



# NEWSLETTER

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DECEMBER, 2017

NO MEETING IN DECEMBER

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*NO MEETING IN DECEMBER*

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*Next Meeting is January 10, 2018  
Klemmer's Banquet Center  
10401 West Oklahoma Avenue  
Milwaukee, WI 53227*

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## Funeral Home Research

*Summarized by Louise Stack*

Bob Heck was a one-man act this evening as he was doing both presentations in addition to his emcee duties. Luckily, his voice held out for the entire show. Both presentations were on finding information about your ancestor's life in death records and, as usual, he truly had a lot to share.

Bob's first presentation was on Funeral Home Research which he says is a forgotten resource often overlooked by genealogists. Information might be found on a simple 3x5 card all the way up to a complete record with lots of information and possibly photos. So, what do you need to start? The most important item is the date of death because prior to computers most records were filed by that date. Even if you do not know the exact date, the month and year will be helpful. If you don't know that, a place to check is the Social Security Death Index. You will also need to know the full name of the deceased. Try to provide as many details as you can to elicit the most information. There are no guarantees though so you are kind of at their mercy as funeral homes are not required to give you any information. While researching his grandparents in funeral records, Bob found his grandfather's SS#, dates of birth and death and other relatives listed. In his grandmother's record he did see that her place of birth, Rudimov, CZ was listed and of course, we know he has actually been to her ancestral home there.

Don't know what funeral home your ancestors used? If you know the church they attended, try their records. Try newspaper obits. If neither of those works, find the funeral home nearest to where they lived. If you know the name of the cemetery where they are buried, check with the cemetery office or sexton who is responsible for assigning plots. Other options are checking the website funeralnet.com or calling the Wisconsin Funeral Directors Association. In addition, Bob did list several other websites for finding funeral homes.

A surprising amount of information might be obtained at a funeral home. Among the usual things such as relatives and children's names, you might also get the date your ancestor immigrated, their place of

employment, names of local newspapers and obituaries. A particularly helpful clue might be the name of the person providing the information to the funeral home. Bob mentioned that husbands are notorious for giving wrong dates so if it is the wife's funeral you may or may not get good info. Wives on the other hand were better at knowing important dates so the husband's funeral record may be more accurate. Remember that the information is usually given by a grief stricken relative so may contain spelling errors particularly with maiden names.

The funeral home might have funeral cards in the record which would give you birth and death dates of the deceased as well as other important information. Perhaps you could find the religion of your ancestor in the records along with their church. Bob was able to get information about a Rev. A. S. Hunt whom he found listed with an AME (African Methodist Episcopal) church in Kansas for example. He also shared his grandfather's 1923 funeral card with the information rubber stamped on the prayer card and his aunt's card that included a picture.

What if you know the name of the funeral home, but it is no longer in business? Bob suggested a google search under the original name and showed the evolution of one funeral home from "Cook and Weber" to the current "Bryant" Funeral Home. There were several name changes in between but Bob says that records are usually transferred and rarely discarded. You could also check the funeral home closest to the one you are searching for.

Bob had some great examples of other types of information you could find such as burial requests, burial permits, transit permits and requests to open graves. One example was for a burial permit for a young woman who had fallen off a train. That led to a bit of a mystery though because one document listed her age as 17 and another listed it as 21. Another was a burial request issued in 1903 for a 9-year old school girl gave her cause of death as endocarditis and pericarditis. For a variety of reasons, people didn't always die at home, but often wished to be buried near relatives which required transportation. Transit permits were necessary especially when handling someone who had died of a contagious disease.

Obits that Bob found at a funeral home for his grandmother's brother George R. Henningfeld, had articles from the Racine Journal Times in both 1944 and 1948. In the 1944 articles he found that the man had been first missing in action shortly after D-Day, then listed as KIA. He was originally buried in a temporary military cemetery in France which was later closed in 1949. The 1948 obit was for George Henningfeld's funeral in the US. Bob also found a request for a military headstone in that funeral home record.

Any presentation of Bob's would not be complete without his intriguing family stories. One involved a husband who had emigrated from Czechoslovakia to Canada. Sometime later, the wife and children were in the process of emigrating and arrived in Bremen. Before they could board a ship, it was discovered that the youngest son had epilepsy so the mother boarded a train and took her son back to Czechoslovakia where she left him with her brother and never saw him again. That family lived in a remote area of Canada so the husband's funeral was held at home and Bob actually had a photo of the family with the deceased in an open casket standing upright.

Where else can you find funeral information? You can check your local library and Historical Society for information about the records. To find a cemetery, you can check [findagrave.com](http://findagrave.com) or ask at a monument store in the area. The stone cutters know all of the cemeteries and often have the name and phone number of the Sexton. Naturally, Bob had a positive story about meeting a Sexton in a Quebec cemetery who not only gave him a map of the cemetery, but circled all the family graves he was searching for. With help from a Sexton at another cemetery Bob was able to find and put a headstone on a great-great-grandmother's unmarked grave. Initially, her grave would have had a wooden cross which disintegrated over time. And did you know that small rural cemeteries are often marked by 4 pine trees, one in each corner? Take a look next time you are out on your research road trip.

If your research takes you to Europe it can be a challenge for finding information as cemeteries are often plowed over after 100 years so a grave older than that would be difficult to locate. In Germany, graves are typically leased for 15-30 years and if the family doesn't renew, the grave gets recycled.

Bob's tip: Make an appointment at the funeral home and NEVER ask for info when attending a funeral.

A member's tip: When you can't find a cemetery or the Sexton, ask at the local café.

Your reporter's tip: The café is a better option than a police station. I found police stations in 2 small towns that were *closed* unless you called for an emergency.

## Wills and Probate Records

Summarized by Louise Stack

After a break where all 19 giveaways were doled out, Bob Heck began his second presentation on Wills and Probate Records. He started by giving us a number of statistics on who actually have drafted Wills. Of note, 67% of women between 55-64 do not have a Will with 51% overall in that age group not having one. Fifty two percent of white Americans have a Will but the statistics for ethnic groups is even lower with only 32% for African Americans and 26% percent for Hispanics. Are you one of the “haves or have nots”?

Having a Will in the 1800's was of more importance since 90% of the population lived on a farm. Farmers tended to want to pass the land on to family so it was important to “Will” it to the children. So, don't believe the old saying that your family was too poor to have a Will because nearly all farmers did. There has been an amazing shift nowadays as only about 1% of the population lives on a farm. Gary Haas touched on this subject at last month's meeting; wills and probate records identify the location of a property as well as other possessions. According to Bob, farms often listed property and possessions all the way down to nuts and bolts and showed a level of wealth. For the genealogist, it will identify relationships including married names of daughters. You could also find your family heritage and proof of whom you are descended from.

Bob showed the Will of his 9<sup>th</sup> great grandfather as well as those of other ancestors. Who knew you could go that far back? Kind of gives you hope you might be able to as well. One that Bob shared was a 1757 Will for a Joseph Matteson which stated: “My son has gone to the Army, if he is kild” then the property would be divided between his 2 sons and 3 daughters. Information he found in an 1830 Will listed all the names of the sons and daughters of his 4X great grandfather and mentioned that he owned land in Vermont, an interesting clue. Bob also noted that the wife's name was spelled Zilpha, but on her tombstone, it is spelled with an S, another research clue. John Burgess, a bachelor son of Bob's 4X great grandfather, left all his property to his brothers and sisters according to his 1849 Will. One of those was Bob's 3X great grandfather Benjamin Burgess. Bob had also found a notice published in the state newspapers “To the heirs of John Burgess” so his advice is to ALWAYS check in the official state newspaper.

Bob next took us into probate records. You might think everything will be simple if there is a Will, but things can get hung up in court. Probate is the judicial determination of the validity of the Will and challenges to the Will are heard in Probate Court. The probate process clarifies issues in a Will and resolves any

challenges to the distribution of funds of an estate. After being approved by the court, the Executor/Executrix manages the estate.

What if there is no Will? The spouse usually would inherit property and belongings but would still have to go to probate court. If the deceased had children, the distribution of the estate would be fairly simple, but again it would still be handled in probate court. If the deceased was never married and had no children, the court decides who the relatives are and what they inherit. The distribution of the estate in that case is based on the relationship to the deceased. Bob's father-in-law inherited \$35 because he got 1/125<sup>th</sup> of an estate. Doesn't sound like much, but the valuable portion was that he got a report that listed all those 125 people, their relationship to the deceased and their addresses. That certainly added a lot of family to the tree.

Now that you know the potential genealogical “gold mine”, as Bob would say, that you could find in probate records, where do you start? For Wisconsin Bob listed several options including FamilySearch.org for some counties, Milwaukee County Probate Records, the Wisconsin Historical Society ARC Centers, Ancestry.com and Google. For other states Bob suggested FamilySearch where most states have probate records and wills available online for our favorite price of FREE. Ancestry is another option for other states and is available also for FREE at local libraries and the Family History Center. According to Bob, Ancestry just added 150 million wills and probate records for the US and he was able to find 59 pages of court documents for his great-great grandfather which covered 11 years after his death even though his will was uncontested. Makes you want to check right now doesn't it.

In addition, Bob even included a website to search probate records in England if you have ancestors there. And if you find it a little daunting to start such a search, Bob gave websites on how to find wills and probates online and that explained how probate records work.

Remember last month when Gary Haas said he liked finding snarky comments in wills and probate records? Well, Bob had a few of those too as Wills are sometimes used to get even. One generous grandpa left his grandson a thermometer and a dung fork of all things. For those of us that did not grow up on a farm, Bob answered that burning question and showed a photo of one. One spiteful husband left his wife a significant amount of money which she could only get if she smoked 5 cigars a day, and another left his wife his whole estate only if she remarried. Lastly, a father left his son the “pleasure of earning a living”. What's in your Will??? Give you any ideas???

Bob's tip: Be patient and diligent when searching older records as they may not all be together.

## Upcoming Programs

### January 10, 2018

Internet, Computer and System Security (Bill Heck & Associates)

### February 14, 2018

House Research in Europe On-line (Bob Heck)  
Google Mapping (ie. Ancestor Homes, Adding Cemeteries, Churches etc.) (Cathy Dailey)

### March 14, 2018

Social Media for Genealogy Research (Cheryl Heck)  
Memories in FamilySearch (Jane Orne)

### April 11, 2018

PERSI Genealogy Research (Bruce Butterfield)  
BYU for Genealogy Research Webinars on YouTube (Lynn Thrasher)

### May 9, 2018

Colonial Wars & Colonial Records (Winnie Mading)  
Preparation for Madison Trip (Jane Orne)

### June 13, 2018

Stack of Research (Louise Stack)  
Show & Tell (John Canapa & Others)

### June 19, 2018 Bus Trip to Madison

### July 11, 2018

US GenWeb for Research (Bob Tatalovich)  
Books Research on the Internet (Bob Heck)

### August 8, 2018

Create Your Own Cloud (Sam Colon)  
TBA

### September 12, 2018

Metes and Bounds Using Google Mapping (Cathy Dailey)  
Land Record Research (Bob Heck)

### October 10, 2018

TBA  
TBA

### November 14, 2018

TBA  
TBA

## Dues for 2018

Dues for 2018 are now being accepted.

## About This Newsletter

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Members interested in submitting articles may e-mail them to [bheck@voyager.net](mailto:bheck@voyager.net). The MPAFUG Publisher will determine if an article will be used in this newsletter. Articles will be used as space permits.

NO COPYRIGHTED ARTICLES may be submitted without express permission of the author and publisher. Articles should be submitted by the 1<sup>st</sup> Wednesday to be considered for inclusion in that same month. Credit will be given for your article.

## Meeting Bits and Bytes

It has arrived - that time of year when we have to venture out into the dark for the monthly meeting at Klemmer's Banquet Hall. Despite the darkness, there were 111 members who bundled up to brave the accompanying cold and come to the Bob Heck show. Four of those were new members/guests.

There was something different in the hall this month. When Bob got things rolling at 7:00PM he asked how we liked the background music on the pre-meeting slide show. The music had not been changed in a while and according to Bob, someone had complained last month that it was terrible. That was a surprise but change can be a good thing.

You might have picked the wrong month to miss a meeting because there were 19, yes, nineteen items on the opportunity table. Kind of like Christmas since we don't have a meeting in December. Anyway, Bob specifically pointed out one of the items which was a new computer with printer and scanner that Sam Colon had built. It came with Windows 10, Legacy 9.0 and Paint Shop Pro but no home delivery and set-up. What a great give-away!

Does it seem like Bob sometimes adds more quiz questions? This month there were 7 starting with one about the email Bob had sent giving a web address for a Church Events calendar. The calendar begins in 900AD. Bob did also explain how that could be of value to you if you are researching church records. Say your ancestor's record (christening for instance) has the date as 3 days after Pentecost you wouldn't necessarily know what that exact date was. This calendar will give the date for Pentecost the year you are interested in.

That was illuminating in one way but the second question asked how many lumens were in MPAFUG's new projector. The bidding was on with numbers too low to too high. The correct answer was 3200 lumens which was 200 more than the old projector. Question 3

referred to what the group used to project a computer image when it was started 26 years ago. It was a 150-watt overhead projector or as Bob recalled a daylight projector AKA Tageschlicht Projektor.

Question 4 was tough but luckily Gary Haas was in attendance so was able to give a few clues. Bob was looking for what the WI Land Economic Inventory Maps are commonly called. When no one jumped up with an answer Gary's first clue was that it began with a "B". The next clue helped snag a winner when he stated that it was a person's name.

The last 3 questions referred to Cathy Dailey's presentation. Why does she talk fast? She's from Cleveland and everyone there talks fast. Bob accidentally skipped question 6 but did get a reminder from the reporter after question 7 which asked what Cathy's tip had been about researching Census and Directory records. That answer was to look left, look right, look up, look down, go back pages and go forward pages. So, back to question 6, what year was the first New York directory published? 1665 of course.



## Help with PAF

Call us if you need assistance in using PAF, or if you have question about MPAFUG  
We're here to help!

NAME	PHONE	E-MAIL Address
Bruce Butterfield	414-462-6097	Babtrfld-mke@wi.rr.com
Sam Colon	414-327-2133	genrschr@gmail.com
Bob Heck	414-421-7143	bheck@voyager.net
Bob Tatalovich	414-897-8280	bobt3725@gmail.com
Jane Orne	262-938-9371	orne@Rworld.net
Guy Porth	414-510-0563	guyporth9@yahoo.com
Earl Capps	414-327-4327	elcapps@yahoo.com

## MPAFUG Key Information

### The Steering Committee

Steering committee meetings are held on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday of every month except December. The meetings start at 7:00 pm at Bob Heck's house (4910 Steeple Drive, Greendale, 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 and participate in the meetings.

### 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 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.

### Resources Available:

In addition to our monthly meetings and website, we offer 3 CD's that are available to members for purchase. CD's are \$5 each if picked up at a meeting, or an additional \$2.50 for shipping/handling. Contact Lynn Thrasher - MPAFUG Treasurer, PO Box 14222, West Allis, WI 53214-0222.

- ◆ MPAFUG Newsletters – December 1991 thru December 2013
- ◆ MPAFUG Handouts – 1999 thru 2013
- ◆ MPAFUG Utilities CD – contains 16 useful programs including PAF, Picasa, GenViewer, Open Office, Adobe Reader, PDA to Palm OS, FastStone, IRFAN Viewer/Plugins, FamilySearcher and more

### 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 30<sup>th</sup>. To join, send a check made payable to "MPAFUG" to: Lynn Thrasher – MPAFUG Treasurer, PO Box 14222, West Allis, WI 53214-0222.

#### *Questions about MPAFUG?*

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