

(Continued from page 1)
From the Editor

Shareable Stories.”

We wind up the calendar year with the society’s annual “Holiday Party + Members Show and Tell.” Several WHAG’s members will share their research stories, and genealogical artifacts found on their research path.

All of this is possible because of the hard work of the program committee, supported by Finance, Website, and other ad hoc committees. It takes people to make these committees successful and each of them would embrace help from other society members. So, think about getting involved and help make WHAG’s an even better genealogical society.

In the meantime, all the committees are working hard to provide programs, and field trips. Our special interest groups (SIG) are gearing up for post-Christmas and the Spring of 2023 activities.

Ron D. Ware

**We Have a Software Designer
Among Us**

**See Rick Armes Article about
Potential Genealogy Software**

Page 3

Our Committees at Work

September Membership Team Update

Did everyone enjoy our first program meeting? Getting to know each other during our Meet and Greet time before our program is one of the perks of meeting in person. Our Zoom setup allows those that can’t come to join in and have fellowship, too.

We are able to do this because of the wonderful volunteers dedicated to our Society. We want you to come and share with us.

Since Sept 1st, we have had 7 more renewal memberships. That’s 48 total so far!

As a reminder – memberships that have not been renewed, expire 10/31. Please consider renewing if you have not already done so. If you are not sure if your membership is still active, please email membership@whags.email.

We are looking forward to seeing everyone at our next program meeting, Saturday, October 15th.

Liz Philip
Membership

Program Committee

Happenings!

The Program Committee continues to meet once a month to keep the 2022-2023 program year on track. We’re also thinking about possible trips to libraries and/or cemeteries in the spring. If you have ideas about places you’d like to visit as a group, don’t hesitate to reach out to one of the committee members: Meg Philpot, Ricky Armes, Liz Philip, Ron Ware, or Pacquitta Laverents.

(Continued from page 1)
Sharrer

fused a level of professionalism and high standards to elevate our mission to provide members opportunities to explore, learn, and share genealogy knowledge and skills.



**Jenny Sharrer is presented roses at
the September general meeting**

(Continued on page 4)

(Continued from page 1)
President's Note

things. We hope to establish a Technology SIG by the end of the year. Our November and February programs cover different aspects of writing and publishing your family history. Many of you have expressed interest in a Writing SIG; I hope these programs will spur some of our members to start one.

As we expand our offerings, we encourage members to step up and help us help you. We ended the last programming year with over seventy members. Attending the monthly programs is a great start. Participating in SIGs and MHM is a great way to learn more about your fellow members and to find people with similar research interests. If there is something you are interested in exploring with a few fellow members, I encourage you to set up a SIG and go for it!

WHAGS now has an Engagement Committee to reach out to members and potential members to learn what they are interested in learning and how they may be able to contribute. Jenny Sharrer and Liz Philip are leading this effort. Please feel free to reach out to them or any member of the LT at any time. The WHAGS' "Meet and Greet" time before each programming meeting (both in person and virtually) is a great way to meet fellow members and express your interest to others and the LT.

I look forward to seeing
"all y'all" during the coming year!
Gail Colby

Rick Armes Interview

The past year has brought many new members to WHAGS. One of those, Rick Armes, has recently retired from a career of 43 years in systems software design. He has also published five family history books. We are fortunate to have him in our society.

Over the past five years, Rick has worked on the development of a genealogy software that focuses on the recording of documents and photographs which makes it easy to integrate with the data he has in his genealogy software, Legacy Family Tree. His application, which he calls GENESSYS, appears to have a lot of potential, and Rick has offered to make it available to WHAGS members at no charge.

When he told me about his project, I was intrigued and asked if I might interview him for a newsletter article. He agreed and his article with interview follows.

Genesis of GENESSYS

I have been incredibly successful in my genealogy research, if success is measured by how many people I have entered in my family tree (2,328) or how many bits of information I have found related to those family members (over 5,000).

The easy part is keeping track of the people. I have used Legacy's Family Tree software for over twenty years. I find it intuitive, robust, and inexpensive. In addition to providing quick and easy data input, Legacy provides the ability to produce a variety of charts and reports including descendant, ancestor and lineage, graphically showing family relationships.

If the easy part was keeping track of people, the hard part was finding software to capture and track the 5,000+ documents relating to my family. I initially used Legacy but soon abandoned that approach. I found it hard to catalog information completely and efficiently. So, given my years of experience designing database systems for clients, I decided to write my own document-handling software. Now, five years later, version one of the software I named GENESSYS (The Genealogy Scrapbook System) is almost done.

I designed GENESSYS to catalog documents of different file and

(Continued on page 4)

(Continued from page 3)
GENESSYS Software

media types, and to facilitate the recording of citation references. It was also designed to work in conjunction with Shutterfly publication software to produce high quality family history books.

Now comes the really hard part: declaring the GENESSYS version one complete in order to make it available to others.

Q: Can you tell us a little about yourself

My name is Ricky Armes. I have lived in the Houston area 43 years and retired from a career in systems software design. I joined WHAGs in May of this year, and I am currently a member of the WHAGS programming committee.

Q: What got you interested in genealogy?

My Aunt Doris was a librarian and keen genealogist. When I was thirteen, she visited our family's home and presented me a copy of her life's work: forty letter-size pages, single spaced, listing family tree information going back to the 1700s. I'll never forget that on the top page of those forty pages was a handwritten note stating "Iddo Arms went West and was scalped by Indians." Given that, how could I not want to know more about the family?

Q: How successful have you been in your research efforts?

To date I've traced my dad's side of the family to the 1400s on the Isle of Jersey, off the coast of France. The family moved to western Massachusetts around 1676, and narrowly escaped being killed or taken hostage in the 1704 Deerfield Massacre. My great-grandfather was a farmer in Sullivan County, Pennsylvania.

I've traced my mom's family to Amsterdam, The Netherlands. In 1752 my fourth great-grandfather enlisted in the Dutch East India Trading Company as a mercenary to help the Dutch safeguard their Asian spice trade. He arrived in Ceylon on 10 December 1752, and unlike many of his fellow soldiers, never returned to Europe. His descendants, including my great grandfather, were Dutch burghers. His son, my grandfather, left Ceylon to manage a hotel in Singapore, and then moved to Bangkok to work at the Oriental Hotel. Fun fact: During that time the Oriental Hotel was owned by Louis T. Leonowens, the son of Anna Leonowens (of "King and I" fame).

Q: Early on how did you organize the information you found?

Initially I relied exclusively on Legacy Family Tree software to handle three requirements:

(Continued on page 5)

(Continued from page 2)
Sharrer

Jenny is constantly thinking three steps ahead of everyone else and keeping track of the details that make the difference between mediocre and "best-in-class" experiences. Not only did she arrange to bring consistently high-quality programs to us month after month, she also brainstormed ideas, coordinated events such as the spring trip to the Clayton Library, and kept a pulse on how well we were doing by designing evaluations and reviewing the results. Programs are a **big** reason that many of us decided to be part of WHAGS, and Jenny Sharrer far exceeded our expectations in her role as Programming Chair. Jenny, from the bottom of our hearts, we thank you. And we applaud you for all that you have done to make our genealogy journey better!

Pacquitta Laverents

Programming Coordinator

Calling All Storytellers

A quality newsletter depends upon the content in its pages. Content (articles, stories, and tips) just doesn't fall out of the sky. I depend on the members to participate. Please get involved – just a few minutes of your time – and help me make the WHAGS Journal something that you will want to read. If you have a genealogy related idea or a story, please contact me at newsletter@whags.email.

Resource Gems

Try these often-hidden genealogical resource gems

Find a Grave

An often-overlooked free site that provides gravesite memorials and links to possible ancestors.

<https://www.findagrave.com/>

Chronicling America

A historic American Newspaper collection hosted by The Library of Congress. The site has thousands of digitized historical newspaper. It is free.

<https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/about/>

Earth Point

Have a deed with a Public Lands description. Enter the section, township, and range. The free site will pinpoint your ancestors property on Google Earth.

<https://www.earthpoint.us/>

Planning a Research Trip

Hit a Brick Wall

After hours and days of research, you have hit a “Brick Wall.” Go online and check out Cyndi’s

help at <https://www.cyndislist.com/brickwall/fan-club/>.

(Continued from page 4)
GENESSYS Software

- capture family members’ key dates/locations
- establish relationships among family member and
- associate images (photos/documents, etc.) with family members

It was only after using this software for a while that I realized Legacy was less than ideal for handling images in an efficient and user-friendly way.

In addition, once I collected lots of information, I discovered I had a fourth requirement: Produce a family history book.

Q: Was it this fourth requirement, producing a book, that got you started writing your own software?

I might not have developed GENESSYS had I been proficient in MS Word. After gathering enough material to create a book I decided to use Word to write the family story. Entering text was no problem but whenever I inserted a document or photo within the text there was almost always a problem. I could rarely size and place the image where I wanted, and I had a lot of images!

I did complete my first book using Word and was pleased with it, but it was a frustrating process. Faced with producing another book for the other side of my family I decided to head down the software development path.

Q: How does your software help with your research?

I’ve digitized and cataloged over a thousand photographs, documents, letters, and interview notes stored in bins in my study, so that I can quickly retrieve them by document type, source type or individual, and sort them by date to produce a chronology.

Documents entered in GENESSYS must include a source citation, and a website link, if available, allowing for further research and corroboration.

Family members can be easily linked to documents or events. For example, I can link 50+ individuals to a single-family reunion photo.

I can create custom slideshows for family members using the documented material allowing me to correct information “on the fly” as they view it.

Events must be supported by a document so if there is a question about an event, I can call up the supporting document as verification.

The software includes a contact list allowing me to easily keep in

(Continued on page 6)

(Continued from page 5)
GENESSYS Software

touch with family members.

The software includes a list of genealogy websites allowing for easy access.

I can log “open item” issues at the document or person level, so that I can follow them up as time permits.

Q: Can you talk about the “publishing” side of GENESSYS? How does that work?

I’ve created five books directly from the material entered in GENESSYS using Shutterfly. Here are the steps I followed to publish a book featuring my paternal grandparents:

Specified my grandparents as the subjects of the book.

Determined which events of my grandparents to include and the format of each event, including image size and placement.

Determined which historical (non-person specific) events should be included. For example, I included the 1918-1919 flu pandemic, as my grandfather lost a sister and a brother due to the flu.

Created five PDF files based on the criteria entered: the main body (event chronology) and four appendices: index, citation, biography and location.

Created JPG files from the PDFs, and imported them into Shutterfly.

Q: Now that GENESSYS V1.0 is almost done what are plans for the software?

I am exploring ways to make the software available to a broader audience by sharing it with WHAGS members.

He was also researching his O’Connor family and had traced his line back to my Michael O’Connor who lived most of his life in Ottawa, Illinois. John and I exchanged information for some years through those early forums, then finally connecting on Ancestry.com. By 2000, we had both exhausted our shared information and only occasionally communicated throughout the first decade of the current century.

John lived in Michigan 350 miles from Ottawa, and I in Houston, a thousand miles away. We had never met, our only communication was through electronic messaging, and we never shared a photo of ourselves. Now the story gets uncanny.

In 2018 I planned a research trip to Ottawa. My wife had passed away, and I, alone with no commitments, began my journey by car from Houston. I have always liked to travel, preferably by car. I wanted to visit St. Louis, where one of my Union ancestors died in the Lawson Military Hospital during the Civil War, and other historic sites along the route. So, I took my time and meandered toward Ottawa, Illinois.

I arrived in Ottawa late in the evening and after a night’s rest, I visited the LaSalle County Courthouse, the Saint Columba church where my O’Connor and Neary ancestors worshipped, and of course Washington Square where on August 21st, 1858, Abraham

(Continued on page 7)

The Chance Encounter

By Ron Ware

My great great grandfather, Michael O’Connor was born in 1802 in County Roscommon, Ireland. He emigrated to the United States during the Irish Potato Famine and after a short stay in New York, settled in LaSalle County, Illinois. He lived there

until his death in May 1872 at the age of 70 years. I have not done much research on Michael, but this is not a story about his life as such. It is a story about the extraordinary meeting between myself and a fellow O’Connor researcher.

John Wesley (not his real name) and I met in the 1990s on one of the early genealogical fo-

(Continued from page 6)
Encounter

Lincoln and Stephen A. Douglas conducted one of their famous debates. Then, in the afternoon, I ventured over to Saint Columba Cemetery which brings me back to my story.

The purpose of my visit was to find the burial location of my O'Connor and Neary ancestors who have been buried there since the mid nineteenth century. I was particularly interested in finding the grave of my great great grandfather, Michael O'Connor. St. Columba is a rather large cemetery and with no burial directory, I spent over an hour moving among the monuments unsuccessfully looking for his grave. During my walk, I noticed a man cleaning a gravestone on a bit of a rise in the center of the cemetery. Not wanting to disturb him, I had not visited that area. But the man noticed me, gave a friendly wave, and I moved up the rise toward him.

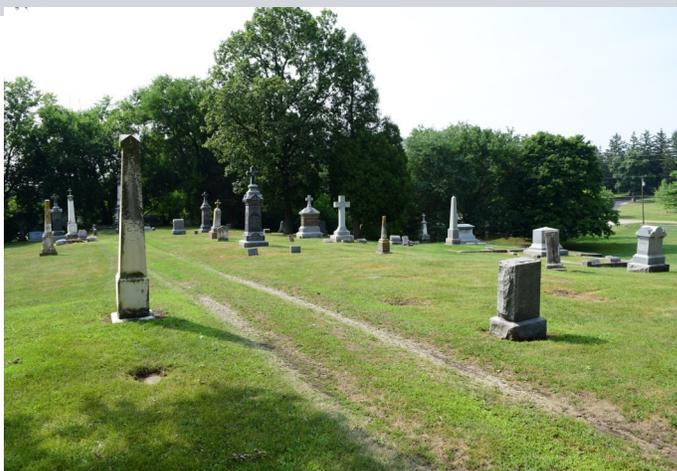
We didn't introduce our-



Grave marker of Ron's great great grandfather, Michael Patrick O'Connor

selves in the beginning, just chatting as strangers will. He asked me what grave I was looking for and when I gave him my second great grandfather's name, he turned to the tombstone he was cleaning and softly said, "he's right here." He then twisted his head toward me with a puzzling look and said, "I'm John Wesley. Is it possible that you are Ron Ware?" I was dumbfounded! What are the odds of two people living a thousand miles apart, showing up in an ancestral town on the same day and same time? We gave each other a heartfelt handshake as if we were cousins, which we are.

John told me that he drove from Detroit and visited Michael's grave every year. We joined forces and continued cleaning the gravesite. It was a fascinating afternoon as John and I, two distant cousins, worked together over the grave of a common ancestor. At the end of the afternoon, we parted ways, he off to Detroit, and I beginning the thousand-mile drive back to Houston. Maybe some day



The Saint Columba Cemetery, Ottawa, Illinois

we will meet again on that rise in the Saint Columba Cemetery.

Ron D. Ware



LaSalle County, Illinois location shown in Red

Great Start to the New Year

Those of you unable to attend September 17th's general meeting-missed a great presentation around a complicated subject, DNA. Bernard Meisner discussed the use of DNA in our genealogical research in layman's terms with just enough humor to keep it interesting. Some 40 people, in person and via Zoom, attended WHAGS' first gathering of the season. Evaluations by the attendees indicated that most were extremely satisfied with the program. We're off to a great start in 2022-2023!

As you know, WHAGS made the decision to go hybrid; in person and virtual, at the beginning of the Covid crisis. Fortunately, we had in our midst, a highly technical person named Neal Scott. He has been the driving force in the success of the hybrid program. Who would have ever thought that we could program with a room full of people while others participated virtually? It boggles the mind.

Consider the past and you shall know the future

Chinese Proverb

This first meeting was a challenge, however. Neal is on a cruise around the British Isles, so WHAGS leadership was left with a challenge. How do we do this without Neal? But no worries. Our leadership ladies, Gail Colby, Pacquitta Laverents, and Jeanie Smith, guided the hybrid program through technical difficulties and glitches, to a successful inaugural program. Everybody, both in attendance personally, and those scattered virtually around creation, participated in its entirety.

Now we look forward to the October general meeting, and

WHAGS.org
Don't forget to visit our website often. It is full of information for the enjoyment and use of our members. Watch there for upcoming events.

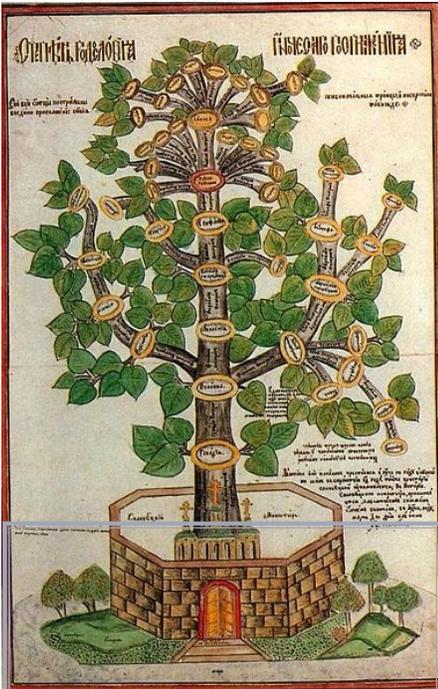
presentation by Lisa Lisson about how to search record collections from home.

Ron D. Ware



The lady techies, getting us through the hybrid session.
Left to right, Pacquitta Laverents, Gail Colby and Jeanie Smith





The WHAGS Journal
A Publication of the
West Houston Area
Genealogical Society
1922-23

West Houston Area Genealogy Society

Helping to find your roots

www.whags.org

PO Box 842661; Houston, TX 77284
Steve Radack Community Center
18650 Clay Road; Houston, TX 77084

ARCHIVEGRID – How to Search Record Collections from Home!

Hybrid presentation by Lisa Lisson

We are meeting both in-person and via Zoom!



ArchiveGrid is a powerful online collection of materials genealogy researchers do not want to overlook! As a useful search tool, ArchiveGrid includes 7+ million archival records from over 1,400 institutions, bringing together information about historical documents, personal papers, family histories, and original manuscripts. Learn how to put the power of this free finding aid to work in identifying your ancestors.

Lisa Lisson is the genealogy researcher behind "Are You My Cousin?", a blog where she has helped genealogy researchers around the world learn how to search for and find their ancestors. Through hundreds of genealogy blog posts, YouTube videos and online masterclasses, she shares research strategies and how-to tutorials to take the overwhelm out of genealogy research. Find her at www.LisaLisson.com.

Date: Saturday, October 15, 2022

Time: Meet & greet 10:00 am Program begins at 10:30 am

If you will be joining virtually, visit our website for the link to register for the Zoom presentation: www.whags.org. Those joining in-person will meet at the new Steve Radack Community at 18650 Clay Road. See you soon!

Visitors are always welcome!

Genealogy is More Fun in the Fall



Help fill this space.. If you have a
genealogy story to tell, email me
at newsletter@whags.email.

The West Houston Area Genealogy Society