

Connecticut Professional Genealogists Council

First Thursday Meeting 7 May 1994 Connecticut Historical Society

Attending: Robert C. Anderson, Mae Collins, Sylvia Guerin, Judith Johnson, Jack Kuras, Dianne B. Lenti, Barbara J. Mathews, Melinde Lutz Sanborn, Jonathan Shea, Donna Siemiatkoski, Helen Ullmann.

President Donna Holt Siemiatkoski opened our meeting with a discussion of the National Day of Prayer. Marked since 1951, the day has been proclaimed by an act of Congress since 1988. We thus began our meeting in this tradition, with a prayer for the governing of our country and our society.

As there were no changes to the minutes, Jack Kuras moved and Helen Ullmann seconded acceptance, which we did unanimously.

The New England Regional Conference was a success. Barbara Mathews reported that over 720 people attended, making the conference a financial as well as a genealogical success. Donna Siemiatkoski was able to present several Connecticut-based items at her business booth in the exhibition area, including nearly three hundred copies of Jack Kuras's map to Hartford-area repositories, and many brochures for CPGC and CSG. In addition, two of the CPGC members - Robert Anderson and Jonathan Shea - spoke at the conference. The next conference is planned for October 1995.

Dianne Lenti gave a brief report on the indexing projects volunteers from our group are doing for the Connecticut Historical Society.

Jack Kuras reported on the efforts of the Publicity Committee. Several drafts of a press release about the initiation of the society were coalesced into one that was distributed to a dozen Connecticut papers on April 16th. In addition, a brief notice about our next meeting was sent to one Hartford paper and to the newsletter editors of all other genealogical societies in Connecticut. A separate notice is planned for each future meeting.

Donna Siemiatkoski reported that she has lined up a tax accountant to speak at our annual meeting this coming November. After a brief discussion, members expressed a desire to hear from archivists at various religious repositories. She will contact both Congregational House and the Episcopal Diocesan House for possible presentations.

Donna Siemiatkoski also provided a report on the Legislative Committee. She, Warren Buchanan, and Judith Plummer will be working this summer on issues to bring before legislative committees the following fall and winter. Members should contact one of these three with their concerns and suggestions within the next few months.

Secretary/Treasurer Barbara Mathews reported three new members. In addition, donations totalling \$25 have already been received, putting us back in the black through to late summer. She thanked everyone for their generosity.

On a motion by Robert Anderson seconded by Jack Kuras, we adjourned the business portion of our meeting.

Our presentation this month was given by Jean C. Bushey, Acting Registrar of Vital Statistics for the Connecticut State Department of Public Health. Mrs. Bushey's division has responsibility to administer the state's policies on vital records access and to protect private records against fraudulent access.

Mrs. Bushey provided attendees with copies of the general statutes which cover access to vital records. In addition, she gave a brief update on the current status of a recent bill relating to vital records. This bill mandates that marriage and death certificates on the local and state level cost \$5 each, but that the cost of a birth certificate differ on the two levels. Birth certificates from town and city vital records offices are set at \$5 and from the state Department of Public Health at \$15. This act has been passed. It will become effective as soon as it is signed by the governor.

Mrs. Bushey also spoke about the responsibilities of her office for maintaining privacy in all records and for maintaining the sealed records surrounding adoption. We requested her help in ensuring that the statutes are followed. She agreed to draft a letter explaining issues relating to access to adoption records. She will send the letter to Barbara Mathews who will in turn send it to all members of CPGC. Members can then copy the letter to any clients who need information regarding state policy in these cases.

In regards to the state law making genealogical records open to members of legally incorporated genealogical societies, Mrs. Bushey told us she plans to provide more information on this statute to town officers of vital records. Mrs. Bushey has informational sessions with these clerks on a county-by-county basis, covering all counties each year. She asked that societies send copies of their incorporation papers to her office. In turn, she will provide these to town clerks. With copies of such papers, clerks can assure themselves that several genealogical societies meet the word of the statutes. Members who were present agreed to communicate this to their own societies.

We shared our concerns regarding access to and research use of the state's vital records. Mrs. Bushey has very limited resources both as to staff and as to space but gave us some information that might help to locate the towns where events took place. She informed us about indexes to marriages and deaths which had been made for various periods. Although space is a severe problem, there may be ways to provide information such as this to genealogists. In addition, it may be possible to locate some of the microfiched indexes with the state library. Mrs. Bushey will look into this further.

We thanked Mrs. Bushey for taking the time to speak with us. We are happy that we can work together cordially to ensure proper access and use of vital records. We asked Mrs. Bushey to return in about a year to speak with us again to order to maintain this communication.

Jack Kuras' Searcheast map of genealogical resources in the Hartford area has been a staple for a year and a half. He discussed his recent update and offered to make copies available to CPGC. On a motion by Barbara Mathews seconded by Lorrie Hamblin, the council voted to accept with thanks his gracious offer to print maps that CPGC can distribute.

Donna Siemiatkoski - on behalf of her company Connecticut Heritage Services - will have a booth at the New England Regional Conference. She kindly offered to make space available on her table for the CPGC Member List and for the Searcheast map.

Lorrie Hamblin reported that her tourism report is complete and that tomorrow she will mail it to the Executive Director.

Donna Siemiatkoski reported that Warren Buchanan is collecting ideas over the summer to bring to state legislators, especially in regards to the Connecticut State Library and its needs. Members are asked to contact him with suggestions.

Lorrie Hamblin reported on the volunteer projects that CPGC members are now doing for the Connecticut Historical Society. The main project is to index the family names found in the client papers given to CHS by the estate of Betty Linsley, CGRS, a friend to many of us. Once each file is indexed, Lorrie Hamblin will computerize the information. In addition, Dianne Lenti is indexing the Mary Morris scrapbook. CPGC's CHS volunteers will continue to work on the Linsley papers at 9:00 AM on Monday, April 18th at CHS. Anyone wishing to participate should contact Donna Siemiatkoski, 203-688-6822.

Several members agreed to work together on news releases about the council and other important issues. An open meeting for this PR task force was set for Thursday, April 14, at 2:00 PM at the Connecticut State Library. Jack Kuras, Lorrie Hamblin, Barbara Mathews and Donna Siemiatkoski plan to participate and other members are also welcome to participate or to provide suggestions.

We discussed the need to raise more money. By consensus we agreed that the next mailing would include a request that people donate, if they wish, one or two or even five additional dollars. Several fundraising ideas were discussed and individuals plan on bringing proposals to our next meeting.

Barbara Mathews pointed out that another way to save money is to meet every other month and thus have half as many mailings. Other members pointed out that this would make it easier to let people know sooner about upcoming programs. On a motion by Dianne Lenti seconded by Barbara Mathews, we decided to have a meeting in May followed by meetings in July, September, and November.

We voted to adjourn on a motion by Jack Kuras seconded by Gerry Caruthers.