The USGenWeb Project

N E W S

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Notes from the Editor
Denise Wells

As you will see in this issue, it's full of politics. Sorry, that's life. Well, that's life around here in the USGenWeb, that's for sure. So bear with us this month. I am a little late publishing this month, but trust me, I've been very busy. Life keeps getting in the way of the things I would rather be doing. genealogy, of course. Work, family, house cleaning, and our responsibilities go on and on, right? But, along with that, I'm planning a short summer get-away.r, but they each served very different positions.

I currently live in Southeast Florida, having moved here from Indiana almost 6 years ago! My how time flies! At the end of July, I will be making a short summer sabbatical, returning to the city of my birth, spending time with my brother, and attending the big race at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway that, until this year, took place the first weekend in August (now on July 29). Yes, I'll be at the race with all of the NASCAR fanatics, now referred to as the Allstate 400 at the Brickyard. We will celebrate my brother's birthday, get sun burned, have a few cocktails and then go out for a wonderful dinner (maybe that great Greek restaurant in Fountain Square again), so I'm sure we'll have the best time.

But then, a few days after the race, I'll be traveling to a city I have never visited. I'm going to explore the city where my American-born Irish great grandfather lived for several years and where his Irish-born parents died-Cleveland! Are you taking any genealogy vacations this year? Summer is often when we make those quick trips to exercise our sleuthing abilities. Have you made your plans? Where are you going? I'd love to hear about your research trips. Write me at: EditorUSGenWebNL@gmail.com

Notes from the N.C.
Scott Burow - USGenWeb Project National Coordinator

It's that time of year again... election season. As I wrote this, nominations were taking place and now have closed. Shortly, we will be voting. Be sure to look at the slate of candidates for open Advisory Board positions; you will be presented with choices of who will represent you, and this Project, in the coming year.

I urge you all to get out and vote. Make your opinion known. Be an educated and informed voter and learn all you can about those who are running. Ask questions and listen to the answers. Determine for yourself the direction that you would like this project to go, and vote for those individuals who share your dream of what this Project can be.

Choose the candidates who can be objective and reasonable. Determine whether they look at all aspects of an issue and not just their own narrow view. These are the people who are like the vast majority of you - hard working, hones members, who care to give their time and skills to others.

Who you vote for is your choice, but please, get out there, choose and vote; be heard with your choice. It's your Project and the election process is what gives you your voice - and your choice - in the future of The USGenWeb Project.

Also this year, there is an Amendment to the Bylaws on the ballot. For over two years, the processes and procedures to handle grievances within the Project have been under development. The Amendment is the final piece of the puzzle. It establishes the committee as a standing committee, meaning if the members vote it into place, only the members can remove it later. It grants members guaranteed rights during grievances and it makes the outcome binding. It protects you, your membership status, and your position pending the resolution of any dispute. I urge you to support this and vote "YES." The Amendment can be found at:
http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~usgwelections/national-2007/amendment.htm

USGenWeb Elections Looming on the Front
www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~usgwelections/national-2007/candidates-index.htm
by Denise Wells, Managing Editor

Well, the election in the USGenWeb is only a few hours away. If you haven't registered to vote, you've missed your opportunity. The leadership of the USGenWeb is an important role in one of the largest projects on the Internet. Are you willing to trust it to just anyone? Have you buried your head in the sand again, hoping to avoid the issue? Have you studied the candidates? What do you know about each of them? Who do you think is qualified to lead the largest genealogy project on the Internet?

How this Project is run is up to you as a volunteer member, but that takes voting. The numbers from each year show that very few qualified volunteers become candidates, win office, or even vote for each available position. Often it is the same people running for office. Why is that?

How are you making a difference in July? Just working on your county pages and not interested in the politics of the Project? I know how that is. It's difficult to get wrapped up in all of the "campaigning" that takes place. That is how a majority of the volunteers operate. Statistically, only about 400+/- members vote. Do you want a small group of 400 to decide how the Project is run? I'm not sure of the exact number of members in the Project, but I do know that this Newsletter goes out to about 2,000 members. Yet, when problems come up, the membership wonders why issues are addressed in a particular fashion and are often displeased with the results. So are you still not getting involved? Are you just working along, unconscious of how this entire Project is managed? Bored with politics? Or, do you really care about what you are creating and want to protect all of the work that you have labored over with love? For most of us, genealogy is a profound labor of love.

If the work you have done, are doing, and want to continue to do is important to you, then you should be voting. If the work that you want to make available for other family researchers is important to you, then you should be voting. Apathy will not support the USGenWeb Project! One single voice won't change anything; but keep adding voices and you have an army of members making a difference and having a say in the management of your labor of love. As my brother likes to say, "The glory of the home run is only available to those willing to risk a fast ball in the teeth; hardly ever happens, but there is a risk."

This Project is just like any other political body and the membership that runs it. You are a member most likely living in the United States. Are you allowing your life in the United States to be decided by your neighbors, or do you go to the polls to vote for the President of our country, the Mayor of your city, and the Governor of your state? I hope you step up to the plate when it's time and vote to make a difference for all of us.

Again, learn about the candidates at:
http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~usgwelections/national-2007/candidates-index.htm

Project Spotlight
by Darlene Anderson, Spotlights Editor
Allegan County, MIGenWeb
http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~miallega/

Have you stopped by Allegan County, MI for a visit lately? The Web site opens with a patriotic theme. Everyone is welcomed to Allegan County and then goes on to say, "These web pages are designed to act as a clearinghouse for genealogical and historical information …." You won't come away from this Web site without a warm, fuzzy feeling in your heart!

The main web page is a complete index of information located within the pages of the Web site. The index begins with Ahnentafels and ends with Vital Records. Census records are your best friend when researching your family history. Allegan County has census indexes for the 1840 to 1880 censuses and a partial index for 1920.

Jan Cortez is the county coordinator for Allegan County, MI. Thanks Jan for all your hard work and dedication!

Project Spotlight
by Darlene Anderson, Spotlights Editor
Cook County, ILGenWeb
http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~ilcook/

Cook County, IL is one of those Web sites that when you open the main index page, there are only a few topics mentioned. Do not let this mislead you into thinking there isn't much offered about Cook County genealogy!

Kim Lemberg is the county coordinator for Cook County. She gives most of the credit to previous county coordinators, Susan Tortorelli and Angel Jacobsen-Shweika, for much of the information found on this Web site.

Each section (search, lookups, data, research, email) gives detailed instructions or detailed lists of information available. Probably the first thing you should do is use the Search feature to check for your surname. But, if you can't wait to look at the "good stuff," skip over to the Data section. Tons of information is to be found here! The index starts with Baptism Records and ends with Voter Records, and has just about any subject in between. The information that has been contributed to this Web site is phenomenal. A lot of work and effort to get this information online and out to anyone researching in Cook County is a great accomplishment.

I would be remiss in failing to mention the Research section. This section contains the how-to's for performing a successful research in Cook County, and to learn more about Cook County in particular or genealogical items in general.

The information contained on this Web site is very helpful to anyone exploring Cook County, IL genealogy!

Kim and the previous county coordinators should be proud of the accomplishments they have made with the Cook County ILGenWeb. It is truly a fantastic Web site!

Graveside Chronicles
by Linda K Lewis, Chronicles Editor

The World of the Cemetery Sexton

Sexton n. Church custodian charged with keeping the church and parish buildings prepared for meetings, caring for church equipment, and performing related minor duties such as ringing the bell and digging graves.
- Encyclopaedia Britannica

Long before the garden-style cemeteries of the 1800s, burial grounds were located on church grounds, and it was the job of the church sexton, or caretaker, to manage the burials in the cemetery. While today most cemeteries are privately owned, either by a corporation or a cemetery association, and graves are no longer dug by hand, the cemetery sexton still plays a vital role in the health of a cemetery.

At a high level, the role of a cemetery sexton is to take charge of, care for, and supervise the cemetery under the direction of the Cemetery Board or other governing party. But what exactly does that entail?

Opening and Closing Graves

One of the main functions of a cemetery sexton is to open and close graves for interments. In order to do that, the sexton must know where the plots are physically located in the cemetery, the dimensions of the plots, and which graves are filled.

It is the sexton's responsibility to open graves without disturbing prior interments. It would not be a happy event for the backhoe to hit another casket. In some cases this means that the sexton must probe the ground to make certain the neighboring graves will not be disturbed.

Selling Plots

Another major function of a cemetery sexton is to be able to show prospective buyers lots that are available for sale. That means that the sexton must not only keep up with what plots are filled, but also what lots are sold. The sale of a cemetery plot is much like the sale of any real estate and usually includes a deed.

Placing Headstones

Similarly, once a headstone is shipped to the cemetery, it is the cemetery sexton's responsibility to know where the monument is to be installed and direct the installation. In many cemeteries, it is also the sexton's responsibility to notify the installers when the stone arrives. In most cases this also includes arranging for free installation of military markers that are shipped to the cemetery for installation.

Grounds Maintenance

The cemetery sexton is also responsible for the grounds, turf, and landscaping maintenance. This includes mowing, filling holes and sinking graves, the upkeep of trees and plantings, the cemetery fence (if there is one), signage, and any memorial areas in the cemetery.

Rules and Regs

One of the least favorite jobs of a sexton is enforcing the cemetery rules and regulations. This includes when people can visit, appropriate conduct in the cemetery, grave decorations, and litter. Most modern cemeteries have rules about what can be installed at a grave, and what can be placed at a grave. Some cemeteries do not allow plantings at graves, holiday decorations, lighting, or other memorabilia, while other will allow some or all of these things. Many cemeteries have rules about live and even artificial flowers and post signage stating their policy. This helps to keep the cemetery clean and fresh of pots of dead flowers throughout the harsh winter.

It's all about the Map

Modern cemeteries are typically platted out and every square inch is accounted for. The cemetery may be comprised of different lot layouts in different sections of the cemetery. There may be differing sizes of graves and usually some smaller crematory plots. A map is created and each grave is identified by some naming or numbering scheme, usually identifying sections, blocks, lots, and plots, and it is the job of the sexton to maintain this map. This map is essential in the ability to do their job.

Not a Mason

It may seem that the sexton has an obligation with regard to the maintenance of markers and monuments; however this is not the case. The monuments are owned by the purchaser and installed on private property (the purchased lot) and it is really the responsibility of the family to perform any cleaning or repair. However, some cemeteries do step up and try to repair and curate old broken stones which have long been forgotten. This is purely a voluntary action on their part, and if they do it, it's because they love their cemetery.

Not a Genealogist

While many people contact cemetery sextons to find out genealogical information on past interments, answering these types of questions, and doing genealogy is NOT their responsibility, and if they choose to provide this information, it is purely of their own free will.

Your Faithful Caretaker

Always remember: it is not the job of a sexton to know what is inscribed on the stone, or the relationship of any individual to any other individual, or to fix a broken stone; it is the sexton's job to keep up the cemetery and to know which lots are filled, what lots are sold, and what lots are available. They have to deal with the finality of death, eternal resting places of loved ones of the living, and be sensitive to the emotional state of the public, sometimes during their time of great loss.

It's not just a job.

Public Records and Information Web Sites for Genealogy
by Anne J Lex - Records Editor

Public records and Information Websites available on the Internet provide genealogy researchers with several databases to search for information on the World Wide Web. Most databases are free. However, some databases require a fee. Fee based databases typically have a dollar sign next to the database.

One of my favorite websites to search for public records and information website links is Onsight Resources Worldwide Public Records http://www.onsightresources.com/. Onsight Resources provides access to "search thousands of free online sources of public records and information sites from each of the 50 states, US territories, the Federal government, Canada, Europe, Asia, North and South America and Africa."

Onsight Resources and similar public records websites can be used to find a variety of records that are useful for genealogy. These records include: birth, death, marriage, divorce, property, wills, and court records to name a few. Public records can also be found on government websites and official state, county and municipal websites. "According

to BRB Publications' Public Records Online, 5th edition, only 35 percent of public records are available online."
http://www.brbpub.com/pubrecsitesStates.asp

Public records become available not only from official resources. Information becomes public when personal information is disclosed online by posting and uploading information on the Internet. Public records and information websites are a good place to find genealogical information on the Internet. Information found on these types of databases should be verified because the information could be scaled down or contain errors. Finally, always remember to cite your sources.

For further research and reading:

Social Security Death Index
http://ssdi.rootsweb.com/

National Gravesite Locator ~ Bureau of Veterans Affairs
http://gravelocator.cem.va.gov/j2ee/servlet/NGL_v1

Killed In Action ~ United States Marine Corps.
http://www.popasmoke.com/kia/all_kias.php?PHPSESSID=c8b4fbb58fb13cbe4f2d998626978e5d#search

Vietnam MIA/POW
http://lcweb2.loc.gov/pow/powhome.html

Birth/Death/Marriage ~ Onsight Resources
http://www.onsightresources.com/birth.htm

Access to Archival Databases ~ National Archives and Records Administration
http://aad.archives.gov/aad/

Unclaimed Persons
http://www.unclaimedpersons.com/

Find A Grave
http://www.findagrave.com/

Genealogy Cemeteries and Obituaries ~ Public Records Finder
http://www.publicrecordfinder.com/genealogy.html

Introduction to Public Records Research
http://www.virtualchase.com/topics/introduction_public_records.shtml

Public Records Directory ~ Search Systems
http://www.searchsystems.net/

Public Information Search Engine ~ Zabasearch
http://www.zabasearch.com/

Orphan Trains
by Christine Sweet-Hart, CG, Contributing Editor

Overcrowding in orphanages, hardships in immigrant families, and the inability or unwillingness of families to take care of their children started the trend in the North East United States to provide their children a better way of life with Midwestern farm families. Set up by orphanages such as the New York Juvenile Asylum, the Children's Aid Society of New York, and the New York Foundling Hospital, a Roman Catholic organization set up by the Sisters of Mercy in response to Catholic children being placed in Protestant homes, the orphan trains resulted in a large child migration out of the Northeast United States to the Midwest. Many ended up in Illinois and Missouri.

An estimated 150,000 to 400,000 street children of New York's orphanages were teens when they were shipped out west. Although there were some success stories in the placements, many were separated from their siblings and mistreated by the families who took them in.

According to the website at www.outfitters.com/~melissa/ot/ot.html, the orphan trains ran from about 1850 to the early twentieth century when the social programs of the 1930s made them unnecessary. A 1901 Missouri law banning them was never enforced.

Records Availability/For Further Reading

The Orphan Train Heritage Society of America
614 East Ema Ave., Suite 115
Springdale, AR 72764

http://www.orphantrainriders.com
http://iagenweb.org/iaorphans/
http://www.kancoll.org/articles/orphans
http://www.genealinks.com/orphantrain.htm
http://www.nebraskahistory.org/sites/mnh/orphans/
http://www.outfitters.com/~melissa/ot/ot.html
http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~mogrundy/orphans.html

Lists of Orphanages in the U.S.: http://www.alhn.org/~ahtopabp/orphanages/early.html

Rootsweb page on how to research U.S., British, and Canadian Orphans:
http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~rwguide/lesson31.htm?cj=1&o_xid=0001029688&o_lid=0001029688&o_xt=224
70719

For further information about orphan trains, check out Cyndi's List for an extensive list of resources, both on-line and available through inter-library loan: http://www.cyndislist.com

Orphan Train Heritage Society Membership: http://www.kesh.com/hnoh/AVOTART6B.html#OTHSA

Archives of Orphan Train Information: http://www.kesh.com/hnoh/AVOTART6B.html

To see a gravestone emblem of the Orphan Train Riders, scroll down the page: www.pastmassters.com

Mail Lists You Might Not Know Exist
by Denise Wells, Managing Editor

Byegone Towns
http://lists.rootsweb.com/index/other/Miscellaneous/BYEGONE-TOWNS.html
A list for anyone interested in towns, communities, and settlements that are no longer found on maps and seem to have become lost in time.

CCHelpMe
http://groups.yahoo.com/group/cchelpme/
This is a list created to help national, state, county and specialized coordinators for USGenWeb, American Local History Network, American Genealogy & History Project and other like networks. It is to offer aid, ideas and help in a friendly, helpful way.

Copyright
http://lists.rootsweb.com/index/other/Miscellaneous/COPYRIGHT.html
A list for the discussion of copyright issues, particularly as they pertain to genealogical matters (e.g., reprints; fair use; mailing lists; publishing of books, web pages and the like).

DEADFREDdotCOM
http://groups.yahoo.com/group/DEADFREDdotCOM/
Looking for old family photos? Tell us who you're searching for and maybe we can help.

Discuss List
http://lists.rootsweb.com/index/other/USGenWeb/USGENWEB-DISCUSS.html
A list for discussion of USGenWeb topics, such as elections and other matters.

GenPhoto
http://groups.yahoo.com/group/genphoto/
Everything you want to know about genealogy and family photographs. Help with identifying and preserving old photographs, as well as using the digital photography and scanning to share and preserve family photographs. Don't forget to visit the Files section for wallpaper you can download.

Help Pages
http://lists.rootsweb.com/index/other/USGenWeb/USGW-HELPPAGES.html
A list to ask questions and receive assistance with almost any issue in genealogy, web page creation and management.

Medical Genealogy
http://lists.rootsweb.com/index/other/Medical_Genealogy/MEDICAL-GENEALOGY.html
A mailing list for the discussion and sharing of information regarding our ancestors' medical histories, old diseases, and the practice of medicine in the past.

Medical-Pedigree
http://lists.rootsweb.com/index/other/Medical_Genealogy/MEDICAL-PEDIGREE.html
A mailing list for anyone with a genealogical interest in genograms, medical pedigrees, causes of death, illnesses and diseases, hereditary factors, medical computer software and more. This list is not for requesting medical advice about a present condition.

Gen-Site-Swap
http://lists.rootsweb.com/index/other/Miscellaneous/GEN-SITE-SWAP.html
A list for the swapping of good genealogy URLs.

Sanatoriums
http://lists.rootsweb.com/index/other/Medical_Genealogy/SANATORIUMS.html
Discussing and sharing of information regarding asylum patients including where to write for patient records; whether a cemetery on the grounds exists; reported deaths, births, etc in these facilities; life in these facilities up through the 1930's; and all knowledge of any asylum, sanatorium, and/or state hospital.

USGenWebCCSharing
http://groups.yahoo.com/group/USGenWebCCSharing/
This mail list is to assist USGenWeb Project volunteers and coordinators find and share material for the various projects…

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