



# Penn in Hand

The Newsletter of the Genealogical Society of Pennsylvania ♦ Vol. XXVIII No. 2 Winter 2011

## William Penn Chapter NS Daughters of the American Revolution donates St. Thomas Church Old Graveyard Records to GSP



Penn Chapter members present GSP Project Manager Anita Sheahan Coraluzzi, third from left, with a copy of their new book. Penn Chapter members are, left to right, Margery Reith, Arlene Hackman, and Sara Lang

By Anita Sheahan Coraluzzi  
GSP Project Manager

The history of St. Thomas Episcopal Church dates from 1683 when a small log cabin church was built on land owned by Jasper Farmer [*also Farmer*], originally from Tipperary, Ireland and friend of William Penn. It was from Penn that Farmer received his land grant at what is now Bethlehem Pike and Camp Hill Road in Whitemarsh Township, Montgomery County.

The original congregation was non-denominational and welcomed all religious beliefs including Quaker, Amish, Lutheran, and Presbyterian. Tradition is the original log church and graveyard was built on a hill said to have been the site of a Lenape Indian burial ground; today the cemetery covers 15 acres.

An important part of St. Thomas' history has been recently preserved thanks to the efforts of the William Penn Chapter of the National Society Daughters of the American

Revolution NSDAR [hereafter Penn Chapter].

Penn Chapter member Sara Lang explains the cemetery transcription project began with a request to index the Old Graveyard from a friend, William Potts, Chairman of the St. Thomas Church Cemetery and Old Graveyard Committee.

The year-long project begun in September 2009 focused on recording the information from the original headstones of the Old Graveyard of St. Thomas. The transcriptions and indexing of some 480 names from 418 headstones was done by the following Penn Chapter members:

Sara Lang, Pauline Hornberger, Arlene Hackman, Darlene Centanni, Margery Reith, Donna Greenberg, Lois Moulton, Kirk Moulton, Jean Belmonte, Mary Stephanie Reynolds, and Valerie Moran.

Sara tells GSP, "By December, January, and February the weather became cold and windy; we looked forward to the warm summer months. Little did we know the heat and humidity of this last summer was worse on our stamina than those cool days."

To carry out their mission without doing damage to the stones, Penn Chapter members used techniques for the do's and don'ts of cleaning headstones found on the Gravestone Studies website, [www.gravestonestudies.org](http://www.gravestonestudies.org).

The teams used an organic washing solution that contained no metallics or phosphates and a soft bristled brush to initially clean each stone. Sara says, "The more you clean, the more names you discover. It makes you

want to work harder and discover even more."

On sunny days the teams also employed the sunlight and use of a mirror to highlight eroded and often difficult to read lettering on the stones. Sara also mentions that interpretations "... sometimes provided a challenge for all of us; sometimes a controversy," and "... sometimes photographs can read inscriptions better than we can and are a definite solution to any controversy."

And, controversies did arise over the interpretation of some headstone transcriptions. When the teams were in doubt they compared lettering and numbering by the engraver and studied birth and death dates when available in church records.

If the information still was unclear, they went back to the stone and scrubbed some more. The teams were also creative about using a mirror: "Shadows, sunlight, the time of day could all play a role in the legibility of a transcription."

GSP greatly appreciates this donation of St. Thomas Old Graveyard transcriptions and wishes to acknowledge the seasonal obstacles of muddy shoes, cold-nipped noses, and sweaty brows endured by the William Penn Chapter members to accomplish this task.

Their dedication to the preservation of important genealogical information is genealogy research at its best, and no doubt the descendants of those early St. Thomas congregants will always be grateful for the effort.

*More about St. Thomas inside*

# Brothers, Fellow Villagers, "Paper Sons," and a Murder Mystery Make for a Chinese Genealogical Adventure

Second in a series

By Joyce Homin  
GSP Associate Director

First-generation Chinese-American on her father's side and Irish on her mother's, Kay Speaks was not sure what she would find when she began her personal family research.

When 12, she typed her maternal grandmother's genealogy inquiry letters. It would be 38 years later before she began her personal Chinese discovery journey to solve a closely guarded family secret and discovered a second surprise along the way.

Schooled from an early age to never discuss a family murder mystery, to honor and respect the privacy of her elders, it was a topic she had never discussed even amongst her siblings until 1999.

At a Leong-Sing family reunion, Kay, her brother, and cousin were standing outside the small ranch where the murder occurred many decades prior.

Suddenly she whispered, "Don't you ever wonder what happened to him?" Her cousin thought his grandmother's murderer had been found and hanged by vigilantes from an oak tree behind his ranch. Speaks' brother thought the murderer was executed at Folsom Prison, while she thought he was executed at San Quentin Prison.

As their eyes met, they quietly agreed they needed to discover the story behind this family mystery before their elders' generation passed.

Speaks sought and received her father's permission to begin her research. It would be a journey that would lead Speaks to a better understanding of her Chinese American culture and a grandfather she never met having died several years prior to her birth.

Speaks discovered the magic of microfilmed newspapers held at the library. Eventually, she found many articles of the event describing the search for the Chinese murderer, Leong Fook, who was a laborer on Leong Fat's farm.

The Leongs shared a common name as the Chinese list their surname first as is Chinese convention. Intrigued that news reporters didn't mention the possibilities the three Leong's were brothers, Speaks continued her family research. According to the newspapers Fook was a laborer on Fat's ranch.

Speaks wondered what happened to Fook after the San Quentin execution in April 1929. Fook was reported to have asked the prison warden to use money owed him to return his bones to China that was custom back then.

Speaks was to discover death records showing Fook's body released to Leong Joe Sing, Speaks' grandfather, further confirming the possibility all three were in fact brothers and fellow villagers.

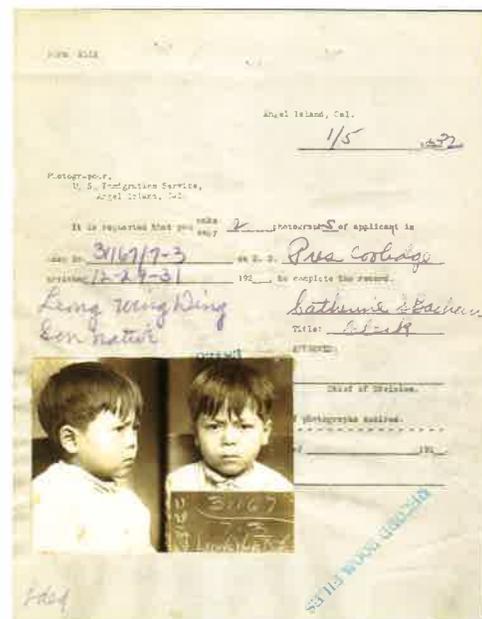
Speaks next visited NARA and found immigration case files for thirteen of her Chinese family. Missing was the file of Leong Fook. Records indicate his file is permanently sealed.

The archivist told Speaks the file shouldn't be sealed, not if it is located within the public records section as are her other family members' records. Once they were placed in that section of the archives they are open and searchable.

Immigration case files and family oral history indicated Leong Joy Sing (Leong Joe Sing/ Joe Sing) and his brother Leong Fat were "paper sons," a product of the Chinese Exclusion Era, as discussed in last issue's article in *Penn in Hand*. (Briefly, the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 prohibited many Chinese from entering the United States. Thus, many who immigrated assumed an identity they knew would be accepted by Immigration.)

When questioned, Speaks' elders confirmed the two brothers were definitely born in China. They were paper sons — another closely guarded secret. In the case files the two men denied any form of common relationship but referred to each other as "fellow villagers."

Their files contained immigration photos as well and documents describing their homes, neighbors, and "all their names," of which there were many. Many personal photos, even



The January 5, 1935, US Immigration Service record shows Leong Wing Ding returning to the US, arriving at Angel Island, CA.

a family scroll with three generations listed, were retained by government officials.

As Speaks found more information it was clear Mrs. Leong Fat (Chuey Ying), was killed by her husband's brother; Leong Fook who was the seventh son of Leong Loy and Wong Shee. Her grandfather's second youngest brother was hanged in prison almost a year after the death of Chuey Ying in 1929.

*Speaks' journey is one of ancestors waiting to be found, riddled with so many serendipitous moments of discovery that she doesn't question how — she just believes, as her ancestors believed — eventually someone in the family will come along and bring the family ancestral records current.*

After all, this is why some Chinese genealogy records date back 4,000 years! It has become Speaks' passion to teach others to preserve and discover their family's history before it is too late and the stories are lost forever.

Several years ago at yet another Leong family reunion, Chuey Ying's two daughters asked Speaks if she had any photos of their mother as they didn't remember what she looked like.

Speaks said it was an incredibly emotional moment watching them sit so very still staring at Chuey Ying's photo. Their mother's image is frozen forever as young beautiful woman while her children in their 80's were seeing their mother for the first time in 78 years.

## GSP'S New Digital Library to Be Named for Noted Genealogist and Benefactor

Our expanding number of online resources will soon make their home in the Ruth Bitting Hamm Digital Library, so named to honor an esteemed family historian and benefactor of genealogical and historical organizations.

Born July 3, 1915, in Torrington, Wyoming, Ruth became a member of GSP in 1972 as part of her research of her family members who numbered among the early settlers in the area. Her ancestors include many who served in the Revolutionary War.

During her 69 years of service in the Daughters of the American Revolution, she chaired numerous committees and was Registrar and Chapter Regent of the Letitia Green Stevenson Chapter in Illinois where she lived her adult life. Ruth served as State Registrar and State Regent in Illinois and Vice President General and Registrar General of the National Society.

Other lineage societies in which Ruth served include Recording Secretary and President General of the National Society Colonial Daughters of the Seventeenth Century; Councilor for The National Society Daughters of Founders and Patriots of America; The

Colonial Dames of America, Chapter XII; Registrar General for the Hereditary Order of Descendants of Colonial Governors; and The National Gavel Society

An accomplished researcher of the history of the areas where she and her ancestors lived, Ruth published several books, including *Soldiers of the American Revolution Buried in Illinois*, *The Hudson Colony* [Illinois], *The Bitting Family Then and Now*, and *Henrich (H-3) Bitting and his Descendants 1672-2005*.

She is listed in *The Hereditary Register of the United States of America*, *Who's Who in America*, and *Two Thousand Women of Achievement*.

Ruth died July 12, 2008, at age 93. Her husband, James, predeceased her on June 1, 1997. She is survived by her sisters: Florence Turner, Paris; Marjorie McAlister, North Olmsted, Ohio; and Barbara Gurtler, Peoria, IL.

Ruth's will provided for continuing historical and genealogical research by her generous bequests to the GSP and the McLean County Museum of History in Illinois.



Ruth Bitting Hamm in June 2007 is wearing on her left shoulder a ribbon with the awards she received during her 69 years of service in the Daughters of the American Revolution. Also included on the ribbon is her DAR insignia and the service pins for each of her Revolutionary War patriots. On her right shoulder and draped diagonally is the sash that signifies her service as a past national officer.



Leong Joy Sing,  
December 28,  
1908

*Cont'd from previous column*

*Soon the sisters and Speaks' aunt, Sue Sam, would decide it was time to tell the stories they had not discussed for almost 78 years.*

Speaks is somewhat challenged, like many American-born Chinese individuals, in that she does not read or write the language. But, as she

says, there are an amazing amount of records and assistance for those in this situation.

Linking up with fellow Chinese researchers helps to open doors to so many other resources. Learning how to research and properly cite sources go hand in hand with working with a good genealogical society.

Kay Speaks can be contacted through her genealogy society, Livermore-Amador Genealogical Society, [www.L-AGS.org](http://www.L-AGS.org), study.chair@L-AGS.com.

### GSP Volunteers

Volunteering has been a long-standing tradition throughout GSP's history. Over the years GSP volunteers have helped the genealogical community by creating indexes to hundreds of church and civil records, which have benefited many researchers looking for information about their Pennsylvania ancestors.

GSP would like to acknowledge the work of our current volunteers, Mary Phalan and Susie Wilson, who for the past 18 months have been actively working with GSP to help fulfill requests received from long-distance members who cannot visit Philadelphia to do their own research with GSP collections.

Mary is also continuing the tradition of indexing obituaries published in Philadelphia newspapers during a time period not readily available through current online resources.

GSP would like to thank Mary and Susie for their dedication to genealogy in Pennsylvania.

SAINT THOMAS' CHURCH  
OLD GRAVEYARD  
2508 Main Pike and Camp Hill Road  
Ft. Washington, PA 19074



Tombstone indexing  
done by  
members of the  
William Penn Chapter, NSDAR  
September, 2010

*Records of the Old Graveyard at St. Thomas Episcopal Church in Ft. Washington are available online on the GSP website, [www.GenPa.org](http://www.GenPa.org) on the Research Services and Resources page.*



Genealogical Society of Pennsylvania  
2207 Chestnut Street  
Philadelphia, PA 19103-3010

Join us the First Friday of each month at NARA in Philadelphia for help with your family history research. Visit [www.GenPa.org](http://www.GenPa.org) for more information.

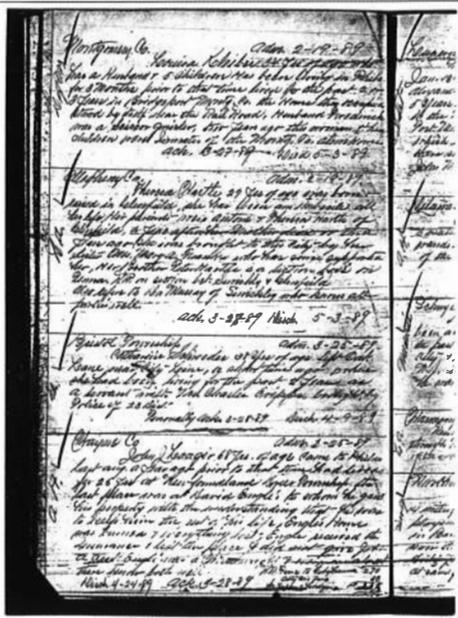
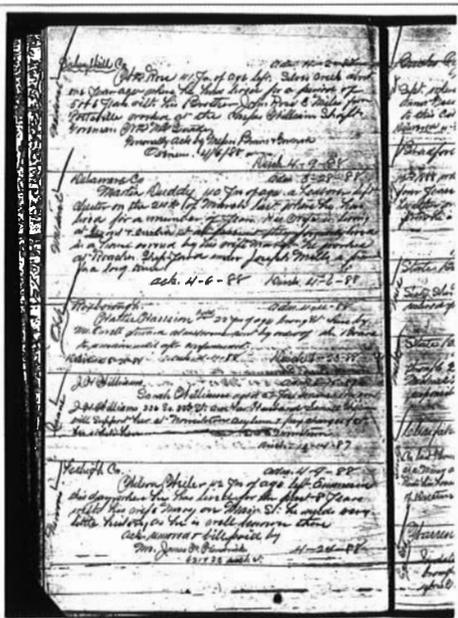
*In this issue —*

*Headstones at the Old Graveyard at St. Thomas Episcopal Church in Ft. Washington transcribed and indexed by NSDAR Penn Chapter*

*Unique genealogical information of Pennsylvanians found in the Philadelphia Alms House Case Book*

*NARA genealogical records solve a Chinese immigrant murder mystery*

# Pennsylvanians from Many Counties Found in Philadelphia Records Collections



Pages from the Philadelphia Alms House Case Book and Pay records provide genealogical information for people from other parts of the state. A page from an 1888 record is on the left; one from 1889 is on the right.

By Anita Sheahan Coraluzzi  
GSP Project Manager

Among the record collections housed at the Philadelphia City Archives are Record Group [RG] 35-3-4.23, Accounts of Charges to Other Counties for Maintenance of their Residents, and Record Group 65.85, Alms House County Case Book and Pay Patients.

The first set of records, RG 35-3-4.23, is comprised of account books kept by the Superintendents of the Philadelphia Alms House and span the time period from October 1811 through March 1887. Eight un-indexed volumes are included in this collection and the “Blotters,” or Day Books, include personal information on inmates who spent time at the Alms House in Philadelphia due to poverty or illness.

Those in charge of the alms house kept detailed records of the inmates and which counties or personal contacts from other counties could be charged with the financial responsibility of caring for the inmate.

The second set of records, RG 65.85, spans April 1887 through August 1915, with some years missing *viz.* September 1898–June 1907, and September 1913–February 1915. This collection consists of four volumes that are partially indexed with entries that are more detailed than the earlier years.

Not only were other counties and known family and friends charged for costs of inmate maintenance, but also anyone associated with the inmate such as governmental bodies like the military or foreign consuls, past employers, and business firms.

Some records from these collections can be found in the Family History Library catalog, which means they can be ordered and viewed at a local Family History Center. Records of the Blockley Alms House and the Philadelphia Guardians of the Poor are contained on one film reel: FHL film #2110178. Items 5, 6, and 7 on this film contain the Daily Case Blotter records from 1881–1887, 1887–1898, and 1907–1913 with some records into 1914.

If you are researching a Pennsylvania ancestor who seems to have disappeared and you’ve found no other record of his or her whereabouts, consider searching the more unusual Philadelphia records. A few hours invested may uncover information pivotal to your search.

An informative online guide also exists for “Poorhouse” information throughout the United States created by Linda Crannell, “The Poorhouse Lady.” Pennsylvania information contained on this website can be viewed at [http://www.poorhousestory.com/poorhouses\\_in\\_pennsylvania.html](http://www.poorhousestory.com/poorhouses_in_pennsylvania.html).

**Examples from Philadelphia County Alms House County Case Book and Pay Patients**

Philadelphia City Archives Collections:  
Record Group 65.85, Bureau of Charities:

James CRAWFORD applied to the Medical ward of the Alms House hospital 6 October 1881 (he was ultimately DENIED admittance); from Dauphin County, 42 years old, born in Scotland, lived with Wm. Simpson or Simmons No. 10 Broad St., also with Rob’t Myers on Frank St. near Rail Road, worked 2 yrs. P.R.R, left Harrisburg 5 Mos. Ago, Wrote 10.24.81

Julia FAHY admitted to the Insane Department of the Alms House hospital on 11 August 1881; from Schuylkill County, Father Mich’l & Mother Mary Fahy live at Girardville at the old Hanson (?) Breaker, Wrote 10.31.81, Acknowledged 11.18.81, Disch 2.5.82

James GILLEN admitted to the Medical ward of the Alms House hospital on 1 February 1883; from Elk County, lived at St. Mary’s Elk County for 22 years, left there about April 1st 1882 worked for Dagonsohondor [sp?] Coal Mining Co. at Centerville, Mr. Robinson Superintendent, Father Michael Gillen a farmer 2 ½ miles So. From St. Mary’s, Wrote Feb. 3rd 1883, Eloped [escaped] March 6th 1883

George SHINTON admitted to the Medical ward of the Alms House hospital on 29 April 1884; from Lancaster County, left Columbia 2 Mos ago where he was born & raised since 1877, has not been away from there more than six months at any one time, Mother Amelia & Brother Isaiah have been there 35 years. Affidavit taken. Disch 5-19-84

Mary ROURK admitted to the Surgical ward of the Alms House hospital on 27 July 1885; from Lehigh County, says she left Allentown July 18th 1885, lived there two years with Father & Mother John Rourk & Bridget Rourk on Rail Road St. between Mont. & Ridge Rd. Father is a musician & plays the Irish pipes, Ack. 8-1-85, Disch 8-21-85

Alexander COYLE admitted to the Veneal ward of the Alms House hospital on 30 July 1881; from Rockdale, Delaware County, 32 years, worked for Sam’l Riddle at Mills, Rockdale, knows Ann (?) Corson, Hotel Keeper & John F. Ackley, was sent here by Dr. W. S. S. Gay for treatment, lived in Rockdale 16 years. Wrote 8-6-81

Students from Julia Masterman High School in Philadelphia (left to right) Jenny Zhang, Chase Middleman, and Keaton Naff visit GSP to organize their research and documents about Woodlands Cemetery subject Capt. Edward E. Packer. The 19th Century Woodlands Cemetery History Project, headed by Social Studies Chair Steven Gilligan, begins with students choosing a name on a headstone that "speaks to them, intrigues them, or humors them."

They explore libraries and archives in the Philadelphia area while learning research techniques. Students create a historical narrative, timeline, and biography of their target subject while using written and photo documentation. The research project counts for a large part of each student's grade for the year. A portion of their finished work will be donated to the Woodlands Cemetery for its archives.



## Happy New Year!

We at GSP are working hard and are excited about future plans for the upcoming year.

New content has been added to the GSP website including St. Thomas Episcopal Church Old Graveyard records from Montgomery County, the Philadelphia Biography Master Index with references to past residents of Philadelphia and surrounding counties, and lesser utilized record collections housed at the Philadelphia City Archives that we named *Indigents, Miscreants, Madams and Madmen*.

In the last couple of months we collaborated on programs with the Stenton House, National Archives and Records Administration Mid-Atlantic branch, The German Society of

Pennsylvania, Willow Valley Retirement Communities, and The Bucks County Conference and Visitors Bureau.

GSP continues to cultivate the next generation of researchers by working with students at the Julia Masterman High School in Philadelphia in their Woodlands Cemetery History Project. (See above article.) We previously joined with NARA in the Summer Institute program and guided students from Philadelphia's Constitution High School [for American History] in researching their ancestors.

For the past few months GSP has been developing a stronger online presence. The board and staff are hoping to serve our members more thoroughly with a newly designed online resource, which will

eventually include many of the traditional GSP collections.

The staff and board of GSP need you to be a part of this growth. GSP is always searching for passionate genealogists who are willing to dedicate their talents, time, knowledge, and experience to support the many programs, workshops, and events GSP hopes to bring to the Pennsylvania genealogy community.

**This is your GSP, the portal to your Pennsylvania past.** We look forward to your thoughts, ideas, support, and involvement to continue to make GSP a vibrant genealogical organization.

*Joyce Homan*  
Associate Director

## UPCOMING EVENTS

7-8:30 pm. Thurs., February 24. *Finding the Slave Owner: Approaches to Antebellum Research.* African American History Month Webinar, hosted and moderated by GSP board member and genealogical researcher Shamele Jordan. Cost: \$15. This webinar will provide researchers with multiple approaches to tracing their enslaved ancestor's antebellum past. Deborah Abbott, PhD, will trace a freed African American back to his enslaved past using land records in Danville, Kentucky. Michael Hait will reconstruct a slave family using assessment lists in Talbot County, Maryland. Floyd M. Riley will connect the dots using oral history, Freedman's Bank records, and an estate packet in Leon County, Florida.

Sat., March 12. *Don't Forget The Ladies: Finding and Identifying The Women in Your Past.* Nancy C. Nelson and Carol M. Sheaffer.

Laurel Hill Cemetery, 3822 Ridge Avenue, Philadelphia, PA. Watch for details at [www.GenPa.org](http://www.GenPa.org).

Fri., March 18. *GSP Annual Meeting.* Check [www.GenPa.org](http://www.GenPa.org) for details

Sat., April 2. *Don't Forget The Ladies: Finding and Identifying The Women in Your Past.* Presentation by Nancy C. Nelson and Carol M. Sheaffer at the Annual Lancaster Family History Conference. For more information visit [www.GenPa.org](http://www.GenPa.org).

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PIH Editor, Deborah Coombe Haas, [editor@GenPa.org](mailto:editor@GenPa.org).  
GSP Associate Director Joyce Homin, [ExecDir@GenPa.org](mailto:ExecDir@GenPa.org).