

Penn in Hand

Vol. XVIII, no. 3—September 1997

The Genealogical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA

GSP NEWS

The Board of Directors is happy to announce the appointment of **John R. Frazier, II**, as Executive Director of the Genealogical Society of Pennsylvania. He brings with him thirty-seven years of experience in the business world as well as a deep interest in genealogy.

GSP made \$9,747.63 at the recent NGS Conference at Valley Forge. The profits will be used to make positive copies from negatives of the church, cemetery, undertaker, and other records filmed by the Society over the years. We have hundreds of reels of these important records. The process of making positives from original microfilm will make this collection more readily available to users. A computerized database to sort these records by location, church denomination, etc., is in GSP's Research Room.

The tours sponsored by GSP at the NGS Conference were a huge success. Special thanks to **Lemar and Lois Ann Mast, John Luebke, Herb Hart, and Barbara and Ed Nieman**.

A lifetime membership was presented by NGS to GSP for its contribution to the success of the Conference. The following awards were made at the NGS Conference at Valley Forge: Distinguished Service awards to **George W. Archer, Annette K. Burgert, Jane Adams Clarke, Kay Haviland Freilich, and John T. Humphrey**. Awards of Merit were presented to **Jane Davidson, Vivian Taylor, and Frances Wise Waite**.

GSP is committed to keeping its Reading Room at 1305

Locust Street open as often as possible during the closure of HSP. Current hours are Monday and Wednesday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Members who wish to visit at other times should call for an appointment.

Don't miss the meeting on Sunday, 23 November, at the Central Library, 1901 Vine Street, Philadelphia. If you have never visited this resource, hold your hats! Librarian Walt Stock will enthusiastically explain how to use the library's genealogical collection.

UPDATE ON HSP LIBRARY CLOSURE

As noted in the previous issue of *Penn in Hand*, the Historical Society of Pennsylvania will close to the public for about 20 weeks between Thanksgiving 1997 and April 13, 1998, to start renovating and restoring its building at 13th and Locust streets.

HSP and GSP are making arrangements for our members who have been inconvenienced by the closing of HSP. Members who use the library and whose memberships expire between Thanksgiving 1997 and April 13, 1998, should contact the GSP office. If possible, send us your expired membership card when renewing.

If you do not intend to use the HSP Library, it would help to let us know—because GSP must pay \$2.00 to HSP each time one of our members uses their Library.

GSP RESEARCH ROOM HOURS:

Monday and Wednesday—10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.
or by appointment

HSP LIBRARY HOURS:

Tuesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday—10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.
Wednesday—1:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.
Closed: Sunday, Monday, and major holidays

VOLUNTEER RECOGNITION

GSP's held its first volunteer recognition day on 13 September. Volunteers, both past and present, received certificates of appreciation. The elections of **Jane Adams Clarke** as a Fellow of The Genealogical Society of Pennsylvania and **Lois Jeanne Pontarelli** as an Honorary Vice President were announced at this time. We made an effort to contact all volunteers—but if we happened to miss you, please let us know.

The longest-lasting GSP volunteer project (15 years) has been the indexing of the original copies of the *Philadelphia Public Ledger* held by the Historical Society of Pennsylvania. Death notice and marriage notice indexes to the *Philadelphia Public Ledger* from 1845 to 1870 are now available in many libraries due to the efforts of GSP volunteers. This project came very close to being terminated when HSP sold some of its volumes that GSP was working on! Although some volumes are still owned by HSP and the Library Company, other volumes were sold to an outside contractor. Happily, the *Public Ledger's* new owners are willing to lend the volumes to GSP for six months. Work is still in progress on the death notice index for the years 1871 through 1875 and,

also, on the project started by Bob O Connor—marriages, deaths, and wants/personals of those parties whose origins are other than the tri-state area of Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Delaware. The "origins" project needs additional volunteers to do as much indexing as possible over the next six months. Come and help us. It's fun!

Volunteers form the backbone of our Society. On-going projects include **Harry Ticknor's** extraction of Mt. Moriah Cemetery records—a project started by **Rita Di-Laurentis** several years ago. **Case Zwart** is loading the data—over 15,000 names—on the computer, and **Rose Mary McKeown** is merging the lists. This project is important because the records filmed by GSP at Mt. Moriah constitute only chronological list of burials. When the project is completed, however, we will have a complete listing of individuals in each plot, as well as an alphabetical index of names, and the existing chronological list of burials.

Other volunteer projects include:

- Organizing the research room (library); weeding out duplicate publications.
- Indexing recently received abstracts of church records and copying them on acid-free paper.
- Organizing and indexing of collections willed to GSP or given to us by members and genealogists.



Penn in Hand, the newsletter of the Genealogical Society of Pennsylvania, is published four times a year—in March, June, September, and December.

Copy Deadline: the 15th of the preceding month

Phone: (215) 545-0391
Fax: (215) 545-0936

Jane Adams Clarke, Editor
M. L. Phoebe Adams, Copy Editor
Marion Egge, Page Layout

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MEMBERS, PLEASE NOTE!

Due to an increased number of accessions, a listing of the materials added to our collections will be published in each issue of the *Pennsylvania Genealogical Magazine*. You will want to check this list in every issue of *PGM* to keep abreast of current materials received.

NEWS OF OTHER SOCIETIES AND AGENCIES

In conjunction with a major exhibition devoted exclusively to Bucks County Fraktur, the **Mercer Museum** will present an education symposium on Saturday, 25 October 1997. For information call 215-345-0210.

The **Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society** (LMHS) will host its annual conference 31 October and 1 November 1997. Contact LMHS at 717-393-9745.

The **Chester County Historical Society** (CCHS) will host a Genealogy Research Trip to the National Archives in Washington on Wednesday, 12 November. Cost is \$50.00 per person. Contact: CCHS at 610-692-4357.

Jefferson M. Moak, Vice President of GSP, will speak at the **Delaware Genealogical Society**, 505 S. Market St., Wilmington, Delaware, at 7 p.m. on 18 November 1997.

The Ohio Genealogical Society and the Federation of Genealogical Societies will hold a three-hour teleconference with syllabus materials and question/answer opportunities on 21 March 1998. The topic will be "Modern Vital Records," presented by Desmond Walls Allen. For details on how your organization can sponsor a teleconference program contact Mary L. Bowman, P.O. Box 870, Athens, OH 45701-0870.

The Federation of Genealogical Societies and the Ohio Genealogical Society invite you to attend "Immigrant Dreams: The Settlement of America" at the FGS Annual Conference to be held 19-22 August 1998. Contact: FGS, P.O. Box 830220, Richardson, TX 75083-0220.

The 1998 National Genealogical Society (NGS) Conference in the States will be held in Denver, Colorado 6-9 May. Host Society is the Colorado Genealogical Society. Contact: NGS '98, 4527 17th Street North, Arlington, VA 22207-2399.

A series of free programs for genealogists and family historians will be held at the Central Library, 1901 Vine Street, Philadelphia. The programs, listed below, will begin at 6 p.m. in the 4th floor Skyline Room. No pre-registration is required:

20 October 1997—

Passenger Lists, Immigration and Emigration Information, Naturalizations, Oaths of Allegiance and Passports.

17 November 1997—

House Histories, Maps, Property and Probate Records.

Masthof Seminars, held at Masthof Bookstore and Press, Morgantown, PA, are scheduled as follows:

1 November 1997—

Genealogy Roundtable

3 January 1998—

Computers and Genealogy

7 February 1998—
Publishing Roundtable

7 March 1998—

Life in Colonial Times, by John W. Heisey

4 April 1998—

The Use of Fraktur in Research, by Corinne and Russell Earnest

2 May 1998—

Welsh Families in the Conestoga Valley, by Jane Evans Best and Pam Shenk.

These seminars are free, but reservations should be made by calling 610-286-0258.

The descendants of William Clopton of England and New Kent County, Virginia, and his wife, Ann Booth Dennett Copton invite family and friends to attend the Clopton Family Association's 1998 Reunion in Williamsburg, VA to be held in June of 1998. For information on this Reunion and a tour of the Richmond and Williamsburg area contact The Clopton Family Association, 5 Susan Circle, Electra, TX 76360.

PUBLICATIONS OF INTEREST

Genealogy book publishers, Russell D. Earnest Associates, have several new titles now in print. The Earnests are known for publishing books on Fraktur (18th- and 19th-century birth and baptism certificates made by and for German-Americans). For a free catalog contact Russell D. Earnest Associates, P.O. Box 1007, East Berlin, PA 17316-0507.

The 1997 edition of the *Delaware Genealogical Research Guide* is available for \$10.50 postpaid from the Delaware Genealogical Society, 505 N. Market St., Wilmington, DE 19801-3091.

PHILADELPHIA'S LOST TOWNSHIPS

Penn in Hand, Vol. XI no. 2 (1990), contained a research tip entitled "Genealogy of Pennsylvania," which emphasized Philadelphia.

In 1854, the city and county offices of Philadelphia were consolidated. The boundaries of Philadelphia city and county have remained the same with Philadelphia divided into numbered wards.

The former township boundaries of Philadelphia were completely obliterated, though records for these townships survive and are located at the Philadelphia City Archives. Most reference books do not acknowledge these "lost townships." The townships in Philadelphia at time of incorporation were: Germantown, Roxborough, Bristol, Oxford, Lower Dublin, Moreland, Byberry, Northern Liberties, Blockley, Kingsessing, Passyunk and Moyamensing.

Prior to 1784, all of Montgomery County's townships were in Philadelphia County. Prior to 1752, some of Berks County's townships were part of Philadelphia County.

The biggest confusion is this:

There is a Bristol Township in Bucks County, which was not the same Bristol Township that existed in Philadelphia County prior to 1854.

Philadelphia's original Moreland Township was split in 1784, the result of which established another Moreland Township in Montgomery County.

There is an Upper Dublin Township in Montgomery County, but Lower Dublin Township was, with the other Philadelphia townships, lost by the city-county merger of Philadelphia. There never was a Lower Dublin Township in Montgomery County, but because some

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authors are not aware of Philadelphia's genealogy, the unfortunate error of placing Lower Dublin in Montgomery County has been perpetuated. Researchers should be extra careful when working with early Philadelphia County records. Just because something appears in a printed publication does not ordain it fact!

For further information on the political sub-divisions of Philadelphia, check GSP's publication, *Philadelphia Maps, 1682-1982, Townships—Districts—Wards*, currently available for sale by GSP.

ARE YOU LOST? DO YOU NEED HELP?

Three genealogists with expertise in Pennsylvania, English, and western European research, have offered to assist GSP in providing counseling service. These three genealogists have also either loaned or given some of their collections to GSP to help fill the void left by the temporary closing of HSP. The fee for this service will be

\$20.00 for members of GSP and \$30.00 for non-members. Send a check, along with details of your problem and a group sheet or pedigree chart showing where you are stuck, and we will try to steer you in the right direction.

Other qualified researchers are welcome to assist with this project.

Using a "Baby Book" as a Source of Vital Records

by Walter Lee Sheppard, Jr., FASG, FNGS, FGSP

Vital records—birth, marriage, and death records—have existed in some type of government form from the time of the earliest colonies in the United States, first in New England where they were kept by the town clerks in each town. In many colonies the settlers seem to have relied on the local churches for their records.

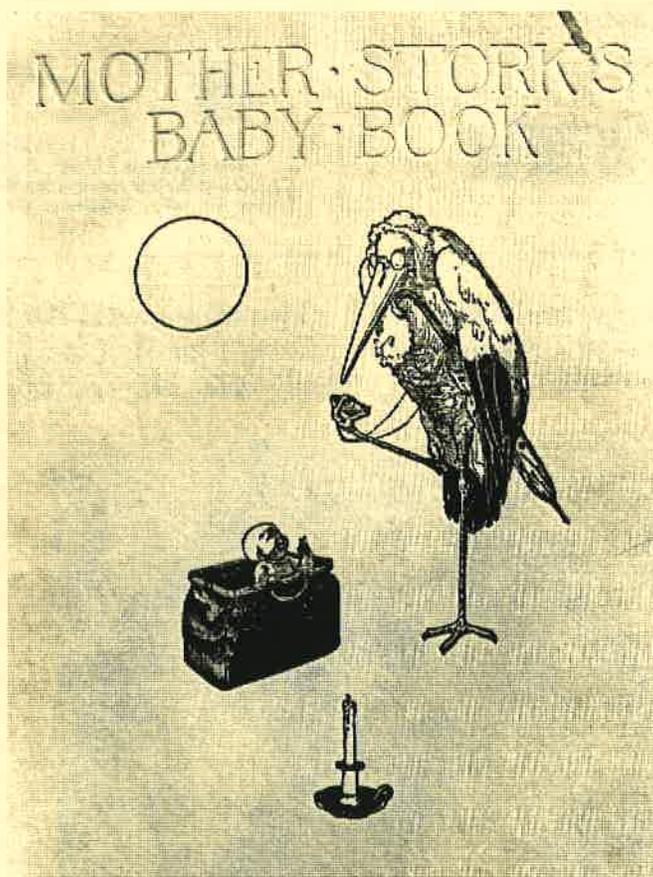
In Pennsylvania, when William Penn welcomed all denominations, the quality of records varies widely, especially with small units in farm areas served by visiting clergy, where the minister himself usually kept the records. There were no colony laws, or later, state laws requiring the maintaining or keeping of these records until early in the first decade of this century, when the state laws establishing the current system, giving counties "permissions" to keep records of births, marriages, and deaths.* It relied solely on a midwife, nurse or doctor, or parent to report a birth to the recorder, and there was no procedure or rule provided to assure that it would be carried out.

When I was born, in June 1911, most births were taking place at home, and this was the case with mine. When in 1933 I went to the recorder's office to get a birth certifi-

cate, I found that they had no record. I had my voter's registration and my identity card as an officer in the Army Reserves and my driver's license, but the recorder had no proof of my existence.

By law, the doctor who delivered me, Dr. James Harwood Closson, should have reported my birth. He did not. I asked for a record of my brother. Carl was born in 1913. The doctor had not reported that birth either. Since Dr. Closson lived a very long life, up to the middle of the second World War, he must have delivered a thousand babies. I asked the recorder's office if they had records of totals of babies delivered by specific doctors. They did, and Dr. Closson was recorded as having delivered four, of which one was for the birth of Suzanne Hammond, my only surviving first cousin. Of course, he may have delivered some, though not all, in hospitals where the hospital is supposed to have reported the birth. Or his nurse may have been charged with the duty to report.

Fortunately for my brother and me, our mother had planned and kept a "Baby Book" for each of us. Record pages reproduced with this research tip supply not only



*For historical details about vital records registrations in Pennsylvania counties, see *Pennsylvania Genealogical Magazine*, V. 39, no. 3 (Spring/Summer 1996): 291-92.

Announcement.

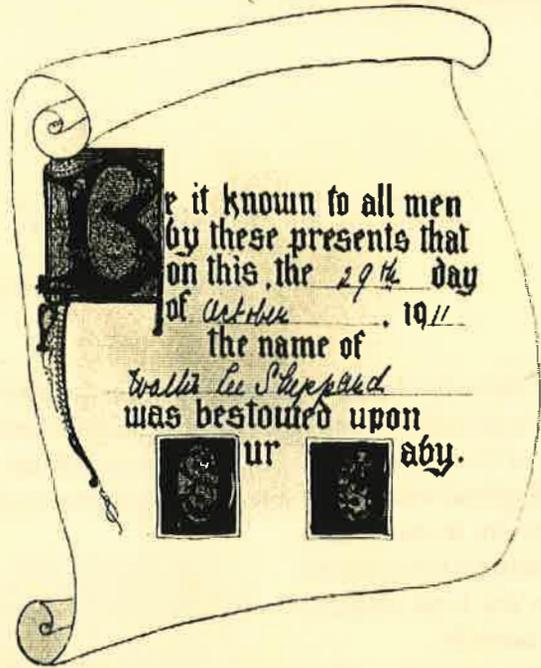
Walter Lee Sheppard, Junior
 was born on the 28th day of June
 1911 at twelve o'clock noon.
 in the city of Philadelphia
 to Mr and Mrs. Walter Lee Sheppard.

Autograph of father Autograph of mother
Walter L. Sheppard *Martha Houston Sheppard*

Autograph of physician
James H. Wood Closson
 Autograph of nurse
Mary E. Payne

Mr. and Mrs. Walter Lee Sheppard, of
 244 West Johnson street, Germantown,
 are being congratulated on the birth of a
 son on Friday, June 28.

the sworn record of my birth, but also the full names of both parents, the doctor, the date, and a clipping from the newspaper giving the location of our home where I was born. All names in the book are in the handwriting of the individuals, even the nurse who helped Dr. Closson. Included is also my baptismal record with the priest's signature, and witnesses, most of them close relatives. My nephew, Carl, Jr., has his father's "Baby Book," so both of our births have been recorded, though not by the government. I might add, the law contains a provision for "late registration of birth" to provide for babies born at considerable distance from the registering office, by parents, medical personnel, other witnesses, baptismal clergy, or relatives with knowledge of an event at the time it took place.



Baptism
 SHEPPARD—On October 29th, 1911, by the Pastor, Walter L. Jr., son of Walter Lee and Martha Houston Evans Sheppard born June 28d, 1911. Residence, 151 Carpenter St.

For people born in this time period who have trouble proving their birth dates—no government records, no family Bible, etc.—perhaps someone has a "Baby Book" recording the events of his or her birth and early life. These books were printed, well-bound volumes with up to a hundred pages, specifically titled, and with lines labeled for birth records, for autographs of doctors, nurses, witnesses, and family members, and for baptismal records that included names of clergy and family members. The books also provided pages for other events for the baby and for the growing child, with places to mount pictures and newspaper clippings.

If you can find a "Baby Book" for your ancestor, it may supply the evidence you need—just as it has for my brother's children and for me.