



Dane County Area Genealogical Society News

Courthouse Records: A Wealth of Information at the March 4 Meeting

The March 4 DCAGS meeting will feature Rick Pifer discussing "Courthouse Records: A Wealth of Information." Pifer will explain that court records provide some of the richest information for genealogy and family history. Records of wills, probated estates and divorce cases are readily accessible to genealogists and often contain important information about family relationships. Access to other court records about

adoptions, guardianships and mental commitments often require special permission before the genealogist can see the records. Pifer will discuss how to find these records in Wisconsin and other states, and special legal issues that have to be taken into account when doing your research.

Pifer is no stranger to DCAGS, having spoken to our group before. He serves as the Director of Reference & Public

Services at the Wisconsin Historical Society Library-Archives Division and is an Adjunct Assistant Professor, University of Wisconsin-Madison School of Library and Information Studies.

Please join us on Thursday, March 4 at 7 p.m. at the Jesus Christ Church of Latter-day Saints, 4505 Regent St.

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Three Secrets Every Archivist Knows That Will Help You Organize and Share Your Family Photographs

Sally Jacobs, the Audio and Accessioning Archivist at the Wisconsin Historical Society, led an enlightening program entitled "Three Secrets Every Archivist Knows That Will Help You Organize and Share Your Family Photographs" at the February 4 DCAGS meeting.

Sally started the evening by defining an archivist, conservator and preservationist. An archivist is a librarian for unpublished material. A conservator cleans and restores materials. A preservationist protects and saves materials in the best form for the future.

Sally said the hardest part of being an archivist is storing the material. Because there can be a lot of material, how does one choose what gets saved and what doesn't.

This is Secret #1 – **You can't save everything.** So how does one decide what to keep and what to get rid of? Sally recommends an appraisal. Look at your items to determine whether they will have value in the future. Ancestor photos are definitely worth keeping. But Sally said in this day and age photos have become ubiquitous – we have multiple photos of everything. No one will want them 20 years from now.

Sally said it is important to identify people in photos otherwise it makes it very difficult to pass on to future generations.

Sally said it is OK to throw out photos. One exercise she has people do is to tear a photo in half.

Before getting to that point one must make an informed decision on what to keep. That can only be done if you know what you have. Sally recommends making an inventory of photos. Sorting by date is a good option.

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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, March 16 at 6:30 p.m. South Madison Library, 2222 Park St. We invite all members to attend. Please join us!

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Three secrets continued...

Look for photos that may need attention.

This leads to Secret #2 – **If it's worth saving, treat it right.**

For photographs, fluctuating humidity is not good. You want a climate controlled area – heated in winter and cooled in summer, not humid or prone to flooding. That means no attics, basements, garages or barns. High temperatures and dust and dirt can age pictures and sunlight can fade them. You want to keep them from pests – insects and rodents. The best temperature is about 65 degrees with 40% humidity. The best two locations are an interior closet or under a bed as long as it's away from a radiator or heating vent.

Sally explained the best way to store pictures is in a box that is acid and lignin free, that has passed PAT (photo activity test). This is the standard – all other claims should be treated with skepticism. She said to check out Gaylord Archival, gaylord.com/archivalsolutions.asp.

Sally said to follow the Golden Rule: do nothing you can't undo. So don't glue, tape or laminate. Use a pencil if you can to list people in photos.

The third secret is: **Digital is more fragile than you think.** Digital is great for access, not for preservation.

Some of the advantages of digital include there is no degradation of the original. Once scanned, additional copies are easy and fairly inexpensive to share. Digital copies take up little space and are accessible and retrievable. Now more and more people are digitally restoring damaged items because it is less expensive.

As Sally explained, digital is fragile since CD-DVD's begin to fail within 5-10 years. Some develop scratches and cannot be fixed. Sally said to protect CDs and DVDs always store them in cases with a center hub. The hub allows the disk to "float" without touching the case itself. Every time you insert or remove a disk from a sleeve you risk scratching it and damaging the effects,

The other problem with digital is that mediums keep changing. Who remembers Beta and how many people still have a VCR? Electronic media is moving ahead and we need to stay current and make sure our digital images can be seen in the future. Sally recommends reviewing your hardware and software every five years. She also recommends saving things on an external hard drive.

Sally provided the best practices for digital archiving. First, when scanning photos save them in an uncompressed format – preferably TIFF. JPEG is not as good because not every pixel will be read. Also be sure to save as a commonly available file form like TIFF, not one that can only be read by one program.

Make sure to make multiple copies and spread them around.

Sally also provided some scanning tips: scan it once and scan it right. Multiple scanning can damage photos. Make sure the resolution is high – at least 300 dpi (dots per inch).

Sally provided a great handout to attendees that is now available on the DCAGS website, www.dcags.org.

Besides working at WHS, Sally also has her own business and website, <http://practicalarchivist.com> You can also follow her blog: practicalarchivist.com/blog or on Twitter: @sally_j. Her Twitter account can be viewed by anyone at http://twitter.com/sally_j.

Now that Sally has shared these three secrets, everyone should do their part to make sure they are saving and preserving their photos for the future.

Hattie Behrens' Photo

Shelley R. Cardiel of Kirkland, Washington, sent a photo of Hattie Behrens to our society in January. Shelley had been trying to locate descendants or relatives of Hattie without success, so she asked if we could help reunite the photo to a member of Hattie's family. The "rescued" photo was taken at the Schubert & Speckner Studio in Madison, Wisconsin. Joseph Schubert operated a photo studio from 1869 until 1912.

Pat Skubis undertook some detective work and discovered that Hattie and her family appear in the 1880 census of Merrimack, Wisconsin. Her parents are listed as

Henry and Mina both born in Mecklenburg. Henry is listed as a hotel keeper and Mina as keeping house.

Five children are listed, two daughters – Otilia, age 14 and **Hattie**, age 10 – and three sons, Henry age 7, Charles, age 3, and George age 1. All were born in Wisconsin.

Don Cole went to Baraboo and found several records about the Behrens family. On page 159 of Bensel's 1890 directory of farmers of Sauk County, it lists "Behrens Henry, sec., 1, 2, 35, Merrimack, 46a, p o Merrimack." (The book has been scanned and is on the Internet.)

He also located the family in Cemetery Inscriptions of Sauk County, Wisconsin Volume 4. Here he found the family buried in Oak Hill Cemetery (also known as Merrimack Cemetery or Park Hill Cemetery). After receiving this information from Don, Pat located gravesites of six family members, including Hattie's on:

http://www.interment.net/data/us/wi/sauk/oakhill/oak_ag.htm

She is listed as: Behrens, Henrietta M., b. 1870, d. 1927, d/o Henry & Charlotte, s/w Henry Behrens, North Side, Row 9

From the information found in the cemetery records we learn that Hattie's father was married twice. His first marriage was to Charlotte, Hattie's mother.

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Upcoming events

Blackhawk Technical College

Genealogy on the Internet Intermediate, #103-464-0M9 CRN 38693

Where: Monroe Campus, 210 4th Ave, Monroe, WI

When: Thursdays March 25 to April 29 from 2 to 4 p.m.

Cost: \$34.42. (Senior rate is \$4)

Register online at

<http://www.blackhawk.edu/lifelonglearning/index.html> or in person at the Monroe Campus.

Instructor: Pat Skubis

Beginning Genealogy /Family History Classes in Oregon or Waunakee

Two beginning Genealogy/Family History classes, with and without a computer classes are planned. Class One will cover: gathering the records, the trail backwards, interviewing relatives, and recording your information. Class Two: Finding vital records, gathering clues from the records, and the resources that are available at the Wisconsin Historical Society. Class Three: Locating records at the Family History Center on/off line. Class Four: Tracing your family using the census, city directories and land records. Class Five: what you can learn from information in newspapers, obituaries and society pages and how to use this information to round out your family histories.

Oregon Class

Where: Oregon Community Education/Gifted Education, Senior Lab Center, 219 Park St.

When: Tuesdays, March 2 – April 6 (no class on March 30) from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.

Cost: \$44 (drop in for \$10 a class provided the minimum number of 8 students is met).

Register at

http://www.oregonsd.org/community/community_education.cfm or contact Scott Lien at srl@oregonsd.net.

Waunakee Class

Where: Waunakee Senior Center

When: Wednesdays, April 7-May 5 from 1 to 4 p.m.

Cost: \$44

Register at: Waunakee Senior Center, 608-849-8385

Instructor: Pat Skubis

University of Wisconsin Union Mini Course: Genealogy

When: Three Tuesday evenings: April 6, April 13 and April 20. The class runs from 6 to 8 p.m.

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

Instructor: Sherry Lloyd is an experienced genealogist with over 25 years of experience.

Description: Interested in discovering your family's history? We will look at how to begin genealogy, what resources are available, how to keep track of your

information and genealogy standards. You 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.

Anyone can become a Union Member for \$55 a year or \$250 lifetime membership. The annual \$55 goes toward the lifetime membership. UW Alumni and UW Retirees may be eligible for lower rates on Union membership. Also a member of the Union may bring a guest at the same rate. Please see Mini Course web site for membership options and registration, <https://www.union.wisc.edu/minicourses/>.

Genealogy Classes Offered by the Wisconsin Historical Society

The Wisconsin Historical Society Library and Archives is offering another season of classes on genealogical research. Classes begin on Saturday, March 6. Classes run from 9:00 a.m. to Noon. The fees are generally \$25 for WHS members or \$30 for nonmembers. Class descriptions can be found at www.wisconsinhistory.org/libraryarchives/classes.

President's Message

Join Me at Gene-A-Rama

The Wisconsin State Genealogical Society (WSGS) is sponsoring its 2010 Gene-A-Rama, with the theme "Finding Your Ancestors in Wisconsin's Ethnic Melting Pot," on 16 & 17 April. This year's conference will feature a potpourri of talks about improving your research on family history in a number of (mostly) European countries. The headline speaker will be Stephen Barthel, a retired staff member of the Family History Library in Salt Lake City. He will give four presentations on Polish and German research.

Other topics will include Swedish (Kathy Meade), Jewish (Penny Dashur), French-Canadian (George Findlen), Hispanic

(Margaret Skare), Catholic church record (Kris Beisser Matthies), migration pattern (Pat Geyh), Scandinavian (Jerry Paulson), and Czech/Bohemian (Sandy Hynek) research. The conference will be held at the Holiday Inn in Manitowoc.

Gene-A-Rama conferences, sponsored by the WSGS every year since 2003, usually feature a number of vendor, society, and library exhibits as well as an interesting array of talks on building your genealogy research skills -- I'm sure this year will be no exception.

You may want to find someone to share a ride and lodging with. I'm not sure how we will do it, but we'll try to facilitate such cost

sharing for those interested. More information can be found on the WSGS website, <www.wsgs.org>, and on the DCAGS website, <www.dcags.org>.

The deadline for discounted registration is 26 March (postmark); the deadline for reserving rooms at the Holiday Inn is 18 March (phone). There will be some conference registration brochures available at the DCAGS meeting on 4 March. I hope you can join me in Manitowoc on 16 & 17 April for what promises to be a great chance to expand your genealogical horizons.

Rollie Littlewood

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We're on the Web!

See us at: www.dcags.org



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**See you at
the March 4
Meeting!**

DCAGS officers for 2010:

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Hattie Behrens' Photo continued

According to pre 1907 records found at the Wisconsin Historical Societies he married a Charlotte Esch on Sept. 12, 1865. <http://www.wisconsinhistory.org/vitalrecords/index.asp>. She had three children with Henry, Otillia born in 1866, Henrietta (Hattie) born in 1870 and Henry born in 1873. Charlotte died in 1875, when Hattie was 5 years old. Henry then married Mary, and according to the 1880 census they had two sons.

Hattie is next found in the 1900 census living in a rooming house in Baraboo, and working as a dressmaker.

Pat also learned that Hattie apparently never married. It is noted that she died in 1927 at the age of 57. According to the current phone book, there are still Behrens living in Sauk County.

Whether they are relatives of the family is not clear. The mystery still remains as to how the photo of Hattie ended up out in the state of Washington.

If any one knows anything about the **Behrens** family please let Pat Skubis know.