



## ***BATTLE LINES***

NEWSLETTER OF THE SARATOGA BATTLE CHAPTER, SAR  
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### **NEW MEMBER WELCOME**

Charles Philip Stone, Jr. – Bedford, MA  
Marvin A. Humphrey – Schenectady, NY  
James A. Humphrey – Naples, ME  
James E. McDermott – Loudonville, NY  
John F. McDermott – Albany, NY

A hearty welcome to our new compatriots!

### **LAST REAL SON & DAUGHTER**

The last son of a Revolutionary soldier lived until 1941! William Constant Wheeler, born in 1847 in Woodbury, VT, was the son of Comfort Wheeler who had served as an Orderly to General Nathaniel Greene. Comfort was age 81 and married to his third wife when William was born; William was 10 years old when his father died. William himself lived until February 1, 1941. Between them, father and son voted in every presidential election from George Washington to Franklin D. Roosevelt.

Annie Knight Gregory was the last real daughter of a Revolutionary War soldier. Her father was a Drummer Boy in the Pennsylvania militia and was age 76 when Annie was born. She died December 1, 1943 at the age of 100. She was one of over 750 Real Daughters in the DAR.

### **REVOLUTIONARY WAR PENSION FILES ONLINE AT HERITAGE QUEST**

While most of us are familiar with Ancestry.com, Genealogy.com, etc., some of you may not be as familiar with Heritage Quest. This tremendous site contains numerous databases, including US census (with gorgeous scanned images of the actual pages), thousands of scanned reference books and the entire NY Times scanned and searchable. Recently added were scanned images of the abbreviated Revolutionary War Pension Files; these files are the truncated ones containing the handful of documents deemed to be of greatest genealogical significance. While not a substitute for a complete file, these are of great help in determining if you are looking at the file you really want.

The reason Heritage Quest is lesser known than other genealogy websites, is that it is not available for individual subscription. You can access it for free, however, at any good library that subscribes to it. In addition, access to Heritagequestoline.com is a free member benefit of the New York Genealogical & Biographical Society (NYG&B).

### **NYG&B CONFERENCE**

Speaking of NYG&B, their conference on New York research will be held in November at the Gideon Putnam Hotel in Saratoga Springs. The conference, spanning 2 days, will feature vendors and first-rate speakers on a variety of genealogical research topics. The Capital District Genealogical Society, of which Registrar Dennis Marr is President, will be assisting NYG&B with this endeavor. If you do not belong to NYG&B and would like information on the conference, please contact Dennis.

### **ANCESTRY.COM RESEARCH TIPS**

Ancestry.com is the 900-pound gorilla of online genealogical research. They have compiled thousands of databases from records all over the US as well as foreign countries. Many users make the mistake of just going to the opening home page and typing in a name. What many do not know is that not all databases are searched: this preliminary search just includes the most common databases, including census records, Social Security Death Index, military records, newspapers, etc. I suggest clicking on the "Search" button on the home page, which takes you to a more detailed search engine; even this one, though, does not search every database.

If you are interested in a particular geographical area, I suggest scrolling down to the bottom right hand of the page that opens after you click "Search" on the home page: there you will find several selections, including "List All Databases." Clicking on this takes you to an alphabetical list of the tens of thousands of databases. You need to work your way down alphabetically until you get "warm," but you will get much more refined search results this way.

### VITAL RECORDS ACCESS UNDER ATTACK

Those of us who actively conduct genealogical research know that vital records are the building blocks upon which we construct our family history. While not the end of the story, they are invaluable for the information that they provide.

Legislation is afoot at both the state and federal level to restrict access to vital records to one extent or another. The ostensible reasons for this are to help prevent identity theft as well as to make it more difficult for terrorists and others to assume identities.

A problem with this legislation as presently envisioned is that it could unnecessarily restrict legitimate genealogical research needs for these records. The major genealogical societies are voicing their concerns and attempting to see that provisions are included so that records stamped "For Genealogical Research Purposes Only" or some such restriction would still be allowed.

### WHAT ON EARTH ARE PEPPERCORN RENTS?

Peppercorn rents originated during the Middle Ages in Britain. When a piece of property was deeded over as a reward for good service (or because the tenant was a favorite of the overlord) a nominal rent was charged as a reminder that the tenant didn't own it outright. A single peppercorn (or a single rose i.e. rose rents) was among the most popular forms of this style of "quit rent," but there were various other curious forms of payment, such as a frog, a roast pork dinner or the donation of a petticoat to a poor woman.

The Feast of St. Michael or Michaelmas (September 29) was one of the standard days for paying rent or settling debts.

### HANDY INFLATION CALCULATOR

In the course of our research, we may find ourselves asking "how much is that in today's money?" One source for converting dollars from the eighteen and nineteen hundreds into current values is on the website of the *Columbia University Journalism Review*. It is very simple to use and can help to place an ancestor's financial transactions into an understandable perspective. Go to:

<http://www.cjr.org/tools/inflation/>

### WHAT COUNTY IS THAT IN?

As you know, SAR, and most other lineage societies, requires place names to include city or town, county and state for US locations. Often, a city/town name will be known, but the county is uncertain. A great source for placing current cities and towns into the correct county can be found on a real estate web site.

This handy tool is the County Locator at NETRonline, a real estate web site. I have spent many hours with my atlases in trying to determine the county that a city or town is in; this problem often arises when you have received a compilation of genealogy information from a friend or relative, but the county identification is missing. Try this tool out at:

[http://www.netronline.com/frameset.asp?StateID=c\\_10c](http://www.netronline.com/frameset.asp?StateID=c_10c)

When county lines have changed over the years, or a city/town name no longer exists, a common occurrence, then a good gazetteer is needed to help you to correctly locate a city or town and to place it into the correct county.

### MEMBER INPUT NEEDED

This issue concludes the eighth year of *Battle Lines*. While reporting news of the chapter is a primary purpose of the newsletter, this is *your* publication. Your submissions are always welcome, and can help to make the newsletter more interesting.

The popular *Ancestor Corner* feature has been suspended only because of a lack of member input. If each of you would submit a brief write-up on one of your Revolutionary War ancestors, we would have fodder for that column for the foreseeable future. Don't be concerned about having to polish the piece to a high gloss: just let me have the highlights of your ancestor's story, and I'm sure we will be able to use it.

For that matter, please feel free to send along anything that you think would be of interest to the chapter membership. This could be a news article that you saw, comments on a book that you read, or news of upcoming events that you think we would enjoy knowing about. For compatriots who cannot actively participate due to age or distance, the newsletter is their primary contact with the chapter.