



# Dane County Area Genealogical Society News

## *Researching the Wisconsin Historical Society Archives at the January 8 meeting*

Harry Miller, the Senior Reference Archivist at the Wisconsin Historical Society, will be joining us on Thursday, January 8 to discuss researching government-created records, with an emphasis on those NOT accessible online. He will talk about creating strategies for searching government records, not only those created in Wisconsin, but also those created

in other states or at the federal level.

Mr. Miller has over thirty years of experience in researching and managing archival materials. He has been in his current position since 1983 where he oversees access for genealogists and all other types of researchers, to the Historical Society's collections of

Wisconsin state and local government records, manuscripts, maps and rare books.

*We are meeting the second Thursday in January at the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints at 4505 Regent Street, Madison, WI. Please join us on Thursday, January 8 at 7:00 P.M.*

## *The Immigrant Experience: A View from Language*

U.W. Professor of Linguistics Joseph Salmons discussed the historic shift, in less than 100 years, from speaking German to English among Western immigrants. As guest speaker at the DCAGS December 4 meeting, he focused on education, religion and the press as reflected by the largest group of immigrants to Wisconsin, the Germans. This included the southeastern Rhineland group, Pomeranians and Swiss. Because different dialects constitute distinct languages, they could not understand each other.

In Milwaukee, German was spoken almost totally in the 1870s and 80s, and signs were also posted in that language. From 1890-1900, 35-40 percent of the Wisconsin population spoke German as their home language. This represented about 60,000 persons. By 2000 the German language was essentially dead, as under 1 percent of the state

population continued to speak German.

How did this happen? Nils Haugen, Norwegian researcher, believed that time takes care of the language question, but many families answered that they stopped speaking German because of WWI.

Initially, small communities reflected a horizontal structure. The church, schools and society were interwoven and highly localized. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century there was a concentration of power from elsewhere: schools tied to state boards of education, churches receiving direction from higher organizations.

The Bennett Law of 1890 required that reading, writing, arithmetic and U.S. history were to be taught in English, often taught by teachers with limited ability in English. This law was a very political issue and was repealed in six months.

In 1910 children of immigrants were still monolingual but became fluent in English after about nine months.

Parochial schools were taught in German and in the 1930s there was still a demand for German curriculum in some schools. Older immigrants had access to "advice" books which included grammar so they could learn without a teacher. In most German communities people could live a normal life without knowing English.

In 1937 a study of Lebanon, Wisconsin, found church records being written in German. Even in the 1940s, 50s and 60s, people requested having German church services. Often pastors had to be recruited from Germany.

In 1857 there were fourteen weekly newspapers printed in standard German. The turn of the century showed 500 active

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December 31, 2008

Volume 3, Issue 4

### Volunteers Needed

DCAGS needs you!  
We have several committees for people to get involved in. We are particularly interested in members willing to work on our program planning and publicity efforts. Contact Rollie at [rklittle@wisc.edu](mailto:rklittle@wisc.edu) or (608) 273-0211 if interested in volunteering.

**Regular DCAGS meetings are generally the first Thursday of each month at the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints located at 4505 Regent, Madison, WI beginning at 7 p.m.**

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### DCAGS Update:

*The DCAGS Governing Board meets the third Monday of each month. However because of the Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday, the next meeting is set for Monday, January 12 at 6:30 p.m. South Madison Library, 2222 Park St. We invite all members to attend. Please join us!*

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## *The Immigrant Experience: A View from Language continued...*

German language newspapers and magazines in Wisconsin, including four dailies – one in La Crosse and Sheboygan, two in Milwaukee – and thousands of books. The most rapid decline came in 1910 when small newspapers started merging although some continued until the 1940s and 50s.

## *DCAGS Meeting Cancellation Policy*

*Given all the bad weather we've been having, here's a reminder of DCAGS's meeting cancellation policy.*

DCAGS will consider canceling a scheduled meeting if the Madison Metropolitan School District cancels school or authorizes early release due to severe weather conditions (e.g., blizzard, tornado, etc.) that are expected to continue into the evening hours. Should school not be in session, other community-wide cancellations may be taken into account.

A decision to cancel a meeting due to severe weather conditions shall be made by a majority of the Executive Committee.

The decision should be made by Noon if possible the day of the meeting and notice should be sent out to members ASAP by email as well as put on the DCAGS webpage.

Members can also check by listening to WIBA, 1310 AM and WOLX, 94.9 FM. Notice will also be sent to Channel 3 and Channel 15 TV stations.

## *President's Message*

I hope everyone has had a Happy Holiday Season and are all set for a great New Year. I want to congratulate the new board members and wish to let everyone know that the board will continue to meet at the South Madison Library.

The date for the January board meeting will be on January 12<sup>th</sup> since the Martin Luther King Jr. holiday falls on the usual board meeting day and the library will be closed. Otherwise the

meetings are held on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Monday of the month, starting at 6:30 PM.

I also want to remind everyone that our January meeting will be on the 8<sup>th</sup> and not on the 1<sup>st</sup> on January. I know everyone is looking forward to a wonderful year of ancestor hunting and to the new programs that the society will be presenting.

I want to remind everyone

we will be planning a fall Genealogy Fair and as the Fair chairman I am looking for people to serve on the committee with me. This would involve some planning meetings in spring and in fall we will need volunteers to help set up and take down tables. Most of the preplanning is contacting the vendors, speakers and helping get flyers out. Let me know if you are willing to help.

Have a great 2009!

*Pat Skubis*

## *A search for descendants of Stephan Bell – by Pat Skubis*

In November DCAGS received an inquiry from Helmut Weidenbach, who is a German currently living in England. Helmut was searching for a Bell family who came to Wisconsin in the mid-1800s. In his first email he had included the name of the relative, his date of birth, information on his wife, and that they had arrived about 1853/54. I checked on Heritage Quest and did not find the family in the 1860 census but located them in the 1870 census and also in the 1880 census. By 1880 the parents apparently had died, as all I found were four of the children and that the family had now moved out of Dane County and to Iowa County.

I emailed back to Helmut and asked for further details, like what religion were they? Were some of their children born in Germany? And what other facts he knew. He replied that the family was

Catholic and in a letter that he had, written by Stephan, it stated that their farm was about 15 miles outside of Madison off Mineral Point Road. He also stated that he had given money towards a new Catholic Church. Helmut had written to the church in Pine Bluff, but had not heard from them yet. I received a list of the Bells that are buried in the St. Mary's cemetery near Pine Bluff and at first I did not think any of them were related to this Bell family. Later I found out that one of Stephan Bell's grandchildren is indeed buried there.

I located the family farm on the 1873 plat map and the area research center in Platteville located the tax records and the bill of sale for the farm outside of Avoca. I also located the oldest son in the 1910 Cross Plains census. Then the family disappeared. At this point I thought that I might have to leave the confines of my house

and do good old-fashioned research at the Historical Society.

But I thought I would give the computer one more try. So one night I typed in "Stephen Bell" + WI + genealogy into Google and what should appear, but Stephen Bell mentioned as part of the Kalscheuer family tree in Sun Prairie. So I called the Kalscheuers and got directed to the sister who looked in her Kalscheuer book and found descendants of Stephan Bell living in Black Earth.

The Black Earth Bell family has now been put in contact with Helmut. I learned that yes indeed the oldest son of Stephan had been married at the church in Pine Bluff and his infant son was buried in Pine Bluff cemetery.

I also found that persistence does pay off. Looking for descendants is at times more challenging than looking for ancestors, but it can be done.

# Upcoming events

## Reminiscence Writing

What: Reminiscence Writing Workshop

When: The workshop includes six two-hour sessions beginning on January 14 and ending on February 18, 2009.

Where: Oregon Senior Center

Cost: \$38.00.

Register: You can sign up by contacting Erika Hoke by phone at 835-5801 or email her at [ehoke@vil.oregon.wi.us](mailto:ehoke@vil.oregon.wi.us).

## UW German Immigration Experience Class

What: Prof. Cora Lee Kluge class "The German Immigration Experience." German 278, lecture #1

When: The class will meet on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays from 8:50 to 9:40 a.m. for 15 weeks from January 21 to May 8, 2009

Where: Room 114 Van Hise Hall.

Register: Information on auditing this course, even though you are not a current student at the UW-Madison, can be found by following this link: <http://www.dcs.wisc.edu/info/guests.htm>.

Cost: And if you are a citizen of the State of Wisconsin age 60 or older, you may audit the course for free. See information at this Web site: <http://www.dcs.wisc.edu/info/audit60.htm>.

## Spring Genealogy Classes at MATC/Ace

Internet: Genealogy Intro. This course covers basic Internet skills needed to research Genealogy sources on the web. Topics covered include: navigating the web by using search engines, web addresses, and links; using web-based e-mail and how to send attachments; downloading genealogy software; downloading & using Acrobat Reader; and internet security and computer protection. You will become familiar with genealogy websites and what they have to offer.

Class# 59806

Fees: \$42.82

Days & Time: Thursday 9:00 AM-12:00 PM

Begins Ends: 3/12 to 4/9

Instructor: Pat Skubis

Location: South Madison

Community Campus

Class# 59803

Fees: \$42.82

Days & Time: Thursday 1:00 PM-4:00 PM

Begins Ends: 4/9 to 5/7

Instructor: Pat Skubis

Location: Oregon Area Senior

Center

Internet: Genealogy

Intermediate. This course is designed to increase your Internet skills and confidence. You will learn about major genealogy websites, how to search for ship records, immigration records, church & military records, and how to find records overseas. Other topics covered are: how to use the internet to plan a research trip or genealogy vacation, using Map Quest and the white pages to assist you in your genealogy research, how to create and send a GEDCOM & download a GEDCOM into your genealogy program, and what to include & exclude when creating a genealogy website, and where you can post it!

Class# 59812

Fees: \$42.82

Days & Time: Wednesday 1:00 PM-4:00 PM

Begins Ends: 4/8 to 5/6

Instructor: Pat Skubis

Location: West Madison Education Center

Class# 59813

Fees: \$42.82

Days & Time: Tuesday 9:00 AM-12:00 PM

Begins Ends: 4/14 to 5/12

Instructor: Pat Skubis

Location: Madison Senior Center

Internet: Genealogy Advanced

Students should have taken Internet Genealogy Intro and Internet Genealogy Intermediate. This class will allow time for independent searches with assistance from the instructor and will update you on new internet

features. Other topics include tracing your ancestor's migration, gathering background information, unusual resources to check out Black Sheep in the family, creating a book online, and more.

Class# 59808

Fees: \$42.82

Days & Time: Tuesday 1:30 PM-4:30 PM

Begins Ends: 4/14 to 5/12

Instructor: Pat Skubis

Location: Waunakee Senior

Center

Class# 59816

Fees: \$42.82

Days & Time: Wednesday 6:00 PM-9:00 PM

Begins Ends: 4/15 to 5/13

Instructor: Pat Skubis

Location: Fitchburg Senior Center

To enroll, call MATC ACE at 246-6440 or 1-800-628-6282, Ext. 6220.

For those 62 or over the cost is \$4.

Sign up early; an enrollment of 10 people per class is required for the class to run. If that number is not reached a week before the class starts the class will be canceled. If you know anyone who might be interested, spread the word.



## Membership Renewal

*The final notice for membership is included with this newsletter for those who have not renewed their membership. Please fill it in and return it to DCAGS. Membership has two levels, individual, \$15, or household, \$20. Members receiving the newsletter only electronically can save \$5.00 a year on the membership fee. Membership is for calendar year 2009.*

Dane County Area Genealogical Society  
P.O. Box 5652  
Madison, WI 53705-0652

**Address Service Requested**

We're on the Web!  
See us at: [www.dcags.org](http://www.dcags.org)



**Dane County Area  
Genealogical Society**

P.O. Box 5652  
Madison, WI 53705-0652

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## See you January 8

We have a new web  
address: [www.dcags.org/](http://www.dcags.org/)

If you enter the address it  
will take you to the group's  
website on Rootsweb.

DCAGS officers for 2008:

President: Pat Skubis  
[p318skubis@hughes.net](mailto:p318skubis@hughes.net)

Vice President: Tom Glassel  
[tglassel@gmail.com](mailto:tglassel@gmail.com)

Secretary: Gerry Schlecht  
[13gerry@att.net](mailto:13gerry@att.net)

Treasurer: "Walker" Walker-Crawford  
[walker@viridis.ws](mailto:walker@viridis.ws)

Past President, Shirley Levine  
[shirts26@sbcglobal.net](mailto:shirts26@sbcglobal.net)

Standing Committee Chairs

Membership: William "Bill" Baures  
[bauresb@juno.com](mailto:bauresb@juno.com)

Programs & Education: Joan Nagle  
[jnagle9059@charter.net](mailto:jnagle9059@charter.net)

Public Relations

Historian: Sandy Zart  
[sandyzart@charter.net](mailto:sandyzart@charter.net)

Web Master: Rollie Littlewood  
[rkittle@wisc.edu](mailto:rkittle@wisc.edu)

Newsletter: Ruth Simpson  
[rsimpson@terra.com.net](mailto:rsimpson@terra.com.net)

### Membership Directory

Thank you to everyone that has already submitted your membership renewals. The 2009 directories will be available at the March meeting this year so please be sure your 2009 membership application is in by the end of January at the latest to make sure your information is included. I understand that in years past there has been a limit of the number of surnames you can submit to be included in the directory. That is no longer the case, please submit as many as you would like. You are also welcome to submit categories or phrases if you have a particular area of interest that is not specific to a surname, e.g. Civil War service members from Wisconsin, Lakota Native American Tribe. If you have already submitted your membership application but would like to expand your directory listing please email me, [walker@viridis.ws](mailto:walker@viridis.ws), or send a note to the DCAGS P.O. Box to my attention.

We would also welcome your suggestions of how to make the directory more useful for our membership. We've considered changes in format and a yearly program to discuss the research our membership is conducting. What ideas do you have? Bill Baures and I look forward to hearing from you.

*Walker Crawford*