



The Newsletter of
Middlesex Genealogical Society

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Darien, Fairfield County, CT

December, 2022

President's Message

Happy Winter 2022

In this season of being thankful, I have many things to be thankful for:

The Season - an Indian Summer - has been nicely warm for an extra month.

My Season of Life - my term as your President. It's been an interesting time navigating programs and safety. I'm glad we are returning to see each other in person.

Genealogy - the benefactor of this time at home. More records have been made available online. Records vary from searchable by name or place or just viewable. Either way I'm very thankful for more access to records from home.

Podcasts - a great way to learn about the history that our relatives lived through. "A Teacher's History of The United States," "History That Doesn't Suck" just to name a few. Search for your state or topic and let us know what you like.

I hope you have been successful researching from home. We are always just an [email](#) away to encourage your research methods or provide a tip.

We look forward to seeing you at our all-live lecture in January 2023.

Happy Winter.

Sara



**CONGRATULATIONS!
MGS IS CELEBRATING 40
YEARS ON
DECEMBER 10TH 2022!**

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MIDDLESEX GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY 2022-2023 OFFICERS & BOARD MEMBERS

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Pamela Shea	Past President
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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

We would like to highlight the contributions of one of our members

For the last several years Sheila Johnson has been a faithful steward of all types of genealogical gold, posting over 45 times to our Facebook page in 2022. Please join us on FB, Click [Here](#) to find more genealogy offerings and to say thank you to Sheila for her posts. Keep up the good work and we look forward to seeing you in 2023.

Upcoming MGS Presentations

Beginning January 21, 2023, MGS presentations will be returning to the Darien Library as LIVE only events. A Social hour begins at 1:00 pm. Come and talk to your fellow members about your progress/problems. Look for emails and our [web page](#) for more information.

Saturday January 21, 2023, 2:00 pm, "The Immigrant Experience" Presented by Toni McKeen.

What was it like to travel from a small village to the large emigration port, and then travel by steamship to a new world to begin life over without speaking the language or knowing the culture? How difficult was the process at Ellis Island? What documents were used? Then how did our ancestors adjust to their new life style? All this will be covered in this emotional lecture.



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 37 years. She now has more than 9,800 of her closest family members entered in her Family Tree Maker program. Toni has identified relatives on extended branches who mar-

ried into the family including those from various immigrant ethnic groups as well as others who have been here long enough to practically have greeted George Washington when he arrived. She is a member of several genealogical organizations and is Chairman of the Genealogy Club of Newtown for the second time.

For the last 19 years, while not doing continuing research on her own family, Toni has been teaching several levels of genealogy, (5 classes weekly). 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. Over the years she has taught over 4000 hours of genealogy courses at Founders Hall in Ridgefield, Redding, CT as well as Bronxville, Tuckahoe, and Mamaroneck, NY.

Toni has also been a popular lecturer at various genealogy societies in the New York, Connecticut, New Jersey, Boston, and Long Island areas.

She earned her BS and MS Degree in Biology. Her training from her research background helped her to establish organized systems and charts for recording family information for herself and her students...a problem for most researchers.

Toni has traveled to Italy visiting the towns of her ancestors in search of additional original documents of her relatives.

Saturday, March 18, 2023, 2:00 pm, a joint presentation of MGS and the Connecticut Ancestry Society "Let's Write a Sketch" Presented by Nora Galvin



A sketch is the simplest genealogy writing format and it is the easiest way to begin writing up your research. A sketch provides the basic information about *one single individual or couple*. Sketches are written in a specific format. Learn the "rules" and get

started on your first writing project for yourself, your family, or publication.

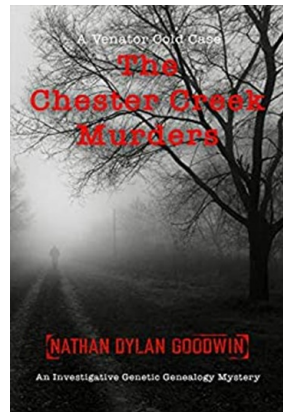
Nora Galvin is a Certified Genealogist® who has been researching and lecturing professionally since 2005. Her areas of expertise include Irish and Connecticut research and genetic genealogy. She is a member of Connecticut Professional Genealogists Council and the APG, and has been the editor of *Connecticut Ancestry*, the quarterly journal of Connecticut Ancestry Society, since 2014.

Member Recommended Book

The Chester Creek Murders

by Nathan Dylan Goodwin

When Detective Clayton Tyler is tasked with



reviewing the formidable archives of unsolved homicides in his police department's vaults, he settles on one particular cold case from the 1980s: The Chester Creek Murders. Three young women were brutally murdered—their bodies dumped in Chester Creek, Delaware County by a serial

killer who has confounded a slew of detectives and evaded capture for over thirty-eight years. With no new leads or information at his disposal, the detective contacts Venator for help, a company that uses cutting-edge investigative genetic genealogy to profile perpetrators solely from DNA evidence. Taking on the case, Madison Scott-Barnhart and her small team at Venator must use their forensic genealogical expertise to attempt finally to bring the serial killer to justice. Madison, meanwhile, has to weigh professional and personal issues carefully, including the looming five-year anniversary of her husband's disappearance.

*Welcome
New Member
Laura Hunt*

MGS News

On Oct 15th MGS held its first meeting of the 2022/23 season. The meeting was attended by 39 combined live and zoom participants. Claire Smith gave a wonderful presentation on Irish research. Beginning with a condensed history of Ireland from the English conquest to the present separation of the Republic and Northern Ireland. Claire went on to explain the necessity of knowing the religion and townland of your ancestor to make the best of your search efforts. She described the records available to search and where to find them as well as useful information such as Irish naming patterns, Civil land divisions and Poor Law Unions, which records survived and which to use as substitutes for those that did not, to name a few. All in all, a great presentation.

November 12th was our second meeting and was a Zoom only presentation, attended by 21 viewers. Amber Oldenburg gave a talk on the Overland Trails that our ancestors took westward. She described the three main migration routes used: the California, Mormon and Oregon trails. Amber told us the reasons people traveled: lack of economic opportunities and religious persecution in the overcrowded eastern cities, as well as the prospect of a better life, free land and the California gold rush. Originally begun by fur traders, these trails saw hundreds of thousands migrate between the 1840s and 1860s. There were published guides that advised the travelers on what to bring and what to expect. Amber told us that they traveled in com-

panies comprising as many as 400 people and how many migrants kept diaries. Even if your relative did not, they traveled with people who did. These diaries give a vivid description of life on the trails and are available for us to read. The talk was followed by questions and answers.

Family Tree Maker Event

Family Tree Maker is offering a free virtual event.

Three classes are available to choose from: **Introduction to Family Tree Maker** - for anyone interested in learning how it works and if it's right for them.

What's New in Family Tree Maker - for anyone already using Family Tree Maker and wants to see the newest features and updates as well as ask any questions they might have. (Most common class)

Family Tree Maker 24.1 update - for those updating their copy of FTM 2019 to version 24.1 - all the information on how to get and use the update and what has been updated, made faster, more reliable, etc. (A great class for current FTM user groups.)

If you are interested in MGS scheduling one of these events, choose which one you would like to attend and send it to [newslet-termgs@gmail.com](mailto:newslettermgs@gmail.com).

LEAVE THEM SMILING



How the Puritans Banned Christmas

By Heather Tourgee December 10, 2019

NEW ENGLAND TODAY
TODAY@NEWENGLAND.COM

In 1659 the Puritans banned Christmas in Massachusetts. But why?

A short, easily overlooked paragraph from an early law book of the Massachusetts Bay Colony reads as follows:

“For preventing disorders arising in several places within this jurisdiction, by reason of some still observing such festivals as were superstitiously

kept in other countries, to the great dishonor of God and offence of others, it is therefore ordered by this Court and the authority thereof, that whosoever shall be found observing any such day as Christmas or the like, either by forbearing of labor, feasting, or any other way, upon such accountants as aforesaid, every person so offending shall pay of every such offence five shillings, as a fine to the county.”

Yes, you read that right. In 1659 the Puritan government of the Massachusetts Bay Colony actually *banned* Christmas. So how did one of the largest Christian holidays come to be perse-

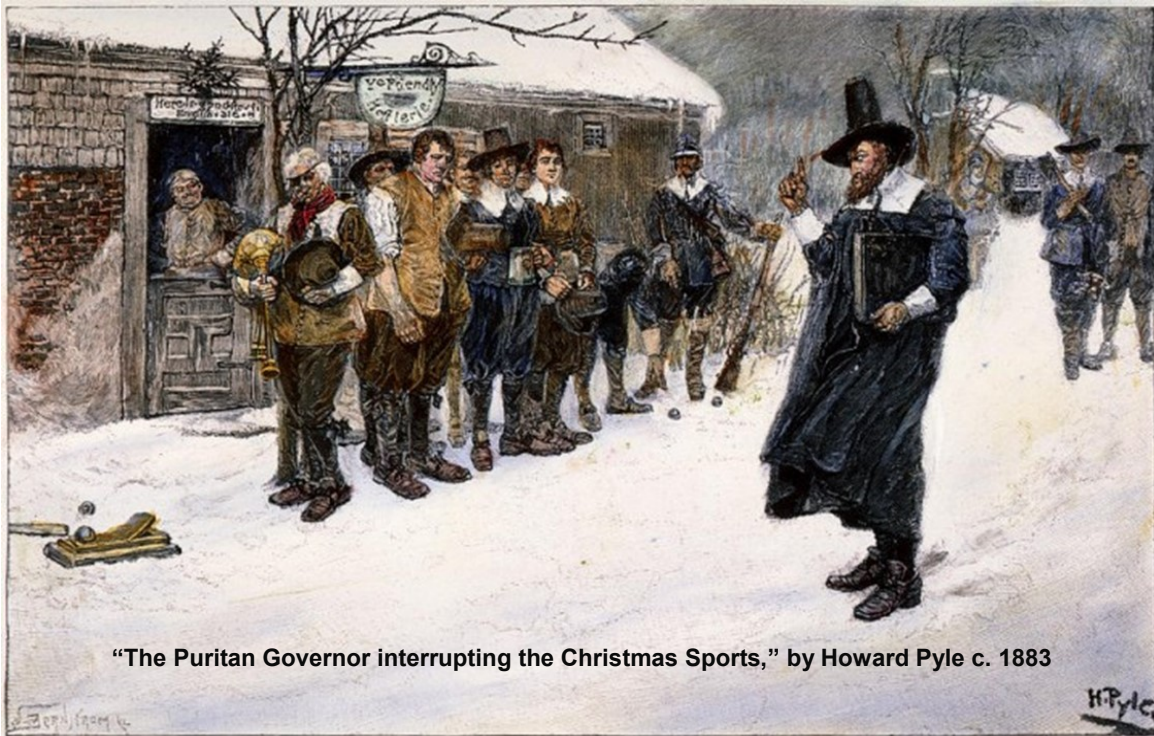
cuted in the earliest days of New England?

Christmas in 17th century England actually wasn't so different from the holiday we celebrate today. It was one of the largest religious observances, full of traditions, feast days, revelry and cultural significance. But the Puritans, a pious religious minority (who, after all, fled the persecution of the Anglican majority), felt that such celebrations were unnecessary and, more importantly, distracted from religious discipline.

They also felt that due to the holiday's loose pagan origins, celebrating it would constitute idolatry. A common sentiment among the leaders of the time was that such feast days detracted

from their core beliefs: “They for whom all days are holy can have no holiday.”

This meant that Christmas wasn't the only holiday on the chopping block. Easter and Whitsunday, other important historical celebrations, were also forbidden. Bans like these would continue through the 18th and 19th centuries (the US House of Representatives even convened on Christmas in 1802). As Puritanism started to fall out of favor, however, Christmas was almost universally accepted throughout the US by 1840 and was eventually declared a National Holiday in 1870.

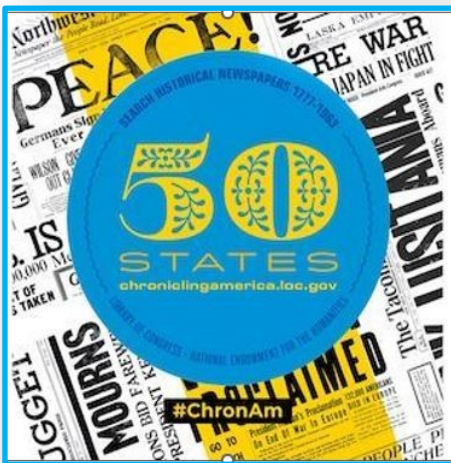


“The Puritan Governor interrupting the Christmas Sports,” by Howard Pyle c. 1883

Chronicling America Reaches 50 States

New Hampshire Joins the National Digital Newspaper Program, Expanding Online Access to America's Historic Newspapers

Chronicling America, the searchable online database of historic American newspapers, will



soon include digitized newspapers from all 50 U.S. states, Washington, D.C., Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

Funded by the National Endowment for

the Humanities (NEH) and housed and maintained online at the Library of Congress, [Chronicling America](#) offers free online access to 19.9 million pages of newspapers published in the United States between 1777 and 1963.

NEH [recently awarded](#) its first grant award to a National Digital Newspaper Program partner for the state of New Hampshire, ensuring access to significant newspapers from the entire United States. Dartmouth College will serve as the New Hampshire state hub, partnering with the New Hampshire State Library, the New Hampshire Historical Society, and the University of New Hampshire Library to identify historical newspapers that reflect the state's political, economic, and cultural history for inclusion in Chronicling America. Among the first newspapers to be digitized and added to the online repository are the New Hampshire Gazette, the first newspaper known to be printed by an enslaved person; The Dartmouth, founded in 1799 as the Dartmouth Gazette, the nation's oldest

school newspaper; and Among the Clouds, a newspaper printed on top of Mount Washington between 1889 and 1917.

"Building on 40 years of collaboration between NEH and the Library of Congress, Chronicling America is a uniquely rich national resource that documents the histories of the events, ideas, and individuals that make up the American story," said NEH Chair Shelly C. Lowe (Navajo). "The addition of the 50th state partner to the National Digital Newspaper Program is a milestone achievement that will expand coverage of this unparalleled resource to encompass all U.S. states, giving the public access to the 'first draft of history' from the perspective of communities across the country."

Established in 2005, Chronicling America gives users on a computer, tablet or phone direct access to American history as it was recorded locally in more than 3,700 newspaper titles in 22 languages. Users can browse the pages of the 1789 [Gazette of the United States](#), a partisan paper friendly to George Washington's administration and the emerging Federalist party; search for headlines related to the [sinking of the Titanic](#) or the [United States' entry into World War I](#); or read contemporaneous newspaper coverage of the [1963 March on Washington](#). NEH grants to state newspaper projects allow program partners across the country to select historically important newspapers published in their respective states and oversee the digitization of those titles for inclusion in the Chronicling America database.

"The Chronicling America collection is a treasure-trove of newspapers of record, community voices and local history unlike any other openly available primary source material," said Deborah Thomas, chief of the Serial and Government Publications Division at the Library of Congress, and the Library's program manager for the National Digital Newspaper Program. "Adding New Hampshire regional and local news to the Chronicling America collection will

expand our understanding of American history and society.”

Sponsored by NEH and the Library of Congress, this talk is free and open to the public. To register, visit: <https://www.loc.gov/item/event-405634/>

Matthew Delmont, the Sherman Fairchild Distinguished Professor of History at Dartmouth is an expert on African American History and the history of Civil Rights. He is the author of the forthcoming *Half American: The Epic Story of African Americans Fighting World War II at Home and Abroad*, which received research support from an NEH Public Scholars award and a Guggenheim Fellowship. His previous books include *Black Quotidian: Everyday History in African American Newspapers* (Stanford University Press, 2019), and *Making Roots: A Nation Captivated* (University of California Press, 2016), among others.

National Endowment for the Humanities

(NEH): Created in 1965 as an independent federal agency, the National Endowment for the Humanities supports research and learning in history, literature, philosophy, and other areas of the humanities by funding selected, peer-reviewed proposals from around the nation. Additional information about the National Endowment for the Humanities and its grant programs is available at neh.gov.

The Library of Congress: The Library of Congress is the world’s largest library, offering access to the creative record of the United States — and extensive materials from around the world. It is the main research arm of the U.S. Congress and the home of the U.S. Copyright Office. Explore collections, reference services and other programs and plan a visit at loc.gov; access the official site for U.S. federal legislative information at congress.gov; and register creative works of authorship at copyright.gov.

Click [HERE](#) to read entire article

Tips

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

newslettermgsdarien@gmail.com

and have it printed in the MGS newsletter.

Did you find a new possible relative? Was he/she living near a proven relative? Go back to the censuses or directories that you have for the proven person and look at other pages to see if you can find the new one. Families often lived near each other.

Don’t want to pay for Ancestry? See if your local library has Ancestry.com library edition. You can access it for free at the [Darrien Library](#).

For those of us who have New York City relatives, the New York Municipal Archives has put many of their records online and for free. Click [HERE](#) to access birth, death and marriage certificates. These are better copies of the same records many of us have looked up in person and paid for over the years. It is not yet perfected, but I have replaced many of my New York City certificates with photo reproductions of the originals.

REMINDER

2023 DUES ARE DUE ON JANUARY 1ST

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

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.

2023
JANUARY 21,
NEXT MEETING

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