The USGenWeb Project

N E W S

Volume 4, Number 6
July 2007

Notes from the Editor
Denise Wells

Right now I am on my current adventure to visit family many miles from home, having boarded a plane in Fort Lauderdale, FL and flown to Indianapolis, IN. I spent some time in downtown Indianapolis and snapped numerous pictures of different buildings, but the first place I really "visited" was the cemetery where my dear mother is buried just north of the city. Although my youngest child was born after my mother passed away, when we visited her mausoleum a couple of years ago, my daughter leaned against the stone wall and just wept for the grandmother she never knew. I remember doing the same thing when I first visited the burial site of my mother's mother, who died at the age of 46 in 1930, 21 years before my birth.

In 2001, my best friend, my daughter and I traveled to Chicago to research several cemeteries. Acacia Park Cemetery is located on the north side of Chicago. When we arrived, the office was closed for the day so I knew I would need to return to the office the next day to obtain the location of my grandmother's grave. Still, I insisted on driving through the cemetery, wishing I would just "know" where she was buried, but rationalizing that it would be impossible to locate her tombstone without the proper information. All of a sudden I had this overwhelming urge to just jump out of the car and start looking, but I resisted. When we returned to the open office the next day, I obtained the location information and we headed toward the section. Lo and behold, we followed the office clerk's directions and, when we reached the spot I where I was instructed to park, JoAnne and I just looked at each other and our mouths fell open. It was the exact spot where I had the urge to jump out of the car and look for her stone! "Walk straight back to the fence," were the clerk's directions, "and the grave will be close to the fence in that area. She is buried next to her (second) husband." There she was, buried 71 years earlier and it was my first time to lay eyes on her tombstone. I wept. I finally felt close to my grandmother for the first time, yet had never known her.

Visiting the tombstones of family members can bring us through many different thoughts as we gaze upon the stone designed by a family member as a last act of love for that person. An unexpected closeness can still exist even if you never knew that person. A tear slips from an eye and a yearning for the experience of being with that relative again touches your heart.

Over these few days in Indiana, we have now visited two other cemeteries, photographing many of the cemetery features, as well as the markers. We even picked up my ex-sister-in-law to visit the grave of my nephew who was buried in January of this year, with grass now spreading to cover the dirt unearthed at the opening of the grave during a cold, wet winter. My daughter shed tears here once again for one of her favorite cousins, as did I. Tomorrow we will be driving to Cleveland, Ohio, where we will visit the grave of my daughter's father who died the day before this past Thanksgiving. She will feel close to the father she misses with all her heart and we will shed more tears and attempt to complete a cycle we can never avoid. Although we dearly miss those family members who have passed, by paying homage at their gravesites we can once again celebrate their lives. Who have you visited and celebrated lately?

Project Spotlight
by Darlene Anderson, Spotlights Editor
The USGenWeb Archives Marriage Project
http://usgwarchives.net/marriages/

Are marriage records in your future? What about a marriage record somewhere in the faraway distant past? The USGenWeb Archives Marriage Project is a must-view site! You know that sounds pretty good. Like Oprah's must-read book club, a must-view site can be the new slogan for Project Spotlights!

Mary Hudson is the project's Coordinator and Patti Jepsen is the Assistant Coordinator. Mary says, "The purpose of the Marriage Project is to bring attention to the information found in marriage records, both applications and licenses." Mary tells me, "I became interested in marriage records several years ago, trying to establish information in Butler County, MO as the new CC."

In my research endeavors, after checking the census, I check the marriages in a particular county. Marriage records often contain much-needed information, such as the names of parents, or permission given to an underage person. Often a Bond was posted by an upstanding member of the community to show the groom was serious about his intentions towards the intended bride.

Today, all but 7 states are represented in the Marriage Project. Many of the counties in each state have links to marriage information; however, some counties do not have any information. We know that census records are considered to be a genealogist's best friend, but marriage records may be the next best thing! The Project does not accept marriage records of the living and prefers to keep the records prior to 1940. The exception to this rule is if the submitter contributing the record assures Mary that the individuals are deceased; then the record may be used.

Mary says, "The Project needs state file managers." Volunteers need to know how to work with Web sites and be capable of uploading files to the Internet; and, be willing to communicate with folks who want to contribute records. The Project could also use coordinators for the counties in many of the states. Do you have some spare time you can devote to transcribing data for the Marriage Project or volunteer as coordinator for a county? Please visit the Project's site and contact Mary! You'll be glad you did.

Project Spotlight
by Darlene Anderson, Spotlights Editor
Howard County, Missouri Marriage Project
http://usgwarchives.net/marriages/missouri/howard.htm

Just above, you read about the USGENWEB Archives Marriage Project. For each of the states there is a coordinator representing a county. The marriage county coordinator's job is to create a web page, transcribe marriage data, recruit volunteers to transcribe marriage data and send the data to the File Manager for uploading into the archives. The information may be submitted in paragraph or column style.

Linda Quinn is the county coordinator for the Howard County, Missouri Marriage Project. She has transcribed 29 databases of marriage information for Howard County. The information covers bride and groom indexes, in column format, ranging in years from 1816-1833, 1881-1892, 1834-1844, 1886-1893, 1844-1860, 1893-1898, 1860-1881, 1898-1904, 1903-1910, and 1912-1919. Linda has done a terrific job and should be applauded for her volunteer efforts!

A final note on the subject of USGENWEB Archives Marriage Project-this is is considered a USGENWEB Archives Sub-Project. The information extracted and transcribed only concerns marriages. The Project could use volunteers to help in the process. I implore you to take a look at your county of interest to see if it is available. If it is please consider volunteering! The USGENWEB Archives Marriage Project needs you!

Graveside Chronicles
by Linda K Lewis, Chronicles Editor
Burial Grounds of Colonial America
Written by Linda K Lewis with assistance from Greta Thompson

We can learn a lot about the life and values of our colonial and revolutionary ancestors by studying their cemeteries and gravestones. From the time of the earliest colonies until the mid-nineteenth century we can see the impact of death on their everyday lives, and the changes in their thoughts and fears surrounding life and death.

The Puritans
Many of our earliest settlers left for America in search of a home where they could practice their religion freely. Religious freedom was not tolerated, and those who did not conform to Catholicism were persecuted as heretics. The earliest Puritans who settled New England were driven to emigrate to the harsh wilderness of the new world with hopes of creating an idyllic society, firmly rooted in their religious beliefs and isolated from the influence of others.

These earliest settlers built small communes with modest dwellings clustered in a tight square enclosing a shared common area in the center. The Commons was planted with crops and cared for by all, to provide for the needs of the community. The community acted as one and each member was integral to its survival.

Early settlers were met with a very harsh environment. Weather, lack of food and supplies, disease, contaminated water, and hostile encounters with Native Americans all contributed to a high mortality rate in these tightly-clustered communities. The harshness of life, overwhelming fear of the unknown, and the grim reality of death drove these settlers to pray for their survival through their faith.

The communities in early New England sought the natural solace of the woods and hills for their burial grounds, where available, and rejected the practice of churchyard burials as a Papist influence. They chose sites hidden deep in the woods and thinned the trees and vegetation to provide a private and protected setting for their departed.

Early graveyards were dangerous and frightening places. The burial ground itself was devoid of grass or other plant life. Graves, hastily dug by hand in the cold and rocky New England soil, were shallow and unlined, and loosely filled at best. Graves were often left open in anticipation of more burials and boxes or coffins were not used.

Graves from this period were marked with both a headstone and a footstone, to resemble a bed, and it was during this time that we first see the now common east-west orientation of graves.

Local artisans used common rocks, slate, and marble as the raw material for the tombstones. Markers were shaped into upright tablets with rounded tops to represent a door or portal into the unknown, and the symbols carved into the stones reflected the community's fears and hopes.

The most common symbol was the skeleton, skull or winged skull. Commonly known as death heads, the skulls represented the grim reaper and the finality of death. The most common epitaph was R. I. P. (Rest in Peace), reflective of the daily harshness of life. Other symbols evolved over time. An anchor, the emblem of a seaman, represented steadfastness; a bird came to symbolize the soul; a butterfly depicted resurrection; and a scallop shell represented the earthly Puritan pilgrimage.

The Revolutionary Colonists
In the early to mid-1700s, waves of new settlers to America brought with them the influences of their home land. Arrivals came in larger numbers and occurred more frequently. Trade developed to support the needs of the colonists and although the mortality rate remained high, the chances of survival of the communities increased.

Through these later arrivals we witness the influence of the Great Awakening, a religious revival movement that swept across Europe. The Great Awakening offered a more tolerant view of religion and the focus of daily life. God became a symbol of love and mercy, and society began to anticipate death as a reward for a pious life. And these colonists brought with them the traditional burial practices of churchyard burial grounds.

Unlike the Puritan burial grounds, the churchyard was not as dangerous and scary. Surrounding the church, they became part of the community and were seen as a daily reminder of family and friends and the finality of death. Burial grounds became the responsibility of the church sexton and were properly cared for and filled. The interred were often now placed in boxes or coffins, making the graves more stable. At time of loss, church elders gathered to dig and fill the graves of their congregation, and the graveyard became an extension of the church community.

The view that living a pious life would be rewarded after death gave rise to new tombstone icons that represented life that continues to grow. Symbols such as trees and flowers became prevalent, and this practice carried forward into the 19th century.

Gravestones of this time were primarily devoid of personal inscriptions, and they no longer carried the message of Rest In Peace. After the Revolution we begin to see the accomplishments of some of the more famous colonists reflected on their tombstones. The rank and service of some of our most noted Revolutionary soldiers may be found on some of these early gravestones.

Although the grave markers from this time typically give no clues to familial connections, as the small churchyards became over crowded, the practice of burying multiple family members in a single grave became more prevalent. We begin to find the stones of family members clustered together, and occasionally the layering of flat tomb coverings. Throughout the stages of American history, we can witness how the harshness of daily life became more tempered by the influx of colonists, improved chances of survival of the community, the more traditional influences of Europe, and with it the hope for a rewarding life after death.

Was Your Ancestor A Patriot?
by Anne J Lex - Records Editor

If you have traced your family tree back to the 18th century, there's a chance that you are related to a patriot. According to the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) Web site, a patriot is not limited to someone who served in the Continental Army or in the militia or an individual who was a privateer. A patriot is anyone who furthered the cause during the war (April 19, 1775 to November 26, 1783). This includes doctors, nurses and anyone who rendered aid or anyone who furnished supplies. Likewise, signers of the Declaration of Independence, attendees of the Boston Tea Party, members of the Continental Congress and civil servants of state governments are patriots.

Before attempting to establish your ancestor as a patriot, be sure to gather as much personal and identifying information as possible. This is necessary to distinguish your ancestor from someone with the same name. A search of the 1790 or an earlier state census could help identify individuals with the same name living in a particular geographical location. Once the preliminary research is completed, three types of records can be searched at the National Archives, Latter-Day Saints (LDS) Family History Centers and many libraries. These records include military service and pension records and bounty-land warrant applications. According to Kimberly Powell's article entitled Researching Your Revolutionary War Ancestor, Powell indicates that many of the original military records were destroyed in a fire. The destroyed records were substituted by using "muster rolls, record books and ledgers, personal accounts, hospital records and pay lists." These records could contain any or all of the following: name, state of service, date of appointment, date of separation, physical description, date and place of birth and residence. These records are available on microfilm and can be located by checking the appropriate alphabetically arranged indices. The National Archives has several indices. The call numbers for the two most comprehensive indices for Revolutionary War records are M881 and M860. Once the records are located, they can be ordered online or by preparing form NATF-86 at the National Archives. If the research is conducted at an LDS Family History Center or at another library, consult the card catalog to determine the location of these records. Footnote.com is a subscription based Web site that provides access to many of these records online.

Researching Your Revolutionary War Ancestor by Kimberly Powell
http://genealogy.about.com/od/revolution/a/revolutionary.htm

Revolutionary War pensions were granted to widows and their children and to disabled veterans. According to Powell, pension applications often contain genealogical information including "details such as date and place of birth and a list of minor children, along with supporting documents such as birth records, marriage certificates, pages from family bibles, discharge papers and affidavits or depositions from neighbors, friends, fellow servicemen and family members." The original pension records were also destroyed in a fire. However, the remaining pension files have been microfilmed by the National Archives. Pension records can be located by researching call numbers M804 and M805. M804 consists of pension file applications and Bounty Land Warrant applications from 1800-1906. M805 consists of files that are "greatly decreased in size" and contain "only the most significant genealogical documents." These records can be ordered online or by preparing form NATF-85 at the National Archives. M805 can be researched at LDS Family History Centers or at other libraries. These records are also available through subscription based Web sites like www.footnote.com and www.HeritageQuest.com. "If your ancestor served in the state militia or volunteer regiment, records of his military service may be found at the state archives, state historical society or state adjutant general's office."

If you are related to a doctor, nurse or someone who rendered aid during the war, establishing your ancestor as a patriot can be difficult. During the war, the army's medical department was still being organized. Medical treatment could have been rendered at medical units that were set up within the community or encampment or at a local hospital. Many doctors received their training in Europe and were working under the supervision of other doctors during the war.

Continental Congress: Hospital Reports ~ Medical treatment during the Revolutionary War
http://www.footnote.com/page/671/Continental-Congress:-Hospital-Reports/

Military Hospitals and the Thompson-Neely House
http://www.ushistory.org/washingtoncrossing/history/hospitals.htm

Army Medical Department 1775-1818 ~ Army Historical Series
http://history.amedd.army.mil/booksdocs/rev/gillett1/

If you are related to someone who furnished supplies, your ancestor may have filed a private claim requesting relief. According to a handout compiled by the Free Library of Philadelphia (FLP) entitled Government Publications, Laws, and Case Reporters, "the Private Relief and Related Actions" indices of the United States Congressional Serial Set and the CIS U.S. Serial Set index can be consulted to locate a private claim. For example, George Washington commandeered a fleet of boats so he could cross the Delaware River with his men. The business owner could have filed a private claim requesting reimbursement for the fleet of boats. The United States Congressional Serial Set can be found at most law libraries. Additionally, documents pertaining to the signers of the Declaration of Independence and other government officials, as stated above, would be located by researching Papers of the Continental Congress and Index: Journals of the Continental Congress, 1774-1789. Papers can be located on microfilm at the National Archives in Washington, D.C. and Philadelphia. Most law libraries and the David Library of the American Revolution would be likely to have microfilmed copies as well. http://www.dlar.org/. Journals can be searched on the Internet at: http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/amlaw/lwjc.html.

The United States Congressional Serial Set
http://www.gpoaccess.gov/serialset/index.html

Using the US Serial Set
http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/amlaw/lwss.html

Finally, it is important to remember that information may be found at many state and local libraries, historical societies and lineage societies. The Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) and the Sons of the American Revolution (SAR) are two national societies where recognition is given to an individual as a patriot when a researcher has submitted the appropriate documents to the National Society. Both societies have patriot indices that are available for research. The DAR will do a free lookup from their patriot index. http://www.dar.org/natsociety/PI_lookup_09-15-03.cfm. The SAR index is available on a CD that can be searched at many local libraries. http://www.sar.org/pat_idx/

If you are not lucky enough to locate your ancestor on a national society index, never fear. You could find yourself surrounded by dusty books or viewing a microfilm reel that has been packed in a carton just waiting for you to discover that your ancestor really was a patriot.

For further reading:

USGenWeb Revolutionary War Pension Project
http://usgwarchives.net/pensions/revwar/

Valley Forge Muster Rolls
http://valleyforgemusterroll.org/

American Revolutionary War Soldiers' Websites
http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~ars/arw.htm

USGenWeb Pension Project
http://usgwarchives.net/pensions/revwar/

United States Internet Genealogy Society Revolutionary War Links
http://www.usigs.org/library/military/links/revwar.html

The David Library of the American Revolution.
http://www.dlar.org/

Immigration and Naturalization Records at the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA)
by Christine Sweet-Hart, CG, Contributing Editor

Immigrants arriving from outside of the North American Continent:

Naturalization Records
The first naturalization act passed in 1790. It provided that any alien desiring to become a U.S. Citizen could apply to any court in any state in which he/she held residence for at least a year. Prior to 1906 when the federal government standardized the naturalization process for the entire country, people usually went to the state or local courthouse that was closest to where they lived, although records have been found in the local courthouses up until 1930s. After 1906, most naturalizations took place in the Federal Courts. To find these records, it is important to know where and when your ancestor became a citizen before attempting to find the naturalization records. Some may still be in possession of the court; some may have been transferred to NARA or to National Archives Building in Washington, D.C.

All Federal Court records for naturalization proceedings are part of Record Group (RG) 21, Records of District Courts of the United States. Federal naturalization records consist of several parts.

Declaration of Intention
Those immigrants desirous of U.S. Citizenship renounced foreign allegiances and made a "declaration of [their] intention" to be come U.S. citizens. Most records contain name, country of birth/allegiance, application date, and alien's signature. Some may contain date and port of arrival. Post-1906 declarations contain more information on the

alien in addition to the above such as: age, occupation, description of the alien, date and place of birth, citizenship, current address, last foreign address, name of the vessel and port of embarkation for the U.S.

Research Note: this form may not have been required if the alien was already married to a U.S. citizen, was honorably discharged from military service, or entered the U.S. as a minor. Otherwise, this form preceded the naturalization petition or proof of residency by two or more years. These may be interfiled with the alien's Naturalization Petition.

Naturalization Petition
After making a declaration of their intention to become a U.S. Citizen and fulfilling the residency requirement, aliens could formally apply for U.S. citizenship. Prior to 26 September 1906, information on the petitions was limited to the alien's name and country of prior allegiance. Sometimes included were address, occupation, date and country of birth, and port/date of arrival in the U.S. After that time, all of the above were included and additionally information on citizenship, date of emigration, embarkation ports and arrival dates, description of the alien, marital status, alien's spouse's and children's names, dates, places of birth, and residences; date the U.S. residency commenced, amount of time alien lived in that state, any name changes, and their signature.

Research Note: declarations of intention may be interfiled in with these records and naturalization certificates post-1930 may have photographs attached.

Naturalization Deposition
These were formal statements by individuals chosen by the alien given in support of the alien's petition for naturalization which asked the alien's period of residence in state of application and among other things, a character assessment.

Records of Naturalization and Oaths of Allegiance
These records document the granting of U.S. Citizenship. Early records are available in the court minute books. Some may be in places that were readily accessible to the clerk at the time of recording. Records are grouped chronologically and most of the minute books are indexed by names of the individuals recorded. Later records consist of unnumbered certificates arranged chronologically with an index of the surnames contained.

Records Availability
Naturalizations that are not in the custody of NARA may be available by writing to the appropriate court that issued the naturalization. For naturalizations after September 27, 1906, write to the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), National Records Center, FOIA/PA Office, P. O. Box 648010, Lee's Summit, MO 64064-8010. See the USCIS Website at http://tinyurl.com/2w9q9m

Timeline for Immigration and Naturalization Records
See the USICS Website at http://tinyurl.com/3yj5dh for the different requirements for immigration for different time periods throughout history.

Records Search
Search the NARA on-line catalog to see what resources the NARA near you contains: http://www.archives.gov/research/arc/

Please note: just slightly more than half the records are in the database.

A great NARA resource, and the source of the information for this article: Eales, Anne Bruner & Kvasnicka, Robert M., Guide to Genealogical Research in the National Archives of the United States, Third Edition, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C. (2000).

Managing Editor: Denise Wells
Records Editor: Anne J Lex
Project Spotlights Editor: Darlene Anderson
Contributing Editor: Christine Sweet-Hart, CG
Graveside Chronicles Editor: Linda K Lewis