

Middlesex Genealogical Society

Vol. XXIV, No. 3

Darien, Fairfield County, CT

September 2008

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Okay, where did the summer go? It's my hope that all of you had a successful summer, especially with your family research. My wife and I did traipse through many more cemeteries looking for family members or more clues. In the past I have said that there are more opportunities being opened to those of us doing research every day, and that statement is still true.

Many of the changes make searching easier, quicker, and more reliable. Access to original documents is more available. The LDS family history organization projects are going ahead nuch more quickly than expected. The digitizing of all records in the Family History Library, which will make the records easier to obtain and to read, is way ahead of schedule. The LDS family history organization has also teamed up with NARA and Ancestry.com to digitize census records, index them, and make them more available to the public to obtain. The family history database is also undergoing a complete change. This should resolve discrepancies in duplicate entries.

The greatest news is that progress on the new Darien Library building is on schedule, and we expect to be in the new building in January 2009. MGS's space in the new building is in an area where we will be able to work with library patrons and visitors, introducing them to methods of searching for their ancestors and finding out about them.

Let us all look forward to the exciting world of learning about our ancestors and helping others with their searches.

Lloyd Sturges Jr.

LIBRARY REPORT

by C. Scribner

Our bylaws have been updated, and a copy will now be located in the top drawer of our filing cabinet. It has been placed in a notebook for protection. Just look under "B" for "Bylaws."

Our library collection of periodicals recently received the latest volume of the New York Genealogical Biographical Record, Vol. 139, No. 3, July 2008. Also received was the spring edition of the New York Researcher, the NYG&B newsletter.

On Row VI, Shelf 4 of our bookshelves in the Darien Library there is a book that tells an interesting story of Darien's history during the Civil War. Because of concern for the families of deceased veterans, Benjamin Fitch, a wealthy Darien resident, decided to establish a home for disabled war veterans and the orphans of the men who went off to war and never returned. It was known as Fitch's Home for Soldiers and Their Orphans. Mr. Fitch donated five acres of land and \$100,000 for construction. It was incorporated by an act of the Connecticut General Assembly in 1864 and was maintained by the State of Connecticut. It was the first home of its kind in the United States. As time went by, the home evolved into a home for veterans of all wars from the Civil War to World War I.

At the outset of World War II the residents of Fitch's Home were transferred to the State Veterans' Home and Hospital at Rocky Hill, Conn. The Darien facilities were taken over by the United States Navy for use as a Radio and Signal Training School and a school for cooks and bakers. Thousands of Navy personnel were trained there.

Following the war the facilities served as tem-

(Continued on page 2)

MIDDLESEX GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY

2008-2009 OFFICERS

Lloyd Sturges Jr. Robert E. Kenyon III Dale Pollart Joan Rinaldi President Vice President Treasurer Secretary

BOARD MEMBERS AT LARGE

Jim Baker Virginia Banerjee Philip Morehouse Kathy O'Farrell Marianne Sheldon

Donna Moughty Charles Scribner Dorothy Shillinglaw Past President Librarian Newsletter Editor

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 holds at least four meetings with a program and speaker during the year, has established a Genealogy Section at Darien Library and publishes a quarterly newsletter (ISSN 1936-3494). Annual membership dues are \$20 per individual and \$25 per couple or family.

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

Homepage: http://mgs.darien.org

UPCOMING MGS MEETINGS MARK YOUR CALENDARS

ALL MEETINGS SATURDAY, 2 PM, PROGRAM ROOM AT DARIEN LIBRARY. COME, AND BRING A FRIEND!

4 OCTOBER 2008. HOW TO CREATE ANCESTRAL TRAVEL TOURS will be presented by SHEILA D. ANDERSEN, who has been the genealogist for the John Clough Genealogical Society since 1996 and was the Chief U.S. Operations Officer for Oxford Ancestors, Ltd. from 2002 to 2006. She combined her love of genealogy, travel, and British history to create British Ancestor Travel Service and designs their ancestral tours. Sheila has also given many lectures to genealogical and historical groups, as well as a MENSA group, on the use of DNA within the genealogical field. Come, and learn the basics of creating ancestral tours and how you might use DNA to assist with your traditional genealogical research. Concrete examples will be provided.

PLEASE NOTE: DARIEN LIBRARY MEETING ROOMS WILL BE CLOSED DURING THE ENTIRE MONTH OF NOVEMBER, which means that we have no place to hold our November meeting. As a consequence, our November meeting has been canceled. As you probably know already, the entire library will be closed during the month of December to facilitate the move into the new building. Darien Library will reopen in January 2009 in its new home, at which time we should be able to confirm meeting dates for 2009 meetings.

DID YOU KNOW?

The Hartford Current is the longest continuously published newspaper in the United States. It was originally named the Connecticut Current and began publishing in 1764.

LIBRARY REPORT

(Continued from page 1)

porary housing for returning veterans. Quonset huts had been left behind by the Navy, and these buildings were used to house veterans and their families until July 1951. The buildings were then razed and replaced by moderate income housing. There are two buildings left standing to this day. One is a large laundry building used for apartments, and the other was moved across the street and is now the home of the Darien VFW Post 6933. The housing project is named Allen-O'Neill after Eric Allen Jr., Naval Airman, killed at Pearl Harbor, and Ensign William T. O'Neill, who lost his life on the battleship Arizona when it was torpedoed.

Right Under Your Nose—Uncommon Sources in Common Places

by Virginia Banerjee

Virginia Banerjee is a member of the board of MGS and is a professional genealogist. A version of this material was presented by Virginia at the 17 May 2008 MGS meeting.

Common places can yield uncommon sources and records often missed. Seek out the "rest of the material" in the repositories we use all the time. After we have dealt with the common records: family sources, vital records, census, probate and land records...what else is there?

Uncommon records in the places we research are materials that were there all the time but that we missed because we didn't know about them and the goldmine they represent. Or we were in too big a hurry to get to the next place! In any repository, be alert for unique materials that can be found nowhere else. Although some times these materials may have been extracted, indexed, published or microfilmed, this is often not the case. You may find such material NOWHERE lse. These items will enrich your understanding of your folks, provide supplemental data and confirm your ancestor's presence in time and place. Examples are:

- The probate packet at the court house...perhaps containing the original will, correspondence and receipts. You may find the receipt for the coffin which will allow you to approximate the date of death. These items often shed additional light on an individual and family not apparent in the published indices or abstracts of wills.
- Manuscript collections may include diaries, journals, account books, correspondence and perhaps photographs. There may be "commonplace books" such as family cookbooks or scrapbooks on a variety of subjects. Such items located in a single location suggest that they may be the originals. Be creative in your searching.

Common repositories may yield many records. Let's take a look at some repositories and see hat we might find.

At the courthouse/town hall, after you have

found vital records and the deed to greatgrandfather's land, and perhaps the inventory of his estate...what else? Possibilities include:

- Clerk's records, sometimes called "minute books"...a running record of events. These are rarely indexed but can yield all sorts of tidbits about individuals...especially in early years before definitive types of records were kept.
- Court files—civil and criminal—sometimes with a great deal of family information.
- Jury lists.
- Divorce records.
- Custody and guardianship files.
- Naturalization records before 1906 when this became a federal function.
- Licenses—tavern, ferry and other types of permits.
- · Poor farm records.
- Road lists—identifying early landowners who had a obligation to help maintain the roads.
- · Voter's lists.
- Livestock identification—earmarks and brands.
- Early newspapers—some jurisdictions were required to maintain these.

These materials are rarely indexed and usually must be researched on site but they can reveal much and often are well worth the effort. Be sure to ask questions about the holdings in any repository you visit and "poke around" in rooms where records are stored if given an opportunity to do so.

Visit the local library where your ancestors lived. Beside the compiled genealogies and the county histories, look for:

- City directories—especially useful for tracking folks between censuses.
- Yearbooks of local schools may contain photos of your ancestor as a student. Early ones sometimes include family information.
- Maps and atlases help to locate land owned by an ancestor and may have landowner names.
- Manuscripts.
- Newspapers.
- Card files of patrons searching particular surnames.
- Photographs.
- Government publications, especially those pertaining to the area.
- Vertical files are often a goldmine of miscellaneous items.

Don't forget local and regional historical societies. They may have records of all sorts in their care. Sometimes even public records can be found in these private repositories. They may also be a source of information about what and where other records can be found in their geographic area.

The BIG libraries are worth a visit if you can. While they generally do not maintain original records, they are valuable repositories. If you cannot visit, search their catalogs on the Internet. These include:

- DAR (Washington, DC) www.dar.org
- Godfrey Memorial Library (Middletown., CT) www.godfrey.org
- Family History Library (Salt Lake City, UT) www.familysearch.org
- Mid-Continent Library (Independence, MO) www.mcpl.lib.mo.us/
- Allen County Public Library (Ft. Wayne, IN) www.alpl.lib.in.us/
- Library of Congress (Washington, DC) www.loc.gov
- National Union Catalog of Manuscript Collections www.loc.gov/coll/nucmc

And don't miss the National Archives Records Administration (NARA) www.archives.gov

NATIONAL LIBRARY OF IRELAND ALLOWS PUBLIC ACCESS TO ROMAN CATHOLIC PARISH REGISTERS FOR CASHEL & EMLY, CLOYNE AND KERRY

STATEMENT by the Association of Professional Genealogists in Ireland:

"The Association of Professional Genealogists in Ireland (APGI) welcomes the announcement from the National Library of Ireland that they are once again to allow public access to their microfilm copies of Roman Catholic parish registers from the dioceses of Cashel & Emly, Cloyne and Kerry.

"At APGI's annual general meeting last December the matter of restricted access and, in the case of Cashel & Emly, total closure of these historical records was raised. A resolution was passed calling on the National Library to immedi-

ately lift all such restrictions in accordance with a legal opinion given as long ago as 1994, when the matter was the subject of an article in *Irish Roots* magazine (1994, No. 2, pp.23-24).

The National Library's collection of microfilms covers the surviving pre-1881 baptismal and marriage records of almost all Roman Catholic parishes throughout Ireland. These records are fundamental to genealogical research for most people of Irish descent. The registers were microfilmed in the 1950s and 1960s. As they then included records of living people, they were made available only with the written permission of the relevant parish priest. In the 1980s, through the intervention of the then Chief Herald of Ireland, Mr. Donal Begley, this requirement was lifted by the relevant bishops for most dioceses, including Cashel & Emly. Having unrestricted access to these records revolutionised research for the thousands of tourists who visited Ireland each year but who had limited time for family history research.

"In 1991 the new Archbishop of Cashel & Emly, Dr. Dermot Clifford, claimed copyright in the manuscript parish registers and stated that he was giving the Tipperary Heritage Unit (now known as Tipperary Family History Research, and based in Tipperary town) exclusive rights to provide and market information from them. The holders of microfilm copies of the registers, primarily the National Library and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormon Church), were informed to withdraw the films from public access. In 1992 the National Library did so. For the past sixteen years no one has been allowed to view the microfilms from Cashel & Emly.

"In 1994 the National Library was supplied with a legal opinion by Muireann O Briain, S.C., which dismissed the notion of copyright in a manuscript which were [sic] created for the purpose of maintaining records and which was not 'the work of one person or of joint authorship'. Ms. O Briain further stated that even if copyright were upheld anyone using microfilm copies of the registers for research purposes would not be infringing any such copyright. It is believed that the National Library subsequently commissioned further legal opinions which did not differ materially from Ms. O Briain's, but it is only now that the microfilms are being reopened.

"The reopening of Cashel & Emly records is of

major importance to those trying to trace their ancestry in an area covering almost half of Co. Tipperary as well as a large part of East Limerick. No longer will those seeking their heritage have to be denied access to church registers at Ireland's National Library."

COOK COUNTY, ILL. RECORDS ONLINE

Statement by the Genealogy Unit of the Cook County Clerk's Bureau of Vital Records:

"The Genealogy Unit of the Cook County Clerk's Bureau of Vital Records provides noncertified versions of birth, death and marriage records for the purpose of genealogical research. Records found on this site are for Chicago and Cook County dating back to 1872.

"This historical record database is an exciting endeavor for the Clerk's office. More than 6 million of the 8 million genealogy records are already searchable. And we will continue to add more as we bring our database up to date.

"The state of Illinois requires that vital records are filed with county clerks. However, it is possible that a birth, death or marriage occurred and no official record was filed with the county clerk.

"There are eight million genealogy records in the Cook County Bureau of Vital Records. Records are added to the database frequently. If your record does not appear, check back again.

"Please note, the Chicago Fire of October 8, 1871 destroyed all Cook County vital records prior to that date. After some rebuilding, record keeping resumed in 1872.

"Under Illinois law, genealogical vital records are defined as:

- "Birth certificates that are 75 years or older (before today's date in 1933);
- "Marriage certificates that are 50 years or older (before today's date in 1958);
- "Death certificates that are 20 years or older (before today's date in 1988)."

Registration and use of the index are free. There is a fee, however, for accessing the actual certificates. This service may be a little pricey, but promises great convenience. You can visit the site at http://www.cookcountygenealogy.com/Default.aspx

UPCOMING SEMINARS

National Archives and Records Administration Northeast Region is offering free programs at three locations:

New York City, 12th floor, 201 Varick St. Programs at this location run from 12:30 to 1:30 on Tuesday afternoons.

- 14 Oct., New York Archives Week—NARA Open House. (Each year in October, archival repositories at the Federal, State, and local level hold public programs and special events for Archives Month. To promote their records and services, the National Archives New York regional office has held workshops and participated in open houses and special events at their facility and around New York City.)
- 10 Nov., Finding Family: Using E-Vet Recs— Military Records Online.
- 9 Dec., Finding Family: Using Court Records. For more information or to register, call, toll-free, 866-840-1752 or e-mail newyork.archives@nara.gov

Waltham, Mass., 380 Trapelo Rd. Programs at this location run from 2 to 3:30 PM on Tuesdays, unless otherwise noted. Behind-the-scenes tours of the archives precede the programs and run from 1:30 to 2 PM.

- 7 Oct., Saving Your Heritage: Scrapbooking With Marcia Melnyk.
- 18 Nov., Records Related to Military Service 18th, 19th, and 20th Centuries.
- 2 Dec., Exploring Footnote and Other Online Sources.
- 6 Jan. 2009, What is Not Online: Guide to NARA's Holdings.
- 3 Feb., African-American and Underdocumented Populations.
- Wed., 18 Feb., 10 AM, Family-Friendly Introduction to Genealogy.
- 3 March, Local History in Federal Records.
- 7 April, Census, Passenger Lists, and Naturalization Records.
- Wed., 22 April, 10 AM, Family-Friendly Introduction to Genealogy.
- 5 May, Records Related to Military Service 18th, 19th, and 20th Centuries.
- 2 June, Introduction to Genealogy.
- 7 July, Census, Passenger Lists, and Naturalization Records.

• 4 Aug., Saving Your Heritage: Scrapbooking With Marcia Melnyk.

For more information or to register, e-mail waltham.archives@nara.gov or call (866) 406-2379.

Pittsfield, MA, Silvio O. Conte National Records Center, 10 Conte Drive, Pittsfield, MA 01201-8230.

- Beginning Your Genealogy Research at the National Archives, 7 Nov. at 10 AM, 2 Dec. at 10:30 AM, 13 Dec. at 9 AM.
- Using Federal Census Records, 9 Oct. at 11 AM, 14 Nov. at 10 AM, 9 Dec. at 10:30 AM, 13 Dec. at 10:30 AM.
- Using Military Records at NARA, 16 Dec., 10:30 AM.
- Finding Your Immigrant Ancestors at the National Archives, 30 Oct. at 11 AM, 25 Nov. at 10 AM, 13 Dec. at 2 PM.
- Genealogy on the Internet, 16 Oct. at 11 AM, 21
 Nov.at 10:30 AM, 13 Dec. at 12:30 PM.
- Finding Italian Ancestors, Fri., 10 Oct. Part I will be given at 10:30 AM, Part II at 1:30 PM.
- Freedmen's Bureau Records, 5 Nov., 6 PM.
- Finding Veterans" Records at www.archives.gov, 10 Nov., 11 AM.

For more information or to register call 413-236-3600 or e-mail pittsfield.archives@nara.gov

National Genealogical Society, 3108 Columbia Pike, Suite 300, Arlington, VA 22204-4304, (800) 473-0060:

- Salt Lake City Research Trip, 25 Jan. through
 1 Feb. 2009 with Shirley Wilcox and Marie Melchiori as your research hosts.
- 2009 NGS Conference in the States, The Building of a Nation, From Roanoke to the West, will be held in Raleigh, NC, on 13-16 May 2009 at the new Raleigh Convention Center, 2 East South St. in Raleigh. (The new convention center offers free wireless access in the lobby.)

Westchester County Genealogical Society, P.O. Box 518, White Plains, NY 10601, presents speakers on genealogical subjects on Saturdays of each month at 10 AM. (Premeeting networking starts at 9:30 AM.) Unless otherwise noted, meetings are at Aldersgate Memorial United Methodist Church, 600 Broadway, Dobbs Ferry, NY (across from Mercy College on Route 9). A \$3 donation is asked of nonmembers. You can visit the society's website at http://www.rootsweb.com/~nywcgs

- 11 Oct., Genealogy Opens Doors of Hospitality to the DAR by Libby McKee.
- 8 Nov., Gravely Speaking: the Who, What, When, Where & Why of Effective Cemetery Research by Jo Heffernan.
- 13 Dec., holiday party, special interest interest groups/study groups meeting.
- 10 Jan. 2009, Return of the Ring by Mary Hoar.
- 14 Feb., Hauntings of the Hudson River Valley by Vincent D'Aquino.
- 14 March, City Directories by Toni McKeen.
- 11 April, Getting the Most Out of the U.S. Census on Ancestry.com by Gordon L McDaniel.
- 9 May, Voyage to America by Leslie Albrecht Huber.
- 13 June, NYC Police Census by Debra Braverman.

Connecticut Ancestry, P.O. Box 249, Stamford, CT 06904-0249, telephone (203) 778-4794, is presenting "Fairfield County Loyalist Documents and Ghostly Encounters" with Paul J. Bunnell, UE, on Sunday, October 26, 2008, from 2 PM to 4 PM, at the New Canaan Historical Society, 13 Oenoke Ridge, New Canaan, CT. This lecture is centered around the Loyalist ship, Union, and its passengers, many from Fairfield County, who fled from New York City in 1783 for Saint John, Nova Scotia (New Brunswick) and their settlement at Kingston, New Brunswick. Paul will also discuss other families from the area and the type of documents you will find during research. His encounter with his Loyalist ancestor's ghost in 1985 and the documents, photos and psychic experiences that followed will shock you in what some research can uncover. Admission is free.

New York Genealogical & Biographical Society, 122-126 E.58th St., New York, NY 10022; Website telephone 212-755-8532, http:// www.newyorkfamilyhistory.org/ is offering its third annual Saratoga program from Thurs., 30 Oct. to Sat., 1 Nov.: Yorkers, Yankees and Beyond: Tracking New York Ancestors. This will be a rounded overview of the people, politics, economics, and cultural forces that helped shape New York, focusing on sources at the local, state, and federal levels. For more information, visit NYG&B's Website at http:// www.newyorkfamilyhistory.org/ and click on Upcoming Programs. You can also contact Lauren Maehrlein at 212-755-8532, ext. 36, or e-mail education@nygbs.org to register.

New England Historic Genealogical Society, 101 Newbury St., Boston, MA 02116 (Website www.newenglandancestors.org) is offering sev-

eral educational opportunities:

Salt Lake City Research Tour, Sun., 2 Nov. to Sun., 9 Nov. 2008. This is NEHGS's 30th annual Research Tour to Salt Lake City. Included are NEHGS and Family History Library orientations, a computer lab, one-on-one research consultations, lectures, and group meals. NEHGS tour staff will be stationed on each floor of the Family History Library for scheduled personal research consultations, and there will be time throughout the week to consult with the tour staff about research questions and concerns.

- Washington, D.C. Research Tour, 8 March 2009 to 15 March 2009. NEHGS returns to the nation's capital to explore its wealth of genealogical resources. Staff will provide daily consultations at three repositories throughout the city: the Library of Congress, National Society Daughters of the American Revolution Library and the National Archives and Records Administration. Orientations will be offered at each repository at the beginning of the week. Program registration includes two group dinners to socialize and share research.
- The English Family History Tour to London, 17 May to 25 May 25 2009, is an essential research trip for genealogists with British ancestry. Based at the Society of Genealogists (SoG), researchers will be offered daily classes providing historical context and research methodology tips for working with the extensive record collection of the SoG. The library's holdings include more than 120,000 books and microforms featuring census indexes; family histories; biographies; service, professional, and trade directories; an apprenticeship index (1770-1774), school and university lists, will and marriage license indexes; runs of Burke's Peerage and Landed Gentry; a large number of manuscripts arranged by surname; and a miscellaneous card index of 3 million references.

For more information, contact Ryan J. Woods, NEHGS Director of Education, at 617-226-1226 or email rwoods@nehgs.org

Federation of Genealogical Societies, P.O.

Box 200940, Austin, TX 78720-0940; telephone (888) FGS-1500.

The 2009 FGS Conference, Passages Through Time, will take place 2-5 Sept. 2009 at the Little Rock Statehouse Convention Center, Little Rock, Ark. More information will be forthcoming.

Genealogy Seminar at Sea, Sat., 25 Oct. to Sat., 1 Nov. 2008. Royal Caribbean's newest ship, Liberty of the Seas, will sail from Miami to San Juan, Puerto Rico; Philipsburg, St. Maarten; Labadee, Haiti (private site maintained by cruise line); then back to Miami. While at sea there will be three days of genealogy presentations on a wide variety of subjects. Speakers include John Philip Colletta, Stephen J. Danko, Michael J. Leclerc, Paul Milner, George G. Morgan, MGS past president **Donna M.** Moughty, Laura G. Prescott, and Paula Stuart-Warren. For more information visit the Website at http://www.genealogycruises.com/index.htm contact Cindy at Fly Away Travel: telephone (800) 837-0295; e-mail flyawayinc@aol.com

Irish Genealogy Cruise, Sat., 10 Jan. to Sun., 18 Jan. 2009, is being offered by The Irish Ancestral Research Association (TIARA), 2120 Commonwealth Ave., Auburndale, MA 02466-1909. Royal Carribbean's Independence of the Seas will sail from Fort Lauderdale, Fla., through the Eastern Caribbean and back to Fort Lauderdale. Presenters will include: Valerie Adams, from the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland, Belfast; Mary Ellen Grogan, TIARA, Boston; George Handran, Boston (expert on Griffith's Valuation); Michael J. Leclerc, New England Historic Genealogical Society, Boston; Gregory O'Connor, from the National Archives of Ireland, Dublin; and Eileen and Sean O'Duill, from Dublin. There will be two simultaneous tracks: Track 1, lectures on basic resources and techniques for Irish research; Track 2, more advanced topics for those with experience in using Irish records.

For more information, visit the TIARA web site at http://www.tiara.ie and click on "Trips."

> Deadline for next newsletter November 2008

MEETING MEETING

Middlesex Genealogical Society PO Box IIII Darien CT 06820-IIII

