



# Dane County Area Genealogical Society News

## *Finding Connection to the Old Country: Looking for a German Connection & Beyond at April 7<sup>th</sup> Meeting*

April - May 2016

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The April 7<sup>th</sup> DCAGS meeting will feature Bob Rettammel, a professional genealogist, who will provide a case study of how he searched for his German ancestors, particularly his great-grandfather's family.

Bob will discuss the records used to begin a search in finding a German Connection: Vital Records – birth, death and marriage; census records, city directories, newspapers and naturalization records.

He will provide information on the genealogical structure in Germany, the reason for German emigration and working with a genealogist.

Bob has been interested in genealogy since age 14 while working with his Uncle Art, who brought out boxes of old pictures from rooms of the old Rettammel house. Those days, nearly 40 years ago, brought to life family members of his paternal side that Bob never met, especially his grandfather August Rettammel, who died 4 years prior to Bob's birth. That summer Bob put together an album he still cherishes. That was the start of Bob's journey to become a professional genealogist.

Bob is a member of the Association of Professional Genealogists and DCAGS. He

has visited Europe a number of times and Germany in 1990 (Austria, Bavaria and southern Germany) and Spring 2014 (Berlin and Hamburg), where he visited with German genealogists that continue to help with his family search.

Bob has a Masters degree in Sociology from Marquette University and lives in Madison with his wife Amy, cats Jake and Ellie and new arrival, a pug-mix dog named Daisy.

Please join us on Thursday, April 7<sup>th</sup> at 7 p.m. at the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 4505 Regent St.

*Once again at the April meeting, members are encouraged to come early and talk with other members about their genealogy. There will be food and drinks available from 6:30 to 7 p.m. and for a half an hour after the meeting. Feel free to bring some cookies or bars to share.*

**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, Madison, WI beginning at 7 p.m.**

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### **DCAGS Update:**

The DCAGS Governing Board meets the third Monday of each month. The Board will meet Monday, April 18 at the Meadowridge Library, 5726 Raymond Road. Information on future meetings will be posted online at [www.dcags.org](http://www.dcags.org) or contact a board member for details.

## *At May 5<sup>th</sup> Meeting*

### *Breaking Through The Brickwalls*



The proverbial brick wall has prevented many a genealogist from moving forward with his or her family history research. The May 5<sup>th</sup> meeting is a time to bring your "brick wall" problems to the meeting and discuss them with other members. A new perspective on a problem is always helpful.

Members will sit a table in the gym and go around the table and discuss a problem and brainstorm for a solution. After about 40 minutes a person from each table will report back to the entire group on the issues addressed.

Members may bring a homemade treat to share with the group. Beverages will be provided by DCAGS.

See you at 7 p.m. on May 5<sup>th</sup>.

# What's New at the Wisconsin Historical Society Library

Lori Bessler, Reference Librarian at the Wisconsin Historical Society, provided the most recent information about the WHS website and collections as the featured speaker at our February 4<sup>th</sup> meeting.

The Wisconsin Historical Society is among the top five institutions for genealogy research in the United States. Nearly every type of genealogical resource can be found - from vital records, to military records, to passenger lists, to census records. Plus, their 4,000-title newspaper collection is second only to the Library of Congress collections spanning the entire United States and Canada.

While the majority of WHS's genealogy resources are located at the Library in Madison, a small number of genealogy holdings is online and accessible for searching by name from your home computer.

## Vital Records

Almost 3 million birth, marriage and death records were recorded at the state level in Wisconsin before October 1, 1907. All are searchable by name. Lori showed us how to do searches and provided some tips on doing searches.

Lori said that general is better than specific. Start with the last name. If you are not sure of the exact spelling, enter at least three letters with the wildcard character (\*). For example, if you enter Roger\*, you will get Roger, Rogers, Rogerson, etc. This field is not case sensitive. Do not use apostrophes.

If there are too many entries, try limiting with a first name. Again, use the wildcard character (\*) in this field to find names that begin with the letters entered. For example, if you enter Ed\*, you will get Edith, Edmund, Edward, etc.

The asterisk need not only be at the end of the stem. It can precede it or it can be between two stems. It is much more powerful than it used to be!

To further limit your search, entering the exact year of the event can be helpful especially when searching for possible name variations or when you have a date but an unclear name.

## Census Records

Similar searches can be made of census records. However, census records are prone to a variety of errors. Misspellings are common in indexes and censuses.

Lori said one thing to check is the Special Schedules, which are only available from 1850-1880. The information in the 1870 and 1880 Agricultural Census may be especially insightful.

## Immigration Records

The Wisconsin Historical Society owns passenger lists for the United States and Canada, and naturalization records for Wisconsin.

## Local and County Histories

There is a digitized volume for each of the 72 counties in Wisconsin. Most are several hundred pages long and include detailed accounts of individual cities, townships and villages, as well as biographical stories of prominent residents. Most were published 1850-1920.

Some books have been digitized through the Google Book project in conjunction with the University of Wisconsin-Madison. These will be available as a link in the Library Catalog.

Lori is available to guide you through the Society's extensive collections and resources, and to answer your questions. Feel free to [email her](#) and ask her any questions.

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## Upcoming Events

### Gene-A-Rama 2016

**What:** Gene-A-Rama 2016  
"Researching Outside the Box"

**Where:** Wausau, Wisconsin,  
at The Plaza Hotel & Suites

**When:** April 8th-9th, 2016.

**Main Speaker:** Judy Russell,  
*The Legal Genealogist*.

**Register:** [WSGS website](#) or  
the [one page flier](#) or [brochure!](#)

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### NGS Conference

**What:** NGS Conference:  
*Exploring the Centuries:  
Footprints in Time*

**When:** May 4-7, 2016

**Where:** Fort Lauderdale,  
Florida

Information on registration and accommodations can be found at:

<http://conference.ngsgenealogy.org/>

### FGS Conference

**When:** August 31 - September 3, Springfield, Illinois

FGS 2016 National Conference — Celebrate our 40th Anniversary with us and local host Illinois State Genealogical Society as we return to the Land of Lincoln in 2016! Hotel reservations are open now. Book your hotel today at [FGSConference.org](#).

# Discovering the DAR Website: Ancestors, Descendants and More

At the March 3<sup>RD</sup> meeting Ruth Simpson and Sherry Lloyd gave DCAGS a presentation on the genealogy resources available on the Daughters of American Revolution (DAR) website.

The DAR website is more than just a place for women seeking to join the organization – it is a great genealogical research repository. The DAR Genealogical Research System (GRS) is a free resource provided by the National Society Daughters of the American Revolution to aid general genealogical research and to assist with the DAR membership process. Over 900,000 women have joined the DAR, and over 177,000 women are currently members. So that means there are over 900,000 family histories in the database! There is a very good chance that you can find useful family history in the DAR databases. The GRS is a collection of databases that provide access to the many materials amassed by the DAR since its founding in 1890.

A hint to using this website is you want to research your ancestors that died prior to 1915 since living person's names will not be shown on the website. The website states that information on descendants that is within the last 75 years will be confidential, but that time frame can be as long as 100 years. Do not just research persons that you suspect were patriots of the American Revolution but all ancestors even foreign born persons. Another hint is to research the members that have a member number over 200,000, and under 900,000. The earlier members did not have to provide

proof of their ancestry to join so there is little information in the early applications. The newest applications, numbers over 900,000 have not been entered into the databases yet. To conduct research go to <http://www.dar.org>, then select the GRS tab found along the top of the screen.

## **Genealogical Research System**

Access to the various databases is through the "tabs" along the top of the search screen. At the top right of the GRS page is a tutorial that provides a brief tour of how to search the databases. The following descriptions provide basic information about each database. The GRS page shows information on how to purchase copies of the applications, support documentation, request research help, or photo copy services. Most of the information will be sent to you by email, but paper mail services can be provided. These services have fees, but are affordable, especially if you compare the prices of vital records, etc. from other repositories. The databases contain DAR proprietary information which should not be redistributed to others; assembled or collected for purposes other than DAR membership or for citation in genealogical scholarship; or reproduced, published, or posted in any form.

**Ancestor:** This database includes names of patriots of the American Revolution but only the people that are ancestors of the women that have joined the DAR. The screen will show a brief history of the patriot's service and to the right is a

pedigree symbol. Clicking on the pedigree symbol will bring you to a screen that lists the DAR members that have joined under the lineage of this patriot. The DAR member's number is at the bottom left of the page, then there are symbols that indicate if there are sources available under that member's application. Next is the name of the child of the patriot that the DAR member joined under. If you click on one of the member numbers you will be directed to the Descendants database. More on this database below.

There are patriots of the American Revolution that are not listed. An example would be George Washington, the president of the United States. He did not have children so no one can add his name to the list of patriots in this database. There could be many patriots of the American Revolution not yet added to this database because a woman has not joined by that line. A patriot can be a person that served in the military, a volunteer in a militia, a person that had their food or animals stolen, lost their home, provided money, served in public office, paid taxes that went to support the cause, or just provided money or other resources.

I heard of a person that joined the DAR because their ancestor was listed in a local census, the documentation mentioned the census was to list persons that could support the cause.

**Member:** If you have a member's DAR number you can select this member's account and see her lines to the patriot(s) she joined under.

*Continued on page 4*

## *DAR Website Continued...*

Descendants: The descendants database shows the pedigree from the DAR member to the patriot. Names of living people will not be shown. This is a very useful database. Every name from the member of DAR to her patriot ancestor will be listed with birth, marriage and death facts. Of course not every fact can be proven so there will be blank spaces. The goal is to link a child to the parents, just as you want to do in your genealogy.

You want to research this database for every name in your research to see if someone joined DAR by that person's lineage. So research every man and women that died prior to or about 1915, even if you know their family was not in the American colonies at the time of the war. This is because your ancestor could have married into a family that had lineage to the American Revolutionary time period. Also research the siblings of these people since there could be family history in the database that may be useful. For example the proof documentation such as a Bible record or a will could show information on your ancestor even if the sibling was listed in the DAR database. If there is more than one DAR member for the patriot you should look at several of the members' pages and select the DAR member's application that has the most facts listed on the application screen. Since some members join by linking to another DAR member, their application would not have as much information as a person that provided proof for each ancestor in her line to the patriot.

You can see most of the information on the application from the website, but not the proof documentation. The application can be purchased for \$10, but I suggest instead to purchase the supporting documentation. The

DAR will provide the proof documentation for \$20 plus photo copy charges if there are more than ten pages. There is no guarantee of what you will receive. This is still very affordable, since you will likely receive documentation for three or more lines. The GRS page of the website shows how to obtain information.

GRC: Genealogical Records Committee database includes mostly Bible records and cemetery record transcriptions. The index is on the website but the information is not. One can request DAR research the item and send copies. Researchers may order copies of pages in the GRC Reports by contacting the DAR Library's Search Service. Please consult the Search Service information page on the Library's portion of the DAR website at

<http://www.dar.org/library/search-services>. Currently the photocopy charge is \$15 for up to five titles and a total of ten pages.

Additional charges apply for larger copy orders. If you go to the DAR library in person you may search this database and make your own copies for 25 cents a page.

Bibles: The Bible database includes family register entries from Bibles. Similar to the GRC database but for Bibles. The register is based on the original surname found in the family register. If you do not find the surname you are looking for check the GRC database that includes an every name index. Also similar to the GRC the images are not online at this time.

Resources: A variety of library records, including Patriot Records Index, Revolutionary Pension Card Index, DAR Library Analytical Card Index. The Patriot Records Project Index shows images of payment transactions for the patriots. The Revolutionary Pension Card Index shows images of the card that

shows some information about the unit the patriot was in. This information then can be used to do further research with records on the National Archives website. The DAR Library Analytical Card Index is a list of information at the DAR Library.

There are other resources in this database that are more relevant for persons conducting research at the DAR Library.

Catalog: This is the Library's online catalog. The catalog provides subject, title, author and other access to books, microforms, manuscripts, maps, genealogical charts and other sources in the DAR collections. Researchers should look at the online catalog even if the collections do not circulate or loan. It's the index that you will find helpful. It is more inclusive than many other library's catalogs. Thus you might find a name in a book by a title that you usually would not look at. You would then check WorldCat, online for the nearest library that has that book.

The DAR website is a great research tool for us to use, it is free and easy to use. If you are interested in joining the DAR please contact one of the two chapters in Madison for more information. Several of the DCAGS members also belong to the Governor Nelson Dewey Chapter of the DAR. The DAR organization will assist you with your membership application. I chose to join the DAR so that my family history would not be lost when I'm gone. This is a great place to put family history. The organization has been around for 125 years and with over 177,000 current members I think the organization will be around a long time.

*Submitted by Sherry Lloyd*

## *New Feature: Sponsor a Free Guest Membership for a Year*

DCAGS is offering an opportunity for members to sponsor a guest with a one-year free membership. Here's how it would work:

1. Current members could sponsor a free one-time guest membership for a new guest and/or family with emailed newsletters and other electronic correspondence, no directories nor printed materials will be sent.

Thereafter, the guest may join as a regular member with full member benefits (newsletters, directory, emails, mailings and events).

2. The year for inclusion runs for the membership period, 1 Apr 2016 to 31 Mar 2017.

3. Members who wish to sponsor a free guest member would send an email to the DCAGS email address, [widcags@gmail.com](mailto:widcags@gmail.com) with the following information:

- sponsor's name,
- guest's name,
- guest's address,
- guest's phone number and
- guest's email address.

This is an excellent opportunity to increase the visibility of DCAGS and promote membership. So, send us the name of a guest.

## *Joyce Nigbor's Husband, William Nigbor, Passes Away*

On March 18, 2016, William "Bill" Paul Nigbor, husband of DCAGS Board Member Joyce Nigbor, passed away.

A full obituary can be found at [Cress Funeral Home](#).

Our condolences go out to Joyce and the entire Nigbor family.

## *Saying Farewell*

I have come to the end of my time in Madison, Wisconsin. It is with mixed emotions that I say a fond farewell to members of the DCAGS.

I have been involved with DCAGS and its predecessor group, CAGSW, for about 20 years. I served as President of CAGSW and was its newsletter editor from 2001 through 2011, during which time it merged with the Dane County Genealogical Society in 2006 to form DCAGS.

I have always been impressed with the knowledge and "can do" attitudes of the leaders of DCAGS. There is no question that DCAGS is facing a changing of the guard in leadership. Gone are the early leaders like Jack Brisse and Joe Waddell. The recent death of Pat Skubis and the departures of Walker Crawford and myself leave big holes to fill. The new Governing Board is struggling to meet these challenges, but they need the help of more members. Please consider volunteering to serve on the Board for a year or two while the group works to invigorate membership and chart the group's future.

I ask each member to consider "what can I do to improve DCAGS?" Perhaps it means inviting a friend to a meeting or giving them a guest membership. It could mean giving a presentation to the group or recommending a speaker.

Think about how DCAGS should operate to increase membership and visibility. Sometimes we get used to how an organization operates, but it could be unappealing to new members. Consider when DCAGS meets, how often it meets and the type of speakers offered.

I feel DCAGS is a wonderful value for its members. It provides great speakers, especially those from the Wisconsin Historical Society, for a relatively small fee. It also offers a newsletter that recaps previous meetings, which most of our members find quite valuable.

But the times are 'a changin.' The explosion of electronic data has revolutionized genealogy research. What can DCAGS do to capture the innovativeness of new technologies, which could appeal to younger people interested in genealogy?

The future can be bright for DCAGS, but all DCAGS members need to be involved.

With these parting words, I bid you a fond farewell. I plan to remain in contact, but it will be from a distance in Minnesota.

Thank you for the opportunity to serve. Best wishes for a bright future.

*Ruth Simpson*

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We're on the Web!

See us at: [www.dcags.camp8.org](http://www.dcags.camp8.org)

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



**Dane County Area  
Genealogical Society**

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See you at  
the April 7th  
and May 5th  
Meetings

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***Membership Renewals Due***

The new membership year has arrived (April 1 - March 30) so if you haven't already, please renew your membership. If you have an email registered with DCAGS, the notice should have come by email. If you do not have an email, a renewal form was mailed to you. Thank you very much for your contribution by maintaining your DCAGS membership!