



BAINBRIDGE ISLAND GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY

June 2019 Newsletter

News from the Board

BIGS Outreach Committee

At its last meeting, the board created a new standing committee. The Outreach Committee will identify and recommend to the board opportunities to promote BIGS and family history research for people of all ages, and to find points of connection between BIGS and the community at large.

Committee members are **Andy Hoskins (Chair), Larry Noedel and Susan Wood**. BIGS is already actively planning our 2nd Annual Family History Month event for the public on October 26th. Other outreach opportunities the committee may explore include participating in appropriate community events, partnering with existing community resources to provide classes or projects or mentoring students interested in family research.

Member's Corner

A Family Myth

Contributed by Joan Rynearson



Gotsy and her husband Frank Anderson with great granddaughters Joan Rynearson (left) and her sister Jill Keeney c. 1960

We called my great-grandmother Gotsy - for what reason I haven't a clue. Her birth name was Berta Aåse. We knew she'd been born somewhere in Sognefjord, Norway in 1874 and died in Bothell in 1965. We ten cousins knew her well but she rarely talked about her past. When her daughter (my grandmother) was dying, she told her youngest son (my Uncle Bill) a story about her mother that had been kept secret for many years.

Gotsy was illegitimate and ashamed of the fact. She did not want her progeny to know. However, according to Grandma, Gotsy's biological father was a person of great importance, possibly even royalty. In 1874, King Oscar II ruled both Sweden and Norway. His wife and family lived in Stockholm but he spent considerable time in Norway. He learned the language and grew to love the country that was considered a poor relative to Sweden. Pouring over

Member to Member Communication

Would you like to informally connect with other BIGS members, perhaps to ask for help on your research or meet for coffee to talk genealogy? You can use our BIGSNET email group to reach out to other members who want to communicate with each other. If you are a member, you can post a question or share information by addressing an email to BIGSNET@googlegroups.com. Or you can add a post (and see all posts) from our website (www.bigenealogy.org) by clicking on BIGSNET at the top right-hand side of the page. To join, please contact Rebecca Pratt at willflourish@hotmail.com

Betty Wiese President



Norwegian history, I convinced myself Uncle Bill actually resembled Oscar. I asked Uncle Bill at age 90 to submit a DNA sample to Family Tree, whose results established strong Norwegian roots. New to genealogy, I was unaware so many are motivated by family myths suggesting connections to important historical figures.

My cousins asked me to ferret out the truth. Having recently retired, I accepted the challenge and began by joining BIGS and attending a Scandinavian sub-group. I delved into Norway's genealogy websites but without even rudimentary knowledge of the language, I was lost. Priscilla Greenlees, a long-time member of BIGS and ardent genealogist, recommended I contact the Norwegian American Genealogy Center in Madison, Wisconsin. In particular, she suggested I contact Jerry Paulson.

Mr. Paulson agreed to help at \$40/hour, which struck me as remarkably reasonable. It took him just over two hours to solve the mystery. Fluent in Norwegian, he began with church records for the parish of Sogndal and found Gotsy's baptism on 25 March 1875. She was born in the tiny village of Lavik on December 24th, 1874. Her mother (my great-great grandmother) was Mari Haakensdatter who lived and worked on a farm next to widowed Peder Nilsen, the

biological father and my great-great grandfather. Mr. Paulson found more confirming information in the Sogndal bygdebok. He also kindly commented, "Bear in mind that illegitimacy in Norway was very common in the rural areas and for the most part didn't carry any level of shame."

In 1882, Mari and Gotsy emigrated from Bergen to southern Minnesota on the Allen Line, another record Mr. Paulson tracked down. Mari joined her brother Ivar who had emigrated in 1879. When she was 14, Gotsy's Uncle Ivar impulsively decided to move his family to Port Orchard and took Gotsy along to help with his children. He was not happy there and returned to Minnesota after a couple years. Gotsy, however, did like it and chose to stay. She went to work as a maid for a Seattle family. Shortly after, she met my Swedish great-grandfather at a Sons of Norway dance in Ballard and they married in 1900.

I sent a letter to my cousins that began, "It appears we can all put away our crowns and tiaras. Instead, we should sharpen our shovels and hoes." I included copies of Mr. Paulson's report. Their reactions ranged from amusement to disappointment to angry denial. The oldest among us who's approaching 80 was the most reticent to give up her assumed royal heritage. I'm not sure she's forgiven me yet.

Tip of the Month:

Finding That Immigrant Ancestor

From *Family Tree Magazine's* list of their 101 Best Genealogy Tips come the following tips about researching your immigrant ancestors:

- * If you can't locate your ancestor in US passenger lists, try looking north. Immigrants often found it easier and less expensive to sail to Canada and travel overland to the United States. In fact, by the 1890s, steamship companies advertised passage to Canada as a way to avoid the US government's rigorous immigration inspections.
- * If you struck out looking for immigrant ancestors in both Ellis Island and Castle Garden passenger records, ask yourself: Are you looking in the right port? Perhaps your ancestors actually sailed through Baltimore, Boston, Philadelphia or another city. The National Archives has microfilmed passenger lists from dozens of ports, and many ports' lists are searchable on Ancestry.com and FamilySearch.org.
- * You might find that Castle Garden passenger lists don't provide enough information to ensure you have the correct ancestor. It's a big help to know the names of others who traveled with the person you're after, especially when you're looking for a common name. Try to narrow the possible matches to a manageable number and study the passengers listed above and below each candidate. Then search for those names along with your ancestor in other types of records.

For more tips, check out: www.FamilyTreeMagazine.com

Did You Know?

Bainbridge Island Library offers technology help!

Any Wednesday from 1:30 pm to 3:00 pm, drop in to get help with basic computer skills, mobile devices or downloading library materials with library staff or volunteers.

**The Heritage Quest Research Library Presents
Autumn Quest 2019 Seminar**

When: Saturday, October 12 from 8:15 am to 3:00 pm

Where: Emerald Queen Conference Center, Fife, WA

Speaker: Dave Obee

Topics: Researching old newspapers, Canadian Genealogy on the Internet, Friends Across the Border and the Geography of Genealogy in England.

See the brochure for registration form and early bird signup special:

[Download: Autumn Quest 2019 registration brochure](#)

Monthly Members' Meetings

JOIN US

Friday, June 21, 10:00 AM to Noon

Bainbridge Public Library, 1270 Madison Ave N

Topic: ***Did Your Ancestors Own Slaves?***

Speaker: Janice Lovelace

Friday, July 19, 10:00 AM to Noon

Bainbridge Public Library, 1270 Madison Ave N

Topic: ***Because you asked for it: Maps!***

Speaker: Tracy Rebstock, WA State Archives

Contact Historian [Betsy Hettich](#) for presentation handouts.
The complete meeting schedule is on our [website](#).

Special Interest Groups

For BIGS Members Only

Refer to our [website](#) for the complete schedule.

Skill Building, second Friday of the month

Friday, June 14, 10 AM to Noon

Bainbridge Public Library, Community Room

Topic: **DNA Discussion including 3rd party tools**

Facilitator: Sue Hassenmiller and Frank Navage

Skill Building, second Friday of the month

Friday, July 12, 10 AM to Noon

Bainbridge Public Library, Community Room

Topic: **Google Search Tips**

Facilitator: Janet Camarata, Stepstone Genealogy

Evening Discussion Group (EDG), third Monday of the month

Monday, June 17, 7 PM to 9 PM

HomeStreet Bank on Hildebrand Lane, Community Room, 1st floor. Knock if it's locked!

Topic: **Active problem solving and updates on research progress**

Come join the discussion. Share your successes and challenges. Compare notes and ask for suggestions from fellow members.

Leader: To be determined

The Evening Discussion Group will take a break during the summer with no meeting in July or August. Meetings will resume September 16th.

Great Britain and Irish Special Interest Groups

- *Irish SIG originally scheduled for June 7th has been cancelled.*
- *British SIG originally scheduled for July 5th has also been cancelled.*

Happening Around the Sound

Seattle Genealogical Society - 6200 Sand Point Way NE, Seattle

Second Saturday Speaker Series: Organizing Your Family History in Order to Stay Sane

Saturday, June 8, 2019 - 1:00pm to 3:00pm

Speaker: **Mary Kathryn Kozy**

Confirm event: <http://seattlegenealogicalsociety.org>

Northwest Genealogy Conference

The 2019 Northwest Genealogy Conference will be held August 14 -17 at the Byrnes Performing Arts Center, 18821 Crown Ridge Blvd., Arlington, WA.

Knowledgeable speakers and varied topics make for one of the best genealogy conferences in the state. This year's topics include DNA, maps, ethnic newspapers, researching Canadian ancestors, writing your family stories, and much more. To see the schedule of classes, go to:

<https://stillygen.org/index.php>

SPECIAL ADDITION!

This year the Northwest Genealogy Conference will offer an afternoon of "Beginning Genealogy" at no cost!

Wednesday, August 14th from 1:00-4:30 pm

Byrnes Performing Arts Center, 18821 Crown Ridge Blvd., Arlington, WA

Topic: **Beginning Genealogy**

If you are intrigued by your family history either because you've watched those Ancestry ads on television or perhaps you've inherited years of research from another relative, "Beginning Genealogy" will get you started on the road to success! You'll learn the basics of family history research, develop strong research habits, discover tips and tricks for Ancestry, FamilySearch and other websites, and take the next steps to continue your genealogy journey!

Speaker: **Thomas MacEntee**

To register go to: <https://stillygen.org/aem.php?lv=r&eid=18>

Your newsletter was edited by Andrea Hoskins and designed by Lori Gibson
