



Dane County Area Genealogical Society News

DCAGS Tour of the Fort Winnebago Surgeons' Quarters on July 1, 2010

Please join us on Thursday, July 1 for a tour of the Fort Winnebago Surgeons' Quarters near Portage, WI, W8687 Highway 33 East. The building is a unique example of 19th century history in Wisconsin. Although not within the military stockade, the Surgeons' Quarters is the only remaining building of Fort Winnebago. The stockade and other buildings and were destroyed by a fire caused by tenants after the Army had left the area.

Built between 1819-1824, the Surgeons' Quarters is a true example of the log houses built by French settlers in early Wisconsin. It was built by Francois LeRoi, who controlled the portaging operations between the Fox and Wisconsin rivers. With increased competition from the American Fur Company and others at the portage, LeRoi sold the log house to the U.S. Army in 1828.

The Wisconsin Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) acquired the

buildings in the 1930s and has worked to restore it, making many improvements and acquiring numerous historic artifacts. It is open to the public for tours from May 15 to October 15.

DCAGS has arranged for a group tour of the Surgeons' Quarters beginning at 5:30 p.m. The tour takes about 45 minutes. DCAGS will pay the cost of the group tour for members who attend. After the tour, we will eat our lunches outside on the grounds of the Surgeons' Quarters.

DCAGS is ordering box lunches for attendees. The box lunches will include a sandwich, chips, vegetables and dip, cookie and a drink. Attendees must pre-pay for their own box lunches. The cost is \$9.00 per lunch. The sign-up form is on page 3. The deadline for signing up is **Monday, June 28**.

The Surgeons' Quarters have a few picnic tables, but we encourage members to bring a lawn chair to sit on. (In case of rain, we will still take the tour,

but we will eat at the Hitching Post, which is providing the box lunches. It is five miles from the Surgeon's Quarters at 2503 W. Wisconsin St., Portage.)

DCAGS is offering carpooling arrangements for members. We will leave Madison at 4:30 to arrive at 5:30 p.m. We will leave from two different places: on the west side at the Latter-day Saints Church on Regent Street; on the east side at the Eastside Shopping Center, 2700-2900 East Washington Ave. (Up by the Park Towne Bank ATM.)

Please fill in the sign-up form or contact Walker, walker@viridis.ws, if you need a ride or let him know if you would be willing to offer people a ride to Portage. It takes 45 to 60 minutes to drive from Madison to Portage. Directions are below.

Please join us!

Directions to the Surgeons' Quarters in Portage

There are a couple of different ways to drive to Portage from Madison. One can take Interstate 90/94/39. Follow I-39 as it goes north and take exit 87, which is WI 33 E. Follow it through town for five miles. The Surgeons' Quarters will be on the right.

The other way to drive there is to take Hwy 51 north from Madison. It is a bit more scenic. As you come into town, turn right on Wauona Trail. (The Dairy Queen is near the corner.) By taking this street, you will avoid the downtown and it takes you to Hwy 33. Turn

right at Hwy 33. After you cross the river, the Surgeons' Quarters will be on the right.

We will provide directions to the Hitching Post that evening, if the weather turns bad.

June 30, 2010

Volume 4, Issue 10



Fort Winnebago
Surgeons' Quarters

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, July 20 at 6:30 p.m. South Madison Library, 2222 Park St. We invite all members to attend. Please join us!

Using Standard Histories to Find Elusive Relatives

George Findlen, a retired academic administrator re-invented as a genealogist, spoke at the June 3 DCAGS meeting about "Using Standard Histories to Find Elusive Relatives." He said the purpose of his talk was to sell the use of local histories in working on family history.

Genealogy is seen as a series of dates and places -- birth dates, marriages dates, and death dates. Very dull. Family history is everything in between these dates and places. It is the explanation of what happened to family members and why that grabs people's imagination.

History tries to explain what happened and why. In general, it often focuses on political, military or economic history within a nation or state. The scope is macro, "a forest."

A family history focuses on one family and the individuals. It is micro in scope, like "a grove of trees."

Larger historical events can have major effects on families and it is important to know them. War service, economic down-turns or upturns can force families to move or cause injury or death.

While most of our ancestors would not be included in a history of the United States, histories are also written about states, counties and townships. These histories can track your ancestors, date their moves and explain how people lived.

State histories cover your part of the world, focusing on major events and list the key players.

County histories list townships, first settlers, leaders and activities. Many local histories include biographical sketches. Local histories also may include information on early churches and lists of businesses and industries.

Business and industry histories provide information on the circumstances for establishment and development of the business. It can name owners, leaders and sometimes employees of the company.

Church and social organization histories can list key events and focus on members and mission. It can list members and leaders.

The rule: the more micro the

history, the more likely to find an individual.

George explained how local histories helped him discover the history of his elusive ancestor Michael Findlen. The family lore relating to Michael was that he went to the Yukon to find gold and never returned. George set about discovering the real story. He was able to find birth records, deed records, court documents, census records and a college transcript to trace the movement of Michael. The story that emerges is quite different than the family lore.

Michael lived from 1856 to 1930. He was born in Maine, and married and lived on the family farm. His first wife died after the birth of their fourth child. He then married a much younger woman, who had been helping to care for his children. He started to have problems making his mortgage payments on the farm in 1890. He staved off the loss until after the economic downturn of 1893. His mother's half-sister brought the foreclosure action.

After the loss of the farm he moved to a few other places in Maine eventually ending up in Millinocket, Maine. Why there? He got started in the lumber business when Great Northern Paper Company built a large paper mill in 1899 and 500 people were hired. George was able to find different wage assignments in court records.

A few years later he left his wife and family and moved west. His wife petitioned for divorce in May 1903. He then moved to British Columbia and Washington state to work in the lumber industry. He was listed in the 1910 census in Washington state. In 1914 he is listed as moving to Bear Lake, Alberta, Canada.

One question George had was why he left the lumber business. He discovered that workers went on strike in 1913 asking for an 8-hour work day and the lumber companies locked out the workers. So it appears Michael lost his job.

So, why Bear Lake, which is in northern Alberta? Michael and

one of his sons appeared to be enroute over land to the Yukon Territory, but they never made it to the gold fields. Instead, they stayed and founded Bear Lake. George found a picture of the son and his wife in a book on the history of the town.

In 1930 he was in Vancouver, British Columbia because of his health. He was diagnosed with acute pancreatitis. Surgery was attempted, but infection set in and he died March 30, 1930. George said that acute pancreatitis is most often caused by alcoholism, which would explain Michael's money problems and why he left his family.

George was able to use the larger historical context to explain certain movements. The histories, in and of themselves, did not answer questions, but the contribute to your answers.

George said that to find a local library go to Google, and list state name and then "state library catalog." You should be able to find something like the Wisconsin Historical Society Library (WHS) MADCAT or ARCAT search engines. Each state will have something similar. In addition, one can search for other catalogs by using a university name and "library catalog" or city name and "library catalog." Once there, do a subject matter search.

Other searches can be utilized:

- state name "history" e.g. Massachusetts history
- county name "history" e.g. Cook County, IL history
- organization name "history" e.g. YWCA history or
- state name, industry name "history" e.g. Colorado mining history

One can also utilize PERSI to find this type of information.

George provides the following tips for using traditional histories to find ancestors:

- Look for a history of the county you are searching. Many include information on townships and biographical sketches.

Continued on page 4

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

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

Where: Knoxville, TN

When: August 18-21, 2010

Registration Fees: FGS Conference Registration Fees – 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/>.

Sign-Up Form for Fort Winnebago Surgeon's Quarters Tour on July 1, 2010

Name _____

I will attend the Surgeon's Quarters tour on July 1. (DCAGS will pay the admission fee for members) Number of people attending _____. (Guests may come. The cost is \$3 for the tour.)

Box Lunch order, \$9.00 per person.

Sandwich preference:

Turkey

Ham

Type of drink? (Any Coke or Pepsi product or water) _____

We will try to order your preference, but cannot guarantee it right now.

I want to ride with someone

I can offer to drive and have room for _____ people. (number of people who can ride with you.)

Carpooling preference

Eastside

Westside

Please send your check to the Dane County Area Genealogical Society
P.O. Box 5652
Madison, WI 53705-0652

How should we contact you if the tour must be canceled at the last minute? (Choose one)

E-mail _____

or

Phone: _____

**Deadline for signing up is
Monday, June 28, 2010.**

President's Message

Should we change how we select our officers?

The DCAGS Governing Board is considering a major change in how our officers and committee chairs are selected. Currently four officers are elected by the membership, each for a two-year term, and all chairs of the standing committees are appointed, for indefinite terms, by the president. The Governing Board consists of the four officers, the immediate past president, and all of the committee chairs.

Some organizations take a much different approach to selecting their leaders, wherein ALL of the members of "the board" are selected by direct election by the membership or sometimes by the

then-current members of the board; the board then selects its own officers and appoints all committee chairs from among the board members.

One line of thinking is that members might be more willing to commit first to "just" being a board member than they would be to initially commit to a specific position.

A different line of thinking is that election of all members of the board works well only when all members of the organization stand to receive direct tangible benefits from the organization, and thus have a greater willingness to

participate in the organization's operation.

If you have experience with a small genealogical or historical society which elects its entire board, or have strong opinions about the wisdom of our switching to such a plan, please get in touch with me. I can be reached at rklittle@wisc.edu or (608) 273-0211.

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



**Dane County Area
Genealogical Society**

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

**See you at
the July 1
Tour!**

DCAGS officers 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: William "Bill" Baures
bauresb@juno.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

***Using Standard Histories to Find Elusive
Relatives Continued....***

- Search for vital records using female surnames, extended families or neighbors. They may provide new avenues to search.
- Search for society histories – fraternal orders (IOOF, Woodmen etc.), churches – in the area. Some minutes and member rolls survive.
- Find out what was going on in the community when your ancestor lived there.
- When your ancestor moved look for a “push” or “pull” moment – something that may have caused the move, like economic factors. The reason(s) may not be apparent, but there usually is one.
- Construct a timeline for your ancestor. The gaps in time are the areas to explore.
- There may be specialty libraries on ethnicities that can be explored.
- Look at histories of industry – mining, lumber or agricultural – it may explain when and why people moved.
- Keep a list of written questions that you want to answer and keep trying to answer them.

No fact makes sense by itself; it is only by pulling them all together that we can make sense of them.

So if you have an elusive ancestor, start using local histories to find them.