

# The Newsletter of Middlesex Genealogical Society

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Darien, Fairfield County, CT

March, 2023

## President's Message

Happy Spring, the season of Genealogy conferences in person or remote! I hope you are planning on taking advantage of these classes. RootsTech 23 will be adding videos to the FamilySearch portal the beginning of March. NGS and NERGC are coming in May. MGS has 2 more lectures before summer vacation. Nora Galvin will be with us 18 March, *Searching for Elusive Ancestors with DNA*. Carol Ansel from The Godfrey will be with us 13 May, *Resources of the Godfrey Library*. We look forward to seeing you on these two Saturdays.

## MGS News

On January 21<sup>st</sup>, MGS resumed our live meetings at the Darien Library. Toni McKeen presented *The Immigration Experience*. She began with the reasons people left, poverty and disease being among the top causes and places they left from, mostly rural areas rather than cities. She described the culture shock of migrants going to big cities like Naples, Bremen and Liverpool to await transport. Usually, the father would travel first, then save enough money to bring more of his family over. Toni explained the conditions of the voyage and the excitement of arriving in the new world, at places like Castle Clinton and later Ellis Island. She told us about the process of immigration, physi-

cal and mental exams, vaccinations, ID tags and in some cases, detention. There were societies to protect the immigrants and help with paperwork and finding a place to stay. Toni then described the naturalization process and recommended books to read. She finished with a Q&A.

## Upcoming MGS Presentations

***Presentations will be held at the  
Darien Library in the Louise Parker  
Berry Community Room***

**Saturday, March 18, and Saturday May 13,  
1:00 pm Informal "Meet & Greet"** Come and talk to your fellow members about your work, brick walls, successes, etc.

**Saturday, March 18, 2023, 2:00 pm, *Searching for Elusive Ancestors with DNA*** Presented by Nora Galvin, CG



How can DNA testing help you identify "missing" ancestors? This presentation provides a strategy using tools at the major DNA companies, at GEDmatch, and at other third-party sites to identify unknown matches who are related to your elusive ancestor.

Nora Galvin is a Certified Genealogist® who has been researching and lecturing profession-

ally since 2005. Her areas of expertise include Irish and Connecticut research and genetic genealogy. She is a member of Connecticut Professional Genealogists Council and the APG, and has been the editor of *Connecticut Ancestry*, the quarterly journal of Connecticut Ancestry Society, since 2014.

**Saturday, May 13, 2023 2:00 pm, The Godfrey Memorial Library and its Resources,** presented by Carol Ansel, Library Director.

The Godfrey Memorial Library was founded in 1947 by Fremont Rider, retired Head Librarian at Wesleyan University in Middletown, Connecticut who had a keen interest in genealogy. He started out by donating his own personal collection of material, which amounted to over



800 books. The collection expanded and grew from there, today comprising over 40,000 works. In addition to genealogies and biographies, the library offers vital records, local town and county histories, city directories, military muster rolls, family Bible records, and unique collections like the Laput Cemetery Collection, with its data and photos for gravestones in 1,048 Connecticut cemeteries (and counting). We will introduce you to "The Scholar," the online research element of the library, and show you how to search it effectively, with an emphasis on the collections which are unique to us.

Carol Ansel is the director of the Godfrey Memorial Library. Before that she was a school and public librarian. She has a certificate from the Boston University Genealogy Program.

*Welcome back  
to the MGS Board  
Pamela Shea*

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

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Mary Lavins	Email Communications
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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 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**  
P.O. Box 9  
Darien, Fairfield County, CT 06820

Website: [mgsdarienct.org](http://mgsdarienct.org)

## Analysis of a Family Tree

by Peter Biggins

Once you have “completed” your family tree, you might find it interesting to analyze various aspects of the tree and present a summary of your findings, such as: birth years, countries of origin, surnames, immigration, places of residence, life span, family size, religion, occupation, education (and maybe even Y-DNA). Following is an example of how to analyze a family tree. It is based on my family tree that goes back five generations to Ireland, Germany, and Switzerland.

**Generations.** My tree has five generations: my wife and I, our 4 parents, our 8 grandparents, our 16 great grandparents, and our 32 great great grandparents. That's a total of 62 individuals in 31 families. This is generally as far back as my research goes. Information for some Irish great great grandparents is incomplete. And, information is available for some German “three-greats” who are excluded in this analysis.

**Birth Years.** The five generations, starting with the great greats, were born roughly every 30 years. I call them Gen 1820, Gen 1850, Gen 1880, Gen 1910, and Gen 1940. The actual average birth years are: 1818, 1845, 1878, 1909, and 1940.

**Countries of Origin.** The 32 great great grandparents from the 1820 generation were all born in Europe: 20 were Irish, 8 were German, and 4 were Swiss (German-speaking). Our children, therefore, are 5/8ths Irish, 1/4th German, and 1/8th Swiss. Ireland was actually ruled by England. Germany was separate Kingdoms of Prussia, Bavaria, and Württemberg, and the Electorate of Mainz (later added to the Grand Duchy of Baden).

**Surnames.** There are 16 Irish surnames: Biggins/Beggan, Carroll (2), Condon, Flannery, Foy, Hartigan, Higgins, Kenny, McDonald, McNally, Murray, O'Malley, Stanton, Walsh, Young. There are 8 German surnames: Berles, Drücke, Fassnacht, Green, Heller, Koch, Schickell, Schmitt. There are 3 Swiss surnames: Alleman, Starke, Wittenmeier. That's 27

out of 32 surnames. There are 5 great great grandmothers whose birth surnames we don't know: 4 Irish and 1 Swiss.

**Homes in Europe.** Thus far, only three specific homes have been found in Europe where our ancestors lived. The first is the Foy farm in the townland of Derreenascooba in County Mayo, Ireland. The second is the Beggan farm in the townland of Drumgill in County Cavan, Ireland. The third is the Druecke house in Ostentrop, North Rhine-Westphalia, Germany. All three were found as a result of travel to the places.

**Immigration to America.** There were no American restrictions on European immigrants when members of the family tree immigrated. The first ancestors arrived in America in the early 1830s. The last arrived in 1880. (There was no Statue of Liberty until 1886.). There were 28 immigrants out of the 62 individuals on the family tree. They are in Gen 1850 and Gen 1820, except one Carroll, who is in Gen 1880. They left Europe from the ports of Antwerp, Bremen, Hamburg, LeHavre, and Liverpool. These were the major European ports of departure in the nineteenth century. They came on sailing ships before 1870 and steamships thereafter. Most arrived at the port of New York (Castle Garden after 1855). Some arrived in Baltimore.

The earliest immigrants left from Bremen in 1834. They were the Schickells from the Kingdom of Bavaria. Their family of six first had to travel 235 miles by horse and wagon to the port. At 20 miles per day, that would take 12 days. They sold the horse and took the wagon with them to America. They left from Bremen on the sailing ship *Johannes* and arrived in Baltimore two months later. After 80 days in Baltimore, they traveled by horse and wagon 420 miles to Tiffin, Ohio, stopping for 14 days in Pittsburgh.

The last immigrants left from Cobh in 1880. They were the Carroll family of Ballyneety, County Limerick. Their family of nine left from Queenstown, County Cork on the steamship *Parthia*. (In 1912, the *Titanic* left Queenstown on its fatal voyage. In 1920, the town name was changed to Cobh.) They arrived in Castle Garden. The voyage took two weeks. They went on to Chicago, probably by train.



The steamship *Parthia* was four times as long as the sailing ship *Johannes*. The *Parthia* took two weeks to cross the Atlantic. The *Johannes* took two months.

**Homes in America.** The families made homes primarily in three general areas: Chicago, Illinois; Grand Rapids, Michigan; and Green County, Wisconsin. Some initially lived a few years in seven areas the eastern United States: Tiffin, Ohio; Baltimore, Maryland; Harlem, Albany, White Hall, and Nunda, New York; and somewhere in Vermont. One settled initially in Ontario, Canada. The earlier generations lived on farms or in cities. The later generations lived in suburbs.

**Family Histories.** It has been possible to write histories for 26 of the 31 families. The 5 unwritten families are in Gen1820.

**Life Expectancy.** The lifespan for 27 males ranged from 41 to 88 years. The mean of 67.8 compares with the 74.2 for Americans in 2020. The lifespan for 26 females ranged from 27 to 91 years. The mean of 70.2 compares with 79.9 for Americans in 2020. My maternal grandmother Rose Smith Drueke was 91 when she died. Her mother Christine Koch Smith was 27.

**Family Size.** The families in the five generations had 1 to 10 children, with a mean of 4.6. There is no apparent trend. If Gen 1970 were included, its family size would be 2 or 3.

**Religion.** All the families in the five generations are Roman Catholic. One couple married after their first child was born. Another couple separated late in life, but were buried next to each other.

**Occupation.** The breadwinners in the five generations had a variety occupations: builder, carpenter, consultant, farmer, gold miner, grocer, harness maker, laborer, wholesale liquor dealer, locksmith, manufacturer, musician, policeman, railway mail clerk, ropemaker, salesman, saloon keeper, slater, and undertaker. One ancestor went to the California Gold Rush in 1849. One was a sergeant the Civil War. One had two brothers who were regimental band leaders in the Civil War. One worked on the transcontinental railroad and was present at the Golden Spike Ceremony in 1869. One was a lieutenant in WWII.

**Education.** The first known high school grad-

uates were in Gen 1880. The first college graduates were in Gen1910. The first post graduates were in Gen1940.

**Deep Ancestry.** Y-chromosome DNA testing has identified the deep ancestry of four of the 16 great great grandfathers: Biggins/Beggan from Ulster in Ireland has the DNA of The Three Collas who emigrated to Ulster from England in the 4<sup>th</sup> century. McDonald from Ireland has the DNA of Cenel Moain who lived in Ulster in the 7<sup>th</sup> century. Carroll from County Limerick in Ireland has the DNA of Breassal Breac who lived in Ossory in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century. Drueke from Old Saxony in Germany has Saxon DNA found in England.

All four go back to one common ancestor who was born with a mutation called R-L151 in roughly 3000 BC in Ukraine. This common ancestor later split into Saxon and Celtic mutations. The Saxon mutation is called R-U106 and occurred in roughly 2950 BC in Poland. Drueke has the Saxon mutation. The Celtic mutation is called R-P312 and occurred in roughly 2800 BC in Southern Germany. Biggins, McDonald, and Carroll have the Celtic mutation. Biggins and McDonald share a later mutation called R-L21 that occurred in roughly 2600 BC in Southern England.

## Upcoming Events

**Thursday March 2, to Saturday March 4, 2023, RootsTech 2023.** This unprecedented global virtual conference will be enhanced by an in-person experience in Salt Lake City. That means that this year you get to decide how you want to experience RootsTech! You can join millions of people from all over the world in learning about family history or join us at the in-person event in Salt Lake City. RootsTech 2023 is going to be epic! You won't want to miss it! Click [HERE](#)

**Sunday, March 12, 2023, 10:30 am – 2:30 pm - Ulster Historical Foundation North American Lecture Tour.** Three lectures. Host: Fré-amh Éireann Genealogy Group, Gaelic Ameri-



can Club, 74 Beach Road, Fairfield, CT 06824  
Doors open at 9:30 am: there will be a ½ hour  
lunch break. Cost \$20/\$30 per person. Click  
[HERE](#) Registration required.

**Wednesday May 3, to Saturday May 6, 2023,**  
**NERGC Conference** Springfield Massachusetts. Our twenty-page [NERGC 2023 Brochure](#) lists all the activities of the conference, day-by-day, including workshops, sessions, special events, and meals. On the back of the brochure, you will find a registration form that can be used to register by mail. Alternative, you can download a [one-page Flier](#) that contains just the cover page and the order form.

**Wednesday May 31, to Saturday June 3,**  
**2023 National Genealogical Society**  
**(NGS) 2023 Family History Conference**, Richmond, Virginia, at the Greater Richmond Convention Center. [Register](#) either for attendance in Richmond or Online at Home. The in-person conference features three days of concentrated learning for everyone interested in family history from beginners to professional genealogists. Online at Home will offer ten lectures, live-streamed (five each day) on Friday and Saturday, 2–3 June. Everyone who registers for the in-person program will receive complimentary access to Online at Home.

## **CORRECTION**

The response email in the December 2022  
MGS newsletter for choosing a Family Tree  
Maker event was incorrect.

It should be [newslettermgsdarien@gmail.com](mailto:newslettermgsdarien@gmail.com)

If you responded to the first email address,  
please choose again.

**1 Introduction to Family Tree Maker**

**2 What's New in Family Tree Maker**  
or

**3 Family Tree Maker 24.1 update**

We apologize for the inconvenience.

## **I'd Rather Do Genealogy!**

By Mel Oshins

*Cooking? Cleaning? I'd Rather do Genealogy!*

*They think that I should cook and clean,  
and be a model wife.*

*I tell them it's more interesting to study  
Grandpa's life.*

*They simply do not understand why I  
hate to go to bed . . .*

*I'd rather do two hundred years of re-  
search work instead.*

*Why waste the time we have on earth  
just snoring and asleep?*

*When we can learn of ancestors that  
sailed upon the deep?*

*We have priests, Rabbis, lawmen, sol-  
diers, more than just a few.*

*And yes, there's many scoundrels, and a  
bootlegger or two.*

*How can a person find this life an awful  
drudge or bore?*

*When we can live the lives of all those  
folks who came before?*

*A hundred years from now of course, no  
one will ever know*

*Whether I did laundry, but they'll see our  
Tree and glow . . .*

*'Cause their dear old granny left for  
them, for all posterity,*

*not clean hankies and the like, but a fin-  
ished family tree.*

*My home may be untidy, 'cause I've bet-  
ter things to do . . .*

*I'm checking all the records to provide us  
with a clue.*

*Old great granny's pulling roots and  
branches out with glee,*

*Her clothes ain't hanging out to dry, she's  
hung up on The Tree.*

## **Chronicles Insight – Ships and Steerage**

### **The Beginning of a New Life**

Written and first published by Ireland Reaching Out at  
[www.irelandxo.com](http://www.irelandxo.com)

During the 19th Century, millions of Irish people left in search of a better chance at life, but the conditions aboard the ships meant that many never made it to their final destination. The Steerage Act of 1819 helped improve the conditions endured by the poorest of passengers, but the biggest impact was due to a remarkable young woman, who dedicated her life to ensuring that Irish emigrants would have a safer passage across the Atlantic Ocean.

The dreadful conditions faced by the poorest passengers on board the many emigration ships which crossed the Atlantic during the 19th century have been well-documented, and at times romanticised in books, film, and television. The lowest class of travel, known as steerage, was reserved for those who could not afford to travel in better conditions. Often these passengers were trying to escape the poverty and starvation which they had endured at home in Ireland. Such was the reputation of these ships that the American government saw fit to introduce a special law which dictated a minimum standard for steerage conditions. The following outlines the Steerage Acts, an account of a tragic accident on board a passenger ship, and the story of a Charlotte Grace O'Brien, whose commitment to improving conditions for the most impoverished of travellers extended to both before and after the voyage.

In 1819, the U.S. government passed its first Steerage Act. Its official name was the Manifest of Immigrations Act. It was intended that this act would mean better conditions on board the ships which were arriving in American ports passengers in their droves who were seeking out the American Dream. The act provided strict regulations and also required the captains of these ships to report a full, detailed list of all

their passengers. This was the very first American immigration law. Sadly, it was not enough. The Act was revised in 1847 and 1849 as immigration to the country increased. A separate law, the Carriage of Passengers Act of 1885 was passed in order to focus more specifically on the plight of the steerage passengers. Similar legally binding regulations came into place in Ireland with the passing of the Merchant Shipping Act in 1894 which sets out strict regulations regarding the number of passengers which a ship could carry and also stipulates that these ships must be surveyed at regular intervals.

The conditions of steerage and the treatment of the passengers therein came into sharp focus at the end of 1848. On the first of December, a paddle steamer called 'The Londonderry' was making its way from Sligo to Liverpool, a journey which it undertook on a regular basis. As the Londonderry was a smaller ship, the steerage passengers generally travelled on deck for the relatively short journey. On this occasion, it is believed that the 174 steerage passengers were being transported to Liverpool where they would board a larger ship bound across the Atlantic to the United States. As this was at the height of the Great Hunger, it is not surprising that large volumes of people were emigrating from Ireland every week. Rampant starvation and abject poverty with little to no sign of improvement meant that there were few reasons to stay in Ireland if you could afford to leave, or if you fell under one of the many assisted migration schemes.

Whilst the Londonderry was navigating around the northwestern coast of Ireland, a terrible storm gathered, with gusts of wind reaching hurricane level. For their own safety, the steerage passengers were sent below deck to shelter from the vicious winds. During the storm the companionway cover broke loose and in order to prevent the sea water from getting below deck and sinking the ship, the crew sealed the

gap with tarpaulin. This meant that the passengers taking refuge below were now effectively trapped. With very little space, which they shared with cattle, and extremely rough conditions, the situation soon turned into a catastrophe as people suffocated from a lack of oxygen, or were crushed or trampled to death. The Londonderry eventually made its way to Derry Harbour where it remained for the night.

When morning came and the skies cleared, the crew made a grizzly discovery. 72 of the passengers, men, women, and children, had perished in the storm. The crew and their captain were put on trial for manslaughter, claiming that had they not acted as they did, then the ship would have gone down in the storm, taking many more lives with it. The case highlighted that the Steerage Act had not been sufficient to prevent the loss of life on migrant ships and that more needed to be done.

Charlotte Grace O'Brien, daughter of the Young Irelander William Smith O'Brien, was



*Charlotte Grace O'Brien*

born in Limerick on the 23rd of November 1845. When Charlotte was just 3 years old, her father was involved in the failed 1848 rebellion. For this he was sentenced to death, but had his sentence commuted

to transportation. He was sent to Tasmania to serve his sentence. From this early experience with ship conditions, Charlotte went on to become heavily involved in campaigning for an improvement in the standards of Irish emigrant ships.

In the book, 'The Irish in America' by J.F. McGuire, Charlotte read about the dreadful experiences which Irish emigrants endured on

their journey across the Atlantic. Determined to have a positive impact, Charlotte travelled to Queenstown (now called Cobh) to see for herself just how the steerage passengers were expected to live. Charlotte even went so far as to undertake a short journey in steerage herself. The 24 hour voyage from Liverpool to Queenstown further enlightened her as to what improvements were needed. She was horrified by what she saw. Charlotte set about lobbying the government to make dramatic changes to ship conditions. Her first notable success was the introduction of Catholic priests to each journey, so as to provide spiritual comfort for the passengers and, when fatalities occurred, to administer the last rites. She began to inspect the ships prior to departure. On these visits, she would take a medical officer with her to insure that the steerage section of the ship was fit to safely house its passengers. She went on a number of transatlantic voyages, though not in steerage, where she would make regular inspections of the ship to insure that standards were being upheld.

Charlotte's efforts to improve the lives of Irish emigrants extended beyond their time on the ships. She also established a lodging house for women in Queenstown where passengers often had to spend a number of nights before travelling. As a busy port, Queenstown had become a dangerous place to be, especially for vulnerable young women travelling alone. She was also instrumental in establishing a mission house in New York City which was dedicated to providing aid to newly arrived Irish immigrants. It was called the Our Lady of the Rosary mission house and it still stands today.

Though these years of intense emigration greatly depleted the Irish population, it also provided us with our incredibly diverse diaspora which stretches all over the world. The Our Lady of the Rosary building is still in operation today, and their records help people to track down their Irish roots as many immigrants would have at least passed through New York.

**Did you  
remember to  
renew your  
membership  
for 2023?  
[Click Here](#)**

*Welcome  
New Member  
Susan Callahan*

**LEAVE THEM SMILING**



**NEXT MEETING  
MARCH 18,  
2023**

Middlesex Genealogical Society  
P.O. Box 9  
Darien, CT 06820