who had never

spoken to a North American relative other than members of my immediate family, it was exciting!

It turns out that James Rapley came to Canada's Adelaide Township in May 1832 as part of Lord Egremont's Petworth Emigration Scheme. Apparently, there was a depression in England in the 1830s, and the parishes in Sussex were having difficulty supporting people on the parish rolls. Lord Egremont⁴, whose family seat was Petworth House, financed an arrangement called the Petworth Emigration Scheme, whereby people in need were helped to emigrate to Adelaide Township (now Strathroy) in Ontario, Canada.

James Rapley, a widower in his early fifties, took a family of seven children to the Ontario wilderness, and within six weeks he was dead! Emigrants were urged to write back to Sussex encouraging others to make the same journey (or mistake), and many of these fascinating letters have been saved and will be published shortly in Canada. ■

MGS TRIP TO CONNECTICUT STATE LIBRARY

Kim Paterson is organizing an MGS visit to the Connecticut State Library, 231 Capitol Avenue, Hartford, CT, on Wednesday, 22 October 1997. Car pools will be arranged, and a sign-up sheet will be available at our 18 October meeting. Group members will assemble at the Darien Library parking lot at 7:00 am the day of the trip. Upon arrival at the Connecticut State Library, there will be an orientation program for us, following which we will be free to pursue our individual research goals until the library closes at 5:00 pm.

Connecticut State Library has an extraordinary historical and genealogical collection that includes town vital records, church records, family bible records, cemetery inscriptions, newspaper notices of marriages and deaths, federal census records, probate records, land records, military service records, court records, maps, manuscripts, archival material covering government activities from colonial days to the present, and much more. *Don't miss this trip!* ■

³ <http://pages.prodigy.com/CT/ctgenealogy2/davebowley.html>

⁴ For those of you who read my article, "Boney's Chamberpot," in the last newsletter, Lord Egremont was the gentleman who neglected to marry the women that bore his children. Perhaps this is where the idea for the emigration scheme originated.

Application for Membership

Middlesex Genealogical Society
P.O. Box 1111
Darien, CT 06820

Annual Dues
Individual (\$15) _____
Family (\$20) _____

Name _____

Address _____

Zip _____ Phone _____

Deadline for next newsletter
18 October 1997



Middlesex Genealogical Society
PO Box 1111
Darien CT 06820-1111

MEETING 18 OCT. 1997
SATURDAY, 2 PM
DARIEN LIBRARY

