



# THE GREEN COUNTY GENEALOGIST

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## Calendar

### Meetings

Meetings are held at the Monroe, WI Public Library at 10:00 a.m. on the first Saturday of the month.

*All meetings thru December have been cancelled due to CoVid 19 restrictions. Stay healthy.*

## SPECIAL NOTE TYPO

Our last newsletter for May-June and July-August was labeled as Issue 4 and 5 combined, it should have been Issues 3 and 4. Hope you enjoyed it.

## Credit Card Payments

We are now able to take Credit Card payments. Currently we can take credit card payments for memberships, workshops, and some publications. We will be working over the next couple of months to make more of our products available for credit card purchase. We are also able to receive credit card payments for research records also by sending an invoice by which credit card payment can be made. We also will be taking credit card payments at the research center/meetings with a terminal. We are excited to provide this service to our members and researchers.

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## Green County Surnames List

We are updating the surname listing on the web. If you have Green County surnames and would like to add yours, please send us the information to :

[info@greencogenealogywi.org](mailto:info@greencogenealogywi.org) with the header Surnames. Be sure to check to make sure you are not already on the list.

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## President's Message

2020 will be a historic year that future genealogists will look into and wonder what it was like to live during that time. What things will stand out? First and obviously will be the pandemic and how it changed our daily lives and how our families were affected. Then they will look at the civil and racial unrest and the political elections. And our year is not over yet. Are you writing your stories? Recording how each of these things touch your lives – good and bad? How do troubling times change our lives? What will 2021 bring? What are you looking forward to? If you have a story you would like to share we can print it in the newsletter.

We now have the Research Center open to limited number of volunteers on a day in order to allow for social distancing. The guidelines for volunteers and the contact information are on our website. If you are interested in doing some research at the center you can do so by making an appointment. Currently appointments are available on Mondays 10:30 am – 3:00 pm. Contact Bill Holland at 608.325.2990 to schedule an appointment. Masks are required and we will have disposable masks available. We encourage you to bring your own pencils, pens, paper, etc so that you are touching less of our items. We do extra cleaning and disinfecting and we wait to reshelve books for 72 hours as extra precaution. If you would like to make an appointment on another day it will depend on the availability of volunteers and Library hours.

Sadly, the rest of our meetings for 2020 are cancelled. We very much miss getting together as members and sharing genealogy together. We look forward into 2021 when once again we will be able to gather again. In the meantime, invest your home time into your genealogical research and share your stories and discoveries with us. Stay safe and healthy for the rest of 2020.

Ginny Gerber

## Research Center Hours

Due to Covid 19 restrictions these are our hours and requirements.

The Green County Genealogical Society Research Center will be open to researchers by **APPOINTMENT ONLY**.

- Appointments available on Mondays 10:30 am – 3:00 pm (Please consider that if maximum capacity is met you will have to wait for entrance to the Library)
- Call Bill Holland (608) 325-2990 to schedule appointment
- Appointments on other days would be dependent on volunteer staff availability. No appointments on Tuesdays.
- Masks Required (We will have disposable masks available)
- Door to Research Center will be locked. Please knock for entry.
- Bring your own pens, pencils, paper, etc.

## NEWSPAPER TIDBITS

From the Times; 03 Jan 1925

"Albany Vindicator is Changed to the Herald.

O.G. Briggs has just announced the changing of the name of his weekly newspaper from The Vindicator to The Herald. The cause for which the publication stood so many years was "vindicated" by the adoption of eighteenth amendment, according to Mr. Briggs, and now the name is not so appropriate."



## Shelf Linings

It has been a quiet few months for our research center, with the exception of one Tuesday in August.

We try to help even when we aren't open. This Tuesday, we received a request for someone wanting to look up a cemetery. That was fine as we weren't busy and had room for them to come.

The request came through the phone and they needed to know how to get to us. Bill told them the information and then we went about our work.

The phone rang again and he explained again. They were determined to find us. Third phone call mentioned that they were outside by the glass doors but they were locked. Bill said he would come down and meet them since the library upstairs was definitely open. He is up looking for them and the phone rings again! Where is he? They are standing out there. Well, I asked them again what cemetery they were looking for and she said Whitehall. Mentioning that we didn't have a Whitehall cemetery in Green County, I asked her what town they were in. She said they were in Jackson, but I didn't catch whether it was Jackson County, WI or in Illinois. She apologized and hung up.

Moral of the story maybe, is keep trying until all the information is given. We aren't familiar with all the surrounding cemeteries and we do have some of the state listings from the state newsletter so would have been able to possibly help.

A very interesting day as after a long quiet time, we had lots of phone calls, with another person wanting to donate a book.

Marriage records are still being indexed in homes of our volunteers. Township records are being scanned as time permits. The stacks are being organized so we can better find things.

## Shelf Linings—contd

We will be ready for researchers when the crazy days of 2020 are over.

Hoping everyone is staying safe and healthy. If you have time, please let us know what you are doing these days as we are staying home.

*Donna Kjendlie*

*Librarian*



## WI. Historical Society Fall Seminar

The Wisconsin State Genealogical Society will be doing their fall seminar as a webinar on Saturday, October 17, 2020, "Hopscotching from Origins to DNA" with Elizabeth Williams Gomoll. Ms. Gomoll is president of the Northland chapter of the APG and a member of the board of the Minnesota State Genealogical Society. Panels include: Genealogy Smart Start: Things I Wish I'd Known, Where They Once Stood: Finding Your Ancestor's Place of Origin, Unlocking Notation Codes on Alien Passenger Lists, and I Got My DNA Results. Now What? Lori Bessler of the Wisconsin Historical Society will do a virtual pre-conference session on Friday afternoon. For details on the seminar and registration information, see <https://wsgs.org/cpage.php?pt=315> Lori is also the person to contact about information and registration details for the Wisconsin Historical Society's planned fall workshops: September 26 African American Genealogy with Tony Burroughs October 17 Researching Your Native American Ancestors with Paula Stuart Warren November 7 German Genealogy with Jim Beidler November 14 Genealogy with Thomas MacEntee You can contact her at: [lori.bessler@wisconsinhistory.org](mailto:lori.bessler@wisconsinhistory.org)

Credit to the Walworth County Genealogical Society for providing this information.

## Trail's Mix

In this time of Covid 19 my job has had some major changes—Zoom trials and jury selection. That made me think about Zoom use for other things. Like a half dozen of my friends and I have now used it to have a “get together”. Some people are using it to chat with family. There are other virtual chat software out there but Zoom is the one I know so I will discuss it a little because I think it could have some advantages for our Genealogy Society.

There is a free package where you get 40 minutes of chat and can have 100 people in the room. The next level is \$150 year and no limits. Besides being able to chat it has ability for a speaker to show charts or objects. Even has a white board for jotting. The host can mute people to allow the speaker to talk and then turn mute off to allow questions from the audience.

We could also use it to have our monthly meetings.

Some people are using it to host virtual family reunions; holiday dinners, and weddings!

So there is the first part of my column. Yes, I have another part since I am talking about virtual stuff.

The other night I was flipping channels trying to find something, I don't recall what, and then I remembered a YouTube video I want to check out from a friend. So thank you smart tv I jumped on my YouTube app. Well, not only did I see that but decided to do a “search”. What I searched for was based on a text I had just received from my 13 yr. old “niece”. Her brother, Mom and she were watching Genetic Detective and really liked it. She was calling to tell me in case I hadn't seen it (of course I had). Yep, I typed in CeCe. Moore and found several videos there. Then I typed genealogy and more.

## Trail's Mix—co contd.

I don't know how many I watched that night and again a few nights later, but there are more to see. Also found several episodes of Who Do You Think You Are (sans commercials), Finding Your Roots and other genealogy shows.

Finally webinars and podcasts! The only webinar I have attended was the “Road to Retirement” thru my employer as I work on getting that paperwork in order. I have seen many genealogy webinars I'd like to see but most often they were while I was at work or would make me get out of bed early on Saturday to watch. Now it appears some of those webinars, if you miss you can still see by signing up (yes there are a fees for some of those) as the host has them set to last a few months. Look around out there, there are lots of webinars. I even found a few sites that have lots of them to chose from:

Extreme Genes (podcasts)

Legacy Family Tree Webinars

Ancestry.com

Familysearch.org

I am hoping to watch more of these in near future.

**By**

*Debra Bailey Trail*

## Why Are Graves Dug 6 Feet

### Deep?

By Chris Raymond Fact checked by [Ashley Hall](#) on February 16, 2020

<https://www.verywellhealth.com/why-are-graves-dug-six-feet-deep-4047407>

The expression "6 feet under" is a common euphemism for death because of the notion that cemetery workers always dig gravesites to a standard depth of 6 feet (1.83 meters). This article answers the question of whether cemetery graves are really six feet deep, and explores the possible origins of this widespread belief.

### Where Does "6 Feet Under" Come From?

Many theories and explanations exist about why people commonly assume graves are always 6 feet deep, but one idea surely wins the "Most Believable But Probably Not True" Award.

### The London Plague of 1665

Many sources point to a series of orders issued in London to halt another outbreak of the plague or "Black Death" in 1665 to explain why we still use "6 feet under" today. The pamphlet, titled *Orders Conceived and Published by the Lord Major and Aldermen of the City of London Concerning the Infection of the Plague*, includes a section titled "Burial of the Dead" containing this sentence: "...all the Graves shall be at least 6 foot deep."<sup>1</sup>

Unfortunately, these "Orders" offer no explanation about why this particular depth was mandated, but it's possible that officials believed 6 feet of soil was sufficient to prevent animals from digging up corpses and/or would prevent the disease from

## 6 Feet Deep? - contd

spreading to the living. (Londoners still didn't realize that they had more to fear from the fleas living on the rats thriving in their filthy city streets and less to fear from plague victims.)

These orders weren't in force very long because the plague outbreak dissipated in 1666 after the Great London Fire. Moreover, in order to dispose of the estimated 100,000 victims who died from the plague in 1665-66, officials resorted to mass burials in dozens of "plague pits" throughout London, which could reach depths of 20 feet or more, just to keep up with the volume of plague victims needing burial. Thus, it's hardly likely that the "6-foot requirement" had enough time or adherents to become a tradition followed by later generations of gravediggers.

### Safety

While soil conditions vary greatly around the world, some have suggested that, given the dimensions of the gravesite opening, 6 feet is the maximum depth someone can safely dig a grave before the sides start caving in without some form of bracing, particularly in sandy soil.

### Average Gravedigger Height

Another explanation suggests that 6 feet was the maximum depth at which an average gravedigger could stand and still manage to toss dirt out of the grave using a shovel or get in or out of the grave without needing a ladder.

### To Prevent Disturbing the Corpse

Incredibly, grave robbery or "body snatching" proved a serious problem in the early

## 6 Feet Deep? - contd

1800s, particularly in England and Scotland. Because medical schools at the time actually purchased cadavers for anatomical study and dissection, some people supplied the demand by exhuming fresh corpses. While cemeteries resorted to many elaborate techniques to thwart grave robbing—including the use of heavy stone slabs, stone boxes, locked above-ground vaults, and mortsafes—it's possible that burying a body at a depth of 6 feet was viewed as a theft deterrent.

In addition, many people commonly believed that burying bodies at greater depths, such as 6 feet, helped contain decomposition odors that might otherwise attract the unwanted attention of animals.

Finally, some theorize that gravesites reaching 6 feet deep helped prevent farmers from digging up bodies when plowing their fields in rural areas.

### To Prevent the Spread of Disease

As mentioned earlier, London officials and medical practitioners in 1665 mistakenly thought that deceased plague victims spread the disease (among many other erroneous explanations), and that burying these bodies "6 feet under" would help slow/stop the spread of the disease.

### Folklore/Rule of Thumb

Finally, like so many superstitions surrounding death, there's an old "rule of thumb" of unknown origin stating that graves should be as deep as the deceased is long. Since the average male in the 17th and 18th centuries stood just 1.67 meters (5.48 feet) tall,<sup>2</sup> it's possible that the 6-foot-deep adage proved a good rule of thumb when digging graves.

## 6 Feet Deep? - contd

### So, Are Graves Really 6 Feet Deep?

The title of the popular HBO television show *Six Feet Under*, which focused on the fictional Fisher family's funeral home in Los Angeles, California, drew upon the fact that most people think a grave is always dug 6 feet (1.8 meters) deep.

While the state of New York, for example, lacks a statewide grave-depth requirement, New York City requires that "when human remains are buried in the ground, without a concrete vault, the top of the coffin or casket shall be at least 3' below the level of the ground." (two feet in the case of a concrete vault).<sup>3</sup>

In neighboring Pennsylvania, however, gravesite burials involving a concrete vault or grave liner must be deep enough so that the "distance from parts of the top of the outer case containing the casket may not be less than 1.5 feet (18 inches) from the natural surface of the ground." When a burial involves only the casket or only the body of the deceased during a "green" or natural burial, then the gravesite must be dug deep enough so that "the distance from parts of the casket or body may be no less than 2 feet—24 inches—from the natural surface of the ground."<sup>4</sup>

In general, most graves dug today are not 6 feet deep. According to Nancy Faulk, director of Prairie Home Cemetery in Waukesha, Wisconsin, "Many states simply require a minimum of 18 inches of soil on top of the casket or burial vault (or two feet of soil if the body is not enclosed in anything)." She added that the crew at Prairie Home Cemetery uses "an approximate depth of 4 feet for traditional and natural burial." contd.

## 6 Feet Deep? - contd

The bottom line is that cemetery graves in the United States are not always 6 feet deep, and for single gravesites, roughly four feet (1.22 meters) deep is closer to the norm. That said, some cemeteries offer double- or even triple-depth plots, in which caskets are "stacked" vertically in the same gravesite. In these cases, a single gravesite might be dug approximately 7 to 12 feet (2.13 to 3.66 meters) deep.

1. City of London, England, Court of Aldermen. Orders Conceived and Published by the Lord Major and Aldermen of the City of London Concerning the Infection of the Plague. University of Oxford Press. 1665.
2. University of Oxford. Highs and lows of an Englishman's average height over 2000 years. Updated April 18, 2017.
3. New York State Department of State, Division of Cemeteries. Cemetery FAQ's.
- 4, 28 Pa. Code § 1.21. Depth of graves.

**GREEN COUNTY GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY PUBLICATIONS**

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## GCGS Meeting and Contact Information:

info@greencogenealogywi.org

Website: <http://www.greencogenealogywi.org>

Meetings are at 10 a.m. on the first Saturday of the month. They are usually held in the Monroe Public Library located at 925-16th Ave. Monroe, WI. We are in the community meeting room on the second floor.

## GCGS OFFICERS

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**Hours Tues and 3rd Sat 10-3  
1st Sat 1-3 other times by appt 608-921-1537 (Donna Long Kjendlie)**

**WEBSITE: <http://www.greencogenealogywi.org/>  
EMAIL: [info@greencogenealogywi.org](mailto:info@greencogenealogywi.org)**

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