

SAN RAMON VALLEY

GENEALOGICAL

SOCIETY



NEWSLETTER

P.O. Box 305

Diablo, CA 9452/8-8308

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. XXI No. 7 February - 2006

THIS MONTH - February 21, 2006

"Geography and Genealogy"

Marcia Holstrom will be our guest speaker this month. *Please note that she will speak at 10 o'clock* as she has an early afternoon class in San Jose. Marcia Murray Holstrom wrote her first letter more than 30 years ago when she started collecting the vital records necessary to work back through one's ancestry. She was sidetracked into an M.A. in Geography at SJSU where she taught for several years. Even though she is retired from SJSU she continues to teach Geography at De Anza Community College in Cupertino but only part time which leaves her the time to teach three Genealogy classes in the Metropolitan Adult Education Program in San Jose. She has presented Genealogy programs on several occasions for various organizations. She is particularly proud that she recently completed the NGS Home Study Program. Her latest research is in the DNA applications to family history research.

She and her husband, Pete, have been married 33 years and are the proud parents of four wonderful children and three perfect grandchildren.

Her topic will be "*Geography and Genealogy*". The answers to the "where" question may be the most valuable answer in researching our family history. If joined with the "when" answer, we can look in the right places for the rest of our story. The Five Themes of Geography are uniquely adaptable to family history research. This presentation will use those Five Themes as an outline to discuss the invaluable relationship between Geography and Genealogy.

JANUARY MEETING

"Fleeing Russia in 1940; The Road to Immigration to the U.S. in 1955"

Speaker: Irmgard Hess Schlenker

Reported by: Lee Schlenker

Irmgard Hess Schlenker, now living in Sacramento, CA has worn many, many hats in her adult lifetime - a nurse for 34 years, college German teacher as well as doing German Language Summer Camps, leading cultural workshops for corporations and a tour guide to German-speaking countries. She came to tell us her personal story about fleeing Russia when she was a young school girl.

In 1812 Catherine the Great of Prussia took land from the Turks. Czar Alexander I invited Germans to settle in this region offering privileges such as free land for farming, no taxes, exemption

from the draft, political and cultural autonomy. So, her great grandfather moved there to farm. The soil was so rich in nutrients soon all of the crops were grown in this section of Prussia. Between 1812 and 1849 there were 13 colonies which quickly grew to 25 colonies in Bessarabia; immigration to there was closed. There were so many people in Bessarabia that they were living in tents on the plains while they worked the land. By 1874, Czar Alexander II changed the rules for these people. And by 1886 Czar Alexander III took all their rights away and wanted them all to speak Russian. So, they started to

immigrate elsewhere. By 1940, with Stalin and Hitler being friends, they ordered Romania to give up Bessarabia and everyone was to relocate going to the Black Sea port. Irmgard's family went into the Vienna Forest living in tents, worked and went to school. She and her sister attended school one day and the students were served spinach for lunch. Her sister said she wasn't going to eat "this stuff" because she never had had it before. And the rest of the class refused to eat it, too. So, her mother was called to school, told how the children wouldn't eat the spinach; her reply was "you should *teach* these children about the things you serve because they don't know about such things." A very logical thought.

As time went on much of the population in the Vienna Forest was taken by train in the dead of night to a new farm (which was given to them). The original farmer was ousted off his farm in the middle of the night and taken elsewhere. And her father was taken elsewhere also by train. They thought he had gone to Siberia. Since her mother couldn't run the farm by herself the government allowed the "helper" to stay on this farm. Michael was a white Russian - but he was allowed to remain. He told them never to ask or to talk about his birth country. On the farm they had no radio, no TV; but they all knew that when you heard the planes coming you were to run to the bunker on the premises. During this time the "Arian Race" idea was surfacing. Michael said that they should prepare two carts (or wagons) - one small wagon filled with the bare essentials and a large wagon with all their worldly possessions. The smaller wagon was for a quick get-away in the middle of the night if needed. And that did happen - they had to leave in the middle of the night and head for Vistula River which was frozen completely frozen. They crossed the frozen river, Michael left them at this point and they headed for the Oder River border.

The wagon was so small and there wasn't enough down bedding for everyone so Irmgard walked with her mother over the river and suffered frostbite in her toes. Her brother became sick on this journey and the family was forced to stay with an older couple (who had refused to leave when ordered) until her brother

was well enough to travel.

When moving from East German to West Germany the towns people were told to take in these migrating people and provide for them. So, Irmgard's family of five received one bedroom with only a double bed in a farm house. Her smallest brother (who was 2 at the time) had a basket to sleep in on the floor. She said that he cried all night. They finally complained about their accommodations to the mayor of the town; he saw to it that they had one extra room. They all helped out on this farm to earn their keep. This is where Irmgard finally got to meet her maternal grandparents who were staying at the inn in the same town. They soon found out that her father had gone to prison and was not in Siberia as they had thought. By 1945 her family got in touch with the Red Cross who started a hunt for her father. Irmgard's mother was told by a "fortune teller" he was alive - which she didn't believe at all. They eventually found that he was working on an island in the North Sea and they were reunited. But there was no work for Irmgard's father for the three years they were here and a decision was made to leave.

By 1952 the family had moved to the Rhineland and acquired a government-sponsored house. In 1955 her father decided to move the family to the U.S. But at that time you needed a sponsor who could provide you with a job in the U.S. The immigrant had to pay back every penny it cost his/her sponsor. So her father promised to work for two ladies who were opening a nursing/rest home in the U.S. (Irmgard was the only one in her family who spoke English, so she became the translator for her family.) They hadn't really settled in N.Y. before having to leave for California. These sponsors decided to move to California and start a nursing/rest home there. Her family traveled from New York to California by train with no money to speak of. The sponsors wanted her father to help out in their psychiatric ward facility which he had never been trained to do. He was a farmer with a debt. The whole family wanted to return to their home in Germany. They were having such a terrible time. Irmgard wanted to finish her education in Germany. As luck would have it the family ended up in Lodi,

CA area and the town took them in - fed them, clothed them and gave the children toys. So, they stayed and felt welcomed by the community.

Irmgard has traveled back to Germany many, many times to visit her original town and the house they had in the Rhineland. And she has enjoyed finding the people she once knew before the war and enjoying their hospitality. She told us if you do go to Stuttgart visit the wonderful museum there. She brought with her large story-boards and information about her life in German - wonderful pictures and information.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

SRVGS CALENDAR FEBRUARY 2006

- 7 Tuesday - 10:00 am. The Board Meeting** was held at the home of Helen Odegard in Alamo.
- 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. Marcia Holstrom from San Jose will speak on "Geography and Genealogy". She will speak at 10 AM.

SRVGS CALENDAR - MARCH 2006

- 7 Tuesday - 10:00 am. The Board Meeting** will be held at the home of Marilyn Tanner
- 21 Tuesday - 10:00 am. General Meeting** will be held at the LDS Church on Stone Valley Road at Smith Road, in Alamo.

SRVGS Special Interest Groups FEBRUARY/MARCH 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@pacbell.net.

This group will meet Tuesday February 21 after the general meeting at about 12:30 pm. Sherry Titus (shertitus@hotmail.com) will host this meeting at the Westcliffe Homeowners Clubhouse in Walnut Creek.

Please contact Peggy Dearman or Sherry Titus for directions. Bring a bag lunch.

GERMAN - This group regularly has a meeting at someone's home on the fourth Wednesday. On February 22nd, they will gather at the home of Margarete Koenig in Lafayette. For further details, the contact person for the group is Fran Schweitzer; phone 935-5744 or e-mail franschw@pacbell.net. Please contact the host if you do not plan to attend.

IRISH - This special interest group will meet February 8 and March 8 (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 February 14, they plan to meet at the home of Dorothy Stanton in Danville. On March 14, they are scheduled to meet at the home of Patty Erickson in Pleasant Hill. Members of the group usually receive directions via email. 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 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 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

1. If your email address **does not** appear in Handbook, and you wish to receive these messages.
2. If your email address **does** appear in the handbook and you do not wish to receive these notices.
3. If you have some information that you would like to make available to the membership.

CALENDAR OF OTHER EVENTS

28 February Tuesday 1 pm

The Sacramento German Genealogical Society will have its regular meeting at Saint Mark's church on Lusk Drive and Saint Mark's Way in Sacramento. "Back to Basics with German Family Research" will be the subject of the presentation made by Ann Laemmlen Lewis and Erin Clark from BYU.

14 March Tuesday 7:30 pm

The Livermore-Amador Genealogical Society will have its regular meeting at Beth Emek, 3400 Nevada Court in Pleasanton. Caroline Earhart will make a presentation about her family history and the quilt she made in tribute to her ancestors.

22 April Saturday

The Sonoma County Genealogical Society will sponsor an all day seminar in Santa Rosa. Barbara Vines Little will be featured. Pre-register or \$ 25 registration beginning at 8 am. For further information, contact Lois Nimmo (707) 537-1684, LoisNim@aol.com or visit their web site, <http://www.rootsweb.com/~cascgs/little.htm>.

NEWSLETTER TEAM

Coordinator: Dorothy Baker 925-427-4883
Email: DJBDorothy@cs.com

Calendar Coordinator: Vern Segelke 925-828-8570
Email: Vmseg3@greaterbaynet.com

Mailing: Lucy Carver 925-837-3146

Deadling 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.

President's Message

This is a message to those of you who did not attend our January meeting and a reminder to those of you who did attend.

Our Genealogical Society needs a First Vice President, a Recording Secretary, and two Program Committee persons to fill our Board for 2006-2007.

Our Nominating Committee, comprised of Sandra Burns and Ed Mason would greatly appreciate one member from our membership to assist them in their search for four new board members.

It should be possible to find four persons from our membership willing to help our Society function smoothly for the coming year. It is most disheartening to be on the Nominating Committee and be rejected by person after person giving reasons why they cannot serve on the board.

I know some have legitimate reasons, but are there others among you who might be willing to give a little time, energy, and assistance to keep our fine 20 year old Genealogy group continuing the good work we are used to?

We need your help and support. Remember this is YOUR society. Where do you want it to go?

Patty Erickson

HOW TO REACH THE BOARD MEMBERS

President:

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

1st V.P.

2nd V.P. Program:

Sandra Burns Marilyn Tanner Bob Dougherty
648-4653 376-6733 556-3302

3rd V.P. Membership:

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

Recording Secretary: Helen Odegard 925-932-6796

Corresponding Secretary:

Mary Tom 925-376-2756

Treasurer: Ed Mason 925-838-7848

Parliamentarian: Virginia Rood 925-937-8659

CONTINUING EDUCATION

On Tuesday, FEBRUARY 28, Linda Bailey will repeat her class entitled: **"Finding Your Way Around the Library"**. The session on January 31 at the FHC in Alamo was filled to capacity. Linda gave a very lively and informative presentation and everyone seemed quite surprised to find that there were so many resources available in such a small room! In addition to those on the waiting list, there is still space for three more people for the class on 2/28. Please contact Marilyn King at (925) 376-1193 if you are interested in attending.

AS A REMINDER In addition to our guest speaker at the GENERAL MEETING on FEBRUARY 21, there will be a "Mini Education Class" presented by the German Interest Group.

At the GENERAL MEETING on MARCH 21, the Irish Group will take a turn. Both groups would like for you to contact them as soon as possible with your questions. For the German presentation e-mail Marilyn Tanner <jtanner@nothingbutnet.net> For the Irish presentation e-mail Patti Erickson <russpat@comcast.net>

If you would like to learn more about **DIGITAL CAMERAS or SCANNERS**, you may e-mail Bob Doherty <arsi@pobox.com> He is willing to teach a class in the spring but would like to have some feedback from our members as to what would be most helpful.

On the subject of **SCANNERS**, a seminar will be given by the Rossmoor Computer Club on Tuesday, March 14 from 1-3 p.m. It will be a chance to learn the basics of scanners from purchasing to operation.

There are several other seminars including **"Intro to Genealogy"** scheduled for Thursday March 9 from 1-3 p.m. **"Writing My Life Story"** March 30 from 1-3 p.m. **"Burning CDs and DVDs"** March 9 from 10 - noon and March 30, 1-3. All of these two hour seminars are \$10.00 for each session. In addition, several computer classes are available and the cost is \$45. for non-members and \$30. for members. Classes are held at the Acalanes Adult

Center, 1963 Tice Valley Blvd., Walnut Creek. Call 256-8537 for further information.

Here is an excellent opportunity to **LEARN MORE ABOUT DNA**. On Thursday, March 23 from 10:30 a.m. until noon, Dr. Fred Wilt, Professor of Molecular Cell Biology at U.C. Berkeley will be giving an interesting and easy to understand presentation entitled: **"The Era of DNA Based Biology: What's All the Fuss About"?** The class will be held at the Senior Center located at the Lafayette Community Center, 500 St. Mary's Road half way between downtown Lafayette and St. Mary's College. You will need to call the center to let them know you are coming (925) 284-5050. **THERE IS NO CHARGE FOR THIS PROGRAM!**

I would like to hear from you with any questions or suggestions regarding our Education Classes. Marilyn King (925) 376-1193 marmal@comcast.net

San Francisco 1906 Earthquake and Fire

On April 18, 1906 San Francisco was wrecked by a Great Earthquake at 5:13 a.m., and then destroyed by the seventh Great Fire that burned for four days.

The hundredth anniversary of that landmark event will take place this year. Did your parents or relative live in San Francisco at this time? Did they tell you a tale about what they experienced? Would you like to share it? Email me your story.

My Mother and Father were both born and raised in SF. My Mother was 5 years old at the time of the Earthquake. She remembered riding on a beer wagon to escape the fire. Her Father lost his grocery store he just opened 2 days before.

My Father was 10 years old. His Father had died July/ 1905. He was the oldest of 3 children, the "man of the family". He remembered pushing his Mother's sewing machine through the streets to Golden Gate Park. The sewing machine was their only means of livelihood.

Send me your stories. They will appear in the SRVGS April Newsletter

Dorothy Baker DJBDorothy@cs.com

Danville Family History Center News

By Linda Bailey

It's a new year and with that comes the perfect time to take a good look at the condition of your genealogy records. Are you still trying to squeeze a few more names onto an old handwritten pedigree chart? Or trying to keep an assortment of priceless biographical notes paper clipped to the correct individual? Or have procrastinated adding sources to all your wonderful research? Maybe it is time to finally buy a genealogy software package for your computer – or to learn how to use the one you just got for Christmas!

The staff at the Family History Center can help you out! All computers at the center have PAF, Family Tree Maker, Legacy, and Ancestral Quest installed in the "PAF and PAF-like Programs" file on the desktop.

In addition, arrangements can be made for a staff member to show you Master Genealogist. This gives you the opportunity to see what each program looks like before you buy it. If a tutorial on how to use the various programs is what you need, you can have staff members guide you through the basics to the more complex tools, or they can refer you to some of the online tutorials.

Once you have entered an individual and his vital information into your database there is almost no limit to what you can then do with your data. You can link notes, sources, photos or audio/video clips to that person. You can print pedigree charts, family group sheets, individual reports, descendants' charts, fan charts, wall charts or books, to name a few. You can easily format your whole database for a website. You can quickly create custom lists or focus groups. Most importantly, you can easily and frequently create copies of all your data, notes, photos etc and be confident that your treasured genealogy will never be lost, destroyed or otherwise inaccessible to you or others.

So, come pay us a visit*

Thanks, Linda
DFHC Director

* See DFHC address and times to your right

Fast Fact - Search Hints--Misspellings, Abbreviations, and Initials - Ancestry.com

Having trouble finding your ancestors in a database? Databases are rather picky creatures; one key letter read wrong by the database creator can throw a huge monkey wrench into your search. Often-confused letters in transcriptions and indexes include:

- L and S
- T and F
- J, G, and Y
- I and J
- K and R
- O and Q
- P and R
- U and W

In addition, vowels are also frequently misinterpreted. Switching similar-looking letters or vowels in the surnames you are researching can bring surprisingly good results.

Another way to overcome misspelled surnames would be to try some advanced searches using only given names, and to include other criteria to narrow it down. The success of this method would naturally depend on the size and nature of the database, but it often works.

Given names can present their own difficulties. How often have you seen records listing William as Wm; Thomas as Thos; Robert as Robt; James as Jas; Charles as Chas, etc. And how about initials?

Probably quite often. These are possibilities that should not be overlooked when including a given name in your search.

- **William Lyon Phelps** I am glad my ancestors arrived on the Mayflower, but I am gladder that there are nine generations between us.

Danville Family History Center

2949 Stone Valley Road

Alamo, California

Phone: 925 - 552- 5920

Hours: Monday, Wednesday, Thursday
10 to 4 pm.

Tuesdays 7:00 to 9:00

Giving Back to Your Genealogical Society

By George G. Morgan - 12/17/2004

Genealogical societies are a great value for the money. If you belong to a local society, you already know how much fun it is to get together with other members. After all, your family probably isn't as receptive to your chattering away about Aunt Penelope, Cousin Elmer, and all the cemeteries that you've visited. Your friends and acquaintances at the local society are all open to listening to you and helping bring down your brick walls.

Distant genealogy societies are valuable too. If you're researching ancestors in other states or countries, it's rewarding to receive their journals and newsletters, visit their websites, learn about their publications, and maybe even ask for some look-up assistance.

It takes time and money to run a genealogy society, as well as the talents of people who are willing to give of themselves to take on some tasks. Your society dues are minimal when you consider all you get for your money. You can help your society by volunteering a little time and energy to help give back some of what you receive. I stay pretty busy myself, but I make time to volunteer to serve as president of the International Society of Family History Writers and Editors (ISFHWE), as a director on the board of the Genealogical Speakers Guild (GSG), and on the board of the Florida Genealogical Society (which is local to the Tampa area). It takes a little time, but the rewards are priceless! And so, in "Along Those Lines..." this week, I'd like to make some suggestions for how YOU can give back to your own society or societies to which you belong.

Volunteer at Meetings While it would be great if you offered to serve as an officer or as a member of the board of a society, you don't have to make that kind of commitment in order to help. I attend scores of society meetings each year and see individuals doing specific tasks, all of which add to the camaraderie and the functionality of the group. These include: - Setting up and taking down chairs and tables for the meeting - Bringing cookies, chips, snacks, soft drinks, and other refreshments - Staffing the welcome table at the door, asking people to sign

in, and distributing name badges - Distributing agendas and handout copies - Helping a presenter get set up - Setting out free literature and books or gift items for sale, and acting as a cashier - Organizing the society's library materials and other holdings - Doing look-ups for out-of-town members - Applying mailing labels and postage to envelopes and newsletters - Making copies at the local office supply store - Taking mailings to the post office and picking up mail - Taking copies of materials distributed at meetings to people who are ill or shut-in and cannot attend - Spreading the word about the society and what it has to offer

Volunteering on Projects Being a genealogist often means being an archivist and preservationist. There are plenty of projects that cannot be done without the help of volunteers, and even a few hours' help can be very beneficial. Here are some projects you might consider. - Canvassing a cemetery and transcribing tombstones - Typing and/or indexing results of a cemetery canvass - Proofing someone else's typing - Making photocopies or doing some binding - Clipping obituaries and helping maintain a file for the society or the library - Organize the society's library, create an index, and label the materials - Volunteer at the local public library to help organize genealogical or historical materials in the vertical file cabinets - Offer to photocopy newsprint materials and other non-archival safe records - Transcribe records at a courthouse or produce a much-needed index to them - Offer to speak to civic groups about the society - Offer to carpool for a group trip to a library in another town with a genealogical collection

Presenting a Program You are probably an expert in some aspect of genealogy by now. That may include how to effectively organize your genealogical materials, how to work with a particular type of record, or how to use a particular genealogy database program. Everyone has something to share. You can contribute to your society and to the members' knowledge by offering to present some short program at a meeting. At one society to which I belong, one member always talks about a different library in the state and the types of materials it holds. She also talks about her own research experiences in

these places, such as a recent talk she gave about using Revolutionary War pension file microfilm. You don't need slides or a PowerPoint presentation. All you need is a few notes, a few minutes, and the desire to share something that others may not know.

Donating Materials Few genealogical societies that I know about are endowed with the financial means to expand their library and collections of other materials. Membership dues also don't provide a great deal of funding. You can help your own genealogical society by donating any number of items. - Bookshelves and filing cabinets - Tables and chairs - Microfilm and microfiche reader/printer units - Microfilm and microfiche - Older computer equipment and printers may be upgradeable - Copies of genealogical magazines, journals, and newsletters - Maps, atlases, gazetteers, and almanacs - Previous editions of reference books you have replaced - Foreign language dictionaries - New books donated in memory of a deceased member - Magnifiers - Empty binders - Office supplies such as printer paper, envelopes, stapler and staples, paper clips, mailing labels, and postage stamps

Summary We all have a vested interest in the success and continued operation of our genealogical and historical societies. You don't have to commit to being elected to a long-term position on the board of directors. An occasional stint as a volunteer will make you feel good about being involved and may inspire others to join in too. *It can be an enjoyable experience unequalled anywhere else.*

In this season of giving, I hope you will consider volunteering some time, energy, and materials to YOUR society or societies in the coming year Happy Volunteering!

"Along Those Lines" George G. Morgan - 12/17/2004

P.S. Please remember YOUR (SRVGS) Society needs YOU - We need a First Vice President, a Recording Secretary, and two Program Committee persons to fill our Board for 2006-2007. Call a Board Member and say, "Yes, I will be happy to serve as a member of the SRVGS Board.

San Ramon Valley
Genealogical Society
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FIRST CLASS MAIL