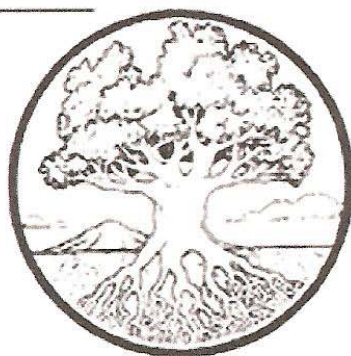


# SAN RAMON VALLEY

## GENEALOGICAL

## SOCIETY



### NEWSLETTER

P.O. Box 305

Diablo, CA 94528-8308

President: Patty Erickson

Coord. Editor: Dorothy Baker

Meetings: 10:00 a.m.

3rd Tuesday of the Month

(Except August & December)

Alamo LDS Church

Stone Valley & Smith Rds., Alamo

San Ramon Valley Genealogical Society

Vol. XXII No. 5 November/December – 2006

## ∞ THIS MONTH – November 21, 2006 ∞ Family Newsletters

Barbara Dittig will be our speaker in November. Barbara has been an SRVGS member for many years. She is also a Past President. She began her genealogy using PAF as the program for recording information. She shared her efforts with her family, and found that it stimulated a lot of correspondence. The interaction between a growing number family members led to the creation of a newsletter as the most efficient way to communicate. It also involved the creation of a unique data base. Her presentation will cover the publication of the "Mock Family Historian."

## ∞ OCTOBER MEETING ∞

### "Keeping Our Genealogy Alive"

Speaker: Marston Watson Reported by: Lee Schlenker

Marston Watson, a retired "headhunter" by profession, upon retiring has turned his interests to finding his New England roots ending up by compiling enough accurate data to write two books on royal families: Royal Families: Gov. Thomas Dudley (the first volume in 2002) and then Royal Families: Rev. Francis Marbury (the second volume in 2004). And he intends to continue with these books.

His feeling is if you don't write about your own family history in some form, your descendants will never know about any of their family - good or bad! You may not want to have a book published but a bound manuscript would work also. Not everyone in your family may want to read it or add to it. There are less and less books being written nowadays on individual histories. Many of these histories are going onto CDs. Even the library patronage is going down due to the internet being so accessible to information.

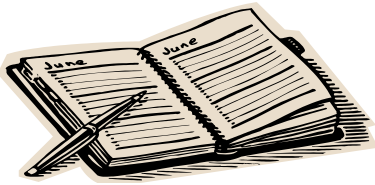
First off, Mr. Watson suggested that you find yourself a genealogy program for your computer which you like just to make things easier on yourself. There are several on the market - The Master Genealogist (TMG), Family Tree Maker, Ultimate Family Tree., to name a few.

If you are researching a certain "family name" you might want to see about joining a lineage society such as The Mayflower Society, DAR or SAR. These can be a little stringent as to whom they accept. But you can work through it.

Mr. Watson covered finding information out on the internet: not all of it is truthful or accurate. You need solid evidence to corroborate your findings before you put something into print. He says most of us have become lazy about sourcing. You must use the book name, page number, the repository, etc. Do an accurate bibliography when citing sources on any ancestor. An original document would be your primary source. A published record, biographical records or bible would be the secondary source. There are county census where you can look for information. Collaborate with people on the same name to find out more information. Names can be differently spelled (i.e. Hayward or Howard). If you find a birth date which is incorrect, put a "circa" date rather than a definite date. You have to be the real "Sherlock Holmes" for your family history. But get it *right* the first time!

Publish your family history because you cannot take it with you! If it's worthwhile - share it. Don't plan on giving it over to a library - they don't know how or what to do with it. Mr. Watson reminds us, "do it for the children!"

## MARK YOUR CALENDAR



### SRVGS CALENDAR November - 2006

- 7 Tuesday - 10:00 am. The Board Meeting**  
was held at the home of Patty Erickson
- 21 Tuesday - 10:00 am. General Meeting**  
will be held at the LDS Church on Stone Valley Road at Smith Road, in Alamo. From I-680 freeway, take Stone Valley Road east 2 & 1/2 miles.

### SRVGS CALENDAR DECEMBER 2006

- 5 Tuesday - 10:00 am Plan to attend the traditional pre-Christmas Cookie Exchange.**

*All members are welcome.*

It will be held at the home of Fran Lloyd in Danville. Bring a few cookies to share and plan to take home.

#### NOTE

The San Ramon Valley Genealogical Society will NOT have a General Meeting during the month of December.

#### NOTE

Special Interest Groups of The San Ramon Valley Genealogical Society will NOT meet during the month of December.

### SRVGS Special Interest Groups NOVEMBER 2006

**COMPUTER INTEREST GROUP** (The Master Genealogist) -- This is a genealogy software users group for PC's with their focus on the use of The Master Genealogist. Peggy Dearman is the contact person for the group. Phone 837-1621 or e-mail dearman@earthlink.net. This group will **not** meet in November or December.

**GERMAN** – Wednesday November 15<sup>th</sup>, the German Group will meet at the home of Robert and Fran Schweitzer in Walnut Creek.

**Please note that this is the third Wednesday.** This group usually has a meeting at the home of a member on the fourth Wednesday at 10 am. Fran Schweitzer is the contact person for the group. Phone 935-5744 or e-mail franschw@pacbell.net. Please contact Fran Schweitzer for further details or to let it be known that you do not plan to attend.

**IRISH** – This special interest group will meet November 8<sup>th</sup> (the second Wednesday) at 10:00 am. at the home of Patty Erickson in Pleasant Hill. Phone (925) 229-0889 or e-mail russpat@comcast.net for further information.

**SOUTHERN** – This group will meet (the second Tuesday of the month) at 10:00 am. On November 14th they plan to meet at the home of Peggy Dearman in Danville. The contact person is Dorothy Stanton, Phone 820-3757 or email dpstant@hotmail.com. New persons interested in attending should contact Dorothy Stanton for information.

**INTERNET INTEREST GROUP VIA EMAIL** – Interested members communicate and receive email messages via the address network established by Jack Johnson, group coordinator. This group does not otherwise get together for meetings on a regular basis. Their purpose is more to alert it's participants to useful genealogical sites on the Web. Receiving a message from someone in this group allows a group member to communicate with ALL group members by saving a current message and sending a reply to ALL. Member Internet/e-mail users may join this group by sending an email request to jackmj@earthlink.net. Please use "SRVGS Internet User" as a subject line.

#### **NEWS VIA EMAIL** -

Ed Mason is the coordinator for an additional method to improve the timeliness and frequency of communication by emails. The purpose of this general email is simply a way to extend our group communication ability beyond the monthly newsletter. He keeps an email address list of members. He will distribute messages a minimum of once a month. Members wishing to share news may send it to Ed. If it is deemed appropriate, it will be distributed. Members will always have the option to Opt-Out. Notify Ed Mason at: edmason@sbcglobal.net

**CALENDAR OF OTHER EVENTS**

**14 November - Tuesday 7:30 pm**

The Livermore-Amador Genealogical Society will have its regular meeting at Beth Emek, 3400 Nevada Court in Pleasanton. "Chinese Genealogy" will be the subject of a presentation by Kay Speaks.

**President's Message  
By Patty Erickson**



Hopefully, many of you, in October, took advantage of the various classes and the LDS seminar in Concord to celebrate Family History month.

How much genealogy work will you do this two months? Perhaps you are working on a family project to present to your family at Thanksgiving or Christmas. You could be putting the finishing touches on such a family presentation. Maybe this would be a good time to share past holiday memories of our parents and grandparents. You might now be the senior generation in your family. Keeping family traditions alive means talking to the next generations, providing them the why and how of these traditions.

I wish each of you a scrumptious Thanksgiving and a Joyous Holiday Season!

**NEWSLETTER TEAM**

**Coordinator:** Dorothy Baker 925-952-9691  
Email: DJDorothy@comcast.net

**Calendar Coordinator:** Vern Segelke 925-828-8570  
Email: v.m.seg3@sbcglobal.net

**Mailing:** Lucy Carver 925-837-3146

**Deadline to put information in the Newsletter is the Last Thursday of the month.**

Member are encourage to submit articles for the Newsletter by mail or email to Coordinator.



**A THANKSGIVING POEM**

Twas the night of Thanksgiving, but I just couldn't sleep I tried counting backwards, I tried counting sheep. The leftovers beckoned-- the dark meat and white, but I fought the temptation with all of my might. Tossing and turning with anticipation, the thought of a snack became infatuation. So, I raced to the kitchen, flung open the door and gazed at the fridge, full of goodies galore. I gobbled up turkey and buttered potatoes, pickles and carrots, beans and tomatoes. I felt myself swelling so plump and so round, till all of a sudden, I rose off the ground. I crashed through the ceiling, floating into the sky With a mouthful of pudding and a handful of pie But, I managed to yell as I soared past the trees..... happy eating to all---pass the cranberries, please! -----



**Welcome to SRVGS**

Susan Busenius

10 Cedarbrook Ct, Walnut Creek CA 94597  
(925) 945-0715 [busenius@astound.net](mailto:busenius@astound.net)

**PLEASE make correction in  
SRVGS Handbook**

Dorothy Baker's Email address should read:  
DJDorothy@comcast.net

**HOW TO REACH THE BOARD MEMBERS**

**President:**

Patty Erickson 925-229-0889  
Email: russpat@comcast.net

**1st V.P.**

Barbara Dittig 925-648-9364

**2nd V.P. Program:**

Bob Dougherty 925-556-3302  
Kathy Javdani 925-736-5464

**3rd V.P. Membership:**

Ileen Peterson 510-651-7728  
Email: ileenpeterson@comcast.net

**Recording Secretary:** Carol Huvane 925-947-5669

**Corresponding Secretary:**

Sandra Burns 925-648-4653

**Treasurer:** Ed Mason 925-838-7848

**Parliamentarian:** Virginia Rood 925-937-8659

## My Genealogical Trip This Summer



2006 - By Virginia Rood

In July after attending the DAR Continental Congress, my husband and I drove to Western Pennsylvania to do some research in the Ligonier area of Westmoreland County outside of Pittsburgh. We had never been to that area before.

I had been in touch with a genealogical cousin for a few years, who had helped me with my research and knowledge of the area. (From this area I have proven four Revolutionary ancestors for DAR.) We had made arrangements to spend a day with her while in the area. She was very willingly to spend an entire day showing us the land and farms where our mutual ancestors lived, (Hood, Felgar, Gettemy, Williams and Campbell families) the cemeteries where they are buried and libraries where she has done research on these families.

It turned out that the local library in Ligonier has a very organized collection of genealogy for the area and a well informed librarian as well. We had visited the Westmoreland County Historical Society in Greensburg briefly when we arrived late in the afternoon, but found it to be not as helpful as the library at Ligonier, which I had known nothing about before arriving in Westmoreland County - Another reason for traveling to your ancestral home area!

After our afternoon with Roberta, we had arranged to visit another contact I had made on the Internet a few days before leaving. We went to her home. She had quite a bit of information on her computer, which she was willing to print out for me. Interestingly, she also descended from the same line as Roberta, but these two ladies had never shared information, both living in the same town.

Following this visit we then went to another very small historical society that we learned about while there called 'The Chestnut Ridge Historical Society'. It turns out that a person from my Campbell line, who I had worked with over twenty years ago through the Westmoreland Historical Society in Greensburg, now lives near this society and volunteers there. The volunteer called her and asked her to come over to meet with us. She came over and again helped me locate materials at their library, and it was really fun to meet her in.

person after all of these years.

In conclusion I learned some new things, particularly new resources, some facts, was able to take pictures of gravestones and got to meet the people who share something with me.

We came home feeling like the days spent in Western Pennsylvania had been very worthwhile and a lot of fun! And I can now picture where my ancestors settled during the Revolutionary period of our history.

### Tips from the Pros:



#### Tips from an Old File

From Paula Stuart Warren, CG

I am taking some of my own advice and checking old files--tossing duplicate items, things no longer needed, and outdated items. I was doing this to get ready for a mini-family reunion. I chuckled a few times at notes I made as I listened to lectures in the early 1980s. (Wasn't that just yesterday?) Much of what I found still applies today:

If a family disappears, check the locations of the wife's family. People often moved with the wife's family.

If a family disappears, look westward. Pay attention to when homestead land opened in various states.

Surname spelling doesn't count; your family may not have known how to spell the name, or the clergy entering their details into a record book may not have been familiar with the language your ancestors spoke.

Always keep maps handy and pay attention to city, county, and state boundary changes.

If your ancestor does not appear in a county history, try for their siblings or in-laws.

Your family may not have moved--the town or county line may have moved.

Don't forget to look for the records of siblings. Those may hold some magic in the form of maiden names, places of origin, and may yield the descendant with the family Bible.

I also found a note talking about the 1910 U.S. census that was about to be opened to researchers. Just think, we now have the 1920 and 1930 available for research. And they are online and every-name indexed today.

Ancestry -

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## Requesting U.S. Passport Applications

Using Ancestry.com Boston Passenger Lists I discovered my great-grandfather returned to Ireland in 1932, at the age of sixty. On the passenger manifest, next to his name and address, was a United States passport number and its issue date. I was intrigued. Why did he go to Ireland at the height of the depression? How long was he there? I wrote to the U.S. Department of State's Office of Information Resources Management requesting a copy of his passport application under the Freedom of Information Act (5 USC 552). By doing this, I saved the \$60 fee the Department of State normally charges for this service. The downside is I had to wait five months for the document. But it was worth it! I received a copy of his application today and it contains his birth date, place and country of birth; the location and date of his naturalization; his current address; the name of his father and his father's country of birth; the countries he planned to visit with the passport, the reason for his visit; how long he was traveling for, the port he was sailing from, the name of the ship, the date he was departing; his height, age, hair and eye color; his occupation; his signature; a signature and address for an identifying witness (his brother-in-law in this case); and best of all, a copy of his photograph! There is space on the application for names of a wife and children, with personal data, but these were left blank.

So for those of you with U.S. naturalized immigrants in your ancestry, don't stop searching for a passenger manifest just for their first trip to the USA. Look for a possible trip home later in life. If you find a passport number and date of issue, you can submit a request for a copy under the Freedom of Information Act (5 USC 552). You will need to provide credible evidence to indicate the person is deceased, in order to overcome the Privacy Act restrictions. (I used photocopies of his Irish birth certificate and obituary.) You will also need to provide the following information: The passport applicant's name; passport number; year of birth; naturalization date; place of residence at the time of the application; approximate year of travel; and your name, mailing (postal) address, and telephone number.

Submit the request to:

Department of State Office of Information  
Resources Management  
515 22nd Street NW  
Washington, D.C. 20522-6001

And then just wait patiently--within six months you could have a treasure trove in your mailbox and answers to your questions! In my case, my great-grandfather wished to visit relatives, and stayed there for nine months!

Susan Daily

Missouri

Ancestry Daily News



## NATIONAL ARCHIVES

San Bruno

The National Archives Pacific Region – San Francisco, located at 1000 Commodore Drive in San Bruno, has reduced Wednesday evening extended hours as of October 4, 2006. Regular week day hours will remain at 7:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. until further notice. As of October 2006, Wednesday evening microfilm and public access computer research room hours will be 4:00 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. For further information call 1-650-238-3501

The following comments are from an article "Upfront with the National Genealogical Society" Vol. 5 No. 10-1 October 2006 - concerning the cutbacks at NARA.

“The petition with more than 10,000 names was received at NARA and the Office of Management and Budget was notified. OMB apparently received a final listing of 530 letters and 2 signed petitions, including ours. Unfortunately, the petitions were only counted as 1 comment.

We know that individual letters written to elected officials are the most effective way to voice our sentiments about proposed changes and budget cuts. This year's drastic cut in NARA's budget means that more changes and cuts in services are undoubtedly in the offing. Now might be the time to contact your elected representatives. Let them know that more than 10,000 researchers signed a petition (recorded to OMB as a single comment) to protest the cutback in research hours.

We should also all be prepared to write again to our elected officials if additional restrictions in services are announced, as we believe they will be.”

Thanks You – Dorothy Stanton

## Name Changes at Ellis Island: Fact or Fiction?



*By Dick Eastman*

Since the recent opening of the American Family Immigration History Center at Ellis Island, a popular myth has come again to the forefront of topics related to Ellis Island. This myth, that immigrants' names were changed when they entered Ellis Island, needs to be dispelled. While immigrants' surnames changed over time as they began assimilation into a new country, names were rarely changed at Ellis Island.

This popular myth ignores the way documents were created and carefully scrutinized throughout the immigration process. For admittance into the United States, an immigrant had to have proof of identity. This form was filled out in the homeland by a local clerk who used the native language. Name spellings on these documents would logically conform to local spellings. Next, when an immigrant purchased a ticket for passage, exit visas and other paperwork had to be examined by ticket agents before a ticket could be issued. The surname would have been accurately recorded at that time as well.

Similarly, a ship's passenger list was prepared by the ship's captain or his representatives before the ship left port. The list was created from the traveler's documents. The ship's captain or designated representative would examine each passenger's paperwork. Immigrants would not be accepted into Ellis Island without proper documentation and, if the paperwork was incomplete, the passengers would be sent back home at the shipping company's expense. The ship's owners went to great lengths to ensure the accuracy of the paperwork, including names, places of birth, and travel plans.

The myth of name changes also revolves around the concept that the immigrant was unable to communicate properly with the English-speaking officials at Ellis Island. However, this assumption ignores the fact that officials at Ellis Island employed hundreds of translators who could speak, read, and write the immigrants' native tongues. Interpreters spoke Yiddish, Russian, Lithuanian, and all of the European languages. They were usually earlier immigrants or children of immigrants.

When the ship arrived at Ellis Island, the captain or his representative would disembark first with the passenger list. Ellis Island officials would then bring in the interpreters to handle the interrogations. The processing time was one to three days. During this time, each immigrant was questioned about his or her identity, and all of the necessary documentation was examined in detail.

Of course, there were a few exceptions to the formality of documentation at Ellis Island, and names may have been changed at these times. Occasionally, war refugees were admitted into the United States without much documentation, especially in 1945 and 1946. A few other immigrants succeeded in falsifying their documents in order to gain admittance when they could not have been admitted under their true identities. Or, a child may have been admitted under the surname of a stepfather when the name of the natural father would have been more appropriate. In general, though, names remained the same throughout the Ellis Island experience.

Once the immigrants settled into their new homes, however, anything could have happened. Millions of immigrants had their names changed voluntarily by clerks or schoolteachers who couldn't pronounce or spell the foreign-sounding names. Some immigrants changed their names in order to obtain employment. Others found it easier to assimilate into American culture if they had American-sounding names, so they accepted the names their neighbors or schoolteachers used. *Note: For more information about Ellis Island name changes, visit the [Immigration and Naturalization Service Web site](#).*

Ancestry Magazine

7/1/2001 - **Archive** July/August 2001

*Eastman's Online Genealogy Newsletter, 13 May 2001.*

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### A Little Thanksgiving Humor – Very Little

If April showers bring May flowers, what do May flowers bring?

Pilgrims!

If the Pilgrims were alive today, what would they be most famous for?

Their AGE



**Yes, Virginia,  
There Is A Santa**

We take pleasure in answering at once and thus prominently the communication below, expressing at the same time our great gratification that its faithful author is numbered among the friends of *The Sun*:

Dear Editor,

I am eight years old. Some of my little friends say there is no Santa Claus. Papa says, "If you see it in *The Sun*, it's so." Please tell me the truth. Is there a Santa Claus?

Virginia O'Hanlon  
115 West Ninety-fifth St.

Virginia,

Your little friends are wrong. They have been affected by the skepticism of a skeptical age. They do not believe except they see. They think that nothing can be which is not comprehensible by their little minds. All minds, Virginia, whether they be men's or children's, are little. In this great universe of ours, man is a mere insect, an ant, in his intellect, as compared with the boundless world about him, as measured by the intelligence of grasping the whole of truth and knowledge.

Yes, Virginia, there is a Santa Claus. He exists as certainly as love and generosity and devotion exist, and you know that they abound and give to your life its highest beauty and joy. Alas! how dreary would be the world if there were no Santa Claus! It would be as dreary as if there were no Virginias. There would be no childlike faith then, no poetry, no romance to make tolerable this existence. We should have no enjoyment, except in sense and sight. The eternal light with which childhood fills the world would be extinguished.

Not believe in Santa Claus! You might as well not believe in fairies! You might get your papa to hire men to watch in all the chimneys on Christmas Eve to catch Santa Claus, but even if they did not see

Santa Claus coming down what would that prove? Nobody sees Santa Claus but that is no sign that there is no Santa Claus. The most real things in the world are those that neither children nor men can see. Did you ever see fairies dancing on the lawn? Of course not, but that's no proof that they are not there. Nobody can conceive or imagine all the wonders there are unseen and unseeable in the world.

You tear apart the baby's rattle and see what makes the noise inside, but there is a veil covering the unseen world, which not the strongest man, not even the united strength of all the strongest men that ever lived, could tear apart. Only faith, fancy, poetry, love, romance, can push aside that curtain and view and picture the supernal beauty and glory beyond. Is it all real? Ah, Virginia, in all this world there is nothing else real and abiding.

No Santa Claus! Thank God! He lives, and he lives forever. A thousand years from now, Virginia, nay ten times ten thousand years from now, he will continue to make glad the heart of childhood.

— Frances P. Church, *New York Sun*, September 21,  
1897

Thought for Today  
12/24/2002 - [Archive](#)

**"Twas the Night Before Christmas"  
Genealogy Style - By Pam Spittel**

After my divorce, I needed to do something for Christmas to lift my spirits. I wrote a silly "'Twas the Night Before Christmas" poem that included every member of the family. I followed the original version for rhyming words but kept it to one printed page. It was so well received that I would go on to write a new one each year. At our annual Christmas Eve gathering, it became a tradition for me to read the newest issue before the gifts were opened. Year-after-year it would be "top secret" what Aunt Pam had written this time. When I started my little nephews and nieces were babies. Now a few have babies of their own! Since the family has grown, the big deal now is whether they are even mentioned because only the highlights are included to keep the poem on one page. Dad and Mom are ALWAYS included. Now in their 80s, we are thankful they are still with us.

After twenty years, there is a lot of history in these poems. Sometimes family members will call and ask that I refer to the collection to find out when a certain event occurred. I had gotten in the habit of noting special happenings in my daily planner and highlighting them in yellow. It made my writing task easier in December when all I needed to do was go through my planner and list the highlighted items. Some would be so surprised that I "remembered" something that had happened in February! (Usually something funny).

I keep each poem in a page protector in a simple three-ring binder. The children love browsing through it each Christmas Eve, the only time it is brought out. After a while, I started adding photos of these special annual gatherings.

This Christmas Eve was the twentieth Anniversary and to commemorate, my very talented twenty-four year old son, who has a degree in graphic design, reproduced the poems and photos into a beautifully bound book! It was the highlight of our celebration.

Some of you may think this is too hard to do, but honestly, it was a labor of love, and not as difficult as it seems. I no longer follow the original rhythm but the poems always start and end the same. Once in a while I will include an "outside the family" current event if it was big, such as the death of Princess Diana or the capture of Saddam Hussein.

I may not ever finish my family tree work of the last six years to be able to publish it, but I already have something that I know will be cherished for generations. (By the way, I'm already interviewing nieces to take over for me when I can no longer do this).

**Ancestry Quick Tip**

**Christmas Poem** - Pam Spittel

Quick Tips may be reprinted, with credit to the submitter

***HAPPY THANKSGIVING***

***MERRY CHRISTMAS***

***HAPPY HANUKKAH***

San Ramon Valley  
Genealogical Society  
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Diablo, CA 94528-0305

FIRST CLASS MAIL

