

Researching Family in Pennsylvania 2019

Historical Society of Pennsylvania

Presentation Descriptions

Monday, July 29, 2019

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 **Keys to Successful Genealogical Research at HSP**

Dawn King Carson

The Historical Society of Pennsylvania is rich with hidden gems genealogists love to discover. This presentation will walk you through the website of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania. Emphasis will be on the genealogy databases available to researchers.

Tuesday, July 30, 2019

8:30-9:45 AM **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 **Military Records at the Pennsylvania State Archives**

Aaron McWilliams, Research Archivist, Pennsylvania State Archives

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.

2:15-3:30 **Understanding the State Land Records of Pennsylvania**

Aaron McWilliams, Research Archivist, Pennsylvania State Archives

Provides a detailed look at the State Land Records held at the Pennsylvania State Archives. The presentation will cover the five principal documents created during the patenting process, their indexes, and how to effectively search them. It will also touch on other sources at the Archives, such as land office maps and Board of Property records.

3:45-5:00 **The “Other” Pennsylvania Archive:
Exploring the Pennsylvania Archives Series**
Frank Southcott

The Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission operates the Pennsylvania State Archives in Harrisburg. Many documents and resources are available online or by visiting the facility. Lesser known but just as valuable to the family researcher is the Pennsylvania Archives Series. The series is a collection of volumes detailing the early development of Pennsylvania from colonial times through the Revolutionary War period. This presentation will explore those volumes and detail the information available to the family history researcher.

Wednesday, July 31, 2019

8:30-9:45 AM **Taxes and Timelines: 18th Century Rural Genealogy in Pennsylvania**
Kim Bucklaw

Tax records are one of the most underestimated and underutilized sources in genealogy, owing in part to the fact 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.

10:00-11:00 **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.

11:15-12:15 **Pennsylvania County Land Records (Deeds)**

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.

1:30-2:30 **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.

2:45-3:45 **Metes and Bounds Land Platting Practicum (Con't)**

Sydney Cruice Dixon

4:00-5:00 **Coalminers, Railroaders, and Immigrants:**

The Keystones of Pennsylvania Labor

Frank Southcott

Coalmining 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.

Thursday, August 1, 2019

8:30-9:30 AM **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.

9:45-10:45 **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.

11:00-12:00 **Researching in Eastern Pennsylvania**
Sydney Cruice Dixon

Whenever you are conducting family research, it is necessary to understand and appreciate the history, geography, major industries and the economic development of that geographic region. We will explore how these elements contributed to the areas of settlement and determined immigrant migration patterns in the Eastern part of the state. We will discuss different industry record resources. In addition, we will review county and township government structures so we can best use and access their records.

1:30-2:30 **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.

2:45-3:45

**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.

4:00-5:00

The Welsh Settlement of Pennsylvania

Dawn King Carson

This presentation will explore the immigration of the Welsh from Wales as original settlers of Pennsylvania. We'll look at the tradition of Welsh customs in the new world as well as resources for Pennsylvania Welsh research.

Friday, August 2, 2019

8:30-9:45 AM

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.

10:00-11:15

**Engraved: The Meanings Behind Nineteenth Century
Tombstone Symbols**

Tammy Schane

The early 19th century saw the birth of the cemetery, which began in Paris, and spread to the United States by 1824. Tombstone memorials experienced great change throughout the 19th century as Americans thought about death in new, more emotional and evocative ways. Tombstone carvers were tasked with carving symbols that illustrated a softer, aesthetically pleasing and more hopeful way of viewing death, not as an endpoint, but rather a step on the path to a better and glorious afterlife where family would be reunited. This presentation will explore those symbols and some of the meanings behind them. They were a language and communication in their time and still speak to us today.

11:30 AM-12:45 **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.”

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