



# Dane County Area Genealogical Society News

## *Beyond the Census and Vital Records -- Government Information for Genealogical Research at May 6 Meeting*

Since their inception, governments – federal, state and local – have gathered information on nearly every topic. Nancy Mulhern, Historical Collections Consultant/ Documents Librarian at the Wisconsin Historical Society Library, will discuss how to search government information for family history research.

For example, the United States federal government has produced millions of documents as it held hearings, conducted investigations, funded research,

and compiled reports on every imaginable topic. An amazing amount of historical data, names and identifying data can be found in these hearings, investigations, and reports. Learn what family history information may be in these reports.

Nancy began working at the Wisconsin Historical Society Library in 2000. Prior to this appointment she was the head of Documents, Patents, Trademarks and Periodicals at the University of North Dakota

for 17 years. Nancy received a BA in Art from the University of Minnesota, Duluth, a BA in Art History from the University of Minnesota, Minneapolis and her Masters in Library Science from Emporia State University.

Please join us on Thursday, May 6 at 7 p.m. at the Church of Jesus Christ Latter-day Saints, 4505 Regent St.

April 30, 2010

Volume 4, Issue 8

Remember to fill out the survey on purchasing a sound system for DCAGS  
<http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/56DFFMW>  
(See page 4 for details)

## *Tips on Planning a Family Reunion*

At the April 1 DCAGS meeting, DCAGS member, Ruth Simpson, gave a presentation on "Tips on Planning a Family Reunion." The presentation relied on the Reunions Workshop magazine. Ruth explained that Reunions had notified groups that the magazines were free if they had a presentation on planning a family reunion. So DCAGS decided to order the magazines for members and have a presentation on the subject. Attendees received a copy of the publication at the meeting. (Additional magazines are still available and can be picked up at any DCAGS meeting.)

The Reunions Workbook

provides several excellent lists that people can use while planning a family reunion. Ruth led a discussion on the various tips and ideas people can utilize when planning a family reunion.

The first thing Ruth discussed was the reasons families have reunions. Most families find it a way to bring together family members, renew and strengthen family relationships, and share family data, stories and pictures. Of course one should always remember to have fun at reunions.

Ruth said some of the first decisions one must make are whether you have the time and energy to plan a reunion. Planners must be

devoted to the reunion, able to spend time on it, willing to take charge and eager to do everything necessary to plan a successful event

Ruth cautioned to not plan the reunion alone. Find out who else wants a reunion and contact them. Don't be afraid to ask for help and build a team. Family members can meet in person, by mail, phone, or email. It is important to share progress regularly.

Family members should develop a consensus for when to have the reunion (dates), how many days for it – one day or multiple days, where to have it (place) and what activities and program will

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

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### **DCAGS Update:**

**The DCAGS Governing Board meets the third Tuesday of each month. The next meeting is set for Tuesday, May 18 at 6:30 p.m. South Madison Library, 2222 Park St. We invite all members to attend. Please join us!**

## Planning a Family Reunion continued...

you have at the reunion. Among the first items to do is put together a budget.

When choosing a date, it is important to pick one well in advance – one to two years is best. Poll family members to avoid conflicts and reach a consensus on the best date. Some families have reunions around holidays – 4<sup>th</sup> of July or Memorial Day – or a birthday or other family event.

Next decide how long the reunion will last – a day, a weekend, or a week. This may depend on how far family members have to travel and what activities are scheduled.

Putting together a budget is crucial. Below is a list of items to consider for your reunion budget:

- communications: mailings, telephone, printing
- location (rent)
- food
- supplies and equipment
- transportation
- decorations and signage
- Commemorative clothing or other items

One of the first things to consider when planning the reunion and its budget is how to pay for everything. Families have a variety of ways to deal with the costs. Some families have registration fees, particularly to pay for meals and rental costs. Other families rely on raffles of quilts or silent auctions. Sometimes one family member, a benefactor, will pay for the reunion's cost. Ruth said she has been involved with reunions that have free will offerings has a silent auction. Family members bring items people can bid on and the money pays for the reunion costs. Finally, money from oil royalties, from family-owned mineral rights, is used to pay for the one family reunion.

Another important choice is where to have the reunion. It needs to be in a place that can accommodate attendees easily. Most families choose places like a community room, hotel, church or picnic shelter.

When choosing a location, remember to think where people from out-of-town will stay. Are there nearby hotels or campgrounds? The

Reunions Magazine listed [reunionsmag@hotelplanner.com](mailto:reunionsmag@hotelplanner.com) as a place where one can solicit hotel bids.

Another important consideration is how easy is it to get food and drink on-site. Will you need kitchen facilities or will the food be catered?

Transportation to and from the reunion may also be important. Rollie told of a reunion he planned for a small group of cousins. Many had to fly in for the reunion, so he planned the reunion at a hotel near the airport.

Most reunions, Ruth explained, usually involve food. So how will people share their meals – potluck or catered? If the reunion lasts more than one day how do you plan for meals? Taking a survey of members at the meeting, most indicated they usually had a potluck meal. Some had reunions at restaurants and then everyone paid for their own meals.

Ruth said one of the biggest challenges in planning reunions is getting contact information for family members to keep them informed of the upcoming reunion. Letters, newsletters, phone calls, social media like Facebook and other genealogy programs can all be utilized to keep family members up to date with reunion plans.

Planning reunion activities is also very important, Ruth said. She usually has an icebreaker by asking people to find family members with certain characteristics – someone with brown eyes, someone who is left-handed, the oldest or youngest, etc. There is usually one large gathering where introductions can be made. One can also plan tours – homes, cemeteries, or other places. Some families have meetings or may share a worship service. Displays of old pictures and videos can be shown. A number of reunions revolve around a family history being written and shared.

Commemorative reunion

clothing can also be ordered. Family members must preorder this ahead of time.

On the day of the reunion, have a book people can sign. If you are having a large group, name tags may be wise. Have a schedule of activities ready to share with attendees.

Taking pictures or videoing the family reunion is also another important activity at a reunion.

Ruth said it is important to enjoy yourself. Make sure to take time to meet and greet family members.

Afterward do an evaluation of what worked or didn't and start planning the next family reunion!

The lists provided in the Reunion Magazine can help you get started planning your reunion. Ruth also showed a book, published by *Ancestry*, on how to plan a family reunion, which has sample letters, lists, etc., another great resource.

Ruth ended by encouraging everyone to enjoy planning their next family reunion.

### ***Death Notice of DCAGS Member Ruth Miller Wells***

DCAGS is sad to report that Ruth Miller Wells, wife of Harold Wells, passed away on Monday, March 22, 2010, at HospiceCare in Fitchburg. Ruth was a member of DCAGS and lived in Stoughton.

Our sympathies go out to Harold. Memorial services will be held at a later date. Those planning an expression of sympathy may wish to consider memorials to HospiceCare, Inc.

Ruth's full obituary is at [www.madison.com/obit/133698](http://www.madison.com/obit/133698).

### ***Forum on the DCAGS Website***

The latest issue of *Forum* is on the DCAGS website: <http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~widcags/fgsforum/forum10spring.pdf>. All 2008 and 2009 issues are available. Use "08" instead of "09" and "spring," "summer," "fall" or "winter" -- as appropriate.

# Upcoming events

## **The German Interest Group- Wisconsin German Workshop**

When: Saturday, July 10, 2010

Where: Hamilton Center, UW-Whitewater campus, Whitewater, Wisconsin (The Hamilton Center is handicapped accessible and air-conditioned. All parking lots are free on Saturday during the summer.)

Featured speaker: James Beidler, Lebanon, Pennsylvania. His topics will include: Contrasting German Migrations: 18th Century vs. 19th Century Waves, Success Story: Finding a European Village of Origin, What's a Palatine Anyway?, Blasting Open Genealogical Roadblocks: Secondary Uses for Primary Sources

Cost: Postmarked by July 1: \$35.00 - GIG member, \$40.00 - non-GIG member  
Postmarked after July 1: \$40.00 - GIG member: \$45.00 - non-GIG member.  
One-year membership at \$10.00 single/\$12.50 family (includes newsletter).  
Make check payable to: German Interest Group-Wisconsin

Register: If you wish confirmation of your registration, send a S.A.S.E. to: GIG-WI Workshop, P.O. Box 2185, Janesville, WI 53547-2185

For more information or questions call 608-754-9130 or 608-752-0358 or [http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~wigi/workshop\\_page1-general\\_info2010.html](http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~wigi/workshop_page1-general_info2010.html)

## **Federation of Genealogical Societies 2010 Conference Rediscovering America's First Frontier**

Where: Knoxville, TN

When: August 18-21, 2010

Registration Fees: FGS Conference Early Registration Fees (postmarked or online NO LATER than 1 June 2010) Full Conference Registration (Wed. through Sat.): \$185; Single Day Registration: \$99

FGS Conference Registration Fees (postmarked or online after 1 June 2010) Full Conference Registration (Wed. through Sat.): \$235 Single Day Registration: \$125

Topics covered: Tennessee and Kentucky research, research in other Southern states, researching ethnic groups including African Americans, Native Americans, and the Scots-Irish, methodology, resources, technology, DNA, land platting, and much more.

Information: Information on the conference and secure online registration is available at: <http://www.fgs.org/2010conference/index.php>. Be sure to check the conference blog for regular updates: <http://www.fgsconferenceblog.org/>

## **New Library and Archives Position at WHS Library and we were part of it!**

Have you seen those TV ads wherein folks from all walks of life claim credit for improvements to Windows operating system?

DCAGS has a similar claim. The Wisconsin Historical Foundation has raised its goal of a \$2.5 million Endowment to establish an important position for the Library and Archives, and we were part of it!

Our donation of more than \$1,000 from the DCAGS-established Jack Brisse Memorial Fund (boosted by 25% matching funds from National Endowment for the Humanities) was a part of that \$2.5 million. Other gifts in Jack's name from many individuals in the genealogy community also contributed to this success story.

The Foundation has announced that Kathleen Mullen, currently a conservator at the Indiana State Library, has been selected for the new position of Preservation Coordinator and will assume duties here May 18. Her background includes work at the New York Historical Society and SUNY-Albany.

## **Editor's Message**

Last weekend I was able to tour the newly renovated Library Reading Room in the Wisconsin Historical Society building on the UW-Madison campus. It was been described as one of the most beautiful and ornate architectural spaces in the state. It certainly proved true. The room was gorgeous.

The room was originally built in 1900. It included stained glass skylight panels, ornate plaster rosettes and gold leaf accents. However, when the room was redone in 1955 the skylights and glass ceiling were smashed and a regular ceiling installed. In addition, another floor was added over the room in later years to provide more space for the Society.

At the beginning of the tour, we were greeted with a large black-and-white photo of the room as it originally looked in 1900. It included a long line of tables with

lamps and students reading at the tables. One can view the ceiling and balcony in the picture. What was not known was the color of the room. As was noted in the *Wisconsin State Journal* article, "They also had one postcard, hand-tinted, from Germany, dated 1900. Researchers scoured records for written descriptions of the room, looking for colors, consulted old blueprints, followed clues from the way the tiny mosaic floor tiles were colored."

The stained glass skylight panels have been completely restored along with rosette and gold leaf with a blushing ocre contrast color. Using the gray colors from the floor tiles, the walls have been repainted and restored.

The tables were refinished to match the stain of the bookcases in the rooms. The lamps on the original tables were also recreated with green glass and updated with

new electrical outlets added to the light fixtures. Now only part of the room contains the tables. The middle of the room has a reference desk and comfortable chairs. The other section of the room has computers and various digital viewers to read microfilms.

The renovation took seven months to complete at a cost of \$2.9 million. Wisconsinites should be proud that we have this great treasure in our state. Visit and use the room along with the wonderful genealogical resources housed at the Society.

To read the full *Wisconsin State Journal* article, go to [http://host.madison.com/wsj/news/local/article\\_41296b34-4d9f-11df-9d29-001cc4c03286.html](http://host.madison.com/wsj/news/local/article_41296b34-4d9f-11df-9d29-001cc4c03286.html).

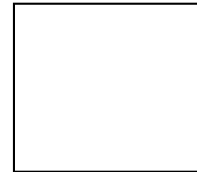
Ruth Simpson

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**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  
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See you at  
the May 6  
Meeting!

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DCAGS officers for 2010:

President: Rollie Littlewood  
[rkittle@wisc.edu](mailto:rkittle@wisc.edu)

Vice President: Don Cole  
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Secretary: Gerry Schlecht  
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Treasurer: Walker Crawford  
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Past President, Pat Skubis  
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Standing Committee Chairs

Membership: William "Bill" Baures  
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### ***DCAGS Survey***

In last month's President's column, Rollie described the Board's search for a much more flexible microphone system than what is currently available in the LDS church. The goal is to find one that would be able to give our speakers freedom to move around without being tied to a fixed-position microphone or having to hold a corded microphone.

At last month's meeting, a new microphone system was tested. It included a wireless headset, a handheld "baton" microphone and mixer.

The Governing Board is looking at purchasing this equipment for about \$1,800. This would consume the bulk of the current financial reserves (what will be left over after taking care of this year's regular expenses).

The Governing Board would be very interested in hearing your views regarding the purchase of new sound equipment. We invite you to fill out a survey to share your thoughts with the board.

This 5-question on-line survey should take no more than 10 minutes. If you would prefer a paper copy mailed to you, please call Walker Crawford at (608) 206-3182. The anonymity of responses in writing cannot be guaranteed.  
<http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/56DFFMW>