

Researching Family in Pennsylvania 2020
Historical Society of Pennsylvania
Session Descriptions

Monday, August 3

8:30-9:45 The Keystone State: Putting Pennsylvania in Historical Perspective

Frank Southcott

Pennsylvania has been a keystone in the establishment of the United States since William Penn founded his colony in 1682. This presentation will explore the early settlement and boundary disputes, the political turmoil, and the eventual industrial might of a land rich in natural resources and open to immigration throughout its early development. We will set the stage for Pennsylvania family history research by understanding the vast complexities of Penn's "Holy Experiment!"

10:00-11:15 Pennsylvania Vital Records – The Backbone of the Keystone State

Sydney Cruice Dixon

Vital records can be the backbone of family research. We will explore the Keystone State's history of vital records, the different types of such records, and where and how to access these valuable resources. We will discuss what you can substitute when the government records don't exist or are insufficient. We will explore the development of the Pennsylvania counties and their government structures in order to understand their resources and gain access to their records.

11:30-12:45 Pennsylvania's Genealogical Gems and Database Treasures

Sydney Cruice Dixon

The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania is particularly rich with record collections and databases. From military records to ship crew lists – Pennsylvania's records can supply details about your ancestors that even the Federal records cannot. However, making sure you are aware of these hidden gems and the best ways to access them can be a challenge. We will discuss the resources and websites that must be explored to incorporate these valuable records into your family research.

2:15-3:30 HSP Collections / Laws of the Library

Lee Arnold, DLitt et Phil, Senior Director Library and Collections, HSP

This presentation will describe the special collections of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, provide a tour of the research rooms, and establish the criteria for use of the library during the course of the Researching Family in Pennsylvania program.

3:45-5:00 Your Keys to Successful Genealogical Research at the HSP

Dawn King Carson

The Historical Society of Pennsylvania is rich with hidden gems genealogists love to discover. This segment will demonstrate how to use the Historical Society of Pennsylvania's website and their research library in order to better find those gems. We'll walk step-by-step through *Discover*, one of HSP's database search engines as well as other vital databases available at HSP.org.

Tuesday, August 4

8:30-9:45 **Courting the Keystone State: Key Court Records of Pennsylvania (Part I)**
Judy Russell, JD, CGSM, CGLSM, The Legal Genealogist

Part I will give an overview and explore the basics of the Pennsylvania court system. It will investigate how the Pennsylvania courts were (and are) organized; court jurisdiction (what court handles what case); court officers and records responsibility; and key court records including civil, criminal, and orphans/probate court.

10:00-11:15 **Courting the Keystone State: Key Court Records of Pennsylvania (Part II)**
Judy Russell, JD, CGSM, CGLSM, The Legal Genealogist

Part II will highlight the specialized records of the Pennsylvania courts including naturalizations, insolvent debtors, and slave cases. Also explored will be the specialized courts, including appeals courts, federal courts, and their records.

11:30-12:45 **Land Records at the PA State Archives**
Frank Southcott

That William Penn established a detailed process of warranting and patenting land in his colony cannot be overstated. The patent process formed the basis of land distribution throughout the counties and was the fundamental process to future land sales and county deed records. This presentation will explore the patent process, the importance of understanding county development and subsequent county deed records, and their benefit and usefulness to the family researcher.

2:15-3:30 **Metes and Bounds Land Platting Practicum**
Sydney Cruice Dixon

Understanding the land measurement system of metes and bounds is critical for family research in Pennsylvania. Anchoring your ancestor's land to the exact location can enable you to discover church records and identify new family members. In this practicum, we will break down legal land descriptions in deeds and learn how to plat land. We will also explore different ways to anchor properties to the land on various land maps. We will discuss using surrounding deeds to assist with this process, and using internet tools like Google Earth and the United States Geological Survey Topography Maps.

3:45-5:00 **Metes and Bounds Land Platting Practicum (con't.)**
Sydney Cruice Dixon

Wednesday, August 5

8:30-9:45 **Military Records at the Pennsylvania State Archives**
Sydney Cruice Dixon

This presentation will provide an overview of the military records available to researchers at the Pennsylvania State Archives. The presentation will cover the primary records and indexes available to researchers interested in the military service of Pennsylvanians from the French and Indian War to Vietnam.

10:00-11:15 **Taxes and Timelines: 18th Century Rural Genealogy in Pennsylvania**
Kimberly F.B. Bucklaw

Tax records are one of the most underestimated and underutilized sources in genealogy, owing in part to the fact that they don't explicitly state a great deal of information. However, armed with an

understanding of the taxation process and the records it created, as well as some creative methodology, genealogists can use even the limited data found in tax records to significantly advance their work. In this course, you will learn about 18th century Pennsylvania tax records and how to use them in conjunction with novel timelining techniques to overcome research obstacles pertaining to early rural families.

11:30-12:45 Pennsylvania's Revolutionary War Militia and Colonial Records: Census Substitutes

Frank Southcott

Unlike other colonies and largely due to the Quaker abhorrence to military action, Pennsylvania did not establish a state-wide militia until 1777. The establishment of the militia put into place a system of service which potentially locates and places an ancestor in a specific geographic location. By cross-referencing surviving colonial tax records with surviving militia records, one can establish a census substitute of neighbors and neighborhoods. This presentation will explore those documents and give examples of how those records can be analyzed.

2:15-3:30 An Introduction to the Pennsylvania Archives Series

Sarah Butson

The Pennsylvania Archive Series consists of 138 volumes published over the years. These books contain extracts and transcriptions of a variety of records created between 1664 and 1902. These records include marriage licenses prior to 1810, militia and continental muster rolls, revolutionary diaries, county tax lists, oaths of allegiance, ships lists, land records, election returns, papers of the governors, and letters between key government figures in Pennsylvania. Learn how the Pennsylvania Archive Series can be a helpful resource.

3:45-5:00 Navigating Resources Near the Delaware River

Sydney Cruice Dixon

The Delaware River played a significant role in the development of the Mid-Atlantic States. The river provided migration routes, political and geographic boundaries and contributed to the economic development of the five state area. We will look at the history of the early settlements of the Dutch, Swedish and English, and how the river continued to influence the social development of the region. We will discuss the record resources connected with this great river and how they can contribute to your family research.

Thursday, August 6

8:30-9:45 Pennsylvania and the Religious Society of Friends: A Quaker Stronghold with Far Reaching Implications

Frank Southcott

The "Quakers" controlled Pennsylvania government and politics until the Revolutionary War period. They were the predominant early settlers who established a religious network of meetings throughout the eastern counties. This presentation will explore the Society of Friends and their philosophy's impact on the development of Pennsylvania. It will detail the repositories and records available to research those early families including the Ancestry.com collection.

10:00-11:15 **Researching German Families in Pennsylvania**

Jim Beidler

Successfully researching German families depends on the timeframe the immigrants arrived in Pennsylvania. Explore the records available and geographic areas that German settlers impacted Pennsylvania.

11:30-12:45 **Finding Your Vorfahren: Genealogy with German-Language Church Records**

Tom McCullough, Archivist, Moravian Archives

Having trouble tracking down a German-speaking ancestor? Church records are often a great starting place! Using examples from the Moravian Archives in Bethlehem, course participants will learn about the various types and functions of German-language church records (such as church registers, catalogs, diaries, and many more) and how to navigate them for family research.

2:15-3:30 **Western Pennsylvania: Researching in the Steel City and Beyond**

Rich Venezia

Learn about researching the people that settled and lived in the western third of the state and the records they left behind. This course will cover the archives and record repositories in Western Pennsylvania, including the Detre Library & Archives at the Heinz History Center.

3:45-5:00 **Coalminers, Railroaders, and Immigrants: The Keystones of Pennsylvania Labor**

Frank Southcott

Coal mining and railroads played an extensive part in the industrial development of Pennsylvania. Understand the various coal mining regions of Pennsylvania, the simultaneous development of the railroads to support that industry, and the people involved. Realize the extensive immigrant population and their contribution to Pennsylvania society.

Friday, August 7

8:30-9:45 **Locating Church Records in Pennsylvania**

Dawn King Carson

Pennsylvania is home to many wonderful religious record repositories. In this presentation, we will look at which religious repositories are available to search, where they are located, what information may be available to you, and how to go about locating the vital information you seek.

10:00-11:15 **The People on Holme's Map: Using Historical Records to Identify Them**

Sue Long, PhD

Thomas Holme's map of Pennsylvania in 1685 is a familiar sight, appearing in countless state histories. It shows the landowners at the time, with their tracts neatly outlined, and each tract named. Who were these people? The talk will include results of a year-long study identifying them, as well as engaging stories – about a suspected murder, a counterfeiting ring, cheating land deals, masters who assaulted the virtue of their servant women, astrology, highway robbery, pirates and more. We hear the voices of the late 17th century as people call each

other “rogues, knaves, and beggarly dogs”, or when a horse thief calls his brother “the most faint hearted man that lives.”

11:30-12:45 **Case Studies in Pennsylvania Research**

Sydney Cruice Dixon

We will look at some Pennsylvania family case studies that solved difficult research issues by using the records sets, repositories, and resources presented at this institute this week.

12:45-1:15 **Class Picture, Critique, and Certificate Exchange**