



# NORTH HILLS GENEALOGISTS



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## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

It's the New Year! And I'm sure that everyone has their list of resolutions. I think there are a lot of genealogical related things that we can put on our list. Here is a list of my top ten New Year's genealogical resolutions:

1. Maintain a list and keep in touch with cousins.
2. Read a book on genealogy research.
3. Understand how probate and wills are handled.
4. Check where my ancestors lived by using city directories and other resources.
5. Use the Northland Library's high speed Internet to access Heritage Quest on line and other resources.
6. Patronize the Pennsylvania Room at the Carnegie Library.
7. Join the New York and the Brooklyn Historical Societies.
8. Plan a trip to some of the towns my ancestors grew up in.
9. Identify a brick wall and break through it.
10. Research my in-laws ancestors and see if I can get them interested in genealogy.

By writing these goals down, I am taking steps in trying to ensure that I accomplish something measurable in 2005. I do this because "if it ain't

written down, it won't happen." We need to do the same thing with North Hills Genealogists. Our group, through you, holds monthly meetings, publishes a newsletter, supports trips such as to Washington, DC, and publishes books on local cemeteries. While the above is not a complete list, it give you an idea of who we are and what we want to accomplish. If there are other goals that we should have, please let us know.

Laura Kunig has agreed to become our Program Chairman. As such, she plans and provides programs of a genealogical/family history nature for presentation at our meetings. Should you have any suggestions for future meeting topics, please let her know.

From what I've heard, the fall trip to the National Archives in Washington, DC was a success. Is there any interest for a trip this year? Are there other places that we might contemplate visiting? Remember, we're only as good as our membership.

**Steph**

## **WHERE GENEALOGISTS MEET**

**Tues., Feb. 1, 2005 - NHG Board Meeting - 7:00 pm** - UPMC Passavant cafeteria. Everyone welcome.

**Tues, Feb. 15, 2005 - Regular NHG Meeting - 7:00 pm** - Doug McGreggor, Ft. Pitt Museum - 50 Years of Amazing Pittsburgh History - 1753-1803 (from George Washington to Lewis & Clark)

**Thurs., Jan. 20, 2005 - Lawrenceville Historical Society - 7:00 pm** - Albert Kollar, Carnegie Museum of Natural History - Ice Age Pittsburgh. Canterbury Place, 310 Fisk Street, Lawrenceville.

**Mon. Jan. 24, 2005 - Greater Pittsburgh Civil War Round Table - 7:30 pm** - The Forgotten Charge: The 123rd Pennsylvania at Marye's Heights. (see article for details) The Babcock, Babcock Boulevard.

**Sat. Feb. 12, 2005 - WPGS Monthly Meeting - 10:00 am** - Real World DNA Testing (see article for details). Carnegie Lecture Hall.

**Sat., April 16, 2005 - WPGS Spring Seminar** - John Konvalinka, Holiday Inn, Greentree - 9:00 am - 4:00 pm (watch the WPGS Website for more details)

**July 18-20, 2005 - WPGS Burgh to Burg Bus Trip** - Trip to Harrisburg, PA. See article for details. (page 8)

**Sept., 2006 - WPGS & Genealogical Society of PA - Regional Conference** - Pittsburgh, PA. More details will be provided later.

If you know of any upcoming meetings/events, please pass them along early for inclusion in next month's newsletter.

## **THE FORGOTTEN CHARGE: THE 123RD PENNSYLVANIA AT MARYE'S HEIGHTS"**

Greater Pittsburgh Civil War Round Table  
Monday, January 24, 2005 7:30 pm

In the summer of 1862 a little-known minister from Allegheny City, John Barr Clark, began recruiting for a new regiment of nine-month volunteers. His fiery sermons invigorated the men of Pittsburgh and Allegheny City to join the Union cause. In less than two weeks, the 123rd Pennsylvania Volunteers, the only fully recruited regiment from Allegheny County, had been formed. The men left from West Commons on August 20th, 1862 and endured more than nine months of disappointment and failure which culminated in their desecrated charge up Marye's Heights during the Battle of Frederickburg. Of the 1,062 men that left the city in August of 1862, only 630 answered the final roll on the West Commons in May of 1863.

Very little has been written about these men from Allegheny County who made the ill-fated charge on that cold December day. Scott Lang has written his book in an attempt to give these men their rightful place in Civil War history.

## **SYMPATHY**

We want to extend our sympathy to the family of NHG member Donald W. Bergmark. Donald died on December 4, 2004. He and his wife Dolores have been members of NHG since 1996. He was also a member of WPGS and numerous other genealogical and historical groups in the local area.

## **CELL PHONES**

Remember that Northland Library does not permit the use of cell phone in the library.

**WPGS MONTHLY MEETING**  
**SAT. FEB. 12, 2005 - 10:00 AM**

Carnegie Lecture Hall

**REAL WORLD DNA TESTING**  
**Megan Smolenyak-Smolenyak**

If you're like many of us, you have a bit of a fascination with DNA, but did you know you could use it to explore your family past? Megan Smolenyak, author of *Honoring Our Ancestors: 101 Inspiring Stories of Serendipity and Connection in Rediscovering Our Family History* and *They Came to America: Finding Your Immigrant Ancestors*, has been an avid genealogist for 30 years and is skilled in many aspects of family history research. Her latest book is *Trace Your Roots with DNA*, an easy-to-follow yet comprehensive guide to using DNA tests for genealogical purposes. Packed with real world examples, it will show you how to solve your own history mysteries. (The book will be available for sale at the meeting.)

**RELOCATION OF FAMILY HISTORY**  
**CENTER**

Thanks to Jo Henderson for providing this information.

The Family History Center of the LDS that is located in Meridian, PA will be relocating to the corner of Powell & Rochester Roads in Cranberry. The earliest date for the completion of the move is expected to be around the end of February. Ruth Reibar, Director of the Meridian branch will be the director at this new location. We will try to keep you posted on any future updates on this move.

**WPGS SPRING SEMINAR**  
**Sat. April 16, 2005**  
**Holiday Inn, Greentree**

Noted genealogist John Konvalinka will be presenting four lectures at this seminar. We will provide more information on the program and

registration in next month's newsletter. This promises to be a wonderful program (with lunch) that you won't want to miss. Mark your calendar now.

**FINDING FAMILY IN THE BOONIES**

If you're seeking info on your ancestor's obscure hometown - whether its Alkali, Ore, or Moody, Ala -- ePodunk.com (<http://www.epodunk.com>) might be able to help. The free web site has information about every US county; profiles of more than 27,000 cities, towns, villages and hamlets; a list of 12,000 plus common misspellings of American place names; and more than 5,000 former place names of communities in 37 states.

To find a former place name, search on a place or zip code and check the "Include the former names" box. (Select Advances Search to specify the type of place.) ePodunk CEO Laurie Bennett says plans for early 2005 include national coverage of names for places that aren't around anymore. "The new database draws from hundreds of published sources to compile a list of prior post office names, railroad depots, plat names, information place names and merged communities."

**CHRISTMAS SOCIAL, 2004**

NHG had its annual Christmas Social at the Zelenople Historical Society. We visited both the Passavant House and the Buhl House with docents from the Historical Society and then had lunch at the historic Kaufman House. A great time was had by all.

Check out the photos of page 49 taken at the Historical Society.

**BIRTH RECORDS ARE ABOUT TO BE  
RESTRICTED ENTIRELY IF WE DON'T  
DO SOMETHING NOW!**

Leland Meitzler, Genealogy Bulletin from  
Heritage Creations, Issue Number 62, Oct. 2004  
Reprinted from the Clark House News, January 2005 issue.

There is currently a bill sailing quickly through the committees of the U. S. Congress that seeks to limit access to birth records - with seemingly no restrictions as to the age of those records. The bill is an anti-terrorism bill and entitled "9/11 Recommendations Implementation Act." You may read the entire bill at <http://thomas.loc.gov> and typing in HR10 in the Bill Number search box. Please note that the bill is EXTREMELY long and you may wish to go directly to Section 3063 to see that portion of the bill that will directly effect us. While I'm sure we all support the bill in most ways, this one portion of the bill needs a small emendment to allow genealogists access to the records we use daily.

David E. Rencher, Chair of the Record Preservation and Access Committee of the Federation of Genealogical Societies, just sent a letter to Congressman Dennis Hastert for additional wording to be added to the bill, allowing records to be available after 100 years. (Ed.: the letter may be viewed at <http://www.fgs.org/rpa/formalactions.htm>)

Following is the wording that he is asking to be added to the bill: Please consider amending this resolution to include the following:

HR-10 Section 3063(d)(2) by adding the following wording to the existing paragraph:

"However, nothing in this Chapter 2 shall be construed to require a State to change its law with respect to public access to (A) non-certified copies of birth certificates, or to (B) birth

certificates or birth records once a period of 100 years has elapsed from the date of creation of the certificate or record."

It is imperative that genealogists immediately support David Rencher in his bid to keep records available to us. Please contact your state representatives immediately (right now!) and let them know that you want David's additional language added to the bill - keeping records available to genealogists.

I received notification of this problem in today's edition of Ancestry Daily News. They recommended the following wording (or something similar) in our letters:

While I support the intention to increase security to protect the U. S. from terrorists and those who wish to improperly take U. S. identities, I am concerned that those researching their family's history continue to have access to non-certified birth records.

Therefore, in order to support HR-10 I ask that you amend HR-10 Section 3063(d)(2) by adding the following wording to the existing paragraph:

"However, nothing in this Chapter 2 shall be construed to require a State to change its law with respect to public access to (A) non-certified copies of birth certificates or to (B) birth certificates or birth records once a period of 100 years has elapsed from the date of creation of the certificate or record."

I believe that this additional language is imperative so that the states do not react by restricting all certificates to comply with the law, rather than dealing with certified as opposed to non-certified birth certificates. This proposed amendatory language would remind them that

(continued on next page)

they can and should be treated differently.

I agree with that wording of this nature is essential.

Leland Meitzler

Ed Note: Here is your chance to help influence our access to the records that we find so necessary in our research. The addresses of all government officials are available on the Internet. Do it now!!!

**The following articles are from the  
Eastman Online Genealogy Newsletter,  
January 10, 2005.**

The following articles are from Eastman's Online Genealogy Newsletter and is copyright 2005 by Richard W. Eastman. It is re-published here with the permission of the author.

**Michigan Birth Certificates Fees to  
Increase**

Fees for birth certificates and other records in the state of Michigan are going up. Governor Granholm has signed a bill to increase the fees of:

- authentic copies, from 18 dollars to 29 dollars
- an accelerated search for a vital record from five dollars to ten dollars
- a new birth certificate following an adoption, from 26 dollars to 40 dollars.

The newly increased fees for copies of vital records are expected to generate one and a half million dollars per year for the state.

**Scottish Archives Unite for One-Stop  
Mega Archives**

To meet the growing demand for genealogy

information, three of Scotland's largest archives will join together to create the world's first one-stop personal history centre. The family records website Scotland's People, the National Archives of Scotland, and the Court of the Lord Lyon (which deals with Scottish heraldry and coats of arms) have begun to join millions of records in one digital archive.

The three organizations have also pledged to establish a new walk-in campus by 2006 for their Scottish Family History service, which will help both tourists and Scots to find out more about their pasts.

The walk-in centre will be based around the General Register House and New Register House buildings in Edinburgh and will offer access to the archive and specialist advisers. Although many searches will have to be paid for, some information, such as surname searches, will be free.

**CIVIL WAR MAPS ONLINE**

The Library of Congress' Civil War Maps brings together materials from three major collections. The online collection contains: approximately 2,240 Civil War maps and charts and 76 atlases and sketchbooks that are held within the Geography and Map Division, 200 maps from the Library of Virginia and 400 maps from the Virginia Historical Society. The vast majority of the maps were prepared by Federal forces or by commercial firms in the North, but there are also a substantial number by Confederate military authorities and a few by Southern publishers.

Among the reconnaissance, sketch, and theater-of-war maps are the detailed battle maps made by Major Jedediah Hotchkiss for Generals Lee and Jackson, General Sherman's Southern military campaigns, and maps taken from diaries, scrapbooks, and manuscripts. (continud)

Many of the maps, charts, and atlases depict battles, troop positions and movements, engagements, and fortifications. Also included are reconnaissance maps, sketch maps, coastal charts, and theater of war maps. An introductory essay traces the development of mapping during the Civil War, with special reference to maps and atlases in the Geography and Map Division.

The largest group among the Confederate works are the 341 manuscript maps and sketch books that make up the Hotchkiss Map collection. Assembled by Major Jedediah Hotchkiss, who served as topographic engineer with the Army of Northern Virginia, this remarkable collection was acquired by the Library of Congress in 1948 from Hotchkiss's granddaughter, Mrs. R. E. Christian of Deerfield, Virginia. The entries for the collection, described in a separate section were prepared in 1951 by Clara Egli LeGear and were originally published by the Library of Congress under the title *The Hotchkiss Map Collection: A List of Manuscript Maps, Many of the Civil War Period*, prepared by Major Jedediah Hotchkiss, and other Manuscript and Annotated Maps in His Possession.

Most of the entries include a brief paragraph describing the contents of the map, but no attempt has been made to analyze the maps completely or to evaluate them critically.

This is an excellent example of another great online resource for genealogists, historians and Civil War buffs. You can view the Library of Congress' New Civil War Maps collection at: [http://lcweb2.loc.gov/ammem/collections/civil\\_war\\_maps](http://lcweb2.loc.gov/ammem/collections/civil_war_maps).

## **WHAT IS GENEALOGY?**

When a person says they are working on their family genealogy, what are they really saying? Some people think it means they are collecting

the names and dates of their ancestors (back to Adam & Eve with a few kings and queens thrown in for good measure). But, is that all there is to genealogy?

I really can't imagine my gr-grandfather George Schneider sitting in front of the hearth after dinner one night around 1866 in Hesse and saying to his wife Martha, "I think I'll stop at the travel agency during lunch tomorrow and see what trips are available to America." There were no Carnival Cruise Lines at that time. From what I've learned about George, he was a butcher and lived with his wife and four children in Hesse. I doubt very much that a vacation cruise to America was something done by a family in this station of life. So, why did they leave their home and embark on such a hazardous trip to America?

In order to try to understand why our ancestors left their home country and undertake this adventure we need to study the history of their home country at that time. By doing this, we may get some idea of what may have caused them to undertake this adventure.

I know that around 1866 the country of Germany did not exist. Germany was just a group of large states. It did not become Germany until unification around 1871. In the years 1850-1870, after half a century of reactionary activities and the failure of a native democracy movement, 1,700,000 people left that area of Europe for America. Some reasons was the focus on social discrimination and religious persecution.

Unfortunately, we rarely get the chance to talk to these ancestors and ask them why they left their homelands for America. I know Martha died in Pittsburgh in 1875 as the result of being hit by a train and that George disappeared around 1881, never to be heard from again.

While my grandfather lived to be 99 years old and died in 1962, he never talked about coming to America. When he talked about his younger life, it was how he began working on the railroad at the age of 12. His older brothers and sisters never seemed to talk about it either. And, since some of them had children who lived into their 90's (and one to over 100), I've never been able to get a "real" answer on why they left Hesse and came to America. I also find it interesting that George was a butcher in Germany, but ended up working as a section boss on the railroad when they got to Pittsburgh (per the 1870 census). Was there some reason why he did not pick up his old occupation once he got here? I'll probably never know. But, boy would I love to know. From what I've learned about the information that was usually recorded in church records in their home country, it didn't seem to give a reason why they left. Also, I wonder, did they leave 'legally' or did they sneak out? So many questions and so few answers.

I've recently come into possession of a tintype of Martha and George (obviously taken before 1875). What I know about him was that he seemed like a large man. I look at that picture and wish I could ask him questions and get some answers.

I have many of the same questions about all the various family lines I have researched. One line has an interesting story which based on my research of history at the time, appears to be false (a good story but probably not true).

I know that after my Schneider (Snyder) ancestors came to America and began working on the railroad, they were here during the great railroad strike in 1877. Again, I have never heard any family stories about what it was like, even though my gr-grandfather, my grandfather and his brother were all working on the railroad at that time. Darn!

Fortunately, one of my 'greats' did write a genealogy of three family lines (this is on my father's side) and I've been lucky enough to get a copy of it. He did a wonderful job and there is a lot of great information in it but I still don't have the answers to the question "Why did they come?"

If you look at the definition of genealogy it reads "The study or investigation of ancestry and family histories." I feel that to truly understand our family history, we need to look at world historical events that could have impacted their reasons for leaving the home county and undertaking such a dangerous trip to America.

I know that my Snyder line came just after the Civil War but other lines came before that time and some before the Revolutionary War. What kind of life did they find when they got here? Were they glad they came? So many questions, so few answers.

Many people feel that gathering names and dates is the 'be all/end all' of genealogy. But I personally feel that knowledge of world history and the events that occurred during their lives had some impact on their lives. Boy, do I wish I could ask them some questions.

In order to get a better understanding of what was going on in the world at the various times and places, doing an historical time line can give some idea of possible reasons for their decisions to come to America. This may be the most information we are able to gather, but it does give us some historical perspective to their lives.

If you don't know what was going on when your ancestors came to America, you might want to look at what was happening both in the home country and in America during that time and it will give you some idea of what their life might have been like.

# BURGH to BURG

## Bus Trip

Monday, 18 July 2005, to Wednesday, 20 July 2005

Join "Roots & Branches" genealogy columnist **James M. Beidler** for two days of assisted research at the Pennsylvania State Archives and State Library of Pennsylvania.

You'll board the **Lenzner motorcoach** in downtown Pittsburgh on Monday morning, arriving in Harrisburg in time for lunch at the acclaimed **National Civil War Museum**, with an opportunity to tour the museum that afternoon along with a chance for a one-on-one research consultation with Beidler and his associates.

Research begins **Tuesday** by splitting into 2 groups for orientations at both repositories. The groups switch sites after lunch (on your own). The State Library is open until 8 p.m. Tuesday for those who want maximum research time.

**Wednesday** research is available at both repositories until the bus leaves at closing time around 4:30 p.m. to return to Pittsburgh

### Tour price includes:

- Motorcoach transportation to and from Harrisburg (including driver's tip)
- Two nights at the Crowne Plaza Harrisburg hotel
- One-on-one and group research assistance
- National Civil War Museum admission and lunch on Monday
- One-on-one research consultations with professional genealogists
- Orientations at both State Archives and State Library
- Welcome packet

Cost of the trip is just

**\$155** (quad occ.) / **\$175** (triple) / **\$210** (dbl.) / **\$315** (single)

NORTH HILLS GENEALOGISTS 2004 CHRISTMAS SOCIAL



Sat. December 11, 2004 = Zelenople Historical Society



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# **NORTH HILLS GENEALOGISTS**

**P. O. Box 304**

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## **FIRST CLASS MAIL**

### **DATED MATERIAL**

#### **50 YEARS OF AMAZING PITTSBURGH HISTORY - 1753-1803**

**Doug McGregor, Fort Pitt Museum**

**February 15, 2005, 7:00 pm**

**North Hills Genealogists is a group of people who share an interest in genealogy and meet to share their knowledge. NHG does NOT maintain a library and does NOT do research for others. An individual member may choose to handle research requests, but NHG will not be responsible for the quality of the work performed or any fees charged.**

#### **UPCOMING HOLIDAYS**

The following are some upcoming holidays. Did your family have any special traditions for these days?

February 9 - Ash Wednesday  
February 15 - Valentines Day,  
March 17 - St. Patrick's Day

March 20 - Palm Sunday  
March 25 - Good Friday  
March 27 - Easter  
April 24 - Pasover

#### **PROGRAM SUGGESTIONS**

Please let new Program Chair Laura Kunig know of any program ideas you would like to see at NHG. She would appreciate your input so she can schedule the type of programs you are interested in having.

#### **NEWSLETTER MATERIAL**

If you have any information (family articles, for example) for the newsletter, please send them along to the Editor.