



# NORTH HILLS GENEALOGISTS

www.NorthHillsGenealogists.org  
PO Box 304, Ingomar, PA 15127

## INTERNET RESEARCH AND SOURCES

By: Steph Valentine

The presentation by Donna Booth at our last meeting showed us the risk of blanket acceptance the data found on the Internet. Unless the source is provided, you should treat the information with suspicion and use it only to provide direction for your research. I once found a family tree going back to Adam and Eve. Do you think it is correct?

So we must define what sources are.

Primary sources are records of events as they were first described, without any interpretation or commentary. That is not to say that all the data contained on a primary source is 100% correct. A death certificate documents a death, but other information, such as parents, etc. might not be correct. A census shows the data the enumerator obtained from the people he interviewed. For example, my father, Stephen Valentine, III, was listed in the 1930 census as Peter Valentine. Peter was his nickname and I can picture my grandmother answering the enumerator, "Yes, I have a son, Peter."

Secondary sources, on the other hand, offer an analysis or restatement of primary sources. For example, a biography is readable and is often based on primary sources. It should contain references to primary sources. A will, by itself, is a primary source whereas an abstract of that will becomes a secondary source because someone read, interpreted, and summarized the data.

The point is that you need to document your research. Primary sources are best, however secondary sources are acceptable provided they themselves are documented. You need to provide whomever is looking at your research

with the ability to replicate it. If they feel comfortable with your sources, then they can build on your existing research.

## HOURS CHANGING AT CRANBERRY FHC

By: Amy Arner

The Family History Center in Cranberry changed its hours as of November 1 due to staffing issues. In November the FHC will be open Wednesdays from 9:00 AM to 3:00 PM and 6:30 PM to 8:30 PM. It will also be open on Thursdays from 9:00 AM to 3:00 PM. The FHC will be closed the week of November 20th (Thanksgiving week). Note that there are no Saturday hours in November.

The FHC hours for December will be announced at a later date.

For the next few months, it is a good idea to call the FHC before driving there. The telephone number is 724-742-0922. The answering machine message will have the current hours.

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## NHG BOARD MEMBERS

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**OPEN POSITIONS:** Newsletter Editor & Programs

## WHO WE ARE NORTH HILLS GENEALOGISTS

*We are a group of genealogy enthusiasts who meet on a regular basis to assist one another in establishing our family histories. We meet on the third Tuesday of every month except December at the Northland Public Library, 300 Cumberland Road, McCandless Twp. in the North Hills of Pittsburgh, PA. Tip Time begins at 6:45 PM and our general meeting commences at 7 o'clock. Our meetings are free and open to the public.*

*We publish a Newsletter ten times a year for a nominal fee of \$15.00 annually. The subscription year runs from August to June, but anyone wishing to join mid-year will receive the back issues of the Newsletter for that year. Previous years' newsletters are also available for purchase, each with helpful hints for beginners and experienced genealogists.*

*The NHG Board meets at 7:00 pm on the first Tuesday of each month in the Conference Room, also located at the Northland Public Library. The Board meeting is open to all members of the NHG.*

## PRESIDENT'S CORNER

The leaves have fallen, the temperatures are dropping and soon snow will be blanketing the 'burg once again. I cannot believe that Thanksgiving is almost here, Christmas is just around the corner and another year of God's many blessings is almost ended. Where did 2006 go?

The holiday season evokes feelings of nostalgia: those days gone by that are warm glows within our hearts. For me, holiday memories begin with those of my Mom and Dad shopping at the A&P grocery store in the old Northway Mall (where Borders Books now stands). They pushed their grocery carts laden with food then arrived home to begin the process of cutting, chopping, and rolling dough for our Thanksgiving feast, working well into the night. The next day our dining table was transformed. China replaced the everyday Malmac dishes and wonder of wonders, a tablecloth, crystal and silver appeared! Anticipation was high as my eight siblings and I, along with my Grandmother and assorted relatives, were called into the dining room to take our places at the table where my Dad would recount the many blessing of the year. The following week the real excitement began as we all withstood the anxiety of wondering if we were "good or bad" in Santa's eyes.

The month of December was always a blur for me: practice for the Christmas Cantata, Nativity Play, and Choral Concert. The month was jam packed with activity. One activity that my family did not participate in was the practice of decorating early. The absolute thrill of flying down the staircase Christmas morning and gazing in astonishment at a beautifully decorated tree with wrapped presents underneath was one of the true mysteries of my childhood. Where did that tree come from? Reflecting upon those days I am in awe of the love, time and patience that my parents and older siblings showered upon me. Mom, Dad and my brother Bill are all gone now but those wonderful days of joy keep me warm.

Wishing you and yours a Happy, Healthy Holiday Season.  
**Maureen**

## NEW MAGAZINE DEBUTS

By: Elissa Powell, CG

A new magazine geared to the Internet genealogist made its debut in November. *Digital Genealogist* was created by Elizabeth Kelly Kerstens, CG, CGL who is also the editor of the National Genealogical Society's *NewsMagazine*, and the electronic newsletter *UpFront with NGS*.

Liz brings years of graphics design and publication experience, making the colorful *Digital Genealogist* both educational and entertaining. For 7 years she was the editor of *Genealogical Computing*, which the publisher (MyFamily.com) has discontinued. Recognizing that *Genealogical Computing* filled a need, *Digital Genealogist* has articles and reviews that help the modern computer genealogist with the technical aspects of genealogy.

The first issue is free to view at [www.digitalgenealogist.com/sample/dgnovdec06.pdf](http://www.digitalgenealogist.com/sample/dgnovdec06.pdf) where you can click on the table of contents and jump to an article. Offering six issues per year, DG should keep subscribers abreast of the latest happenings in our field of interest.

## USING ANCESTRY: SEARCHING PASSENGER LISTS

by Juliana Smith, Editor of Ancestry.com newsletters  
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©Ancestry.com Daily News 10 Nov 2006

Wow! Christmas came early for family historians last week when Ancestry posted a huge addition to its Immigration Collection (which is, *sic*) [free until 30 November](http://landing.ancestry.com/immigration/main/default.aspx) <<http://landing.ancestry.com/immigration/main/default.aspx>>. I began my searches this morning and have not been disappointed! I ran across

some interesting items and have a few tips that I'd like to share today.

## Low-Hanging Fruit Can Be Sweet

Most of my searches focused on the [New York passenger lists](http://www.ancestry.com/s23557/t8917/rd.ashx) <[www.ancestry.com/s23557/t8917/rd.ashx](http://www.ancestry.com/s23557/t8917/rd.ashx)> that were added for the Ellis Island years. I started with a few family members that I had previously found, but for which I didn't have printed copies of the record. Ancestry allows you to print either the entire image, or the "current view," which enables you to zoom in and print enlarged sections of the record. (For these lists, I also set my print preferences to landscape so I can fit more on the page.)

One of the records I needed a print of was for my great-grandmother's brother, Marton Szkokan. I was able to quickly find his record, but noted that there were actually two entries for the same ship and date. I printed off the manifest and just for the heck of it, clicked on the other entry. What it turned out to be was a "Record of Aliens Held for Special Inquiry."

I hadn't seen this record before. It appears that Marton was detained at Ellis Island, because according to the record, he had "no money." The record also shows that he was admitted on 24 March at 11:00 but a couple of his fellow passengers were not. Guiseppe Degni was detained with the reason given as "poor physique" and there is no admitted date--only a line. It must have been heart-breaking for him.

Another interesting entry on the page was for Agnes Sponholz, who was detained at the "Request of Miss Wichman," and under "Departmental and Executive Orders," it says, "married at Ellis Island 3/23 '03. Certificate filed in Ex. Office." Nice! A passenger arrival date and marriage date all wrapped in one!

So if you find what appears to be a duplicate entry in the index, be sure to check both!

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## USING ANCESTRY: SEARCHING PASSENGER LISTS (CONTINUED)

### Behind the Name

What's in a name? A lot, if you're trying to find someone in a database. Variant spellings of your ancestors' surnames can really complicate your searches. We'll talk about some search strategies to address this later, but to make matters worse, they may also be coming into the country with a given name that looks different than the name you find in later records.

Some of my Polish and Hungarian ancestors are perfect examples of this. My great-grandparents' names are listed on their 1903 marriage certificate as John Szucs and Teresia Szkokan. John is listed on his 1902 arrival record as Janos. Among my Polish ancestors, my great-grandfather, John Mekalski, is listed as Jan Minkalski on his arrival record.

I haven't found Teresia yet; on her death certificate, her name is listed as Theresa, and other variants I will need to search for include Terez, or Terezia. Teresia's brothers' names were given to me by family members as Martin and Andrew. Martin arrived with the name Marton, and Andrew will likely be found with a Hungarian variant like Andras, Andreas, Andris, or Endre. Other family names are Susanna, who I'll look for with Hungarian variants like Zsuzsanna, Zsuzsa, or Zsuzsi, and Elizabeth, or Erzsebet.

There's a good website for finding given name variants in several languages, called [Behind the Name](http://www.behindthenames.com) <[www.behindthenames.com](http://www.behindthenames.com)>.

Wade Hone also has a list of Hungarian name variants on the [ProGenealogists website](http://www.progenealogists.com/hungary/names.htm) <[www.progenealogists.com/hungary/names.htm](http://www.progenealogists.com/hungary/names.htm)>. Another useful table by Paul Kankula can be found on RootsWeb. It includes English given-name cross-references for Czech, French,

German, Hungarian, Italian, Polish, Slovak, Russian, and Yiddish and is available on the [Oconee County, South Carolina USGenWeb page](http://www.oconee.usgenweb.org) <[www.rootsweb.com/%7Eescoconee/names.html](http://www.rootsweb.com/%7Eescoconee/names.html)>.

More help for Hungarian names can be found at [Hungarian Names 101](http://www.geocities.com/Athens/1336/magyarnames101.html) <<http://www.geocities.com/Athens/1336/magyarnames101.html>>. An interesting point brought up here is the Hungarian practice of writing the last name first, followed by the given name. For this reason, it may be a good idea to also reverse the names in a search.

Try a Web search for:

*[your ancestor's ethnicity] given names*  
(e.g., French given names, Polish given names, Danish given names).

### Gathering Resources

Identifying relatives in passenger lists can be tricky. Even when you're dealing with what would seem to be unusual surnames, you may find more of them than you'd think. For example, a search for my maiden name of Szucs in the New York passenger lists brings up 1,808 results. There were even three Marton Szkokans listed in various ports. So how do you tell which one is yours?

Gather as much information as you can on your immigrant ancestor using records found here in the U.S. and especially home sources. I first learned of the name of the town my great-grandfather was from in Poland from a notation on the back of an old photograph. Letters, family Bibles, and interviews with older family members can be goldmines of information. The more you can gather, the better your chance of correctly identifying your immigrant ancestor in these passenger lists.

I had heard from my grandfather that Teresa had brothers named Andrew and Martin and I was

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## USING ANCESTRY: SEARCHING PASSENGER LISTS (CONTINUED)

able to identify Marton because I also knew the family's town of origin and it matched what he listed on the manifest. Age, occupation, and destination can also help. Manifests may list, "The name and complete address of nearest relative or friend in country whence alien came." or "Whether going to join a relative; and if so, what relative, the name and address." These and the names of traveling companions can help to ensure you have the right family.

### Flexible Searching

As we discussed earlier, name variants can be an obstacle, but fortunately Ancestry allows for the use of wildcards. (More information on searching with wildcards can be found in the [Ancestry Help Center](#).

< <http://www.ancestry.com/s23557/t8927/rd.ashx>>

As I searched for variant spellings for the Szkokans, using the exact search, I used "Szk\*", in the hopes I would pick up mistranscribed names. I also used the wildcard for given names, and found this particularly helpful. For Andrew, I could search for And\* and pick up instances of Andras, Andreas, Andres, Andris, Andrias, Andrey, Andrew, etc.

Once I found an ancestor, I also did a search by ship to see if I could browse through and find other familiar names on the same manifest. To do this, I just left the name blank, entered the ship name and year of arrival in both the "Year of Arrival" fields. In the keyword space I entered the date and month of arrival. (Tip: You have to enter it exactly as it is in the database.)

For example, the date of arrival for my great-grandfather was 24 December 1894 on the ship Dania. I have to enter "1894 to 1894" in the arrival fields, ship name Dania, and in the keyword field "24 dec," because the date fields have the abbreviated version of the month.

### Finding the Unexpected

Don't overlook searches for family members who arrived in the U.S. generations before the Ellis Island era. My mom did a few searches and quickly found her mother returning from a trip to Mexico, where she was visiting her sister Madelon. Madelon's husband was a mining engineer and worked in the mines in Mexico. This record is a great addition to our family history and complements the photo we have of her on board the ship. (I've posted the photo [on the blog](#).)

### One Last Story...

I actually found my dad's Dziadzia (Polish for grandfather) in the passenger lists at the National Archives several years ago. I had received a copy of his alien registration in the mail, which said, "I last arrived in the United States at New York, N.Y. on Dec. 24, 1892. I came in by 'Pretoria' German Steamship Co." After being unable to find him arriving on that date, I found that the Pretoria wasn't even built until 1898.

Since the alien registration was created forty-some-odd years after his arrival, it's possible he didn't remember it clearly, and family legend has it that he went back and forth several times before settling here (although I think he must have swum it most of those times!). So maybe he couldn't remember the name of the ship. But the date stuck in my head--24 December, Christmas Eve. Maybe the name of the ship was fuzzy, but he would probably remember landing in the U.S. on Christmas Eve. Using the *Morton Allen Ship Directory* (also available in the Ancestry Immigration Collection) I found an entry for the Dania arriving 24 December 1894, and that's where I found him.

So, if your family story is a bit fuzzy, play around with the details, and you might get lucky like I did! **After all, until November 30th, the price is right.**

## MARK YOUR CALENDARS FOR GREAT NHG PROGRAMS SCHEDULED IN 2007

### **JANUARY 16, 2007: GENEALOGY AND MULTIMEDIA *Presented by Reed Powell***

The availability of affordable hardware and software has brought the use of multimedia technologies into the realm of possibility for most genealogists. This talk will provide an overview of the relevant technologies and their capabilities, especially as they relate to genealogical research activities. It will also cover the hardware and software products currently available to the genealogist, and will provide examples of how they can be used to aid both genealogists and their audiences. The technologies discussed will include: scanning, digital photography and slide shows, video capture & recording, and audio recordings; significant focus will be given to video technologies.

### **FEBRUARY 20, 2007: SAILING INTO THE SUNSET: TIPS FOR FINDING YOUR ANCESTORS ON PASSENGER LISTS *Presented by Elissa Scalise Powell, Certified Genealogist<sup>SM</sup>***

Passenger lists are a wonderful resource for finding more information about the origins of immigrant ancestors: Most people have at least one immigrant ancestor who arrived by ship. The records that have been kept over the years are mostly chronological. This lecture reviews the origins and history of passenger lists in an attempt to understand the types of records that exist. Various indexes and research aides, along with examples of records from each of the past three centuries (and where to find them) are discussed, along with Internet sources.

## NEW ITALIAN COOKBOOK BENEFITS SCHOLARSHIP FUND

The Executive Committee of the Italian Nationality Room has published *The Italian Nationality Room Cookbook*. The book is rich with recipes and anecdotes submitted by Pittsburgh Italian American Families and historic facts about the Italian room. Cookbooks will be available during the Nationality Days open house on Sunday, December 3, noon to 4 pm.

All proceeds from the sale of the cookbooks benefit the Italian Nationality Room Scholarship Fund. The cost of this wonderful cookbook is only \$20.00 plus \$4.00 Shipping & Handling. Send checks made payable to University of Pittsburgh, Italian Room Scholarship Fund to:

Arcangela Balest  
1701 Chestnut Court  
Sewickley, PA 15143

If you have any questions, please call Arcangela Balest at 412-559-0558.

## DONATION OF REFERENCE BOOKS TO NORTHLAND PUBLIC LIBRARY

*By: Maureen Durstein*

Genealogical education is one of the defined missions of the North Hills Genealogists. The NHG annually allocates funds in the operating budget to purchase reference books for Northland Public Library, our generous host for Board and Monthly Meetings. The final two books that we purchased have finally arrived.

They are:  
*Cherokee Connections* by Myra Vanderpool Gormley, Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Company, 2005, 56 pp., \$9.95

*Ancestral Trails The Complete Guide to British Genealogy and Family History*, 2nd edition, by Mark Herber, Baltimore, Genealogical Publishing Company, 2006, 873 pp., \$34.95

## VISIT TO MASSACHUSETTS

*By: Steph Valentine*

I recently returned from a one week jaunt to Cape Cod which involved visiting elderly cousins and my aunt and uncle. On prior visits I borrowed their old family photo albums and scanned them on to my PC. This time I went prepared with my trusty laptop loaded with those scans along with my genealogical software and data.

We spent many hours going over the pictures. I think we did a pretty good job identifying as many as possible. Alas, there are still quite a few people who we were unable to identify and whose names will be lost forever. The lesson learned is to browse your old family photo albums and identify all the people in the pictures if not for you, then for your descendants. My uncle took that advice to heart and we started to review his family's albums and identifying his parents, brother, relatives, etc.

My cousin was the only child of the oldest Valentine daughter, Great-Aunt Mary. Aunt Mary helped to clean out her parent's, (my great-grandparents), house when it was sold. As she was a pack rat, my cousin has two boxes of Valentine memorabilia. Cousin Virginia and I spent the best part of a day going through those two boxes. Mary kept a lot. One item was a letter written by her to her mother about a trip to Washington, DC, in 1901, where she wrote about attending suffragette meeting and a planned visit with Susan the next day. We can only think that the Susan she was writing about might be Susan B. Anthony.

My cousin also lent me some 30 letters to scan and transcribe. These letters were from my great-great-grandfather to his family covering the period 1854 to 1894. I found the following paragraph in a letter dated February 12, 1865, Washington, DC:

“We went to General Lee's place. It was sad to see the ruin of such a grand old estate, but sadder still to know that a man who possessed it all could be a traitor, a rebel, one who was connected by marriage with [the] Washington family. The view from the house overlooks the river, Washington City, etc. Well, it is a fit place for the graveyard of the poor soldier in sight of the Capital of liberty he was so nobly died in defending, it was with a saddened heart, we passed by their graves laid side by side. I thought the ground would be traversed yet by many of bereaved relative, in search of a mark, the name, of their missing one.”

I never knew that Cousin Virginia had these sort of things. I'm glad I went prepared and I'm glad I asked the right sort of questions.

## CCAC to Offer Beginning Genealogy Course

The Community College of Allegheny College will offer a Beginning Genealogy course on Wednesday evenings from 6:30 pm to 9:30 pm beginning February 14 and continuing for 6 weeks. Learn how to get organized, and the various steps involved in finding your family records efficiently. A hands-on field trip will be included.

This course has been taught for 13 years by Elissa Scalise Powell who is one of only 10 people in Pennsylvania with the Certified Genealogist credential. Call CCAC or monitor their website at [www.CCAC.edu](http://www.CCAC.edu) under the continuing education link for the start of Spring course registration. Note: This is not the on-line course, but one that meets at North Campus, located on Perry Highway, one traffic light south of Cumberland Road.

## WHERE GENEALOGISTS MEET

**Sunday, December 3, 2006 – 12 noon-4 PM**  
**University of Pittsburgh Nationality rooms**  
[www.pitt.edu/~natrooms](http://www.pitt.edu/~natrooms) are decorated for the holidays and open to the public to view and enjoy!

**8 - 12 January 2007** - Salt Lake City, UT  
**Salt Lake Institute** has 10 different weeklong courses you can take. The deadline to register for Course 10, which was based on individual problem solving, was Oct. 31. The other courses do not have such a deadline and you can register online at [www.infouga.org](http://www.infouga.org). So you do not want to delay Course 7 “Advanced New England Research” has already sold out.

**26-29 April 2007** - Hartford, CT  
**New England Regional Genealogical Conference.** Elissa Scalise Powell, CG will be presenting “Hiding Behind Their Skirts: Finding Women’s Records,” “Managing a Cemetery Reading Project Efficiently,” and “Rubik’s Cube Genealogy: A New Twist on Your Old Data.” For more information see [www.nergc.org](http://www.nergc.org).

**10-15 June 2007** - Birmingham, AL  
Registration for the **Institute of Genealogy and Historical Research (IGHR)** has just opened for the 11 courses to be offered that week. Choose from Beginning, Intermediate, Advanced or Professional courses, plus topics such as Land, Southern States, Computers, Virginia, Advanced Military, English Research or Law Libraries and Government Documents. Some classes reach their maximum enrollment by late winter, so don’t delay in considering this exceptional opportunity, taught by the top people in the genealogy field. For more information and registration information, please see [www.samford.edu/schools/ighr](http://www.samford.edu/schools/ighr).

## NHG MEMBER HONORED

*By: Maureen Dimond Durstein*

At the Association of Professional Genealogists luncheon at the National Genealogical Society conference in Chicago, Elissa Scalise Powell, Certified Genealogist, was presented with a Certificate of Appreciation by President Sharon Tate Moody, Certified Genealogist. The certificate reads “APG Certificate of Appreciation awarded to Elissa Scalise Powell, CG, for her boundless enthusiasm and non-stop work on behalf of APG during her six years service on the APG Board.”



The Association of Professional Genealogists has its office in Colorado with over 1600 worldwide members. The Board of Directors, who are representative of all geographic regions, tries to promote standards, ethics, and professionalism among all genealogists whether or not they take paying clients. They have an educational seminar each year on the first day of the Federation of Genealogical Societies annual conference, which is open to anyone interested. The next seminar will be held in Ft. Wayne, Indiana on Wednesday, August 15, 2007. For more information, please see [www.APGen.org](http://www.APGen.org).

# Christmas Social

Saturday, December 2, 2006

Join us for a day of fun and fellowship at the annual NHG Christmas Social!

## 10:00 AM -- FIRST THE TOUR -- FORT PITT MUSEUM

Situated in the re-created Monongahela Bastion at Point State Park, the Fort Pitt Museum commemorates the strategic importance of the Forks of the Ohio during the Great War for Empire in which British, French, Colonial, and Native American forces struggled for control of North America. Through exhibits and programs, the museum also addresses the important role of Fort Pitt during the American Revolution and the early development of the city of Pittsburgh and broadens understanding of the significance of the area known as “the Point.”

## 12:30 PM -- THEN THE FOOD – LUNCH AT THE SPAGHETTI WAREHOUSE

Located in the Strip District, 2601 Smallman Street, Pittsburgh, PA 15222

**Cost of the Tour and Lunch is \$18.00**

**Please return this reservation form with payment before November 22, 2006.**

**Mail to: North Hills Genealogists, PO Box 304, Ingomar, PA 15127**

**NAME:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Please indicate your lunch choice:**

- Spaghetti & Meatballs** – a heaping portion of pasta topped with homemade tomato sauce and three hand-rolled meatballs.
- Incredible 15-Layer Lasagna** – Lasagna noodles baked with layers of meat sauce, a blend of cheeses, herbs, spices and topped with our famous meat sauce.
- Fettuccini Alfredo**- Fettuccini noodles in Alfredo sauce, Romano cheese and a hint of garlic.
- Four Cheese Manicotti** – Three pasta tubes filled with a blend of cheeses. Topped with tomato and Alfredo sauces.
- Grilled Chicken Caesar Salad** – Fresh and crispy romaine lettuce delicately tossed with our unique Caesar dressing. The creation is completed with croutons, Romano cheese and delectable grilled chicken.



PO Box 304 ♦ Ingomar, PA 15127

## FIRST CLASS MAIL

### Dated Material

#### UPCOMING – NHG PROGRAMS

#### MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

**DECEMBER 2006: CHRISTMAS SOCIAL**  
**Saturday, December 2, 2006**

Tour of the Fort Pitt Museum (10:00AM) followed by lunch at the Spaghetti Warehouse (12:30PM) in the Strip District, 2601 Smallman Street, Pittsburgh, PA 15222.

**Registration due by Wednesday, November 22<sup>nd</sup>.**

**JANUARY 2007: GENEALOGY AND MULTIMEDIA**  
**Tuesday, January 16, 2006**

This talk will provide an overview of the relevant technologies and their capabilities, especially as they relate to genealogical research activities. It will also cover the hardware and software products currently available to the genealogist along and will provide examples of how they can be used.

**THIS MONTH -- TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 21, 2006**

**“SCALING YOUR BRICK WALL”**

*Presented by NHG Board*

November’s meeting is dedicated to YOUR brick wall.

Bring your problem or just come and learn from the discussion of other member’s research stumpers.