



NEWSLETTER

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JUNE 2019

Resources at The Family History Center (John Canapa)
American Geographical Society Library (Jovanka Ristic)

Next Meeting is June 12, 2019
7:00 PM -- Klemmer's Banquet Center
10401 West Oklahoma Avenue
Milwaukee, WI 53227

MEETING BITS AND BYTES

For our May 8th meeting we had a bit of a reprieve from rain for our 7:00PM arrival, but by the time we were leaving Klemmer's Banquet Center, it was back to cold and wet weather. In fact, when Bob Heck welcomed the 75 members who came he commented that he hoped we had all enjoyed "summer last week." There were no new members or guests at this meeting.

If you couldn't make the meeting and were hoping to listen to the sound recording, sorry, but the first presentation, "Faces Behind Memorial Day" did not record. Bob Heck's presentation on "Finding the Trail to Europe" did record though so all was not lost. It seems that the more technology you have, the more things can go awry.

There are two good research topics scheduled for the June meeting. One will be about the Resources at the Family History Center. For those of you who have not used this local resource, you might be surprised at what you can learn there. The center director, John Canapa, will let you know what is waiting there for you to discover about your ancestors. The second presentation is basically all about maps. Now, if you are not all that enthused about maps like our own Cathy Dailey, this presentation could still intrigue you. The American Geographical Society Library is located at UW Milwaukee in the Golda Meir Library building and has an extensive collection of all sorts of maps. They even have a map from 1492. But, for genealogists, a Sanborn Fire Insurance map or a map of the land your ancestor's hailed from could be just what you are looking for. The guest speaker from that library will surely inspire you to look into maps as a valuable resource.

FACES BEHIND MEMORIAL DAY: TRACING MILITARY DEATHS

Louise Stack

As Memorial Day is celebrated in May and is a time to remember those who died while in military service, this presentation was about how to research those who never came home from war. Louise Stack was the first presenter and showed how to get started, where to look, and what you can find. She also shared how she researched family members killed in action during World War II and Vietnam. In addition, she also showed how to research a non-family member MIA from Vietnam.

If you have a family member or ancestor who died while in the military, you may want to know their story. You might want to know what their assignment was, where they were stationed and perhaps even the circumstances of their death. It is sometimes like an unfinished story that you just have to know how it ended.

To start your research, you would look at what information you already have such as any letters, newspaper articles, obits, pictures, military records or uniforms. A good source might also be any living relatives or next of kin. Clues could even come from family stories about what happened.

You will want to look for the basic what, when and where details as well as dates and places. A key piece of information that will really help in your research is the military unit the person was assigned to. With this you can trace backwards to learn about the battles that the person might have participated in and possibly the circumstances of their death.

Louise showed a number of examples of resources for your research. Besides the usual FamilySearch, Ancestry, Fold3, Google and the National Archives she suggested trying the Department of Veterans Affairs, veteran's groups and monuments and memorials. Two great sources for World War II and Vietnam research that were not included in the handout are:

www.nationalww2museum.org/war/research-veteran

www.vvmf.org/wall-of-faces

Two of Louise's family members were killed in World War II and she was able to show how she used those resources to trace their stories. Both were in the Army and were 1st cousins. When she learned the units they were assigned to, she was then able to learn that one died during a battle in Italy in October 1944 and the other died during a battle in France in November 1944.

Louise also lost a cousin in Vietnam to "friendly" fire and with the help of that cousin's sister and the other available resources, she was able to gather quite a bit of information about his service. The details of his death are scant, but give the essential circumstances.

The last research story Louise shared was also about someone lost in Vietnam, but unrelated to her. In high school Louise had a POW/MIA bracelet which she did wear. Many, many years later she wanted to know his story and was able to find a lot of information about him. He was originally listed as missing in action, but was later declared dead, remains not recovered because his plane went down in the waters off North Vietnam.

Although it can be difficult to find information about military deaths (remember, you are dealing with the government), it is not impossible. The same resources can also be used to research an ancestor who made it home.

FINDING YOUR ANCESTOR'S TRAIL TO EUROPE

Summarized by Louise Stack

Following a short break, Bob Heck was up next with research tips on how to discover where your ancestors really came from. Kudos to you if you already know, but most of us just start out with an inkling or a family story. In Bob's case, he didn't really know where his grandmother came from until he started asking. It was then that he learned she came from Moravia, a state in the Czech Republic.

His first tip is that if you don't ask the question, don't expect an answer.

Begin by checking local resources first such as family documents, tombstones newspapers, etc. That also means family members and you should start with the oldest first as they might not be around real long. Now when you interview those family members it is important not to just ask yes and no questions so they can expand their answer. Even if they seem to stumble and go "mmm" it means they are thinking about their answer so don't move on or give prompts, just let them finish their thought. Bob suggests using a digital voice recorder like the Sony that he uses to record the MPAFUG meetings.

Among the questions to ask are not only where the family came from but how and when. Factors like economics, religion and war could have all influenced their decision to emigrate. Try to find out where else in the US they might have lived, don't assume that they came directly to Wisconsin. And, as Bob pointed out there were 172 ports of entry so NY might not have been where they actually arrived.

Tombstones might give you a clue, but remember they are carved sometime after the person's death so aren't always accurate. Of course, like Bob's GG-Grandfather, there might not be a tombstone until your ancestors put one up 132 years later. Findagrave.com could be a good source of information though, especially if there is an obit.

With a little bit of luck, according to Bob who we know does seem to have it, you might also find certificates and documents with information. Passenger lists, marriage records, death records and naturalizations might all give clues. He did point out that some immigrants, like farmers for instance, thought their first papers for naturalization made them a citizen and didn't finish the actual process.

Bob shared a number of examples of research on his family and what he has encountered. Did you know that the Latin version of Prussia is Boernssiae? Or that sometimes what looks like a comma, might really be a period? Or that a dash over a letter in a name means that there are 2 of the

same in a row like double n's? Once Bob figured out the true spelling of his ancestor's village, he was able to add hundreds of names to his family files.

Other tidbits Bob shared included paying attention to handwriting in a bible as some entries could have all been made at one time so might not be as accurate. Look on the back of photos as well as at the name and location of the photographer. Check census records and naturalization records which could give place of birth and date of arrival in the US. Be aware that the Austro-Hungarian Empire was huge and encompassed countries you might not expect. It even included regions they controlled in Mexico and surprisingly, Italians.

Bob had lots of great tips and examples using his family research. As impressive as the amount of research he has done, he still has not found the birthplace of his GG-Grandfather. So, the moral of the story is that it does take time and patience but you can follow the trail.

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

The Dorothy Boxhorn Story

"Once upon a time in a land far, far away there lived a little girl who was fascinated by a picture hanging on the wall above her bed. She learned years later what it was and who the people were. The framed document was the marriage certificate of her grandparents in the German language from 1909. That was her first introduction to genealogy, even though she didn't know it at the time.

This little girl (me) lived in a very close-knit farming community in central Wisconsin. As we would drive to town my mother would tell me about each neighbor and how we were related. I was convinced I was related to everyone! In reality, as I learned years later, I was related to *almost* everyone. If you consider this as my start in my genealogy adventure, it has been a fond interest of mine for about 60 years. Officially, I say that I started in genealogy in 2003. My mother-in-law was losing ground and I figured if I wanted information, I had better get busy. We would sit day after day looking at her photo albums. She would talk, I would write down memories and

names. Some days we made progress, some days not.

I belong to about a dozen genealogy organizations. I belong to several that have interest for me in specific areas in Germany. I belong to all the local Wisconsin county organizations where my and my husband's people lived. I have been a member of MPAFUG, at various levels of involvement, for about 8 years. Each of these organizations has and continues to help me on my adventure in their own way. Now that I am retired, I am supposed to have more time for what I want to do. I think the days are just shorter. There is never enough time for everything I want to do.

In 2003 I did an inventory of what I or anyone in the family knew about each family line. I then asked my husband what he knew about his family over and above what I had already learned from his mother. In all regards there didn't seem like anyone knew much about anything except for two family lines. Two aunts from two different family lines had some handwritten memories. So, I decided that I would work on the eight lines in rotation as I met a self-imposed goal for each line. My goals were: 1) document grandparents, aunts and uncles for each line, 2) document and research the immigrant person for that line and 3) find and document the village where each family line came from with the hopes of visiting someday. That was my plan in 2003 and in 2003 that worked pretty well for me. Along with my research, my other goal was to find pictures and documents and to get people identified for all lines whenever I had the opportunity to pursue it. Family gatherings and funerals seemed to be the best venues for information, contacts and pictures. Over time I became the go to person for family information for all 8 lines. I have had some great cooperation from many different cousins, but not a long-term hard-core working relationship with any one person.

I have been fortunate enough to have been able to visit Germany 4 times starting in 2013. Three trips were with the Pommerscher Verein Freistadt organization. These group tours visited what would have been Pommern before WWII. Now some is in Germany and some is in Poland. The trips were organized so that if you wanted, you could do side

trips to your villages. Over the three trips I have visited 7 villages for two family lines. My villages are now in Poland. I did get to see the old German buildings but there was no chance to meet relatives because the German population in this area was forced west, back into Germany proper after WWII. In 2013 my husband and I arranged a 16-day trip to Germany on our own. Family Tree Tours helped us make contact with cousins or locals in our already known villages and to arrange meetings and translators, if needed, at each village. We basically did a loop around the southern end of Germany visiting 4 of the home villages. We were fortunate to be able to visit with cousins from two of the family lines as well as informed locals at the other villages. Between the 4 trips I have visited 6 of the 8 home villages for our family lines. The last two villages we were not able to visit because one was in the Czech Republic and the other no longer exists. It was a wonderful trip and I only had to compromise to see an auto, train and Zeppelin museum as part of the trip. My husband also wanted to drive the autobahn.

While at one of my home villages my cousin introduced me to another cousin. He had retired a few years earlier and charted the church records for the village back to 1535. He added my family's information to his data base and made a copy of my Ahnentafel Chart back to 1535. I felt honored.

One of my persistent challenges was to find the maiden name of my great-grandmother. People had two different names, but no one could show me documentation to prove the surname they had was the correct one. In 2018, I contacted a cousin I found through a DNA match. I asked her how she knew for sure that the surname she had was the correct one. She said: "I found it in the church records." She then sent me a copy of a church record I didn't have. The church records were destroyed in a flood in 2008. So, we exchanged what records we had to help us both.

My latest goal is to meet cousins from Pommern lines that ended up in Germany proper. Hopefully, I will be joining the Pommerscher Verien Freistadt tour scheduled for the Spring 2020. I would love to meet some new cousins while there. I am working on it with the help of a German researcher to follow

up on some leads from after WWII. Wish me luck!"

What an inspiring story Dorothy! Thanks for sharing.

Note from the editor: All of you have a family story within you so please consider sharing. There are 12 questions to answer that will be the same for everyone. You can give as much or as little of an answer as you want.

If you are interested, please see me at a meeting or email me with Member Spotlight in the subject line at:

kilostack@att.net. Hope to hear from you!

Louise Stack

History Lessons

LET'S TALK MAPS.....

First of all, what is a map? According to Webster's it is "a representation usually on a flat surface of the whole or part of an area."

The next question then is: Why is a map important or useful for a genealogist? In past presentations we have learned that a map, say a plat map for instance, can show you not only where your ancestor lived, but also who the neighbors were. Sometimes you can tell just by looking at that map that your ancestor probably married the girl or boy next door.

A Sanborn Fire Insurance map can show you what type of structure your family lived in, whether it was one or more stories, commercial or residential, etc. Again, you might be able to piece together a family story by looking at the whole neighborhood.

Maps can also show you the geography of an area which might give you an idea of what your ancestors grew or otherwise farmed. And, that is just in the United States. Maps in Europe might also give you a better understanding of where your family came from and why they might have emigrated.

Historically, the first maps, as found in cave drawings from ancient times, were of stars and not the earth. Ironically, nowadays we are still looking to the skies as our GPS maps are coming from satellites orbiting the earth.

Upcoming Programs

July 10, 2019

World War I Genealogy Research (Debra Dudek) Full evening presentation.

August 14, 2019

Relative Finder/BYU Labs (Bob Heck)
Genealogy Mapping (Cathy Dailey)

September 11, 2019

Dating Old Photographs (Bob Heck)
Secrets Hidden in Old Photographs (Bruce Butterfield)

October 9, 2019

Researching an Old Cemetery (Gary Haas)
Cemeteries – In the Works

October 19, 2019

All day workshop at the Family History Center.

November 13, 2019

City Directories (Bruce Butterfield)
Civil War Research – In the Works

No Meeting in December

If you would like to make a presentation or have a suggestion for a topic for a meeting, please contact Bob Heck.

About This Newsletter

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Steering committee meetings are held on the 3rd Wednesday of every month except December. The meetings start at 7:00PM and are held at the Family History Center located at 9600 W. Grange Ave., Hales Corners, WI. The Steering Committee is an informal group of members who get together to plan the general agendas for future meetings. All MPAFUG members are welcome to attend.

MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION

Membership in MPAFUG is open to anyone interested in learning more about computer genealogy. Membership is \$12 per calendar year for an individual or family. Dues are \$6 for the balance of a year if you join after June 30th. Send a check made payable to MPAFUG to:

Lynn Thrasher – MPAFUG Treasurer
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OUR WEB PAGE: <http://mpafug.org>

We invite you to visit our web page and even print a copy of this and the previous month's newsletter. We also have a surname section where you can see who else is working on your family line. Members of MPAFUG have access to a members-only web page which contains past newsletters and handouts from our meetings.