



NEWSLETTER

February 2023
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FEBRUARY 2023

Plat Maps (Randy Ray) (#12 on member suggested topics)

What You Can Learn from RootsTech 2023 (Bob Miller)

Next meeting February 8, 2023

7:00 PM – New Berlin Ale House

16000 West Cleveland Avenue

New Berlin, WI 52151

MEETING BITS AND BYTES

“Cyber Security” was presented by Bill Heck at the January 10, 2023 meeting. Bill outlined the ways that scammers are successful, starting with pretending to be someone that you know. Scammers pretend to be legitimate organizations with the top organizations being Amazon, Walmart, Microsoft and Apple. Top on the list also are pretending to be recruiters or puppy breeders.

Bill referred to a publication on the Better Business Bureau’s website with great information on 2022 scamming statistics. (Here is a link to the [published report](#).)

Scammers might also present you with a chance at a prize or with a problem. Often, they pressure to act immediately. They may ask for a specific way to pay. The payment methods that give no percentage of money returned because of fraud are wire transfers, prepaid cards and Zelle. Minimal money is returned on a debit card when used in a scam.

This year phone and text scams seem to be on the rise. The advice is not to answer if the caller is unknown. Let the call go to voicemail. If it is important, the caller will leave a message. Use voicemail to your advantage.

Scammers are after your passwords, your financial information, your identity and/or your money. We fall for these scammers because they either present urgency, or appeal to our desire to please, prey on our fear, or peak our curiosity. We should watch for spelling and grammatical errors. Also, review the sender address. Remember the old adage, “Anything that seems too good to be true, probably is.” Beware of attachments, links, login pages, and

Facebook Messenger (e.g. “Is this you in the video?”).

Bill discussed the importance of strong passwords. The minimum suggested length of passwords is 12 to 14 characters, using upper and lower case with numbers. Do not use the same password for everything. If multi-factor authentication is available, use it. Use a Password Manager program. Bill recommended KeePass (locally stored password database) or LastPass. Both are among the best free versions available. Bitwarden is a highly-rated non-free version, using the cloud as storage.

Stay proactive and check your credit report. You can do this from one of the three credit bureaus – [Equifax](#), [Experian](#), or [TransUnion](#). Consider [LifeLock](#) for identity protection. Consider [Credit Karma](#). It is free to monitor your credit reports.

Also consider freezing your credit if you are not actively opening a new account. It will require you to manually unlock the freeze when you want to open anything new.

Consider using online banking with strong passwords, multi-factor authentication, and text alerts. Statistics show that online banking is more secure than in-person banking. Most importantly, be your own security monitor.

Bill concluded with the reminder that passwords are still our weakest link.



For our second feature, Bob Heck presented “How to Identify a Hoax or Scam” which was originally presented in 2017, but still is applicable today.

The difference between a hoax and a scam is that a hoax is anything deliberately intended to deceive or trick, while a scam is a fraudulent deal. One of the most important things to remember is that the FBI will never contact you by email. Neither will the court. Your bank will never call you and ask you to verify your personal information. Your bank already has that information. Call your bank to report them, but never use a phone number provided by the scammers. Always look up a phone number for yourself.

A typical hoax or scam email will generally contain grammatical, spelling, and punctuation errors. There will sometimes be odd spacing or indents in the text or mixed fonts. If you receive an email without a subject line, delete the email immediately. Don’t click on fraudulent blue web addresses. Don’t open unexpected attachments.

Use anti virus software and be sure to renew it when its subscription is expiring.

Read more about current cyber threats at F-Secure at <https://www.f-secure.com/us-en/home/articles>. Read about urban legends, folklore, myths, rumors and misinformation at www.snopes.com.

Other sites for checking hoaxes ...

<http://www.cyndislist.com/myths>

<https://us.norton.com/blog>

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hoax>

<https://urbanlegendsonline.com/>

Any email from MPAFUG will always have a subject that starts with MPAFUG and will never contain an attachment. All email to and from MPAFUG is scanned for viruses. The MPAFUG computer is updated daily for current virus definitions.

WHAT’S ON THE FEBRUARY SCHEDULE

As requested on the member suggested topics list, February’s meeting will feature Randy Ray talking about Plat Maps (#12 on the list). A plat is a map of a particular neighborhood, subdivision or tract of land, detailing where the original surveyors established property lines and separated each parcel or lot. A plat map records the collection of plots that make up a neighborhood. Find out how we are able to use these maps in our research.

Also on February’s agenda, Bob Miller is discussing the upcoming March RootsTech 2023 genealogy conference. (See the [Reminders section](#) for a registration link.)

STEERING COMMITTEE NOTES

Your MPAFUG Steering Committee held a Zoom meeting on January 18, 2023.

A snapshot of the attendees was taken of the online meeting. Pictured below in row #1, left to right are Sam Colon, Bob Heck, and Cheryl Sarasin. Row #2, left to right are Debbie Bluett, Randy Ray, and Bob Tatalovich. Row #3, left to right are Bob Miller and Louise Stack.



Cheryl Sarasin was welcomed as Newsletter Editor.

It was noted that more Membership Spotlights are needed. Bob Heck will send out a request.

Our main topics of discussion were the previous week's meeting, with samples of recent hoax emails received. There are a few presentations in the works, waiting on finalization of speakers. A few more dates were filled in with topics from the member suggested list.

Randy Ray volunteered to speak on Naturalization Records for the September meeting. Debbie Bluett will contact Judy Rockwell to speak on "Telling Your Story". Louise Stack is trying to reschedule Russell Horton to talk about World War II Genealogy.

A QUOTE TO PONDER:

"Stories have to be told or they die, and when they die, we can't remember who we are or why we're here." **Sue Monk Kidd, author**

REMINDERS

The Family History Center is open Thursdays and Saturdays.

Thursday hours: 8:30AM – 3:30PM and
6:30PM – 9:00PM

Saturday hours: 10:00AM – 1:00PM

On Thursday evenings, Bob Heck and Randy Ray are the volunteers on duty who will assist you in your research.

There are numerous portal systems available for free use at the center, some of which you may not have tried from home because they come with a cost but could be of use for your research. Ancestry, Fold3, Newspapers.com among others that charge, are available free at the center. If you need help with your research, this is the place to go.

The **RootsTech 2023** genealogy conference will be held in person and virtually March 2-4, 2023. Attending virtually is 100% free. Here is the conference description from the registration page: *"A family history conference. An on-demand learning library. A way to grow closer to the people, places, and stories that matter most. RootsTech is all that and so much more. Join us as we celebrate the joy of connection together."*

Here is the link for registration:

<https://www.familysearch.org/rootstech/event/rt2023>

GROUNDHOG DAY

According to legend, if a groundhog sees his shadow on the morning of February 2, there will be six more weeks of winter. If he doesn't, that foreshadows an early spring. Midway between the winter solstice and the spring equinox, February 2nd is significant in today's traditions as well as in several ancient celebrations. The Celts celebrated Imbolc, a pagan festival marking the start of spring. Many Christians celebrated Candlemas, bringing their candles to the local church for blessings. As Christianity spread through Europe, Imbolc evolved into Candlemas. In certain parts of Europe,

Christians believed that a sunny Candlemas meant another 40 days of cold and snow.

Germans developed their own spin, proclaiming the day sunny only if badgers and other small animals saw their shadows. When Germans settled in Pennsylvania in the 18th and 19th centuries, they brought the custom with them, choosing the native groundhog as the forecaster.

In 1887, the first Groundhog Day celebration in Punxsutawney, PA was the brainchild of Clymer Freas, city editor of the Punxsutawney Spirit Newspaper. Mr. Freas convinced a group of businessmen and groundhog hunters on the idea of the celebration. The men trekked to a site called Gobbler's Knob, where the inaugural groundhog became the bearer of bad news when he saw his shadow. Using his editorial clout, he proclaimed the local groundhog to be the only official weather forecasting groundhog. The groundhog's fame spread and newspapers from around the globe began to report his predictions.

Today, tens of thousands of fans come to Punxsutawney, Pennsylvania (population of about 6000 people) on Groundhog Day. The annual festivities are presided over by a group of local dignitaries known as the Inner Circle, members of the Punxsutawney Groundhog Club. The club members wear top hats and conduct the official proceedings in the Pennsylvania Dutch dialect. The current president speaks to the groundhog, Punxsutawney Phil, in "Groundhogese", and only the president can translate the prediction. If the prediction is wrong, then the president might admit to interpreting incorrectly. The day is described as a day to take everything a little less seriously and break up the winter monotony, at least for a little while.

The annual event in Punxsutawney begins on February 1st with a banquet at the High School cafeteria. Groundhog Eve was set to top off this year with "Dueling Pianos" – a lively, interactive musical show. On February 2nd, the Gobbler's Knob Grounds, a two mile walk southeast of town, opens at 3:00 am for festivities. Fireworks begin at 6:30 am. Phil is brought out of his stump at sunrise

by the Inner Circle. Phil makes his proclamation at 7:20 am.

The festivities continue the next evening with a formal "Groundhog Ball" held at the Punxsutawney Country Club. On Saturday this year, the events will have concluded with "Lunch with Phil" at Gobbler's Knob Visitors Center Hall.

You can receive festivity updates from the club through Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, Instagram, or by subscribing to their newsletter on the club's page at www.groundhog.org.

The official groundhog, Punxsutawney Phil, was reportedly named after King Phillip. Previously, he was called Br'er (slang for "brother") Groundhog. The groundhog's official full name is "Punxsutawney Phil, Seer of Seers, Sage of Sages, Prognosticator of Prognosticators, and Weather Prophet Extraordinary."



Marmot – free picture from pixabay.com/users/katielwhite91-557236

A groundhog, also known as a woodchuck, is a marmot – a species of large ground squirrel. Groundhogs grow up to 25 inches long and can live for 10 years. However, according to legend, Punxsutawney Phil is more than 125 years old because of a magical punch he drinks. Groundhogs hibernate in the winter. After winter, they eat succulent plants, wild berries and insects.

One might tend to wonder how accurate the official animal has been. Records kept since the 1880s by the Punxsutawney Groundhog Club show Phil with 105 continued winters predicted and only 20 early

springs. According to researchers at the National Centers for Environmental Information (NCEI), the Nation's leading authority for environmental data, Phil's track record for the entire country isn't perfect. To determine just how accurate he is, they've compared U.S. national temperature with Phil's forecasts. On average, Phil has gotten it right 40% of the time over the past 10 years.

PETA (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals) objects to the event, calling for Phil's retirement. They have suggested that Punxsutawney Phil be replaced with a robotic groundhog. They claim that Phil is put under stress at the event with noisy crowds, bright lights, and near-constant confinement. They urge the Inner Circle to celebrate without the use of live groundhogs. They also claim that using the animal is exploiting him for tourist dollars.

PETA offered to send a persimmon tree, which according to folklore can predict the harshness of winter. According to their letter, they offered the club other ways to predict the coming of spring. Suggestions included the following. Count the number of chirps of crickets to get the approximate temperature. The height of a hornets' nest predicts the amount of snow to expect. A thick skin on a locally grown apple or onion indicates that a cold winter is on the way. Thick tight cornhusks may predict a hard winter.

Other forecasters include a groundhog in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. His name is Gordy and he lives at the Milwaukee County Zoo. Gordy makes an annual Groundhog Day prediction in a ceremony live streamed on the Zoo's Facebook page.

Residents of Vermilion, Ohio, have turned to the woolly bear caterpillar. According to tradition, if the bugs have more orange than black coloring in autumn, the upcoming winter will be mild. More than 100,000 people attend the town's Woollybear Festival, held every fall since 1972.

In Concord, Ohio, a cat named Casimir predicts the changing season based on how he consumes a dinner of pierogies. If he eats sloppily, it means a lengthy winter.

At the Oklahoma City Zoo, grizzly bear brothers Will and Wiley prognosticate by choosing among different boxes of treats.

In Palm Desert, California, a desert tortoise named Mojave Maxine heralds the start of spring by emerging from her den after her annual brumation (reptilian hibernation).

Whatever the outcomes of whichever ways humans use to predict the weather, the bottom line is that we enjoy the distractions from winter weather.

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT REQUESTS

***We are in need of volunteers to share their story.** ** If you would like to submit your story, please email Cheryl Sarasin at: cheryld@wi.rr.com and put Member Spotlight in the subject line.

There are 12 basic questions to answer about your genealogy story, but beyond that you are free to tell your story any way you wish. All the stories are unique and interesting, but also give other members research hints and hope that they too will find their ancestors.

The Member Spotlight questions are:

1. Who or what got you interested in genealogy?
2. How long have you been doing your genealogy research? How long have you been a member of MPAFUG?
3. How big is your family tree?
4. How many ancestors are you researching? Are you working with or sharing with another relative?
5. Do you have any special photographs or memorabilia?
6. Have you gone on any road trips for your research? Where? Did you find what you were looking for?

7. Have you had any surprises?
8. What is your best find?
9. Have you hit any brick walls?
10. What countries have you been researching?
11. How far back have you gone?
12. What are you hoping to find?

July 12, 2023 (Working on It)

August 9, 2023 (Working on It)

September 13, 2023

Naturalization Records (*Randy Ray*)

If you would like to make a presentation or have a suggestion for a meeting topic, please contact Bob Heck at: bobheckmpafug@gmail.com.

UPCOMING PROGRAMS

March 8, 2023

Flash drives, Auto Backup on External Drives and How to Upload & Download (*Randy Ray*)
(#1, 3 & 4 on member suggested topics)

Ship Records, Images, Passenger Lists, Other Ports in the USA and Canada and Where to Find Them (*Bob Heck*)
(#11 & 14 on member suggested topics)

April 12, 2023

Understanding DNA in Simple Terms (*Randy Ray*)
(#16 on member suggested topics)

Canadian & French-Canadian Research (*Bob Heck*)
(#8 on member suggested topics)

May 10, 2023

System Mechanics with live demo (*Sam Colon*)
(#7 on member suggested topics)

GEDCOM: How to create one branch, how to Share with Others and how to view it with a GED Viewer type program (*Randy Ray*)
(#10 on member suggested topics)

June 14, 2023

Reading Foreign Language Genealogy Documents Using a Tablet or Smart Phone (*Randy Ray*)

Technology for Reading Hand-Written Records via Tablet or Smart Phone (*Randy Ray, Bob Heck and Sam Colon*)

About This Newsletter

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Members interested in submitting articles may email them to bobheckmpafug@gmail.com. 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 1st Wednesday to be considered for inclusion in that same month. Credit will be given for your article.

MPAFUG KEY INFORMATION

STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Sam Colon:

414-327-2133

genschr@gmail.com

Bob Heck:

414-421-7143

bobheckmpafug@gmail.com

Randy Ray:

262-674-4756

rayr4989@gmail.com

Louise Stack:

414-581-3978

kilostack@att.net

Bob Tatalovich:

414-897-8280

bobt3725@gmail.com

Cheryl Sarasin

414-758-1204

cheryld@wi.rr.com

Debbie Bluett

John Canapa

Steve Gulowski

Bob Miller

Jane Orne

Questions about MPAFUG?

Write, call or email:

MPAFUG c/o Bob Heck

4910 Steeple Dr.

Greendale, WI 53129

414-421-7143 bobheckmpafug@gmail.com

Steering committee meetings are held on the third Wednesday of the month except in December. The meetings have historically been held at the Family History Center located at 9600 W. Grange Ave, Hales Corners, WI; however, due to the Covid 19 pandemic the meetings are currently being held via Zoom. 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 usually \$12 per calendar year for an individual or family.

For 2023 new membership or renewal:

Please send a check for \$12.00 made payable to MPAFUG to:

**Deborah A. Bluett – MPAFUG Treasurer
PO Box 229
Delavan, WI 53115-0229**

Please include with your check, your Name, Mailing Address, email Address and Phone Number.

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.