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**Next meeting: 3<sup>RD</sup> WEDNESDAY**  
**SEPTEMBER 16<sup>TH</sup> 2026**

**6:30 PM – NEW BERLIN LIBRARY\***  
**15105 West Library Lane**  
**New Berlin ~ WI 53151**



## YOUR NEWSLETTER

- This is your newsletter – what do you want to see? Or not see?
- Please send me your ideas, suggestions and insights.
- Tweak the format?
- Not recap what the presentations were? Expand it more?
- Add biography section for members that want to participate?
- Puzzle? Jumbles? Word search?
- Surname exploratory info?
- Announcement section?
- More, less, of what?
- All ideas welcome 😊
- Please contact me at:  
[lindamurphympafug@gmail.com](mailto:lindamurphympafug@gmail.com)



**NEW MEETING SCHEDULE - 2026**  
**3<sup>rd</sup> WEDNESDAY OF THE MONTH**  
**for the remaining Aug-Nov 2026.**

| MONTH & DATE | ROOM       |
|--------------|------------|
| 09/16/26     | COMMUNITY  |
| 10/21/26     | COMMUNITY  |
| 11/18/26     | HERITAGE   |
| DEC          | NO MEETING |

## **SEPTEMBER PRESENTATIONS**

### ***US GENWEB***

***By Bob Heck***

- Bob will share updates on an often overlooked and forgotten resource.
- This free resource is run by over one-million volunteers and contributors making it arguably, the largest, single-interest group on the internet.
- Today the USGenWeb Project has thousands of sites, millions of web pages, a wealth of genealogical and historical information on line and welcomes several millions of visitors each year to its sites
- Enlighten us Bob and glad this resource is being brought to the forefront again!

### ***CREATING A PERSONAL ARCHIVE***

***By Randy Ray***

- Randy will show us some of the best ways he has come across and uses to properly preserve his treasured findings.
- There are certain steps, "do's and don'ts", as it were when documenting, preserving, digitizing and displaying pictures, slides, documents, and more when it comes to helping it last as long as possible for all generations to continue to enjoy and learn from.
- Looking forward to learning more and this might help get rid of the fear of making a rookie mistake for us.

## **AUGUST PRESENTATION RECAP**

### ***LIBRARY RESOURCES FOR GENEALOGISTS***

***By Natalie Beacom***

- As Director of the New Berlin Public Library, Natalie shared some of the best tools the library has to offer you, the genealogy enthusiast.
- Check out her handout as it has sites and databases that will help you the most.
- There is some reciprocity with other area libraries, and they may carry different subscriptions per the interests in each area.

- Some libraries charge to get a membership if it is as a non-resident so inquire ahead.
- We were reminded that keeping the family media preserved should be done sooner than later as degradation continues as things age. They have many items to help you do so.
- Whether you are a novice at the beginning of your journey or a well-seasoned researcher, there's useful tools you can take home for a week at a time from the "Library of Things" collection:

|                          |                            |
|--------------------------|----------------------------|
| Cassette MP3 Converter   | Document camera            |
| Portable scanners        | Negative scanners          |
| Slides scanners          | 8mm film digitizers        |
| Super 8mm digitizers     | Video-to-digital converter |
| Floppy disc drive copier |                            |

- New Berlin Library also has subscription to give you access to Consumer Reports - free
- She did a great job bringing all that is available to light. She also has many knowledgeable staff ready to help you in your journey. Fantastic job!

### ***PASSENGER LIST RESEARCH***

***By Bob Heck***

- Bob had super examples of utilizing ship passenger lists to fill in more missing pieces to your family story.
- 1820 was a pivotal year in the shipping world as that is when law passed requiring passenger lists to be used. Printing companies made bank as the logs printed were sold in great quantities, were mostly the same, and now had to be used.
- As always, check out his handouts as it references many tips and sites to get more information on passenger lists and connections.
- Far more ports existed than you would think. 328 between 1820-1960. Bob noted and they covered land, sea, air entries.
- He outlined the ports and associated time frames. Keeping in mind some of the records show "to" and some are "from".
- More popular ones are Ellis Island and Wharves of Manhattan but many lesser-known ports can be hidden gems as not all came through NY.

- Many names were changed or documented differently from their original homeland names. His example was “Mikel” may be noted as “Mikelova”, adding the “ova” to denote it was a female arriving.
- Some records were one page, some two with added info, some were bonus with three pages and unique gold mine of added information.
- Some of the information was later utilized in establishing the person’s document numbers to start of social security.
- You can view pics of the ship, search other people that came together from same village. Bob has examples of people that came over together and remained connected from the old country for lifelong friendships in settling here together. How incredible!
- Great set of sources that we wouldn’t generally think would all come from this one list. Fantastic job Bob!



## **MUSINGS & MUTTERINGS:**

### **Roots in the Soil: How Wisconsin’s Changing Harvests Shaped Our Ancestors’ Lives**

When tracing our Wisconsin ancestors, we often look at census records, birth certificates, and plat maps. But to truly understand their daily lives, we must look at what they were harvesting. Over the past 200 years, Wisconsin’s agriculture underwent massive transformations. The crops our ancestors planted, the pests that ruined them, and the machinery they adopted dictated exactly where they lived, why they moved, and how they survived.

#### **The 19th Century: From Wheat King to Devastating Pests**

If your ancestors arrived in Wisconsin during the mid-1800s, chances are they were wheat

farmers. Long before Wisconsin was "America's Dairyland," wheat reigned supreme. By 1860, the state's rich soil made it the **second-largest wheat-producing state** in the entire nation.

However, continuous wheat planting quickly depleted the soil. This environmental strain triggered a catastrophic **chinch bug infestation** in the 1870s. The pests wiped out entire harvests, bankrupting families and forcing a massive wave of desperation. If your family tree shows ancestors suddenly abandoning their land or shifting trades in the 1870s, they were likely fleeing the chinch bug disaster. Desperate farmers had to pivot, diversifying into hops, tobacco, potatoes, and livestock.

This agricultural collapse coincided with a massive influx of **German, Scandinavian, and Irish immigrants**. These new settlers brought centuries of European knowledge in dairy, cheesemaking, and butter production. Together, native farmers and immigrants rebuilt the state’s economy from the ground up, setting the foundation for a dairy empire.

#### **The 20th Century: The Rise of Innovation and Machinery**

For nearly a century, our ancestors relied on grueling physical labor, using ox- and horse-driven plows to handle the autumn harvest. If you have photos of your Wisconsin ancestors from the early 1900s, you will likely see working horses in the background.

Everything changed around World War II. The introduction of **widespread rural electricity, aluminum irrigation systems, and tractors** completely phased out horses and automated milking. Suddenly, farms required fewer hands, prompting many young men and women from farming families to migrate into Wisconsin's growing cities for factory work.

At the same time, scientific breakthroughs at the **University of Wisconsin-Madison College of Agricultural and Life Sciences** altered the landscape. Researchers developed new **hybrid seed corn**, which was planted on **90% of the state's corn acres by 1939**. This drastically boosted harvest yields despite the short Midwest growing seasons, allowing our ancestors to feed larger herds of livestock



through the harsh winters. Because of these innovations, Wisconsin took the crown as the **nation's leading dairy producer in 1915** and held the top spot for nearly 80 consecutive years.

### Modern Harvest Superlatives

Today, Wisconsin's agricultural industry contributes **\$116.3 billion annually** to the economy. While dairy is still a major component of the state's identity, the diverse agricultural landscape our ancestors built has made Wisconsin a national leader in several unique specialty crops. Today, the state ranks **first in the United States** for harvesting:

- **Cranberries:** Generating over 60% of the entire U.S. supply.
- **Ginseng:** The rolling hills of Marathon County produce about **90 to 95% of all root ginseng** harvested in the country.
- **Snap Beans:** Leading the nation in green beans grown specifically for canning and processing.
- **Corn for Silage:** The leading producer of preserved, high-moisture fodder used to sustain livestock.

Next time you look at a branch of your Wisconsin family tree, consider the harvest. Whether they were fleeing the chinch bug, adapting to the first tractors, or tending to Marathon County ginseng, the soil of Wisconsin shaped the journey of your ancestors.



**WE WOULD LOVE TO SEE YOU IN  
SEPTEMBER – BRING A FRIEND!**

## MEMBERSHIP UPDATE

*Membership in MPAFUG is open to anyone interested in learning more about computer genealogy.*

**\$12** – the cost per calendar year membership that covers individual and family

**RENEW NOW FOR 2027 SO YOU DON'T MISS  
ANY MEMBER-ONLY BENEFITS** ☺

Please send a check for \$12.00 made payable to **MPAFUG** or bring to the next meeting:

Include: name, address, email & phone number.

**Deborah A. Bluett**

**MPAFUG Treasurer**

**PO Box 229**

**Delavan, WI 53115-0229**





## About This Newsletter

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NO COPYRIGHTED ARTICLES may be submitted without express permission of the author and publisher. Articles should be submitted by the 1<sup>st</sup> Wednesday to be considered for inclusion in that same month. Credit will be given for your article.



## RESOURCES

### ***The Family Search Center***

9600 West Grange Avenue, Hales Corners

The Family Search Center Library hours:

**Tuesday:** 8:30AM – 3:30PM

**Wednesday:** 8:30AM – 12 Noon

**Thursday:** 8:30AM – 3:30PM and  
6:30PM – 9:00PM

**Saturday:** 10:00AM – 1:00PM

Enter at the main doors facing West Grange Avenue and follow the signs to the library.

On Thursday evenings, Bob Heck and Randy Ray are the volunteers on duty who will assist you in your research.

For some extra special help from May through September, Cheryl Heck is there to help you. Cheryl is LDS Mormon and is the expert in the Family Search website and LDS issues.

There are numerous portal systems available for free use at the center.

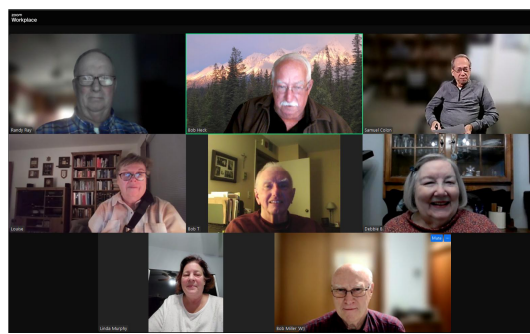
**Come enjoy this resource!**

## MPAFUG KEY INFORMATION

### STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBERS

|                       |                       |                        |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|
| <b>Bob Heck</b>       | <b>Debbie Bluett</b>  | <b>Randy Ray</b>       |
| <b>Bob Miller</b>     | <b>Linda Murphy</b>   | <b>Sam Colon</b>       |
| <b>Bob Tatalovich</b> | <b>Merilyn Romani</b> | <b>Steve Gulgowski</b> |

Steering committee meetings are held via Zoom on the Monday following the presentation meetings. Generally no meeting in December. The Steering Committee is an informal group of members who get together to plan topics for future meetings.



### ***If you would like to make a presentation or have a suggestion for a meeting topic***

Write, call or email:

MPAFUG c/o Bob Heck

4910 Steeple Dr.

Greendale, WI 53129

414-421-7143

[bobheckmpafug@gmail.com](mailto:bobheckmpafug@gmail.com)



### **OUR WEB PAGE**

<http://mpafug.org>

We invite you to visit our page, print a copy of this or last month's newsletter. You'll find a surname section where you can see who else is working on your family line.

**Members** of MPAFUG have access to a members-only web page which contains past newsletters and handouts from our meetings.

**\*The New Berlin Public Library does not advocate for or endorse the viewpoints of meetings or meeting room users.**

