



Dane County Area Genealogical Society News

Genealogy on a Budget at Sept. 2 Meeting

Genealogy on a Budget is the topic at the September 2 DCAGS meeting. Our speaker will be Lori B. Bessler, Reference Librarian and Outreach Coordinator at the Wisconsin Historical Society Library Archives.

It is easy to spend a small

fortune on genealogy research. There are lots of shortcuts and low cost strategies that will keep your research thorough but not as expensive.

Lori Bessler has worked at the Wisconsin Historical Society and Archives since 1988. She has lectured throughout

Wisconsin and the Midwest on genealogical topics for over 20 years and has been researching family history for over 35 years.

Please join us on Thursday, September 2 at 7 p.m. at the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 4505 Regent St.

August 31, 2010

Volume 4, Issue 12

“Tip Toe Through the Tombstones”

At the August 5 DCAGS meeting, Ann Wells of McHenry County, Illinois led us on a tour of cemetery research. Cemeteries can contain a wealth of information – from the stones themselves to the records behind them.

Ann began with the various types of cemeteries:

Public: Records are usually public. They can be found in townships, towns or cities. Usually there is a caretaker who has the records.

Private: The records are found in a cemetery office. Depending on the size, they can be well-maintained.

Family: These are usually found near a family home. Records may exist – from a bible or family member.

Church – The records are available with the church overseeing the cemetery.

Military – There are several national cemeteries across the country and in foreign

countries. Servicemen and their spouses are generally eligible to be buried in them.

Ann said cemetery records may contain information on the date of interment, possible date of death, information on the grave lot – others buried in the lot, who purchased it and when.

Older cemeteries often have information on a local cemetery at a local historical or genealogical society. Ann said that members of the group often transcribe the tombstones and the information may be in a book that can be purchased or found online. Sometimes photos are available of gravestones.

One can also hire a researcher to visit a cemetery to find graves and get records or take pictures.

There is also much information about cemeteries online. Ann said she uses “Find a Grave” extensively. It has over 49 million records

online. The website is www.findagrave.com.

Other places to find cemetery records are Cemetery Records On-Line, www.interment.net. There is a Tombstone Transcription Project, www.usgw-tombstones.org/ as well as a U.S. Department of Defense National Grave Locator, <http://gravelocator.cem.va.gov>.

Cemeteries are very important in genealogical research. Sometimes the information on the stone may be the only information you'll find about the person. Sometimes the stones will reveal other family members you may be unaware of or other branches of the family. Sometimes the stones will reveal evidence of military service or fraternal affiliation.

Ann said that finding cemeteries has gotten easier with more information online, including GPS coordinates.

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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.

DCAGS Update:

The DCAGS Governing Board meets the third Tuesday of each month. The next meeting is set for Tuesday, September 21 at 6:30 p.m. South Madison Library, 2222 Park St. We invite all members to attend. Please join us!

Tip Toe Through the Tombstones Continued...

Other places to look are local genealogical or historical societies as well as local funeral homes or florist shops. Death records as well as obituaries may contain the information.

Ann said that no law provides that cemeteries must be open to the public. So if gates are locked or there are "No Trespassing" signs, honor them and seek permission to enter the cemetery. This means you may need to find the cemetery caretaker or someone who oversees the cemetery. Checking with a funeral home may be your best bet.

Ann showed us several different symbols that gravestones may have. Fraternal affiliations – DAR, Mason, Odd Fellows; Military affiliation – branch of service or war served in as well as veteran organization; Religious affiliation – Catholic, Jewish or other denomination. The shape or design of the stone may also provide clues about the person buried there.

Finally Ann provided some practical advice about what to bring and wear when visiting a cemetery. She recommends bringing the

following: camera, notepad, cemetery map (if available) cell phone, water (to drink and use on stones), sturdy brush (never wire), lawn clippers, small shovel, bug spray and flashlight. One should wear long sleeves and long pants and sturdy shoes, no sandals. Ann also recommends bringing a friend or family member to help, especially in rural or questionable areas.

Someone asked about rubbings, but Ann advised that they were no longer recommended since they can age a stone.

Afterward there were several questions about taking pictures. Ann thought the best time for pictures was when the sun was overhead – 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

There were also questions about abandoned cemeteries or cemeteries without grave markers. Ann said sometimes Boy Scout troops or local genealogy groups rescue abandoned cemeteries.

Ann provided a handout with

various online sources as well as a bibliography, which is available on the DCAGS website.

Editor's note: After the meeting, DCAGS member Bob Gruetzmacher sent me a links to a blog on errors on grave markers: A Grave Mistake - or Even if it's Written in Stone it Could be Wrong and Set in Stone – <http://olivetreegenealogy.blogspot.com/2008/09/grave-mistake-or-even-if-its-written-in.html> and <http://olivetreegenealogy.blogspot.com/2010/08/set-in-stone.html>.

Lorine McGinnis Schulze writes about her great-grandfather, Alexander McGinnis' tombstone in Crown Cemetery, near Morriston, Ontario. His tombstone lists his date of birth as 1844. Other information indicated he was not born on that date. After digging, it turned out he was born in 1849. So not everything written in stone is correct. Lorine advises, "So be creative. Think outside the box. Don't believe that something, once written, is set in stone. It may very well be wrong."

President's Message

Help Needed

The society needs help – very specific help. DCAGS needs someone who can serve as a liaison between the society and the church where we hold most of our meetings. Bill Baures had taken on this role for the past several years; he has been called away from Madison to take on a mission for his church. We need someone who is both a member of DCAGS and a member of the LDS Church, who thus knows the leadership structure of both groups, and is willing to help insure that both groups are aware of another's needs. If you can fill this role, please contact me at <rklittle@wisc.edu> or (608)273-0211.

The genealogical community needs help – financial help. Many of us have gained insight into the lives of our

ancestors by studying pension files. People who served in the military service, or their surviving dependents, often applied to the United States government to be granted a monthly pension. As part of the application process applicants had to reveal information about their families and about their military service. From the point of view of someone compiling family history generations later we may hope that these pensions were initially denied, as the applicant was then very likely to go into more detail about their situation in the process of appealing a denial.

When we think about U.S. military pensions, we most often think about pensions related to service during the Civil War of 1861-1865. An index to these pensions is available at the Wisconsin Historical Society library, among other locations. It

is usually relatively easy, though somewhat costly, to request photocopies of such Civil War pension files from the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA). These Civil War pension files are also being digitized by Footnote, a subscription service; this digitizing process will take several years because of the sheer volume of the papers being digitized.

NARA has identified another significant set of pension files which has not been microfilmed or digitized, but which they feel is of great interest to many of us with ancestors who were adults in the United States during the early nineteenth century. These are the pension records related to service in the War of 1812. NARA has 180,000 such pension application files, with over 7.2 million pages, in their files.

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Upcoming events

Wisconsin State Genealogical Society 2010 Fall Seminar *Research: Something for Everyone!*

Where: Ramada Hotel, Stevens Point

When: October 9, 2010

Registration Fees: WSGS rate postmarked before Sept. 24: \$35.00 postmarked after Sept. 24: \$45.00 Regular Rate postmarked before Sept. 24: \$60.00; postmarked after Sept. 24: \$70.00

Guest Speaker: Lori B. Bessler, Reference Librarian and Outreach Coordinator at the Wisconsin Historical Society in Madison, WI.

Lectures: Everyone's a Beginner, How to Find Genealogical Collections, Google.com, Genealogy on a Budget.

Info: wsgs@tds.com

Burlington Genealogical Society and Walworth County Genealogical Society *Family History Fair*

Where: Burlington High School Commons, 400 McCanna Parkway, Burlington

When: September 25, 2010; 9 a.m. – 3 p.m.

Admission: \$5

Registration: Contact Judy Rockwell at jjrockwell@gmail.com

Guest speaker: Mike Karsen, President of the Jewish Genealogical Society of Illinois and member of the Association of Professional Genealogists and the Genealogical Speakers Guild.

Lectures: 10:00 a.m. – Write Your Family History NOW; 1:00 p.m. Live Up Your Family History with Images

University of Wisconsin Union *Mini Course: Genealogy*

When: Tuesdays September 28, October

5 and October 12. The classes are from 6 to 8 p.m.

Where: The room at the University has not yet been assigned.

Instructor: Sherry Lloyd

Class: Interested in discovering your family's history? The class will look at how to begin genealogy, what resources are available, how to keep track of information and genealogy standards. Students will learn how to find information on the Internet as well as the large amount of information available at your local libraries. Emphasis will be on using free computer programs and Internet sources.

Cost: Standard charge for Union members or students: \$44.50, for UW staff or others the charge is higher. Please see Mini Course web site for membership options and registration, <https://www.union.wisc.edu/minicourses/>

Genealogy Classes Oregon Community Education Classes

Genealogy/Family History – Intermediate

Tools needed to locate ancestors overseas; resources to use to learn to read old script; a visit to the Family History Center in Madison and finding free international genealogy sites.

Instructor: Patricia Skubis

Dates: Tuesdays, Sept. 7 – Oct. 5

Time: 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.

Fee: \$44

Location: 219 Park Street (Sr. Center Lab)

Min/Max. 8/15

Genealogy/Family History – Advanced

Learn methods to find what's new in genealogy and explore new sites using new search engines. Track your family

through local and church histories. Find other distant relatives working on your family's genealogy by joining a social networking group.

Instructor: Patricia Skubis

Dates: Tuesdays, Oct. 12 – Nov. 9

Time: 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.

Fee: \$44

Location: 219 Park Street (Sr. Center Lab)

Min/Max. 8/15

It's Easy To Register for Oregon Community Education Classes.

1. Online. Visit us at [<db.oregonsd.org/ce/>](http://db.oregonsd.org/ce/). Register online 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and mail your payment. View availability of classes in just a few clicks! If you notice that a class is full when viewing it online, please register and put your name on the waiting list. If an opening occurs, you will be in line to get your name on the active roster. This also helps them know if there is enough demand for additional sessions and plan for additional classes.

Please make out your check to "OSD Community Education" or cash is accepted.

2. Mail or Drop Off

Please download a registration form on the Community Education page at [<db.oregonsd.org/ce/>](http://db.oregonsd.org/ce/).

Mail or drop off your completed form with payment at Community Education Oregon Schools, 123 East Grove Street, Oregon, WI 53575. Hours are Monday - Friday, 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Please register early!

Please don't wait until the last minute to register! Registering early allows us to confirm the start of a class and plan for materials, facilities, etc. Unfortunately, programs may be cancelled if minimum enrollment is not met.

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President's Page Continued

NARA approached the Federation of Genealogical Societies (FGS) for help in enabling the digitization of these records. The anticipated cost of digitization is \$3.7 million—about fifty cents per page; FGS has taken up this challenge by creating a campaign to raise the needed funds. NARA will oversee the digitizing and will make the resulting files available **at no cost** on its website,

[<archives.gov>](http://archives.gov). The files will be put on the website as they are individually finished, without waiting until the whole process has been completed. The "Preserve the Pensions!" campaign seeks to raise the bulk of the needed funds before the bicentennial of the start of the war and finish digitization before the bicentennial of the war's end in 2015.

FGS is now asking for (tax-deductible) contributions from individuals to fund this project. Further information can be seen at [<fgs.org/1812/>](http://fgs.org/1812/); printed information will be available on the registration table before the September DCAGS meeting. Please consider helping this cause; I, and many others with connections to the War of 1812, will thank you.

Rollie Littlewood

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

Or www.facebook.com/dcags



**Dane County Area
Genealogical Society**

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

**See you at
the
September 2
Meeting!**

DCAGS Governing Board for 2010:

President: Rollie Littlewood
rkittle@wisc.edu

Vice President: Don Cole
846-3819

Secretary: Gerry Schlecht
13gerry@att.net

Treasurer: Walker Crawford
walker@viridis.ws

Past President, Pat Skubis
p3l8skubis@hughes.net

Standing Committee Chairs

Membership: Pat Konrad
Patkonrad1@yahoo.com

Programs & Education: Vacant

Public Relations: Beverly Vaughn
beverlymvaughn@charter.net

Historian: Sandy Zart
sandy_zart@yahoo.com

Web Master: Rollie Littlewood
rkittle@wisc.edu

Newsletter: Ruth Simpson
rsimpson@terracon.net

Genealogy Classes continued...

**Blackhawk Technical College –
Monroe Campus**

Genealogy on the Internet-Beginning;

Two classes

Dates: Thursdays, 9/16-10/21, 6 sessions,
Time: 2:00-4:00 p.m., Room 302

or

Dates: Thursdays, 9/16-10/21, 6 sessions,
Time: 6:00-8:00 p.m., Room 302

Cost: \$34.42. Senior rate: age 62 or older
\$4.00.

Register on line at

<http://www.blackhawk.edu/lifelonglearning/index.html> or in person at the Monroe Campus, 210
4th Avenue, Monroe, WI

Madison Area Technical College

41664 Internet Genealogy Intro.

Dates: Fridays, September 10 to October 15

Time: 9:00 to 11:30 a.m.

Fee: \$56.38 (Ask about Senior Discount)

Place: Madison Senior Center, 330 Mifflin St.
Madison, WI

Register at the Enrollment Center (608) 246-
6210