



Middlesex Genealogical Society

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Darien, Fairfield County, CT

September 2005

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

I hope you all had a great summer. Mine was busy—college graduation for my youngest and her move to Philadelphia. It doesn't seem possible that all three of my girls (young women now) are finished with school and out on their own. One of the projects I'm working on (one of many) is a scrapbook for each of them this Christmas. Actually, there's a method to my madness. I'm trying to sort out pictures and go through all the memorabilia I've collected over the years to organize and clear out the house. I tend to be a saver and, unfortunately, I now have 35 years worth of stuff to go through.

I'm not sure which is worse, to be a saver and have more "stuff" than you know what to do with, or to be a cleaner with little to recall the times of those that lived before us. I'm afraid my ancestors were probably cleaners since I have little with which to reconstruct their lives.

The key is to organize what we have, what we've researched, and to publish it (well documented and sourced, of course). I sometimes get so involved in research that I neglect to do the writing. Most experts advise writing in small chunks. That way the task doesn't seem so daunting. Right after you research, stop and write a narrative of what you've found. Notice that I said narrative, not just data entry into your genealogical program. I have found this to be an important part of my client work, but haven't done it as much for my own family (not that I have a lot of time to work on my own family anymore). I copy the narrative I've written and paste it into the "Notes" field of my genealogical database so I have it with the rest of my data. One of the benefits for me of writing a narrative is that it clarifies my research and highlights gaps, as well as areas for additional research in the future.

Think about how you can incorporate this into your own research. Perhaps you begin with a picture and write narrative about that individual or event; or maybe you have a letter or diary that provides insight into the time

your ancestor lived. Don't forget to write about yourself, too. I find that my database for my own family has notes about my children and my parents, but doesn't have much narrative about my husband and me. So maybe that's a place to start. Tell your story; tell about your family, siblings, life when you were growing up, or pick an historical moment (death of a world leader, landing on the moon, 9/11) and write about what you were doing, thinking, and the effect it had on your life.

Think about what might happen to your work if you don't share it with others. It may end up as just notes, files or computer programs that are discarded at some point in the future. One way to share your information, not only for your family, but also possibly for future generations is to publish it in our MGS Newsletter. Our newsletter is one that is extracted for PERSI (the PERiodical Source Index). Not long ago I found a reference in PERSI to an article written in the 1930's. On my recent trip to Salt Lake City I obtained a copy of the article (you can also write to the Ft. Wayne Library and ask them to send you a copy of any article cited in PERSI), which helped to support an evidence case I am working on. So talk to our newsletter editor, Dorothy Shillinglaw, about an article, a Family Bible record, or some research problem that you've solved. Not only will it help the society and our members, but it may help a researcher in the future make a connection to your family.

Happy hunting!

Donna Moughty

OFFICIAL REGISTER OF THE UNITED STATES, 1816-1959

An article with the above title begins on page 50 of the Winter 2004 (Vol. 36, No. 4) issue of *Prologue*, Quarterly of the National Archives and Records Administration. If your ancestor was employed by the federal government during these years, this article should be of great interest. ■

MIDDLESEX GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY

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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 and publishes a quarterly newsletter. Annual membership dues are \$20 per individual and \$25 per couple or family.

Original 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://mgs.darien.org>

E-mail: mgs3@optonline.net

UPCOMING MGS MEETINGS

MARK YOUR CALENDARS

ALL MEETINGS SATURDAY, 2 PM, PROGRAM ROOM AT DARIEN LIBRARY. COME, AND BRING A FRIEND!

1 OCTOBER 2005. GERMAN GENEALOGY will be presented by **ROBERT LAW, JR.** Bob's presentation will answer the questions: Where is Germany? Who is a German? What do you need to discover in the U.S. before researching in Europe? German history and geography, immigration and emigration, names and religion, language and script, church and civil records, maps and gazetteers, family history sources, and Luxembourg, Alsace, Switzerland and Austria will all be covered.

Bob has 25 years of genealogical research experience with particular focus on U.S.A., Canadian, German, Irish and English research. He is the Director of Genealogy at Ridgefield Historical Society and a librarian at the New Canaan Family History Center. He is a member of Ontario Genealogical Society, German Research Association, Immigrant Genealogical Society, Irish Ancestral Research Society, Ulster Historical Society, Scotch-Irish Society of the U.S., Society of Genealogists (London), Connecticut Society of Genealogists, New York Genealogical & Biographical Society, and New England Historic Genealogical Society.

19 NOVEMBER 2005. TAX AND LAND RECORDS: WHAT THEY CAN TELL YOU will be presented by **VIRGINIA BANERJEE**. Analysis of tax and land records can provide insight into the lives of our ancestors not available elsewhere. Tax records are a valuable substitute for censuses, and examination of land records may expose a chain of relationships. This program will focus on the variety that may be extant within these record types and how to locate and use these records in genealogical research. These records locate our ancestors in *time* and *place* and offer us an opportunity to see our ancestors within the context of their community and neighbors.

Virginia is a member of the MGS board with over 25 years of research experience. She has presented programs and taught courses in genealogy for a number of years and has been published by several genealogical organizations. She has also completed research and private publication of a book on Indian history, genealogy of her husband's family, and memoirs of their life in India in the early 1950s.

28 JANUARY 2005. CONNECTICUT'S BARBOUR COLLECTION OF VITAL RECORDS: MORE (AND LESS) THAN MEETS THE EYE will be presented by **HARLAN JESSUP**. Connecticut statutes have required vital records to be kept since 1640, and these records to about 1850 have been compiled in the Barbour Collection. Understanding and using this collection depends on understanding the history of record-keeping statutes in the colony and state and on understanding how the collection was created by Lucius B. Barbour, the sponsor, and James N. Arnold, the remarkable compiler of these records. Groups of records from several towns were missed, and sources for these will be disclosed.

(Continued on page 8)

LAST FAREWELL

The original of this letter is in the hands of James Shillinglaw of Monroe, Ohio, who has graciously granted us permission to print a transcription here. The recipient of the letter was his ancestor Andrew Shillinglaw, an immigrant to South Carolina. The writer of the letter was Andrew's brother in Scotland who, approaching the age of 70, felt his life was probably coming to a close and was essentially saying goodbye.

Editor's note: Punctuation is skimpy, spelling is casual, and capitalization is somewhat random. For example, you will rarely find a capital letter at the start of a new sentence. Sometimes a long dash is used between two sentences, sometimes a double comma, but periods are notably lacking. I have inserted bracketed periods where no other separation exists. Nevertheless, staying as close as possible to the letter as written quickly immerses the reader in mid-19th century life.

Persevere; it is well worth the effort! Not only is the letter deeply touching, it also sheds light on the great impact that emigration had on the families of our ancestors.

Getsidehouse

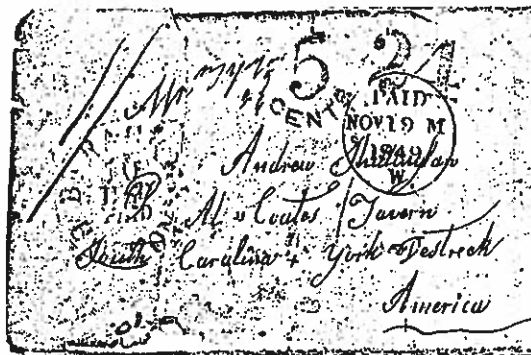
Nov. 18th

1849

Dear Brother & Sister & Frinds

We thus mak another attempt of writing to [you] once more before we go hence and be no more with respeck to this world — Hoping therefor that you both are in the land of the living and also your family so we in the hope of this we now write you,, And we your Brother and Sister first of all will give you a Description of ourselves as Charity begins at home — and we by the living mercy of God are still in the land of the living and in wonderful good health when we are writing this according to our advanced years[.] I am now upon the border of seventy years, and shourly it is high time for me to Consider that my time upon this Earth is near an end frinds to be in readiness to stand before the Judge of all the Earth and to stand aquited before Him in a Deying hour and a Judgment Day,, Margaret is well stricken in years also but sum years younger than I am but Coming Down to meet the grave the house appointed for all leiving but we have leived very Comfortable together[.] it hath been good for me that ever I fell inn with her and I trust that God in his providence will sper her to see me laid in the Dust[.]

My family is all squandred from me especially my Daughters — Andrew with whome you are best aquent is Stoping in Earlston and hath been for sum years past[.] they ave now 5 Children 4 Sons and one Daughter[.] they had another Daughter but she Died sum years ago[.]



they keep a publick house in Earlston, and the Wife keeps the publick and Andrew still works at the mason work[.] I think they are Doing Disently well in as far as I have any knowledge of there way of living — My Second Son whose name is Henry he and his family are stoping at Longformacus but [he] is going to remove to Dernick a littel from Melrose[.] he hath been forrman to one Mr. Smith that stop at Dernick — My 3 son is now in the grave[.] he Dyed of the Cholera at ___duenton last year in the month of December and left a Widow and 3 Children[.] the youngest Child Dyed that Day week that John its Father Dyed[.] There [are] two in leife and they are Stoping in Edinbrugh with one of there Ma's sisters and there Mother had just to go to serves again for they had nothing by them[.] the two Children receive ich a Shilling a week from Westruther parish, a very littel allowance in Deid[.] the poor are to be pitteyed when they have to reluy upon the parish in this Country[.] we hope that they get mor with you for with it could not keep in leife yet it is better than nothing[.]

My oldest Daughter is stoping in Ireland and hath been for 5 years past[.] She Married and her Husbent was a land Stewart but he was taken from her in the month of Aprile in the year 1848 by the types fiver and she is still stoping with the Gentelman that her Husbent was Stewart unto just as a servent within his house — My Sekond Daughter is in America not far from Montreal[.] I think that her Husbent said in one of his letters that they were abouve a thousand miles from you therefor neither of you will have any Chance of ever seeng one another[.] they have now bought a pice of land and built a log house upon it[.] they have 3 Children[.] they were all in good helth in Aprile last when we received the last letter from them[.] we have allways a letter from them once a year sence they went over to America,, but we cannot say so of you[.] I have lost your last letter wherfor I cannot just say what year we received it,, But it is at list 8 years,, I have wrote to you two times sence we received your last but both of them it appirs had not come to your hand otherwise you eather had not wrote to us again or if you Did we never received them,, This will be the last efort that ever we will need to make in order to stir you up to send us a few

liens if you are yet in the land of the living — Your Sister Isiabel is but very poorly and hath been nierly for a year past[.] She is stoping in the Bunk in Lauder just to keep the house clien and for douing that she hath a free house Col and candel but no muny as wages[.] her Daughter Hellen Simpson is stoping in Lauder also and she helps her

Mother to sort the bunk house otherwise our sister could not be able for it,, And iven Hellen Simpson is turned but tender also and is not able to do very much,, Our sister Hellen is in Edinbrugh at present,, Robert Turner [Helen's husband] is now turned a gardener and hath goten a place neir Edinbrugh and they are doing very well by the accounts we receave[.] Our youngest sister Jannet was Married sum years ago upon a man whos nam is Robert Hogert[.] he was a Weaver and he is what is called a hand[.] they are living not far from Kelso,, We hurd that Jannet was but poorly sum time ago but we cannot say if she hath got better or not[.] I wrote to them sum time ago but they never have write to us in return so leave that metter must rest[.]

Thus I have given you a short account about my own family and also of our Sisters for Brothers they are all in the grave but myself sum years ago[.] that was one of the times that I wrote you when our brother Robert Deid which was the 10th of Aprile 1845 and if you never received our letter you could not know about your Brothers Death,, As to his sons I cannot say much about them[.] they are just very like my own, all squandered about[.] Sume of them are Married[.] they are all however in the kingdom of Scotland for anything that I know of them — Dear Brother if you were to pay old Blenslie a visit it would be a rer thing if you seed a kind face[.] there is just four that I know myself[.] those are Andrew Robertson Betty Gibson Ralf Tail and his sister Agnes[.] all others that I was acquainted with in my younger Days are sleeping in the Grave and the most of them long ago — But I mostly forgot to inform you about our Brother Williams family there is 3 of them Married, two of the Sons and a Daughter[.] there is 3 of them stoping at Getside where we are[.] Alexander and myself works together and we are all the Masons that is now in Spottiswoode[.] there is 2 of the sons in the lands of America James & William[.] They are in the British Setelments in uper Canada[.]

There is many altereshon in Scotland since you left it we have Railways in abundance,, There is no dout but you will have them with you also,, And gas light allmost in every small town such as Lauder — We have an abundant Croke with us this year so that our markets is very low with us at this time loer then ever I seid them sence I had a house[.] we have the ote meal for littel more than a pound per lod[?] and the barly meal at 74 shillings per lod[?] But the pottus hath felled very far with us for

sum years past and this year when all was living in the high hopes of an abundant croke of pottus there is a great number of them given way again[.] [Unreadable line.] The corn[?] markets ___ have been loer still with us[.]

When I begin to look over what I have written abouve I fiend that I have forgot to inform you about my youngest Daughter Agnes who hath been stoping in London for sum years[.] She was down at Scotland last summer seeng us all[.] She hath 3 Children alive and one Deid[.] My family was all Married long ago[.]

___ now Dear Brother & Sister & Frinds having thus given you but a short account of ourselves and Famely and Frinds who are yet alive I your Aged Brother whose Days upon this Earth is sufficient I wuld just say in conclushon that there is no hope of ever seeing one another in this world face to face[.] I will not say that it is imposable [but] say that it is very unlikely at the present time,, But our mitten one another in this world is of smal moment when Compered in metting with one another in the happy land where Sin and Suffering and Death will stand forever exiled where all who meet there will never part any more world without end[.] You know Dear Brother the bright exampel that our Father gave us in ___ with God and the many warnings he gave us to mind those things that belonged to our everlasting wellbeing[.] You and I cane never say that we was not warned by our parents to flie from the reath to come nor as littel can we say that we have had but littel ___ on Earth to mind Devin things[.] [Unreadable line.]

There hath been a vast number of the inhabitants of our 3 kingdoms cut down by the Cholera an alarming Disorder it is for how suddenly all that are sised with it are cut off,, what need there is for a preparedness for the atack of Death in whatever way it comes or at whatever period of life it comes,, The Call is be ye also redye[.] [Text ends. The ending of the letter no longer exists.]

Editor's note: Because the end of the letter is missing, the identity of the writer was unknown for a long time. Jean Ridley of Colorado Springs (MGS XIII, 2, March 1997) has identified him through his death record as John Shillinglaw, mason, age 76, who died at Gateside House 9 January 1856. The informant for the death was a nephew, Alex Shillinglaw (see William's son Alexander above). According to John's monumental inscription in Legerwood Churchyard, his second wife was Margaret Butler, so that fits, too. Henry, the second son of this John Shillinglaw, married my husband's great-grandaunt Clara Eliza Shillinglaw 30 May 1835 in Earlston, Berwickshire, Scotland. ■



These low stone walls are all that remains of Gateside House. Photo by David Shillinglaw, Northumberland, England.

LDS ANNOUNCES PLANS TO INDEX ALL MICROFILMS

At the recent Federation of Genealogical Societies Conference in Salt Lake City, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints announced plans to index all microfilm in their granite vault and to make these indexes available to everyone through their FamilySearch.org Website. Part of this project will be the digitization of all microfilm images, too, so that eventually researchers will be able to consult the indexes and then go directly to the selected record.

The church holds millions of microfilmed records from 110 nations so, needless to say, this is an enormous project. How long it takes will depend on the number of volunteers around the world who offer their time to assist. According to Paul Nauta, manager of public affairs for the church's FamilySearch.org Website, "The challenge now is it takes a lot of people and a lot of time....Currently, you have to look at images on paper or burn them on a CD and distribute those to index the data. We're moving the whole process to the Internet."

Nevertheless, new advances in indexing software utilities and applications have given the church the ability to produce indexes faster than it has in the past. (The 1880 U.S. Census Index was, for example, a 12-year effort involving tens of thousands of volunteers.)

Stay tuned, but be patient. ■

THE GERMAN CARD

The German Card is a handy item that can simplify German research in libraries and archives and help interpret documents written in the old German script. It contains the entire German alphabet, both printed and handwritten (upper- and lower-case letters), along the edge of the card so that each letter can be placed right up against the German letter in the record on which you are working. There is a key for interpreting German genealogy symbols and a basic German genealogy vocabulary. Nine basic German genealogy resources are listed. Dates of civil records in Germany are included as well. There is also a list of the kinds of immigration information to be found in each of the 1850-1920 U.S. censuses and the rules and code for the Soundex system.

The card is actually four cards laminated in an accordion fold and measuring 3¾ by 2½ inches when closed. It is produced by the Sacramento German Genealogy Society, P.O. Box 660061, Sacramento, CA 95866-0061, from which it can be ordered for \$3.50, which includes shipping and handling cost. ■

CASTLE GARDEN DATABASE ONLINE

Those of us with ancestors who arrived in New York City before Ellis Island opened will be pleased to learn that the Battery Conservancy has created a Castle Garden database (includes Barge Office records), which was launched to commemorate the sesquicentennial of the opening of Castle Garden 1 August 1855. (The Battery Conservancy is a non-profit educational organization that was founded in 1994 to rebuild and revitalize The Battery and Castle Clinton National Monument.) The database was placed online to commemorate the sesquicentennial of the opening of Castle Garden 1 August 1855. It is available at <http://castlegarden.org/>

All records have been extracted from the original ship manifests. The database allows a search for any of the immigrants that arrived in New York City between 1830 and 1892 when Ellis Island opened. Ten million names are already in the database, and an additional two million are now being transcribed.)

The free "Quick Search" at the site allows you to search by first name, last name, date range, place of origin, occupation, and name of ship—leaving anything unknown blank. When you click, a display of all matches to the information supplied will come up. An "Advanced Search" will, in addition, allow you to search by gender, age upon arrival, and destination, but costs \$45 and will rarely be necessary.

The Conservancy is investigating the cost of scanning and making available online the microfilms of passenger lists, but there are no plans to do so at present. (The original records are now too fragile to use for this purpose.)

Stephen Morse has added Castle Garden to his One-Step list, which can be accessed at <http://www.stevemorse.org/> Your editor has found Steve's "One-Step Castle Garden Passengers" an easier-to-use connection. By all means, try both. ■

NEW NEHGS LIBRARY HOURS

New NEHGS library hours began 6 September 2005.

They are:

- Sunday, closed.
- Monday, closed.
- Tuesday, 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM.
- Wednesday, 9:00 AM to 9:00 PM.
- Thursday, 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM.
- Friday, 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM.
- Saturday, 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM. ■

UPCOMING SEMINARS

Archivists Round Table Family History Fair, Sun., 16 Oct., 12 noon to 5 PM, The Graduate Center, City University of New York, 365 Fifth Ave. at 34th St. in Manhattan. Learn how to research your family history, care for photos and papers, use libraries and archives, locate missing relatives, and interpret and translate documents. Admission is free. For more information visit their Website at <http://www.nyarchivists.org/fhf.html>

National Archives and Records Administration Northeast Region is offering free programs at two locations:

New York City, 12th Floor Conference Room, 201 Varick St. All programs run from 12:30 PM to 1:15 PM.

- Searching for Your Family Roots: Getting Started, Tues., 11 Oct. 2005.
- Using NARA's Archival Research Catalog (ARC) for Genealogical Research, Tues., 8 Nov. 2005.
- Using NARA's Access to Archival Databases (AAD) for Genealogical Research, Tues., 13 Dec. 2005.

Space is limited. To register call 866-840-1752, fax 212-401-1638, or e-mail newyork.archives@nara.gov

Waltham, Mass., 380 Trapelo Rd.

- Local History in Federal Records, Mon., 26 Sept., 2 PM.
- Immigration and Naturalization, Thurs., 29 Sept., 6 PM (behind-the-scenes tour at 5 PM).
- Freedman's Bureau Records, Tues., 4 Oct., 2 PM.
- Naturalization Records, Tues., 18 Oct., 2 PM.
- Census, Naturalization and Passenger Lists, Tues., 1 Nov., 2 PM.
- Military Census Records, Tues., 15 Nov., 2 PM.
- Beyond the Census, Tues., 6 Dec., 2 PM.

Space is limited. For more information and to register call 866-406-2379.

New York Genealogical & Biographical Society, 122-126 E. 58 St., New York, NY 10022; telephone 212-755-8532.

Writing Your Family History, a two-day workshop, will be conducted by Sharon DeBartolo Carmack and Jim Warren on Sat. and Sun., 22-23 Oct. 2005. Attendance will be limited to 20 persons.

An all-day **New York-New Jersey Genealogy Conference** in Suffern, NY, with two tracks of lectures by well-known speakers, will be presented Sat., 29 Oct. 2005, in conjunction with the Genealogical Societies of Orange, Rockland, Bergen, and Passaic counties, and the New City Library.

New Yorkers and the Military will take place in Saratoga Springs, NY, 10-12 Nov. (Thurs. evening, Fri. & Sat.). Armed conflicts have been a part of American

history since colonial times, and almost every American genealogist has ancestors or relatives whose lives were affected by one or more of these conflicts. At this conference top genealogists, historians, and archivists will share their expertise about the armed conflicts that have been part of American history since colonial times.

Conflicts from the French & Indian War and American Revolution through World War I, as well as the draft in World War II will be covered. Some speakers will explain how to find and use records of military service at the national, state, and local levels, while others will focus on the historical context in which these records should be viewed. There will be presentations on the experience of the ordinary soldier or sailor in the different wars, as well on specialized topics such as the role of the Iroquois of New York in the Civil War, the experience of pacifists in World War I, and medical records from the Civil War. Allen Weinstein, Archivist of the United States (head of the National Archives) will be the speaker at the conference banquet.

For more information visit the NYG&B Website at <http://www.newyorkfamilyhistory.org/> You can register there at their online store, or call 212-755-8532, ext. 36, or e-mail Education@nygbs.org

New England Historic Genealogical Society, 101 Newbury St., Boston, MA 02116; toll-free telephone 888-286-3447; Website <http://www.newenglandancestors.org>

Salt Lake City Tour, 30 Oct.-6 Nov. Included in the weeklong program are orientations to our tour and to the Family History Library and its computer system, personal one-on-one consultations and guided research in the library with NEHGS staff, and group meals. Lodging will be at the Best Western Salt Lake City Plaza Hotel. For more information contact NEHGS.

Fall Research Weekend Getaway, 20-22 Oct. This popular program at NEHGS in Boston gives researchers one-on-one consultations with the expert NEHGS staff, informative lectures, and special access to the society's extensive collections.

For more information on these programs, please e-mail tours coordinator Amanda Batey at tours@nehgs.org

Daughters of the American Revolution, 1776 D St., NW, Washington, DC 20006.

The DAR will hold a **Conference on Early American Genealogical Research, 15-16 Oct. 2005**, at their national headquarters in Washington, DC. The two-day program includes presentations by nationally known professionals from around the country, including Christine Rose, John Humphrey, and Craig Scott.

Several NEHGS staff members will also present talks. Editor of the *Register* Henry B. Hoff will discuss "How to

Prevent Mistakes in Genealogical Writing,” and “Genealogical Writing: Style, Guidelines, and Practical Advice.” Director of Marketing Laura Prescott will deliver “Timelines: Placing Your Heritage in Historical Perspective”; “Diaries and Journals: Finding and Using These Valuable Resources”; and “Spinsters and Widows: Gender Loyalty Within Families.” Director of Special Projects Michael J. Leclerc will present “Publishing in the Age of Technology”; “Uncommonly Common: Non-Traditional Families in Genealogy”; and “Using Deeds, Maps, and Other Records to Find Your Ancestral Home.”

Registration for the two-day conference is \$105, single day \$55. For more information visit the DAR Website at http://www.dar.org/library/eager_conf.cfm ■

EARLY AMERICAN NEWSPAPERS

The New York Biographical and Genealogical Society has added a significant new membership benefit: the Readex Digital Collection of Early American Newspapers (1690-1876) from NewsBank, Inc. The series presently includes 207 newspaper titles, but by the summer of 2006 will have approximately 1,000 titles with over a million searchable pages—all accessible from members’ home computers via the Internet. Searches can be made for any name, word, or words, and the “Advanced Search” option allows Boolean searches. Searches can also be made for all articles, or specific types of article, such as marriage or death notices; all dates or a specific range of dates; and all newspaper titles or specific titles (listed by state: if you click on any listed title, where it was published, the number of issues, and the range of dates will come up). ■

SAXONY ROOTS’ ONLINE SHIP AND PASSENGER LISTS DATABASES

The Saxony Roots’ Online Ship and Passenger Lists Databases were developed to serve as indexes for all lists of ships and passengers that are available free on the Internet and to direct you to the proper Website with just a click.

There are two databases to search: “Passenger Lists” and “Ships’ Database.” The “Passenger Lists” segment requires only a passenger’s name and is very easy to use. The “Ships’ Database” is more powerful, but requires a good bit of information before use.

The site currently has information on 14,182 voyages and 110,253 passengers. They are actively seeking access to passenger lists that they do not yet have, as well as volunteers to help with transcription. ■

CLOSING THE CIRCLE: THE STORY OF GENEALOGISTS & ADOPTIVE PARENTS WHO FOUND THEIR CHILDREN’S BIRTH FAMILIES

11 June 2005 Meeting

Tom and Virginia Howard gave a touching presentation on this subject, sharing with us their own experiences in the process. Both of their children were adopted and knew it from the time they were very young. Both children had come to the Howards through a Catholic adoption agency in the Diocese of Hartford at a time when every effort was made to match the background of the child to the backgrounds of the parents. As a consequence, the Howards knew the area in which the children had been born, the religion of the mothers, and the probable ethnicity of each child.

As they came of age Tom and Virginia gave each child the option of searching for birth parents. Their son, Stephen (the elder of the two), expressed an immediate interest. Within three hours they had the names of the birth parents; a couple of days later a picture; and the following day an address and phone number. The birth parents had been too young to care for a child, but later married and had additional children. The Howards made a telephone call, and the response was, “Oh my God, we were just talking about him.” It’s a small world. The Howards discovered that at one time they had looked at a house next door to the birth parents and that Stephen had been a camp counselor for his younger two brothers and a sister.

Their daughter, Karen, decided at 21 that she wanted to learn about her birth parents. This search was more difficult because the last name was a common one. They narrowed the search to two possibilities, however, and then used Connecticut’s procedures for adoptees 21+ years of age seeking birth parents. The first meeting took place in a park.

The story doesn’t end here, because each child acquired a large number of new relatives: siblings, aunts, uncles, and grandparents, as well as the birth parents. There will be more birthdays to keep track of, graduations and weddings to attend, and, sadly, also funerals. The Howard children found their extended families secure and welcoming, but that is not always so. Sometimes there are broken families, damaged people and sad events to deal with.

The Howards recommend reading *Lifeline: The Action Guide to Adoption Research* by Virgil Klumber. In addition to vital records, the Howards used city directories, phone books, and year books in their searches, but they recognize that they also had a lot of luck. ■

MGS CALENDAR

(Continued from page 2)

Harlan Jessup is a professional genealogist whose research focuses on Connecticut, western Massachusetts, and the lower Hudson Valley. He is editor of Connecticut Ancestry and past president of that Society. He is also an accredited researcher at the Connecticut State Library, and he has published the Civil War letters and diaries of his Virginia ancestors.

25 MARCH 2006. To be announced.

13 MAY 2006. HIDDEN IN VAULTS: LESSER KNOWN TREASURES FOUND IN TOWN HALLS will be presented by **THOMAS V. HOWARD**. Local governments have for years collected and stored many diverse and valuable genealogical gems. We know about vital records and land records, but towns have touched citizens in many other ways leading to significant and sometimes illuminating paper trails.

A retired high school teacher, Tom is now a full time professional genealogist. He has taught genealogy classes, lectured at social studies regional and national conferences and most recently at the NERGC regional conference in North Falmouth. He has lectured on several genealogical

topics to the MGS, DAR, Westchester County Genealogical Society, Descendants of the Founders of Ancient Windsor, the Connecticut Society of Genealogists, Southington Genealogical Society and the Naugatuck Valley Genealogical Club and others. He is Chairman of the Connecticut Genealogical Coalition, a founding member of the Town Clerks and Genealogists Action Group, President of the Connecticut Professional Genealogists Council, and is on the board of directors of NERGC and the Connecticut Society of Genealogists. He will co-chair NERGC's 2007 Hartford conference. He is a member of APG, NEHGS, Connecticut Ancestry and numerous other genealogical or historical organizations. He is a former president of the East Granby Historical Society and currently is president of the East Granby Land Trust. He and fellow genealogist wife Virginia have two adopted children and four grandchildren. ■

**Deadline for next newsletter
18 October 2005**

MEETING
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