



# QUEST

THE  
JEWISH GENEALOGICAL  
SOCIETY  
OF  
CONNECTICUT

ESTABLISHED 1989

Volume 26, Number 2

Second Quarter 2014

## SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- Vice President Barney Miller honored
- President's Message
- How I Got Started in Genealogy by Deb Samuel Holman

## QUEST SUMMER ISSUE



Our apologies for this delayed issue of Quest.

Since taking on co-editorship, both of us found ourselves busier than expected. We are putting out this small summer edition of Quest with the expectation of resuming the normal publication schedule in September.

-Gail Kalison Reynolds and Deb Samuel Holman

**PLEASE SEND YOUR EMAIL SO WE CAN SEND YOU QUEST ELECTRONICALLY!**

## CONGRATULATIONS

Vice President Barney Miller has been named Volunteer of the Year by the Jewish Federation of Greater Hartford for his work on the Cemetery program.

The press release cited "Your dedication, hard work and commitment to *tikkun olam*, or repairing the world, is appreciated more than you could know. Thank you for your support and your devotion to the Federation and our ancestors. We rely on the partnership with volunteers for our success. "

Barney was honored at a reception on Tuesday, June 10, 2014 at 7:00 PM at Beth El Temple in West Hartford.

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## UPCOMING PROGRAMS

SEPT 21, 2014

Monica Talmor, DNA and Genealogy

OCT 19, 2014

Gary Mokotoff, TBD

All programs held at

Godfrey Memorial Library  
134 Newfield Street,  
Middletown, CT 06457

# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Doris Loeb Nabel

## Implications of CT Bill Restricting Genealogists' Access

Did you know that during this past legislative session a bill presented to the Public Health Committee of the Connecticut General Assembly might have impacted your ability to obtain documents? I didn't. Not until 11:32 PM on March 13, the night before the scheduled hearing.

That's when Jan Meisels Allen, Chairperson of the IAJGS Public Records Access Monitoring Committee, contacted me via e-mail after learning about the situation. No mention of the bill had appeared in the media, or in my Facebook feed, which contains posts by groups that focus on genealogy research.

The Connecticut statute, revised in 1996, states that genealogists have access to all vital records in the custody of any registrar of vital statistics, including certificates, ledgers, record books, card files, indexes and database printouts, "during all normal business hours."

Senate Bill 414, AN ACT CONCERNING THE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH'S RECOMMENDATIONS CONCERNING GENEALOGISTS' ACCESS TO VITAL RECORDS, posed an immediate threat to genealogists because it stated, "A registrar of vital statistics may grant a genealogist immediate access to such records or may require a genealogist to schedule an appointment to access such records, at the registrar's discretion."

In Jan Allen's e-mail, she shared a message from Dr. Robert L. Rafford, who explained in an e-mail, "...because this is a short session of the legislature, bills are not introduced by individual legislators, so tracking the origin of this proposal is most difficult." He added,

The most egregious part of this legislation is that it would single out a particular class of American citizens, genealogists...This is legally impermissible. Others who regularly make records requests of registrars are attorneys, funeral directors, title searchers, real estate agents, heads of municipalities, veterans, medical researchers, officials from state and federal agencies and departments, police departments, adoption agencies, statisticians, newspaper reporters, authors, biographers and other members of the general public. Not one of these groups would be adversely affected by this legislation – just genealogists.

He and Jan Allen requested that I contact JGSCT board members, inform them about the need for advocacy, and encourage them to contact the members of the Public Health Committee, and their legislators. I immediately did so, including the template of a letter.

On March 16 I received an e-mail I from Tom Howard, who later became a member of the new Connecticut Genealogical Coalition 2014 Steering Committee. He wrote, "We were all blindsided by this attack...Vigilance and continued visible "interest" through e-mail, snail mail and phone calls to all legislators is the only means we have to stop this unfair targeted attack on genealogists' access to vital records."

In another e-mail, sent on March 18, he shared, "

The note I just received from 6th District and Co-Chairman of the Public Health Committee Senator Gerrata's office confirmed that SB 414 failed to get out of the committee to the floor of the State

(continued on page 3)

## P R E S I D E N T ' S M E S S A G E (Cont. from pg. 2)

Senate and House because of the outpouring of letters, phone calls and e mails received and testimony given at the public hearing on the bill...We feel confident that the bill is dead and will stay dead for this session. We will remain vigilant that the matter will not appear as amendments to other bills. We ask that you thank senators and representatives for any help they have given us while asking them to continue to watch for any matters affecting genealogists.

Jan Meisels Allen suggested that Connecticut genealogists form a group to address such scenarios when they arise. On March 30, Bob Rafford wrote to me: "Yes, I think great teamwork saved the day; now we've got to organize a statewide coalition for future threats." The coalition is now active via e-mail. I will share information by e-mail when I receive it.

## NOTES FROM NU? WHAT'S NEW?

### Please Sign Genealogists' Declaration of Rights

A recent issue of *Nu? What's New?* described that the Records Preservation and Access Committee (RPAC) has created a "Genealogists' Declaration of Rights" which advocates open access to federal, state, and local public records. The Declaration affirms America's long history of open public records, which has been threatened the last few years over concerns about identity theft and privacy. *Nu? What's New?* readers are encouraged to read and sign the Declaration at <http://tinyurl.com/GenealogyDoR>. It will be a help make legislators aware of the significant size of the genealogy audience in the United States and that their needs should be considered.

### Dutch Site: *Wie Was Wie*

The Dutch genealogy website *Wie Was Wie* (Who Was Who) is now available in English at <https://www.wiewaswie.nl/en/home/>. To gain an understanding of the scope of the database, the surname Levy appears in 2,989 documents as early as 1798 and as recently as 1959. The source of the data at the site is Dutch archival material as well as user-generated content.

## CT STATE LIBRARY RENOVATIONS

The History and Genealogy Reading Room at the Connecticut State Library will be closed August 15<sup>th</sup> through September 5<sup>th</sup> for renovations. However, from August 19<sup>th</sup> through September 3<sup>rd</sup> the public will be able to access most library and archival materials. Use of Secured Collections, Archives, and Offsite Materials will be limited to between 11 am and 3 pm from August 19<sup>th</sup> and September 3<sup>rd</sup>. The reading room will undergo extensive renovations to include new carpeting, painting, electrical work for enhanced computer usage and installing walls around the archival reading area for greater security. Also, the hallway will be reconfigured creating a new entrance to the Reading Room and a new photocopy area.

The newly renovated History and Genealogy reading room is scheduled to re-open on Saturday, September 6, 2014.

**Yes!! We are on Facebook!**  
Visit our page often for updated news  
and information.  
Search using: JGSCT

## FROM THE IAJGS LEADERSHIP DIGEST

Jan Meisels Allen in the IAJGS Leadership Digest (Vol 88, Issue 7) mentioned several useful sites that are listed by Ken Marks on his blog *The Ancestor Hunt*. The blog has an area on Jewish American Historical Newspapers.

“Most are free sites, some require registration, some may only be used through a library that has a ProQuest Historical Newspaper subscription, and he mentions a few that are available only with subscriptions to paid sites.”

Go to: <http://tinyurl.com/m5yojk7>

Original url: <http://www.theancestorhunt.com/1/post/2014/01/find-your-ancestors-in-historic-jewish-american-newspapers.html#.U2PhD1eWqSh>

Additional sources that may be of interest:

- Compact Memory- a digital collection of 118 Jewish periodicals from German-speaking countries, 1806-1938. All in German.
- The Historical Jewish Press- a collection of 45 publications (most not from America). Also included are Jewish newspapers published in various countries, languages, and time periods.
- Links to US Historical Newspapers online, listed by state

## NOTES

Did you remember to renew your JGSCT membership for 2014?

Membership dues are the primary source of funding for JGSCT. Without our member support, we would be unable to sponsor the fabulous programs you all enjoy.

### SHARE YOUR STORY

Nearly everyone reading our newsletter has already begun the search for family history. Many of us encountered obstacles soon after, but we persevered.

Share your story of how you began your journey. The length of the write-up could be short, medium or long - but please share it!

Send your story to: [quest@jgsct.org](mailto:quest@jgsct.org)

Sending announcements and newsletters by mail uses funds that could be put to better use.

Help your JGSCT by requesting that all correspondence be done electronically.

To make changes, contact: [deborah.holman@sbcglobal.net](mailto:deborah.holman@sbcglobal.net)

## PROGRAM IDEAS FOR JGSCT

Do you have requests or suggestions for future JGSCT programs ?

We are always looking for quality programs for our members and guests.

Contact: Arthur S. Meyers at [marciarthur@sbcglobal.net](mailto:marciarthur@sbcglobal.net)

## HOW I GOT STARTED IN GENEALOGY

Deb Samuel Holman

My family is a little bit complicated. My father divorced my mother when I was 7 and remarried three times. I have three sisters, a half-sister, a step-brother and three adopted siblings from his various families. My mother remarried a man who had three children and then, together, they created my half-brother. So, essentially, I have 12 people whom I consider my siblings.

Add to that my marriage to a man whose father married twice, creating a blended family of seven children and you can understand why I use the term “bramble bush” when describing my family instead of “family tree.”

Another characteristic of my family is that we are “semi-hoarders.” My mom always referred to herself as a “museum curator” to explain why she kept all of our various mementos. In her “collection” were family photographs, papers and objects belonging to her parents, aunt and uncle and both sets of grandparents. Everything was stored (and I use the term loosely) in cardboard boxes in her attic. I found these objects really interesting and wanted to learn more about the people who had owned them.

In July of 2007 my father held a family reunion in honor of his 75<sup>th</sup> birthday. I suspected he had a hidden agenda behind his wanting to get the family together. As it turned out, two months after the reunion, we received news that Dad was suffering from pancreatic cancer. Years ago, Dad told me about “Barney the Red” an Irish guy in our family. I always had a love for anything Irish. St. Patrick’s Day was my favorite holiday. I have fair skin and freckles. We named our children Caitlin and Meghan. Now that Dad was getting ill, I thought it best to find out more about his side of the family.

I began searching the websites and found Samuel family going back to 1824 in England. No Irish. The only “Barney” I found was my father’s grandfather, Barnett. He was born in Jamaica, New York in 1882 to John Samuel who had emigrated from Stepney, England in 1857. Not Irish.

In the summer of 2008 I traveled to Toronto to visit my father who, by then, was in hospice. I shared with him the results of my research. He was quite pleased with the work I had accomplished. I asked him about “Barney the Red” and his supposed Irish ancestry. His response? “Oh. Maybe I was wrong. Maybe we’re Scottish.”

Six years later I still have not proven (nor disproven for that matter) my Irish ancestry. However, I have been able to trace back two more generations of the Samuel family to Moshe Jacob Samuel, the father of Lazarus Samuel (b. 1795 England) and grandfather of John.

Genealogy is the perfect hobby for me. It’s a great match for my personality. I don’t like to go outside. I love possessing little bits of curious information. I get totally invested in finding the solution to a specific problem. I love to write. But most of all, I love that I am making use of my mother’s “museum” and sharing the history of our family.



34TH IAJGS INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON JEWISH GENEALOGY  
Co-hosted by the International Association of Jewish Genealogical Societies and the Utah Jewish Genealogical Society

SALT LAKE CITY 2014 JULY 27-AUGUST 1

**Watch for reports from the Salt Lake City Conference in the Fall Issue of Quest!**

WWW.JGSCT.ORG



**The Jewish Genealogical  
Society Of Connecticut**

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