SAN RAMON VALLEY GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER
P.O. Box 305
Diablo, CA 94528-0305
President: Barbara Dittig
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. XXV No. 1 June - 2009

Father's Day

THIS MONTH – June 16, 2009

"The Civil War Veterans of the San Ramon Valley"
Presented by: Dick Finn

Summer Fun!

In this presentation Dick Finn will be sharing the colorful history of the civil war veterans from our San Ramon Valley area - those who lived in Danville, Alamo, and the Tassajara Valley. Dick will offer a brief introduction to the Tri-Valley Heritage Families and the Tri-Valley Civil War Veterans Projects, and then delve into specifics such as a "show and tell" about typical burial markers for these veterans. He will also explore the lives of the men themselves. You will walk away with a unique view of our area veterans and the impact of the valley on the Civil War.

Dick Finn is the past president and vice president of the Livermore-Amador Genealogical Society and leader of their Family Tree Maker users group. He is currently a member of our society as well as the Amador-Livermore Historical Society, and the Livermore Heritage Guild. Dick volunteers as a genealogy docent at the Pleasanton Library, and at the Museum on Main in Pleasanton, as well as the Livermore Family History Center, and the Livermore Heritage Guild, and is the co-founder of the Tri-Valley History Council.

MOM

May Meeting

"Tap Into Your Inner Private Eye:
7 Strategies You Need to Find Living Relatives"
Speaker: Lisa Louise Cooke Reporter: Lee Schlenker

Lisa Cooke, our past 2nd Vice President, gave an interesting talk on what you could consider "super sleuthing the living." And she was "super" interesting! It's her take on that "brick wall" syndrome.

Lisa wanted to find her husband's first cousin. She had found recent photos but nothing very old. She knew the Cooke line immigrated in 1912 from England. She knew they had sold everything they owned in England to book passage to Canada. Raymond Cooke, the father, had a son, David, who had seven daughters. Tracing through surname was harder with girls. Lisa knew one of the daughters was named Mercedes and being a not-so-typical first name Lisa started her search. It quickly came to a dead-end but found a relative, Mary Cooke, who just happened to be a collection agent. Mary suggested that Lisa use websites such as Peoplesearch, Melissadata.com, Anywho.com. She also suggested Lisa's search include the entire Metro Area and not just the town itself since people move to the suburbs and suburbs just keep growing. Also search the first name only since the relative could have married.

Well, nothing was found on all those web searches so, Lisa says she had to get craftier and

Lisa Cooke

think more like a private eye for finding those relatives. She turned to a book she found on the internet called Be Your Own Detective by Greg Fallis and Ruth Greenberg. He is a P.I. and has been for many years. The following are his basic principles: 1. Nobody lives in a vacuum, 2. People are creatures of habit, 3. People are reluctant to change affiliations, 4. Few people are free from bureaucracy.

On a family tree you can go sideways and work from there. So Lisa went to the son of one of the seven daughters, found out Mercedes was the artistic one of the seven girls but she had never married. Found Mercedes was living somewhere in Santa Rosa, CA and had had an art showing in one of the restaurants in Santa Rosa. So Lisa called the restaurant only to find out it had closed. She figured Mercedes could have belonged to an art council and the closest one was the Art Council of Petaluma. She found out that there were only two art galleries in Petaluma, acquired the numbers, called, and told a "white lie" about being interested in purchasing a particular painting done by a Mercedes Cooke and did they have a phone number for her or an E-mail address. Lisa got the E-mail address and wrote to Mercedes but heard nothing back. So she wrote a nice letter to Mercedes and then got an answer. Being shy, Mercedes wasn't sure this whole thing was on the up and up but when she received Lisa written letter she did call. Mercedes had stored boxes of her fathers things in her attic when he went into a nursing home. One afternoon she drove down from Santa Rosa with the boxes to Lisa's. Lisa couldn't have been happier with the contents: old pictures of H.R. Cooke Carriage & Motor Works, a picture of the matriarch of the Cooke line (which nobody had seen), a tape recording of voices of ancestors and a piano recital all done at home once upon a time.

Lisa's 7 key strategies for finding living relatives are: 1. Write down everything you remember about that person, 2. Run search engine searches (Google.com. Yahoo.com, dogpile.com, whowhere.com, AltaVista.com, whitepages.com, Pipl.com), 3. If you have an old address try mailing to it, 4. They may be hiding in plain sight - check local phone books and #411 (phone info), 5. If you know the hometown, try contacting the local churches, 6. Does your relative practice a licensed profession? (insurance agent, doctor, nurse, hair stylist, building contractor, stockbroker) - check state level databases for an address at which they are registered. And lastly - 7. Check campaign contributions (http://tinyurl.com/rcnrxf).

In closing Lisa says, "living relatives won't be around forever. They could have tiny bits of information you can use. Become a "gumshoe" today!"

A GENTLE REMINDER

A new Society year has begun. The new year started on June 1st, and your annual membership fee is now due. For the convenience of those who have not yet renewed, we have attached a membership renewal form to this newsletter. Please take the time to send it in with your check, now, while you are thinking about it.

President's Message

By Barbara Dittig

JUNE – Spring is turning into summer. It's a time to enjoy the great outdoor weather we have here in the Bay Area. Set up the bar-b-que for outdoor festivities and enjoy the fruits of your labor in the garden.

Schools are out and graduations are signaling the start of a new adventure for the graduates

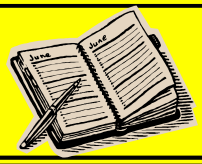
Family and high school/college class reunions are a popular destination.

JUNE for us starts a new year for our Society. We will be celebrating our 25th anniversary this year. Stay tuned for updates! I would like to thank those members who have volunteered to be an officer or committee person. For those who have recently joined, being on a committee is a great way to get acquainted with other members. All members are encouraged to attend Board meetings. The meetings are informal and the morning snacks are great. Check the SRVGS Calendar in the current newsletter for place and time.

Speaking of JUNE class reunions, I will be attending my ____ high school class reunion in La Junta, CO, a small town, now about 7500 population, in the SE corner of the state. We will stop along the way to visit family members and to celebrate a 21st and 50th birthday. We plan to arrive a day early for the reunion so that I can do some family research. I mentioned to Ileen Peterson that I hoped to find family members in the local cemetery. At our last General Meeting Ileen handed me a packet – material she found in a website for Otero Co., CO. Included was a History of La Junta 1914-1915 and a City Directory for those living there during that time. There were records from vintage high school yearbooks 1914-1920. I saw some familiar names, but it was too early for my mother and her siblings. Now I'm hoping to find later yearbooks. There is a complete record of those buried in the local cemetery giving date of birth, death and Block number. I was absolutely thrilled to have all of this information. Thank you Ileen!! I now realize that there are 5 generations of McConnells (my mother's maiden name) who settled in La Junta by 1900 and I have a cousin and her children still there.

And now, armed with the printout of Lisa's talk at the last meeting (Find your Living Family Members) and the packet from Ileen, I'm ready to hit the research trail running! This is an excellent example of members helping members.

Since I won't be here for my first general meeting as president, Ed Mason has graciously volunteered to step in and do his thing – one more time. Thanks Ed. I'm sure there will be a pay back somewhere along the line!



MARK YOUR CALENDAR

SRVGS CALENDAR

May 2009

2 **Tuesday – 10:00 a.m.** A Board Meeting was held at the home of Vern Segelke in Danville.

16 **Tuesday – 10:00 a.m.** The 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

July 2009

7 **Tuesday – 10:00 a.m.** A Board Meeting will be held at the home of Lee Schlenker in San Ramon. The September Board Meeting will be held at the home of Ed Mason in Alamo.

21 **Tuesday – 10:00 a.m.** 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 NOT meet during June or July. The group will look forward to meeting after the general meeting in September. 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. Persons interested in attending a meeting should contact Gail Roche Van Wye. Phone 253-1096 or e-mail gailrvw@aol.com. *This group will not meet during the summer.* If a club member has a FTM Database question or problem in the meantime they are welcome to contact Gail.

GERMAN – The German Group will meet June 24th (the fourth Wednesday) at the home of Bob Venter in Livermore. 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 June 10th (the second Wednesday) at 10:00 a.m. at the home of Patty Erickson in Pleasant Hill. This group will NOT meet in July. 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 June 11th (the Second Thursday of the month) at the Family History Center on Stone Valley Road. Likewise they are scheduled to meet on July 9th. The contact person is Dorothy Stanton; Phone (925)820-3757 or email dpstant@hotmail.com. New persons interested in attending should contact Dorothy Stanton.

CALENDAR OF OTHER EVENTS

9 June Tuesday 7:30 pm The Livermore-Amador Genealogy Society will have one of its regular meetings at Beth Emek, 3400 Nevada Court in Pleasanton. "Canadian Research Techniques" is the title of the presentation that will be given by Lisa B Lee. She is a professional genealogist, author, and guest speaker. She is a graduate of the National Institute for Genealogical Studies (University of Toronto) with certificates in U.S. and Canadian Research.

17 June Wednesday 7:30 p.m. The San Mateo County Genealogical Society will hold a regular meeting at the Silicon Valley Community Foundation, 1700 South El Camino Real in San Mateo. This is near Highway 92. **Topic:** "Your Genealogy Stay Vacation on the Peninsula" Yes the Internet is an important resource for genealogy - but once in a while we need to get away from the computer and discover the wonderful repositories here. Their panel will briefly tell you about the highlights of the collection at the National Archives, San Bruno, Sutro Library, Stanford Green Library, SMCGS Library and the Menlo Park Family History Center

23 June Tuesday 1 to 3 pm The Sacramento German Genealogical Society will hold its regular monthly meeting at St. Mark's United Methodist Church, Lusk Drive and St. Marks Way in Sacramento. "Involving Your Children and Posterity in Your Family History Work" will be the subject of a presentation by Marion Wolfert, AG of Salt Lake City.

26-28 June Friday through Sunday The Southern California Genealogy Society will have its 40th annual Jamboree at the Burbank Airport Marriott Hotel and Convention Center. They plan to have over 50 speakers and nearly 100 lectures. For more details, visit their web site: http://www.scgsgenealogy.com/2009jam-home.htm

An Additional Proposed By-Law Change:

The Board is recommending the revision of the Standing Rules to have them conform with the way our Society is currently operating, adding such things as descriptions of new committees and deleting descriptions of ones that no longer exist. The Membership will have the opportunity to vote on those changes at the June 19th General Meeting. One change has to do with the amount of time required to audit the Society's books at the close of the fiscal year. It came to the Board's attention that one item in the *Constitution and By-Laws* (C&BL), if left unchanged, would conflict with the revised Standing Rules. Therefore, even though the Membership just approved several revisions at our Annual Meeting in May, we will require an affirmative vote of two thirds of the members on this small additional Change in the C&BL at the July General Meeting. The Board's recommendation has to do with Article VIII 2a, on page 17 of the current Handbook. It currently reads:

> "Audit the books of the Society **within six weeks after the Annual Meeting** and submit the report with the Treasurer's Report."

The Board is recommending that the bolded words should be removed and replaced with "**as stated in the Standing Rules".** The Standing Rules call for the audit to be completed by July 15 of the new fiscal year.

Genealogical Research Around the Country

The May 2009 issue of *Family Tree Magazine* had an interesting article by David A Fryxell on doing genealogy research in the various states. Some states, "by design or accident of history" are much easier in which to do research. Others have been slow to put information on-line, make it harder for the researcher in other ways, or have suffered the proverbial "courthouse fires" or other natural disasters. Mr. Fryxell admits that his analysis has a "large dose of sheer subjectivity", but here, in no specific order, is his list of the best and the worst

The 10 BEST States for Genealogy Research	The 10 WORST States for Genealogy Research
1. Texas	1. New York
2. Minnesota	2. Idaho
3. Utah	3. Oklahoma
4. Illinois	4. West Virginia
5. Wisconsin	5. Montana
6. Arizona	6. Louisiana
7. Missouri	7. Nebraska
8. Virginia	8. Alaska
9. Washington	9. Wyoming
10. Massachusetts	10. Mississippi

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Find the Mothers in Your Family Tree

By Jana Lloyd 04 May 2009, Ancestry.com

Before 1922, immigrant women were not required to naturalize. If they were married, they were listed under their husband's surname on the census records. And before the 1850 census, they weren't even listed at all—they were just given a tally mark. Combine that with the fact that for many years women couldn't vote, own property, or enter into legal agreements, and you may find researching your female relatives a bit of a challenge.

Follow these seven tips to help find out more about your female ancestors—especially to locate their ever-elusive maiden names.

1. Look for mothers-in-law in census records.

After their husbands died, many women went to live with children. You'll often find mothers-in-law (and other in-laws for that matter) listed in census records. Finding out that Robert Jones's mother-in-law was Peggy Thompson can tip you off that his dear wife may have been a Thompson pre-wedding day. Be careful though—the mother-in-law may be on a second or third last name.

2. Search the vital records of other family members.

Don't know great-grandmother's maiden name? Check grandma's birth certificate. Or marriage certificate. Or death certificate. And if you don't find it listed there, check the vital records of other siblings and even half-siblings. Records changed from year to year and state to state, so information not included on one certificate might have been recorded on another.

3. Search local newspapers at the time.

Besides birth, wedding, and death announcements, the personal columns of local newspapers can be very revealing. You might find that —Mr. and Mrs. X invited their daughter and son-in-law, Mr. and Mrs. Y, for Thanksgiving dinner.

4. Conduct a thorough search of the husband's records.

For better or worse, you often find out about the women in your family tree by researching the men. The husband and father's records usually offer the most information, but you may want to try those of brothers and other male relatives as well.

One researcher looking through records from the Corp of Engineers in the 1890s was surprised to find a letter written to John Brown saying his sister had been turned down for a job. They had written to her brother—not her—to inform her that she had not been hired! A descendant would only have found this information by researching the brother's name—not the woman's. (See —10 Tough Ancestors, in *Ancestry Magazine.)*

5. Pay attention to witnesses, neighbors, and friends.

Witnesses were often family members, so male witnesses on a record may have been brothers, fathers, or uncles to any female mentioned. Neighbors on censuses, directories, and town maps are also potential in-laws. And, finally, women sometimes married brothers' friends.

—So what if John and Permelia died too soon to apply for a military pension? writes Elizabeth Shown Mills, author of —Finding Wives, Mothers, and Old Women with Suitcases, in *Ancestry Magazine. —John's presence on a muster roll gives* us a list of fellow soldiers who could have lived longer, could have applied, and could have talked about John. "Me and John", one old veteran wrote in his pension affidavit, "me and John Pettypool dug them trenches together. Me and John were buddies, just like brothers. He married my sister."

6. Locate cemeteries.

Records might not mention women's last names, but headstones usually do. If you can locate a woman—either in person or on a list of cemetery records—buried beside her husband, you can often find out her unmarried name.

7. Understand the laws of the time.

Get to know the culture and laws surrounding the area and time-period when your female family member was living. Understanding what records she may or may not have left behind can help you know what to search for.

For instance, throughout most of the 19th century a single, divorced, or widowed woman,

known as a "feme sole", often produced more paperwork than a "feme covert", or a married woman. She could enter into contracts, sue her debtors, and create a will. However, she lost most of these rights when she married.

Beginning as early as 1850, though, married women in many states did exercise ownership over any property they had personally inherited or been given. This meant she could create a will or deed for her own personal property, apart from her husband's.

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LIBRARY TRIPS

There are no organized library trips planned for the summer.

But for any member who wants to learn about or do military / veteran research we are suggesting/recommending that SRVGS members register and attend the Friday, June 12 and Friday, June 26 scheduled workshops at the National Archives in San Bruno. Refer to page 6 of our SRVGS April newsletter for details. When the educational workshop is finished you still have a few hours available to conduct personal research at NARA. Gail Roche Van Wye is the contact person for future library trips. Phone 253-1096 or e-mail gailrvw@aol.com.

SOCIETY NEWS VIA EMAIL

Ileen Peterson 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, and substantial savings for the Society and for the environment. Ileen keeps an email address list of members. She will distribute messages a minimum of once a month. Members wishing to share news may send it to Ileen. If it is deemed appropriate, it will be distributed. Members always have the option to Opt-Out of the email distribution. Notify Ileen Peterson at: ileenpeterson@comcast.net

HOW TO REACH THE BOARD MEMBERS

President: Barbara Dittig 925-648-9364
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1st V.P. Ileen Peterson 510-651-7728

2nd V.P. Program:
Sherri Hedman 925-275-8123

3rd V.P. Membership:
Ed Mason 925-838-7848

Recording Secretary:
Lisa Cooke 925-831-8537

Corresponding Secretary:
Kathy Javdani 925-736-5464

Treasurer: Gail Roche Van Wye 925-253-1096

Parliamentarian:
Virginia Rood 925-937-8659

NEWSLETTER TEAM

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e-mail: rjventer@comcast.net

Calendar Coordinator:
Vern Segelke 925-838-8570
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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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A Resource for Irish Research

The **Irish Family History Foundation** offers a great resource for Irish genealogical research at www.irish-roots.ie. It contains nearly 15 million church, vital and census records.

Most of Ireland's census records and Church of Ireland parish records were lost in the 1922 fire at Dublin Public Records Office, but some did survive. Of course, church records that remained in the possession of the local churches also survived, but many are hard to access.

County genealogical societies throughout Ireland and Northern Ireland are now transcribing church registers, vital records, census records, and gravestone inscriptions from around the country. Most church records date from early 1800s to 1900 and some back to 1634. The civil records date from 1864 – 1900. The fully intact 1901 and 1911 censuses give name, age and relationship to the head of household.

All searches are free, but transcribed records cost 5 euros each.

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