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# CCGS NEWS

*A Publication of the Cape Cod Genealogical Society*

**Volume 10 Issue 4**

**August 2023**

**Please Join us at our Monthly Meeting  
Tuesday, August 15, at 10:00 AM, Eastern Time  
at Brewster Ladies' Library**

Our meeting will be brought to you via both **Zoom and in-person**.  
Members will receive an email a few days before the meeting with an invitation and registration link.

Non-members are asked to email us at [info@capecodgenealogy.org](mailto:info@capecodgenealogy.org)  
to receive a registration link.

*Please Welcome Pam Vestal  
Genealogical Pitfalls and How to Avoid Them*



Genealogy is a great treasure hunt, but sometimes the clues are easy to misunderstand, or to miss altogether. Learn practical strategies to overcome eight obstacles that may be preventing you from breaking through your brick walls. Here's your chance to learn from Pam Vestal's mistakes without making them yourself.

Pam Vestal is a professional genealogist and speaker who turned her focus to her longtime love of genealogy after a 20-year writing career. Her articles have appeared in the *National Genealogical Society Magazine*, *The Association of Professional Genealogists Quarterly*, and FGS's *Forum* magazine. Her lectures take her from coast to coast. Pam specializes in conducting genealogical research and then transforming that information into illustrated stories that even non-genealogists can enjoy.

# Message from the CCGS President Judy Fenner



## Greetings and Happy August!

It is hard to believe that the summer is half over and school will be starting in a few weeks!

We have launched our project of preparing Barnstable County probate documents for scanning by FamilySearch. We are working three at a time to flatten documents in probate packets so they can be scanned and then reassembling the packets to be returned to the file cabinets. My heartfelt thanks for the loyal volunteers who continue to do such great work! We are having fun and getting to know each other better as well. If you want to join our happy group, even if you can only give us an occasional morning or afternoon, please let me know.

The book inventory is complete thanks to Will Graves. We are waiting to hear back from FamilySearch about rescanning some of the books.

Walter Murphy reports that the library has been busy this summer. If you can volunteer to help patrons with their questions on a Tuesday or Thursday afternoon, please get in touch with Walter by emailing [info@capecodgenealogy.org](mailto:info@capecodgenealogy.org). You will be redirected to Walter.

As always, we look forward to the monthly meeting which this month is on **August 15**. More information is coming out soon. We can't wait to see you in person at the Brewster Ladies' Library or on Zoom! Interested in joining us afterwards at Scargo Café for lunch? Please let me know via email (with address below) and I can include you in the reservation.

Once again, thanks to all our volunteers! You are what keeps the Society alive!

Happy August to all,  
Judy

[president@capecodgenealogy.org](mailto:president@capecodgenealogy.org)



**Cape Cod Genealogical Society  
Board of Directors 2023-2024**

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TBD	Library
David Martin	Education
TBD	Membership
Carolyn Weiss	Publications
Pat Merriell	Communications
Jo Anne Makely	Program
TBD	Financial Review
Jo Anne Makely	Youth Services
L. Ray Sears	Technology
Bob Oppenheim	Long Range Planning

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**Cape Cod Genealogical Society**  
**P.O. Box 1394**  
**Harwich, MA 02645**  
[www.capecodgenealogy.org](http://www.capecodgenealogy.org)

**Board Meeting Invitation**

Ever wonder what is discussed at the **Board of Directors** Meetings? Board Meetings are open to ALL members of the CCGS, excepting those instances when a motion for an executive session is approved. Usually, the Board Meetings are held on the first Wednesday of the month at 2:00 PM and meets via Zoom. President, Judy Fenner, sends out the Board Agenda with a Zoom link to join the meeting. The Board welcomes any member and at the end of the meeting, offers an "open forum" for any attending member to express a thought, an opinion, ask questions, etc. After the meeting and when the meeting minutes are approved, the minutes will be posted onto the Members Tab on the CCGS website for any member to view.

Please Welcome New  
Members

Patricia Kennedy  
Donna Tunison Ovadia  
Linda Coffey  
Roger & Stephanie Gill

## Program Summary

June 17, 2023

Written by *David Martin*

### The Stranger in my Genes: A Memoir How a Simple DNA Test Complicated the Author's Life

With Bill Griffeth



The Society had the benefit of a presentation by Bill Griffeth, the author of *Stranger in My Genes*, and *Strangers No More*, about the process and effects of discovering a Non-

Parental Event (NPE) in one's family tree, (sometimes referred to as Not Parent Expected).

After a thorough check on his paternal line, going from son to father to son to father, etc., he learned that his birth-certificate father was not his biological father. He referred to another slogan for individuals in this category, "Best Club You Never Wanted to Join."

After more than 20 years of traditional genealogical research, he had learned a great deal about his supposed father's family tree, tracing back to colonial times, including an ancestor that had immigrated from Europe to America on the *Little James*, one of three ships which arrived in the New World directly after the *Mayflower*.

This lineage encompassed considerable Cape Cod and Southeastern Massachusetts roots, including Brewster and Sandwich (where a supposed ancestor was a founding member of the Sandwich Quaker Meeting House in the 17<sup>th</sup> century). He had also learned about other supposed ancestors who were among the earliest Mormons, settling eventually in Utah, Wyoming, and Idaho.

But all of this traditional genealogical research was eliminated by a DNA discovery. DNA research identified that his biological father had roots in Tennessee, including one who had fought in the American Revolution from New Jersey. He also learned that his biological father (whom he never had the chance to meet) had an ancestor who owned 60 slaves in the South.

Upon learning of this unexpected fact of ancestry, he went through the well-known stages of grief which are associated with mourning—denial, anger, etc., to final acceptance. He then learned that his biological mother had been employed by his biological father and that their relationship occurred because of that employment. His mother, 95-years-old at the time of this discovery, was reluctant to talk about the situation, and the discovery also changed his relationship with his mother (who passed away at the age of 100).

Except an older brother, his siblings had passed away by the time of the discovery; however, his "family brother" said that the information would not affect their affection for each other because each had grown up together as "family." There is no evidence that his non-biological father ever knew about Bill's biological father, and his mother had never revealed that information to Bill until the discovery.

Bill was asked if he ever sought to change his surname, and he said that he had not done so because he had always had the identity as Griffeth in his life and in his career of public broadcasting, although he had considered changing his middle name to be the surname of his biological father.

He pointed out an important aspect of identifying birth parents other than strictly genealogical interest—that is the usefulness of knowing any previously unknown genetic aspects of health that might be inherited by the person from the now-identified birth parent.

To date, he has never sought to change the information on his birth certificate to identify his biological father. There was never any issue related to probate from his late biological father, but Bill has succeeded in contacting a half-brother whose father is also that biological father; they do have a cordial relationship.

## **Getting Started in Irish Genealogy**

Still time to join this complimentary  
In-Person Gathering

**Tuesday, August 8, 2023**  
**10:15 AM to 1:15 PM**

Dennis Public Library  
5 Hall Street  
Dennis Port, MA

If you are curious about how to search for your Irish Ancestors,  
this is the place for you! There will be lots of tips and tricks.

Please contact Pat Flaherty at  
[patcarolegenealogy@gmail.com](mailto:patcarolegenealogy@gmail.com)

Bring your laptop.

# Share Your Stories with the Writers Special Interest Group

*By Lee MacDonald*

Do you like to write? Have you started writing your family history and are looking for a forum to share it? Do you need a little inspiration to overcome writer's block? The Writers Special Interest Group may be just the group for you. We are a community of members with a passion for writing. We meet monthly (September through June) via Zoom on the third Friday of the month from 10:00 AM to Noon. We share our stories, poems, and current writing projects. We give supportive feedback to help participants polish their style and refine their ideas. Participants exchange tips, resources, and advice on various aspects of writing and publishing.

Writing helps with critical thinking. One participant who was faced with conflicting research on an ancestor wrote a letter to that ancestor asking all the unanswered questions he had as a way to help clarify his thinking. He shared the letter with the SIG.

Participating in the Writer's SIG can help spark new ideas when you hear the different writing styles and techniques. One participant has taken us on a research-and-writing journey about a maternal great-grandfather from Breckerfeld, Germany. SIG members learned about life along the Hudson and Mississippi Rivers in 1842 from a research abstract he wrote and shared. Later we heard the result of his research when he shared the first of an ongoing story of his great-grandfather's immigration from Germany to Wisconsin.

We share more than just stories. We have heard some stirring poetry such as "The Legend of Scargo Lake" and another called "Stephen Hopkins Is My Name."

You may also discover new opportunities for publication or networking. One of our authors recently published an article in *American Ancestors* magazine about life on whaling ships. You have likely read many of our stories or poems in the Cape Cod Genealogical Society Journal.

Some members (OK, me) find the monthly meeting helpful in reducing writing procrastination. The inspiration I get from hearing participants share their stories helps me unblock writer's block. I use the looming monthly meeting as a deadline to help me get started on my writing projects. The feedback at the meetings helps keep me writing.

The Writing SIG has helped me improve my writing style and structure my writing to be more readable. If this sounds like something that interests you, join us for our next meeting. Contact Sherill Baldwin at [writersSIG@capecodgenealogy.org](mailto:writersSIG@capecodgenealogy.org) for more information and to be added to the Writer's SIG Zoom invitation list.

## Special Interest Groups

**SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS (SIGs)** are informal member gatherings for the purpose of sharing information, research techniques, data, and references, regarding specific topics or geographical areas.

*The following is general information. Please email the SIG leader for further details and/or to be added to their list to receive the email announcements for meetings and handouts.*

You may also visit our website at [www.capecodgenealogy.org](http://www.capecodgenealogy.org).



### Cape Cod Families

[capecodfamiliesSIG@capecodgenealogy.org](mailto:capecodfamiliesSIG@capecodgenealogy.org)

Leader **Bebe Brock** advises that all are working independently, and carefully following the on-going announcements from Sturgis Library, whether open or not (where the group meets) and adhering to any mask requirements. Bebe is currently holding meetings on the fourth Tuesday of the month at 1:00 PM.

### Computer Users

[computerusersSIG@capecodgenealogy.org](mailto:computerusersSIG@capecodgenealogy.org)

Leader **Bob Oppenheim** holds a meeting on the second Tuesday of the month at 10:00 AM (except in July and August). The Group has started to meet in person after our long Zoom-only, COVID-necessitated hiatus. Our in-person meetings will all be hybrid, that is both Zoom and in-person, so we will not lose any of the members that have joined the group from off-Cape locations. Our meeting space is the meeting room at the Dennis Public Library, 5 Hall Street, Dennis Port, except when otherwise announced. We have used facilities at the Brewster Ladies' Library when the room at the Dennis Library is unavailable.

### DNA

[dnaSIG@capecodgenealogy.org](mailto:dnaSIG@capecodgenealogy.org)

Leader **Walter Murphy** holds a Zoom meeting every other month on the first Tuesday at 1:30 PM. Prior to the Zoom meeting, he sends out both an agenda and a Zoom invitation to register. This is an active group that typically attracts participants of all levels of interest and expertise to each meeting. All sessions begin with a question-and-answer roundtable discussion, divided into two sections: DNA 101 questions/problems followed by time for "old hands." The discussion period is followed by topics of interest.

## German

[germanSIG@capecodgenealogy.org](mailto:germanSIG@capecodgenealogy.org)

Co-Chairs **Ann Croston** and **Bob Oppenheim** host a monthly hybrid Zoom meeting on the first Tuesday of the month at 10:00 AM (except in July and August). The meeting is held at the Brewster Ladies' Library in the upstairs auditorium when it is available, otherwise in the downstairs meeting room.

In addition, Ann posts notices of events and items of interest on the SIG's Facebook Group, the Cape Cod Genealogical Society German SIG <https://www.facebook.com/groups/CCGS.GermanSIG>. Because the meetings are hybrid, attendees have the option of attending in person or on Zoom.

## Irish Research

[irishresearchSIG@capecodgenealogy.org](mailto:irishresearchSIG@capecodgenealogy.org)

Leader **Pat Flaherty** holds a Zoom or in-person meeting. Gatherings are held every three months and Irish SIG members are advised via email on specific dates and times. Anyone with an interest in Irish genealogy is most welcome. We have members with lots of experience who can help those with little experience. It is a good combination. Our sessions usually include a presentation from a member on available records (either in the United States or in Ireland). We also share strategies for finding those elusive Irish ancestors wherever they may be lurking. There is always time for good discussions during which questions are answered and experiences are shared. Please contact Pat if you wish to be added to her email list.

## Writers

[writersSIG@capecodgenealogy.org](mailto:writersSIG@capecodgenealogy.org)

Leaders **Sherill Baldwin** and **Lee MacDonald** hold a Zoom meeting on the third Friday of the month at 10:00 AM. Anyone interested in sharing their writing with the group regarding personal genealogy or about family members (including pets), anything historical, current event topics, articles of personal satisfaction and more is most welcome. We explore many styles of writing and narrative, even poetry, as well as discuss the possibilities of publication. Everyone is welcome to participate and share their work, writing tips, and techniques. If you do not have anything to share, join us anyway. You may become inspired! For more information, contact Sherill Baldwin.





# CCGS Calendar

Tuesday, August 8

Irish SIG, 10:15 AM

Special In-Person Gathering

*Getting Started in Irish Genealogy*

Dennis Public Library, Dennis Port

Tuesday, August 15

Monthly Meeting (Hybrid), 10:00 AM

Brewster Ladies' Library

Pam Vestal

*Genealogical Pitfalls and How to Avoid Them*

Wednesday, September 6

Board Meeting, via Zoom, 2:00 PM

All SIG Meetings for the rest of 2023

Details Emailed Separately to SIG Members

Tuesday, September 19

Monthly Meeting (Hybrid), 10:00 AM

Brewster Ladies' Library

Pamela Holland

*Using DNA in Family History*

Tuesday, October 17

Monthly Meeting (Hybrid), 10:00 AM

Brewster Ladies' Library

Sarah Dixwell Brown

*John Dixwell, Regicide*

Saturday, November 18

Joint Annual Meeting with Falmouth (Hybrid), 10:00 AM

St. Peter's Church in Osterville

Lisa Louise Cooke, Program to be Decided

Tuesday, December 19

Monthly Meeting (Hybrid), 10:00 AM

Brewster Ladies' Library

Members Share