



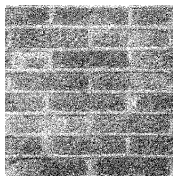
San Ramon Valley Genealogical Society



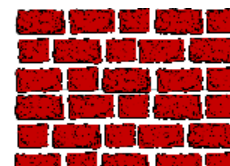
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San Ramon Valley Genealogical Society

Vol. XXVII No. 5 November - 2011



THIS MONTH – November 15, 2011
“Learning to Love Brick Walls”
Presented by: Mary Beth Frederic



What many genealogists refer to as a "brick wall" can be the portal to a richer research experience. Accompany Mary Beth Frederick on the long and winding road to discovering the identity of her ancestress Ann E., which not only taught her many lessons about doing research, but led to surprising family history and a whole new group of cousins.

Mary Beth Frederick has enjoyed careers in Marketing research, systems analysis and design, project management and as an editor for both print catalogs and an online website. For nearly seven years, she has been engaged full time in discovering her family tree and those of her husband and select clients. She has researched the records of many U.S. states, French Canada and the Louisiana Territory; England, France and Germany; Wales and the Channel Islands, and South Africa. She teaches classes in Beginning Genealogy and Using Digital Photography for Genealogy for the California Genealogical Society and Library in Oakland.



October Meeting
"Putting the Flesh on the Bones"
Speaker: Ron Arons Reporter: Lee Schlenker



The speaker for our last members meeting was Ron Arons. You can find his extensive biography in your October Newsletter. He was interesting as a person as well as his talk being very humorous!

He made many a trip to New York, starting in 1991, in search of information about his relatives before there was the wonderful Internet.

His hand-out was in the shape of a wheel with the hub being *one individual* you wanted more information ("flesh") about. The spokes of this wheel are the people you should try to contact in order to find the "flesh" - such as the children

of the individual, places & environments, events, other relatives, siblings and parents. All these will help you put together a sort of time line and help you along the path for more information on that one particular individual.

First off, concentrate on one individual. Then ask - Who? When? Where? and start exploring WHY. You'll need to examine their personality and the environment in which they lived. Work from present day and go backward in time. Ron's caveats: he was compulsive and then blessed to find much of what he was looking for through his compulsiveness. But he warns, ►



(Photo by Nancy Alexander)

Our October speaker: Ron Arons

“backward-looking documents can be hazardous to your health.”

Ron lost both his parents to cancer some 20 years ago. He went to New York to go through their belongings. He took home with him a box of postcards in script from Belarus. His father had done a family tree which he found in the box. But being a college student, Ron wasn't particularly interested in this tree then. So, sleuthing was put aside until the “bug” got to him and he found a 1920 Soundex index card with an Isaac Speir on it (his great grandfather), born in N.Y. (not born in Staffordshire, England). Ron came across another document for Isaac claiming he was born in Pennsylvania. He found a marriage license showing Isaac, born in London, England, married Ida in 1895. And then he discovered a birth certificate with Ida giving birth to Sidney in 1894. Question: was Sidney a premature birth? Dates didn't quite match. That meant more digging. The N.Y. Department of Health had a Joseph Speir listed, which was another avenue to follow from the family tree.

But through digging in an old newspaper after talking with relatives, a 1916 vaudeville article was found in Variety showing that Isaac was caught “fooling around” and by 1897 he was convicted of bigamy in Brooklyn, N.Y. Ron ►

found the Kings County admission card (to Sing Sing Prison) and it was full of information about Isaac Speir: an entry clerk, a trolley car conductor, had red hair, could read and write, did not drink, and he was living with Ida Speir (at the same address which was on their marriage license). It turns out that Isaac also had an alias – Herbert Edward Speir, a watchmaker. After a year of searching Ron found the court records which stated Herbert was married to wife Minah, but she couldn't remember being married to him! Minah withdrew the charges. Isaac wrote to Ida a letter stating what a loving husband he was, asking for food to be brought for him in jail. Both wives showed up at the prison. Ron also found an article in the New York Herald where the court calendar showed a law suit against the New York Railroad by Speir. The article told the whole story of all the disagreements but in the name of Spear. Everything seemed to match except the spelling of the last name.

Ron, as a child, had jokingly said to his grandmother one day, “if I'm bad today I'll go to Sing Sing.” His grandmother got very angry with him and told him never to say Sing Sing again. Can you guess why?

Ron also uncovered in his findings a book on life in Sing Sing from 100 years ago written by prisoner #1500 telling of the daily life and hardships in prison.

While Ron was looking for Joseph Speir, an article in the N.Y. Times came up where Joseph was arrested for extortion. This was interesting so Ron made his umpteenth trip to N.Y. searching. The court file was 100 pages long but Ron found a shorter version (Aug. 1916) on file stating Joseph was arrested for forgery for “cooking the books” of \$5,000 while working at Gretsck Drum Company! But he somehow never served time. Ron found Joseph was still working in N.Y. in 1922. Then Joseph died in 1947 with his head stone written in Hebrew.

Ron also found the Speir name spelled Speer and did more research comparing his found-family with the Speer information and much of it matched.

He then got very excited when the 1881 British Census was available. He claims to ►

hit “pay dirt” with Brighton, England the target. He was able to trace what was happening in England in the 1800s and found bigamy was on the rise there. Sound familiar? Ron also found old maps where the house was located. It was very close to the oldest synagogue in that area in England. It seems Isaac was in trouble in England as well because there was a letter from the chief Rabbi of the synagogue thanking Isaac for the gift of clotted cream (evidently, standing up for Isaac on a court matter). He found the place where Isaac had lived. Sheffield, England had two Rabbits and one was Ron’s great, great grandfather Speir; the 1901 census showed him moving to Manchester, England where Ron was able to research and found his g-g-grandfather’s handwriting. His g-g-grandfather eventually committed suicide due to a tooth abscess which caused him so much pain he took his own life. Back then there were no antibiotics to aid in the infection.

Ron used Excel spreadsheets often to compare and contrast information. He then knew which holes to fill and would concentrate on those holes. He keeps finding more information as he continues forward. His conclusion: research one person in depth! But beware – backward looking documents can be hazardous to your health!! ■

WELCOME — NEW MEMBERS

Please extend a Warm Welcome to our newest members!

Schiller Gayle

20 Stanley Court

Walnut Creek CA 94595

925-932-2331

gayle.scheller@gmail.com

Sunderman Lee

10126 Colima Ave.

San Ramon CA 94583

925-833-7276

lee@leesunderman.com



President's Pen

By Sherri Hedman

Keepsakes—from whom to whom?

May this help your estate planning, and dealing with elderly relatives.

Section one: An introduction, then cautionary true tales!

Section two: Ideas from our members, with my fill-ins.

Review/introduction: Part I: *In September, I requested your help as to the best way to I.D. my remaining keepsakes, as to original owner. I have already distributed much family glassware, a bit of jewelry and some furniture to our three daughters over the years, but, since I only verbally identified the sources they have forgotten. However, I have been very pleased by the way our daughters have dealt with each other in distributing these keepsakes. Note following examples, otherwise:*

Part II: Caution: *I had heard sad stories from three friends about how their parents' wills (two) and wishes (one) were ignored. Some keepsakes and jewelry were identified as going to them; however, their sisters' who lived nearby went in and quickly cleaned out the valuable items, (although anyone with a key could do the same thing). One sister rationalized she had done the most for their mother, another had a drug/alcohol problem, while the third believed she was “owed it,” since she had a difficult life. Note: in a “Family Finances” article, Jilian Mincer suggested that when someone dies or becomes disabled, and the house is vacant, the locks should be replaced immediately, and jewelry and valuables be put in a safety deposit box. However, the other items should be left where they are, as some items are identified in a will by the room they are in.*

READ ON FOR SUGGESTIONS FROM OUR GROUP +1:

initials immediately after their input (where none, mine).

Many thanks to the following: Rosemary ►

Bondi, Sandra Burns, Elaine Franke, Pat Levy, June Mercer, Vern Segelke, Barbara Shapas, & Shellie Pollitt, (my daughter).

IDENTIFYING KEEPSAKES TO PASS ALONG

- A. Take photos of your items: create a master list (JM)
 - non-digital camera – write on bottom of the photo (RB)
 1. use photo-safe pen
 - digital camera download photos -- can attach & send (SP)
 1. attach labels through photo program
 2. or find photos in computer program & right click to ID
- B. Create a Master List, then
 - Write history & attach in plastic sleeve with item (BS)
 - Cut list into strips and attach to items to give away (VS)
 1. Tape with names on back -- if won't damage item

ASSURING KEEPSAKES END UP WITH RIGHT PERSON

- A. Use keepsakes with family now & discuss their history
 - June Mercer's family uses 3 generations family silver & china at Tahoe cabin -- she will later photo & ID
- B. Ask now who wants items -- you may be surprised
 - Pat Levy's nephews were thrilled to receive g-grandpa's furniture, tools and pots/ pans
 - Barbara Shapas' 2 sets grandparents asked what she wanted, gave items then, & later & some oral history
- C. Promises, Promises
 - promises not written [officially] mean nothing (EF) ►

- name (of who wants item) written on back on tape can be changed (SB) or removed
- D. Make separate notarized list with attorney, keep with will, of who wants what, or who gets what (SB), then give list to all involved to keep everyone honest (BS)
 - E. If family dynamics are too complicated, or there is so much stuff it gives you a headache, ID the best items and hope someone in the family will want them later
 - F. If heirs aren't interested, stipulate in your will what charity, school, historical society or museum you want to receive the item (BS) check first; Oakland Museum accepts many items for its' huge yearly rummage sale . ■



November 2011

- 1 **Tuesday - 10:00 a.m.** A Board meeting is scheduled to be held at the home of Ed Mason in Alamo.
- 15 **Tuesday - 10:00 a.m.** The General Meeting will be held at the LDS Church on Stone Valley Road at Smith Road, in Alamo.

December 2011

Our Society does not hold meetings during the month of December. Enjoy the Holiday season and look forward to meeting again in January, 2012. The next Board meeting is to be held on Tuesday January 3, 2012 at a home location to be announced.

SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP UPDATE

By: Bill George

by Bill George, SIG Coordinator - williamcgeorge@gmail.com

The TNG has been moved forward one week to Tuesday, November 29th because the Danville Family History Center is closed the week of Thanksgiving.

We had a very good start for our new DNA SIG in October. Bob Venter enlightened us about many aspects of DNA and gave us homework to read a short course in Genetics called, "A short Course in Genetic Genealogy". To view, go to <http://venter.org>, and click on "Venter Surname DNA Project", then click on "A Short Course in Genetics". The SIG meets on the 2nd Thursday at the Danville History Center and starts at 10am.

I'm sorry to report that the Master Genealogist SIG has ceased meeting. However, there still is a good resource for Master Genealogist users scheduled by the L-AGS Master Genealogist Group that meets in Pleasanton on the 3rd Saturday. See <http://www.l-ags.org> for information about the next meeting.

Visit our SIGs page at <http://srvgensoc.org/sig.html> to see the latest list of SIGs. At present we have nine SIGs and if you have a need for one we don't offer, and are willing to help organize it, a new one can be started very easily. After November's SIG meetings we will be taking December off and will resume in January. Happy Thanksgiving! ■

SRVGS SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS

NOTE: Special Interest Groups will not meet during the month of December



DNA - This new Special Interest Group will hold its second meeting **Thursday November 10th (second Thursday) at 10:00 a.m. in the Danville Family History Center on ►**

Stone Valley Road. They will review "A short Course in Genetic Genealogy", available at <http://venter.org>. Bob Venter has volunteered to be the initial contact person for the group. You may contact him via e-mail, rjventer@comcast.net or phone (925)454-9919. Bob has a Venter family web site, <http://www.venter.org>, from which you may view family DNA information and from which he wants to gather information for the Venter Surname Study.



MacGen – MACINTOSH GENEALOGY GROUP

The MacGen group will meet **Wednesday November 16th at 10:30 a.m. in the Danville Family History**

Center on Stone Valley Road. This SIG specializes in the uses of the Macintosh by genealogists. If you have a Mac laptop, please bring it, so you will be able to follow along with the examples. The theme for this meeting will be to cover Reunion's Cascading Pedigree Chart. Bill George, Special Interest Group Coordinator, is the contact person for this Group. You may contact Bill via e-mail, williamcgeorge@Gmail.com or phone (510) 538-2449. You may also visit the following web site: <http://www.macgen.org>



ENGLISH – Members with this special interest may set aside **Thursday mornings** from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. to be at the Family History Center on Stone Valley Road.

Suzanne Johnston will work with you on research in England and Wales. Gather the material you have about your English family line, and bring it on a Thursday morning. Contact Suzanne by phone, 552-5920 or e-mail, gjohnston3@comcast.net



GERMAN – The German Group will meet **Wednesday November 16th at 10:00 am** at the home of Susan Hanck in Walnut Creek.

The contact person for this group is Helen Odegard. If you are interested in joining this group, please contact her via e-mail, shodegard@att.net or phone 932-6796 for more information.



IRISH - This special interest group will meet **November 9th (the second Wednesday) at 10:00 am.**, at the home of Russ and Patty Erickson ►

in Pleasant Hill. Patty Erickson is the contact person for this group. You may contact Patty via e-mail, russpat@comcast.net or phone 229-0889.



LEGACY SOFTWARE – The Legacy group will meet **Monday, November 28th (the fourth Monday) at 1 pm. in the Danville Family History Center** on Stone Valley Road. This is a genealogy software users group. The theme for this meeting will be to discuss how to add multimedia items to your Legacy database. Bill George is the contact person for this Group. Contact Bill via e-mail, williamcgeorge@gmail.com or phone (510) 538-2449.



PUBLISHING – This is a group of several members that are interested in sharing their interest in Publishing their genealogy and family history data. **They often meet at 10:00 am on the third Thursday** of the month at the home of Frances Lloyd in Danville. Interested members should let her know ahead of time that they plan to attend. For further information, contact Francie at 837-9382 or e-mail, frances_lloyd@comcast.net



SCANDINAVIAN - Members with this special interest may set aside a Wednesday afternoon between 1:00 pm. and 3:00 pm. at the Danville Family History Center on Stone Valley Road. A few members are usually there to provide help with research for Swedish, Norwegian and Danish genealogical information. Phone (925) 552-5920 to confirm that they are there or e-mail Linda Bailey, baileylin-da100@gmail.com for further information.



The Next Generation of Genealogy Sitebuilding® ("TNG") – A group has been organized for the purpose of allowing members to share their interest in creating their own web site from which their family history data can be found and shared. Their next meeting will be held at **10 am. Tuesday November 29th at the Danville Family History Center** on Stone Valley Road. The theme for this meeting will be how to upload photos and create thumbnails to your TNG database. TNG is a powerful way to manage and display your genealogy data on ►

your own web site, all without generating a single page of static HTML. Instead, your information is stored in MySQL database tables and dynamically displayed in attractive fashion. Linda Bailey is the contact person and SIG leader. Her email address is baileylinda100@gmail.com or Phone (925) 552-5920 for further information. ■

CALENDAR OF OTHER EVENTS

- 8 **November Tuesday 7:30 pm.** The Livermore-Amador Genealogical Society (www.L-AGS.org) will have their regular meeting at Beth Emek, 3400 Nevada Court in Pleasanton. Deborah Ratto Dash will give a presentation about "Find a Grave," What it is and how to use it.
- 9 **November Wednesday 10 am** The East Bay Genealogical Society will hold a regular meeting in the Meeting Room at the Oakland Regional Family History Center, 4766 Lincoln Avenue. The speaker will be Sally Stevens. Her topic will be: **WESTERN MIGRATION DURING THE GOLD RUSH ERA.**

Sally Stevens has been a docent at the Oakland Museum of California for twenty years. She will share what she has learned and discovered about her ancestors who arrived in California and settled in San Francisco during the Gold Rush Era.
- 18 **November Friday** The Mount Diablo Genealogy Society will hold a regular meeting at the US Bank in the Rossmore shopping center. E-mail mready001@yahoo.com The speaker will be Greg Siulinski. His topic will be, **Introduction to Blogging, How to find, use and navigate for genealogy.** Craig teaches blogging at the California Genealogical Society.
- 19 **November Saturday 10:30 am.** The San Mateo County Genealogical Society will hold their regular monthly meeting at Grace Lutheran Church Hall, 2825 ►

Alameda de las Pulgas in San Mateo Four members will tell how they have succeeded in solving difficult and perplexing "brick wall" situations. For more information, visit their web site: www.smogs.org

EDUCATION

 The **California Genealogical Society** begins its activities on Nov. 1st with a field trip to the California Genealogical Society Library led by Jane Lindsey at 2201 Broadway, Suite LL2. The Library will be closed on Nov 5th, 2011 for Ancestry Day (now sold out) in San Francisco. First Free Saturdays resume Dec. 3rd. The Society's Membership Meeting will be on Saturday, Nov. 12th at 1:00 p.m., Members Speak, CGS listens. The Roots Magic Special Interest Group will meet on Tuesday, Nov. 15th from 6:30 p.m. - 8:15 p.m. A December preview - Intro to Genealogy with Lisa Gorrell will be on Sat, Dec. 3rd from, 11:00 am – 12:30 pm. Check the Society's website, <http://www.californiaancestors.org/>, for further details.

 The **Family History Center** in Oakland will be the site on Nov. 13th for the Jewish Family History Open House from 1 – 5 p.m. The Center will join with the San Francisco Bay Area Jewish Genealogical Society in celebration of Jewish Family History Month. Experienced researchers will be on hand to assist beginners through advanced researchers in Jewish genealogy. Local researcher and author Ron Arons will present "*Putting the Flesh on the Bones: Researching Why Our Ancestors Did What They Did.*" Bring your documents (copies only) and questions. The goal is for each attendee to find the answer to at least one question about his or her family history. Check the Center's website, <http://www.oaklandfhc.org/classes.php>, for further information. The Center will be closed from Nov 20 thru Nov 28, 2011(Thanksgiving Day Weekend)

 **NARA** (National Archives and Records Administration) does not currently have classes listed for October. Check the website for updates. <http://www.archives.gov/pacific/archives/san-francisco/workshops.html> ■

HOW TO REACH THE BOARD MEMBERS

President: Sherri Hedman 925-275-8123
e-mail: president@srvgensoc.org

1st V.P. Ed Mason 925-838-7848

2nd V.P. Program:
Elaine Franke 925-831-1989

3rd V.P. Membership:
Phil Seelinger 925-254-1338

Recording Secretary:
Carol Huvane 925-947-5669

Corresponding Secretary:
Vern Segelke 925-838-8570

Treasurer: Tom Draeger 925-9375161

Parliamentarian:
Virginia Rood 925-937-8659

NEWSLETTER TEAM

Coordinator: Bob Venter 925-454-9919
e-mail: rjventer@comcast.net

Calendar Coordinator:
Vern Segelke 925-838-8570
e-mail: 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.

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

INDIVIDUAL HELP

Do you need individual help in overcoming a "brick wall" in your research? Go to the SRVGS web site at: <http://srvgensoc.org/>, click on RESOURCES, then click on INDIVIDUAL HELP FOR SRVGS MEMBERS.

Want to help someone who is having research problems in your area of knowledge? Call Harry Baggett at 925-837-7960 to have your name added to the SRVGS Individual Help list.

Harry Baggett trvrlr@sbcglobal.net



CHRISTMASTIME

COOKIE EXCHANGE



Replaces December Board & General meetings

Everyone, one and all -- new members especially, are invited to attend the annual SRVGS Cookie Exchange the morning of:

Tuesday, December 6th, at 10 am.

Frances Lloyd will again host this event at her home, 210 Town & Country Drive, Danville 94526. Participants are asked to bring two dozen cookies to exchange, reflecting a particular ethnicity or cultural heritage, if possible. Francie has promised to have soup and veggies on hand to make the cookie tasting almost "guilt-free"! We hope you will join us to celebrate the season with your friends in the San Ramon Valley Genealogy Society.



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