



San Diego Genealogical Society

Newsletter

Oct. 2004



Vol. 37, No. 9

Annual Luncheon Program Set

Our Annual Luncheon will be on January 8, 2005. Due to the popularity of last year's program and the many requests for his return, Dr. George Schweitzer will again be presenting our all day seminar program. His new topics for this year's program will be; 1) Frontier Religion and its Genealogical Effects; 2) Scots-Irish Genealogical Research; and 3) Kissing Cousins and Pedigree Collapse.

Last year Dr. Schwietzer enthralled us with his subject expertise and clear, concise presentation style and further regaled us with his period costumes and showmanship antics. I know this year's meeting will even be better!

So, mark your calendar now for your Society's premier annual event and alert your family and friends. What a great way to introduce someone new to genealogy.

Additional program details and sign-up forms will be available in November. You won't want to miss this!



Storage Space Needed

In preparation for the Society's next rummage sale, storage space is needed where we can put donated items until the sale. If you have extra garage space or other suitable building that you can let the Society use, it would really help us in preparations for another successful rummage sale. These events help us raise money to keep our library open and fund our many events. Please phone or e-mail Karna Webster (619-463-1029, kwebs49669@aol.com) if you can help or know someone who might be able to help us.

Monthly Meeting, Oct. 9

St. Dunstan's Parish Hall, 12 noon

Land, Probate and Court Records: Your Keys to Successful Research

The importance of these and other court records in genealogical research can not be emphasized enough. But how often do we overlook them in our research because they are difficult to access, not well indexed, not available online and not well understood.

Our speaker, Penny Feike, will not only show you how critical these records to your research but also de-mystify how to find and use them. These and other court records may be the key to unlocking your research problems and breaking through those brick walls. Often times, they can reveal family relationships and connections not found anywhere else.

So, if you have not begun or put off researching these all important resources, be sure not to miss this meeting. This could be the revelation you need to take your research to a higher level.

Penny Feike is well known to San Diego genealogists. A Society member, Penny has been doing genealogy research for over 40 years. She has worked at and taught genealogy at the Family History Center. As a professional genealogist, she does U.S. and international research, as she puts it, 'anyplace that uses the latin alphabet'.

If you have heard Penny speak before, you know what an excellent program this will be. And if you haven't, be sure not to miss this opportunity -- you couldn't learn from a better teacher.

The Newsletter is published monthly by the San Diego Genealogical Society and mailed to all current members. Submission deadline for articles and announcements is the 15th of the month for the following month. Inclusion is based solely on the discretion of the Editor and/or Board of Directors. Members are encouraged to submit materials for publication, subject to copyright provisions. Please contact the Editor for guidelines.

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Reality TV for Genealogists

MyFamily.com, Inc. along with its television production partners, LMNO TV, have signed a deal with NBC to create a primetime network TV special that could evolve into a series, if successful.

The name of the show is "Extreme Reunion!" It is a family-friendly show based on making people's deepest dreams, of locating missing loved ones, come true! The reunions could happen anywhere from a private jet to the halftime of an NFL game! You never know!

And you can HELP... In order to create this TV special, they need great stories! A website has been established for the purpose of gathering stories from people who would LOVE to be reunited with someone special from their past. That site is www.ExtremeReunion.com.

For the right people, this is truly a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity!

If you are looking for anyone significant from your past; be it family, friend, loved one, military buddy, whomever, go to their web site and tell them YOUR story! If selected, you may be reunited with that person, have the most amazing experience of your life ... and share it all on national TV! And if you know someone who has such a story, please pass the message on to them. Somewhere out there in America, is a family who's life can be changed

President's Message.....

Its that time again to renew your membership. Included in this newsletter is your renewal form. Please take a moment **right now** to complete it and mail it in. Don't put it off -- otherwise it might get lost in the holiday shuffle.

As you will notice on the renewal form, this year we have added three additional tiers of membership -- Platinum, Gold and Silver -- in addition to the Regular, Family and Life memberships. While you get additional membership benefits and premiums for joining and renewing at a higher level, the primary reason for this change is to give members more ways they can support their Society. Many members have asked what more they can do. This gives those who would like to and can afford it, to give additional support to help fund all the great things your Society does. In addition to the premiums, members joining at higher levels will receive special recognition in our Yearbook.

So, as you fill out the renewal form and think about all the great things your Society does to promote genealogy -- through education, meetings, seminars, publications, trips, our library, etc. -- please consider joining at a higher level. It will help your Society to continue its fine work for its members and San Diego genealogical community.

Thanks for your continued membership and valued support. It is most appreciated. Your Society wouldn't be what it is without you.

Peter Steelquist
 President

Your Help Needed

Our library costs continue to increase which challenges the Society to find ways to meet expenses. You can help by adopting-an-expense. By doing so on a one time or ongoing basis, you will help keep our library the valuable asset it is. Please contact the Society's Treasurer, Harvey Keating (phone: 619-475-7061, e-mail: ade-laide1@sbcglobal.net) to find out how.

Here are some of the ways you can help.

Monthly newsletter printing and postage.....	\$225
Monthly library rent.....	\$1,355
Monthly Library utilities.....	\$185
Monthly Library telephone.....	\$30
Quarterly Leaves & Saplings.....	\$230
Annual Yearbook printing.....	\$400
Monthly meeting hall rental.....	\$50
Monthly raffle prizes.....	\$50
Annual insurance premium.....	\$1,220

With their approval, benefactors will be acknowledged in our newsletter. Thank you for your generosity.

Library Notes

by Anna Acosta

Too bad so many of you missed the potluck and book auction. It was really hot (weather wise) but we all had a good time. The food was delicious as always and the bidding was definitely lively at times. Anita Milner was entertaining and her grandson was really helpful as he moved around on his "skate shoes".

It takes many hands to put on this event every year. Our grateful thanks to all those who helped - especially the library volunteers who spent a day sorting and tying. Lynn's husband, Jack Robinson, and mine, Walt Acosta, were truly appreciated moving all those heavy boxes from the library to the church and helping us set up on Saturday. And thank you Shirley Lamendola, Twila Moore and Donna Trapnell for helping us return the unsold items to the library.

Additionally, our thanks to our President, Peter, and all those who set up the tables and chairs. And where would we find a greater Hospitality pair than Adeline and Larry Shaw who displayed the food so attractively. AND, where would we find more capable cashiers than Jean and Jane who do such a super job managing to collect the money with the assistance of our Treasurer, Harvey Keating. As I said before, it takes many people to support this event every year so those of you who attend and buy are truly appreciated too.

Three members have recently offered to help with tasks at the library. Thanks for answering our call for help. We welcome Connie Reins, Joan Semler and Robert Cosgrove who have agreed to take care of jobs that need to be done to make the library a pleasant place to visit. Our newest Thursday volunteer, Robert Reese, has been kept very busy and we are thankful to have him devoting his time every week. Also, we continue to be pleased with the books donated by members.

A group from the Chula Vista Genealogy Society visited our library on Saturday, Sept. 18th and Lynne Robinson helped me greet and assist the group in their research. We are always pleased to have groups visit, so if you are a member of another group who would like to check out our resources just let us know so we can set up a date.

See you at the library.

Welcome to Our New Members

We want to welcome the following new member to the Society. Please introduce yourself to Robert at our next meeting. Welcome to the Society!

Grandma's Apron

by Anna Acosta

Grandparents Day was again celebrated in September (it's always the 2nd Sunday) and I got to thinking about what I remember most about my grandmothers.

One of the things I remember most is that they always wore aprons and then I recalled all the uses that apron served. They were bib aprons and put on first thing every morning. Of course, they all had two big pockets that could hold a myriad of things.

The principle use of Grandma's apron was to protect the dress underneath. When I was a child, growing up in the country in the midwest, Grandmas had a dress to wear, a dress to wash and iron and a dress for going to church on Sunday.

Those big old aprons wiped many a perspiring brow, bent over the hot wood stove; but along with that, it served as a holder for removing hot pans from the oven. Who had pot holders?

From the chicken-coop the apron was used for carrying eggs. Chips and kindling-wood were brought into the kitchen in that apron. From the garden it carried all sorts of vegetables, and after peas had been shelled it carried out the empty pods. In the fall it was used to bring in apples or other fruit that had fallen from the trees.

When company came those old aprons were ideal hiding places for shy kids; and when the weather was cold, Grandma wrapped it around her arms. It was wonderful for drying children's tears, and on occasion was even used for cleaning out dirty ears or wiping off baby's mouths.

When unexpected company drove up the rode, it was surprising how much furniture that old apron could dust in a matter of seconds. And out-of-place items disappeared into those big pockets to be put back in their proper place later. When dinner was ready, Grandma walked out on the porch and waved her apron, and the men knew it was time to come in from the fields for dinner.

It will be a long time before anyone invents something that will replace that old-time apron that served so many purposes.

Aluminum Can Recycling Helps Your Society

The Society continues to collect your empty aluminum cans for recycling. By bringing them to the monthly meetings or leaving them in the storage room at the library, you are not only helping the environment, you are also helping your Society. So, please, collect your cans (and those of neighbors, relatives and friends) and give them to your Society.

Their Final Resting Place

Finding the burial place of an ancestor can be one of the great hunts of genealogy. It can also be one of the most frustrating parts of the research process. This article looks at some ways to determine where your ancestor is buried and the additional records that may be available. First, we will look at some records that may indicate the ancestor's burial place.

Death Certificate -- For relatively recent burials, the death certificate should provide the relative's final resting place. Bear in mind that the names of some cemeteries may have changed over the years. Attempts to locate the death certificate should be at the county or state level.

Obituary -- Your ancestor's obituary or death notice may provide information on her place of burial. Even the name of the church or the officiating minister may be a clue as to where the interment took place. See our Sept. issue on locating an obituary.

Burial Permits -- In some areas, records of burial permits were kept. These records may be helpful if you are reasonably certain where your ancestor died but you don't know the place of the burial. These records (if kept) are typically created at the county or city level. They may also be published in the local newspaper.

Church Records -- Is your ancestor buried next to his church? If so, the church may have additional records on your ancestor, particularly a death or a burial record. If you know your ancestor's denomination, were there particular cemeteries in the area that catered to members of that faith? If you are not certain of your ancestor's religious persuasion, are there clues in her background that might make memberships in some denomination more likely than others? French-Canadians tend to be Catholic, Germans tend to be Lutheran or Catholic, Swedes tend to be Lutheran, Irish are typically not Lutheran, and so on. These are tendencies, not hard and fast rules---there are always exceptions and a lone staunch Lutheran on the frontier may easily attend the local Baptist, Methodist, or other church.

A Proximity Search -- Look for your ancestor in cemeteries near where he is last known to have lived. Remember if your ancestor "evaporated" that he might have died where he last is known to have lived, or he might have moved several states away to live with one of his children and died there. Consequently your search for an ancestor's stone should include all those areas where his children lived. Also, check other family member's cemeteries.

Battlefield Burial -- If your ancestor was in the military service and died on the battlefield, he may be buried in a military cemetery or in an unmarked grave. This may be noted in his military service record.

No Burial, No Stone -- If the remains were cremated, there may be no burial or inurement. The ashes may have been scattered at sea or otherwise disposed.

Sometimes, they may have been buried but no headstone was purchased. It is always recommended to check with the cemetery office, sexton, or other record keeper. With older burials, the stone may not be readable.

Some Finding Aids -- The inscriptions of the stones of some cemeteries have already been copied and may have been published. When using any type of transcribed tombstone information, try to determine if the information you are viewing is an actual transcription of the stone or if it is a listing of burials in the cemetery. There is a difference. Some stones might have been buried themselves and overlooked when the transcription was completed. Once you know your ancestor is in a certain cemetery, it still may be a good idea to view the stone yourself or see if you can get a picture.

Published Transcriptions -- Published transcriptions can be relatively easy to locate even if they were published in a small quantity. Card catalogs of the Library of Congress (www.loc.gov), the Family History Library (www.familysearch.org), the Allen County (Indiana) Public Library (<http://acpl.lib.in.us>), and other libraries (including those in your region of interest) may contain references to published transcriptions for the area under study. Keyword searches in these card catalogs for "yourcounty county cemetery" or "yourcounty county tombstone" should pull up some desired results. Searches of the Family History Library Catalog should be for the specific county and state of interest.

Online Transcriptions -- Online cemetery transcriptions can frequently be obtained via the County USGenWeb site (www.usgenweb.org) or other geographically based genealogy pages. Searches for "cemeteryname city state" at Google (www.google.com) may also bring up additional references.

Unpublished Transcriptions -- Not all transcriptions have been published; many exist only in manuscript format. Locating these unpublished transcriptions requires a little more work, but may be well worth the effort. The county historical or genealogical society is the place to start this search, but regional and state archives, state historical societies, and public and private libraries within the region may also house these materials.

No Records -- Some cemeteries keep excellent records. Others do not. Generally speaking, one is less likely to find records for small, rural cemeteries. Larger, more urban cemeteries may still not have extant records for the earlier burials and lot owners. In some areas, cemeteries that were once maintained by a church or a private group of individuals may now be under township or other government maintenance, or no maintenance at all. Local historical or genealogical societies may also be able to provide information or at least give the name of a contact person for the cemetery. Keep in mind that for some cemeteries, records of burials and lot owners were never kept. It could be that the cemetery no longer exists. With the need for land, some were moved or destroyed.

Specialized Finding Aids -- Card Records of Headstones Provided for Deceased Union Civil War Veterans, ca. 1879-ca. 1903 (National Archives and Records Administration microfilm publication number M1845) contains information on the burial location of thousands of veterans. While 99% of these burials are from the Civil War. In some states, lists of military burials were published, some have been reprinted, and usually local historical or genealogical societies have copies or are aware of their existence. Statewide finding aids (if available) are also included in the appropriate state research guide from the Family History Library (www.familysearch.org).

Web Sites -- A number of web sites have databases of burial information. Some of the largest are;

www.findagrave.com -- searches 6.2 million grave records.

www.interment.net -- has 3.7 million cemetery records from 7,790 cemeteries from around the world.

www.cem.va.gov -- Nationwide locator for veterans and their descendants.

www.abmc.gov -- The American Battle Monuments Commission maintains twenty-four permanent American burial grounds on foreign soil which includes 124,917 U.S. War Dead (30,922 of World War I, 93,245 of World War II, 750 of the Mexican War and others).

www.daddezio.com/cemetery -- is a cemetery locator for the US and other countries

www.deathindexes.com -- Death indexes and records by compiled by state.

While some graves and records may never be found, others are just waiting to be recorded and compiled into a database. If you have such records or know of a cemetery that hasn't been recorded, please consider taking on the project to preserve those records. Web sites, like Interment.com, have guidelines and formats for submitting your ancestor's burial records or those of a partial or complete cemetery. It is easy to do if you are willing to take the time. I hope you will. Happy hunting.



Access The Web For Less

Are you paying more than \$9.95 monthly (or \$99 per year) to access the Internet via dial-up connection? If so, you might want to consider changing to Copper.net. Your Society is now an affiliate of Copper.net, the high quality, low cost dial-up connection service. We receive a one time referral fee if you sign up using our referral code or go through the Society's web site. But it costs you nothing more to help your Society.

Copper.net has been around since 1994 and has been very successful by keeping expenses low and the

process simple. You get the same technology and networks as AOL, MSN and others but without the vast overhead (at less than half the price).

There are no setup fees and no special software is needed. You get an e-mail account you can access from any PC in the world and thousands of access numbers throughout the continental US (area code 619 has 44, 858 has 23). For \$14.95 per month, they offer a HiSpeed program that runs up to six times faster using their special compression utility. Their service works on both PCs and Macs.

So, what the catch? There really isn't any. The only limitation is 200 hours overall usage per calendar month (that's an average of 6.5 hours per day), far beyond what is used by the average consumer. They offer a risk-free 30 day money back guarantee. Furthermore, they do not sell advertising, which creates pop up and banner ads.

So, if you are not happy with your current Internet service provider, are planning on moving or just want to save some money, consider switching to Copper.net and help your Society at the same time. Use our referral code; **5305759** when you sign up or go through the Society's web site. You can find out more and sign up at their web site at: **www.copper.net**.

Black Sheep Ancestors

If you have found an ancestor who was an infamous crook or scoundrel, don't despair over your disgrace. You just may qualify for membership in the International Black Sheep Society of Genealogists. Founded by Jeff Scism, the Society's goal is to promote public knowledge of these 'black sheep' individuals lest they be forgotten and become a genealogical dead end.

Ancestral acts of automatic qualification are; murder, kidnapping, armed robbery, treason, theft of any item of fame. membership in a famous gang (well documented), political assassin, member of the FBI's Most Wanted List, political expatriate, 'extreme public embarrassment', involvement in Witchcraft Trials, bigamy (outside the Mormon faith, which condoned it at one time), persons expelled from normal society, convicted felons (documented).

Ancestors married to such a perpetrator also qualify. Living individuals shouldn't be mentioned by name or should have an alias to protect their privacy. You can not qualify yourself, no matter what deeds you have done. Membership is free and documented and declared members may append the letters "IBSSG" after their names in all genealogy correspondence. There is even a Black Sheep-L mailing list. To find out more about the IBSSG, log on to **<http://blacksheep.rootsweb.com>**. Save your relatives from the family 'wall of shame' and celebrate the black sheep in your family.

Breaking Down Your Brick Walls

Genealogy brick walls - those insurmountable genealogy problems that prevent us from moving ahead in our insatiable search for our ancestors. We all have brick walls. Sometimes by our own making and others by confusing, missing or destroyed records. So, what can you do? Here are a few tips on how to approach your brick walls and begin to break through.

Are you hanging on the wrong tradition? Sometimes we hear a family tradition and believe it as fact. It may have been told and retold by your grandmother -- and granny doesn't lie -- but was she just repeating what she heard? You need to prove every fact. Sometimes stories were told to cover up some deep family secret or exaggerate the truth (that never happens today, does it?).

Are you looking in the right place? Not only did people move from place to place (more often than you might think) but places moved as well. County boundaries may have changed several times. Be sure you are looking at the right place at the right time. Sometimes we can mix up county and city names. A city may not be in the same county with the same name. Double check in an atlas of the period you are searching. Towns also changed their names and even moved. Map research can be critical.

Do you have the correct spelling? We all think we know how to spell our ancestor's names and places. But do we? Many of our ancestors were illiterate. Others may have tried to spell their names phonetically. Recently, I couldn't find my HILDRETH ancestor only to finally find it spelled HIDDORTH. Who would have ever guessed? Misspelled place names can also prove diabolical. Look for all possible variations.

Have you drawn the right conclusions? When researching, you are at a serious disadvantage if you are unfamiliar with the history, culture, geography and records of the area. It significantly increases the chances of interpreting something incorrectly or leading you in the wrong direction. You need to do general research as well as genealogical research to put things in the right perspective. Use the FHL 'Research Guides', area 'finding tools' and local libraries and historical societies to get background information.

Do you have the right person? Often, there are people of the same name in the same place - sometimes even neighbors. Are you possibly confusing or 'merging' two different people together? First cousins can have the same first and last names, live close by and have similar family naming patterns. Don't assume that just because they are in the right place they are the right person. If possible, get samples of signatures (see last months newsletter) to compare.

Did they remarry? Our ancestor's multiple marriages can easily create confusion and brick walls. When our

ancestors were widowed or divorced, there is a very good chance they remarried - often by convenience or outright necessity. Not only did this create addition offspring but added stepchildren. All this can be very confusing to the researcher five generations later.

Do you have hidden assumptions? We all have to make some assumptions in our research. Is it possible that you accidentally confused assumption with fact, particularly in your early research? You may need to 'clean out your assumptions' by listing everything you "know" about an ancestor or problem and then citing its proof. You might be surprised by what you can't prove. Doing so now may solve your problem.

Are you organized? If the stacks of papers on your desk (and floor) attest to your organizational skills could this also carry over to your research? It is important to organize your research information to be able to see patterns and trends. Creating timelines can help put your data in perspective. They will often show missing or conflicting information you can't find otherwise. There are software programs that can help you get organized (Cloz, Bygones). Just the process of getting organized may help you make a break through.

Give it a rest. Sometimes we get so involved in our research we 'can't see the forest for the trees'. It can be very beneficial to step away from a research problem for awhile (weeks, months) and come back with a fresh approach. Start over and review every fact, piece of paper and assumption you have. You may see something you missed before. While time may heal all wounds, it can be a great destructive force against your brick wall.

Still have a research problem or brick wall? Then don't miss the Society's November meeting -- Breaking Through Brick Walls -- a panel discussion of Society experts to help you solve your research problems.



Family History Fair Oct. 16

There still may be time to register for the Family History Fair on Oct. 16, 2004 from 9:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. at LDS Escondido South Stake in Escondido. There will be 35 workshops and other displays. SDGS will have a table there to promote the Society.

There is no cost for the class presentations. Box lunches and class syllabus will be available for purchase. Mail-in pre-registration is required by October 1, 2004. Find out more at: www.familyhistorfair.org

The Meaning of Life.....

Live so that when your children think of fairness, caring and integrity, they think of you.

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The Photograph: The Negative

[Editor: This is a series of articles on various aspects of photography]

You got your photos back from the processor and are most please with your pictures. You dutifully caption them on the back and file in your album or archival storage. But, did you forget to take special care of the negatives? After all, THEY are the real pictures, not the prints. If the prints get lost or damaged, as long as you still have the negatives, you can replace, enlarge, get multiple copies made -- all just as good as the original print. Often, however, the negatives just get thrown aside and are soon forgotten or tossed out. The same holds true for the 'native file format' of a digital photo. These are the irreplaceable images that should deserve your utmost attention to preserve and protect. What should you do to ensure their safekeeping?

Let's consider the film negative (or positive in the case of slides) first. As you know, they are fairly fragile and need to be protected from dirt, dust and scratches. And light will cause them to fade. Unfortunately, the processing lab is most concerned with getting your prints back to you and not so much with the preservation of your film. Often, they are just loose in a paper compartment of the envelope or perhaps in a plastic sleeve which provides inadequate protection. Just like with your prints, you need to come up with a safe storage and identification system that will ensure their safety and preservation.

A system that works well for me uses archival negative preserves; similar to the 8x10 sheet archival protectors you are familiar with. These are divided into rows that hold the 35mm film strips of 6 images (36 images per page). They are available for all film format sizes as well as slides and can be purchased at any large photographic store or by mail. The protectors are punched for a 3-ring binder.

Each sheet has an area at the top where you can write general information about the film. While this is good for a quick identification, it does not help caption and identify each image. To accomplish this, I put a piece of lined paper, with vertical separations like on the film strips, placed just behind the protector in the binder. For each image, I write a description (who, what, when, why & where) on the paper corresponding to the film's position. Now, when I need to find a particular image, I can go right to it in no time.

But what about your digital images? If you have downloaded them from your camera, they are somewhere on your hard drive, but where? If you didn't change the image file name, it probably has some cryptic naming convention no one will recognize. After downloading your image files, you should always change each file's name to one that will help you recognize the subject and

include the date in the title.

How can you preserve and protect these elusive images? Just as in the case for film above, you need a storage and identification system. Fortunately, there are a number of software solutions available, some even free of charge. You probably received one when you purchased your digital camera. There is also a shareware program, Picasa, which was recently acquired by and is distributed free by Google. The URL is: <http://www.picasa.com/google/>. It offers many features beyond organizing and cataloging, including e-mail support, timelines, side shows and some editing capabilities (red-eye removal, cropping, etc.). It is definitely worth a look - if only just to compare to your current program. Another one by JASC, Paint Shop Photo Album, is available for retail purchase.

But even after you have brought order out of the chaos on your hard drive, you need to be sure to archive and preserve you precious images. That ever looming and eventual hard drive crash will take anything you have not backed-up. Just like with your genealogy files, be sure to regularly backup your image files as well. And as many found from our recent fires, also make sure you have off-site storage as well (online, at work, with a relative or friend, etc.) and update it regularly.

If your photos were worth taking in the first place, they are certainly worth the time and effort it takes to organize, identify and preserve them. And the original image, the film or the digital file, is far more precious than the prints and deserves your utmost attention.



Improve Your Genealogy with Study Groups

The Study Group is a 2-hour workshop in which we discuss a specific topic or area. After the discussion, we can provide mentoring should you have a "brick wall" situation in which you need help. We meet the third Tuesday of each month except July, August and December, 10 a.m to noon at the Society library.

October 19: **Military Research**

Come and learn from experienced researchers.

The Meaning of Life.....

A successful marriage depends on two things: 1) finding the right person and 2) being the right person.

'Cleaning Mother's House'

by Michael John Neill

It has been nearly a year since fictional genealogist Barbara passed away. Her daughter Charlene reflects upon that year in a letter to her friend Karen. Charlene truly has been busy. And Barbara is probably rolling over in her grave.

Karen,

As usual, my cards are late. It has been a busy year. We spent much of the year settling up Mother's estate. The house sold well, but cleaning it took longer than we expected.

You are probably the only person who did not know Mother was a genealogy buff. She told practically every human she encountered. I'm convinced that genealogy "nut" was the most accurate phrase. The stuff was all over the house. The inheritance would have been enough to pay for my new Mercedes had she not insisted on spending money on that blasted hobby. I don't know why she couldn't be more like Tom's mother. Nadine spends her day doing needlepoint and watching reruns of 50s television shows. Tom just does not realize how lucky he is, but men never do. My mother had to run off to cemeteries and courthouses. She even went to a conference in Davenport, Iowa, last year! Can you imagine? Davenport, Iowa! After she got back, she was so excited about all that she had learned and all the fun she had. She was planning on going to another one in California this year. Well the grim reaper took care of that.

Because of my promotion to head of knick knack sales at Garbageforless.com, I had not been home for several years. I was appalled to learn that Mother had converted my old bedroom into her family history "headquarters." My shelves of Teen Beat and other magazines documenting my adolescence had been replaced with old family photographs, copies of old documents, and something called family group sheets. She even got rid of the pants I wore to my first junior high dance. I cried at the thought.

I could not bear to go in the room and be reminded that my childhood had been stripped from me and replaced with an obsession with the past. I told the children that if they would clean the room and prepare the items for the garage (should I say "garbage"?) sale they could have the proceeds. I learned what true entrepreneurs they are.

Kenny stripped Mother's hard drive in under ten minutes. I kept hearing him say "GedCom is GedGone . . . GedCom is GedGone . . ." I have no idea what it meant, but the computer fetched a good price. Before he unplugged the computer, he erased all Mom's floppy disks and downloaded public domain games. He sold these at a nominal price.

Susan took the old photographs to a flea market and was able to sell many of them. Some special labels had to be taken off and we had to take them out of protective envelopes. Mother had written the names on the back of

many of them. At least none of those pictures of depressing old dead people had our last name written on them. I don't want to be associated with such sour people.

Mother had some type of old plat book -- whatever that is. Kenny tore out the pages individually and sold them separately on Ebay. It was so clever. His dad said he got much more than if he had left the book in one piece.

Susan didn't tear the bibles apart though. I thought that showed tremendously good sense. She's learning that not everything can be marketed in the same way. The 1790 bible brought her a good penny, but she couldn't get the one from 1900 to bring more than fifty cents. She donated it to a local church, and here is where I am so proud of her. We can write it off as a charitable deduction. Someone had written what they had paid for the bible on the back cover. Susan converted that to 2001 dollars and will use that for our tax deduction amount. I've already enrolled Susan in tax lawyer summer camp this coming August.

There was some old large certificate of written on heavy paper. The silly thing wasn't even in English, so why would Mother keep it? Kenny used the other side to keep track of the things he had sold. Waste not, want not. When we were finished we put the paper in the recycling bin.

The kids put an old wedding dress from the 1870s in the washer to get the stains out. It was terribly filthy. The worthless thing didn't even survive the extra long cycle and the half-gallon of bleach. It's doubtful we can even use it for cleaning rags.

The dress was in some kind of old trunk. I'm not certain what it was for, but it had a name stenciled on the front in huge letters along with the name of a town. Susan gave it a good coating of red paint and sold it as a toy box.

The filing cabinets were emptied of their contents, as were the three shelves of binders. Kenny got the bright idea to shred the paper and sell it in bags as New Year's confetti. The file folders were too heavy to shred.

The baby did not react well to any of this. She cried and fussed almost the entire time. Kenny thought she wanted tea, which made no sense to me at all. As she cried, it sounded like she was saying "family tee." She can't even talk yet and I think Kenny was hearing things. The baby does look exactly like my mother though, it's the oddest thing. The fussing didn't stop until she spit up an entire bottle of strained prunes on my junior high jeans, which we did find in the basement. They were ruined -- it was the one real loss. Now my past has really been taken from me -- magazines and all.

Charlene

Whether you have a child like Charlene or not, have you thought about what might happen to your genealogy collection upon your demise? Review our Sept. issue.

This appeared in Ancestry Daily News and is reprinted with permission.

El Dia de Los Muertos



Ancient tradition says that people die three deaths. The first death is when our bodies cease to function, when our hearts no longer beat of their own accord, when our gaze no longer has depth or weight, when the space we occupy slowly loses its meaning. The

second death comes when the body is lowered into the ground, returned to mother earth, out of sight. The third death, the most definitive death, is when there is no one left alive to remember us. These three deaths are the basis for El Día de los Muertos or the Day of the Dead, the Hispanic holiday usually celebrated between October 31 and November 2.

The tradition actually originated in Mexico possibly as long as 4,000 years ago. The Aztecs had elaborate ceremonies with dances and rituals that lasted 20 days each year and included a feast day for dead children and one for dead adults. The Aztecs believed that death was but a portal to other existences - a natural, albeit mystical, occurrence. Families paid homage to their dead, and on those days when the living and dead were reunited, they welcomed them back with great respect and reverence. In an attempt to convert the Indians to Catholicism, the Spanish merged the native celebration into the Catholic traditions of All Saints Day and All Souls Day.

Today, the holiday is a time for remembering friends, family and ancestors. It is a happy celebration when the souls of the dearly departed return home to the world of the living. Even though a family is saddened by a loved one's departure, they do not cry on the Days of the Dead. The elders say the path back to the living world must not be made slippery by tears.

Tradition says that on November 1st, the dead children come back to visit their homes, and on November 2nd, the souls of deceased adults return. Families shoot off strips of firecrackers to help the children find their way home. In some villages, shining yellow petals of marigolds, the flower of the dead from pre-Hispanic times, mark a bright path from the graveyard.

Meanwhile, at the family burial plot in the local cemetery, relatives spruce up each gravesite. In rural villages this may entail cutting down weeds that have sprouted up during the rainy season, as well as giving tombs a fresh coat of paint after making any needed structural repairs. The graves are then decorated according to local custom. The tomb may be simply adorned by a cross formed of marigold petals or elaborately embellished with colorful coronas (wreaths) and fresh or artificial floral arrangements. In many areas children's graves are festooned with brightly colored paper

streamers or other festive adornments. The following day, November 2nd, family members gather at the cemetery for gravesite reunions more festive than somber. Some bring along picnic baskets, bottles of tequila for toasting the departed or even a mariachi band to lead a heartfelt sing-along. Local merchants set up provisional stands outside the cemetery gates to sell food and drinks. The booming thunder of pyrotechnic rockets may announce the commencement of an open-air memorial mass, the occasion's most solemn interlude.

Perhaps unknowingly, genealogists and family historians live up to this tradition and carry on the values celebrated at the Day of the Dead. We preserve and rekindle the memories of the deceased so they may live on, far beyond the living memories of those who knew them. We also preserve, protect and restore the cemeteries of our ancestors so their resting place will be there for future generations. While not on the grand scale as our Hispanic neighbors we, in our own way, carry on the tradition. I hope, when you celebrate Halloween this year you will reflect on and do something special to recognize a most commendable holiday celebration - El Dia de Los Muertos.



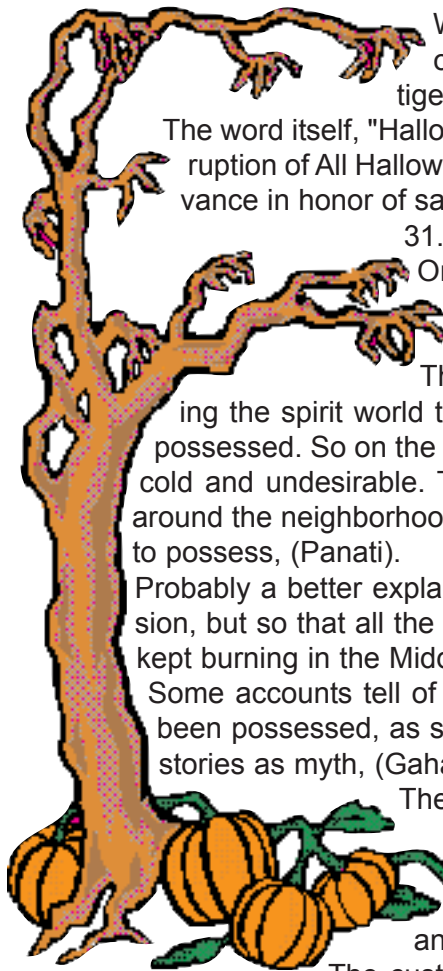
Sept. Meeting in Review.....

Our Annual Book Auction and Pot Luck Luncheon raised needed funds to support our Society. While the heat and humidity reduced the turnout for this usually popular event, it did not stifle the heated bidding for the many fine genealogy and family history books offered. Our entertaining auctioneer, Anita Milner, kept things lively and moving and worked to generate bids on every item, even if only out of sympathy. We even had some bidding wars when there was only one bidder! Her grandson was there again to act as a runner (in this case on shoe skates) to deliver the books to the lucky highest bidder.

The serving tables were loaded with wonderful pot luck offerings, including many cool, refreshing salads which really hit the spot for our noon time luncheon. Deserts were also there in ample portions and provided much needed 'brain food' to get everyone in the bidding spirit. Thank goodness there are no calories in pot luck food!

Our thanks to Anita and grandson as well as all the helpful volunteers who worked to get all the books and periodicals ready for the auction. Thanks also to all those who braved the heat and bid so generously to support the Society. Next year we will hopefully have

Why We Celebrate Halloween.....



We celebrate Halloween every year but just how and when did this peculiar custom originate? Is it, as some claim, a kind of demon worship? Or is it just a harmless vestige of some ancient pagan ritual?

The word itself, "Halloween," actually has its origins in the Catholic Church. It comes from a contracted corruption of All Hallows Eve. November 1, "All Hollows Day" (or "All Saints Day"), is a Catholic day of observance in honor of saints. But, in the 5th century BC, in Celtic Ireland, summer officially ended on October 31. The holiday was called Samhain (sow-en), the Celtic New year.

One story says that, on that day, the disembodied spirits of all those who had died throughout the preceding year would come back in search of living bodies to possess for the next year. It was believed to be their only hope for the afterlife, (Panati).

The Celts believed all laws of space and time were suspended during this time, allowing the spirit world to intermingle with the living, (Gahagan). Naturally, the still-living did not want to be possessed. So on the night of October 31, villagers would extinguish the fires in their homes, to make them cold and undesirable. They would then dress up in all manner of ghoulish costumes and noisily paraded around the neighborhood, being as destructive as possible in order to frighten away spirits looking for bodies to possess, (Panati).

Probably a better explanation of why the Celts extinguished their fires was not to discourage spirit possession, but so that all the Celtic tribes could relight their fires from a common source, the Druidic fire that was kept burning in the Middle of Ireland, at Usinach, (Gahagan).

Some accounts tell of how the Celts would burn someone at the stake who was thought to have already been possessed, as sort of a lesson to the spirits, (Panati). Other accounts of Celtic history debunk these stories as myth, (Gahagan).

The Romans adopted the Celtic practices as their own. But in the first century AD, they abandoned any practice of sacrificing of humans in favor of burning effigies.

The thrust of the practices also changed over time to become more ritualized. As belief in spirit possession waned, the practice of dressing up like hobgoblins, ghosts, and witches took on a more ceremonial role.

The custom of Halloween was brought to America in the 1840's by Irish immigrants fleeing their country's potato famine. At that time, the favorite pranks in New England included tipping over outhouses and unhinging fence gates, (Panati).

The custom of trick-or-treating is thought to have originated not with the Irish Celts, but with a ninth-century European custom called souling. On November 2, All Souls Day, early Christians would walk from village to village begging for "soul cakes," made out of square pieces of bread with currants. The more soul cakes the beggars would receive, the more prayers they would promise to say on behalf of the dead relatives of the donors. At the time, it was believed that the dead remained in limbo for a time after death, and that prayer, even by strangers, could expedite a soul's passage to heaven.

The Jack-o-lantern custom probably comes from Irish folklore. As the tale is told, a man named Jack, who was notorious as a drunkard and trickster, tricked Satan into climbing a tree. Jack then carved an image of a cross in the tree's trunk, trapping the devil up the tree. Jack made a deal with the devil that, if he would never tempt him again, he would promise to let him down the tree.

According to the folk tale, after Jack died, he was denied entrance to Heaven because of his evil ways, but he was also denied access to Hell because he had tricked the devil. Instead, the devil gave him a single ember to light his way through the frigid darkness. The ember was placed inside a hollowed-out turnip to keep it glowing longer.

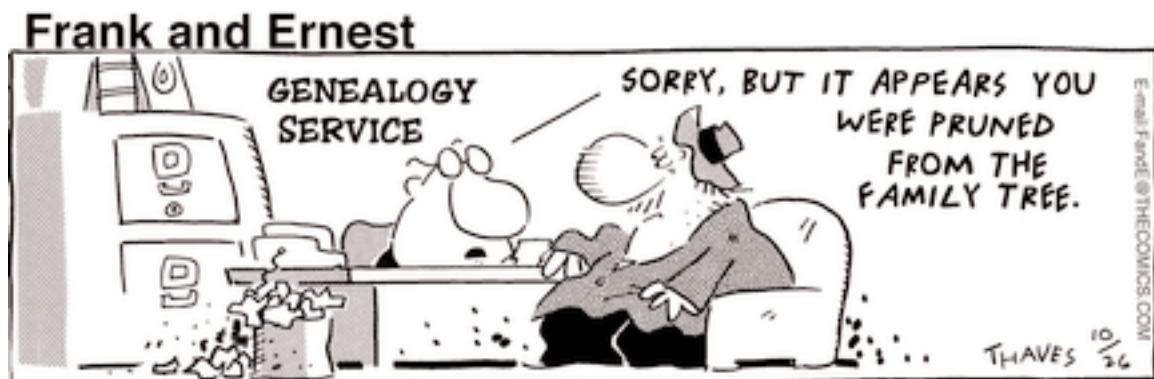
The Irish used turnips as their "Jack's lanterns" originally. But when the immigrants came to America, they found that pumpkins were far more plentiful than turnips. So the Jack-O-Lantern in America was a hollowed-out pumpkin, lit with an ember.

So, although some cults may have adopted Halloween as their favorite "holiday," the day itself did not grow out of evil practices. It grew out of the rituals of Celts celebrating a new year, and out of Medieval prayer rituals of Europeans. And today, it is only as evil as one cares to make it.



New At The Library

The following items have been cataloged since last month's newsletter and are now available in the library. Our sincere thanks for the many generous donation. Thanks, also, to our library catalog volunteers.



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SDGS Event Calender

Unless otherwise noted, all meetings held at;
St. Dunstan's Parish Hall, 6556 Park Ridge Blvd., San Diego

- Oct. 6: Board Meeting, 7:00 pm, Society Library
- Oct. 9, Reunion/Generations Users Group, 10: am, St. Dunstans
- Oct. 9: Monthly Meeting, with Penny Feike, 12 noon, St. Dunstans
- Oct. 17: North San Diego Family History Fair, Escondido, pre-registration by Oct. 1 required.
- Oct. 19: Study Group: Military Research, 10:00 am-noon, Society Library
- Oct. 24 - 31: Salt Lake City trip, Best Western Plaza Hotel
- Nov 10: Board Meeting, 7:00 pm, Society Library
- Nov. 13: Monthly Meeting, Panel Discussion: 'Breaking Through Brick Walls'
- Dec. 8: Board Meeting, 7:00 pm, Society Library
- Jan 8: Annual Luncheon, Dr. George Schweitzer

View All San Diego County Genealogy Events at: www.cgssd.org/events.php3