



The Newsletter of

Middlesex Genealogical Society

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Darien, Fairfield County, CT

September, 2021

President's Message

Happy Summer, Genealogy Friends

I hope these long days of summer have given you time to reflect on your genealogy path.

As for me, I have had a full year of discoveries, which is always easier with a network of friends. They can be your genealogy program, your social media partners, and your family.

My year has been spent finding cemeteries. I visited a cousin who fell at Shiloh, family members that founded a County and Town in South Dakota, ancestors who spent time in Idaho, and an elusive great-grandmother who went to visit California and is buried there away from her husband and children.

When not traipsing through cemeteries I managed to visit several repositories. I read articles written by my great-grandfather in the 1890s for a newspaper he published in South Dakota. I also held a land plat belonging to another great grandfather – where they lived on a small farm in Minnesota.

Not everything can be found online, but a signpost pointing you to a brick and mortar building with staff you can email with questions can be located!

This fall we will have two great lectures to help you dig deeper into areas of DNA research and Land Records. Nora is returning to MGS with DNA presentation. Our second speaker is new to Darien and Connecticut – she is my tenth

cousin Sandy. We met three years ago at the New York Genealogical and Biographical Family History Conference. Then we bumped into each other at a NGS conference and discovered we were related. Please plan to come out for Sandy and her Land Records presentation – more info on page 3.

Sara Zagrodzky

Using the Social Security Death Records

The following article is from *Eastman's Online Genealogy Newsletter* and is copyright 2021 by Richard W. Eastman. It is re-published here with the permission of the author. Information about the newsletter is available at <http://www.eogn.com/>.

The Social Security Administration's Death Index (SSDI) can be a boon to beginning genealogists. The Social Security number is the



most valuable piece of information when seeking a number of other documents. It is essential

for ordering paper copies of original death records, obituaries, and more. The SSDI is the first step in obtaining this information.

The Social Security Death Records information has not been updated for several years. However, the majority of genealogists are looking for information about people who passed away several years ago so that lack of current entries is usually not a huge drawback.

If you can only trace your U.S. ancestry back to your grandparents or possibly great-grandparents, the Social Security Administration can help you find where they were born, the names of their parents, and more. The SSDI can be especially helpful for those researching immigrants as the data often shows where the individual was born in "the old country." Sometimes it will show the exact location of the town or a country that no longer exists, although that is not guaranteed.

The Social Security Administration was created by an act of law in 1935 as part of President Roosevelt's New Deal program. The act laid out a retirement system for many Americans, although not all. The act also created a new governmental agency to manage the program. The Social Security Administration has since become one of the largest agencies in the U.S. Federal Government.

The Social Security Administration's Death Index (SSDI) originally was a database of deceased persons who received Social Security Benefits. The Social Security Administration started computerizing records in 1962. This made it possible to produce an index of people who had Social Security numbers and are deceased. Most death records prior to 1962 were never computerized and therefore do not appear in the SSDI although a few exceptions do exist. Some online Web sites advertise that the data they possess will contain information about deaths "as early as 1937," but that claim is a *Continued on page 6*

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2020-2021
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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

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Upcoming MGS Presentations

Our planned presentations are contingent on the availability of the Darien Library's Community Room during the pandemic. Please look for our emails for updates, changes, or cancellations.

Saturday, October 2, 2021, 2:00 pm

"Searching for Elusive Ancestors with DNA"

Presented by Nora Galvin, CG

My brick walls are two female ancestors born in



Ireland. One is a great-grandmother. I know where her husband came from and she is supposedly from the same place but I find no records for her even though I know the names of her parents and two siblings. The other is a great-great-grandmother who may be

from Co. Mayo, but I don't know her parents' names so I can't identify her in baptism records.

I am leveraging my DNA in an effort to find unknown relatives of these women (DNA matches of mine or my siblings) who know more than I do. I have a strategy to narrow down DNA matches who may lead me to the information I want to know. The lecture will demonstrate numerous tools available on company websites, third-party websites, and other sources, and specifically apply them to my project.

Nora Galvin, CG, is a professional genealogist specializing in Irish and Connecticut research and Genetic Genealogy. A former secondary-school science teacher and laboratory scientist, she started her family-research business in 2005. She is editor of the quarterly journal *Connecticut Ancestry* and is active in Connecticut Professional Genealogists Council.

Saturday, November 13, 2021, 2:00 pm

American Land Records: The Meat and Potatoes of Genealogical Research

presented by Sandra Schaad MS, CSCS

Mark Twain famously said, "Buy land. They aren't making more of it." From the beginning most Americans owned land. Well into the nineteenth century American land was cheap and readily available, allowing more adult men to own land than practically anywhere else in the world.



During our session you will learn to search for and discover valuable genealogical information about male and female land-owning ancestors through land transfers.

Sandra Schaad, MA, CSCS, is a former figure skater turned avid genealogist as a result of joining DAR and the Colonial Dames of America. Her ancestors lived in seven of the 13 American colonies. Following her BA in Political Science at the University of Arizona, she became fluent in German while spending five years living and working in Germany.

Sandra currently specializes in Lineage and Southern Genealogical research. She has nearly completed an AA in Family History and is in the process of becoming an Accredited Genealogist [AG] in the Upper South: Kentucky, North Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia. However, as a Lineage Specialist, she follows her subjects throughout America and is committed to a life-long process of developing genealogical skills.

Welcome New Member

John E. Clarkin

End of a Feud

By John Driscoll

Life is more like “The Honeymooners” than “Father Knows Best”. Almost every family has its moments, sometimes years, where one or more family members are at odds with another. Mine is no different. Usually, these spats are just a matter of misunderstanding and Irish stubbornness. Such was the situation between two of my cousins. They had a falling out about forty years ago and although they lived very close to each other, rarely spoke.



As my interest in genealogy increased, I began to reestablish connections between my



Dan Driscoll on drum, with family tree on wall

long-lost cousins. My mother’s side of the family was always close, but on my dad’s side, everyone seemed to have scattered around the States; California, Washington, Florida, Virginia, New Jersey, Connecticut and New York. Consequently, I had lost touch with them. Some of these I had not spoken to in many years. I would locate one and make a cold call, armed with enough family info to stop them from hanging up on me right away. My wife and I then visited them and began to reestablish the Driscoll Clan.

We had a mini reunion with some local cous-

ins in 2005, then in early 2009, one of my cousins and I decided to try to have a *real* family re



Driscoll Family Reunion

union. She found the ideal spot for the reunion, Wilcox Memorial Park in Stanfordville, NY. It has a large, open-air pavilion with a kitchen area including refrigeration, overlooking a rolling lawn down to a playground and a pond with a swimming beach. Since much of the family was from different parts of New York State and New Jersey, the park was a good central location for most. After consulting with the cousins, we picked a Saturday in July for the big day.

We had over 100 attendees! The weather was perfect and everyone had a great time. One of the younger generation barbecued whole chickens that he himself had raised. I prepared a family tree chart that my son had printed on a roll that was over 25 feet long and I posted it on the kitchen wall of the pavilion. Pens were provided to make necessary changes and additions to the chart. My Cousin Dan brought his band with him and provided live entertainment. The day went by too quickly, playing cornhole, swimming and mostly *talking*.

All in all, we were a family once again. The best part? My two cousins I had mentioned in the first paragraph seemed to have forgotten why they ever feuded. To this day they are as close as ever once again.

Tips

Can't find an obit? Not sure if there was one? Try the Obituary Daily Times, an index of published obituaries. [Obituary Daily Times \(rootsweb.com\)](http://rootsweb.com). This is a volunteer based list. The site does not contain death notices, but may tell you if one was published. It is by no means a complete list, but I have found some relatives on it and have been able to locate those obits with the information. You can also become a volunteer.

Sometimes I get on a roll finding documents online. When this happens, I don't want to enter this information into my family tree each time as it will disrupt my train of thought. I created a TO-DO folder on my computer. In that folder I made sub folders for each surname in my family. I save my findings there and come back to them when I am ready to put it all together.

When visiting a cemetery to find relatives, take a walk around and look at nearby graves. Sometimes relatives and friends bought plots at the same time and were buried near each other. They probably lived near each other as well and this may be a finding aid for relatives you cannot locate.

Have a tip to share with your members?

Send it to

newslettermqsdarien@gmail.com

Member Recommended Book

A Ten Years' War

An Account of the Battle With the Slum in New York

by Jacob A. Riis

Jacob Riis's career-long "battle with the slum"



was aided through acquaintances and friendships with political and affluent allies—the most powerful being Theodore Roosevelt. Their deep friendship began in 1895 when then Police Commissioner Roosevelt sought out Riis in his newspaper office across from police headquarters on Mul-

berry Street. Riis took the commissioner on a series of nighttime forays into the slums and used the relationship to make recommendations for reform of the police and health departments, many of which Roosevelt embraced. Over time their bond strengthened, even after Roosevelt left the city to climb the rungs from a state to a national political career. The two men supported each other publicly—artfully using the media to enhance their mutual reputations.

Riis reviewed his decade of reform, which began in 1890, in his book *A Ten Years' War* (1900). He called the two years (1895–1897) he worked actively with Roosevelt crusading against police corruption and housing conditions in New York City “the happiest by far” of his time as a reformer. When Roosevelt became governor of New York (January 1899 to January 1901), Riis encouraged him to improve the standards of state factory inspection. Roosevelt's letters to Riis mention social worker James Bronson Reynolds and child-labor reform advocate and seasoned factory inspector Florence Kelley, both important allies in improving factory inspection at the state and national levels.

Social Security continued from pg. 2

bit misleading; 99.9% of the information is for 1962 and later.

Initially, the Social Security Administration only recorded the deaths of individuals who were receiving retirement benefits from the Administration. Those who died before reaching retirement age were not listed. Neither were those who had different retirement systems, such as railroad workers, schoolteachers, and other municipal, state, and federal employees. In the 1970s the railroad and many other retirement systems were merged into the Social Security system. Deaths of those retirees then started appearing in the SSDI.

In the late 1980s and after, all deaths in the U.S. were reported to the Social Security Administration and recorded in the SSDI. You can find deaths of children and non-retired adults listed for the 1990s and later, but not for earlier years.

Because legal aliens in the U.S. can obtain a Social Security card, their names may appear in the SSDI if their deaths were reported, even if the death occurred overseas.

The online SSDI databases contain the following information fields:

Social Security number, Surname, Given Name
Date of Death, Date of Birth Last Known Residence, Location of Last Benefit, Date and Place of Issuance

You can access the Social Security Death Index at no charge on a number of Web sites, including the following:

New England Historic Genealogical Society

<https://www.americanancestors.org/search/category-search/344/vital-records-incl-bible-cemetery-church-and-ssdi>

Ancestry.com: <https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/3693/>

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (the Mormons) offer the Social Security

Death Index on their popular Family Search site at <https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/1202535>

Keep in mind, however, that the online SSDI database is only an index -- an abbreviated listing. The Social Security Administration holds additional information that can be a genealogical jackpot. The index listing of an ancestor is merely your ticket to this jackpot.

From 1936 on, anyone who has applied for a Social Security Card filled out an application form (SS-5) that the U.S. Government keeps on file. This application form (SS-5) contains the following information: Full name, *Full name at birth (including maiden name), *Present mailing address, Age at last birthday, Date of birth, *Place of birth (city, county, state), *Father's full name "regardless of whether living or dead", *Mother's full name, including maiden name, "regardless of whether living or dead," *Sex and race, *Ever applied for SS number/Railroad Retirement before? Yes/No, *Current employer's name and address, *Date signed*Applicant's signature

The items marked with an asterisk are not available in the online SSDI database but are available in the original SS-5 applications.

The SS-5 form is obviously much more valuable to the genealogist than the limited information shown in the online death index. The Social Security Administration can supply photocopies of the original Social Security application form (the SS-5) to anyone who requests information on a deceased individual. You can obtain a photocopy of the SS-5 form by writing to the Social Security Administration.

The SSA charges \$27 for each individual SS-5 copy if you can provide the Social Security number of the deceased person, \$29 if you cannot provide the number. (A computer extract is available for \$16, but those extracts do not include the names of the individual's parents nor

the place of birth.) The SSA is not in the business of doing genealogical research and cannot, by law, expend Social Security Trust Fund money for purposes not related to the operation of the Social Security program. The \$27 fee is intended to offset the cost to the government whenever SSA provides information from its files for non-program purposes.

To obtain the photocopy of the original SS-5, you must fill out Form SSA-711, the "Request for Deceased Individual's Social Security Record," available at <https://www.ssa.gov/forms/ssa-711.pdf>.

There is a fee of \$21.00 U.S. for most records requests. Send your request and check to:
Social Security Administration
OEO DEBS FOIA
P.O. Box 33022
Baltimore, Maryland 21290-3022

If you want to obtain the SS-5 forms for more than one person, it is suggested that you mail multiple forms individually (in different envelopes) and include separate checks. Be patient. You may have to wait several months for the response to your request(s).

Social Security Numbers

It is interesting to note that you can tell where a Social Security Number was issued simply by looking at the first few digits of the number. This does not tell where the person was born, only where he or she was living when the number was issued. Nonetheless, it can be a valuable clue as to where to look for additional information.

The Social Security Account Number (SSAN) is divided into three sets of digits. For example, let's take 123-45-6789. The 3 digits in the first group indicate the state or territory in which the number was originally issued. The second group of 2 numbers is used to define the people within the state. The third group of 4 digits is simply issued in numerical sequence.

The following list shows the area indicated by first 3 digits:

001-003 NH, 004-007 ME, 008-009 VT, 010-034 MA, 035-039 RI, 040-049 CT, 050-134 NY, 135-158 NJ, 159-211 PA, 212-220 MD, 221-222 DE, 223-231 VA 232-236 WV, 237-246 NC, 247-251 SC, 252-260 GA, 261-267 FL, 268-302 OH, 303-317 IN, 318-361 IL, 362-386 Michigan, 387-399 Wisconsin, 400-407 Kentucky, 408-415 Tennessee, 416-424 AL, 425-428 MS, 429-432 AR, 433-439 LA, 440-448 OK, 449-467 TX, 468-477 MN, 478-485 IA, 486-500 MO, 501-502 ND, 503-504 SD, 505-508 NE, 509-515 KS, 516-517 MT, 518-519 ID, 520 WY, 521-524 CO, 525 NM (also 585 below), 526-527 AZ, 528-529 UT, 530 NV, 531-539 WA, 540-544 OR, 545-573 CA, 574 AK, 575-576 HI, 577-579 DC, 580 VI, 581-585 PR, GU, AS, 585 NM (some 585 numbers), 586-699 Unassigned, 700-729 Railroad Retirement Board, 730-899 Unassigned

A few Social Security Numbers beginning with a 9 have been issued, but these are very rare.

Upcoming Virtual Events

Saturday, September 25, 2021, 10:00 a.m.
The Register of Qualified Genealogists (RQG) is pleased to announce that our 2021 conference "Genealogy and Social History: Know your Ancestors" has been moved and will now be held online via Zoom.

This free conference is for EVERYONE interested in genealogy and family history and will feature main speakers Professors Helen Johnson and Heather Shore, Melanie Backe-Hansen and David Annal. Several short paper presentations have also been designed to support you in developing your genealogy and family history skills and knowledge. Details can be found on the call for papers page.

<https://www.qualifiedgenealogists.org/2021-conference>

Saturday, November 20, 2021, 10:30 a.m. – noon. Sponsored by the Friends of the Cos Cob Library, "Genealogy for All: How Best to Research and Record Your Family History"

Genealogy is a fast-growing pastime. Anyone with an internet connection can access and search digitized pages of documents, newspapers, and books for clues to their origins. DNA tests can be purchased for under \$99 by those who are curious about their ethnic origins or who want to find their DNA matches among the tens of millions who already tested.

The presentation will emphasize the best practices for researching family history, showcasing the steps required to locate and record that history, and how best to navigate the myriad paths that are available. There will also be a discussion of desktop vs. cloud-based options for record keeping.

Whether you are a newbie, or a veteran who is ready for a do-over, you will pick up tips on how to save time and money while doing Genealogy.

The program is free and open to the public. To request the ZOOM link for the presentation, contact the [Cos Cob library](#). The Friends of the Cos Cob Library have sponsored the "Next in a Series Genealogy Programs" for nineteen years.

LEAVE THEM SMILING



**2021
OCTOBER 2,
NEXT MEETING**

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