



THE DUTCHESS NEWSLETTER

Dutchess County Genealogical Society

P. O. Box 708, Poughkeepsie, New York 12602-0708

<http://www.dcgs-gen.org>

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• President's Notes

Linda Koehler <lckoeblr@optonline.net>

In Memoriam



We extend our condolences to the family of long-time DCGS member, **Jeannine Minisci** of Lakeland, Florida, who passed away Saturday, January 24, 2004. Jeannine was born in Rhinebeck, New York, in 1929 and moved with her family to Florida in 1983. She was active in the Daughters of the American Revolution, serving as

Florida chairman of community services, co-chairman of the American Indians Committee and Regent of the Lakeland Chapter. She maintained her genealogical ties to Dutchess County, offering research services in the Dutch, Huguenots & Palatines of New York. But she is probably best known to DCGS members as the long-time Queries Editor of *The Dutchess*, serving in that post for over 20 years. Her competent, cheerful handling of the queries duties will be missed.

Memorials may be made to The Jeannine Minisci Scholarship Fund c/o Phyllis Bielanski DAR Scholarship Chairman, 719 Louise Drive, Lakeland, FL 33803.

Coming to the DCGS:
the DCGS Spring Seminar
April 24, 2004

The Dutchess County Genealogical Society will hold its Spring Seminar on 24 April 2004 from 9:30 to 4:00. Brochures will go out to members who live within about 50 miles of Poughkeepsie before March 15. If you haven't received a brochure and would like one, please e-mail your address to Christine Crawford-Oppeneheimer at cco4cats@prodigy.net or call her at (845) 229-9552. *Information will also be on the DCGS web site.*

The location for the seminar is in the works, but has not been finalized at press time. The location will be in Poughkeepsie. Check our web site for location.

Roger Joslyn, C.G., FUGA, FGBS, FASG, will be the seminar speaker. A full-time professional since 1978, certified in 1981, Roger provides full-service research, due diligence, expert witness testimony, coordination of national and international research and other services -- for private clients, attorneys, heir-search firms, Indian tribes. He is a past president of the Association of Professional Genealogists and a former trustee of APG and the Board for Certification of Genealogists. He is a member of many national and regional genealogical societies. He contributes articles to scholarly journals and publications and lectures and teaches at national, regional, and local conferences and seminars.

His topics will include:

TAKING A CLOSER LOOK AT THE CENSUS

A vital source for genealogical research, census records are often used without sufficient background information or understanding that could enhance research. For example, what is important about the three copies of the Federal census 1840-1870, or how can problems in published census indexes be overcome? This presentation covers important historical aspects of the census and explores examples of problem areas and some possible solutions to them. The discussion includes the underutilized non-population schedules.

THREE FEMALES 10-16. . . : MAKING SENSE OF PRE-1850 CENSUSES

Genealogists are spoiled by the 1850 and later Federal censuses, which provide the name of everyone in a community. Earlier, only the name of the head of a household is listed and for this reason the earlier censuses are not used to their full potential or avoided altogether. For most areas, however, these records must be used in solving genealogical

research problems. Utilizing case-study examples, this presentation will provide researchers with a good understanding of the pre-1850 Federal and the few corresponding state censuses.

NEW YORK STATE CENSUSES AND TAX LISTS

State censuses can enhance your research and those for New York are among the richest of these sources, providing considerably more detail than the Federal censuses--about births, marriages, deaths, migrations, citizenship, changes in occupation and land ownership, and military service. Tax lists also provide many important details about individuals and families as well as clues to further information in other sources. Tax lists can also serve as census substitutes for years when there were no censuses, when censuses are missing, or when a person is not listed in the census. In this presentation, the New York State censuses and tax lists will be described, their availability discussed, and their use in genealogical research delineated. **Even if you don't have New York ancestors, this may help you learn how to work with these tools in other states.**

FINDING YOUR ANCESTORS IN UPSTATE NEW YORK

This presentation will focus on New York State genealogical source records, their location, content, and use, with particular emphasis on the nineteenth century. Research examples will be discussed and special attention given to the uniqueness of certain records, such as probate petitions, state censuses, and Civil War lists, all with the intention of quieting the myth that New York is a genealogical graveyard.

Coming to the NYG&B Week of Research: "NYC 2004" May 2 - 8, 2004

The NYG&B's semi-annual Week of Research: "NYC 2004" will be held at the NYG&B Society building during the week of May 2 - 8, 2004. Please visit our web-site for complete information:

<http://www.newyorkfamilyhistory.org/modules.php?name=Content&pa=showpage&pid=66>

Registrations are now being accepted for this program. To register or for additional information, please contact Lauren Maehrlein at 212-755-8532, ext. 36 or by E-mail at Lmaehrlein@nygbs.org

• WEB THREADS

Jeanette (Jan) Foster <jfos@fosterswebsite.com>

Recent updates to the website include details about the [new name search policy](#), including an online form that folks can print out, a [new address to be used for submitting queries to The Dutchess](#), information about [online genealogy access](#) at

our library, recent additions to the library holdings, and agendas for upcoming meetings.

Previous issues of this newsletter and detailed information about obtaining Dutchess County vital records are also available at the website.

Coming soon! A new section containing the topics of each and every [Dutchess](#) quarterly since the publication began over 25 years ago. While not a detailed index to the publication, it is anticipated that Dutchess County researchers will nonetheless find this guide extremely helpful in locating which back issues of [The Dutchess](#) contain relevant information for them. Individual back issues of [The Dutchess](#) can then be ordered using an online order form. I anticipate this new section will be available in the next several weeks so check back often!

Unfortunately, we are unable to take inquiries of any kind at the website. We encourage you to use the e-mail address provided on the webpage to submit corrections, improvements or suggestions for changes to the website. All other inquiries should be addressed to the society at the address at the top of page 1.

• Membership

By Roland E. Ormsby, Membership VP
wf-are@juno.com

Membership listings are a benefit of membership. Updates are published in the written versions of this newsletter which are distributed to all current members

• Library Report

Linda Koehler <lckoehlr@optonline.net>

Library hours remain the same: Tuesday 9 a.m. - 2 p.m.; Wednesday 5 p.m. - 9 p.m.; Thursday 10 a.m. - 1 p.m., and 7 p.m. - 9 p.m.; Saturday 7 a.m. to 11a.m. All DCGS materials are available whenever the library/FHC is open, but the DCGS librarian works in the library on Tuesdays. If you are planning a special trip to the library or coming from a distance, you may want to call the DCGS librarian, Linda Koehler, to confirm the schedule before you come (home telephone # 845-462-2361; <lckoehlr@optonline.net>).

• Our Name Search Service

Linda C. Koehler <lckoehlr@optonline.net>
History

Among the "Objects" of our society as articulated in our bylaws are several aimed at collecting and disseminating information "to make available for the use of its members genealogical materials" and to assist people "in genealogical research and in tracing their several genealogies". It was in that spirit that we first decided to offer a rudimentary research service run by a volunteer committee in the late 1980s. For

many years before that, Bernice Fitchett, our Corresponding Secretary (and everything-else person), had answered letters that came to the society inquiring about families or resources of Dutchess County. For the most part, she used her own personal library and voluminous knowledge of the county to help those letter-writers.

We did not have a very large library collection, but it did include some basic resources - the Smith county histories, Beers' *Commemorative Record*, some published church records, a few census indexes, and of course, our own quarterly, *The Dutchess*. Through the timely efforts of our librarian Frances Brown, we acquired an almost complete run of the NYG&B *Record* for our library. We decided to offer to search the indexes of those resources in response to queries sent to us by our members and others. We did not demand a fee for the service, but did suggest a donation, with much of the proceeds going toward improving the library collection itself.

Well, we found it very difficult to keep up with demand virtually from the beginnings of our offer. Dutchess county, and New York state in general had long had a reputation for being a "black hole" of genealogy, official vital record resources being so much less than what was available in New England genealogical research. Dutchess County was formed early in the history of our country, so the families of its former residents have had time to spread all over in the last 300 years; the county also acted for some time as a stopping off place for New Englanders moving west or New York City immigrants traveling up the river, so there are a large number of families who at least touched upon the county sometime during their travels. And thus there is large pool of researchers seeking our help.

Queries have come in the form of very specific questions about a birth or marriage date, and open-ended requests to find the parents, siblings and wife's maiden name of someone who "might" have been born in New York before 1830. The library itself has grown, so that there are many more resources that are available to be checked for a query. The number of volunteers who are working on Name Search at any one time has always been limited (never more than 4), and their availability varies during the year (illness, weather, wintering in Florida or traveling during the summer). Also, like many other societies, the local members of DCGS who joined for fellowship with other genealogists and are now generously offering their volunteer services, are not necessarily the members most familiar with Dutchess County history and genealogy. However, when our volunteers start working on a query, they feel a tremendous sense of responsibility in taking on someone else's search, often going to extra effort of time and travel in search of an answer.

All in all, we feel that the service we offer is important and useful, even in these days of Internet access and CD-ROM publications. At the same time, those who have written to us are feeling very frustrated by the long delay in a response, and uncertainty as to whether their query has been lost

somewhere along the line. If money has been sent, we cash the checks immediately so that the patron's financial records are cleared (also serving as notice that we have received their query), and so that we do not have to worry about dealing with stale checks. As far as I am aware, all DCGS members who paid for a Name Search have been answered. However, we have a backlog of 10-12 months for non-members who paid for a search, or those who made a request and have indicated that they will pay whatever fee is required when the search is done.

Our Name Search policy has gone through a number of changes over the years, usually in an attempt to handle our backlog and deal fairly with those who have paid for a search in good faith and expect an answer in a reasonable time. We will make a special effort in the coming months to reduce the current backlog, and we hope that the new structure will enable us to keep up with future requests. Please understand that we are very conscious of the time it takes us to respond to Name Search queries, and that we are working on it as hard as we can within the limits of the numbers of volunteer personnel that are available to us.

Changes in Name Search Policy In effect for all queries after 1 January 2004

Because of lack of time, we can only respond to pre-paid search queries. Any queries which come to us without payment will be returned to the patron (or they will be contacted by e-mail). We will send an information sheet outlining our Name Search service including a form that will (hopefully) help the patron frame a clear specific query, or direct them to our website where they can see a copy of the form.

We will put all pre-paid requests into 1 queue, strictly ordered by date - first come first served. This is a change from the priority system in which members with pre-paid requests received first priority.

Rate change - we are going to charge DCGS members and non-members different rates. The cost of a Name Search is \$10.00 for DCGS members, and \$20.00 for non-members.

We are asking our patrons to give us a clear specific query based on 1 Surname. If you have more than one question, or more than 1 surname, then you need to request more than 1 Name Search. For example, a search for the marriage of John Smith and Marietje Van de Voort between 1780 and 1800 is one search. A search for the parents of Marietje Van de Voort is another search.

We wish to emphasize that we search ONLY the indexed records in our library and that the search has a time limit of up to 2 hours. It can take a surprisingly long time to go through indexes and their references just in our quarterly *The Dutchess*. Therefore, it is to the advantage of you, the patron, to tell us if you have already searched certain resources (if you can search census indexes at home, you don't want to pay

us to spend the time searching them again when we could be searching something else). On the other hand, if you want to be sure that certain specific sources or types of sources are checked, feel free to tell us that. It is also to the advantage of the patron to give us some basic information about the person being searched. If you are searching for the parents of Marietje Van de Voort and can provide us with an approximate birth date of Marietje, the area of the county where the family may have lived, the names of some siblings, or the names of Van de Voorts that you know cannot be her parents, it can focus our search on more likely references.

- **Dutchess County Poor House, Home, Infirmary**

relayed by Linda Koehler on 10/6/03

“More Than a Number”

written by Ginny Buechele

From 1864 to late 1999 Dutchess County operated a facility in the Town of Washington first known as the Poorhouse / Almshouse and later as the County Home and its final years as the County Infirmary. Through 1955, those who died at the County Facility who had no other means of burial were buried in “Brier Hill”, the very appropriately named cemetery in the far southeast corner of the site. My research has revealed that this cemetery was also used as a “Potter’s Field” for the burial of those whose bodies were found within the county under mysterious circumstances and those who died in the County without means for burial elsewhere.

We know of 748 burials marked only with numbered markers. Burial records for graves 607 through 748 identify, where possible, the deceased there. The identities for the 606 remaining graves remain a mystery and one I hope to do my best to solve. We also hope to learn if there were unmarked burials prior to the use of the numbered markers.

Who were these individuals? Each one of them surely has a story to tell and they were more than just a number! What stories lie beneath the ground with these seemingly forgotten burials? Could they be your ancestors, cousins, great aunts and uncles? Are there family members you have been searching for that seemed to disappear off the face of the earth?

I truly believe that each and every human being counts, each one an individual, each one a part of a family, each has a story that is part of our history. History and Genealogy are what ground us, what give our lives meaning and a foundation to build on. History and Genealogy go hand in hand, you can’t have one without the other.

Even if all fails in the archival research as it pertains to the identity of the individuals buried at Brier Hill with only a number, I sincerely believe it is important to determine the total extent of the burials at the cemetery, and that the area is set off, a fence or other barrier is erected and the area (currently overgrown with briars, trees and other debris and containing sunken graves) is cleaned out and maintained in

perpetuity by the County so as to prevent future disturbance of the burial ground. To me this is required out of a basic respect for the dignity of human life. In respecting the dead; we respect life. This is what got me started on this project to begin with along with Terre Ahlgren whose grandfather was buried there in 1950. Just because someone died at the Poorhouse and/or is buried at the cemetery on the site does not mean that their life should be any less respected than that of any other.

For my friend Terre it means that she will have a place to come to pay respects to her grandfather who died in 1950. Terre’s father will be able to do the same. For others it may mean that finally they will know where their ancestors may be or are buried, and provide them with a part of their family story that is missing and is part of what made them what they are today.

A Vassar College Digital Underground Class is currently [Fall 2003] conducting geophysical surveys at “Brier Hill” and it is hoped that their surveys combined with their archival research will help solve some mysteries.

For background and further information on my efforts regarding Brier Hill please visit my website at <http://www.geocities.com/Heartland/Acres/2843/saveacemetery.html> - Here you will find a link to a page of 924 deaths that occurred in the Poorhouse/Infirmary between 1872 & 1944 – and a link to those buried in Brier Hill Graves No. 607-748 - are they your family? Do you have a Story to Tell for any of these forgotten souls? Perhaps as research continues we can insure that many who rest in Brier Hill are ***More than a Number***. Contact me at ginnyflies@usa.net or by mail at Ginny Buechele, P O Box 243, Pleasant Valley NY 12569.

*“Immortality is --
your family records in a journal and on file in a library!”*