SAN RAMON VALLEY
GENEALOGICAL
SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER
P.O. Box 305
Diablo, CA 94528-0305
President: Ed Mason
Coord. Editor: Bob Venter
Meetings: 10:00 a.m.
3rd Tuesday of the Month
(Except August & December)
Danville Family History Center
Stone Valley & Smith Rds., Alamo
http://srvgensoc.org

San Ramon Valley Genealogical Society Vol. XXIV No. 7 February - 2009

THIS MONTH – February 17, 2009
"Genealogical Holdings of the Pleasant Hill Library"
Presented by: Turalu Brady

Our speaker for February is Turalu Brady. She will tell us about the genealogical holdings in the Pleasant Hill Library. She has been the Librarian at the Heritage Library in Pleasant Hill almost since its beginning when it was organized by the DARs of the area. She is a retired teacher from the Walnut Creek Schools, and has taught English to the Foreign Born and Educationally Handicapped children in the Mt Diablo schools. She has lived in Walnut Creek for 50 years and has been involved in many community activities, including the Valley Art Center and Children's art classes in Walnut Creek and Lafayette. She is a member of the DAR and many Heritage organizations and has been an officer in many of them. She is Honorary Vice President National of the United States Daughters of 1812 and was the Librarian National at their War of 1812 Library for 8 years.

January Meeting
"City Directories"
Speaker: Dr. Stephen Harris Reporter: Lee Schlenker

Dr. Stephen Harris earned his PhD at UC Berkeley and decided to remain in the East Bay area not returning to his home town of Brooklyn, N.Y. He worked for the Contra Costa Health Department as Director of Planning and Evaluation for 33 years. He started researching genealogy intensively after his family records were destroyed in the Oakland "Fire Storm." He became interested in other peoples relatives and found them so intriguing that he became a professional genealogist.

Dr. Harris has a large collection of City and County Directories and some phone books located in Oakland at the California State Genealogical Society on Broadway. His collection numbers over 6,000 and growing. (There was an 18-page list of his holdings sent E-mail to SRVG folks who signed up for E-mail data and info from Ed Mason.)

Dr. Harris walked us through the 1) need for city directories, 2) where and when they were created, and 3) how information was collected. He claims the city directory is the "unappreciated stepchild of genealogy." The directories came in all shapes, sizes and are very similar to our phone books nowadays They were started in the 18th century in the largest cities. So, the directories were here long before the telephone or the phone book. It was a way of finding people within a city or finding businesses you needed. Compiling a

Dr. Stephen Harris

directory was annual and very expensive to send a person door to door gathering the needed information as the population grew. A graph showed that in 1820 the urban population was 7.2% and by 1940 the urban population rose to 56.5%. And nowadays 85% live in cities. So the phone book quickly took over the city directories and, in essence, "killed off" the directories. Before WWII few people had telephones but after WWII everyone had a phone and the phone books became prevalent. In 1934 the N.Y. City 1933 Directory was printed and it was their last directory printed because of the Depression. Ultimately, it is nice to have a city's directory and then a phone book consecutively in years, but that's not always the case. Directories were printed, so you didn't have to decipher someone's poor handwriting.

What will you find inside a city directory? The first thing to look at with a directory is the spine. What is written on the spine is not necessarily what you will find inside. An example: the outside reads "NYC Directory of May, 1872" but the inside reads "NYC Directory for year ending May l, 1872. So if you have an ancestor in NYC in May, 1872 you may not find his/her name listed. City maps are a "good thing" if they are still in tact. Often times they have been ripped out. Next, check out the Table of Contents. It will list government offices (Federal, state, local), volunteer groups, homes/asylums, fire department, social groups, schools (all types), ads (if your ancestor had a business the ad could hold a picture of him - they loved to show their proprietorship), residential listings. Residential listings were done last name, male first name, occupation, and address; then the wife; next, the children. There is also a page which tells you what the abbreviations are next to names in the residential listings. Lower case 'b' meant you are a boarder in your parents home (depending on the street address) or you could just be a boarder in a boarding house. Lower case 'h' meant you are the homeowner or head of household. 'Wid' meant you were a widow or a widower. In some directories minorities were not listed but if they should be 'col' would mean colored. 'do' meant ditto (just so they didn't have to rewrite the address again). There can also be a reverse listing in the directory: that would be the street name listed with bounda-

ries of the streets and then the address with the name next to it. The 'o' after a name meant they were the owner and a tiny bell symbol before the name meant they had a phone. Often there might be the phone exchange listing (e.g. ADams and a four digit number). If you had an ancestor living in a rural area near that city you might want to check the very back of the directory or the county directory for some rural information.

Dr. Harris said that trying to find an ancestor in the U.S. Census can be difficult when the Census is released every 10 years. There is a lot that can happen within those 10 years and it's easy to lose someone if they move or die. With a city directory it's easier to track their movement between Census periods. Often a directory may have a List of Removals which could be that that person has moved or died. The removal means they no longer are at that address listed the year before. Or you might find the wife's name with 'wid' after it which means she's a widow. So you have narrowed a search down to within a year by using a directory. Now you can search death records or obituaries for that year. Dr. Harris says finding someone in the Census can be hard but if you find them in the city directory, get the address, go to the Reverse Directory where there can often times be names you recognize being nearby, then look it up in the census, you stand a good chance of finding who you're hunting for.

Often you can find changes in the occupations of your ancestors in the city directories as you follow them year to year.

Large libraries, state libraries, Library of Congress, Sutro (on microfilm no hard copies) and online copies (which he says are not too wonderful, often slow and don't recognize broken character so can't find you what you're looking for) are all places to find city directories. But the "online" is not the end all, be all because they omit a lot more items. Family History Center's Footnote.com is a good source for directories of large cities.

Dr. Harris' Directories are located at: 2201 Broadway, Suite LL14 in Oakland; (510) 835-4606 and his E-mail is: www.wizard848@earthlink.net. You can check with him on his hours there.

President's Message

By Ed Mason

This month I was late getting my President's Letter put together. Taking advantage of my lateness, I am going to report on some of the things that went on at the Feb 3 Board Meeting.

We opened the subject of nominations a month earlier than usual. Sherri Hedman is on the Nominating Committee. We will be looking to add two more and would prefer it if we can get one person from the regular membership. We will have several officers' slots to fill, including mine, so please let us know if you can help out in any way or have any suggestions. The Nominating Committee has to present its slate to the Board on April 7 and you will vote on May 19.

We started planning for events to mark the 25th anniversary of our society. Events commemorating the occasion will likely kick off during Family History Month this coming October. We are expecting to: develop a theme, appoint a committee, plan events, schedule publicity and use the anniversary to promote our Society. We are seeking suggestions from any and all of our members on how to bring this off successfully.

Our General meeting next month falls on Saint Patrick's Day. To observe the occasion, Patty Erickson will entertain you with a summary of what goes on at the Irish Special Interest Group. *May the lilt of Irish laughter lighten every load.*

We are continuing to plan for Richard Rands' FamilySearch Indexing class that will immediately follow the March 17th meeting. Twelve members have already signed up. We will have room for more, so please let me know if you wish to be added to the list. Here is a promotional paragraph about the project:

> *"The key life events of billions of people are being preserved and shared through the efforts of people like you. Using our online indexing system, volunteers from around the world are able to quickly and easily transcribe the records—all from the convenience of their homes. The indexes are then posted for FREE*

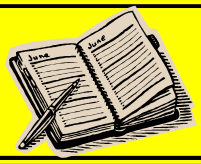
at familysearch.org."

SRVGS is a member of the Federal Genealogy Society. FGS offered to review our Constitution and Bylaws and we took them up on it. In general they were quite complimentary of what we had done, but they did make a few suggestions. We set up a committee (Barbara Dittig, Virginia Rood and Gail Roche Van Wye) to review the suggestions and came back with some improved wording. They presented their findings at the Feb 3 Board Meeting. The Board discussed and approved most of their recommendations, but reserved the opportunity to review them again at the March Board Meeting. The changes were minor, merely rewording a sentence or two, in order to more explicitly express the original intent. After final Board approval, you will be copied and have a chance to discuss and vote on them.

Our society is alive and well. We have added several new members in the last couple of months. Our officers and committee people who are devoted to Membership, Community Outreach and Membership Liaison have been doing a tremendous job. Our Website can be brought up dozens of different ways and, once on it, the user can find out much more about us and then download a membership application. We are doing a good job of getting the word out there. As long as we continue to do so, some day we will be celebrating our 50th anniversary.

"In all of us there is a hunger, marrow-deep, to know our heritage - to know who we are and where we have come from. Without this enriching knowledge, there is a hollow yearning. No matter what our attainments in life, there is still a vacuum. An emptiness. And the most disquieting loneliness."

-- Alex Haley



MARK YOUR CALENDAR

SRVGS CALENDAR

February 2009

3 **Tuesday – 10:00 am.** A Board Meeting was be held at the home of Sherri Hedman in San Ramon.

17 **Tuesday - 10:00 am.** The General Meeting will be held at the LDS Church on Stone Valley Road at Smith Road, in Alamo.

March 2009

3 **Tuesday – 10:00 am.** A Board Meeting will be held at the home of Vern Segelke in Danville.

17 **Tuesday - 10:00 am.** The General Meeting will be held at the LDS Church on Stone Valley Road at Smith Road, in Alamo.

SRVGS SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS

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. This group will meet Tuesday, February 17 after the general meeting at about 1:00 p.m. at the home of Phil Seelinger in Orinda. Peggy Dearman is the contact person for the group. Phone 837-1621 or e-mail: dearmanp@gmail.com

FAMILY TREE MAKER GROUP This is a genealogy software users group for PC's with their focus on the use of Family Tree Maker. This group will meet February 26th (the fourth Thursday of the month) from 10:00 a.m. until noon at the Danville Family His-

tory Center in Alamo. Gail Roche Van Wye is the contact person for the group. Phone 253-1096 or e-mail gailrvw@aol.com.

GERMAN – The German Group will be meeting at the home of Marilynn Tanner at 10:00 a.m. on Feb. 25th (the fourth Wednesday). If you are interested in joining the group please contact Helen Odegard at 932-6796. Helen Odegard is the contact person for this group. For more information, please call her or e-mail shodegard@att.net.

IRISH – This special interest group will meet February 11th (the second Wednesday) at 10:00 a.m. at the home of Patty Erickson in Pleasant Hill. Patty Erickson is the contact person for the group. Phone (925) 229-0889 or e-mail: russpat@comcast.net

SOUTHERN – The Southern Interest Group will meet at 10 a.m. on February 12th and March 12th (the SECOND THURSDAY of the month) at the Family History Center on Stone Valley Road. The contact person is Dorothy Stanton; Phone (925) 820-3757 or email: dpstant@hotmail.com. New persons interested in attending should contact Dorothy Stanton for information.

FOR THOSE OF YOU WITH ANCESTORS IN HOUSTON:

The Houston Public Library in Texas, which has a major genealogy collection, has joined with FamilySearch in a five-year project to digitize a large collection of county and local histories, registers of individuals, directories of Texas Rangers, church histories, and biographical dictionaries. Texas materials will be done first, followed by gulf coast states' materials. Online access to the Houston Public Library collection will be free through: FamilySearch.org → Search Records → Historical Books. Some publications are already viewable online.

From: Monterey County Genealogical Society Newsletter January/February 2009.

CALENDAR OF OTHER EVENTS

17 February - Tuesday 7 to 9 p.m. The Santa Clara County Historical and Genealogical Society City will hold a regular meeting at the Santa Clara City Library at 2635 Homestead Road in Santa Clara. Irish Research will be the subject of the presentation by Cath Madden-Trindle.

21 & 24 February - 10:30 a.m. to noon The CGS Library or the Oakland Regional Family History at 4766 Lincoln Avenue in Oakland will have an intermediate series class.

Another Joint Venture with the Oakland Regional Family History Center and the California Genealogical Society consists of several sessions with each one being offered twice; on Saturday at the CGS Library and on the following Tuesday at the Family History Center. The same instructors and handouts will be at both sessions and students can attend classes at either (or both) facilities.

The schedule includes the following topics:

- February 14 & 17: No classes
- February 21 & 24: Newspaper Research by Jane Lindsey
- February 28 & March 3: Reading and Transcribing the Handwriting of Colonial America by Marge Bell
- March 7 & 10 - No classes
- March 14 & 17: Immigration, Passenger Lists, Naturalizations and Passports
- March 21 & 24: Other People Finders, Continuing Education and Giving Back

Pre-registration is necessary to insure adequate handouts. Individual sessions cost $2 each. Register by telephone (510)531-3905 or E-mail fhcoakland@yahoo.com

7 **March Saturday 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.**
The California Genealogical Society will host a Scots-Irish Seminar at Oakland Airport Holiday Inn at 77 Hegenberger Road. It is the one between Doolittle Drive and Pardee Drive. Dr. Brian Trainor and Fintan Mullan will be the featured speakers at this Ulster Historical Foundation (UHF) Seminar. The registration fee is $ 75 for non-members, payable to CGS. Lunch is included. For further information, please call the CGS library at (510) 663-1358.

Dr. Brian Trainor is a former Director of the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland, Chairman of the Irish Manuscripts Commission and former Research Director of the UHF. Fintan Mullan has been Executive Director of the UHF.

Where Are the Wicked Folk Buried?

'Tell me, grey-haired sexton,' said I,
'Where in the field are the wicked folk laid?
I have wandered the quiet old graveyard through,
And studied the epitaphs, old and new,
But on monument, obelisk, pillar, or stone,
I read no evil that men have done.'

The old sexton stood by a grave newly made,
With his chin on his hand, his hand on a spade:
'Who is the judge when the soul takes its flight?
Who is the judge 'twixt the wrong and the right?
Which of us mortals shall dare to say
That our neighbour was wicked who died to-day?'

'In our journey through life, the farther we speed,
The better we learn that humility's need
Is charity's spirit that prompts us to find
Rather virtue than vice in the lives of our kind.'

'Therefore good deeds we record on these stones;
The evil men do, let it rest with their bones'
I have laboured as sexton this many a year,
But I never have buried a bad man here.'

-- **From:** "Journal of the Association for the Preservation of the Memorials of the Dead in Ireland," Vol. 2, Part 1 (1895)

EDUCATION

Two classes will be available for SRVGS members in February and early March:

Tuesday, February 24, 10 am - "FINDING YOUR WAY AROUND THE FHC"

Linda Bailey will introduce the resources at the Family History Center in Alamo.

Learn about the following topics:

- Accessing Athena (catalog of local Family History Centers)
- Mining the resources of the Salt Lake City Family History Library
- Computer programs available at our local FHC
- Using locality binders and research outlines
- Fiche readers and digital scanners
- Finding the "forgotten fiche"
- What's new!

Thursday, March 5, 10am-noon "USING YOUR CAMERA IN GENEALOGICAL RESEARCH" by Bob Dougherty, at the Family History Center in Alamo.

This class is aimed at tech novices who want to use their digital cameras in their family history research. It covers taking photos, sharing them with others, using them in published genealogies as well as using the camera in courthouses, libraries, and cemeteries and travel.

Sign-up sheets will available at the February 17 General Meeting or contact Dorothy Stanton in advance.

Four of our members were able to take advantage of Frances Lloyd's class on Organization in January. We will schedule another class shortly for those on the wait-list. Our thanks to Frances Lloyd (again) for the contribution of her time and expertise.

WELCOME—NEW MEMBERS

We extend a warm welcome to our newest members:

CARL WEBB
PO Box 504
San Lorenzo, CA 94580-0504
Tele: 510 481-1321
CarlWebb3@gmail.com

PHILIP AND ROSEMARY BONDI
3238 Veracruz Drive
San Ramon, CA 94583
Tele: 925 828-4022
bondipr@aol.com

TED AND BARBARA SHAPAS
36 Lisa Court
Alamo, CA 94507
Tele: 925 820-7943
Shapas@comcast.net

NEWS VIA EMAIL

Ed Mason is the coordinator for the sending of group emails. This extends our group communication ability beyond the monthly newsletter. In addition, about half of our members have chosen to receive their monthly newsletter by email, the advantages being; faster delivery, a much prettier presentation in full color, substantial savings for the Society and for the environment. Ed 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 always have the option to Opt-Out of the email distribution. Notify Ed Mason at: edmason@sbcglobal.net

HOW TO REACH THE BOARD MEMBERS

President: Ed Mason 925-838-7848
e-mail: edmason@sbcglobal.net

1st V.P. (vacant)

2nd V.P. Program:
Clarice Hart 925-743-9245
Lisa Cooke 925-831-8537
Sherri Hedman 925-275-8123

3rd V.P. Membership:
Jane Nowicki 925-939-7808
Barbara Dittig 925-648-9364

Recording Secretary:
Ileen Peterson 510-651-7728

Corresponding Secretary:
Vern Segelke 925-838-8570

Treasurer: Gail Roche Van Wye 925-253-1096

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 trvlr1@hotmail.com

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Here is one you may have heard before;

There was a man who had serious hearing problems for a number of years. He finally went to a doctor one day and was fitted with a hearing aid that was so small no one could tell he was wearing it.

When he returned for a checkup, he told the doctor he was pleased with the device -- he could hear perfectly.

"Your family must really be pleased that you can hear again, too," the doctor said.

"Oh, I haven't told my family yet," the man said. "I just sit around and listen to their conversations. In fact, I've changed my Will three times."

--Author Unknown

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