

Volume 25 Issue 6

June 2014

SILICON VALLEY COMPUTER GENEALOGY GROUP

# PastFinder

## Managing family collections

By Janet Brigham

As we're growing up, family keepsakes may be the objects we're not allowed to touch. They may be important beyond our childish understanding.

A later indication that we have, indeed, grown up is that these precious objects — letters, documents, notebooks, books, music, and household items — are entrusted to us.

Some examples from my family:

As a teenager, my sister was given a box of old music when her piano teacher died. In the box was a piece of sheet music signed by French composer Saint-Saëns.

Going through our family collections of old music, my sister also found music owned by our grandmother, Sibyl. My sister chose to keep Sibyl's music and gave away the Saint-Saëns sheet music, which he signed at the Panama-Pacific Exhibition in San Francisco in 1915.

She still enjoys pulling out the books that the young Sibyl played more than 100 years ago. Until my sister found the music, we had forgotten that Sibyl played piano. We remembered many other things about her, but we hadn't seen her play piano. Sibyl preferred to sit and watch her grandchildren play piano.

After Sibyl's oldest daughter died in 2002, the daughter's two children gathered a few large boxes of family letters, photos, and documents and asked me if I wanted them. Richard and I soon took a flight eastward so that we could retrieve the materials. We took empty carry-on suitcases so that we could keep the materials with us in the plane's cabin when we flew it all home.

It took me several years to get through the hundreds of letters, numerous little notebooks (see illustration below), photos, and other documents in this collection. As I worked through the suitcases (and the fireproof safe where I stored many of the materials), I transcribed parts, scanned everything at high resolution, and created a comprehensive index or map to the collection.

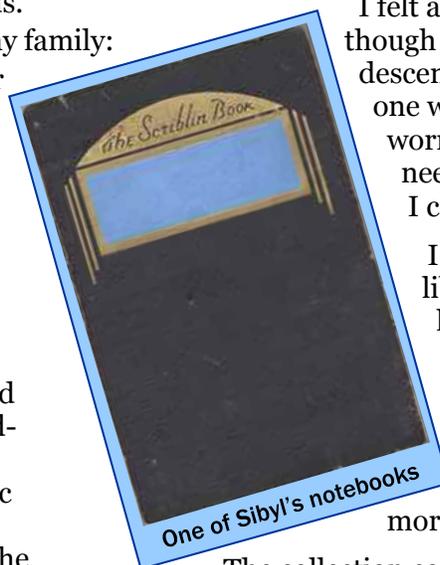
I felt a bit guilty that even though Sibyl had numerous descendants, I was the only one with access. I also worried that the material needed better care than I could provide.

I started contacting libraries in Sibyl's home state of Utah. One university was polite. A special-collections archive near where Sibyl grew up was far more interested.

The collection contained pioneer-age letters and documents, but what interested the archive most was that the collection contained so much written by *women*. The director of special collections told me that they had very little correspondence, much less other writings, by women. So this donation would greatly enlarge their collection.

That year, we flew with the collection

*(Continued on page 2)*



### Outside and Inside

- **Managing family collections (above)**
- **Archival preservation (page 3)**
- **Why I love conferences (page 4)**
- **How I found it (page 5)**
- **Whadya think this is? page 6**
- **What didja think it was? Answer, page 8**
- **About the group, classes, page 8**
- **SVCGG board, contact info, page 8**

# Managing family collections *(continued)*

*(Continued from page 1)*

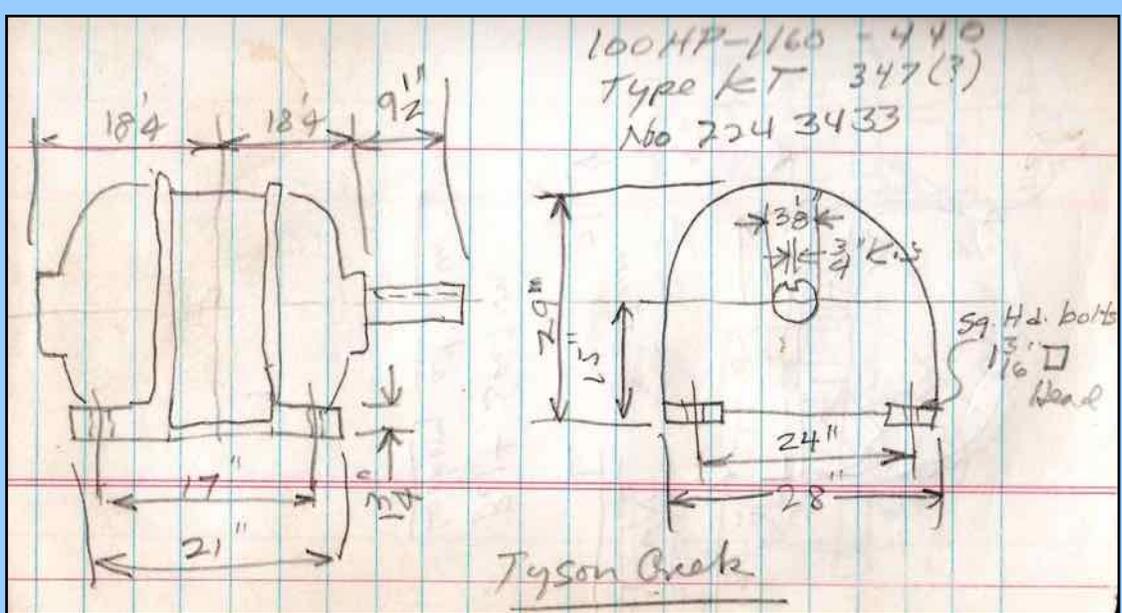
to Utah, drove to the university, wheeled the collection in carry-on suitcases to the library, and finalized the donation. The staff was surprised but pleased that I included an external drive with many gigabytes of high-resolution scans, and a complete map of the collection, including names and descriptions of authors, recipients, circumstances, dates, and locations.

Some parts of Sibyl's jottings were in shorthand. I'd highlighted the shorthand on photocopies, and my mother translated the shorthand into English. Sibyl, my mother, and my mother's older sister all learned shorthand about the same time. My mother translated all but one or two words—"Sibyl had her own shorthand," my mother explained. As it turned out, Sibyl did many things her own way.

Several years later, after both of our parents had died, my sister and I went through their voluminous papers and belongings. Neither parent had planned to be incapacitated before life brought that surprise, so neither had done much sorting. Bank statements were interspersed with letters and photos. Everything was a jumble.

We found suitable ways and places to donate most of the furniture, household items, and books, which left us with all those papers. We also had to deal with a sizable collection of my father's engineering drawings, blueprints, and field books.

We contacted the special collections librarian at the university from which he had graduated many decades ago. They already had a few of his letters and other papers donated by a friend of his; adding his engineering drawings would be reasonable.



A page from the author's father's engineering field books

A few months later, we took an extended car trip and delivered the engineering drawings and blueprints, along with marked maps relevant to his avocations as a conservationist and outdoorsman.

Do I miss any of these materials?

No. I thought I might, but I don't. I clearly remember these people I have loved — and I've found that while their belongings reminded me of the people, the people already had their own safe place in my soul. I didn't need their "stuff" to remind me. I am relieved about the care the materials receive—and I know it is much better than any care I could provide. The materials are accessible to anyone who wants to see them. I tell my cousins that I'm happy to provide them with a complete set of Sibyl's scanned papers if they want one. So far, only one has been interested.

I like to think that the materials will be useful someday, perhaps to academics who aren't even born yet—students and researchers who want to study the writings of pioneer women in Utah, or the history of wood products engineering in the Pacific Northwest.

It was time to find new homes for things too important to live in a basement or a storage unit. 

# Archival preservation of paper documents

---

By Lesly Klippel

One of my goals is to get rid of the stacks of paper associated with family history research. Due to space restrictions, I recently had to go from a full file cabinet of my own to one drawer in my husband's file cabinet.

I found that much of my paper could be discarded as being out of date and useless to my current research. More of it could be typed into my computer genealogy program, either in the source template or in the notes section. Much of my information about localities could be easily obtained with Google, which, my granddaughter says, "knows everything."

However, certain pieces of paper are very precious and need to be preserved in a form to be successfully passed down to my descendants. Among them is my grandparents' marriage certificate, my husband's grandparents' marriage certificate, and a beautiful Catholic christening certificate for my husband's aunt.

If you have similar precious documents, here's an easy and inexpensive way to preserve them in their present condition for future generations.

## Paper manufacture

Before the middle 1800s, paper was made from linen cloth that was bleached in the sun, soaked in water, and pounded into pulp. This mixture of water and pulp, in the correct proportions, when drained through a strainer, created a mat of fibers that was then pressed and dried to make a piece of paper that would not yellow with age.

In the 1800s, it was discovered that acid could be used to break down wood fibers into pulp for manufacturing paper. The acid content in paper is what causes it to turn yellow and deteriorate. In recent years, alkalines have been added to the paper pulp to neutralize the acid and create "acid-free" paper. Most copy paper today is acid-free. Archival quality paper that will last 100 years or more has an alkaline reserve of at least 2 percent.

Many of the documents passed down in our families were created using paper with a high acid content—you may have noticed that they have yellowed, and some actually may have a burned look around the edges and on the folds. Unless the acid in the

paper is neutralized, the documents will continue to deteriorate.

## Preparation of paper documents

To prepare your documents for archival preservation, unfold any folded or rolled documents and remove any tape, rubber bands, paper clips, staples or pins. Mend any tears with acid-free document repair tape. This tape and other materials needed for archival preservation can be purchased at archival preservation stores. You can find many good ones on the Internet by searching for "archival preservation." You also can find informative articles and hints to help you explore the subject further.

Flatten any rolled or wrinkled documents by dampening slightly with a damp sponge and pressing on a flat surface with books for a few days. Handle the documents as little as possible and only with clean, non-oily hands. Copy any documents you may need to use in your research.

## Deacidification

To neutralize the acid in your documents before you encapsulate them, you will need to purchase deacidification spray, acid-free double stick tape, and some sheets of medium weight polyester film such as Mylar. If you have only a few documents to preserve, you can buy preformed encapsulation units in various sizes. You also will need a ruler; some small, heavy objects to use as weights; scissors; and a clean, large bed sheet to protect your working surface. I spread the sheet on my dining room table, which has a padded plastic cover for protection from dinner with my grandchildren.

It is best to practice the spraying technique first on a throw-away paper such as newspaper. The spray is expensive, so try to get proficient quickly!

Lay the paper or document on the sheet and make sure it is flat and as unwrinkled as possible. If the document has ink (such as a signature), you can spray the document, but be careful not to get it too wet. Carefully spray the document with the deacidification spray. The movement of your hand and the spray container is very important. Start at the upper left corner (if you are right-handed) and move your hand along with the container, spraying straight across the document, then down and back to the left, overlapping the previous spray a bit. Try to

*(Continued on page 4)*



# Why I love conferences



By Patricia Burrow

Genealogy conferences are a great way to immerse yourself in new research ideas, new source concepts, and new ways of organizing your thoughts around the family history you have been pulling together all of these years. Whether you have been working on your family for two years or twenty, a conference will give you new ideas on how and where to boost that research. This year's National Genealogical Society (NGS) Conference in Richmond, Virginia, in May was no exception.

The conference theme was "Virginia: The First Frontier." The host in Richmond was the Virginia Genealogy Society, which assured the participants that, in addition to the 175+ lectures and workshops, a plethora of libraries and research facilities would be open before and after the daily conference meetings.

Need to dig into that colonial collection housed in the archives of the Library of Virginia? This was my

chance. I could attend lectures all day and go to the library in the evening. I could put into practice those research techniques I learned just that morning. Then I could do it again the next day. I had four glorious days of genealogy with friends whose eyes never glazed over when I told them my grandfather's story. They never yawned when I mentioned plat maps or nonpopulation schedules. I was surrounded by more than 2,500 attendees and 115 speakers, and more genealogy knowledge than a microfilm reader in the Family History Library in Salt Lake City!

The highlight of the conference for me was the opening session when I was able to accept the 2014 award for Best Major Genealogical or Historical Society Newsletter for our own *PastFinder*. (Actually, we tied with *Der Blumenbaum*, the Sacramento German Genealogy Society journal, but we were mentioned first.) This was the third year in a row that we were honored. Be sure to congratulate our masterful editor, Janet Brigham Rands, the next time

(Continued on page 7)

## Archival preservation of paper documents (continued)

(Continued from page 3)

keep a continuous motion, and don't tilt the container, but keep it parallel to the document.

Turn the document over, and spray the other side in the same manner. Let the sprayed document dry for a few minutes (it doesn't take long).

### Encapsulation

While the document is drying, cut two pieces of polyester film (Mylar) a little larger than the document, lay the document on one of the pieces of Mylar, and place a couple of weights on it to hold it in place. Be sure to protect the document surface from the weights, if needed.

Apply acid-free double-stick tape around the document, close to it but not touching it. Leave a 1/4-inch breathing gap between the edge of the document and the edge of the tape. Lay the second piece of polyester film over the document, starting at one end and using the ruler to press out all the air as you go. Use the ruler to continue pressing the rest of the air out of the pocket through the 1/4" breathing gap. Trim the My-

lar edge of the encapsulated document; rest assured that it will not deteriorate further through the years. A document can be stored in your files or in your binders. Larger certificates can be hung from skirt hangers at the back of your closet.

I have sprayed the various certificates that my children have received, but I have not bothered to encapsulate them. I just mount the certificates in the children's scrapbooks or keep them in their folders, knowing that they will not yellow with age. Never laminate a document — it will deteriorate inside the plastic. The National Archives found that out and had to rip open all its laminated documents to encapsulate them. Further information about the procedures followed by the National Archives to preserve historical materials can be found at <http://www.archives.gov/preservation/family-archives/preserving-family-papers.html>.

Each family deserves to have its precious documents properly preserved. Let's each do our part to honor and preserve the memory of those who have gone before and who have left us treasured mementoes of their lives.

# How I found it *First, find living relatives*

---

By *Richard Rands*

Beginning genealogists should get in touch with their living relatives before seeking the dead ones. It is crucial to find out who might have valuable memories and what materials they already have that will save many hours of research. It is commonplace for the records of grandparents or great-grandparents to end up in the hands of cousins you may not even know exist.

This is a story of how you might go about tracking down living cousins when you do not know whether they even are still around. The names have been changed to protect the family's privacy.

While doing research for someone very anxious to uncover her family history, I found that it was not difficult to discover most of her grandparents and their siblings, as well as her great-grandparents and their siblings. When I plotted them all on a drop-down genealogy chart, she was able to add bits to some of the individuals from her childhood memories. For example, she said, "Oh, that must be Aunt Maggie, who was handicapped. She never got married. I remember going to her funeral when I was a teenager." Maggie actually was her great-aunt, but everyone called her "Aunt Maggie."

Once I had gleaned all I could about the siblings, and updated the chart, it was a simple matter of selecting those siblings who had married, or probably had married, most of whom were listed in the 1940 U.S. Census. I then set my sights on each of their descendants. When I located them in the 1940 U.S. Census, I could validate that I had the correct individuals. Since the 1940 census is the most recent census available for searching, it became a project of using more current sources to locate details about those who are existing cousins.

In this case, I was looking for Putnams or women who married Putnams. The common ancestor of a William Putnam line had eight children divided equally between boys and girls and had been a reasonably well-known and successful inhabitant of a large metropolitan city, which seemed to have led most of his children to remain close to home as they became adults. The same cannot be said of the subsequent generation of whom I expect to be still alive in their seventies and eighties.

Before I began searching for the living cousins, I made a list of the most important questions I wanted to ask each of them. I had William's mother's name,

but nothing about her family history. I knew that William's father's name was Joseph Putnam, and I knew something about his mother, although Joseph Putnam's marriage registration in England stated that his father was unknown.

The sources of information about individuals after the 1940 census are typically more expensive, rarer, and often incomplete. Many record collections have restrictions relating to privacy laws. That makes it necessary to be more creative when doing research in the 20th century.

Because the naming patterns in the United States make it far simpler to trace male descendants than females, I started with the four sons. First came Walter Hays Putnam, born in 1906, married in 1932, and died in 2000. Because of the prominent status of the Putnam name, I elected to scour the city newspapers for any articles about the family. Unfortunately, during that period, one of the governors of the state had the same name, so I picked up tens of thousands of hits. I had to narrow the search criteria to such an extent that I may have filtered out some potential good hits.

But using various ways to search indirectly, I was able to pick up several highly useful details. One article that was totally unexpected told the sensational story about William's youngest daughter running away to Reno to marry a sailor when she was 16, and all the juicy details about William tracking her down, going to court to have the marriage annulled, having to tear the screaming child from the arms of her lover outside the courtroom, and sending her home with a sister. Besides being a fascinating addition to the family's history, the article informed me of the sister's married name, something I had yet to uncover anywhere else.

In the newspapers, I turned up a wedding announcement that listed some of the siblings who were attendants. Names of those who were married confirmed details I already had. Another article was the announcement of the graduation of Walter Hays Putnam from a local university. There were mentions of family parties, social events, and recognition of William's contributions to the community, but few other details.

Next I turned to city directories to search for the residences of William's children. I found Walter Hays living in a suburb of the city with his home address. Since he died in 2000, I surmised that many

*(Continued on page 6)*

# Whadya think this is?



This item has historical significance. Whadya think it is? (Answer is on page 8.)

- A. A mobile calliope with eight steam whistles, used by members of the Continental Congress to promote the U.S. Constitution
- B. The wagon belonging to William Penn and used to convince immigrants to purchase land in his Province of Pennsylvania
- C. A carriage built for Queen Elizabeth I to carry her from Buckingham Palace to Parliament
- D. Abraham Lincoln's hearse

## How to find it (*continued*)

(Continued from page 5)

of the online people-finder sites could have data well before that time. I began a search of Walter Putnams living in the suburb specified in the city directory.

I found several hits, but because I had a good idea of how old this Walter would be, it was possible to narrow it down to one particular Walter.

I called the telephone number listed on the website, only to reach a disconnected number. Two extra columns often included in people-finder sites can be useful. The first contains other places where this person has lived. The second column lists several other members of the household. Often among these additional names are the householder's children.

In this case I spotted two names, Wilson and Beverly. Both were names of ancestors in earlier generations. If I could locate a Wilson Putnam in the people finder site, it would be a better-than-average possibility to be the correct person. A search for Wilson Putnams turned up multiple hits, but it was easy to single one of them out by comparing the names in the household and the places they had lived.

When I called the telephone number in the listing, Wilson answered the phone and, fortunately, was a son of William and grandson of Joseph. He has since been a great help in providing new details about the family.

Even so, he could help me with only half of his aunts and uncles. That required me to repeat the process with another of William's siblings. This time I chose one of William's daughters for two reasons. Females sometimes are more likely to know family history; because this one had a somewhat unusual

middle name, she was easier to locate.

At FamilySearch.org, I found her marriage record in state marriage records, which noted that she had married a divorced man. That would complicate the search, because I might have to sort through step children. I was able to pick out a most likely candidate for the daughter's husband through a people-finder website. That number was disconnected.

By switching to one of the names in the list of members in the household, I found another name and number to try. It too had been disconnected. This time the listing provided more than one telephone number. The third number worked, and a young woman answered the phone. She was understandably cautious about why I was calling, but she handed the phone to someone who was obviously much older.

He confirmed that he had been married to a woman with the surname *Putnam*. As I began to probe his memory about the information on my list of needed details, he said that he did not recognize any of the names.

At first I was about to end the conversation, thinking I had the wrong person. But before I could, he explained that his wife had never wanted to have any relationship with the rest of the Putnams; this was why he couldn't remember any of the names I mentioned.

This was a dead end for finding living cousins, but it gave me insight into a circumstance that would save me hours of further research. I have six more cousins on my list, so the search goes on. In any case, it is possible to locate living cousins. And it can be very worthwhile. 



# Why I love conferences (continued)



(Continued from page 4)

you see her. It is not easy to sustain quality and content over time, and she has our full appreciation.

## Conference app

NGS provided a wonderful app for iPhones, iPads, and other handheld devices such as Android, Blackberry, and Windows. The app not only gave me descriptions of each session, bios of the speakers, a place to take notes, and my own schedule, it also allowed me to “friend” others and see their schedules in case I wanted to join them in a session they were attending. This worked out well when one of us was across the street and the other was able to grab seats for our group in a particularly popular session. The app included a map of the vendor area so that I could save time and go directly to the table that had the book I wanted. The app had built-in Twitter feed and a blog reader. We got messages for room changes and last-minute notices. Great app.

## Four days of sessions

I started with a session on “Virginia Ancestors: Spanning Gaps and Developing Theories to Build a Possible Family Structure,” by Eric G. Grundset — perfect for initiating and documenting an analysis of a family find. It provided lots of good ideas for possible resources. “The Sociology of Cemeteries” by Helen A. Shaw was next. I never tire of learning more about cemeteries. One statement in particular struck me: “Think native tongue, not country boundaries.”

Many of you have seen Lisa Louise Cooke do her GoogleEarth presentation and other lectures that are informative and easy to follow. But, if you have not seen her do the one on “Tech Tools,” you are in for a treat. “Tech Tools That Catapult the Newspaper Research Process into the 21st Century” was a delight. We all *ran* out of the lecture to get to the wifi hotspot to try the time slider in the Stanford Newspaper Data Visualization project (Google it and have some fun). She had several other newspaper websites that we were anxious to try also. In addition, Lisa Louise Cooke, Maureen Taylor (The Photo Detective), and Janet Hovorka (ChartMasters and The Granny Gap) opened up their booths in the vendor hall and did “Outside the Box” 30-minute demos. They have put them into an ebook; I hope they put them on YouTube too.

One of the best sessions was “Using Evidence Creatively” by Elizabeth Shown Mills. She said, “Creativity in genealogy does not mean creating evidence!” She suggested alternate resources for burned counties, using indirect evidence, and above all, thoroughness.

You probably are familiar with her research method, the FANs, for Friends, Associates, and Neighbors. She recommended developing these and brainstorming even remote possibilities. It made me want to bury myself in research, but I had other sessions to attend and other people to meet. Her later session, “Problem Solving in the Problem-Riddled Carolina Backcountry,” was as creative in sorting out similarly named people using plats and the distance to the courthouse where they recorded land transactions.

Lecturer, author, and professional genealogist Thomas W. Jones presented creative ways to solve complex problems using online methods. He sorted out identities, traced people with the same or variant names, and concluded that it all would be easier if the subject had not changed his name every time he partnered with a different female: Analysis required.

I tried to catch as many North Carolina sessions as I could and was delighted with J. Mark Lowe and his two lectures on inheritance and estate issues, and migration to Virginia, the Carolinas, and Tennessee. Also, James Ison talked about “Carolinians Settle the South,” including the migration of Carolinian herdsman, farmers, and planters to Georgia, Tennessee, Arkansas, and Texas.

Those who follow Judy Russell’s blog, *The Legal Genealogist*, understand why I caught several of her presentations. She is humorous, entertaining, and knowledgeable. She covered “Picture This: Images You Can Freely Use” (try [Flickr.com/commons](http://Flickr.com/commons) or [ars.usda.gov](http://ars.usda.gov)), and “DNA and the Golden Rule: The Law and Ethics of Genetic Genealogy” (think: permission to share results).

## Find the right conference

We can choose from many genealogy conferences each year, each with its own theme and agenda. For example, RootsTech emphasizes technology as a vehicle to aid and enhance genealogy research. The United Polish Genealogical Societies has a conference where you can brush up on Polish genealogy

(Continued on page 8)

# What didja think it was? And were ya right?

## ANSWER to question posed on page 6: D.

The is the hearse that carried the body of President Abraham Lincoln through each of the 180 cities between Washington and

Springfield in 1865, following his assassination on April 15. At each stop Lincoln's body was borne by this elaborate hearse to a viewing place where hundreds of thousands thronged to get a glimpse. 



## Why I love conferences (continued)

(Continued from page 7)

research techniques. There are even cruises where you can snorkel in the morning and learn how to analyze census records in the evening. Whatever your interest, a genealogy expert can show you the secrets of the subject.

## Upcoming meetings

The Silicon Valley Computer Genealogy Group meets monthly except December, on the second Saturday of the month from 9 to 11 A.M. at The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 875 Quince Ave., Santa Clara, California (see map at right).

The group is not affiliated with any church or other organization.

- **14 June 2014**, 9–11 A.M.
- Family keepsakes: identifying collections
- Family history on a tablet
- Family curating with a Mac
- Research with Lesly
- Getting started in genealogy

### 12 July 2014, 9–11 A.M.

- Trying new web search sites
- Organizing your stuff
- Reunion 10 for the Mac
- Research with Lesly
- Getting started in genealogy



It is not inexpensive to attend a genealogy conference. In addition to the conference fee, you will have to pay for transportation, food, and lodging. Many of us have to choose carefully which conference to attend. If you are fortunate enough to live close to a genealogy hub, you might find one within daily driving distance.

If you cannot attend one of these events, try to join their live streaming or recorded sessions. Some have fees for viewing but some, like the recent Southern California Genealogy Jamboree, held in early June, with free streamed sessions.

This was my third NGS Conference. I hope that you too will get a chance to enjoy such a conference—NGS, Federation of Genealogical Societies, Roots-Tech, Southern California Genealogical Society Jamboree, or another opportunity.

We all love to learn. 

## About the Silicon Valley Computer Genealogy Group

SVCGG is the former Silicon Valley PAF Users Group, a nonprofit group of some 600 genealogy enthusiasts. We are based in Silicon Valley in the Bay Area of northern California; members live all over the world.

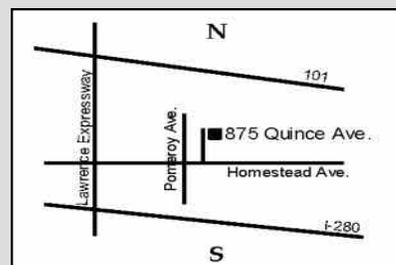
SVCGG offers classes, seminars, and publications to help family his-

**PastFinder**  
First place, Major Society Newsletter, 2013-14  
First place, Local Society Newsletter, 2012  
National Genealogical Society  
Website: [www.svcgg.org](http://www.svcgg.org)  
Email: [siliconvalleygroup@earthlink.net](mailto:siliconvalleygroup@earthlink.net)  
Postal mail: P.O. Box 23670, San Jose, CA 95153-3670

### Officers and staff

Richard Rands	President <a href="mailto:rrands@earthlink.net">rrands@earthlink.net</a> 650-969-6567
Janet Brigham	Vice-president Newsletter editor <a href="mailto:jzbrands@earthlink.net">jzbrands@earthlink.net</a>
Wanda Levy	Secretary
Carleen Foster	Treasurer
Lesly Klippel	Membership director <a href="mailto:leslyklippel@gmail.com">leslyklippel@gmail.com</a>
Brian Smith	Program chair <a href="mailto:bsmith4gen@yahoo.com">bsmith4gen@yahoo.com</a>
Pat Burrow	Board member at large
Bill Weller	Webmaster
Leland Osburn	Education administrator
Pamela Erickson	Assistant editor
Betsy Shafer	Assistant editor
Allin Kingsbury	Editor emeritus/ past president

Copyright ©2014 Silicon Valley Computer Genealogy Group. All rights reserved. No articles herein may be reproduced for profit or commercial purposes without the express written consent of the Silicon Valley Computer Genealogy Group. Individuals and groups may reprint articles but must request permission and cite the original publication information.



Meeting site has ample free off-street parking, with a wheelchair-accessible entrance at the front.

torians improve their skills in using technology for genealogy research.

*PastFinder* is published monthly except December. It is distributed at meetings to members and mailed to others after the meetings. Members can receive the newsletter digitally by emailed link. 