

Benton County Genealogical Society Newsletter

P.O. Box 1646, Philomath, OR 97370

Volume 30 Issue 6



From the Desk of the President

June 2015

I hope that this newsletter finds you well and enjoying this glorious Spring and that you will come to our last meeting of the season on June 13 at 10 AM. Please note the article below that describes the potluck gathering that will follow at 11 AM. As Summer is busy with travel, gardening, family and other matters, the society will take its customary break and will not hold meetings in July and August, beginning again in September with the board meeting on Tuesday, September 8 and the general meeting on Saturday, September 12.

We gather as members of our society to share and learn from one another in our programs and in the informal settings of our potluck socials as well. The collective expertise that we have as society members and freely shared between us is such a tremendous resource! We deeply appreciate those shared perspectives, trainings, programs, speakers and the inspiration that comes from these that can provide assistance in our own personal research and writing. Just as we have all benefited from the expertise of others along our path, we find again that joy in helping another when help is needed.

Summer will shortly be upon us, an excellent time to benefit from Mary Dean's program shared last month, the highlights of which are included below. Is this the year to combine the fun of travel with the desire to see where your ancestors originated or, with more information, find greater detail that will round out their story?

Family history enriches our lives in perspectives gained, with the increased knowledge and a deepening honor due our forebears who struggled that we might be; may you find the months ahead are productive in your own research and writing the legacy that will be left to those who will follow. *Ron D.*



June Program: Potluck and Library Tour, Come Join With Us!

Our June program, Saturday the 13th, will begin at 10 a.m. in the church for our regular business meeting. About 11 a.m. we will go to the annex for our potluck lunch. Please bring a dish to share. Beverages will be provided. As a special treat this year, we will be offering tours of the library. We know that even members sometimes don't know about all the treasures it contains and how to find them. *by Lois Courtney*



May's Program: Planning a Genealogy Research Trip.

On Saturday, May 9th, Mary Dean Snelling, a long time BCGS member, gave us information and inspiration on how to make a research trip as successful as possible. She had an excellent handout, and lots of personal stories about things that went wrong or surprisingly right with her own trips. Her anecdotes were supplemented by other members' stories as well. There are several things she emphasized:



- **Know where you are going.** Find the correct name for the county or town you plan to visit.
- **Learn the history of the area.** Locate local library resources. She recommends World Cat and Family Search Guides, interlibrary loans. Make a list of books to take with you.
- **Determine What is available and where.** Courthouses, archives, libraries, societies.
- **Contact resources before you go.** Get the hours and days places are open, what records they have, restrictions on copying, directions.
- **Create an itinerary.** Where will you go and when. Have a list of questions to ask. Allow time to walk around small villages.
- **What to take with you.** Flash drives, user IDs and passwords, recorder, adaptors, copies of your family tree to share, blank charts for notes, magnifying glass, maps, small Oregon-themed gifts, adaptor cords, camera.

Mary Dean had wonderful stories about finding local folks who were helpful, took her to someone else in the area with information, and treated her with generosity and welcomes. We were all inspired to start packing! A copy of her excellent handout is available in the Program Handouts Notebook in the library and can be copied for your own use. *By Lois Courtney*

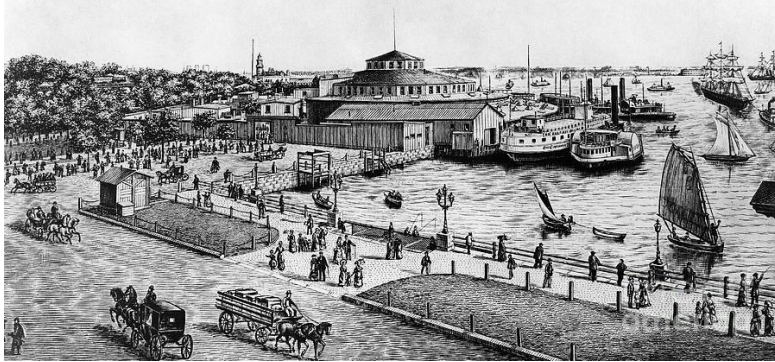


Coming to America: Arrival at Castle Garden, New York by Sue VanLaere (Part 1 in the May newsletter)

The Baltic and North Seas are always unpredictable, but in the fall, strong winds and dangerous seas were real possibilities. Lena and her family were fortunate for having crossed in October, 1881. Only a month later, their ship, the Lessing, was pounded by hurricane force winds in the North Sea. Her rudder broke and the crew cobbled it together so she could be towed to Cornwall in England for repairs. Cargo and steerage passengers were forced to stay in Plymouth, Cornwall, until December 11 and finally reached New York on December 25.¹

With a stopover in LeHavre, France, my Rittgarn ancestors arrived in New York on October 20, 1881. First and second class passengers disembarked on a pier at Castle Garden and were free to leave. Third class passengers had to go to quarantine.

Castle Island 1885



Even though passengers were vaccinated against diseases (especially smallpox) before boarding or while enroute, there was always the worry of contagious diseases being spread by the newcomers, and rightfully so.² Newspapers frequently reported the number of sick passengers who arrived in port. I read a report of a horrible procedure in quarantine. A doctor would use a button hook as used for shoes to fold up a passenger's upper eyelid. Scabs

under the lid indicated the disease Trachoma, which caused blindness.³

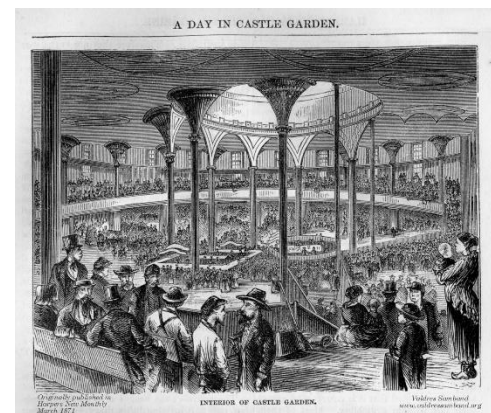
In earlier times, those who had Trachoma or other serious illnesses were sent back home at the ship owner's expense. But by 1881, a hospital had been established to take care of those who arrived sick instead of sending them back to their homeland. The quarantine rules applied only to steerage passengers; the 1st and second class passengers were just as likely to spread disease, but that wasn't considered.



Castle Gardens, southern tip of Manhattan Island

Those who made it through quarantine were taken into the rotunda of the main building where all kinds of services were available. They were divided into two groups—those who spoke English and those who didn't. Non-English speakers had translators to help them get through registration. Then they were free to get help from various licensed vendors inside the building.

Luckily for my relatives, by 1881 Castle Garden had begun controlling the scam artists who preyed on newcomers. A board of commissioners set up rules for those who were allowed into the station to provide services. In the past, immigrants were fair game for all kinds of rackets. But now licensed railroad agents were there to help, and a barge took passengers to Jersey City or Hoboken, New Jersey, where they could catch a train to other states. Boarding house agents had to provide a card in several languages with the contact person's name and written prices for each kind of accommodation. There was even a labor exchange for those who planned to work in New York or for those who needed travel money. It was also possible to spend one night in the station for those who were too exhausted to go on, and licensed food carts and restrooms were available. Once they left the terminal, though, charlatans of all sorts were waiting at the gate to take advantage of exhausted or naive immigrants.⁴



I don't know how my relatives traveled from New York to Danvers in McLean County, Illinois, after their arrival. They probably went by rail and had to transfer trains a number of times. When they finally arrived in Danvers, the relief had to be overwhelming. Other Rittgarn relatives had settled in Danvers in 1866, so they must have been welcomed. The family lived there until 1893 where my grandmother's other siblings were born, then moved to Lexington in Dawson County, Nebraska, my home town. Friederich and Christiane farmed south of Lexington for the rest of their lives. I never met my great-grandparents, but my grandmother was a very kind woman, and I loved her very much.

1. (<http://www.fortunecity.com/littleitaly/amalfi/13shipl.htm>)
2. <https://books.google.com> "Documents of the Assembly of the State of New York," Vol. 105, Issue 1, p. 265
3. <https://books.google.com> "North Dakota Immigrants: Coming to America" by Joseph L. Gavett, p. 238 The Red Star Line on Oregon Public Broadcasting, viewed March 18, 2015
4. www.immigrantships.net/newcompass/ancestral/imm_exp/castlegarden.html#cg_4

Other informative websites:

<http://www.norwayheritage.com/steerage.htm>

<https://books.google.com> "The Port of Hamburg"

www.theshipslist.com/pictures/CastleGarden.pdf article removed from "Harper's Monthly," Vol XLII, June to November 1870 (This is a wonderful article about arriving at Castle Garden in 1869)



The Philomath Post Office as Remembered by Mabel Green Cummings

Daughter of William Henry Green and Rosetta Allen Green, Granddaughter of William F. Allen and Mary Catherine Lewis Allen; written by her niece, Linda Green Olsen 4/14/07 ©



Mabel and George Cummings

If you received your mail through the Philomath Post Office in the early 1920s through 1945, you probably knew Mabel and George Cummings. Aunt Mabel began her career as a clerk in the Philomath Post Office in 1919 at the age of 22. Uncle George was the postmaster from 1930 to 1935 when President Herbert Hoover, a Republican, was in office. Then Aunt Mabel became the assistant postmaster and eventually postmaster from 1935 to 1945 under President Franklin D. Roosevelt, a Democrat. Back then, the postmasters' political party had to match the political party of the current president in office.

The post office work was very exacting. Patrons expected their mail to be delivered on time and mistakes were not looked upon kindly. Mail was delivered to the post office at a regular time each day and outgoing, bagged mail had to be ready or it would have to wait for the next delivery and pick up time. Mail was carried by passenger train west and east. First,

it traveled east to town about two o'clock then it came back and traveled west to the coast. All the mail was hand canceled and transported by passenger stages and freight trucks three times a day each way.

Besides organizing the incoming and outgoing mail, the post office clerks sold a variety of postage stamps, and ration stamps during WWII. Aunt Mabel remembered selling thousands of dollars worth of

money orders and bonds during World War II. Children bought savings stamps. With four or five savings stamps, they could buy a bond. Other stamps Mabel sold for \$1 were Game Bird Stamps that were actually licenses that looked like a postage stamp. Another memorable event she recalled was the time President Roosevelt gave everyone the day off to celebrate the end of the war.



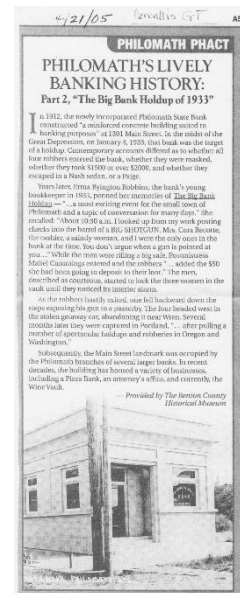
Most of the people who came into the post office were friendly and polite and a pleasure to serve. Some people however, were suspicious if there had ever been an error made in delivery of their mail. Handling the money and accounting for it accurately was a huge responsibility and Mabel prided herself on never losing a penny while in charge of the post office. The only time there was a mishap was the time she walked into the middle of a bank hold-up in Philomath with \$50 of postal funds in a sack ready for deposit. This was January 4, 1933. The postal funds were stolen along with the money from the bank. The robbers were later caught

and brought to justice. The whole story of the bank robbery can be read in the newspaper accounts.



Mabel resigned from the post office in 1945 due to recurring arthritic knee problems. During retirement, she kept busy with church activities and numerous hobbies. She always enjoyed collectibles and loved antiques and family memorabilia. She wrote brief anecdotes about events in her life and little snippets of what life was like as she grew up. She left a priceless legacy of family history and stories for which I will be forever grateful.

"Last Day at the Philomath P. O."
Mabel Cummins. Retired. 1945



Google Photos with Unlimited Storage is Now Available Dick Eastman 1 Jun 2015
This is worth checking out as a cloud-based storage of your family history photos! See details here:
<http://blog.eogn.com/2015/06/01/google-photos-with-unlimited-storage-is-now-available/>



Free Research Guides from Ancestry.com (from Ancestry Insider, 07 Apr 2015)

“In a recent [Ancestry Blog post](#), Ancestry Anne pointed out several short, free research guides.

- [Finding Your Immigrant Ancestors on Ancestry](#)
- [African American family research onAncestry.com](#)
- [Finding Your Irish Ancestors in the U.S. and Ireland](#)
- [Finding Your Ancestors from the UK and Ireland](#)
- [Finding Your Swedish Ancestors atAncestry.com](#)
- [Finding Your German Ancestors onAncestry.com](#)
- [Finding Your Canadian Ancestors onAncestry.com](#)
 - [Researching Your American Indian Ancestors on Ancestry](#)

Of course, they are Ancestry.com centric, but not entirely so. Each is a PDF of just a few pages, suitable for printing or keeping on your tablet. You can see the [complete list of research guides](#) in the Ancestry.com learning center.” *From Ancestry Insider*



Hope You All Have Fun "Finding" the "Old Homesteads" contributed by Maridee



“At the last meeting I told of the blmglo site to find homesteads in the states. I found my g-grandparents in Wallowa county, Union county and g-g-grandfather in Missouri!!!! The site is: www.glorerecords.blm.gov/default.aspx” by Maridee

The map here shows the states (in blue) whose land records are regulated by and searchable from the link shared above. You can search for an ancestor’s land holdings and residences by becoming familiar with the website. Those states in white are surveyed by another method and their land records are not found at this site. Thanks to Maridee & Happy hunting!! (Ron D)



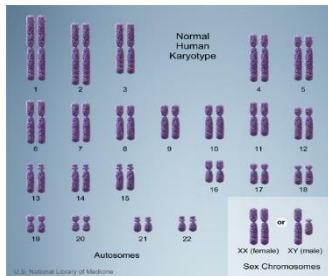
Family History Fair reports: Attending two family history fairs in the past month, Salem and Eugene, gave me some great resources and valuable information plus free lunches as well! Linda Forrest, PhD, member of the Oregon Genealogical Society and editor of the OGS Journal presented a very “accessible” talk

on the practical application of DNA research; she periodically offers a series of classes that assist with understanding one's own DNA results.

Randy Wilson, PhD and employee of FamilySearch provided classes on archiving photos, audio and video plus the means to convert old 8mm & 16mm family "home movie" films to digital media. Another class addressed family interviews, recording and documenting memories, converting audio tapes to digital files and the use of FamilySearch to store these in the "cloud". Time well spent! For a list of where these are located and to register online, go to: <https://www.lds.org/topics/family-history/host-a-family-history-fair/search?lang=eng> and enter your zip code to find those close to you. (Ron D)



Speaking of DNA analysis..... A number of our society members now have some "skin" in the game or more correctly, DNA derived from cheek swabs; now I'll spend many months working with the results and contacting "cousins" to figure out our relationships! I can tell that this will be great fun and thoroughly informative but will require a steep learning curve!



An excellent paper by a well-respected expert in applied genealogical DNA analysis, Blaine Bettinger, "The Genetic Genealogist" produced a helpful paper titled "*I Have the Results of My Genetic Genealogy Test, Now*

What?!" which describes me perfectly! This is located on the FamilyTree DNA website, link here: https://www.familytreedna.com/pdf-docs/Interpreting-Genetic-Genealogy-Results_web_optimized.pdf Caution! Be advised before you hit "print", it is 51 pages long!! (Ron D)



Benton County Genealogical Board Contacts

Names, email and phone numbers have been removed for security reasons.



US Geological Survey adds a New Online Map Viewer [Dick Eastman](#) · [May 4, 2015](#)



"The US Geological Survey has an online collection of more than 178,000 maps, dating back to 1880. They cover the entire country. Best of all, they're free to download..... Browsing and searching for maps is now much more intuitive. You can type or zoom in on a particular place, limit your search to maps of a particular scale or from a particular range of dates. You can download them in a variety of formats, from JPGs (fine for printing out a nice map to put on your wall...."

<http://blog.eogn.com/2015/05/04/us-geological-survey-adds-a-new-online-map-viewer-and-it-is-a-good-one/>

It's the first of the month



back up your files!!

BCGS General Meetings held on the 2nd Saturday in the month September through June. The June 13th meeting will be at 10am in the Social Hall of the College United Methodist Church, Philomath, everyone is welcome! **The June 13th "program" is a Potluck** at 11 am in the Annex and will include informal **tours of our collection**.

Board Meetings are held the Tuesday before the general meeting; in June it will be on Tuesday the 9th in the Philomath Public Library meeting room from 10am to noon. All members are invited.

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