



# The Newsletter of Middlesex Genealogical Society

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## President's Message

Happy Holidays MGS,

November has been NYGB month for me and hopefully for you, too. The New York State Family History Conference (NYSFHC) was hybrid from New York City and Buffalo, filled with live speakers and an on-demand set of lectures. Kalyn came to our meeting to share her work on digitization. There are so many more records you can search for and see from home. The new year will have a return lecture by Toni McKeen - Navigating Ship's Manifest and a first time talk by board member Joan Killian Gallagher on her home place in Ireland.

We would like to hear from you, our readers.

Do you want to see small groups return, 1 on 1 help sessions or a particular topic? Please email us at [mgsvolunteer@gmail.com](mailto:mgsvolunteer@gmail.com)

Sara

*Welcome  
New Members  
Sharyn Drapala  
Janet Duffy*

### MIDDLESEX GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY 2022-2023 OFFICERS & BOARD MEMBERS

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Joan Killian Gallagher	Member at Large

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 publishes a quarterly newsletter (ISSN 1936-3494) and co-sponsors, with Darien Library, at least four meetings with a program and speaker during the year. Annual membership dues vary from \$25 for 1 yr. or \$45 for 2 yrs. per individual and \$30 for 1 yr. or \$55 for 2 yrs. per couple or family. Original notices of genealogical interest and queries are welcomed for publication in the newsletter.

**Middlesex Genealogical Society  
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**Website: [mgsdarienct.org](http://mgsdarienct.org)**

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## MGS News

On Oct 7<sup>th</sup> MGS and the Darien Library hosted Michael Cassara, professional genealogist, who presented "*Connecticut in Postcards: Bringing Deltiology To Your Genealogy.*" Michael began with an overview of the history of postcards and how they were used in the days before instant communication as a way of sending messages between family and friends across the country or from town to town. He then described how to date postcards using stamps, postmarks and other clues on the cards themselves. Real Photo Postcards (RPPC or RPC) may have had photos of families or places of business that relatives sent to each other. On the back of these cards there may have been notes that identify unknown members of the family. Maybe one of your relatives did this. There were literally billions of postcards used in the early twentieth century and many of them are still around.



Left to right: Pam Shea, Pete Kenyon, John Driscoll, Kalyn Loewer  
 Joan Killian Gallagher and Sara Zagrodzky

Postcards can be useful as a genealogical source, with photos of buildings that no longer exist, adding color to a town that a genealogist's ancestors may have lived in. Michael also reminded the audience that their great-great grandfather may have sent postcards to his brother. These postcards may be in the possession of a third cousin, who may be located through a DNA match. One member of the audience actually found a relative this way.

On Nov. 18<sup>th</sup>, Kalyn P. Loewer, Manager of Digital Collections at the [New York Genealogical and Biographical Society](#) gave a presentation on the NYG&B's mission to preserve, document, and share family history. She described what collections they are digitizing and what methods they use to do the job. Using state-of-the-art equipment, such as the CopiBook OS A2 scanner and LIMB processing software, they turn high-res scans into searchable New York State historical records. Scans are saved in non-degradable Tag Image File Format or Tif

files. Some records are then indexed with optical character recognition (OCR). Kalyn then told us about how to search the NYG&B collections. The best place to start is the Online

Records tab, where one can browse the collections catalog and apply various search filters, such as biographies, census, cemeteries, account books, etc. She gave examples of records from the town of Sterling, New York, and Sherwood medical journals. The presentation was followed by questions and answers.

## Trying to Find a Famous Relative

By John Driscoll

For many years, I have been searching for someone of historical note to add to my family tree. So many of my fellow family historians have famous people in their trees; from Mayflower ancestors to politicians. All of my great and second great grandparents im-



migrated between 1837 and 1870 to New York City. Their occupations were sailmaker, plasterer, mason, well digger, boiler-maker, truck driver and laborer. One did make it into the newspapers as the Keeper of the Kings County Nursery in Flatbush, Brooklyn. Still, not the notoriety I am looking for. I need someone who everyone will say "Ah yes! I know that name!" Well, I think I have found this person. It is not the celebrity I was hoping for, but beggars can't be choosers. Now I face a dilemma.

My great grandmother, Nora Coughlin, was born in Brooklyn in 1858 to Daniel Coughlin 1825-1886 and Mary Coakley 1830-1907. Before she married my great grandfather, she lived on Columbia, Smith, Huntington, Clinton, and Luquer streets, all in the Carroll Gardens section of Brooklyn.

Living nearby on Clinton, Luquer and Manhasset Pl. was Mary (Mae) Coughlin, born April 11, 1897, daughter of Michael Coughlin 1872-1913 and Bridget Gorman 1873-1919. Because I did not find any other

Coughlins in this area, (other than my relatives,) I am assuming they were possibly related. Irish families tended to stay near each other in Brooklyn. In 1900, Mae Coughlin lived on



*Mae Coughlin Capone*

Manhasset Pl., just one block away from Luquer St. where Nora lived at the same time. Nora was old enough to be Mae's mother, and Nora's children and siblings' children would have been contemporaries with Mae and her siblings.

As the story goes, Mae met her future husband in 1918, either at a dance or a meeting arranged by his mother, who knew Mae's mother from church. He was none other than Al (Scarface) Capone, the notorious crime boss. Alphonse Gabriel Capone was born in Brooklyn on January 17, 1899. He was a bright student but was expelled from Catholic school at the age of fourteen for striking a female teacher. He



*Alphonse Capone*

worked at odd jobs around Brooklyn, including a candy store and a bowling alley. From 1916 to 1918 he played semi-professional baseball. He joined the Five Points Gang as a teenager and became a bouncer in organized crime premises such as brothels. In his early twenties, Capone moved to Chicago and became a bodyguard Johnny Torrio, head of a criminal syndicate.

Al and Mae married on December 30, 1918, soon after the birth of their only son, Albert Francis (Sonny) Capone. The wedding took place in Saint Mary Star of the Sea Roman Catholic Church, on Court Street, which has been serving Carroll Gardens and South Brooklyn since 1851. This was the same church my family attended. On their marriage certificate, Al increased his age by one year, and Mae decreased her age by two years, making them both appear 20 years old. Since Al was under the age of twenty-one, he had to get written consent from his parents to the marriage.

Mae was aware of Al's racketeering business but did not participate. There are however sto-



ries that she made bootleg whiskey. After being convicted of tax evasion in 1931, Al was sent to the Alcatraz for eleven years. While there, his physical and mental health severely deteriorated. Mae sent her husband many letters and travelled from their Florida home to visit him and handle his affairs. She was a fierce protector, telling the press that he was suffering from dejection and a broken spirit and not mentioning that he was dying from syphilis.

After his release from prison, he spent the rest of his life in his Florida home. He died on January 25, 1947. The New York Post reported that Mae burned all the diaries and love letters they had written so that no one could read them after her death. She lived out the rest of her life in a nursing home in Hollywood Florida and died on April 6, 1986, at the age of eighty-nine.

Here lies my dilemma. Do I *really* want to add someone like Al Capone to my extended family? I have yet to find the smoking gun that will prove the connection and am a bit reluctant to do so. My next phase will be searching for baptism and marriage records of Mae and her siblings to see if any of the sponsors may be one of my Coughlins..... Or maybe I won't.

## Upcoming MGS Presentations

**Saturday, January 20, 2024, 2:00 pm., Navigating the Ship's Manifests presented by Toni McKeen.** Take a really close look at ALL the information that these important records can



provide. Directed to those who have been research for a long time and those just beginning, find out what information is needed to locate manifests, find the markings to learn which immigrants were detained and why, who they left behind, the address where they were headed, and who they were coming to see.

Toni has been doing genealogy research on her own extensive Italian family, her husband's Irish family and son in law's German family for the last 30+ years.

She has over 19 years of experience in teaching and over 30 years as a researcher. She is highly motivated and energetic with extensive teaching skills with well-organized lesson plans. She is a member of several genealogical organizations and is Chairman of the Newtown Genealogy Club, Newtown, 2013-2015, 2020 - present. Toni has traveled to Italy multiple times to research her ancestry and obtain documents in Amalfi, Sicily, and Calabria.

She is a popular lecturer in the New York, New Jersey, Massachusetts, and Connecticut areas and at various genealogy organizations. Her training from her research background while earning her degrees in biology helped her to establish organized systems and charts for recording family information for herself and her students, often a problem for most researchers.

Toni is on a mission to expose as many people as possible to the fun, excitement, and importance of tracing their own genealogy. She believes documenting your family history is important for yourself and for future generations, even if they are not interested or have the time now.

**Saturday, March 16, 2024, 2:00 pm., The Killian Homeplace, presented by Joan Killian Gallagher.**

On June 20, 2023, The Irish Family History Foundation announced that The Killian Home-



place Family History Centre has been appointed as the County Longford centre for the IFHF. The Killian Homeplace, winner of the 2013 All Ireland Pride of Place in the Diaspora category, is located in Fermoy, just outside Lanesborough in County Longford.

Founded in 1998 by Joan Killian Gallagher, the centre is housed in a meticulously restored

cottage and is a sustainable tribute dedicated to the memory of her great, great grandmother, Anne Furey Killian, who against all odds, purchased the farm from the Land Commission in 1893. She was 82 years old and had been widowed for over 30 years. Joan reconnected with Killian cousins in Longford and Roscommon in 1996 when she took her father to the Notre Dame Navy game in Dublin. This was the beginning of a journey of joy and discovery that Joan hopes to share with those in search of their own family history and place of origin in County Longford. It is this life changing cultural and educational exchange that is the mission of The Killian Homeplace Family History Centre.

Joan is a board member of MGS and the founder of Warden-Brooks Ltd. New York, Makers of the Original Banker Bag. She is the proud recipient of the Enterprising Women of the Year Award.



*The Killian Homeplace Family History Centre in Fermoyle*

## LEAVE THEM SMILING



## Tips

**Do you have a tip to share with your members? Send it to:**

**[newslettermgsdarien@gmail.com](mailto:newslettermgsdarien@gmail.com)**

**and have it printed in the MGS newsletter.**

Don't trust obituaries for accuracy. My Great grandfather's brother, James Prendergast a boilermaker, died in 1903. His death certificate and the coroner's report state he was 51 years old and lived at 555 Kent Ave. Brooklyn, New York, both correct. The Brooklyn Standard Union said he was 32 years old and a carpenter and according to the Brooklyn Daily Times, he lived at 535 Kent Ave. and his surname was Pendergast.

Did your ancestors own property? Check the censuses. Some of them will show whether or not they owned or leased the homes they lived in.

The National Archives Catalog has a new look! We are excited to introduce a fully redesigned and modernized online public access Catalog. This new and improved Catalog maximizes our ability to make the records of the National Archives even more accessible. Click [HERE](#)

Don't assume that all children listed in the census belong to the wife listed. The children may be from a previous marriage of one or both.

## Military Records for Genealogy Research: Getting Started

A guide for navigating the military records useful for genealogy research.

Courtesy of The New York Public Library, Irma and Paul Milstein Division Reference Librarians, 3/6/2023

<a href="#">Types of Military Records</a>	<a href="#">Where to Find Military Records</a>		
<a href="#">Colonial Wars</a>	<a href="#">Revolutionary War</a>	<a href="#">War of 1812</a>	<a href="#">Mexican War</a>
<a href="#">Civil War</a>	<a href="#">Spanish American War America/Philippine Insurrection</a>		
<a href="#">WWI and Later Conflicts</a>	<a href="#">Men of Color and Women</a>		

Military records can be a rich source of details for your family history. They convey basic information such as name, residence, age, and may also provide a physical description. They also provide details of military service that can enrich your understanding of their lives -- dates mustered in and out of service, the unit served in, a record of injuries sustained, and so on. And if you're lucky enough to find a pension file, it may include not only information about military service but records of important family events such as birth, marriage and death certificates, letters, and perhaps even photographs.

Given the frequency of U.S. military conflicts, your ancestors may have served in the military even if you're not aware of it. Before delving into military records, however, you'll need to conduct research in other types of genealogy records so you'll have the information you need to establish a link between your specific ancestors and the names which appear on military lists, rolls and registers. Since most names are not unique, it can be hard to determine whether the James Smith who served for Virginia in the Revolutionary War is the same person as your ancestor with that name. Knowing information such as your ancestor's state and county of residence, approximate age, names of relatives, wife and neighbors, and any other identifying information you can find will help you in

trying to corroborate identities. For early conflicts, when the population was still relatively small, it's important to also check census records of the era to determine if there are other men with the same name living in the same area.

Once you have the background information you need, this guide will help you to navigate the various types of military records that are available. It's organized as follows:

- The first two tabs provide an overview of the types of military records, and where to find them, including tips on locating military records online
- The records available for each of the major U.S. conflicts are listed under their own tabs, organized by type of record
- Note that the first tab is always for "Guides" - don't ignore these! Many useful articles about various aspects of military record research have been created for each conflict, and the invaluable advice in them is not repeated in this guide.
- Federal records are described separately from state records
- Resources relating to the military service of African Americans, Native Americans and other ethnic groups, and, where applicable, women, are included for each conflict. In addition, the last tab of the guide highlights additional resources that may aid individuals researching members of these groups.

### UNDERSTAND THE DIFFERENT TYPES OF RECORDS

This research guide is designed to clarify one of the most confusing aspects of researching ancestors in the military, namely the sheer volume and multiplicity of records. Typically, military records are organized into separate categories based on criteria such as:

- federal versus state records
- "volunteer" records versus Regular Army records



- various branches of military service (Army, Navy, Marines)
  - various types of military records (service, pension, bounty, and other records)
- each conflict generates its own set of record

Looking for a specific individual among these many groups of records can feel a little like looking for a needle in not just one, but many haystacks. Over the years, various tools and finding aids have proliferated to help researchers with this task, but sorting through the many different types of secondary sources can sometimes add its own confusion:

- In the pre-digital era, hundreds (probably thousands) of indexes were created to aid researchers interested in identifying specific individuals in the record set. These can be arranged alphabetically or by other criteria, and it can be difficult to identify relevant titles from the sparse information available in catalog records. While more and more records are becoming available online, the source information is sometimes incomplete. Many digitized records are available on multiple platforms, and inconsistencies in titles can make it hard to keep track of which records are duplicates and whether you've consulted all the available sources.

The organization of this guide is meant to help researchers connect the dots between the original records, the various digital platforms, and the many indexes, finding aids, abstracts and other tools that have evolved to make the records accessible. Following the format outlined here, so that you understand all of the various records that might be available for a particular conflict, and systematically trace down each set of records separately, will help you make the most effective use of military records. For specific details about how the entries are organized, see the "Where to Find Military Records" tab.

## QUESTIONS TO GUIDE YOUR RESEARCH

The following questions are designed to guide your research and help you get started:

- What conflict did the individual serve in and what were his dates of service?
- If you are uncertain whether or not an ancestor served in the military, consider which conflicts took place during their lifetime.
- The FamilySearch Research Wiki article [Ages of Servicemen in Wars](#) contains a helpful chart showing the typical birth years of those who served in each of America's major military engagements.
- What branch of service did the individual serve in?
  - The Army, Marine Corps, Navy, Air Force, Space Force, and Coast Guard each keep separate records
  - Prior to WWI, soldiers may have served in a state militia rather than the U.S. Military
  - If they served in the Army, was it in the Regular Army or a volunteer unit?
  - Volunteer and regular army records are maintained separately
  - For each of the major conflicts, volunteer soldiers make up a large proportion of the force
  - "Volunteer" simply means not regular army and includes soldiers who are draftees.
- What state did they live in when they joined the military?
  - Soldiers served in local, state and federal units, so knowing the location will help you locate records.
- Did the individual serve as an officer or an enlisted man?
  - Officer's records are kept separately from enlisted men.
- Was the soldier, his widow or a dependent eligible for a pension on account of his service?
  - Pension records are often a goldmine of genealogical data.

## REMINDER

### 2024 DUES ARE DUE ON JANUARY 1<sup>ST</sup>

OUR PRESENTATIONS ARE SUPPORTED BY DUES AND  
ADDITIONAL DONATIONS ARE NEEDED AND WELCOME.

You can download the membership application from our website:

[www.mgsdarienct.org/application.pdf](http://www.mgsdarienct.org/application.pdf)

Renewing members do not need to complete an application unless their information has changed. Payment can be mailed to PO Box 9, Darien, CT 06820 (make checks out to Middlesex Genealogical Society Inc.) Or you can use PayPal Click [HERE](#)

Membership fees are as follows:

<u>Membership categories</u>	<u>One year</u>	<u>Two years</u>
Individual	\$25	\$45
Family	\$30	\$55

**If you wish to receive a paper copy of the quarterly newsletter, please add \$10 per year to cover the cost of printing and postage and a note stating your wish to receive a paper copy.**

2024  
JANUARY 20,  
NEXT MEETING

Middlesex Genealogical Society  
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