

WOOD COUNTY ROOTS



INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Chairman's Corner 1312

New Officers 1313

Dues Reminder 1313

WPA Records for Genealogy: 1313
Local Histories &
by Lisa Cooke 1315

Embracing your Black Sheep Family Members Stories 1314
Annie Greeno

In Memory
Caroline Meta Anna Mras 1316

Fred Murray 1317

Membership Form 1317

Calendar of Events 1318

Society Information 1319

CHAIRMAN'S CORNER

As we head into the Christmas season, I'd like to take this time to wish all of you a very blessed Christmas. It seems the season is being rushed this year; I've been listening to an all-Christmas radio station for some time now. I could listen to this music all year long but not so the rest of the family! Take time this Christmas season to enjoy your family, friends, traditions, get-togethers, etc.; after all, this is what genealogy is all about!

On a recent trip to Boston, I connected with a guy in Ohio who has in his possession a box of glass negatives. Some of the negatives were printed; one of these was a photo of my great-great-grandmother's (Catherine Wannamaker Sweet) tombstone in Ontario, Canada. Another printed photo shows two well-dressed, mustached men standing off to the side of her tombstone. Of course, no identification on any of the photos or negatives. Darn. This box was found in an old box factory in Jamestown, NY. One of my ancestors had owned a box factory there so I'm thinking these glass negatives could depict some family connections. I am busily pursuing this new avenue. Since the Boston trip, I have re-connected with a Canadian cousin and have connected with a new cousin. Exciting times!

I connected with the guy in Ohio through some old websites that I hadn't visited since 2005. When I saw his post from last year, I was very happy that I took a few minutes to re-visit this website. Sometimes, reviewing past research may prove fruitful.

Do you have any success stories? Perhaps you've found a gem searching in a unique place? Maybe you have a brick wall and just want to write out the facts you know to try to identify where to go from here. Consider writing them all up and sending them on to our Wood County Roots editor Tina Krummel. It is always interesting reading about someone else's successes and/or brick walls. Who knows maybe one of the readers will have an idea of where you could go next to get through that brick wall!

With winter upon us again (way too early!), we can now snuggle down and search the internet, write up our stories, nail down our sources, connect with cousins—all with a cup of hot chocolate warming us from the inside out!

Have a wonderful winter!

Happy Hunting!
Bev Peaslee, Chair

NEW OFFICERS

Officers were voted in at the end of last year to take us on into the new year. Please help the officers out in any way that you can. Our society is only as strong as its members.

- Chairman:
Bev Peaslee
- Vice Chairman:
Wayne Peters
- Secretary:
Sue Miller &
Myra Sweet
- Treasurer:
Tina Krummel
- Trustee:
Flores Gumz

Dues!

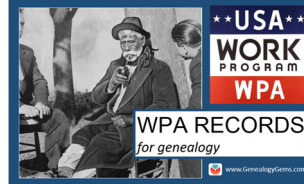
It's that time of year again—your annual dues are payable now. Our membership year runs from August 1 through July 31.

Check your newsletter label. The line above your name has the expiration date of your membership. There is a membership form on page 1317 of this newsletter. Please check with Tina, our treasurer, on the status of your membership.

WPA Records for Genealogy: Local Histories

by Lisa Cooke

Have you used WPA records for genealogy? Their Historical Record Surveys and local and oral histories



may help you in your family history research. Existing records and locations vary widely. Here are tips to help you in your search.

In the late 1930s and early 1940s, employees of the Works Progress Administration (WPA, also known as the Works Projects Administration) created new resources for U.S. genealogical research. It's possible you've even consulted some of these without being aware of their WPA origins. After all, the projects and their formats varied. They didn't always prominently credit the WPA and some were printed long afterward. We're going to shine the spotlight on WPA-era local histories, oral histories and statewide Historical Record Surveys.

WPA workers also captured oral histories of individuals, too. Many were collected in **American Life Histories: Manuscripts from the Federal Writers' Project, 1936 to 1940**, now online at the Library of Congress. According to the collection description, "The documents chronicle vivid life stories of Americans who lived at the turn of the century and include tales of meeting Billy the Kid, surviving the 1871 Chicago fire, pioneer journeys out West, factory work, and the immigrant experience. The documents often describe the informant's physical appearance, family, education, income, occupation, political views, religion and

mores." Other important WPA oral histories are narratives of former slaves and their families. You can browse an enormous collection of

these online at the Library of Congress. These aren't the ideal eyewitness accounts we wish for, as they were gathered so long after the end of slavery, from many who were young children at the time. Also, many researchers believe interviewees may not have spoken candidly, especially to white interviewers who may have known them personally. It's a long shot to find an ancestor mentioned by name in WPA oral histories. In some instances, pseudonyms were even used for names and places. But, you can still learn a lot from others' descriptions of daily life and unusual events your ancestors may have experienced.

When I was in my teens, we lived near 149th Street at the corner of Cortlandt and Morris Avenues. And at the end of the block was a ravine with a little creek running through it. A gang of petty thieves lived down there much like hoboes in a "jungle" - in shacks they had, oh, I guess, nailed together or plastered together out of wooden slats and sheets of tin.

They were known as the Frog Hollow Gang, for the ravine was full of frogs what with the river and all and it being rather swampy.

Our neighborhood was scared to death of the Frog Hollow Gang and every door was barred at night. Some of the neighbors kept a light burning in the hall all night. It was said that those men could see in the dark like cats or owls but couldn't see in daylight and that if you kept a light burning they would be blinded and would go away. Of course my father pooh-poohed that idea, but we children used to believe it.

From one of the slave narratives mentioned in this article.

Historical Record Surveys

The Historical Record Surveys created by the WPA are among the most genealogically-valuable of their projects. "Under the auspices of the WPA, workers went to archives, historical societies, public and university

Embracing your Black Sheep Family Members Stories

You know that relative that no one talks about. The notorious black sheep of the family. We all have one. Some black sheep are more notorious than others. Annie Greeno's the story of a distant relative makes my log stealing relative look like a choir boy.

The Island's Last Execution

Langeland's last execution took place in 1834, at Langeland's Trial and Court Place on Skrobelev Hebe. The story of this is, up to the present time, orally passed on from generation to generation.

It is said that Niels Larson Pedersen also called Niels Arnt, was the last to be executed at Langeland. The report reads as follows:

Niels, who originated from Simmerbolle, but served at Bjerrebygarb, had in 1833 captured (won) the daughter at Eskebaekgarden in Simmerbolle, Dorthe Helene Larsdatter. They were married on October 19, 1833, where soon after the couple had a little daughter who they were incredibly happy with.

However, Niels did not have enough interest in Dorthe, and before long was expecting a child with Ellen Cathrine Jorgensen, who also served at Bjerrebygard. Niels found he really wanted Ellen rather than his own wife. Therefore, the two decided that they would kill Dorthe. The two of them jointly bought in some rat poison, which Niels on Christmas Day offered his wife a piece of bread, with which they did not achieve a satisfactory result. They gave the rat poison another try, this time in the coffee, which also failed. Another version was, they first tried to poison her with some poisoned pancakes, but the attempt failed because the wife suspected and first tried to let the cat eat one of them, and when the cat died, she obviously didn't want to touch them.

Then they agreed that he should shoot her. It was a morning when Ellen, throwing peat blocks at the window, got Dorthe to get up, and Niels shot in with a shotgun through the door. He hit her in the thigh and she lived many years thereafter. A similar version stated that on New Year's morning 1834, when the wife lay in bed on Eskebaegaard with their little daughter. For some reason, perhaps so as not to shoot their little girl, who was also lying in bed, he wanted his wife out of bed, Ellen stood in the door with some peat chips she threw at the Dorthe. Then the Dorthe got up and then Niels Arent shot her through the window.

Niels and Ellen were arrested, and on March 26,

1834, he was sentenced to death and she was sentenced to life in prison. When the execution was to take place, Niels was driven out to the count sitting on his own coffin. A large gathering of both children and adults had arrived, and the music corps was to play mournful melodies, but when the wagon with Niels swung into the square, they started playing "Here comes Jens with the fan." Old Pastor Wind from Simmerbolle, who should have prepared him for death, was so moved that he could not handle it, so the priest from Longelse had to take over. Then Niels put his head on the block and it fell at the first chop.

It was customary that the executed head was shown, but the executioner showed it, people fainted in streak. Niels was buried in the lowly southwest corner of Skrobelev cemetery, and he did not have to enter through the cemetery door, so he was carried over the fence.

Another version was more graphic Niels Arent himself was quite calm and put his head down on the block, after which the executioner lifted the ax, squatted and his head fell at the first hug. But then the executioner chopped so hard that the ax penetrated deep into the block, making it difficult for him to release it again. The executed heads were to appear to the people at the time, and when Niels Arent's head had fallen, the executioner's assistant took it and held it up, but the view was still too strong, those who had climbed the trees fell down as the first to frighten.

Niels was buried at Skrobelev Kirkegaard's scorned Southwest corner, but he did not get peace in his grave. He was later seen by many as he wandered around the churchyard at night without a head. The unhappy Ellen spent 20 years in the prison.

Then was pardoned and spent her last years in the Tullebolle poverty farm under the nickname "Ellen Tugthus".

Annie gave me two versions of this story and I have combined them to help explain what happened.



libraries, and compiled inventories of manuscript collections,” writes Bryan Mulcahy in an online report. “They went to courthouses, town halls, offices in large cities, and vital statistics offices and inventoried records. Besides compiling indexes, they also transcribed some of the records they found.” Today, many of their efforts still exist. They include indexes to cemeteries, newspapers, and naturalization records, as well as inventories of courthouse records, church records, and other manuscript collections in various archives or libraries. Of course, some records may have been moved or destroyed since inventories were created, but knowing what records existed around 1940 and what they were called may help you locate surviving collections. Some indexes, such as those of cemetery tombstone inscriptions, may actually be *more* valuable since they captured information from tombstones that may no longer exist or be legible.

A blank WPA Historical Records Survey church records inventory form. Image courtesy of the State Archives of Florida. Click this image to find it online at Florida Memory.

Sheet 1 of 2 sheets
WPA Form 20 RR-FLORIDA Revision _____ Remarks

(Worker's full name and date)

HISTORICAL RECORDS SURVEY
CHURCH INVENTORY FORM: 1939

(Fill in each item, or state in items for which information is not available, sources contacted in attempting to secure information.)

- County _____ 2. City or town _____
- Exact name of church _____
- Street address, R.F.D. route, Highway Number and No. of miles N., S., E., or W. of nearest town _____
- Name of membership _____ 6. Language of Services _____
- Denomination (full title) _____
- Name and locations of denominational bodies with which church is connected (national, state, district, etc. - in descending order of importance) _____
- Date church organized _____ 10. Dates of lapses, or date defunct _____
- Is church incorporated? _____ 12. If so, give date of incorporation _____
- Original name of church (if name has changed) and date of change _____
- Name of local parent church (if any) from which organized or split _____
- Information on all previous buildings used for services, since organization, specifying location and dates used _____

One great example is the Historical Records Survey for the state of Oregon, described as “the most comprehensive documentary project of Oregon history and related records of its time.” It includes historical essays, document transcriptions, interviews, research notes, photographs, pamphlets and more. According to its collection description, “The territorial and pioneer periods of the mid-to-late nineteenth century receive the greatest attention, with an emphasis on the growth of state government and infra-

structure, business and agriculture, transportation, education, biography, and relations between social groups. Native Americans figure prominently in this collection.”

Finding WPA Records for Genealogy Online

Some WPA projects were carried out on a federal level and others by state agencies. They were never centrally published or collected. Today, surviving original files and published volumes are scattered across the country. Some can be found in the National Archives, many in state libraries or societies, and many more available at local repositories.

A Google search such as *historical records surveys* and the name of the state and/or county is a great way to start your search for WPA records for genealogy research. Some results will lead right to the kinds of resources you want, such as this guide to WPA records in archives in the Pacific Northwest. Others, such as this one for the Iowa Historical Records Survey published in *The American Archivist*, are mostly a history of the effort. However, they do contain several useful bibliographic citations to records that were created. Add the name of the county to your search and you may find more targeted results, such as this library catalog entry for the inventory of the Jasper County archives.

Remember, though, that many WPA publications and collections aren't identified as such. Don't fixate on needing to find *WPA* listed in the title. Just concentrate your efforts on finding the local and oral histories, photos, historical record indexes and inventories, and other resources that may be out there. When you find one created during the Great Depression, you'll know it may have been done by the WPA.

By Lisa Cooke

“from Lisa Louise Cooke’s Genealogy Gems at www.GenealogyGems.com, home of the free Genealogy Gems Podcast”

In Memory

Caroline Meta Anna Mras WISCONSIN RAPIDS - Caroline Meta Anna Mras, age 95, of Wisconsin Rapids, went to be with her Lord and Savior on Thursday, October 3, 2019 at Aspirus Wausau Hospital. Services will be at 3:00 P.M. on Sunday, October 6, 2019 at St. Luke's Lutheran Church.



Rev. Dr. Carlton Andersen will officiate. A private burial will take place at Grace Lutheran Cemetery in Nasonville, WI at a later date. Visitation for family and friends will begin at 2:00 P.M. prior to the service on Sunday at the church. Herman-Taylor Funeral Home is honored to be assisting the family.

Caroline was born November 7, 1923 in Lyons, WI to Julius and Marie (Neumann) Kutz. The family moved to the Town of Cary, WI in 1934. She attended Pleasant Rock School and graduated from Pittsville High School in 1942. Caroline furthered her education after high school by attending St. Joseph's School of Nursing, in Marshfield, WI, graduating in 1945. She worked as a nurse at the Milwaukee Children's Hospital until her first marriage. Caroline later worked at Riverview Hospital in Wisconsin Rapids. She was married to Elger L. Fritz on April 12, 1946 in Pittsville, WI. Elger passed away on April 8, 1949. Caroline married Earl A. Mras on October 2, 1952. Earl passed away just after their 49th wedding anniversary, on October 16, 2001.

Caroline was an active member of St. Luke's Lutheran Church where she participated in the Women's Ministry and Anna Circle. Caroline managed the church bookstore from 1971 to 2004. She was also a member of the Heart of Wisconsin Genealogical Society and the Central Wisconsin Stamp Club.

Caroline is survived by her son, Roger (JoAnn) Fritz; her granddaughters: Kimberly (David) Six and Tracy (Scott) McClennan; her great-grandchildren: Elena Six, Juliana Six, Beatrice McClennan, Joshua, Six, and Simon McClennan; her brother, Warren (Marjorie) Kutz; and many loving nieces and nephews. In addition to her parents and husbands, Caroline is preceded in death by her grandson, Erich Fritz and her sister, Violet Knoll.

Memorials may be forwarded to St. Luke's Lutheran Preschool or the Salvation Army. Caroline joined the Society in 1977 and was an active member until health issues held her back. She served on many indexing committees and helped at Brat frys. She gave a slide show program one year, on her trip to Germany and told the history of her and her husband's ancestry.

One year she and two others performed a Christmas skit for the program. It was very *entertaining*. She was always ready to help new members with their search for family.

In Memory



Fred and Marlene joined the Society in 1976, and was always there for Genealogy Days at McMillan or the many Brat Fry fundraisers, helping where ever he was needed. He was the historian for the

Green Hill Cemetery and had time to be active in the American Legion Post. His presence will be greatly missed by all who knew him.

Fred A Murray, age 81, of Nekoosa, died Friday October 25, 2019 at Marshfield Medical Center. Fred was born January 9, 1938 in the town of Saratoga to Arthur and Rose (Herms) Murray. He married Marlene Capek on September 2, 1972 in Nekoosa. Fred served in the US Army for nine years from 1960 to 1969 during the Viet Nam Era, serving in Japan, Turkey and Korea.

He was later employed by Consolidated Papers Inc. for 17 years, retiring in 1994. Fred graduated from Mid-State Tech in 1978. He was a member of the Wisconsin Rapids VFW Post #2534, Joseph J. White American Legion Post #442 and the Wisconsin Rapids Disabled American Veterans Chapter #55. Fred was a longtime member of the Nekoosa United Church of Christ and of the AARP. His hobby/craft was woodworking. His interests included fishing, hunting, politics, playing cards with his pals and taking care of the wildlife in his backyard.

He is survived by his wife Marlene and by his cousins, nieces and nephews. He was preceded in death by his parents and brothers Eugene, Gerald, Ronald and Robert.

MEMBERSHIP FORM

**DETACH AND MAIL WITH A CHECK FOR \$15 PAYABLE TO:
HEART O' WISCONSIN GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY
P.O. Box 1565
WISCONSIN RAPIDS WI 54495-1565**

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____

Phone: (____) _____ E-mail: _____

New members only: You may have **one** free surname search if you reside outside of Wood County, WI (a \$10 value).

Surname you would like researched: _____

The membership list is published once per year in the December newsletter. We ask that you give permission for us to publish your address, telephone number, and e-mail address by responding to the following questions. **(Please clearly circle your answer; if no response is given, we will automatically publish):** I wish to have the following published in the December newsletter: my address? **Yes No**; my phone number? **Yes No**; my e-mail address? **Yes No**

Members may submit one free query per year, which will be published in the Society's newsletter in order to contact others researching the same ancestors. It should be 50 words or less, not counting the name and address of the submitter. Members and non-members may submit additional queries at the rate of 10 cents per word.

Please enclose a self-addressed, stamped envelope if you want a membership card mailed to you. Thanks.

Heart O' Wisconsin Genealogical Society

Chairman	Bev Peaslee
Vice Chairman	Wayne Peters
Secretary	Sue Miller & Myra Sweet
Treasurer	Tina Krummel
Trustees	Flores Gumz
3 years	Betty Pearson
2 years	Mary Moss
1 year	

COMMITTEE CHAIRS:

Book Purchases	Flores Gumz
Hospitality	Joyce Keehn
Indexing	Mary Peters
Library Files	Arlene Keehn
New Members	Joyce Keehn
Newsletter	Tina Krummel
Sunshine	Sue Miller
Website	Di Neinfeldt
Tech Data Admin	Ben Chitek

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HEART O' WISCONSIN GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY

PURPOSE OF SOCIETY: To assist members and others in genealogical research and to preserve local records.

DUES: \$15 per household—one newsletter per address. Please list names of all persons joining. Due at or before 31 July. Membership year runs from 01 August through 31 July.

MEETINGS: Held monthly—August through June—on the Third Saturday of the month at 9:30 a.m. at the McMillan Memorial Library, 490 East Grand Avenue, Wisconsin Rapids, WI (right across the street from the Hotel Mead & Convention Center).

Wood County Roots Editor:

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Visit us on the web at www.howgs.org!!!