



San Ramon Valley Genealogical Society

www.srvgensoc.org



San Ramon Valley Genealogical Society

Vol. XXXX No. 2 July - 2024

July Presentation

Tuesday July 16th, 2024 at 10 am

AI Assisted Genealogy (Via Zoom)

By Steve Little



This presentation provides a comprehensive overview of how AI (Artificial Intelligence) tools, like chatbots, are changing genealogical research. Learn about the history, current limits and capabilities, and future potential of AI in family history. Key topics also include the ethical and privacy implications in this emerging field. A must-attend for those curious about the cutting-edge intersections of technology and ancestry.

Steve Little is the AI Program Director for the National Genealogical Society and has lifelong passions for language, technology, and genealogy. He completed graduate-level courses in applied linguistics, specializing in natural language processing and computational linguistics, two pillars of today's large language models of AI; his first career was spent in and around libraries (law, local, university, and state archives) building information systems. Steve traces his deep roots to one Appalachian county, where, by 1820, all 32 of his 3rd-great-grandparents had settled—many even earlier than that. In fact, 60 of his most recent ancestors were born, lived, and died there, in Ashe County, North Carolina. His passion lies in AI & genetic genealogy: with a keen interest in endogamy, pedigree collapse, and the art of deciphering multiple relationships through DNA segment triangulation, and an insatiable curiosity to explore beneficial uses and current limits of artificial intelligence in genealogy. ■

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A link to the Zoom meeting will be sent out to all members a few days prior to the meeting. If you have any friends or family that would like to attend, have them contact Scott Hefner at president@srvgensoc.org prior to the meeting for the link. If you have any Zoom questions or issues, please contact Scott at 925-765-7184 or Bill George at williamcgeorge@gmail.com.



President's Message

By Scott Hefner



As I begin my term as President of the SRVGS, I'm reflecting back on my experiences in genealogy research and my reasons for seeking out and joining a local Society. Like many people, I have a great interest in my family history and have recognized that there are a lot of gaps in my basic knowledge of my parents, grandparents, and more distant family. How long they've been in this country, where they came from, how they got here, where they lived, who the other members of their family were, and a myriad of other questions have occurred to me and demanded answers.

Years ago and without giving it a lot of thought, I bought a program for my computer (I think it was Family Tree Maker) that came in a box with about 20 CDs of program and data files. I installed it on my PC and went to work in a very haphazard manner trying to solve all the mysteries of my family background. There wasn't much online at the time and the data files on the CDs, while interesting, didn't provide a lot of the answers I was looking for. As time passed, though, more and more data became available online and I started making some real discoveries. The first time I saw a page from the Census with names of my ancestors on it, I was hooked. Then later, when I discovered other family trees online that intersected with my own and added branches of my family who had been in America since the 1600s, I knew there was no stopping.

Genealogy research can be a lonely pursuit, involving frequent frustration, encountering dead ends, following paths that lead the wrong way or nowhere. But there is also the occasional exciting discovery or breakthrough which seems to make it all worthwhile. I've found that both the frustrations and the excitement are made better by sharing with others. But as fascinating as genealogy

is for us, we quickly discover that not everyone in our family and circle of friends shares our enthusiasm.

Joining a Society like ours brings you into contact with others who share the same interests and passions as you regarding family history. It provides opportunities for sharing ideas and experiences, learning new approaches, brainstorming about how to overcome brick walls, celebrating discoveries, and more. Sharing with others is a great way to maintain or re-ignite your enthusiasm for continuing your research.

When I first joined the Society I intended to just pay my dues, attend occasional meetings, and listen to presentations. I didn't expect to become involved in the operation of the Society. However, as I began attending meetings and getting to know a few members, I realized how much the Society depends on the efforts of many people in order to function. I also began to feel a little guilt from being just a bystander who let others do all the work so I could enjoy the benefits.

In the end, I agreed to serve as First Vice President when I was approached two years ago. During the ensuing two years I got to know more members and attend more functions, and decided that I really enjoyed being a part of the Society and wanted to see it succeed. All of the foregoing leads to where we are today, as I begin my first month as the President of the Society. I still have a lot to learn but I am confident that with all of your help and support we will continue to enjoy all of the benefits from our Society we have had in the past.

Thank you all and I'm looking forward to a fun and rewarding future! ■

News from the June Board Meeting

Steve Watty (1st VP) and Karen LaDuca (Recording Secretary) tendered their resignations to the board for their positions this month. A special election was held at the most recent Board Meeting to fill these positions with Karen LaDuca being elected to the position of 1st VP and Margaret Goetze elected to the position of Recording Secretary. ■



Join the New Italian Research SIG

Are you interested in doing research in Italy for yourself, a family member or friend? Join our Italian Research SIG and learn what records are available online and where to access them, along with strategies for finding that all important town of origin and how to decipher the Italian records. We have 3 members so far but we need you! Meeting type (Zoom or in-person) and date TBD once we have a large enough group to get started. Contact SIG leader Karen LaDuca at kblquilt@comcast.net or SIG coordinator Bill George at williamcgeorge@gmail.com to join. ■

WELCOME TO OUR NEW MEMBERS

Let's all extend a Warm Welcome to our newest members,

Weldon Theobald
Wendy Line
Susan Toulson
Elizabeth Murphy
Mary Denney

Family Search Center Availability

Our Danville Family Search Center, located at 2949 Stone Valley Rd, Alamo, will be open by appointment only for the month of July, and closed for the entire month of August, as usual. They will reopen in September with regular hours. Check this newsletter for their hours in the September issue—due out at the end of August.

Do not despair, though, because there are other options. The Concord and Oakland FSCs are still open with regular hours for drop in patrons.

There is also a Livermore FSC, where our own Karen LaDuca volunteers, and she says that it is open for the month of August. Check the Family Search website for hours, locations and contact info. ■



Notes on the June 2024 Presentation

By Karen LaDuca

"A New Strategy: Organize to Break Through Research Barriers"

By Kim Richardson

Ms. Richardson presented a different way to approach breaking through a genealogical brick wall by treating it like a cold case. She uses sticky notes or index cards to help you simplify the information that you have already collected on your ancestor. Interacting with the data in a hands-on way will use more parts of your brain and putting concise thoughts handwritten on sticky notes will allow you to rearrange them in logical order and see everything at one glance.

She presented 3 steps for solving the problem of a brick wall.

Organize: Use notes to list life events horizontally in your workspace. Add notes below with information about that life fact. Look for missing information or conflicts.

Plan: Write a research question that will lead you to possible searches.

Brainstorm: Try many different methods to approach the problem. Her handout lists 10 different approaches you can try. One that she particularly likes to use is transcribing a record. This method won't let you overlook something that you might miss by just reading it. ■



**MARK YOUR CALENDAR****July 2024**

- 16 Tuesday-10am, the July General Meeting will be held via Zoom Link. Steve Little will present **AI-Assisted Genealogy via Zoom Link.**
- 23 Tuesday-10am The Board Meeting will be held via Zoom. All members are welcome.

August 2024 No meetings or events

September 2024

- 17 Tuesday-10am, the September General Meeting will be held via Zoom Link. Lisa Vogel will present **Travel Our Tree: Walking in Your Ancestors' Steps.**
- 24 Tuesday-10am The Board Meeting will be held via Zoom. All members are welcome.

October 2024

- 15 Tuesday-10am, the October General Meeting will be held via Zoom Link. Our own Gay Scott will present **The Witchcraft Crisis of 1692**
- 22 Tuesday-10am The Board Meeting will be held via Zoom. All members are welcome.

November 2024

- 19 Tuesday-10am, the November General Meeting will be held via Zoom Link. Bob LaPerriere, M.D will present **Women's Issues on the Overland Trail.**
- 26 Tuesday-10am The Board Meeting will be held via Zoom. All members are welcome.

December 2024 Holiday Gathering and Cookie Exchange. ■

OFFICERS & COMMITTEE MEMBERS

President: Scott Hefner
president@srvgensoc.org

1st Vice President:
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NEWSLETTER TEAM

Editor: Barbara Thurston

Calendar Coordinator:
Bill George

Education Coordinator:
Kathy Javdani

Webmaster: Bill George
webmaster@srvgensoc.org



SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP UPDATE

By: Bill George, SRVGS SIG Coordinator

In July, 2024 we will have "normal", meetings on-line, except for the in-person German SIG at the Danville FamilySearch Center from 1pm - 2:45pm. All SIG members receive emails from their leaders on how to join each meeting.



FamilySearch - Monday, July 8th, (the 2nd Monday) from **1:00 pm – 3:00 pm in a Zoom Meeting.** Learn the many aspects of this free, comprehensive genealogy web site. You may contact SIG Leader Bill George at williamcgeorge@gmail.com



Irish/Scottish Research, Wednesday, July 10th, (the 2nd Wednesday) **10:00 am - 12:00 pm in a Zoom meeting.** They share information from the internet, journals, DNA and books. **Leslie Stewart volunteered and is now leading the group.** You may contact Leslie at lvwleslie@gmail.com.



DNA, Monday, July 15th, (the 3rd Monday) **1:00 pm - 3:00pm in a Zoom meeting.** This SIG assumes a basic knowledge of Genealogical DNA testing and therefore is only open to those who have completed the SRVGS Intro to DNA class or an approved equivalent. You may contact SIG Leader **Mark McLaren** at greatscot@earthlink.net.



Publishing, Thursday, July 18th, (the 3rd Thursday) **10:30 am 12:00 pm in a Google Meet meeting.** Contact Kathy Javdani at kjjsc@aol.com for info on how to join the meeting. Share information and ideas on how to publish and preserve your research. **Francie Lloyd**, is the SIG Leader and can be reached at frances_lloyd@comcast.net ►



German Research, Wednesday, July 24th, (the 4th Wednesday) **1 - 2:45 pm, at the Danville FamilySearch Center, 2949 Stone Valley Rd, Alamo. This is an in-person meeting only (No Zoom).** Members share information from a variety of sources. You may contact SIG Leader **Karen LaDuca** at kblquilts@comcast.net)



After a successful first meeting in June, we are open to new members! The **Italian SIG** will meet on **Wednesday July 17th 1:00 pm—3:00 pm** via Zoom. Zoom meeting details will be mailed to members before the meeting. Please contact Karen LaDuca at kblquilts@comcast.net with questions or to join. ■

**Your Society Needs You!**

Due to some changes in current volunteer availability, SRVGS has the following volunteer openings:

Publicity and Outreach Committee – this entails getting the word out about our Society via newspapers, social media, and fliers posted in public places, as well as fielding requests for genealogy speakers. Ideally, this would involve several volunteers working together as a team.

Hospitality – entails arranging for refreshments at key in-person meetings, such as our Annual Meeting in May and our Holiday Meeting in December. This could involve one or more volunteers.

As you know, our Society thrives because of its volunteers. Please consider helping out with one of these openings. If you're interested, or have questions, please contact President Scott Hefner, shefner@sbcglobal.net, 925.838.8208.■



EDUCATION

By: Kathy Javdani

It's July with the 4th to celebrate. Let's also celebrate our family history by learning more about it.

☞ The California Genealogy Society Library, www.californiaancestors.org, is open Thursday through Saturday from 10-2. Refer to the society's website for specific procedures for Saturday visits and to register for the following activities. Note any fees. Also, visit the website for access to available recordings and videos.

- On Sat. July 6 from 10-12 the **Introduction to Genealogy Group** will hold a Zoom meeting. The topic will be **Vital Records**.
- On Sat. July 13 from 1-3, as part of the California History and Genealogy Workshop Series, Anthony Starz and Robin Hurwitz will lead a hybrid meeting with a discussion of **New Spanish Patriots' Eligibility for DAR** in addition to the presentation Sylvia Pacheco: **A Woman of Mystery and Longevity**.
- On Wed. July 10 from 6:30-8 Lisa Gorrell and Jacqueline Henderson will host the **CGS Members Roundtable** – an online group discussion session.
- On Sat. July 20 from 10-12 Sandra Huber will lead the **San Francisco SIG** via Zoom.
- Also, on July 20 from 1-3 Ron Madson and Karen Halfon will lead a hybrid meeting of the **Family Tree Maker SIG**. Fee for non-members. Register through the FTM-SIG website or contact Ron Madson (650) 576-4495 or Karen Halfon (415) 922-2255
- On Fri. July 19 from 10:30-11:30 Robert Trapp will guide the **Mayflower Descendants SIG** in person at the CGS library.
- On Mon. July 22 from 7-8:30 the **DNA Skills SIG** with Mark McLaren will meet online. Contact Mark at greatscot@earthlink.net for details.
- On Wed. July 24 from 6:30-8 the **RootsMagic Users Group SIG** with Keith Montgomery will meet online.
- On Sat. July 27 from 9:30-11 John Grenham will discuss **Mapping Ireland's Records** on Zoom. Fee.
- Sat. Aug. 3 from 10-12 the **Introduction to Ge-**

nealogy group will hold a Zoom meeting. The topic will be **Organizing Your Family History Work**.

☞ Contact the Oakland Family Search Center, www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Oakland_California_FamilySearch_Center/Classes_and_Workshops for an appointment, to register for classes and /or workshops. Check the website, email fhcoakland@gmail.com or call 510-531-3905 for details. The website also has links to online classes at the other Family Search Regional Libraries and BYU as well as Rootstech classes. In addition, the Family Search Library in Salt Lake presents several webinars each month.

- In July CGS and OFSC volunteers host **Tips & Talk**. These are in-person discussions about genealogical research for different ethnicities and more at the OFSC. Go to www.californiaancestors.org for dates, times, and details. No registration required.
- Jane Lindsey will provide **French Canadian Assistance**. Appt. only.
- On Thursdays from 11-6 there will be assistance for **Swedish Research**. No appt. required.
- On Wed. July 24 from 6-8 the **African American Research Workshop** meeting will be held on Zoom.

☞ The Southern California Genealogical Society (SCGS), <https://www.scgsgenealogy.com/programs> offers a variety of webinars and programs. Register online in advance.

☞ The New England Historic Genealogical Society (NEHGS), www.americanancestors.org/

[events](#) has a growing Online Learning Center that offers educational resources for both guest users and NEHGS members. It contains subject guides on a variety of genealogical topics, informative videos, webinars, online courses, and more. If you have questions or feedback, contact Online Education. Register for its webinars on the society's website.

- On Wed. July 3, 10, 17, 24, and 31 from 6-7:30 Rhonda McClure, Hallie Kirchner and James Heffernan will explore **Researching Immigrant Ancestors to America, 1620-1965**. \$125.
- On Mon. July 8 from 3-4 Jeffrey Rosen will share his book, **The Pursuit of Happiness: How Classical Writers on Virtue Inspired the Lives of the Founders and Defined America**.
- On Tue. July 9 Curt DeCamillo will preview the first volume (A-H) of his new book series, **A British Country House Alphabet: A Historical & Pictorial Journey**.
- On Thu. July 11 from 3-4 Meaghan Siekman will offer **An Introduction to California Research**.
- On Fri. July 12 from 10-11:15 Curt DiCamillo and Sadie Barber will discuss **Sandstone & the Blue Whale: Stories from One of the World's Oldest Botanic Gardens**.
- On Mon. July 15 from 3-4 Robert Sullivan will share his book, **Double Exposure: Resurveying the West with Timothy O'Sullivan, America's Most Mysterious War Photographer**.
- On Thu. July 18 from 12-1 Melanie McComb will present **Understanding and Utilizing Indexes**.
- On Mon. July 29 Gabrielle Roth will discuss **Locating Jewish Women in the Archives**.

Unable to attend the live session? A recording of the free events will be posted on the NEHGS website the following day. Many courses with fees are available on demand following their initial

presentation.

 The Allen County Public Library's Genealogy Center offers many webinars. Go to <https://acpl.lib.in.us/genealogy> to see the current list and to register online. Also, explore the Genealogy Center Videos at <https://acpl.lib.in.us/explore-genealogy/our-services>. Recorded Genealogy Center programs can be found on the Genealogy Center section of the library's YouTube channel.

- On Tue. July 2 from 11:30-12:30 Nate Mason will examine **Using MyAncestor.AI**.
- On Tue. July 9 from 11:30- 12:30 Daniel Poyner will discuss **Pass on the Torch: How to Ignite Passion in the Next Generation for Family History**.
- On Thu. July 11 from 3:30-4:30 Christina Clary will share offer **Discovering Your Roots at the Genealogy Center**.
- On Tue. July 16 from 11:30-12:30 Heather Nickerson will present **Documenting the Many Lives You've Lived with Artifacts**.
- On Thu. July 25 from 3:30-4:30 Leigh Bowles will explore **German Immigration From North Carolina to Indiana During the Plantation Era**.

 Legacy offers numerous free webinars every month. Go to <https://familytreewebinars.com> to register.

- On Tue. July 2 at 7 Elizabeth O'Neal will examine **10 Unexpected Places to Find Ancestor Photos Online**.
- On Tue. July 9 at 11 Melissa Barker will offer **10 Reasons Why MyHeritage is the Genealogist's Best Friend**.
- On Wed. July 10 at 5 Grant Din will discuss **Chinese Immigrants in the South**.
- On Fri. July 16 at 5 David Ouimette will present **Oral Genealogy in Asia-Pacific: The Essence of Personal Identity and Tribal Connections**.
- On Wed. July 17 at 11 Cheri Daniels will explore

- The Genealogy Squad <https://www.facebook.com/groups/genealogysquad/>
- Lisa also has a genealogy chat on YouTube at 9 am on Thursdays entitled **Elevenes**.
- Thomas MacEntee's www.genealogybargains.com
- Judy Russell's www.legalgenealogist.com
- Family History Fanatics www.familyhistoryfanatics.com/blog
- Connie Knox <https://genealogytv.org>

- On Fri. July 19 at 11 Collen Greene will share **Putting Them in Their Place: Understanding Localities for Your Mexican & Colonial Spanish Ancestors.**
- On Tue. July 23 at 11 Gilad Katz will offer **Lat-est Updates to the MyHeritage Mobile App.**
- On Wed. July 24 Dawn Carlile will discuss **Re-searching Oregon Trail Ancestors.**
- On Fri. July 26 at 11 Elizabeth Shown Mills will present **Genealogical Research & Writing: Are You a Saint, Sinner or Bumfuzzled Soul?**
- On Tue, July 30 at 4 AM Elisabeth Zetland will offer **Webinaire MyHeritage en Francais.**
- On Wed. July 31 at 11 Warren Bittner will discuss **Solving a 1770 Problem with the 1880 Census.**
- On Fri. Aug. 2 at 11 Ari Wilkins will offer **African American Research 101 – Antbellum Era (Part 3 of 3).**

 The State Historical Society of Missouri has produced nearly 100 On-Demand programs through its virtual program series and past recorded events. Freely available through the Society's website, <https://shsmo.org>, on demand topics include genealogy, art, scholarship, signature lecture series, and more.

 Here are some other webinars, blogs, and podcasts that are available.

- Auntie Jen's Family Trees, <https://Auntiejentrees.blogspot.com/p/1950-census.html>
- Extreme Genes: Family History Radio <https://extremegenes.com/blog>
- The Genealogy Guys Podcast www.genealogyguys.com
- Lisa Louise Cooke's Genealogy Gems <https://lisalouisecooke.com/podcasts>

And there's more....

The following are sites with large amounts of valuable information:

- The National Archives- www.archives.gov/research/genealogy offers a genealogy tutorial, genealogy research topics and a variety of charts and forms.
- The DAR Library – www.dar.org/national-society/genealogy offers help on the variety of genealogical topics. Also see the upcoming events schedule at www.dar.org/libraryevents.
- The Sutro Library hosts the Bay Area Genealogy Calendar, www.library.ca.gov/sutro/genealogy/calendar. The calendar provides information about events throughout the Bay Area.
- Conference Keeper, <https://ConferenceKeeper.org>, lists conferences, events, calls for papers, contests, grants, volunteer opportunities, tours and more. To sign up to receive *Tami at Conference Keeper* which lists events that have been recently added, go to mail@sendfoxmail.com.
- The Sacramento Public Library Genealogy Program has a YouTube channel. Visit its playlist at [https://www.youtube.com/playlist?](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL8383838383838383)

Events from Local Societies

- On Mon. July 8 from 7 -8:30 the Livermore-Amador Genealogical Society, www.l-ags.org, will host a hybrid meeting. The guest speaker, James Baker will present **I Thought He Was My Ancestor: Avoiding the Six Most Common Genealogy Mistakes** The link to register for the meeting is on the society's website under speakers.
- On Thu. July 11 at 1:30 the Genealogy Society of Vallejo- Benicia, <https://gsvb.org>, will present Margaret Kapustiak on Zoom. She will answer **What Do I Do with All Our Collected Photographs, Family Memorabilia & Genealogy?** Visit the society's website for details or contact the society at 707-334-0675 or president@gsvb.org.
- On Thu. July 11 from 6:30 - 8 the Contra Costa County Genealogical Society, <https://cccgs.net>, will hold its monthly meeting on Zoom. Guest speaker Rear Admiral (ret.) Bonnie Potter will share **Aboard Navy Hospital Ships (as the first female physician)**. Go to events on the society's website to register.
- On Thu. July 18 at 1 the Napa Valley Genealogical Society, <https://napagensoc.org>, will have Glenda Gardner Lloyd as their guest speaker at their hybrid meeting. Glenda will examine **The ABCs of Land Records**. Register under events on the society's website.
- On Fri. July 19 from 10-12 the Mt. Diablo Genealogy Society will hold its monthly meeting with a hybrid format via Zoom and at the Club Room at Creekside in Rossmore. The guest speaker will be Dawn Kosmakos. See the society's Facebook page for details on the program.
- On Tue. July 16 from 6:30-8:30 from 10-12 the Santa Clara Historical & Genealogical Society, www.scchgs.org, will hold its monthly meeting via Zoom. Its guest speaker, Jamie Mayhew, will share **"If He Could Do It, I Could Too" – Stories of Women Homesteaders**. Go to the Upcoming Events section of the website to register.

Upcoming Special Events

- From July 21 - 26 the Institute of Genealogy and Historical Research (IGHR), <https://ighr.gagensociety.org> will hold its **2024 Virtual Institute**. See website to register.
- On Aug. 17 and 18 the Society for German Genealogy in Eastern Europe will hold its 2024 Conference, **I Didn't Know What I Didn't Know** on Zoom. Go to <https://convention2024.blogspot.com/> to register.
- From Sept. 11 - 13 the **7th WAC (We Are Cousins) Virtual Genealogy Conference** will take place. Register at <https://wacconference.com/register>.
- On Sept. 20 and 21 the New York Genealogical and Biographical Society, www.newyorkfamilyhistory.org will hold its hybrid **New York State Family History Conference**. For details go to www.newyorkfamilyhistory.org/nysfhc/about
- From Sept. 29 – Oct. 5 Stewart Traiman and Evan Wilson will lead the **2024 CGS Salt Lake City Research Trip**. See the CGS website for details ■