

Outstanding OGS Chapter Award for 2007

Warren County Chapter of Ohio Genealogical Society has a very energetic society of local and out of state members numbering a total of 302 (as of December 2007). Our meetings are held in the Phillippi Meeting Room at the Otterbein-Lebanon Retirement Center on the third Wednesday of the month at 7:30 PM (except for January and February). We welcome all interested in genealogy. We have a resource center library located in the Warren County Administration building; the address is 406 Justice Dr., Lebanon, OH 45036; phone (513) 695-1144. Our library is staffed and maintained by member volunteers for researchers who come to Warren County, Ohio. We maintain a website www.co.warren.oh.us/genealogy/index.htm with many of our master indexes. Our officers and library volunteers answer patrons questions, research mail requests, or work on abstracting and indexing information used for our master indexes, website and publications. Besides preserving records of Warren County, Ohio, one of the goals of our society is to help researchers quickly and efficiently find more about their ancestors. Researchers can use the many resources in our library, our website, our master indexes, read our quarterly *Heir Lines*, attend our monthly meetings or summer daytime workshops.

We work hard to contribute to genealogical records preservation. We have created master indexes for many records searchable by surname. These databases are available in our library on our computers, in book format, or online at our website. Our website currently has over 397,889 entries for records in Warren County from these indexes. Some of the indexes we have completed include: births 1867-1925; marriage records and returns 1803-1901; deaths 1867-1930; obituaries 1810 (start date) to current date; military records for all the wars; deed records; court records; will and estate records 1803-1936 (abstracted from 1803-1914); probate records (1803-1936, working on index to 1996); funeral home records, tax records; coroner's records; and cemeteries.

Our projects are moving steadily forward. We are continuing to digitize all the tombstones in our county; obtaining copies of cemetery ledgers and funeral home records; copying and indexing obituaries from the local newspapers, abstracting will and estate records, guardianships, and adoptions from the probate court records. One of the new projects this year was indexing the newspaper articles written by Josiah Morrow's column in the *Western Star* newspaper, which is nearly complete. Another new project that is near completion is the indexing of our quarterly publication, *Heir Lines* by topic and by an every name index. The topical index was completed during the summer and is already loaded onto our website. The every name index should be completed very soon. Some future projects include indexing more of the vital records available at Archives and the Health Department, creating an index for Warren County census records searchable by surname for all census years, and creating an every name index for our Bible record collection.

Our cemetery preservation project is massive and is dependent upon a lot of volunteers. We have been fortunate to have many society members and local Boy Scout troops help us with this project. Some townships are almost completely digitized and the project is rapidly moving forward. In addition to obtaining digital pictures of every headstone in each cemetery of our county, we are also obtaining copies of the cemetery plat (or creating one if it doesn't exist), and obtaining copies of the cemetery ledger books. The information gained from this project has been organized into a cemetery database, with sources for the data noted as from the tombstone, ledger, obituary or will record. This database provides a more accurate description of exactly

who is buried in each cemetery whether or not they have a stone. In the future we plan to cross-reference burial information provided in will and estate records and obituaries with our cemetery database. This information will eventually be republished in our series of cemetery books and abbreviated information included on our website. We are working in conjunction with the US Gen Web Site for Warren County, Ohio. All our digital images have been loaded on that site. These images are also available on the computers in our library.

Our WCGS obituary project is being updated as new obituaries become available or are sent to us. We have indexed and photocopied obituaries from many of the local newspapers starting in 1810, when obituaries began to appear in the paper, to the present date. An obituary index is available in our library and in book format. Our WCGS web site lists obituaries by surname and given name, the year the obituary appeared, and the page the actual obituary appears in our binders. Researchers can search for their surnames and request copies of obituaries, then receive a photocopy. Our obituary index has made these records much more accessible and reduces the time to find them. Obituaries are one of our most requested research items.

Our funeral home record project is growing as we gain access to more records. To date we have about 30,442 indexed funeral records published in 2 book volumes. We are trying to obtain copies of all the funeral home records in our county. A funeral home loans us their record books while we photocopy each page. The photocopies are organized into large binders and indexed. The funeral home receives a copy of the binders and index when we return their original record books. A copy of these binders is placed on the shelf in our library. By having multiple copies of these records, we insure that if some natural disaster or theft occurs, that at least one copy will survive.

WCGS has obtained the copyrights and abstracts records for wills and estate records from boxes 251-700 (~1883-1914) from Cardinal Research, a research group started by two members of our society. From this information we organized and verified the research and published our next book covering boxes 251-300. We have about 12 other books formatted covering up to box 912 (~1931) in various stages of completion. We hope to publish more of our will and estate books this coming year.

We strive to provide assistance to our local members, general public and other local libraries and repositories. We are happy to assist all who come into our library or who correspond through mail, phone or email. Some of our members teach genealogy classes at local libraries or at other nearby genealogical societies or organizations. Our research request box is always full. Our research requests brought in \$3080.72 and we sold \$8346.17 worth of publications in 2007. These funds were put back into purchasing new books, microfilms and equipment to further the preservation of Warren County records.

WCGS is a great asset to all those researching in Warren County, Ohio and to many county departments. We frequently work with Archives and the Recorder's Office. Many local libraries have copies of our books. Societies and libraries nationwide purchase copies of our publications. Our quarterly, *Heir Lines*, is sent out to 90 genealogical societies in Ohio, and other major repositories nationwide. *Heir Lines* provides articles of interest on families, localities, happenings, family charts, queries, and membership pertaining to Warren County. We encourage our members to submit free queries to *Heir Lines*.

WCGS members and the public can become better genealogists and researchers, by participating in a variety of activities such as our monthly society meetings, summer daytime workshops, by visiting our library or by using our website. Our website has a listing of our monthly programs for the year as well as major conferences in the region. We encourage members to attend these programs and conferences and send reminders via our newsletter, local newspapers, and email. A variety of programs are presented based on members' interests. Some of the programs from 2007 included: RootsMagic software, Digital Research & Photos, Military Histories from Military Repositories by Rob Young Historian for the Wright-Patterson AFB, Probate Research, and Warren County Record Center Archives & Preservation techniques by Pamela Schwartz. We had a field trip to the Fort Wayne Library in Indiana during October. Our First Families and Early Settlers of Warren County Banquet was well attended. We recognized seven new inductees, five for First Families and two for Early Settlers of Warren County, Ohio, with new certificates. We now have 93 First Families and 10 Early Settlers of Warren County members. We encourage members to qualify for this recognition. After the banquet and inductee presentation, the program featured Allison Stacy, editor of *Family Tree Magazine*, who prepared a presentation on "What's Your Genealogy IQ". We have exciting programs scheduled for 2008 such as Researching English & Welch Ancestors by Pam Wolosz, Land Records in Genealogy by Beth Deckard the Warren County Recorder, Irish Genealogy by Dave Vickers, Canadian Research by Patrick Kennedy, and Genetics & Genealogy Research by Mary Jo Neyer.

We have daytime genealogy workshop classes at our library in the summer instead of monthly meetings. The classes are free and open to the public. In 2007 we had on average 16-19 people at each class. The classes were held weekly and included a variety of topics starting with beginner topics. We strive to teach how to properly research, document and be organized to be successful. Each class member is required to organize their information into a three ring binder, which they use all summer long to document and add to their family records. They are taught how to find and read genealogy documents on their family lines and organize it so they can publish it into a well-documented family book when they are completed. More advanced topics are chosen at the class's request, on German research and U.K. research. These classes are fun to teach and many times result in new memberships and volunteers for our society.

Warren County Genealogical Society offers many opportunities to be involved such as answering research requests; helping with our projects by data entry, abstracting, indexing, photocopying or digitizing Warren County records; attending our workshop classes and meetings; reading our quarterly or by becoming active members and volunteering in our library.

We strongly support OGS and its mission by having our officers and members represent us at the annual OGS Conference and Leadership Management Meetings. We invite each new OGS District trustee to one of our chapter meetings. We include OGS chapter listing with addresses in *Heir Lines* every year or so. Periodically we have articles written up in the OGS publications and newsletters. The most recent article appeared in *OGS Genealogy News* Summer 2007 issue on page 63 in the "Chapter News" category. We appeal to this committee to please consider Warren County as the Outstanding Chapter of 2007.