



# Dane County Area Genealogical Society News

## *Everything You've Ever Wanted to Know About Your Family... But Really Didn't When You Found Out!*

*How Genealogy Can Help You Understand Your Family  
at November 1 DCAGS Meeting*

George Findlen will join us on November 1 to talk about the sometimes uncomfortable discoveries genealogists find in their family histories. All too often genealogists come across information which is, well, you know, embarrassing. So they shove it under the carpet. Hide it. Deny it. Threaten any and all family members with dismemberment if they even THINK they remember the information. They think of genealogy as assembling names with dates and places, not trying to explain what happened to their ancestors. They fall prey to the belief that descendants inherit the shame of the ancestors, and they avoid

shunning by hiding anything that others would whisper about.

George will argue that by digging into the available records for explanations as to why our ancestors did what they did we come to understand our ancestors as three-dimensional humans with hopes and fears, successes and bitter disappointments, not two-dimensional wire trees on which we hang dates and places devoid of any meaning.

To make his point, George will tell the story of his great-great uncle Hilaire Martin's killing his wife with an axe and of his

grandmother's begging the parish priest to view her father-in-law's suspicious death as an accident due to old age, not suicide as all the gossips of Hamlin Plantation said. In digging for answers traditional genealogical documents, taken together, weave a story that makes these long-dead relatives come alive. Hopefully, this will make DCAGS members more willing to look more deeply into the emotions and social forces underlying what their ancestors did.

Please join us at the November 1, meeting at the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter day Saints located at 4505 Regent, Madison, beginning at 7 p.m.

## *Annual Meeting on November 1*

The Nomination Committee – Sherry Lloyd, Pam Anderson and Shirley Levine -- makes the following recommendations for officers in 2008: Vice

President: Tom Glassel, (2-year term), Treasurer: D.E. "Walker" Walker-Crawford (2-year term) and Secretary: Pat Konrad (1-year term).

Nominations will also be accepted from the floor. Ballots will then be distributed in the November newsletter for return on or before the December meeting.

*October 31, 2007  
Volume 2, Issue 2*

*Membership forms are included with this newsletter. Please fill it in and return it to DCAGS. Membership has two levels, individual, \$15, or household, \$20. Membership is for calendar year 2008.*

*Regular DCAGS meetings are the first Thursday of each month at the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter day Saints located at 4505 Regent, Madison, Wisconsin beginning at 7 p.m.*

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### *DCAGS Update:*

*The DCAGS Governing Board meets the 3<sup>rd</sup> Monday of each month. The next meeting is on Monday, November 19 at 6:30 p.m. South Park Library, 2222 Park St.. We invite all members to attend. Please join us!*

### *Individual Highlights:*

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## *"Finding More Ancestors in More Censuses"*

Jim Hansen was our tour guide through the changes taking place in census indexes at our October 4 meeting. Before 1970 census indexes were unknown. Eventually the 1850 Census was indexed, but not every name in the census, only the head of household was listed and only by last name. This format was followed in other census indexes.

Jim explained this all changed with the 1930 index. With the 1930 census a full name index was created in a digital, searchable format on Ancestry.

Because of the success of the 1930 census index, other censuses soon followed. Now all the censuses, from 1790-1930, have all name indexes. You can search by the first name, age, birthplace or geographic area.

Jim cautioned that one still has to be cautious because names can be misspelled, miscopied or misindexed. Names can change or people may have used a nickname or middle name. The indexes allow the use of a wild card, which can be very useful if names have different spellings. However you must use the first three letters of a name before inserting a wild card. Jim recommended doing an exact search, which will weed out similar matches and lessen potential mismatches.

Jim gave an example of looking for a person by names and geographic

area and not appearing to find anything in the index. Wisconsin has a back up index. During the 1930s, the WPA did index the 1850, 1860 & 1870 Wisconsin censuses. He was able to find who he was looking for, but it appears that he was using his middle name. So be careful!

There is an advantage with the online search. You can view an image of the name and that can be very helpful in determining if it is your ancestor.

Sometimes ancestors gave different information on their age or where they were born. Given the changing boundaries of Europe, country names change or their borders move.

Jim recommended working with what is reasonably certain. With an all name index, you can use the name of a child as a finder rather than just relying on the father's name. Also spread out. Don't assume that you necessarily have the right place. Many ancestors moved more than you think. This is especially true for young men.

Jim cautioned that each index for each census year is different. The 1930 census index lists the names and ages of everyone in the household, while birthplace is shown only for the head of household. There are also may be typographical errors. Corrections can be sent to Ancestry, but don't expect to see changes.

Jim said that Ancestry is also indexing state censuses. Indexes already exist for the Wisconsin 1895 and 1905 state censuses, and are being developed for other Wisconsin territorial and states censuses taken between 1836 and 1885. Iowa has several state censuses indexed. Some state indexes may only be available by subscription. There is a list of state censuses available online.

Jim said that agricultural censuses are not available online but some mortality schedules for the 1850-1880 censuses are presently available.

There may also be indexes available for other countries. Several Canadian indexes are available, as well as British and Norwegian indexes.

Jim was asked several questions on census information. There is always a possibility that someone was missed, especially if they moved a lot, e.g. circus people, military personnel especially if one was stationed on a ship. College students or teachers may be double listed, once with their parents or secondly at their college address.

Jim concluded by encouraging people to revisit censuses to see if additional information can be learned. But he reminded us that the records were created, recorded and indexed by fallible human beings.

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*"How to  
Get the  
Most Out of  
the  
Revolution  
in Census  
Availability  
and Search-  
ability"*

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## Upcoming Events

The Wisconsin Historical Society Library and Archives is offering the following workshops:

December 1 – *Ancestry.com*. By Lori Bessler, Outreach Coordinator and Microfilm Librarian.

December 1 – *Tracing Your Immigrant Ancestors*:

*Naturalization Records and Passenger Lists*. By Jim Hansen, Reference Librarian.

December 8 – *It's All Online! Or is it?* By Lori Bessler.

December 15 – *Writing Your Family's History*. By Michael Edmonds, Deputy Administrator, Library Archives.

All dates are on Saturdays. The workshops take place from 9:00 a.m. to Noon.

Descriptions of each workshop and fees for each can be found at:  
[www.wisconsinhistory.org/archives/classes](http://www.wisconsinhistory.org/archives/classes).

### *DCAGS Board Votes to form Brisse Memorial Fund to Benefit Wisconsin Historical Society Matching Funds Available*

The DCAGS Governing Board has established a memorial fund honoring Jack Brisse. The organization's \$1,000 seed gift to the Wisconsin Historical Society Library and Archives Preservation Endowment will be finalized after the first of the year.

Members and friends who wish to add to this gift may send tax-deductible contributions, payable to "Wisconsin Historical Foundation," to DCAGS at P.O. Box 5652 by Jan. 15, 2008. In his lifetime, Jack was a generous supporter of the Wisconsin

Historical Foundation and the Wisconsin Historical Society.

Gifts made before Jan. 31, 2008 will be matched by a National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) \$500,000 challenge grant. Every dollar raised by the Foundation, on behalf of the Society, will be matched by \$.25 from NEH.

When completed the Preservation Endowment, according to WHS, will support a full-time senior conservator, part-time assistants and an annual preservation operations

budget to carry out the work of keeping Library and Archives collections accessible for public use. The latter effort was a particular focus of Jack's volunteer work in the genealogy community.

Jack's interest in genealogy began after retirement from a lifetime career as a US Army officer. At his death from cancer on May 8, 2007, he was mourned and eulogized by genealogists on the local, state and national levels.

## President's Message

At our November meeting I will be presenting the nominations for the following Board positions: Vice President: Tom Glassel, Treasurer: Walker Crawford and Secretary: Pat Konrad. I will also be accepting nominations from the floor. The ballot will be posted in next month's newsletter and should either be returned by mail or be turned in at our December meeting.

We are still looking for people to fill in committee positions. People can volunteer to be part of a committee or a committee chair. We are looking for two committee chairs:

The Historian Chair, which shall collect and preserve all important documents belonging to the Society.

The Public Relations Chair will oversee the outreach functions of the Society. Outreach is defined as a continuation of or a branch of the Society that reaches out to both members and non-members, to extend the advantages of the society as well as to publicize and promote the activities and projects of the Society.

The Program and Education committee is seeking members to help organize and plan programs

for our regular Society meetings. This is a good way to get involved.

The program committee will be announcing the plans for our upcoming program for December. I for one am looking forward to George Findlen's upcoming talk on "Everything you've ever wanted to know about your family...But really didn't when you found out!" which will be our program on November 1<sup>st</sup>. Hope to see all of you then.

Pat Skubis

Dane County Area Genealogical Society  
P.O. Box 5652  
Madison, WI 53705-0652



**Address Service Requested**

We're on the Web!

See us at: [www.dcags.org](http://www.dcags.org)



**Dane County Area  
Genealogical Society**

P.O. Box 5652  
Madison, WI 53705-0652

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See you  
Nov. 1

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We have a new web address:  
[www.dcags.org](http://www.dcags.org).

If you enter the address it  
will take you to the group's  
website on Rootsweb.

**DCAGS officers for 2007:**

President  
Pat Skubis  
[p318skubis@hughes.net](mailto:p318skubis@hughes.net)

Vice President  
Pat Stone  
[rjstone@chorus.net](mailto:rjstone@chorus.net)

Secretary  
Pat Konrad  
[PatKonrad1@yahoo.com](mailto:PatKonrad1@yahoo.com)

Treasurer  
Jim Benes  
[JimBenes@iname.com](mailto:JimBenes@iname.com)

Past President  
Shirley Levine  
[shirts26@sbcglobal.net](mailto:shirts26@sbcglobal.net)

**Standing Committee Chairs**

Membership  
William "Bill" Baures  
[bauresb@juno.com](mailto:bauresb@juno.com)

Programs & Education  
Joan Nagle  
[JWNagle@merr.com](mailto:JWNagle@merr.com)  
Fay Schoenemann  
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Historian  
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Web Master  
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[rklittle@wisc.edu](mailto:rklittle@wisc.edu)

Newsletter  
Ruth Simpson  
[rsimpson@terracon.net](mailto:rsimpson@terracon.net)

**Upcoming  
Program:**

December 6: Show  
and Tell

Tell us about your  
most interesting  
ancestor in 2-3  
minutes. Members  
who want to share can  
sign up at registration  
table that night.