

# Dane County Area Genealogical Society News



Celebrate the 5<sup>th</sup> of July by joining the DCAGS BOARD for supper at Ian's Pizza on State Street starting at 5:30 PM.

Pizza and a non alcoholic beverage will be free to members.

A \$5.00 fee will be charged for guests and visitors. To register please go to <http://dcags.camp8.org/> and follow the link to the event. When registering you should not attempt to login, simply use your email address for

registration. You can also email Walker at [walker@viridis.ws](mailto:walker@viridis.ws) or call 608.206.3182 to register.

June/2012  
Volume 6, Issue 10

Following supper at 6:30 we will go across the street to the Wisconsin



Veterans Museum for a Behind-the-Scenes Tour.

Have you ever wondered what the coolest things are in the Wisconsin Veterans Museum Research Center? Reference Archivist Russ Horton will show off some of them in a special behind-the-scenes tour for members of the Dane County

Area Genealogical Society. Come and see some amazing documents and images from the Civil War, as well as important genealogical resources from subsequent conflicts that are currently only available to researchers who visit the facility. If you are joining us only for the tour, be sure to be there between 6:30 & 6:45 since the doors will be open only to let members and guests of DCAGS in. Archives are often kept at a colder temperature than normal room temperatures so you may wish to dress in layers. Parking is only one block away at the Dayton Street ramp, across the street from the downtown MATC campus. Parking fees: \$1.00 per hour. The Museum and Ian's Pizza are located on the corner of Mifflin, Carroll, and State Street. For a detailed map go to: [http://www.wisvetsmuseum.com/uploads/PDFs/BID\\_Map\\_Parking.pdf](http://www.wisvetsmuseum.com/uploads/PDFs/BID_Map_Parking.pdf)



*Regular DCAGS meetings are generally the first Thursday of each month at the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints located at 4505 Regent Street, Madison, WI beginning at 7 p.m.*  
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*DCAGS Update:  
The DCAGS Governing Board meets the third Tuesday of each month. The next meeting is set for Tuesday, August 20th at 6:30 p.m. at the new South Madison Library on 2222 Park St. We invite all members to attend. Please join us!*

## Meet Our Guide



Russ Horton is the Reference Archivist at the Wisconsin Veterans Museum, where he has worked for the past 11 years. He has helped thousands of genealogists in their search for details about the veterans



**Thursday, August 2nd**

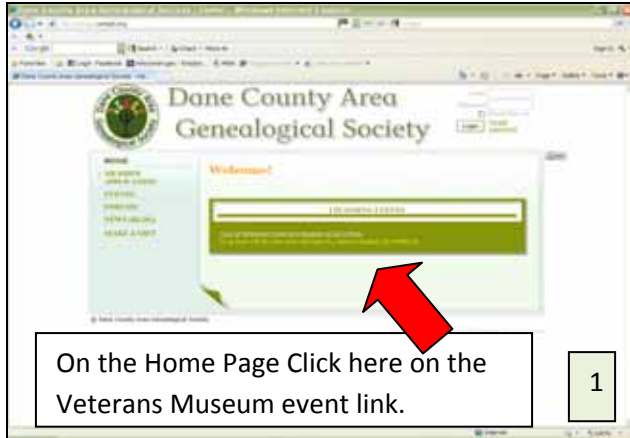
**Land: It's Not Just Real Estate**

Our speaker will be **Ruth Simpson.**

This presentation will complement the June presentation, with Ruth focusing on personal research using land records.

<http://dcags.camp8.org/>

This is soon to become our new website; you can preview the site and register there for our July Pizza Party. If you are having a guest you can either use PayPal to pay for the guest or an invoice will be sent to your email address and you can pay when you get to Ian's. Just follow the pages:



On the fourth screen select your choice of Pizza and Tour, Pizza only or Tour only. Then click on next.



On screen 5 you get to fill in

your name, e-mail address, phone number, and if you plan to bring a guest. You can also choose if you want your name displayed on the list.

On screen 6 you can review you order. If it is correct proceed to check out. If not, hit back and make



corrections.

Here on screen 7 you get to choose your method of payment. Choose either to pay online or to have an



invoice sent to your email (you can then pay when you get to Ian's). Remember all DCAGS members get to eat at no charge.

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### New Member:

Joining us as a new member in June is Robert H. White. Robert is currently researching the names Bevan, Haddock, Hawthorne, and Whyte. His areas of research are focused on New York, Pennsylvania, and the United Kingdom. RootsMagic is Robert's genealogy software of choice. If you would like to contact him please let Walker know.

# Historical and Genealogical Records at the Board of Commissioners of Public Lands

Randy Bixby joined us at the June 7 DCAGS meeting to talk about the Board of Commissioners of Public Lands (BCPL). It is a little-known agency but the BCPL is the oldest state agency, established in the Wisconsin Constitution in 1848.

To begin Randy shared a little of her history with us. She graduated from the UW-Madison with a master's degree in library science. She then attended George Mason University, getting a master's degree in U.S. History. She has a breadth of experience in Wisconsin archival work and land records, particularly in the Wisconsin Dells area where her ancestors settled.

The BCPL was established to facilitate the "... sale of the school and university lands, and for the investment of the funds arising there from ... ." When Wisconsin became a state, the federal government granted the state millions of acres. The acres came in a variety of grants.

- The 16<sup>th</sup> section or common school grant was established in the Land Ordinance of 1785 and was granted upon statehood. Each township set aside Section 16 for education, which totaled almost 1 million acres in Wisconsin. The sale of land and its interest provided money for the Common School Fund. Principal in the Common School Fund is now supplemented by fines, forfeitures, escheats, and unclaimed property.
- The 500,000 Acre grant was originally intended for internal improvement. There was a great deal of controversy in how these lands and funds were used in other states, so Wisconsin petitioned Congress to be able to use these lands for education as well. It was approved and Wisconsin received almost 500,000 acres as part of this grant.
- The University Lands grants were received in three different programs

- Seminary of Learning in 1838
- University Lands from 1854
- Agricultural (Land Grant) College in 1862. UW-Madison is a Land Grant College. Because President Abraham Lincoln signed this law, his statue sits at the top of Bascom Hill.

The grants totaled almost 332,000 acres. Proceeds of sales and earnings are for the University. Today there is only one 40-acre parcel left unsold.

- Normal School Grant was originally the Swamp Land Grant of 1850. It was intended to encourage the development and drainage of swamp land so it could be cultivated. However, much of it couldn't be made arable, so the state chose to use half of those lands, 1.75 million acres, to support Normal Schools, which helped train teachers.

School districts and municipalities can borrow against the funds held in educational trust funds at a very low interest rate. Yearly interest from these loans is distributed to school districts as library aid. In Fiscal Year 2012 the amount given to school libraries totaled \$32.5 million. Information on the education trust funds can be found in the BCPL biennial reports or on their website: <http://bcpl.wisconsin.gov>.

The BCPL archives holds the records of all lands granted by the federal government to the State of Wisconsin, totaling ten million acres. These records include the original survey field notes and maps, the federal patents, the state patents, and everything in between.

Surveys could only be conducted on land to which the U.S. had title. This meant a treaty had to be signed with the Indian tribe before the survey could begin. The

last treaty in Wisconsin was in 1848 with the Menominee tribe.

In 1832 the Wisconsin surveys began. Lucius Lyon established the initial point at the intersection of the 4<sup>th</sup> Principal Meridian and the baseline (the boundary between Wisconsin and Illinois). Townships are measured north from the baseline, and ranges are measured east and west from the 4th Principal Meridian. Townships are usually six miles square. Townships are broken down by section, each one square mile or 640 acres. The numbering starts in the top right corner and goes left to right, then right to left, from 1-36.

From 1832 to 1866 surveyors literally walked across Wisconsin, south to north, west to east, measuring it into one mile squares. These surveyors used chains for all of these measurements. These chains were made up of 100 links. Each link was 0.66 of a foot or 7.92 inches. Each chain was 66 feet long. Eighty (80) chains equal one mile. Surveyors wrote their observations into small leather notebooks. The BCPL holds all of those original notebooks. The surveyors noted natural features, and many man-made ones, marking trees, setting posts, or building mounds of stone. Then cartographers in the Surveyor General's Office drew the original survey maps based on the sketch maps and field notes.

These survey maps and the land descriptions derived from them are the basis of all land descriptions in Wisconsin. The sketch maps for about 2/3 of Wisconsin were never received by BCPL; their location is unknown.

BCPL holdings include the Original Survey Field Notes. There are 311 volumes of Exterior (Township lines), 221 volumes of Interior (Section lines) for the East Ranges, and 139 volumes of Interior (Section lines) for the West Ranges. There are also Sketch Maps, which number more than 1000 maps, original survey maps (more than 1500 maps), resurvey maps from 1850s to present, which number more than 430 maps, and resurvey field notes from 1850s to present with more than 8,000 pages.

BCPL also holds additional Federal Patents for Capitol Land grant, Canal grants, Potosi/Grant River, and Military Wagon Road. There are also more than 90,000 state patents to individuals. The indexes to all of these records are in tract books. There's one set of tract books for the Swamp Lands, another for the Education Lands, and a third for the Railroad Lands. Randy said the Railroad Lands can be a bit perplexing because sometimes the federal government just granted land to the railroad for building a rail line and some of the land transfers were not recorded in the county deed books.

Randy said one may not find the 16<sup>th</sup> section grants, swamp land grants, or railroad land grants in county land records unless the person who bought the land recorded the document. The records are kept by the BCPL because they are the depository for both incoming and outgoing land patent grants.

There is no digital index currently online searchable by name. To search, one must know the description of the land. Randy is currently working on a digital index, but it is a very time-consuming process; she's only through the Bs and they are only available in-house.

The other kinds of records BCPL holds are: loans to school districts (1870-present), loans to individuals (circa 1850-1870), patent and certificate delivery records, timber sales, timber trespass,



## President's message

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## I'm Pleased to Announce that We Have a Program and Education Committee

Joyce Peterson and Donna Johnson-Schmidt have agreed to serve as our Program and Education Committee, otherwise known as our speaker recruiters. I thank Joyce and Donna very much for stepping forward to take over this job. If you have ideas for program topics or speakers, especially if you are willing to give a presentation to the group yourself, please get in touch with one of them; their contact information is on the last page of this newsletter.

We still need someone to be responsible for getting publicity out for our meetings and other functions, and someone to be a permanent (NOT for a lifetime, but for at least a year) editor of our monthly newsletter. Having someone to help gather material for the newsletter, in lieu of taking complete responsibility for the newsletter, would also be helpful to the society. If you can consider taking on either of these responsibilities, please get in touch with me. *Rollie Littlewood / (608)273-0211*

appraisal records, biennial/annual reports, and commissioners meeting minutes.

Randy said the most frequent users of the archives were not only the BCPL, but other government agencies such as Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Wisconsin Departments of Transportation and Natural Resources, county surveyors, title companies, and county tax offices (especially for GIS maps).

A few years ago some professors and government employees created a Pre-European map of the vegetative state of Wisconsin that was derived from the field notes taken during the original surveys. (The link to the map is provided below.)

Randy is very optimistic that the many more materials the BCPL holds will be digitized at some point and will be very valuable, especially when used in conjunction with other records such as censuses, county histories, deeds, and archaeological records.

Records currently online are original survey maps and fields notes and resurvey maps. Future plans are to digitize the resurvey field notes, federal patents, and state patents.

Randy provided the BCPL's website: <http://bcpl.wisconsin.gov> to check out the field notes and survey maps, as well as some sample articles and websites:

- "See Wisconsin through the Eyes of 19th Century Surveyors," by

Natasha Kassuke. Wisconsin Natural Resources Magazine, August 2009.

<http://dnr.wi.gov/wnrmag/2009/08/insert.pdf>

- Sickley, Theodore A., David J. Mladenoff, Volker C. Radeloff, and Kristen L. Manies. "A Pre-European Settlement Vegetation Database for Wisconsin." <http://proceedings.esri.com/library/userconf/proc00/professional/papers/pap576/p576.htm>
- Could, F. W. "Plant Indicators of Original Wisconsin Prairies." *Ecology*, Vol. 22, No. 4 (Oct., 1941), pp. 427.
- Early vegetation [map] of Wisconsin. <http://www.uwex.edu/wgnhs/earlyv.htm>.

For a little-known agency, the BCPL has a wealth of information to help genealogists discover the land their ancestors purchased, as it existed when first surveyed. We thank Randy for sharing her wealth of information about the BCPL.

## BRAIN STORMING SESSION

We would like to have your input into the new programming for the coming months!! Are there any speakers you would like to hear? Do you have a certain subject that you wish to book? Do you have other suggestions on new programs? Email your suggestions to: [Jomay99@aol.com](mailto:Jomay99@aol.com) [Rklittle@wisc.edu](mailto:Rklittle@wisc.edu) or [Donna53705@aol.com](mailto:Donna53705@aol.com)  
Genealogy: A hay stack full of needles. It's the threads I need!!

I'm



## 1940 Census More Than 50% Indexed

Thanks to your efforts and those of more than 125,000 other volunteers, the [1940 US Census Community Project](#) reached the halfway mark one month ahead of schedule! Already, 75 million records have been indexed and [18 states and territories](#) are searchable by name! Let's work together to index 100% of the 1940 US Census and make it freely searchable to the whole genealogy community!



**Ancestry 1940 census**, please note that only DE, DC, ME, NV, and NY are currently searchable by name (indexed). You can also look through the entire 1940 U.S. Federal Census by locating your family's neighborhood using the browse tool. You do not need an Ancestry.com

account. Go to: <http://www.ancestry.com/1940-census> enter name and place.



**My Heritage** Has completed indexing New York and Rhode Island. At present their index of the 1940 census is still small, but it's growing fast. <http://www.myheritage.com/1940census>



The Illinois State Genealogical Society offers free WEBINARS, on the 2nd Tuesday of each month. All ISGS webinars are FREE and open to the public when they are presented live. For **Upcoming Webinars**: click [here](#) to learn more about our upcoming webinars and to register.  
**July 2012**

### Clue to Clue: Tracking a Family Over Time and Miles

- **Presenter:** Jean Wilcox Hibben, PhD, MA, CG
- **Date:** Tuesday, July 10, 2012, 8:00 pm Central
- **Description:** Using various clues, this presentation shows how to move from one piece of information to the next to piece together the life of an ancestral family. The steps used are illustrated so that they can be followed by the beginner as well as the seasoned genealogist. Use of census, probate, property, and personal records, among others, are explained.
- **Register:** <https://www3.gotomeeting.com/register/726337462>

### August 2012 Major Midwestern Archives & Their Records

- **Presenter:** Paula Stuart-Warren, CG, FMGS, FUGA
- **Date:** Tuesday, August 14, 2012, 8:00 pm Central

- **Description:** Dates, names, ages, relationships, lawsuits, prison records, church records, bibles, probates, and more await us in archives. This presentation highlights some major Midwestern archives and their holdings, finding aids, websites, and special indexes. An overview will be presented for each state's archive and some will be covered in greater detail. Archives are not created equally! For the states we are covering this is very evident. Some have a combination state historical society and/or library and the state archives. The websites, research services, online databases, range of holdings, and even the mission statements show big differences. We will also look at other unique archives in the Midwest. The main aim is to show the wealth of material available, how to access it, and why the on-site experience can be so rewarding.

- **Register:** <https://www3.gotomeeting.com/register/413029062>



### Genealogy for Kids

**Date:** August 18, 2012  
**Time:** 10:00 AM - 12:00 PM  
**Location:** Wisconsin Veterans Museum, 30 West Mifflin St.,

Galleries **City:** Madison  
**Contact:** Jennifer Kollath  
**Email:** [jennifer.kollath@dva.state.wi.us](mailto:jennifer.kollath@dva.state.wi.us)  
**Phone:** 608-264-7663  
**Cost:** Free  
Do you have a veteran in your family? With the help of our Reference Archivist, kids can find out how they can research their own family's military history.

## Upcoming Events



**14 July 2012 - "Sears Houses"**  
Regular monthly meeting of the [South Suburban Genealogical and Historical Society](#).

Hazel Crest Municipal/Police Building Board Room, 3000 W. 170th Pl. (east end of complex), Hazel Crest, Illinois. Rebecca Hunter will be the speaker. Meeting starts at 10:00 am. See the [SSGHS Calendar of Events](#) for further information.

### 20-21 July 2012 - "Midwestern Roots 2012: Family History and Genealogy Conference"

Sponsored by the [Indiana Historical Society](#). [Indianapolis Marriott East, 7202 E. 21st St.](#), Indianapolis, Indiana. Periodically visit the [conference web page](#) to learn further details as the plans develop for this conference.

### 26 July 2012 - "Swedish Research"

Monthly meeting of the [Indian Prairie Genealogy Group](#). [Indian Prairie Public Library](#), 401 Plainfield Rd., Darien, Illinois. Kathy Meade will give the presentation. Meeting starts at 1 pm. Handouts for this meeting may be viewable/printable at [jgg.wordpress.com](http://jgg.wordpress.com). For further information visit the [Indian Prairie Genealogy Group](#) web page.

Dane County Area Genealogical Society  
P.O. Box 5652  
Madison, WI 53705-0652

Address Service Requested

We're on the Web!

See us at: [www.dcags.org](http://www.dcags.org)

Or [www.facebook.com/dcags](http://www.facebook.com/dcags)



## Dane County Area Genealogical Society

P.O. Box 5652  
Madison, WI 53705-0652

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### See you at the July 5<sup>th</sup> Party!

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Become a Committee  
Member--only two spots left



### DCAGS Governing Board for 2012

President: Rollie Littlewood  
[rkittle@wisc.edu](mailto:rkittle@wisc.edu)

Vice President: Jim Benes  
[Jimbenes@iname.com](mailto:Jimbenes@iname.com)

Secretary: DeAnn McAllan  
[d.mcallan@sbcglobal.net](mailto:d.mcallan@sbcglobal.net)

Treasurer: Joyce Peterson  
[Jomay99@aol.com](mailto:Jomay99@aol.com)

Past President, Pat Skubis  
[skubie27@live.com](mailto:skubie27@live.com)

### Standing Committee Chairs

Membership: Walker Crawford  
[walker@iridis.ws](mailto:walker@iridis.ws)

Programs & Education: Donna Johnson-Schmidt  
[Donna53705@aol.com](mailto:Donna53705@aol.com)

### Public Relations: Vacant

Historian: Sandy Zart  
[sandy\\_zart@yahoo.com](mailto:sandy_zart@yahoo.com)

Webmaster: Rollie Littlewood  
[rkittle@wisc.edu](mailto:rkittle@wisc.edu)

Newsletter: vacant

***Put Saturday, July 14, 2012, on your calendar now for this workshop held at University of Wisconsin's campus in Whitewater, Wisconsin.***

Barbara Bell will be the featured speaker for the German Interest Group – Wisconsin's July 2012 Workshop. Barbara was born in Schleswig-Holstein, Germany. She was educated in Germany, France, United States (B.A.) and Great Britain (M.A.). When she was a little girl, Barbara started asking her relatives questions about the family's history and gathering information. After raising her five children, Barbara finally was able to devote her time to pursuing her family research — a very challenging endeavor. She has visited archives, attended conferences in the U.S. and abroad, given lectures, posted classes and written numerous articles. For more information go to: Registration form: [http://www.gig-wi.com/docs/2012-workshop\\_brochure.pdf](http://www.gig-wi.com/docs/2012-workshop_brochure.pdf)

