



# Middlesex Genealogical Society

Vol. XXVIII, No. 4

Darien, Fairfield County, CT

December 2012

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

The end of the year 2012 is now here and Mother Nature has certainly expressed her wrath here in New England and especially in Fairfield County. The destruction of homes and our shore line has been tragic for some of our citizens with the loss of some or all of their possessions.

To us as genealogists this could be a really traumatic experience. One of my relatives in Norwalk lost all of her many years of research on her family history. Water and mud just destroyed all of her files and paperwork and many books of pictures and original documents. Her computer, where all of her research was stored, was also destroyed, and the many discs and CD's are somewhere among the rubbish at a dump. Some of your information may be in the hands of relatives because you shared it with them. But you may have only shared the information that pertains to their line.

In my last message I mentioned that organization of the vast accumulation of pictures and documents was an important project for me. Now I believe that we also need to concern ourselves with saving these records from Mother Nature, man-created disasters, and the world of technology advancement. Yes, we can digitize our records with the machines and knowledge that we have today. How long will these records be readable, however, due to the digital bit loss of CD's, DVD's and flash drives, and the obsolescence of file formats and storage technologies? As I write this message and keep looking for more solutions, I am mindful that there is a lot that needs to be researched to give all of us the

real solution to the preservation of all of the long and tedious research that we have done on our ancestors.

I will be discussing with our board of directors a plan for addressing this subject. I also welcome any and all inputs that you, the readers of this publication, can send to us. My e-mail address is [lrskeeter@optonline.net](mailto:lrskeeter@optonline.net).

I look forward to the new year of 2013 and the opportunity of serving each of you to make the research and thrill of finding out about your ancestors exciting and fruitful.

Lloyd R. Sturges Jr.



### 2013 MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

Membership renewal is due 1 January 2013. ***Please consider this to be your renewal notice.*** You may use the application form on page 7 of this newsletter if you wish, or a plain piece of paper, marked renewal, with your name and address. Please note that while you do not have to provide us with any information that we already have, we would like to receive any significant changes, e.g., new e-mail address. You may bring your renewal to our 26 January meeting, or drop it in the mail addressed to Middlesex Genealogical Society, P.O. Box 1111, Darien, CT 06820. Annual dues are \$25 per individual, \$30 per couple or family.

**MIDDLESEX GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY**

**2012-2013  
OFFICERS**

Lloyd Sturges Jr.	President
Robert E. Kenyon III	Vice President
Dale Pollart	Treasurer
Joan Rinaldi	Secretary

**BOARD MEMBERS AT LARGE**

Steven Anderson  
Jim Baker  
Virginia Banerjee  
Peter Biggins  
Leonard Christie  
Timothy Gordon  
Keeley Kriskey

Donna Moughty	Past President
Charles Scribner	Librarian
Dorothy Shillinglaw	Newsletter Editor

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 (ISSN 1936-3494). Annual membership dues are \$25 per individual and \$30 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**

**Website: <http://mgs.darien.org>**

**UPCOMING MGS MEETINGS**

**MARK YOUR CALENDARS**

**ALL MEETINGS SATURDAY, 2 PM, DARIEN LIBRARY, 1441 POST ROAD. COME, AND BRING A FRIEND.**

**26 JANUARY 2013: MILITARY RECORDS RESEARCH** will be presented by **TONY LAURIANO**. The presentation will provide a step-by-step approach to procuring military records, including draft registration cards, separation papers, certification of military service, serial number index, medal replacements and cold war certificates of recognition, and civil war enrollments and pension files.

Tony has been a genealogy instructor for five years and has published a number of articles in the Italian Genealogical Group magazine. He is a regular lecturer on genealogical subjects throughout the tri-state area including Nanuet (NY) High School; New City (NY) Library, Valley Cottage (NY) Library, Clarkstown Central School District, New City, NY; The Valley Hospital, PrimeTime Program, Ridgewood, NJ; Chilton Memorial Hospital, Community Outreach New Vitality Program, Pompton Plains, NJ; Westchester Italian Cultural Center, Tuckahoe, NY; POINTERS Italian-American Club, Elmwood Park, NJ; and South Orangetown Central School District, Continuing Education, Orangeburg, NY.

**16 MARCH 2013: CRUISING LONG ISLAND SOUND—TRACING ITS EARLY FAMILIES WITH A REGIONAL VIEW** will be presented by **FRED HART**. The program will be fully illustrated, including maps, examples of migrations within the region, etc.

Fred is a Norwalk native and graduate of Norwalk High School, Dartmouth College, and Dartmouth's Thayer School of Engineering, and is now retired from an engineering management career at Northeast Utilities. Both of his parents grew up in Rowayton—one on the Norwalk side and the other in Darien. In addition to being a charter member of the Middlesex Genealogical Society, he is also a member of Connecticut Ancestry Society, the Connecticut Professional Genealogists Council, and several other historical and genealogical organizations. Fred has been a Certified Genealogist since 1993 and was elected a Fellow of the American Society of Genealogists in 2007.

**18 MAY 2013: BLOGGING YOUR GENEALOGY** will be presented by **PHIL HAYES** who is the CEO of Sirius Innovations, LLC. In that position he served as Technology Solutions Consultant and Web Applications Programmer for Fortune 500 companies, large municipalities and hospitals. He is fluent in SQL, ColdFusion, PHP, and Javascript programming languages. He

*(Continued on page 8)*

## PROBATE RECORDS

by Virginia Banerjee

Virginia Banerjee is a member of the board of MGS and a professional genealogist. A version of this material was presented at the 10 November 2012 MGS meeting.

Probate records are court documents created to settle the estate of a deceased person. These records can be found at town halls, court houses, state archives and sometimes at other repositories such as historical societies. Very old ones, especially, may be available at state archives (as in Connecticut) or through Family History Centers of the Church of Latter-day Saints (Mormon). Abstracts or indices are also available of some of these records. Some may be found on the Internet.

The FULL FILE is often only available at the court house or wherever the originals are archived. The court may be named variously *superior*, *orphans*, *surrogate* or something else. In the South after Emancipation, there were “different courts for different folks”: white and black. It is often worthwhile to review these records fairly early in one’s research as they may contain information available nowhere else.

The word **probate** is derived from terms meaning *to prove*. What is being proved is that this is the last will of the deceased. Today the term is generally used to refer to the entire **process** of settling an estate...whether there is a will or not. An addendum to a will is called a **codicil**. There are separate names for different types of wills such as handwritten ones. When there is no will, it is referred to as **intestate**. The principal difference is who decides how the estate will be distributed. When there is a will, the estate is distributed as the decedent indicated in the will. When there is no will, the court distributes the estate according to law. The settlement of an estate generates a variety of records including: **petitions, letters testamentary, inventories, appraisals and decrees of distribution**. I even found a death certificate before death registration was required.

Lists of family members are often found in the files of intestate probates as the court sought to determine legal heirs. Files of contested estates are frequently rich in family information. Probate files may also provide clues to other rec-

ords, i.e., vital records, land transactions and guardianship. Not all of these are found in every probate. Some files may be very scanty while others are a goldmine.

Even the scanty one can offer clues to other records. For instance, the simple will that is fairly common may say something like “I leave all my worldly goods to my beloved wife for her and the care of our children” without naming anyone! Even from this scant will, however, we can deduct useful information. When the will was written, he was married; the wife was alive; and the children were likely minors (if they required care). Be alert to the date the will was written and the date it was offered for probate (usually, but not always, soon after death). This span of time will affect the possible suppositions that can be drawn. Is the wife still alive? Are the children still minors?

A will, if there is one, is often a wonderful “find.” With the possible exception of diaries and journals, a will may be the most personal glimpse of your ancestor you will ever find. It may be in your ancestor’s handwriting or, at least, have a signature or unique mark in lieu of signature by someone who could not write. It may hint at family secrets. Probate files may provide clues to personal relationships, religious convictions, political affiliations, etc. Researching probate files is quite a different experience from reading about ancestors in a book or finding an abstract of some document, interesting as they may be.

The original will, if it is still available, would be found in the probate file along with other related records. Remember that the will in the ledger book is NEVER the original...it is a copy by the scribe. The settlement of an estate generates a variety of records of interest to genealogists. Because they are legal documents, they are generally reliable IF they are interpreted correctly.

A detailed description of the probate process can be found in such reference works as Val Greenwood’s *A Researcher’s Guide to American Genealogy* or *The Source: A Guidebook to American Genealogy* edited by Arlene Eakle and Johni Cerney. On the Internet, [Cyndislist.com](http://Cyndislist.com) or the home pages of major genealogy sites have information regarding probate.

All the rules of genealogy apply here. Take time to understand the system, time and place.

Understand the jurisdiction where the record was made and where it is now. Work back from the known to the unknown. Be careful in interpreting what you find. Be thorough and get it all. And fully document your findings. Don't depend on published or abstracted records or information that has been submitted to the Internet. Digitized versions of original records are perhaps as close as you will get to the original document and generally can be considered reliable IF interpreted correctly.. But remember that some on the record maybe have been missed: registrar's comments, notes on reverse side of documents and so forth that were skipped when records were digitized.

If you haven't researched the probate files of your ancestors, I urge you to do so. Probate records provide a fascinating look at your ancestors in a manner rarely found anywhere else. One final reminder: While you are researching court records, don't skip over such gems as divorce, adoption, guardianship, or the "court minutes." While not specifically probate files, they may be related and reveal useful information.

**HAPPY HUNTING!**

## UPCOMING SEMINARS

**National Archives and Records Administration, Northeast Region, New York City**, is settling into its new quarters at One Bowling Green, and has not yet scheduled programs at the new location.

**National Archives and Records Administration**, Constitution Ave. NW (between 7th & 9th Sts.), Washington, DC 20408. **Wed., 16 Jan., at 11 a.m. Room G-25, Research Center "Beyond the Basics Genealogy: Passport Applications** will be presented by **Katherine Vollen**, archives specialist. (It is worth noting that a genealogy program is always scheduled in this location on the third Wednesday of every month.)

**National Archives and Records Administration, Northeast Region, Boston**, Frederick C. Murphy Federal Center, 380 Trapelo Road, Waltham, MA 02452-6399, phone 781-663

-0130, fax 781-663-0154, e-mail [boston.archives@nara.gov](mailto:boston.archives@nara.gov). Programs are free, but reservations are required. Telephone toll-free 866-406-2379 or e-mail the address above.

- Thurs., 17 Jan. 2013, 6 p.m., "They Came From Ireland: The Foresters Mortuary Records," a treasure trove of local Irish Immigrant history. Virginia Wright, guest speaker.
- Tues., 5 Feb. 2013, 2 p.m., "Coming to America: Ship Passenger and Arrival Lists as Genealogy Sources." Archivist and genealogy expert Jean Nudd presents.
- Wed., 20 Feb., 10 a.m., "Genealogy for Kids (Gr. 3-8 and chaperones).
- Thurs., 21 Feb. 6 p.m., TBA.
- Tues., 5 Mar. 2 p.m., "Finding Our Mothers: Women in Federal Records."
- Thurs., 21 Mar, 6 p.m., "The 54<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry (Colored) 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary."
- Tues., 2 Apr., 2 p.m., Researcher Forum: Resources, strategies, services, and navigating the world of 21<sup>st</sup> century research.
- Thurs., 18 Apr., 6 p.m., Patriots' Day Program.
- Wed. 24 Apr., 10 a.m., History for Kids (Gr. 3-8 & chaperones): Get ready for Patriots' Day.
- Tues., 7 May, 2 p.m. Our Town: Discovering local history in the archives.
- Thurs., 16 May, 6 p.m., Finding Our Jewish Ancestors: Jewish history, migration, and genealogy. Generalist Meredith Hoffman of the Jewish Genealogical Society presents.
- Tues., 4 Jun. 2 p.m., They Went Down to the Sea in Ships: 19th c. crew lists, shipping articles, & more.
- Thurs., 20 Jun., 6 p.m., TBA.
- Tues., 9 Jul., 2 p.m., Introduction to Genealogy: Everything you need to get started.
- Thurs., 18 Jul., 6 p.m., Introduction to Genealogy: Everything you need to get started.
- Tues., 6 Aug., 2 p.m., Census, Passenger Lists, and Naturalization Records.

**New York Genealogical & Biographical Society**, 36 W. 44<sup>th</sup> Street, 7<sup>th</sup> fl., New York, NY 10036-8105; telephone 212-755-8532; fax 212-754

-4218.

NYG&B has scheduled its annual series of repository tours:

- **Genealogy & Map Division of the New York Public Library**, Fri., 8 Feb. 2013, 10 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., at the NYPL Stephen Schwarzman Building, Fifth Ave. between 40<sup>th</sup> & 42<sup>nd</sup> Sts. Maira Liriano, Manager of the Milstein Division of United States History, Local History and Genealogy, will give an overview of the Milstein Division, and Katherine Cordes of the Lionel Pincus and Princess Firyal Map Division, will provide an overview of the Map Division, from 10:00-11:30 a.m.. These introductions will be followed by a "hands-on" tutorial of some of the library's online offerings in the South Court Classroom and the visit will conclude with tours of both divisions.
- **Archives of the Cathedral of St. John the Divine**, at the archives, Tues., 12 Feb., 1-4 p.m. This is one of the few religious institutions with a full-time archivist, Wayne Kempton, who will provide a tour of the stacks and an orientation on how to access records which cover not only the cathedral itself, but also many other churches in the New York area.
- **New York City Municipal Archives**, Friday, March 1, 1:30 to 4:30 p.m. This program is a rare chance to research in the Municipal Archives when it is closed to the public, so there is no waiting for work stations or staff attention. Leonora A. Gidlund, Director, will welcome registrants and provide an introduction to the large assortment of vital records, city directories, photographs, voters' records, etc. NYG&B staff and volunteers will assist you with your research.
- **The Manuscripts and Archives Division of NYPL**, Wednesday, March 13, 6-7 p.m., at The NYPL Stephen A. Schwarzman Building, Fifth Ave. between 40<sup>th</sup> & 42<sup>nd</sup> Sts, NYC. Thomas Lannon, Assistant Curator, will provide an orientation to the extensive holdings of the Manuscripts and Archives Division of the New York Public Library. Documents, manu-

scripts, and photographs spanning four centuries of New York history will be on display and attendees will be instructed on using the catalog and retrieving materials.

- **National Archives at New York City**, Tues., March 26, 2:00-4:30 p.m. Dorothy Dougherty, Director of Public Programs, will provide a tour of and an introduction to the brand new quarters in the Alexander Hamilton U.S. Custom House in lower Manhattan. Be among the first to see the beautiful new quarters. The Archives moved in late 2012, but Hurricane Sandy delayed the opening date. Program attendees will be given an overview of the holdings and assistance in their research by Education Committee members and NARA staff.
- **Center for Jewish History**, Thurs., April 11, 1:30-4:00 p.m. New to our repository lineup last year, the center has extensive resources for both Jewish and non-Jewish research. Learn about the many collections of the five organizations housed at the center. Staff will provide descriptions of the facility's five divisions from 1:30-3:00, p.m. followed by an orientation by a Jewish genealogy expert. Participants will have time for research after the formal program.

Registration: You may sign up via NYG&B's online store or by calling 212-755-8532, ext. 211. Each program \$20 members, \$30 nonmembers; any three programs \$50 members, \$80 nonmembers; all six programs \$90 members, \$150 nonmembers.

**Significantly Advance Your Research Skills with Online Legend Steve Morse.** The NYG&B presents Stephen P. Morse, originator of a series of fabulous "One-Step Websites," for a full day of lectures and discussions about getting the quickest and most effective use from online data sources. This is your chance to learn from one of the nation's leading innovators in advanced online genealogical research. This event will be useful to people at all levels of ex-

pertise, because the applications discussed are, from the researcher's perspective, easy to use. The event takes place in the commodious South Court Auditorium of the New York Public Library's Stephen A. Schwarzman Building, Fifth Ave. between 40<sup>th</sup> & 42<sup>nd</sup> Streets, NYC. Seating is limited, and this program will be sold out; please book a prepaid reservation in advance. Cost: NYG&B members \$60, nonmembers \$90. Register: online at [newyorkfamilyhistory.org](http://newyorkfamilyhistory.org) or call 212-755-8532, ext. 211. For additional information e-mail [education@nygbs.org](mailto:education@nygbs.org).

**Westchester County Genealogical Society**, P.O. Box 518, White Plains, NY 10601, presents speakers on genealogical subjects on the second Saturday of each month at 10 a.m. (Premeeting networking starts at 9:30 a.m.) Meetings are at Aldersgate Memorial United Methodist Church, 600 Broadway, Dobbs Ferry, NY (across from Mercy College on Route 9). A \$3 donation is requested of nonmembers. Visit the society's website at: <http://www.rootsweb.com/~nywcgs>.

- **12 Jan. 2013, "The Hart Island Project: Twenty Years Later"** will be presented by Melinda Hunt. (For more information on Hart Island, visit the Website at <http://www.correctionhistory.org/html/chronicl/nycdoc/html/hart.html>)
- **9 Feb., "Using Ancestry.com in Researching Your Family"** will be presented by Toni McKeen.
- **9 Mar., "Civil War Research"** will be presented by Laura H. Congleton.
- **13 Apr. "Blogging Your Genealogy"** will be presented by Philip Hayes.
- **11 May, "Finding Your Female Ancestors"** will be presented by Tony Lauriano.
- **8 June, "Kleindeutschland: Researching Your Ancestors in Manhattan's Little Germany,"** presented by Joseph Lieby.

**Ancestor Seekers Mon., 17 June—Sat., 22 June, Salt Lake City Research Week.** There are currently 31 places left on this trip, and the 10% early registration discount is still in effect. Visit [www.ancestorseekers.com/slcr/event.php?id=36](http://www.ancestorseekers.com/slcr/event.php?id=36) for more information.

**Gaelic American Club Irish History Lec-**

**ture Series** at Gaelic American Club, 74 Beach Road, Fairfield, CT 06824. Lisa Nic an Bhreithimh, Fullbright Scholar in Residence at the University of Connecticut will present "The Irish Language at Home and Abroad From the Past to the Present," the fifth in a series of lectures on Irish History, sponsored by Feile, Inc. from 2 to 4 p.m. on Sun., 10 Feb. Register online at [marroyo@optonline.net](mailto:marroyo@optonline.net), subject "Irish History," and mail a \$5 check, made out to Feile, Inc., to Mary Adams Arroyo, 221 McGrath Court, Stratford, CT 06615, along with your name address, and phone number. For more information, telephone Mary at (203) 377-2346.

### **Genealogy Cruises**

**3<sup>rd</sup> Unlock the Past History & Genealogy Cruise** is a nine-day cruise from Sun., 10 Feb., to Tue., 19 Feb. 2013, aboard Royal Caribbean's *Voyager of the Seas*—one of the largest and most exciting cruise ships to visit Australia. The *Voyager*, which is 138,000 tons and accommodates up to 3114 passengers, will sail from Sydney, Australia, to Noumea and Fiji, returning to Sydney. Participants may attend up to 50 presentations for a selection of over 80 genealogical topics. One-on-one conferences with the experts are possible. Unlock the Past's parent company is Gould Genealogy, P.O. Box 675, Modbury, SA 5092, Australia. They can also be reached by phone at (08) 8395 7476, (08) 8263 2455, and via e-mail at [inquiries@unlockthepast.com.au](mailto:inquiries@unlockthepast.com.au).

**The 10<sup>th</sup> Annual Legacy Genealogy Cruise**, to be held 22 Sept. through 7 Oct. 2013 aboard Celebrity Cruise Line's *Millennium*, starts in San Diego, Cal.; stops at Cabo San Lucas and Puerto Vallarta, Mexico; Puerto Quetzal, Guatemala; and Puntarenas, Costa Rica; then transits the Panama Canal; stops at Colon, Panama, and Cartagena, Columbia, , and then ends in Fort Lauderdale, Fla. Featured speakers include Megan Smolenyak, Karen Clifford, Geoff Rasmussen, Randy Seaver, Steve Salisbury, Dave Berdan, Ken McGinnis, and Luc Comeau. For additional information, visit Legacy's Website at [www.legacyfamilytree.com/Cruiseinfo\\_2013.asp](http://www.legacyfamilytree.com/Cruiseinfo_2013.asp).

MIDDLESEX GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY

Post Office Box 1111
Darien, CT 06820

APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP

Annual dues: \$25/individual, \$30/couple or family. Photo I.D. (e.g., driver's license), required. If joining/renewing in person, show photo I.D.; if via mail, send copy of photo I.D. Please consider adding a contribution to support our genealogical resource expansion.

Code of Ethics: In consideration of being accepted as a member(s) of the above society and in order to protect the integrity of Public Records and Library Books, I/we am/are ethically bound and hereby agree that I/we will research Vital Records for Genealogical or Historical purposes only. I/we also agree:

- 1. That I/we will treat with the greatest care and respect all Public Records and Library Books that may be made available for my/our use;
2. I/we will respect the privacy of the individuals whose information I/we may encounter in my/our research;
3. I/we will respect the custodians of the records.

This pledge is freely made by me under penalty of forfeiting my membership in the society.

Signature of applicant Date

Previous Member Yes [ ] No [ ]

Signature of co-applicant Date

Previous Member Yes [ ] No [ ]

(Mr., Mrs., Miss, Ms.)
Full Name of Applicant

(Mr., Mrs., Miss, Ms.)
Full Name of Co-applicant

Street Address (mandatory):

Mailing Address:

Telephone: Town: State: 9-digit Zip: E-mail:

Date and Place of Applicant's Birth:

Date and Place of Co-applicant's Birth:

Occupation of Applicant:

Occupation of Co-applicant:

I/we belong to the following Historical Societies:

I/we belong to the following Genealogical Societies:

I/we belong to the following Lineage Societies:

Reason for interest in genealogy:

Dues enclosed:

Contribution enclosed:

MGS use only.
Photo I.D. [ ]

**MGS PROGRAMS**

*(Continued from page 2)*

is also a power user of of the WordPress Content Management System, commonly used for blogging.

Combining the power of technology and the primary sources from historical documents, Philip developed his own family history Website based on the Word Press Content Management System (<http://www.hayesfamily.us>). It has inspired many people to develop an interest in the family's history and has connected Phil to several undiscovered relatives and their family stories.

Phil is a member of numerous historical and genealogy societies, including the Association of Professional Genealogists.

In 2010 Phil developed a presentation aimed at teaching amateur and professional genealogists how to document their family's history on the internet using a blog. If genealogists want to get the most out of their efforts, there are some basic strategies that must be employed. These strategies are fully covered in his program, "Blogging Your Way Into History."

**Deadline for next newsletter 26 February 2013**

**MEETING  
26 January 2013  
DARIEN LIBRARY**