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Darien, Fairfield County, CT

March 2019

## Upcoming MGS Presentations

**Saturday, March 23 and May 18, 2019 1:00 pm. Social Hour, Come Talk About Your Work.**

This is an informal social hour with others who are interested in genealogy. The goal is to share experiences with fellow genealogists and hopefully gain new insights. Think of the most important question or issue that you have about your genealogy. It may be a brick wall that you are facing with one of your ancestors, a question of wanting to know where to find a particular resource, or a success that you are dying to share with the rest of us.

**Book Exchange.** This is also a good time to bring in genealogy books and periodicals that you are no longer using and make them available to people who can make use of them.

**Saturday, March 23, 2019, 2:00 pm. "Do the 'Write' Thing For Genealogy."** Presented by Marian and Wally Wood.

Whether you know a lot about your family tree or you've just embarked on your genealogy journey, you can begin to write your family's story right now! Get practical, creative ideas



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for planning, organizing, and writing a personalized family history that focuses on one ancestor or family, one heirloom or photo, or one occasion. Learn how to look for the dramatic moments and descriptive details that reveal turning points and show the context of your ancestors' lives. You'll be inspired and encouraged to tell your family's story with a clear, engaging narrative and finishing touches like old photos, timelines, and maps.

The speakers are Marian Wood and Wally Wood. Together, they will demonstrate proven techniques for planning, organizing and writing family history, with sample write-ups on display to serve as idea-starters.

Marian Wood is a textbook author, an avid family history researcher for 20 years and a frequent speaker at genealogy conferences and clubs. With a B.A. from City University of New York and an M.B.A. from Long Island Univers-

*See Wood on pg. 3*

## MIDDLESEX GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY

2018-2019

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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, as well as a lifetime option at \$300. 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/>

## Presidents' Message

One of the most fundamental principles in conducting genealogical research is with documentation. But why is this such a challenge for many of us? Personally, the lure of securing one more record or connection keeps me digging deeper and procrastinating on my organizing and documenting tasks.

The thrill of this ancestral chase is still there for me after 18 years of research along with a significant amount of data to prove it. In the process I've also become the informal family historian and happily tasked with responding to the email requests from those interested in our family history. One request from a second cousin that I never knew existed made my day when she explained that she was given my contact info from another relative as the go to person with all the family "goods". Last month I received another request from a first cousin planning a trip to Ireland. Besides providing a brief summary about our Irish roots, I emailed her the Ahnentafel reports created by my software program and included a Google map pinned for each ancestral townland.

After this last request, I realized that in my pursuit of my family history, I have a sense of responsibility to compile my years of research into a shareable format. Although I administer two private Facebook family pages to post photos, pedigree charts and recent genealogy finds, creating a well-documented family narrative to personalize the past and keep the stories flowing for generations would be the pinnacle to my years of passionate research.

Although taking the leap from family historian to family history writer is rather intimidating, our next presentation on March 23rd, "Do the 'Write' Thing for Genealogy," presented by Marian & Wally Wood, will be the ideal place for me to start.

Tara Finn Forschino

## Obituaries Index Project

**The Darien Library is in need of volunteers to help index obituary listings from Darien's local newspapers back to 1900. For further information contact Coleen Wood at [cwood@darienlibrary.org](mailto:cwood@darienlibrary.org)**

*Wood continued from pg. 1*

ity, she is also the author of the best-selling genealogy book, "Planning a Future for Your Family's Past."

Wally Wood followed up a career as a magazine editor by writing or coauthoring 23 business books on topics such as marketing and social media. Wally holds a B.A. from Columbia University and an M.A. from City College of New York and he is currently working on his fourth novel.

**Saturday, May 18, 2018, 2:00 pm. "Digging up Cemetery Records"** Presented by Toni McKeen.



Toni will discuss tips on how to find your buried ancestors: when and where they were buried, various helpful internet sites and data bases with providing possible clues and then what to bring to the cemetery for a successful outing. In addition, she has developed two

helpful charts that she will share: one to help you record your cemetery information, and the other to keep track of who is buried in which cemetery.

Toni has been doing genealogy research on her own extensive Italian and her husband's Irish family for the last 29 years. She now has more than 9,100 of her closest family members entered in her Family Tree Maker program. Toni has identified relatives on extended branches who married 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.

Toni was born in Miami, Florida. She earned her Bachelor's and Master's Degree in Biology from C.W. Post College on L.I. She has been

married for over 40 years, and has two children and two grandchildren (both gorgeous and brilliant, naturally). 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...a problem for most researchers.

Toni enjoys traveling yearly to Italy to visit the towns of her ancestors in search of additional photos and original documents of her distant relatives to round out her research from the various towns in the regions of the Amalfi Coast, Calabria, and Sicily.

## *Welcome New Members*

*Georgia von Schmidt*

*Edmund F. Schmidt*

## **Are You Recording Fairy Tales in Your Genealogy Records?**

The following article is from *Eastman's Online Genealogy Newsletter* and is copyright 2019 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/>.

**WARNING:** This is a "soapbox article" in which I rant and rave a little.

A newsletter reader wrote to me recently expressing unhappiness with all the erroneous information found in online family trees. The bogus information is usually found in family tree information submitted by other users of whatever online family tree service is being used at the moment.

My belief is that this newsletter reader wasn't spending much time looking at online images of census, birth, marriage, and death records or at other online documents of value to genealogists: old newspapers, military pension files, and such things.

I decided to share my response publicly in this newsletter so that others could either benefit from or reject my ideas and suggestions.

*See Fairy Tales on pg. 4*



## Genealogy, Identity and DNA By Pam Shea



Recently I submitted a DNA test and read the disclaimer saying something like “the results of this test could be traumatic and upsetting...” and I thought to myself this is rather melodramatic; until several months later when I was helping a friend decipher some DNA results. In the process we discovered that his grandfather was not his Dad’s biological father. What impact would this have on his elderly father? Imagine discovering after 40 or 50 years of researching a family line that this wasn’t really your family. Does he tell his father that the name that they both carried wasn’t their biological heritage? If the man with whom they had shared their lives and identity with all these years wasn’t theirs, who was? The people who could have shed light on the situation were dead so he would likely never know the answers to his many questions. Was his grandfather aware, or for that matter was his grandmother aware of this child’s paternity? Did she intentionally deceive the grandfather or was she mistaken? There were so many questions that he wanted answered that would never be.

At one point he considered asking family members if they knew anything of the situation but that would mean telling his father or at least risking that is father would find out. Did he tell his father that the last name that both of them had I carried and associated with all these years wasn’t really theirs?

Identity is a complicated thing. Something not just answered by DNA.

So often you read about people searching for their complete identity, looking for their biological family, but what happens when DNA makes you lose hold of your identity? It’s no longer just an interesting story on the internet “But rather an event that can be traumatic and upsetting”.

How many children have been raised by men who knew or at least suspected they were not their own? How many children were born to a deceived father? How many women simply weren’t sure of the paternity of their child? Monkey business is nothing new and was a lot more prevalent than we might think

How many children in the past had a false identity? Or was it really false? Is an identity given to us or created by us or both? Can you choose your own identity? How many of us have come across family members who have changed their age, name and adopted “family stories” to create an identity of their liking?

How can any of us be sure that the family tree we’ve created is truly ours. In the age of DNA, things could become a lot clearer but more complicated too.

My friend hasn’t decided yet what he’s going to do with his newfound knowledge. He has been going through feelings of anger, betrayal, confusion and disappointment and is deeply connected with the man who has been his grandfather all along. What decision would you make?

### *Fairy Tales continued from pg. 3*

Instead of spending your time looking at other people’s fairy tales, I suggest you look at original records and newspapers (or digital images of original records and newspapers). That’s the manner that experienced genealogists have used for decades, and it has always worked well.

Luckily, millions of such records are available online today, unlike the days when I started doing genealogy in the 1980s. In “the old days,” I often had to go to the locations where the records were kept. I spent a lot of money on travel and on photocopying machines. However, the expense was worth it. I got accurate results most of the time.

Back in the 1980s, we also had thousands of self-published books written by other genealo

gists with claims of their family trees. Those books were just as inaccurate as today's online family trees. Those books often were a mix of facts and conjecture, often accompanied by so-called "family coats of arms" and similar fictitious material.

Sadly, in the 1980s and earlier, thousands of new genealogists did not understand the difference between unsourced information versus documented records. A lot of junk claims were copied, republished, and distributed all over the place.

I will suggest that online databases of genealogy information intermixed with fairy tales hasn't really changed genealogy very much. The only difference today is that computers and online capabilities allow genealogists to publish accurate and inaccurate information alike faster, easier, and at less expense than ever before.

My belief is that the **PERCENTAGE** of inaccurate genealogy information hasn't changed much in many decades. What has changed is the **QUANTITY** of both accurate and inaccurate information available today.

The reality is that the basics of good genealogy research haven't changed in the past century, even though we certainly have more convenient access today than ever. In short, any genealogy claims you find that are not accompanied by verifiable source citations to original records should be treated as a potential fairy tale.

Please don't get me wrong: I still love the online family trees submitted by other genealogists, and I look at them often. I have thousands of such claims saved in various note files in my computer. I always want to know what someone else thinks is a fact. I want to save those possible fairy tales until I can verify the information myself through independent, well-trusted sources. In most cases, that means looking at an original record, either in person or as an online image.

See *Fairy Tales on pg. 8*

## Is Your Family Tree Getting Top Heavy?

By John Driscoll

The path of least resistance can lead to a "top heavy" family tree. We genealogists have an urge to keep exploring and finding facts, documents, stories, photos and whatever else we can find about our ancestors. We often hit walls. They may just be a fence we have to climb over to get the info on the other side



and keep moving on. Sometimes they are harder to get through. When this happens, it is tempting to take a break and go out on an easier branch of the tree. I call this the path of least resistance. An in-law, say, or worse, a cousin's in-law. I have to admit I have done this just because I love to discover things about the family and when I do, share it with them. Then, I add it to my existing tree which continues to grow up and out, but on the same tree trunk. In some cases, I have more information about my cousin's extended family than I do about my



own. Fun, but not helping me with my immediate family research.

Searching can be a very time-consuming

endeavor. Whether it is online or going to repositories, libraries and cemeteries. Use your time wisely and where it will produce the greatest results. Try to stay with your immediate family. More time devoted to breaking through a brick wall may produce less but much more relevant data than a lot of documents on your cousin's father-in-law's grandmother.

## Upcoming Regional Events

**Saturday, March 9, 2019, 10:30 a.m.-noon, Naugatuck Valley Genealogy Club. Meeting takes place at Prospect Library, 17 Center Street, Prospect, CT - "Using Social Media for Genealogy" by Marian Wood.**

Marian's talk about social media for genealogy, Twitter, Facebook, and Pinterest are fun, free, and good ways to gain family history knowledge, find useful and timely information, connect with researchers and possible relatives through posts and live chats. Decode the hashtags of #family history, #genealogy, #genchat and more. Marian will explain how to lurk and learn or participate by asking questions and adding comments. More info: <http://www.naugatuckvalleygenealogyclub.org/>

**Monday, March 11, 2019, 3:10 - 4:50 p.m., Classes Resume. The Lifetime Learners Institute at Norwalk Community College, 188 Richards Ave, Norwalk, CT 06854 - "Finding Your Family in Online Newspapers" with Janeen Bjork.**

The Lifetime Learners Institute at Norwalk Community College provides affordable educational opportunities for people who are 50 or older. The fee for the eight-week class is \$30, in addition to a \$50 annual LLI membership. LLI member privileges include the NCC Wellness Center, the NCC Library, and the NCC computer lab as well as weekly Lunch & Learn presentations. Genealogy teacher Janeen Bjork will provide instruction each week in a computer-equipped classroom on different newspaper websites, search techniques, and best practices for sharing and organizing newspaper items. There will be lab time during each

class so that students can receive individual attention about their specific questions. Registration and catalog links will be added when they become available.

**Saturday, March 16, 2019, 1:30 p.m., The Connecticut Society of Genealogists, 175 Maple Street, East Hartford - "A to Z of Indexing" with Judith Bowen**

This program will point out the idiosyncrasies of indexes for deeds, births and marriages because of the variance from one town or county to another. Cost: Free and open to the public. Please pre-register by Wednesday, March 13 so that we may plan appropriately. Contact the CSG Office at [csginc@csginc.org](mailto:csginc@csginc.org) or 860-569-0002 to register or for more details.

**Tuesdays: April 16, April 23, April 30 and May 7, 1:30 - 3:30 p.m. Genealogy Workshops at the Greenwich Historical Society, Bush-Holley Historic Site, 47 Strickland Road, Cos Cob, CT 06807, 203-869-6899**

Genealogy is not just for you: It's for your ancestors and for future generations, and you could be the link that connects them. This four-week class will offer you options for organizing what you already know, as well as for researching and recording your family history. Beginning with a pedigree chart, we'll discuss Genealogy conventions, best practices and research strategies. We will also touch on how DNA testing can augment your research.

Participants can partake in all of the workshops or just one. While the sessions do build off of one another you do not need to attend the previous sessions to get something out of this course. No prior experience is needed and attendees with specific questions can bring them to the class for discussion.

Greenwich resident Janeen Bjork has applied



the detective, analytic and presentation skills she garnered in a career of over three decades in TV research to her second career as a Genealogy teacher and presenter. Her engaging and interactive presentation style uses audience participation with actual examples and case studies to prepare students to find the family members and stories that have eluded them.

**Sunday, May 5, 2019, 1 - 4 p.m., Co-sponsored by the Connecticut Ancestry Society and the Fairfield Museum & History Center, "Annual meeting and World War I Show & Tell" Fairfield Museum & History Center 370 Beach Rd. Fairfield, CT**

Following a brief annual business meeting, there will be a program honoring the 100-year anniversary of WWI. A series of speakers will be given 5-10 minutes to present their WWI research, WWI objects, or to share a WWI story that would be of interest to Genealogists. If you're interested, please email Janeen Bjork, [info@JaneensList.com](mailto:info@JaneensList.com). The event is free and all are welcome. Light refreshments will be served.

**Saturday, June 1, 2019, 10:30 a.m. - noon, Co-sponsored by the Connecticut Ancestry Society and the Danbury Public Library, Cos Cob Library, 5 Sinaway Road, Cos Cob, CT 06807, "Wills and Probate" by Ed Strickland.**

Genealogist Edwin W. Strickland II will present case studies that demonstrate the kinds of the information that can be found in Wills and Probate records that can be used to answer Genealogy questions. Light refreshments will be served. All CAS programs are free and open to the public. Genealogists of all levels are welcome. For more information about CT Ancestry Society: <http://www.connecticutancestry.org>.

## Tips

- Check every available census taken during your ancestor's lifetime. Record the data provided for each family member in the household, not just your ancestor. Gaps in birth years may indicate a birth and death of a child between censuses.
- Have you found someone that may be related, but you are not sure? Ask them if they have had a DNA test done and if so, ask to see the results. If you are related you probably know it from your own DNA results. They may, on the other hand, confirm that they are NOT related and save you some work.

## Do you have a tip?

**Send it to the editor and have it published in the newsletter.**

**Email to:  
newslettermgdsdarien@gmail.com**

## Tree Trivia

**Who were the only Mayflower descendants to serve together as President and Vice President of the United States?**

**Answer on page 8**

**Fairy Tales continued from pg. 5**

I still want to know what another person believes is true, even though I have some doubts. Knowing someone else's guesses is still better than knowing nothing at all about an ancestor. There are times when someone else's guess gives me a clue as to what to look for to see if I can confirm or refute it.

I never ever enter possible fairy tale information into my primary genealogy database until I have independently verified its accuracy in the original records. In other words, I don't enter any information into my primary genealogy database until I have verified that it is **NOT** fairy tale information.

My belief is that your genealogy collection of facts can be better and more accurate today than ever before – if you really care about accuracy.

Anyone who doesn't care about accuracy probably isn't reading this article anyway.

What's in your (possibly bogus) family tree?

**Trivia Answer**

George H. W. Bush (John Howland, Elizabeth Tilley, John Tilley, Joan Hurst Tilley and Francis Cooke) and Dan Quayle (John Alden, Priscilla Mullins, William Mullins, Alice Mullins and Myles Standish).

**LEAVE THEM SMILING**

**2019  
MARCH 23,  
NEXT MEETING**

**Middlesex Genealogical Society  
P.O. Box 1111  
Darien, CT 06820-1111**