

# NDSGS Newsletter

Spring 2022 —Volume 13, Issue 1

## *Special points of interest:*

- ND Genealogical Societies Reports
- ND State Archives Reports

## **Inside this issue:**

<i>NDSGS Election Results</i>	2
<i>Adoption Search</i>	2
<i>State Historical Society</i>	3
<i>1950 Census</i>	3
<i>MRLGS Report</i>	4

## **President's Letter**

Hi! So nice to be in touch with some genealogist again. As we all may find, not too many people are so into their ancestors as some of us. My sister told someone I was boring with all my questions about the past and my sister-in-law told me I was living in the past. Oh well, I am happy in the past and love researching all those events and people. There is nothing more exciting than following a path back (or forward) to another generation and learning about that branch of the family. AND how do we find out things without asking questions??

It is exciting to hear that Shane and his crew are working on digitizing some of the North Dakota local newspapers and making great progress. A couple of years ago, I brought the films into the library and read a county paper for about 50 years of weekly news that was fun and educational, but just how fantastic this will be to have access to some early issues to go online on our computers to read.

I know there are some projects out there that people are raising funds to do more digitizing of their local papers. Congratulations to all that have progressed and encouragement to those who will be working on this in the future.

I am looking forward to our April 8 meeting. The more people that can come the better. It is so nice to be able to exchange ideas on what everyone has been doing, what is possible to do, and just finding out where our ancestors came from. Special prayers for those of you with Ukrainian family trees.

Stella Papachek

## **Next Meeting**

The next meeting of the North Dakota State Genealogical Society is Friday, April 8 at 1 pm central time in the Legislative Assembly Room, State Archives, Bismarck.

All individuals who have paid their membership are welcome to attend. All genealogical societies in North Dakota who have paid their membership are encouraged to send a representative of their society.

# North Dakota State Genealogical Society Minutes

There was no NDSGS meeting in October.

The e-mail motion to approve the following slate of officers for 2022-2023 was approved by 16 members:

President: Stella Papachek  
 Vice President:  
 Secretary: Barb Knipe  
 Treasurer: Patrice Hartman  
 Patrice Hartman, Treasurer

## Adoption Search in North Dakota

*by Jackie Marler, Newsletter editor and member of Red River Valley Genealogical Society*

Sooner or later, a genealogist is going to run into a specific kind of genealogical search which has its own peculiar difficulties, that is, an adoption search. At RRVGS, we had a major adoption search about 35 years ago and my mother, **Myrtle Howe Marler**, had a couple of adoption searches during her volunteer time at the Grand Forks Public Library. Personally, I've been working, off and on, through the years, on a grand uncle's adoption. And recently, in the RRVGS newsletter we have been running a procedural series called "Digging Up Bones" which began with an early 1900s adoption in Fargo.

A brief history of adoption shows that the institution has evolved from relatively simple straight forward legal or informal outside-of-court action. There is no national uniform standard involved with adoption and it has been left to the 50 states to define. The one evolution which has caused the greatest number of problems is the adoption of a "secrecy" code in regard to birth family information. In days far gone by, adoptions were more out in the open but with the advent of the modern era, secrecy about a child's origins was codified. Keeping family origin information secret was felt to allow the child to have an unconflicted attachment to their new adoptive parents. The secrecy also served to hide embarrassing or troubling situations the birth parents may have wanted to keep private as well as the adoption itself solving the troubling lack of fertility of a couple. It seems the adoptee has been saddled with an undue and unfair burden to keep the peace forever and solve

all these problems with lack of information about itself.

Adoptees often begin their searches at watershed moments, just as most genealogists begin their own research: you leave your parental home, you get married, you develop health issues, you retire, you get curious (or feel free to search) after the deaths of (adoptive or otherwise) parents or grandparents. In the 35-year-old RRVGS research, the adoptee had a feeling of never belonging and was looking for an end to that anxiety. My grand uncle was concerned on the eve of World War II to ascertain his actual US citizenship status --birthright or not—and started his search then. One of Mother's searcher's son had an inherited disease and she wished to find out where that came from.

Each of these cases, started with different information. Each knew they were adopted. In the 35-year-old RRVGS search, she had gone through her adoption agency and was able to get non-identifying information about her birthparents and their families. But she was advantaged in a horrific way since she had seen her adoption papers (even though she didn't ever possess them) on which her birth mother's name was given. It was horrific because during an argument with her adoptive mother, her mother had thrown the papers at her, saying the searcher was not her daughter! The searcher with the family health issue had petitioned the court and had her adoption papers, pre-DNA, discovering that two men were named as her possible father. After a search for her birth

*(Continued on page 4)*

# State Historical Society of North Dakota

## New Local Government Records

by *Lindsay K. Meidinger, Head of Collections & Information Management*

### September 2021 – March 2022

41991 Benson County. City of Minnewaukan. Assessor's Field Slips, 1909, 3 volumes

41990 Benson County. Minnewaukan School District No. 5, Teacher's Register, 1904-1905, 1907-1909, 1 folder

41988 Burleigh County. City of Bismarck. Bismarck Public Schools, Census Records, 1892-2005, 4.5 feet

41989 Burleigh County. City of Bismarck. Bismarck Public Schools, Teacher's Reports, Enrollment Records and Pupil Membership, 1926-1988, 9 feet

41997 Burleigh County. Election Ballots, 1872, 1 folder

42002 Dickey County. Census Enumeration Books, 1915, 9 volumes

42003 Dickey County. Military Duty Records, 1920, Undated, 32 volumes

42001 Logan County. Foster School District, School District Treasurer's Record, 1891-1911, 8 volumes

42000 Logan County. Lehr School District #7, School District Clerk's Record, 1899-1902, 1 volume

41999 Logan County. Miller School District #9, Teacher's Register, 1900, 1906, 2 volumes

41995 McLean County. Clerk of Court, Justice Docket - Civil, 9/24/1907-2/1912, 1 volume

41987 Mercer County. Wittenberg School District No. 8, Teacher's Register, 1925-1927, 1 folder

41986 Mountrail County. Water Resource District, Board Minutes, 2019-2020, 13 digital files

41993 Pembina County. Clerk of Court, Probate Cases, 1875-2019, 170 feet

41992 Ramsey County. Recorder, Birth Ledgers, 1884-1978, 3 volumes

41994 Slope County. Richland Township, Township Records, 1946-1975, 1 foot

41998 Walsh County. Minto School District #20, Records, 7/1/1895, 1 folder

41996 Ward County. City of Kenmare. Sheriff, Sheriff's Day Book No. 6, 7/31/1909-12/28/1909, 1 volume

42004 Wells County. Welfare Ledgers, 1935-1939, 4 volumes

## The 1950 Census is Coming!

The United States census is taken every 10 years. There is a 72-year restriction on access to the records, so the most recent census year currently available is 1940.

On April 1, 2022, the 1950 census will be released, and accessible on various websites. The National Archives will provide an initial name index using optical character recognition. (OCR). Because it will not be 100 percent accurate the

National Archives is asking for help in submitting name updates to the index. See <https://www.archives.gov/research/census/1950/faqs> for 1950 census FAQs.

FamilySearch is also asking for volunteers to proof their index. Ancestry will create an initial OCR index then FamilySearch volunteers will review and refine that index. Learn more at <https://www.familysearch.org/1950census/>.

# North Dakota Genealogical Society Reports

## Mouse River Loop Genealogical Society

*by John Mogren, President*

The Mouse River Loop Genealogical Society got off to a slow start in 2022. January brought winter weather that cancelled our meeting. February the Public Library closed due to COVID cases, so our meeting was cancelled. March brought icy roads but 8 brave souls showed up for the meeting and we enjoyed a

presentation on the 1950 census. Our membership remains consistent and we are already receiving invitations to participate in local events this summer. We continue to meet monthly in the Minot Public Library. Check us out on Facebook.

### *Adoption Search (Continued from page 2)*

mother turned out disastrously, the search Mother helped with was to find which of the men might be her father. Grand uncle had written both the adoption agency and the hospital where he was taken after he was born, long before there were formal legal procedures to follow and so had harvested all that there was, which was only the name of his birth mother, nothing whatever on his birth father.

North Dakota is not an especially friendly-to-adoptees state, seemingly preferring the privacy of birth parents over the desire to or need to know (medical reasons and the like) on the part of the adoptee. But one method to get some information would be to hire an attorney and petition the court where the adoption was effected for the legal adoption information. This is not always convenient and certainly not expense-less, but should always be considered. If budgetary considerations are truly a problem, go ahead and write the civil or probate court of the county where the adoption was concluded yourself, but depending on the county, be prepared for a firm no.

Adoption agencies have developed protocols for the release of information of the non-identifying type. In most cases, if there is no signed agreement with the birth parents allowing contact, non-identifying info is all you can get and it might not be free, either. Depending on what they gave her, in the 35-year-old search along with the misbegotten name, dumb luck

played a hand. The adoptee was born in Fargo in 1941, thus the 1940 census would have been an ideal record to search for the name she had but that census was decades away from being released. One piece of the non-identifying information was that the birth mother had a sister who was a practical nurse and North Dakota started licensing practical nurses in 1948, 7 long years after the fact but still you play the cards you have. At the time, the late **Shirley Simmons**, one of the founders of RRVGS, had political connections in Bismarck and had someone who knew someone look at the first list of licensed practical nurses and there was only one with a similar but not an exactly matching last name. The search for the similar name in her town of registration-- Grand Forks (a person who turned out to not be related in any way), actually lead to finding the exact birth mother! So don't disrespect the value of non-identifying information and hope for something lucky.

In the case of knowing the name of one birth parent, finding a chatty or friendly sibling or cousin of that birth parent might help you get additional information about the other birth parent. Also ex-family members, provided they actually know something, will generally have no qualms about speaking the truth and /or scuttlebutt about their former relative, so consider them as possible sources as well.

In Cass County, North Dakota adoption records are part of the civil court jurisdiction. Many years ago, the pre-1944 Cass County Civil Court records were indexed. About 1500 adoption

*(Continued on page 5)*

*Adoption Search (Continued from page 4)*

records entries were part of this index and include both adopting parental names as well as unaltered adoptee names. The index is available to search on the NDSU archives website, but the actual records themselves are still held by the court.

Fargo is also the point of origin for a lot of adoptions because of the Florence Crittenton Home and other agencies which were located here. The Florence Crittenton homes were funded like a franchise system nationwide and were places for unwed (and wed) women to stay during their “confinement” and to receive vocational training after the birth. An article in the *Fargo Forum* published in 1909 said that at that point over 1350 women and children had been served in the Florence Crittenton home in Fargo. In a rather bizarre happenstance, one of the RRVGS members, the late **Maxine Workman**, had a friend who had gone “dumpster diving” in the dumpster of what was the old Florence Crittenton Home (then Fraser Hall) and found about a 3-month long collection of folders of women who were in the home dating to about 1909. The youngest represented there was 9 years old and the oldest was a 52-year-old married woman. There is a website of Florence Crittenton Home adoptions with a search engine but it finds only about 45 adoptions from Fargo and a sprinkling of other North Dakota venues and they are entirely self-reported, far from comprehensive.

The most extreme manifestation of the adoption secrecy code is the altering of the original birth records of the adoptee. My grand uncle was born in Minnesota and the adoption was completed in North Dakota and his Minnesota birth certificate was altered to carry his adoptive name as well as including his adoptive parents’ names in place of his birth parents. Having a correct name to search is hypercritical, what records which carry the parents names might not be expunged in this way? In the denominations that practice infant baptism, if the child was baptized, those records may be in their original unaltered condition. Generally, if it’s known, most often the original birthdate goes along unchanged to the adoptee. Ancestry and FamilySearch have been adding a

lot of church registers to their billions of records, so you may want to look and looking for an exact date of birth is possible in the specific-to-dataset search engines at Ancestry.

In some jurisdictions, the probate court is the place where adoptions are recorded, this is particularly true in the cases where children are orphaned or are given up by parents who cannot afford to raise them and are assigned a guardian. The probate court dockets and indexes may contain listings of the “transactions.” Not every courthouse is up-to-date on all the legal ramifications and may allow you personal access search time in the indexes which their records may have. All you can do is ask.

Another way to find these adoptions would be to read newspapers looking for publication of court dockets as well as county commission minutes. In the times prior to the locking in of the secrecy code, often the original names of the adoptees, those in need of guardianship, those getting help in the county social service divisions were published in the newspaper in those columns. With more and more historical newspapers coming online all the time, and the technology of OCR (Optical Character Recognition) searching in them becomes more to the point, valuable, and easier all the time.

DNA testing can also be utilized. Basically, the search technique there is to search the trees supplied by folks online whose DNA has significant matches to yours, the degree of which can indicate the closeness of your relationship, and then to go backward to the common ancestor and then down the tree to find possible candidates and eliminate or accept them doing additional DNA testing or using paper records.

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Sources:

“750 women and 600 children shelter’d, fed, and trained at Florence Crittenton Home,” *The Fargo (North Dakota) Forum and Daily Republican*, 25 June 1909, p. 5.

Florence Crittenton Home Reunion Registry, “FCH and State Info,” database, <https://florencecrittentonhome.com/Index.html>

## North Dakota State Genealogical Society

5750 104 Ave SW

Regent, ND 58650

### THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE NORTH DAKOTA STATE GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY

North Dakota State Genealogical Society  
5750 104 Ave SW  
Regent, ND 58650

#### Officers for 2022-2023:

President: Stella Papachek—[psmrasmu@gondtc.com](mailto:psmrasmu@gondtc.com)

Vice President:

Secretary: Barb Knipe—[bfjknipe@gra.midco.net](mailto:bfjknipe@gra.midco.net)

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#### NDSGS Dues

Individual	\$5.00
Supporting	\$10.00
Society (1-10 members)	\$5.00
Society (11-25 members)	\$10.00
Society (26-50 members)	\$20.00
Society (51+ members)	\$35.00

Website: [www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~ndsgs/](http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~ndsgs/)



[www.facebook.com/#!/NorthDakotaStateGenealogicalSociety?fref=ts](https://www.facebook.com/#!/NorthDakotaStateGenealogicalSociety?fref=ts)

## Upcoming Events

**8 April 2022. North Dakota State Genealogical Society meeting. Bismarck.**

23-24 April 2022. East Coast Genetic Genealogy Conference. <https://ecggc.org/>

24-28 May 2022. National Genealogical Society Conference. <https://www.ngsgenealogy.org/conferences/>

**8 July 2022. North Dakota State Genealogical Society meeting. Bismarck.**

29 Sept.-1 Oct. 2022. Montana State Genealogy Conference. Fairmont. <http://montanamsgs.org/conferences.html>

30 Sept.-1 Oct. 2022. Rapid City, South Dakota Genealogy Conference. <https://www.rcgenealogy.com/>