

The

Computer Link

January 2010

The Newsletter of the Northern Neck Computer Users' Group

NNCUG Officers

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804-580-8666

Vice President

Chris Christensen
438-4339

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438-4820

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804-580-2538

Member-at-Large

Roger T. Fortin
804-462-0431

The Computer Link

Tom Duke, Editor
804-435-0439

Website

Betty Lehman
<www.nncug.org>

Webteam

admin@nncug.org

E-mail address for all
NNCUG officers/staff:
admin@nncug.org

Send newsletter
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➔ **DEADLINE** ➔

for **NEXT ISSUE**,

One week after meeting

December Meeting Snowed Out—Year in Review

The December 19th membership meeting was cancelled at the last minute by President BJ McMillan when it was clear that travel conditions for all was too dangerous. When the snow ended, it was a beautiful scene. It was time for reflection.

2009 was a great year for the NNCUG. The membership was treated to programs that introduced us to internet phone calling and HDTV, Google's other features, Kilmarnock's Boys and Girls Club's computer learning program, the latest on Photoshop Elements, Doing Research Online, Calling Baghdad on Skype with full screen video, a great demonstration on building a personal website, a visit from Gabe Goldberg with a primer on cleaning up your computer, Favorite Program demonstrations by NNCUG members, Using MS Publisher to create the *Computerlink*, a seminar on Ebay, and computer scrapbooking and paper crafting.

Our snowed out December presentation was to be on Windows 7 which is now scheduled for our January meeting on the 16th with **Charles Wrightson**.

Other highlights of 2009 included two of our Photo SIG frequent monthly winners competing nationally with all the AP-CUG user groups in their annual photo contest and winning seven out of twelve places with over 100 national entries. **Richard Davis and Linda Boyatzies** along with other SIG members will hopefully enter again in the 2010 contest. Entries are due by the end of January.

Another milestone was the very successful **re-incarnation of the Genealogy SIG** under the leadership of Ann Thompson. They have 30-40 members and have had sessions on family tree software, digitalizing documents, and learning the tricks of genealogy techniques and research.

2009 was another great year for the **website** under the aegis of long time dedicated member and volunteer, Betty Lehman. Treasurer, Jim Thompson, has kept the coffers healthy with his **monthly raffles**, often with very valuable prizes.

The **Board of Directors** have all been at it for many years and have become term limited. The

Continued on Page 5

Genealogy Online Using the internet's Tools to "Dig Up" Your Family Tree

Written by *Terri Neary*,
a member of the ICON PCUG, Inc.,
New York
The ICON Graphic, Newsletter of the
ICON PCUG, August 2009
www.iconpcug.org
[editor\(at\)iconpcug.org](mailto:editor(at)iconpcug.org)

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Everyone has their own ideas about how computers and the internet can help them the most. For me, it is my genealogy project. I am trying to find out who my family were, what they did, where they lived, and even how they lived. I would like to **confirm or disprove several family stories** and be able to give the generations after me a sense of where they came from. Trying to do this without a computer and the internet would be the equivalent of using a horse and buggy in the 21st century. But searching for your family history can be an expensive project. There are many ways to cut down the cost.

Now one of the easiest websites to search is www.Ancestry.com. However, this can be a pricy option unless you know of a **library with a subscription** to it. Personally I travel to the Bethpage Library to use theirs. The databases available on this site range from the basic Social Security Death Index, which gives you the option of writing to the appropriate department to get a photocopy of the original application, to the Federal Censuses, to Passenger Lists coming from multiple locations to multiple ports in the United States and over a thousand different databases in the United States alone. Each of these databases can give you information regarding your immediate line of family members as well as

their siblings. Every little tidbit can help you to find more out and help to confirm or deny family stories. By searching their World War I Draft Registration Cards, I discovered that my grandfather, who died before I got to know him, was born in Hungary on the 24th of January in 1896. In addition, I learned that he was considered ineligible for the draft, not because he was an alien residing in NJ, but because he was missing the first joint of his third finger on his right hand. This small piece of information appears to help back up the stories I have heard of him los-

...World War I Draft Registration Cards, I discovered that my grandfather, who died before I got to know him... ..was missing the first joint of his third finger on his right hand.

ing this finger while a butcher at his brother's shop, though it does not confirm it. Another site that can be expensive to use is www.heritagequestonline.com. However many libraries are paying for access to this site so it can be easily employed if you can locate which library near you that has access. Farmingdale allows you to log on from your home computer so it makes it even easier to use. Through this site you can search though the censuses, the Periodical Source Index for genealogical publications and many thousands of books for information on your missing relatives.

One of my favorite sites is one that actually connects you to multiple sites, some free and others not. It is run by Stephen P. Morse in San Francisco. His site, www.stevemorse.org, is **de-**

signed for ease of use. The home page lists multiple databases including records from Ellis Island, Castle Garden in NY, Passenger records from New Orleans, Philadelphia, and San Francisco, as well as census records from the US, Canada, and Britain, in addition to Vital records and other assorted information that make it easier to locate that elusive relative. Steve Morse has designed his own search engines for each of the sites he lists that are easier to use than then the search engines on the actual sites. **Using his Ellis Island search engine**, I was able to find an aunt that came to the US in November of 1922. I had been unable to find my grandfather coming into the country, even though I was sure he was born in Europe, but with the information from the passenger lists, I determined that his first name must have been altered. When using most of the Morse site's search engines, you can limit the information you give them to search; for example you can put an "E" in for all spellings of what we spell as Elizabeth. My aunt's name was listed as Erszebet and it indicated she was going to live with her brother Malzas - a bad spelling of Mathias. With this information I will be able to track down additional information on his entry into the country.

Another site that is very good for searching vital records is run by the **Church of Latter Day Saints**, www.familysearch.org. They are updating their site to include records from Ohio court records to Florida state enumerations. I actually find that I have the most luck using the computers available at a Family History Center, such as the one in Plainview. Using their records,
Continued on Page 4

~~~~~**Power to the Pixels!**~~~~~

Written by *Dave Christenson*,

The digital photo guru and member of the Fox Valley PC  
Association, Illinois  
[www.fvpca.org](http://www.fvpca.org)  
deanholste (at) sbcglobal.net

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I suspect that everyone reading this has at least one digital camera. What criteria did you use when buying it? Size, features, cuteness, need, impulse? Some or all of these? Maybe. But I'll bet that two you definitely considered are **price and pixel count**. All other things being equal, low price and high mega-pixel count is good! Right? Not always. I'll certainly go along with the low price bit, but let's think about the pixels a bit.

Why do we want more pixels? Obviously, because the picture, or image, is made out of pixels, the more pixels we have the more detail the image can contain and the greater we can **enlarge it**, or more cropping we can do. If we go beyond the capabilities of the count, we get what's called pixilation, or, more informally, stair-stepping, where a diagonal line zig-zags. Also called, for obvious reason, "the jaggies." So, why don't we necessarily want the most pixels possible for the price?

Well, everything in this world is a compromise, including us. We all make unnecessary noise, so do pixels. When light from the lens hits a pixel it puts out an electronic signal, proportional to the amount of light striking it. But, there is also a residual signal in a pixel, that is, a signal that it puts out whether or not light is hitting it. **This is called noise**. This is on top of the wanted signal, and the lower the brightness of the image, the greater the noise appears. Thus, it shows up more in photos taken in dim light. But it's always there, and in all cameras. It appears more obvious in areas of

smoothness, such as sky, or human skin, and causes the image to look somewhat rough or granulated. (To those who are used to film, it's more or less the equivalent of grain.) Altogether, noise is something really undesirable.

What's the easiest way to reduce the amount of noise in a pixel? Easy, make it bigger! Now, do you see the conflict? If we make the pixels bigger to reduce noise, then we have to have fewer of them on a given size sensor. Or, we can have bigger sensors. This method definitely works, **but at a price**. A bigger sensor means a bigger camera, and a higher price. Large sensors are expensive, huge sensors ridiculously so. (A giant sensor or a new car, your choice!) There is software in cameras designed to analyze the noise and reduce it. It works, but it has limitations distinguishing between noise and signal. Software packages can be purchased at varying price levels to reduce noise, they help but don't cure the noise problem, if you want to get into that.

You would think that camera manufacturers, being aware of the problem, would design their cameras to have a reasonable compromise between sensor size and number of pixels. The designers could, but specifications are given by the marketing group, who are well aware that "Pixels sell!" So, what should you do?

Well, consider **how you are going to use your photos**. Are you going to print 16" x 20" photos on high resolution glossy paper? Are you going to crop out an itchy-bitsy portion of the center of the picture and enlarge it? If so, I'm afraid you will have to bite the bullet and get a larger sensor camera. But if you are taking photos of birthday parties, vacations, and get-togethers, and want to print them as 4x5's or e-mail them, then I wouldn't be too concerned about pixel counts. Maybe cuteness is more important.

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## Online Genealogy From Pg 2

you can obtain copies of actual birth certificates for relatives without having to pay the high fees that the actual source would charge you. They will charge you for copies, but it is usually much less than you than you would pay otherwise.

In addition, there are members who will actually help you to determine where the records are held. The one thing I will mention is that the members will not try to convert you to their religion. They are only there to help you with your research.

A site that is maintained locally with many records is [www.italiengen.org](http://www.italiengen.org). They include databases for naturalizations and vital records for New York City as well as Nassau and Suffolk counties. These records are constantly being updated and are not limited to only those of Italian descent. They include on their site a form for obtaining actual copies of the records from the NYC Archives. I have found a great grandparent's death certificate number on this site and by using the Family History center obtained a copy of the actual certificate. It lists the cause of death as influenza on June 2, 1918 which appears to confirm another story that he had died in the flu epidemic of 1917 (which actually lasted several years).

Then as much as people think that going to cemeteries is for visiting immediate relatives graves, there is a great deal of information available if you can **locate where your ancestors are buried**. One of the easiest sites for this is [www.findagrave.com](http://www.findagrave.com). You can

search this list by surnames, birth and/or death dates as well as location of the cemetery. You can also browse cemeteries for people who might be relatives of yours.

If you find one relative, it can be advantageous to actually visit the grave. Headstones often list multiple people, some of whom you may not recognize, and frequently families purchase graves near to each other. You might find an aunt or uncle just



**December Photo SIG Contest Winner**  
*Evening Solitude By Richard Davis*

by **looking at the next headstone**. It used to be the custom that you would take rubbings (with charcoal) in order to keep the record of what the headstone indicates, but with digital cameras you can get better images of the headstone of interest as well as those neighboring yours for much less work. If you don't find your family on Find a grave you should try [www.interment.net](http://www.interment.net). Even though this site has fewer records than the other, it has multiple special collections you can search covering flooded cemeteries, California mission graveyards and Veteran's cemeteries.

Finally a site that most of us

use on a daily basis, [www.google.com](http://www.google.com), is a haven for a large amount of information. I recently began using this site to search out information about my relatives. While I have not yet been successful, the **NEWS section of Google links** you to articles in multiple newspapers around the world. By entering a name you can find articles from the very current to archives pre-dating 1910. The articles come from major newspapers as well as some smaller ones and can give you an idea of what was occurring at the time of your ancestor's life. Comparing what you find or know about your family with what was going on in the world at the time can give you a real sense of what their lives were like. Google News can help you to locate information about the **"black" sheep of your family** by possibly showing you the newspaper articles indicating what helped to make them the "black" sheep.

By researching your family, you can find out your history. You may be able to solve some family mysteries and prove your family stories. You can locate information about the possible murderer or embezzler as well as the great aunts and uncles who died in World War I. Since life is changing so quickly in this era of computers it helps us keep some things in perspective as you realize your great-grandfather came into the country with only \$10.00 in his pocket and no job waiting for him. Or that the census record indicates that the apartment your parents were born in had a rent of \$24.00 per month. Not all the information you want is available online but the **search for what is, makes it fun**.

## **Genealogy SIG Meets January 8, 1 pm—Online Immigration Records**

The Genealogy SIG will meet on Friday January 8, 2010 at Rappahannock Westminster Canterbury at 1:00 pm. The topic will be ONLINE IMMIGRATION RECORDS – Retracing Your Ancestor’s Trip to America.

- Immigration facts
- Using what you know before you search
- Records available online including sample search results
- Search strategies
- Q&A with real-time demos to respond to questions

An immigration record is the link to your ancestor’s homeland. This single record is the key for additional research.

Immigration research is filled with pitfalls. Surnames were Americanized, borders of countries changed, multiple ports were used for emigration and immigration, and indexing of original documents is frequently inaccurate or non-existent.

Ann Thompson will do the presentation which should last approximately one hour.

This will be followed by requests from the audience for online answers with demos. Then Mary Elizabeth Stewart will bring her years of genealogy expertise to answer questions on immigration or other areas of genealogy.

N.B. This topic has changed somewhat from the concept at the November meeting. The more I worked on the presentation; I realized this has to be the first step for tracing ancestors from abroad. The sample searches that I captured (to avoid connection delays) are for my own ancestors. Another advantage to using immigration records, to start your research, is they are in English. At future meetings we can address online records for Great Britain as well as other countries. I am not multi-lingual and I do not have paid access for some of the large international databases.

There are hundreds of online resources for those who know European languages, many of which are free.

*Ann Thompson*  
804 580-8210

### **Membership Report - December 2009**

**NEW MEMBER– None**

**RENEW** January 2010 – John Bowles, Carol Hallett, Anne Moss, Bill Pregall.

**RENEW** December 2009 – Nick Borst, Bob Butts, Peter Kane.

Membership dues are \$20 annually. Please send to:

Jim Thompson, Treasurer, NNCUG, P.O. Box 774, Burgess, VA. 22432

*For insertion into our local newspaper advertising, please send to [bevnjim@netscape.com](mailto:bevnjim@netscape.com) no later than 15th of the month.*

### **Year in Review from page 1**

future of the NNCUG will require new leadership of many of our talented members. All the **Board member positions are open** and need volunteers to take over. NNCUG has enjoyed many great programs and successes and being part of the leadership is a very rewarding and happy experience. Please, don't be shy. Volunteer.

P.S. We need a newsletter editor too. All expenses paid.  
**Ed.**

# The Computer Link

Northern Neck Computer  
Users' Group  
c/o Jim Thompson  
PO Box 774  
Burgess, VA 22432

## NNCUG Meeting Dates

### NNCUG GENERAL MEETING

*Third Saturday 9:30 a.m.*

*Rappahannock Westminster-Canterbury Meeting Room*

### BEGINNERS SIG

*Meets three times a year. Those interested, contact  
B.J. McMillan at 580-8666*

### GENEALOGY SIG

*Meets bi-monthly, 2nd Friday, 1:00 p.m.—RW-C  
Contact Ann Thompson at [athompson@kaballero.com](mailto:athompson@kaballero.com)  
to get on the mail list for announcements.*

### PHOTOSHOP SIG

*First Tuesday every month, 9 a.m.  
Lancaster Community Library, Kilmarnock  
For more information, Call Jim Sapione, 804-462-5831  
or message Bird@kaballero.com*

For a photo treat visit  
[www.rapptapp.homestead.com](http://www.rapptapp.homestead.com)



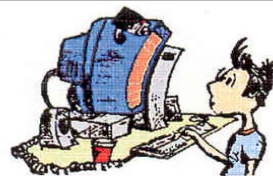
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74-B South Main St.  
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[sfoulkes@ggcweb.com](mailto:sfoulkes@ggcweb.com)

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Computer Help available by appointment. Call Betty Lehman 435-2011 or B.J. McMillan 580-8666

## Coming Attractions

Membership—January 16th, 9:30 am Charles Wrightson  
Photo SIG—January 5th, 9 am—Library  
Genealogy SIG—Jan. 8th, 1 pm—RWC, Immigration Records