



Anchorage Genealogical Society
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July Meeting: The July meeting will be at the Z.J. Loussac Library, ground floor conference room at 7 p.m. on 2 July 2003. Refreshments will be provided by Kathy & Jim Roberts and Susan McKelvie, Juice by Pat McClure. The topic after the business meeting will be roundtable discussion on organizing data on the computer and on paper. Do you have any you would like to bring and share?

June Meeting: There were 22 members and no guests present, \$17.00 was donated for the 10 Most Wanted book fund. Lynn Pikey advised there are still a need for volunteers for the Scottish Highland Games being held on June 28th and the Galway Days on G Street (Irish Music Festival) that will be held on August 2nd. Harvey Rookus gave a very informative and interesting talk on his trip to the Netherlands and England doing research on his line and Wilma's line. Harvey's G-grandfather migrated from Holland to the United States and the family members in Holland lost track of him until Harvey established contact about six years ago. Harvey said the original spelling of the surname was Rookus but it is pronounced as if it was spelled Rukus. He was met by a distant cousin and traveled around some of his ancestral homeland with other distant relatives. After leaving Holland on a high-speed catamaran ferry that had about 1200 passengers as well as vehicles, he landed in England and took the train to London where he spent the night. The next day he proceeded by train, bus and taxi to visit some of Wilma's Gribble relatives. Harvey had a number of maps and photographs to accompany his talk.

Copyright: According to experts, there is a way to copyright your family history materials. It's called "Common Law Copyright" and it's easy to do. Simply write "Copyright" and then the year in which you began writing your material and your name. It will protect your work until it is finished.

The Family Tree, Odom Library, Moultrie, GA, February/March 2003 Issue (Vol. XII, No.1).

From the editor of the Seattle Genealogical Society Bulletin, Spring 2003: As a free-lance writer. I learned a very simple way to protect material in addition to the above. When material is at a point that I worry about copyright, I simply put a copy of whatever it is in an envelope and take it to the post office. I mail a Certified Mail back to myself. When it is delivered I just file it away with the seal unbroken. That way should the problem ever arise, I have a sealed envelope that is dated by the USPS showing that I had written the material on such and such a date. It's cheap, It's easy. It works.

State Updates: Here's what's making family history headlines in Ohio, Texas, Maine and New Jersey:

If you haven't ordered copies of your Ohio ancestors' vital records, do it soon. As early as July 1, Ohio counties will charge an extra \$5 for obtaining certified copies of birth and death records. That means certified copies will cost at least \$12, because counties currently must charge at least \$7. This price hike stems from a proposed state budget bill pending approval by state legislators--that would require the fee to help fund digitization of vital records. The bill also would prevent the issuance of uncertified copies of vital records--now available for mere pennies--in order to curb fraudulent use of the records.

Proposed budget cuts threaten to close the University of Texas' Center for Studies in Texas History, a genealogical gem in Austin. The center works with the renowned Texas State Historical Association to publish the "Southwestern Historical Quarterly," now in its 107th year of publication, and "The New Handbook of Texas," a six-volume guide to Texas people, places and history that's now searchable online at <http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online>. Learn more about the Texas State Historical Association and Center for Studies in Texas History at <http://www.tsha.utexas.edu>.

Good news for Maine researchers! Rather than cutting programs--as every other state seems to be doing of late legislators are working on the New Century Community Bond, a provision to allocate \$4 million for cultural improvements. The bond would provide \$500,000 to the Maine Historical Society to upgrade the Maine Memory Network, an online database of the state's historical documents, including letters, journals, photographs, maps, and sound and video files. Visit the Maine Memory Network Web site at <http://www.mainememory.net>, and urge your local legislators to support the New Century Community Bond.

There's even more good news for New Jersey researchers: The New Jersey Division of Archives & Records Management has launched a browsable online catalog of its 27,000 cubic feet and 25,000 reels of historical and

genealogical records at <http://www.njarchives.org/links/catalog.html>. Now, you can see what the archives holds before planning a trip to Trenton. Plus, the catalog includes a New Jersey county map with information about when each county was formed, as well as a place-names search.

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AGS Quarterly: Bob Waites, editor of the quarterly, advises that this issue of the quarterly is ready to print.

AGS Seminar: Contact Merle Carlson to volunteer and help during the seminar on Saturday, September 6, 2003. There will be a potluck meeting with the presenter Shirley Hodges on the evening of 5 September 2003 in the conference room of the Z.J. Loussac library at 6 p.m. More information will be available at the July and August meetings.

California Birth & Death: The following is a copy of a letter received by the Sequoia Genealogical Society Inc: Beginning July 1, 2003 the California Health and Safety Code Section 103526 permits only specific individuals to receive an "Authorized Certified Copy" of a birth or death record. An "Authorized Certified Copy" of a birth record is required to obtain a driver's license, passport, social security card and other services related to an individual's identity. An "Authorized Certified Copy" of a death record may be required to obtain death benefits, claim insurance proceeds, notify social security and obtain other services related to an individual's identity. Please see below for list of authorized individuals.

Those who do not meet the criteria for an "Authorized Certified Copy" may receive an "Informational Certified Copy" with the words "Informational, not a Valid Document to Establish Identity" imprinted across the face of the copy.

When ordering in person an authorized individual must complete an approved application including a sworn statement under penalty of perjury to receive an "Authorized Certified Copy". A notarized Certificate of Identity and a completed application form signed under penalty of perjury by the authorized requestor are required for all orders sent by mail. Applications and Certificate of Identity Forms are available on the website www.co.tulare.ca.us.

Individuals permitted to receive an "Authorized Certified Copy":

- (1) (1) (1) The registrant or a parent or legal guardian of the registrant.
- (2) (2) (2) A party entitled to receive the record as a result of a court order, or an attorney or a licensed adoption agency seeking the birth record in order to comply with the requirements of Section 3140 or 7603 of the Family Code.
- (3) (3) (3) A member of a law enforcement agency or a representative of another governmental agency, as provided by law, who is conducting official business.
- (4) (4) (4) A child, grandchild, sibling, spouse or domestic partner of the registrant. An attorney representing the registrant or the registrant's estate. Or any person or agency empowered by statute or appointed by a court to act on behalf of the registrant or the registrant's estate.
- (5) (5) (5) Any funeral director that orders certified copies of a death certificate on behalf of any individual specified in paragraphs (1) to (5) inclusive, of subdivision (a) of Section 7100 of the Health and Safety Code.

Rosalie Longan, editor of the Sequoia Genealogical Society Newsletter had the following comments:

What does this mean to us? If you want the obituary for someone and you don't know for sure where your ancestor lived, it would be difficult for us to request a death certificate to find out the details. That makes looking for this obituary a little more difficult. So our request is that you be sure you know the paper, or the town where your ancestor lived. That would help us a lot.

The staff at the recorder's office stated that this causes a lot of work for them as well as for the client who wants the documents. They stated that some people would offer their driver's license for identification before these changes. When told that that was not needed, they felt that was too easy for someone to just come in and get the documents, especially to use for fraudulent reasons. So to make it safe for the families, steps like these are necessary. You win some you lose some.

There will be a counter outside the recorder's office. The required forms and instructions will be there for the public to fill out before you enter the office and request the record. The current fees for death and marriage certificates are \$13.00. The fees for birth certificates are \$15.00

Sequoia Genealogical Society, Inc., Newsletter, Vol. 30, No. 4, June 2003.

A Sermon by John Hagee:

I want you to close your eyes and picture in your mind the soldier at Valley Forge, as he holds his musket in his bloody hands. He stands barefoot in the snow, starved from lack of food, wounded from months of battle, and emotionally scarred from the eternity away from his family, surrounded by nothing but death and the carnage of war. He stands though, with fire in his eyes and victory on his breath. He looks at us now in anger and disgust and tells us this:

I gave you a birthright in freedom born in the Constitution, and now, your children graduate too illiterate to read it. I fought in the snow, barefoot, to give you the freedom to vote, and now, you stay at home because it rains. I left my family destitute to give you the freedom of speech, and now, you remain silent on critical issues, because it might be bad for business. I orphaned my children to give you a government to serve you and it has stolen democracy from the people.

It is the soldier, not the reporter, who gives you the freedom of the press. It is the soldier not the poet, who gives you the freedom of speech. It is the soldier, not the campus organizer, who allows you to demonstrate. It is the soldier who salutes the flag, serves the flag, whose coffin is draped with the flag, that allows the protestor to burn the flag.

LORD, hold our troops in your loving hands. Protect them as they protect us. Bless them and their families for the selfless acts they perform. **Amen. Support the Troops!**

Clark County, NV genealogical Society, The Prospector, Vol 23, No. 2 April 2003 ISSN: 1085-3707

Probate in Scotland, 1500 to 1901

– Sherry Irvine, CGRS, FSA (Scot)

What Has Changed?

Until recently, indexes to testamentary records had to be explained in four sections: before 1800, 1800 to 1823, 1823 to 1876, and after 1876. Distance searchers using Family History Library resources on microfilm had a difficult time. The search in Edinburgh was easier because all finding aids were accessible at the National Archives (or as it used to be known, the Scottish Record Office). Everyone faced the problems of index peculiarities; e.g., for the 1820s it was wise to search the commissary and sheriff court records because the change was not a distinct break.

Now there is a single online index, derived from the records and not from the old indexes, covering the earliest surviving records to 1901 (more than half a million). It is found at: www.scottishdocuments.com

What You Need to Know—Background

In practice it is possible to simply search the online index; in theory, and to achieve the best success, it is necessary to understand some of the background. Up until 1868 testamentary records relate only to the moveable goods of the deceased; the inheritance of property was governed by another set of laws and the records are known as services of heirs or retours. There were two types of testaments: testament testametar, which included a will, and testament dative, which did not (i.e., the deceased died intestate). In both cases the court confirmed the executor or the executrix (the purpose of the testament); there was usually an inventory of the goods.

There was no requirement to go through this process and few people bothered with the trouble and expense.

You should be aware of the names of the courts that held jurisdiction in the area of your deceased ancestor. The court names changed; until 1823 they were commissary courts; the probate function was then assigned to the sheriff courts. Commissary court divisions were derived from the old Catholic dioceses of Scotland so their boundaries do not coincide with county lines. Sheriff court jurisdictions pretty much matched the counties; where there were two or more courts in a county only one may have handled probate business. From 1876 a printed annual volume summarized the confirmations in the sheriff courts. Lists of the counties and sheriff courts of Scotland can be found at the Scottish Documents website.

At all times the Edinburgh court was a senior court that could be used by anyone from anywhere in Scotland; also, it was the probate court for those who died overseas.

What You Need to Know—Using Scottish Documents

If the name is unusual then geographic details and a range of years for the search are less important. For a common name it is essential to set geographic parameters and a range of years for your search. If prior to 1830 you need to be aware of the boundaries of the commissariots; maps of these appear in the "Phillimore Atlas and Index of Parish Registers" (C. Humphery-Smith, 3rd ed, 2003). Information about which commissary courts were in what counties, and vice versa, can be found at the Scottish Documents website within the research tools area. Include the Edinburgh court in every search.

The basic search permits both surname only and forename only searches; an exact spelling option can be toggled on or off. The advanced search allows for the addition of one or more of the following facts: the year range, a distinguishing detail such as title, occupation or place, or the name of the court. The advanced search also offers the option of setting out how the results will be sorted—by surname, by first name, or by date.

You can search using only a place name or only an occupation. This is useful because the testamentary records of an entire parish for a set period or of all those of the same occupation could prove illuminating on family affairs and relationships.

Reports of what the search found are set out in an easy to follow table format. This gives the surname, forename, date, residence, court, and where applicable, access to the online image of the original document. Where this is available you can check the length before spending five pounds to see it; this charge applies regardless of length.

Additional Advice

Explore the site because it offers some useful tools: a glossary of occupations, handwriting assistance, forename variants, surname variants, and unusual words and abbreviations found in the documents. If you cannot find what you are looking for, consider these points: Mac/Mc names should be searched for using both forms; name variants should be checked and all listed options tried; be prepared to try other sources. Remember not many people left testamentary records and of those that did, some were registered in other places such as the Court of Session.

Make a note that you have carried out the search regardless of the result. Databases online tend to encourage bad habits, such as dropping a name into a search box and moving on without recording what's in the database and therefore what has been searched. If you are simply trying your luck, do it properly—read the related "Help" information, FAQs, and search tips. If a search is thoroughly done and recorded it does not have to be repeated.

This is one of those searches that all doing Scottish research should undertake. It is free, the database is complete to 1901 for names of testators (no beneficiaries are in it), and although few are recorded there is a sufficient cross section of social classes to make it a sensible step.

Sherry Irvine, CGRS, FSA (Scot) is an author, teacher, and lecturer specializing in English and Scottish family history. She is the author of Your English Ancestry (2nd ed, 1998) and Your Scottish Ancestry (1997) and she is a regular contributor to several journals including Genealogical Computing. Since 1996, she has been a study tour leader, course coordinator, and instructor for the Institute of Genealogy and Historical Research at Samford University. She teaches online for the family history program of Vermont College and has lectured at conferences in Canada, the United States, and Australia. She is the president of the Association of Professional Genealogists. Ancestry Daily News, Copyright 1998-2003, MyFamily.com Inc. and its subsidiaries.

See you at the Meeting!