
PLAIN HISTORY GENEALOGY GROUP

Covering Plain, Sauk Co, Wisconsin and Beyond

Vol 17 Dec 2003

New Format

Internet & Goodies

Using CDs to Backup Data

Using & Finding Documents

Meeting & Events Schedule

Plain History Genealogy Group

Sat Jan 10, 2004 9:30 am, Plain, WI

If you are doing genealogy research, you have to use the website www.familysearch.org. This site is maintained by the LDS church and gives you access to all sorts of stuff. I can guarantee that you will find lots of stuff at this site to help your research. At our meeting we will discuss how you can use this site to find out about your ancestors.

Future Meetings:

Jan 10, 2004 March 13, 2004

WSGS Gene-A-Rama 2004 Fri Apr 23

Sat Apr 24 2004 Oconomowoc WI

A little bird told me that John Colletta will be the featured speaker. He is a great speaker. Be sure to mark your calendar for this event.

**German Interest Group Sat Jul 10
2004 Whitewater WI**

The speaker will be Roger Minert. I heard him speak a couple of years ago and was phenomenal. Another item to put on your calendar.

New Format

We will be using a new format for the newsletter. There are a couple of reasons for the change. One reason is that the 2-column format should be easier to read. Another reason is that it will be prettier.

One of the drawbacks is that the file will be larger and take a little longer to download. It will also be in a PDF format.

Also, instead of attaching the entire newsletter to email you will get links to the newsletter and the Internet sites mentioned in the newsletter. This will keep the size of the file smaller, which will keep my email provider from identifying me as a spammer.

Let me know how this format works for you.

Internet & Goodies

Wisconsin History Explorer

The Wisconsin Historical Society's Division of Historic Preservation is a great place to find stories about historic places and the way things were in the past.

They have really neat stories about Wisconsin Suburbs, Travel on Wisconsin Roads, Gas Stations, Early Travel & Hotels, Roadside Food Stands and Historic Theaters.

If you want to know how things were in the past you have to check this site out. They are in the process of adding more stories. Be sure to look at the web pages carefully. There are really neat links to more websites hidden on the page.

www.wisconsinhistory.org/archstories

Wisconsin Stories

If you want to know how your ancestors lived, you need to do some historical research. This is another great site created by the Wisconsin Historical Society in cooperation with the Wisconsin Public Television.

This site has got some really great videos you can watch over the Internet. Ain't it nice to have broadband.

They have stories about the first NBA team in Wisconsin (no it wasn't in Milwaukee), specific town histories, schooling from one-room school houses to universities and how the mail effected rural Wisconsin (you would be amazed at what could be order through mail-order catalogs in the past). I am especially interested in the WWII stories.

Be careful with these sites, you can spend a lifetime in them.

<http://www.wisconsinstories.org/>

Comics on Internet

The times they are a changing. Its been over 2 years since I stopped receiving a daily newspaper. Today I read the online versions of over a dozen newspapers daily. I do need to get my fix for my comics addiction.

You can find free access to comics all over the Internet. I find it interesting that these companies can make money by giving their products free on the Internet. It will be interesting how this trend effects pay-per-use sites like Ancestry.com

<http://www.onwisconsin.com/puzzles/>

Rich Tennant - The 5th Wave (funny computer related comic)

<http://www.uclick.com/client/mij/fw/>

Bear Hunting Finns

Technology is a wonderful thing. However even a good thing can be misused. The Dec / Jan 2004 issue of Outdoor Life (page 14) gives an example of something that is just wrong.

The Finns attach a cell-phone to their bear-hunting dogs. They turn the dogs loose and the Finns can give the dogs instructions over the cell-phone. As if this weren't enough, the Finns can hear their dogs' barking over the cell-phone. They can tell by the dogs' barking if the dogs have found a bear. Using satellites and global positioning system (GPS), they can locate the dogs on a map.

Makes you think. Big Brother is watching you.

German Fonts for PC

Reading old handwriting is bad enough, let alone trying to read the old German scripts. I found a site on the Internet that lets you download 14 fonts for your PC that will generate these old scripts. One of the best ways to learn the old script is use these fonts in your word processor to type your name, ancestor's names, ancestral home names, etc and see what it looks like.

To add a new font to your computer Open Fonts in Control Panel. On the File menu, click Install New Font. In Drives, click the drive you want. In Folders, double-click the folder that contains the fonts you want to add. In List of fonts, click the font you want to add, and then click OK. To add all of the listed fonts, click Select All, and then click OK.

<http://www.german-usa.com/fonts/>

US Immigration Collection.

If you are patient and willing to spend money you can get anything. www.ancestry.com has a new pay-per-use data base that eventually will be an index to passenger lists for all America's major ports (New York, Boston, Philadelphia, Baltimore, New Orleans and San Francisco)

Looking under ALL DATABASES by city you can find the index for each city. New York has 1850-1859 already index with 1860-1862 coming soon. You can search by name, age, arrival (range of dates), ports, ship name or keyword

SUPPOSEDLY THIS INDEX IS LINKED TO ACTUAL IMAGES OF THE PASSENGER LISTS COPIED FROM NARA'S MICROFILM

I haven't plunked down the \$79.95 a year. Current subscribers to their other pay per use services might qualify you for a discount to \$39.95 a year.

I tried this database and it seems to work well.

RootsWeb Guides

RootsWeb is one of the better sources of information and how-to-do instructions / aides. This website is a great starting point for your research project. Be sure to look carefully at the pages. There are lots of links on the left-side of the webpages that are little gems.

<http://rwguide.rootsweb.com/>

Virtual Magnifying Glass 2.00

When I work with digital images, I often want to magnify a portion of the image. Here is a neat tool that lets you magnify a portion of the screen. Lots of programs let you magnify the entire image. The bad thing is that you can only see a part of the image on the screen. The

Virtual Magnifying Glass lets you keep the entire image on the screen while you move a "magnifying glass" over your screen. This is a neat tool and the price is right - free.

I found this and lots of other neat stuff in Leo Laporte's 2004 Technology Almanac.

<http://magnifier.sourceforge.net/>

Yahoo! Web Messenger

In the future, we will be using Yahoo! Messenger to communicate. This is okay if you are at home and have the program loaded on your PC. But what if you are not at home? Libraries will not let you load Yahoo! Messenger on their PCs.

At the bottom of the following webpage is a link to an "online" version that doesn't require you to load the Messenger program to your PC. This "online" version will allow you to see your "buddy list". But you can not use microphones or webcams. At our next meeting, we will demonstrate this at the Library.

<http://messenger.yahoo.com/>

World Rock Paper Scissors

Another example of people with too much time on their hands, literally. They had the world championship in Oct 2003. The winner won best two-out-of-three with 3 papers vs a 3-rock throw.

This makes a great break from serious research. Be sure to read the areas about strategies and trainers.

<http://www.worldrps.com/>

BadgerLink - Newspaper Articles

This is a great site that has lots of links to Wisconsin newspapers over the Internet. You can search newspapers for all sorts of articles about your family including obituaries. Look under the Resources for Wisconsin Residents section. Best of all, the price is right, free.

<http://www.badgerlink.net/>

TechTV

How does a newbie become a full-fledged geek? There is a great channel available on some cable TV networks that can help you learn all sort of stuff.

I always watch "Call for Help" and "The Screen Savers". I have my DVR recorder catch all the shows.

If you are not lucky enough to get this cable channel, check out www.techtv.com.

Tech TV also published a great book, "Leo Laporte's 2004 Technology Almanac. This book covers a bunch of neat things you can do with your computer. It is written in easy-to understand, short bytes of information.

If you watch the shows and use the website you should get yourself a pocket-protector and put tape on your glasses.

PHGG Yahoo! Group Update

We have several people who have joined our group, some of them that I don't know.

I am trying to keep the calendar up-to-date with events.

Thanks to Bernie Ruhland and Marian Burmester for adding photos to the site. This just shows part of the potential of this site. This would be a great way to display "unknown"

photos and ask for help in figuring out who is who.

This is also a way that we can get around the problem of posting individual member's personal information to the "main" web site. If you want to have your personal information displayed, add it to your Yahoo profile. (You can add the families you are researching, areas that you are researching, and special documents that you have, and questions that you would like answered.)

Next, we will have to figure out what to put in the databases and file sharing area

Using CDs to Backup Data

Many genealogists trust their hard-worked-for research to little pieces of plastic that look like coffee cup coasters. Should these genealogists sleep well at night? Or should they be afraid, very afraid?

Optimists say that CDs should last over 100 years. Of course how would they know? Modern CDs have only been around for less than 10 years. Pessimists say that only paper and photos can be trusted to last the test of times. Who is right?

Fred Langa, a knowledgeable and reputable computer guy has issued a strong warning that needs to be heeded. His excellent article covers a number of issues.

Inexpensive / cheap disks do not last as long as quality disks. Protect your disks from heat, humidity, sunlight and scratches. Labels look nice but the glue can "seep" into the data and ruin the disks. Permanent-ink felt markers "seem" to be a good way to label your CDs.

The CD-Recordable FAQ gives you more things to think about.

It's the "top" of the disk that you have to worry about, not the reflective bottom. CD-R's have "speed limits." Make sure that the CD-R's rated speed is fast enough to work with your CD writer. It is difficult to identify who actually manufactures the CDs. You can't just go by the brand-name on the disk. Companies have their disks manufactured throughout the world with different levels of quality.

If you really want to get "geeky" about CDs, you can read the document by the Optical Storage Technology Association (OSTA) by Hugh Bennett.

Okay what does this all mean? To sum up, it just doesn't matter.

If you are betting that you can copy all your stuff to a CD, let it sit around for ten years and still be able to use it, you are in for a rude awakening.

For one thing, technology is always changing. 5 1/4" floppy disks were unbelievable when they came out. Then we had the 100 meg ZIP drives. CD-R writers have replaced these. DVD writers that write almost 5 billion bytes on one side of the disks are now replacing CD-R writers. Two-sided DVD writers are soon to be released. What's next? I have heard of disks capable of storing 100 billion bytes. Good luck trying to read a ZIP disk after 2005.

Digital image formats are also changing. BMP's, GIF's, TIFF's are all different standards. I am currently using JPEG as my main storage format. Even the JPEG format is changing.

This is what I am doing to keep my digital data safe.

1) I keep ALL of my images on the hard drives of one computer. It is easy to misplace a single CD disk, but tougher to lose a whole computer. Hard drives are cheap. You can get a 160 billion-byte disk for around \$150. I have two drives in my PC. I use one drive for my

programs and one my data. I feel that hard disk storage is more "stable" than CD disks.

2) I create "fresh" backups of my disks every year. Because of this I don't rely on some marketing claim of an 100-year life. I make "backup" copies using the current standard format. I was able to get my 60+ CD disks on less than 15 DVD disks. (I also have a pretty good supply of old ZIP disks.)

3) I TEST MY BACKUPS REGULARLY. It is bad time to test your backups for the first time when you have to restore files after a hard drive crash. Just because the CD writing program says that the disk was created successfully doesn't make it so.

4) I share copies of my backups with family, friends and historical archives. It's always the other guy's house that burns down or is flooded. By sharing my stuff all over the place, I also don't have to worry about well-meaning relatives putting all my stuff in a dumpster after my death.

You spent a lot of time gathering your stuff. Spend a few hours and dollars making sure that it is safe.

"Time to Check your CDRs" Langa Letter, Fred Langa, Nov 3 2003

<http://www.informationweek.com/story/showArticle.jhtml?articleID=15800263>

"CD-Recordable FAQ" Last Updated Oct 14 2003 <http://www.cdrfaq.org/>

"Understanding CD-R & CD-RW", Hugh Bennett, Jan 2003

<http://www.osta.org/technology/cdqa.htm>

Using and Finding Documents

Vital records like; birth, death and marriage certificates are great sources of information about our families. But there are lots of neat stuff that you can find in other types of documents. We will tell you where you can find some of these "other" documents and how to use them.

To start with, the first question you have to ask about any document that you use is, "Is the information on the document accurate and complete?"

One measure of the quality of a document is when the document was created. Documents created closer to the event are "better." For example a birth certificate is generally a better source of a birth date than an obituary.

Another way to measure a document's quality is who created the document. Did the source of the information really know? Was the source of the information biased? Did the source have something to hide?

Another thing about documents is just because somebody says it doesn't exist, doesn't mean it doesn't exist. Not everything was burned up, lost, stolen or thrown away. Maybe the person you ask for the document doesn't know where it is. I am constantly surprised to find documents that aren't supposed to exist.

Let's look at individual types of documents.

Civil War Pension Records. People who served in the Civil War or their dependents were usually entitled to federal pensions. (If they fought on the North's side.) People had to fill out a detailed request to qualify for a pension. This request could give you a detailed description of military service and battles. Requests filed by dependents are great because they have to prove a relationship to the soldier.

There is an index card to these requests.

www.ancestry.com, a pay-to-use service, lets you search for images of these cards on the Internet. Once you find the index card, you have enough information to make a request to the National Archives Records Administration (NARA).

US Government Land Records. Many of our ancestors bought their land from the US federal government. You can search for these records on www.glorerecords.blm.gov Once you find what you are looking for, you can look at, print or download a digital image of the actual land transfer document. The price for this service is right, free.

Plat Maps. Plat maps show you who owned what property. Knowing who owned a piece of property and when they owned it can help you find that ancestor that is trying to hide on you. It is also great way to find out where your ancestors came from in Europe. If you can't find records for your direct ancestor, look for the records of their neighbors. People often lived next to family and friends that came from the hard-to-find ancestral home.

Plat maps are not available for every year. The format of plat maps changes from year-to-year. Some plat maps show you land ownership in villages and towns.

Plat maps for the townships of Franklin and Bear Creek can be found on the Haas Bauer CD-disks on DISK #3 in the AG0000 directory.

A great source for plat maps is the Archives room at the Wisconsin Historical Society Library in Madison, WI.

German Documents. The LDS church has lots of records from foreign countries microfilmed. You can find what the LDS has by using their catalog at www.familysearch.org. For example, they have over 100 rolls of film covering the Waldmuenchen, Bavaria,

Germany area (which is where many of our ancestors came from.)

Here is a trick to remember about German documents. The LDS church has filmed only few of the records of church records in Bavaria. You will also hear that the government did not make civil records of births, marriages and deaths in Bavaria until 1876. This would make you think that these records didn't exist until after 1875,

The government might not have recorded marriages until 1876. But if a person wanted to get married, the government required the couple to fill out a "book" proving that they could support themselves and not become a burden upon the community.

Okay so while it is true that there isn't a civil record of the marriage, these "marriage packages" going back to around 1800 have been filmed by the LDS church.

These "marriage packages" contained such things as:

- information about the bride and groom
- information about their parents
- school records
- military records
- land transfer records between father and sons (these are fantastic for the interesting details you can find in them)

The first problem that you have working with German documents is that they are written in German. The next problem is that they are written in that awful, hard-to-read script.

When trying to read German documents, you don't have to eat the elephant all in one bite. It isn't too difficult to learn how your ancestors' names and towns' names look in the old script. If you know this much, you can flip through the LDS microfilm looking for these names. Once you find the name, copy all the sheets that look that they are part of the "package." You might not be able to translate every detail, but you can then hire somebody to translate these

documents. (No, it isn't cheating hire somebody to help you with your research.)

In addition to "marriage packages", people had to request permission to emigrate from Germany to America. On our website we have a file showing an index of permissions to emigrate filed with the Waldmuenchen government.

<http://solo18.abac.com/garylhaas/phgnews/WALDPTM1.PDF>

WWI Draft Registration. Men born between June 6, 1886 and September 12, 1900 had to register for the draft. These "cards" show

- date and place of birth
- current residence
- occupation
- previous military experience (even if it was in the German army)
- physical description
- reason for possible deferment.

The Wisconsin Historical Society Library has microfilms of these cards. They also have the actual cards for Sauk County in the Archives room.

Images of these cards can be found on the Haas Bauer disk #16 in the CC0000 directory for the Plain area.

Ahnenpass. Under the Nazi's, people had to document their genealogy to prove their "purity." These records are sensitive because of what they were used for. But if you can find them they might be a good source of information about your ancestors.

US Naturalization Records. The first step in becoming a citizen was to file your intent to become a citizen. These are referred to as "first papers". After a waiting period, a person could file final papers and become a citizen. Many people filed their "first papers" but never carried through on becoming citizens. (Because you could own land and vote without becoming a US citizen.)

The information required in naturalization records changed over the years. One of the key pieces of information that can be found is when did the person enter the US and where did they come from.

Naturalization records for Sauk County can be found in the Archives Room of the Wisconsin Historical Society Library.

Prayer Cards. These religious cards for funerals can contain a lot of information. You might want to check with the funeral home to see if they kept a copy of the card.

Obituaries. These are a great source of information. They can include:

- cause of death
- occupation
- immigration information
- life events (one of my gg-grandfathers went west during the Gold Rush)
- names of close relatives.

Baptismal Records. My grandfather did not have a birth certificate filed with the county. When it came time for him to register for Social Security, he had to go to the church and get baptismal records. These records can hold surprises. The sponsors are people to research. They generally were close friends or relatives. I discovered that my grandfather's name was James not Ludwig.

Social Security Death Index. This index of death benefits paid can be found in a number of places on the Internet. Most of these records are from after 1960. You can find out:

- date & state of issuance of social security #
- birth date
- death date
- social security number
- last residence

Census Information. There is lots of good stuff in census records. This is a complex topic that I can only cover briefly what can be found.

- US federal census is available online www.ancestry.com is one source
- immigration information
- birth month
- relationship to head of household
- neighbors
- number of children
- State census contain unique information
- Agricultural census are available for Federal and State census (selected years)
- Can be found at Wis Historical Soc Library

WWI Bonus Records. Soldiers who served in WWI were paid a bonus based on their service (time overseas, etc.) These cards show the amount of the bonus, enlistment, discharge, serial number, physical description, birth date, birth place, where inducted, units served with, ranks, engagements, time overseas, and degree of disability.

These cards can be found on microfilm in the Archives Room at the Wisconsin Historical Society Library. CAREFUL, there are two sets of microfilm. YOU WILL NEED BOTH. On one set the front of the card is properly exposed. On the other set the back of the card is properly exposed.

Divorce Records. I had my gg grandmother's marriage record to the guy in 1898. I had the 1900 census, which show her listed living alone under her maiden name. I also had the death certificate of the guy from 1901. This was a puzzler, but I thought she might have gotten a divorce.

If she got a divorce, the case would have been tried in a Sauk County court. When I asked records clerk at the county court house for records from this time period, they said they didn't know where the records were.

The clerk thought that maybe the Sauk County Historical Museum might have them. They didn't.

I checked the Archives Room at the Wisconsin Historical Society Library and found Sauk

County Court records. The books had an index in the front. I checked the index and didn't find anything.

This appeared to be a classic case of "records that didn't exist." Not so. Since the cases were in date order, I started paging through the books. I found the case in the book but not in the index in the front of the book. Seems that they didn't list the "really good" cases in the index.

School Records. School records are a nice slice-of-life source of data about relatives. When my relatives in future generations look at my college transcripts, I hope they get a chuckle because I got a C in bowling.

Medical Records. The Archives Room at the Wisconsin Historical Society Library in Madison has all sorts of good stuff. They have the accounting records of Dr. Bossard, who served this area around the turn of the century.

I found the records for my g grandfather. From the records, I could identify a major illness in February 1896. It was fun to see that he paid the doctor with bushels of oats and cash.

Probate Records. One final document to look at is probate records. Probate records can contain anything. They can contain a final will. Wills can list relatives and give the dead guy his final shot at the living. Probate records contain detail lists of what the dead guy owned. My g grandfather had \$40 worth of chickens (that's a boat-load of chickens). My g grandfather also owned land in South Dakota.

I found these probate records at the Sauk County Court House.

Another place to check for probate records is the Sauk County Historical Museum. They have the probate records prior to 1916. Be sure to check out their website because they have a detailed list of the individuals they have records for.

www.saukcounty.com/schs/probate.htm

KEEP IN CONTACT

Send Email to garylhaas@yahoo.com

Be sure to check the website occasionally.
<http://solo18.abac.com/garylhaas/>

Join our Yahoo Group at
<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/phgg>

Some members can be contacted using
Yahoo Messenger.