

# Benton County Genealogical Society Newsletter

P.O. Box 1646, Philomath, OR 97370

Volume 30, Issue 5

## From the Desk of the President

May 2015

Memorial Day 🌸🌸🌸🌸🌸🌸🌸🌸🌸🌸 May 25, 2015

To say I am grateful to the men and women who served, some who “gave the last full measure of devotion” as President Lincoln penned in the Gettysburg address, does not begin to touch the feeling which we probably all do feel.



Arlington National Cemetery

Our kids can plan their lives, our grandchildren and great grandchildren are blessed beyond their ability to adequately comprehend because of the sacrifice of those who answered, and still do answer the call of country..... and also the sacrifice of their families left behind, some never to see their sons, fathers, husbands, wives and daughters again.



Viet Nam Memorial, Washington, D.C.

The pull we feel at such times, that debt of gratitude to those who have gone before is part of what motivates our family research, the trips, the writing, the hours and expense in which we engage, that those who served in the military and those in the homes in which we or our forebears grew might not be forgotten. Dedication and sacrifice made in battlefields, or within our homes, families and neighborhoods are worth remembering, recording, worth telling to those who follow.

Memorial Day will yet again find me among friends and neighbors at a commemorative program and flag raising, acknowledging the service of those whose efforts have “made and preserved us a nation”. We all are the beneficiaries of the sacrifices of those from whom we sprung, those in uniforms in foreign fields or in aprons in the homes of our youth. May we ever remember them and write their stories for those who follow. Ron D



In Flanders Fields



**May's program: Preparing for a Research Trip** will be presented by local society members with Mary Dean Snelling leading the topic. “If you are thinking you might go back to your “roots” and look for original records, ancestral homes, or living cousins, this program will help you get ready for that adventure, domestic or abroad. Combining a summer vacation with a genealogy research trip cannot only be rewarding but lots of fun. Who to contact ahead of time? What resources will be available to you when you get there? What repositories will you visit? Are there historical or genealogical societies

that have sources relating to your family? What will you need to pack to take with you? Preparation is the key to a successful genealogy vacation.” (Mary Dean)



### April Program Report: Researching Your German Ancestry, by Lois Courtney



On Saturday, April 11<sup>th</sup>, 27 of us learned about approaches to researching our German ancestors from presenter was LeAnne Trask. LeAnne works at LBCC in the Parenting Education Program, but was inspired in her genealogical research by her grandparents, who left her a wealth of information about her origins. Since many of her biological ancestors had already been well-researched, she decided to focus on her husband’s family, the Trasks, and that led her into her German research. She outlined 3 problem areas with German genealogical research:

**Location.** Any particular town in what is now Germany, may have been in Russia, Prussia, or Poland in an earlier time. Once you have some dates, you need to determine which of these is the relevant location. The boundary changes in Germany are worse than in any other nationality.

Then you have to know the name of the town (Stadt) or the district (Kreis). She recommends [http://germanculture.com.ua/library/history/bl\\_german\\_history.htm](http://germanculture.com.ua/library/history/bl_german_history.htm) to help with answers.

**Records.** The usual records, ships’ manifests and census data, are a good place to start. The National Archive has an on-line, free, searchable database. Between 1850 and 1897 4.1 million Germans came here. To get information about them in Germany, before they arrived, you need the town and religion, as many German records are only available through the local church. You might also find German military records that reference an ancestor.

**Language.** The older German documents are very hard to read. It wasn’t until 1996 that they formalized spelling. Also, there are three kinds of “fonts,” and most documents were written very lightly.

LeAnne handed out a wonderful “cheat sheet,” that shows a Geography Guide, the names of the German States and their capitals, the names of the Historical Regions, a description of the Administrative Divisions and the format for addresses. It also included samples of the three styles of writing and how important pieces of genealogical data might look in each (wedding, birth, burial, etc.). The sheet also lists helpful websites and books. She especially recommended In Search of Your German Roots by Angus Baxter. A copy of the sheet is available in our library in the Program Handouts Notebook on the movable bookshelf. LeAnne’s enthusiastic and energetic presentation inspired many of us to get busy with our own research.



**CDs are on their way out**, it is time to plan ahead. Optical drives (CD and DVD readers) in computers are becoming less common, reflecting the transition to jump drives, external hard drives, the Cloud, etc. CDs and DVDs also degrade and are made unusable when the shiny surface oxidizes. Remember punch cards, 5.25” and 3.5 “ floppy discs??! (Ron D)



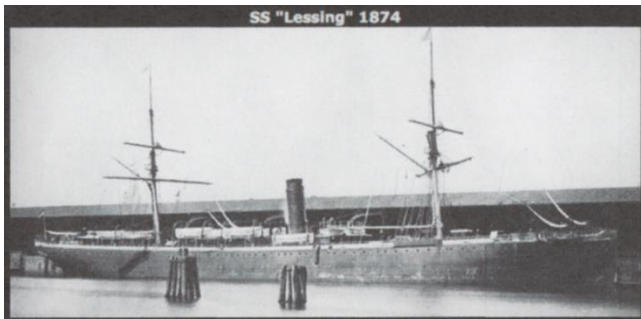
### **Coming to America, by Sue VanLaere**

Many of my European ancestors came to the United States on the steerage deck of a steam-powered sailing ship, the least expensive way to travel. Most larger ships provided three types of accommodations: 1st class (saloons/staterooms), 2nd class (cabins), and third class (steerage.) Usually, the largest number of passengers were in steerage accommodations below the main decks. They had their own outside deck for fresh air so they wouldn't mingle with the 1st and 2nd class passengers.

Because of political and economic conditions in Europe, large numbers of immigrants came to the Americas starting in the early 1800s. By 1855 the U.S. government realized the need for a reception center to control who was allowed to enter the country and to keep immigrants safe once they reached shore. This first center, Castle Garden, was a former fort named Castle Clinton and then a resort, located at the tip of Manhattan. My father's mother Lena was one of over 441,000 steerage passengers<sup>1</sup> who came through this center in 1881.

By the 1860s, 31% of immigrants were from the German countries.<sup>2</sup> Lena was only eight months old, accompanied by her parents Friederich and Christiane Rittgarn and siblings Emma and Martha. They had been given permission by Kaiser Wilhelm I to leave Prussia and were required to renounce their German citizenship. Taking their emigration papers, they left their home near Stralsund, Prussia, on the Baltic Sea and probably took a train to Hamburg. Once there, they were examined by a doctor to make sure they were well before they boarded. Papers and tickets were checked and they said a final goodbye to their homeland, knowing they would never be back.

They and most of their fellow passengers were farmers or craftsmen, not used to being on the sea. No doubt they arrived in New York exhausted and dirty from their 15-day ordeal on the steerage deck. But they were probably better off than earlier passengers. In the early 1800s, steerage passengers rode wherever they could find room in the cargo area, the lowest part of the ship. They had to bring their own food and bedding and whatever else they could carry. Little or no light and poor ventilation, cramped quarters, rats, fleas and lice, and constant noise and ship movement added to the misery.



But by the time my grandmother came, accommodations were somewhat better, at least on their ship. The SS Lessing, owned by the Hamburg-America Line, held 90 first class passengers, 100 second class, and 800 steerage. Along with those nearly 1000 passengers, there were over 100 crew—all of these in a ship 40 feet wide and 375 feet long.

Bunks in steerage, six feet long and 18 inches wide, at least four tiers high, took up most of the space. Long communal tables filled the rest of the area. Probably most passengers used their bunks as “home” for the duration. My sister remembers our grandmother saying, according to her mother, that she cried so much on the trip that some people threatened to throw her overboard. It’s hard to imagine trying to take care of a baby and two other children, ages 3 and 4 in such crowded conditions.



Simple menus such as salt meat, meal pudding, and prunes or smoked bacon, sauerkraut, and potatoes were available for steerage passengers as part of the ticket price.<sup>3</sup> Steerage passengers ate what they were given, if they could eat. Seasickness was rampant because of poor ventilation, close quarters, and the constant rocking of the ship. The toilets were at either end of the deck, so it’s easy to envision trying to make it there when people had to vomit. Trying to keep clean was nearly impossible, so smells must have been quite unbearable at times.

Continued in the June newsletter: **Arrival at Castle Garden, New York**



**Adoption Records** (another change!): Last month we earned new access to Ohio birth certificates and court decrees. This month, a change in New Jersey laws!

**[New Jersey to Allow Access to Birth Records for People Adopted in the State](#)**

Beginning in 2017, an adult adopted child whose adoption took place in New Jersey can request to obtain a non-certified copy of their original birth record. They will not be able to use the original birth record as proof of identification or for any other legal purposes. The only people allowed to request an original birth certificate in the case of an adoption are: an adult adopted child; a direct descendent, sibling or spouse of the adopted child; an adoptive parent or other legal guardian of...

**[Read the rest of the story](#)** (Eastman’s Online Genealogical Newsletter, April 4, 2015)



**History’s Wisdom** It has been said, *“When an old man dies, a library has been burned to the ground.”* I believe, with all my heart, that this is true. The only way to remember our past, our history, is to hear it told. Don't wait. Ask your elders about their past. Learn about YOUR history before it’s too late and another library burns to the ground. from Dawson County Historical Society Museum website, Lexington, Nebraska, [www.dchsmuseum.com](http://www.dchsmuseum.com) Sent by from Sue VanLaere





### Fold3, an invaluable resource.

Though the free access to Fold3 during April, the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Civil War's beginning, will have expired by the time the newsletter reaches you, it is always freely available at the Family History Center in Corvallis.

Fold3, formerly called Footnote until 2011, is a repository of many military records and worth using as part of your research. Those who have seen military funerals and the solemn manner in which the flag is folded into its triangular shape may understand its symbolic meaning where the name Fold3 comes from.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> flag fold signifies:

*“The **third** fold is made in honor and remembrance of the veteran departing our ranks, and who gave a portion of his or her life for the defense of our country to attain peace throughout the world.”*

The meaning of the flag folding ceremony may be found here: <http://www.legion.org/flag/folding> (Ron D)



#### Benton County Genealogical Board Contacts

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



#### Helpful Hints and Pitfalls! By Linda Olsen

Always work from the known to the unknown. In other words, build your next research step on previously well documented information.

Another Civil War non-participant: Find a Grave usually has good information and wonderful photos. However, I have to wonder when they listed my relative as having participated in the Civil War when he was born in 1865. Knowing a bit about historical events can help you spot errors.

Find a Grave error: Someone collected information on my great grandmother and said it was her great grandmother. It surely was not her relative and after two e-mails to straighten it out, she graciously conceded. The problem was reading the middle initial as a “G” instead of a “C”. Old grave markers become difficult to read over time. However, she did make an error by not checking facts. You can't just attach a whole family to your own ancestral line because of a name similarity.

Two people of the same name: When two people of the same name live in the same area, it's difficult to sort them out. When not all the research data fits together, then checking further into marriage, censuses, obituaries and death certificates can reveal two separate families that were mixed together as one person in some records. It took a relative of the “other” George W. Fuller to call into question some of the online information on the George W. Fuller, son of Arnold Fuller of Benton County. It still

seems strange that there could have been two George W. Fullers, about the same age, living so close together in a very small population of early Benton County, but there were.



## Upcoming classes and conferences



### Only searching the “Tip of the Iceberg”?

Then don't miss out on Mary Dean's presentation May 9th! An open forum will follow for others to share their experiences, lessons learned and how to get the most value and enjoyment out of the trip! Is this the year you plan and take the trip that will open doors, answer questions, provide the pictures and memories that enrich while enjoying yourself as well? (Ron D)

**Family History Fairs scheduled** Free family history fairs, open to the public, routinely scheduled and vary between half and full day classes. Two classes are offered in May. 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)



### 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 May 9 meeting will be at 10am in the Social Hall of the College United Methodist Church, Philomath, everyone is welcome!

**The May program** follows at 11 am and will be on *Preparing for a Research Trip* by Mary Dean Snelling.

**Board Meetings** are held the Tuesday before the general meeting; in May it will be on Tuesday the 5<sup>th</sup> in the Philomath Public Library meeting room from 10am to noon. All members are invited.

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