

25 + Years of History

The following history of the Society is mostly extracted from that included in the 25th Anniversary issue of *The Archivist*.

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1971 - The Early Years - Pascack Genealogy Workshop

In January 1971, students who had taken an adult education course in genealogy at Pascack Hills High School in Montvale, NJ (Charles Gibbs, instructor), decided to continue to meet informally. They called themselves the Pascack Genealogy Workshop and met on every fourth Monday of the month at the Westwood Public Library.Â Marge Johnston was the leader and acted as Secretary. By the fall of 1972, Marge was unable to continue, but some people still wished to meet. They decided to form a formal organization with bylaws and elected officers, and would recruit new members. Eight people were present at a special organizational meeting where they decided to retain the name of Pascack Genealogy Workshop. The dues were set at a \$5.00 initiation fee, and \$3.00 annual membership. Officers were elected, and the Secretary, Dot Moos, mailed "an invitation to join" to all who had taken Charles Gibbs' genealogy course. Notices were placed in local libraries, supermarkets, newspapers, etc.

1973 - First Official Meeting - The Archivist is Published

At 7:30 on January 22, 1973 the first official meeting of the Workshop was held at the Westwood Public Library. The fourteen members who officially joined at that meeting and became Charter Members were: Spence Newman, President; Anne Angeloni, vice-president; Dot Moos, Secretary; Gardner Moyer, Treasurer; Ann Beck, Editor of the *Archivist*; Edna Falter, Librarian; Julie Fetters; Harvey Forrest; Kathy Frasco; Jeanne Hogan; Marge Johnston; Ted Obal; and Evelyn Peterson. They made Charles Gibbs an honorary member.

Ann Beck distributed the first edition of *The Archivist*, a one page bulletin, at the meeting.

By April, others had joined, making a total of 20 members. They formed a committee to draft bylaws and they completed this by the end of the summer. In September, since the Workshop had the use of only one drawer of a file cabinet in which to house its books at the Westwood Library, it moved to the Church of Latter-Day Saints in Emerson, NJ.

1974 - Interests Expand - Name changed to Pascack Genealogy Society

With the organization a year old, a membership list completed by Membership Chair Anne Angeloni consisted of 33 names. With this increased membership, the interests of the group were widened, and it became more than a Workshop. They then decided to change the name to the Pascack Genealogy Society.

Edna Falter became Editor of The Archivist with Ted Obal and Jeff Aronsky helping on the editorial staff. The newsletter was now being distributed by mail instead of being handed out at the meetings.

1975 - Adult Genealogy Course Begins

The first Adult Genealogy Course was offered by the Society at the Benjamin Franklin Junior High School in Ridgewood, NJ. Charles Gibbs, Dot Moos, Spence Newman, Ted Obal, and John Svenson volunteered to teach this class. The school received one half of the fee paid by the students, and the other half was deposited in the Treasury of the Society.

Lola Crandall became Librarian in 1978, taking care of the growing collection of books. Ted Obal had now become the Editor of the Archivist.

1979 - Scope of Society Increases - Name Changed to Bergen County Genealogy Society

The name of the organization was changed to the Bergen County Genealogy Society to better reflect the interests of the expanding membership. In 1980, membership cards were purchased

and issued after the dues were paid. Name tags were also made available for use during the meetings.

1981 - Membership exceeds 100 - Name Changed to Genealogy Society of Bergen County

In June of 1981, the name was changed again - to the Genealogical Society of Bergen County, N.J.

In that same year, the Church of Latter-Day Saints informed the Society that the Church needed more room for their own affairs, and the Society looked elsewhere for a meeting place. The Hillsdale Public Library agreed that the Society could meet there and have space for a small library. Also, they began the compilation of the Ancestor Surname Card File which was kept at the Library.

In 1982, Maria Hopper took over the responsibility of the adult course offered by the Society.

Annabelle Courtney, now Membership Chair, reported in 1983 that the Society had 147 members, including 23 from out-of-state and one from Canada. They changed dues to \$5.00 for individuals and \$8.00 for families. Barbara and George Crede and Maria Hopper had joined Ted Obal's Archivist editorial staff.

<1987 - Meetings and Library moved to Midland Park Public Library

The Society changed its meeting place again in 1987. Through the efforts of Barbara Flurchick, the use of the Midland Park Public Library was acquired, and they held trial meetings there in September and October. Additionally, sufficient space was available in a downstairs storage room to house the continually-growing library collection. They held regular meetings there until 1999.

They adopted a revised set of Bylaws on June 27, 1988. With the new bylaws, the Society was

pursuing a Certificate of Incorporation and a New Jersey nonprofit status. By these new bylaws, a new Board of Trustees, consisting of five officers and four at-large trustees, was elected in January 1989.

Ken and Edna Franz took over the coordination of the teaching of the genealogy course and added a new Family History study to the Adult Education program in Ridgewood. Several members of the Society were part of the teaching team.

The Society sponsored a genealogical workshop on April 15, 1989; "Family Tree Climbing can be fun", presented by Everton's International Genealogical Society. It was held at the Christ Lutheran Church in Paramus.

Starting in November 1989, the meeting started at a new time - 7 p.m. instead of 7:30 p.m. - since the library required that the meeting be over by 9:00 p.m. Dues were now set at \$12 for individuals and \$14.00 for families. Out-of-country members would pay \$15.00.

In January of 1990, two of the members who had put forth much time and effort, withdrew from their positions. Lola Crandall, who had taken care of the library for 12 years, handed the duties of the librarian over to Marion Armstrong. Ted Obal, after 16 years of working on the Archivist, retired and Pat Wardell succeeded him.

In June of 1990, Patricia Boyle, Membership Chair, reported the Society had 170 paid members and 23 complimentary memberships.

1995 - The Society is incorporated as a New Jersey Nonprofit Corporation.

After many years of work, the Society became incorporated in New Jersey as a nonprofit organization on December 22, 1995. During this time, the bylaws were again updated to meet the New Jersey requirements for nonprofit organizations.

1998 - Celebrating 25 Years

We celebrated the 25th Anniversary of the organization with a gala event in January 1998. The new logo of the Society, which appears on the home page was adopted. The name tags that were initially issued in 1980 had been updated to include this logo. Dot Moos and Ted Obal, two of the original fourteen charter members who founded the society in 1973, still continued as active members.

After eight years, Pat Wardell moved to Florida and retired as editor of *The Archivist*. In those eight years, this quarterly newsletter has grown in size to ten pages. Lucille Siebold then took over as editor. Patricia Boyle, also retired after ten years as our membership chairman, and was replaced by Frank Poole.

1999 - The GSBC moves to the Ridgewood Public Library

The original genealogical workshop had come a long way since its inception and had shown a significant growth with a substantial increase in membership. The meeting room at the Midland Park Public Library was filled to overflowing every month. Also, the renovation of the Midland Park library eliminated the space where the Society's collection was shelved. There was no longer adequate space for the GSBC library collection which now had grown to more than 600 books, plus other periodicals and reference material. A library search committee was formed, and after looking at a number of alternate locations, found a new home in the recently renovated and expanded Ridgewood Public Library. We then began to hold our meetings in their large library auditorium.

The Ridgewood Public Library had recently received a grant to establish a local history and genealogy reference section and became interested in incorporating our collection. The GSBC library collection (which remains the property of the GSBC) was placed on the library shelves, resulting in a strong beginning for the genealogical section. The library is available to everyone throughout the week and volunteers are there at scheduled times to help with research. Marion Armstrong, with help of other members, continued to run our library until she retired from that position to be replaced by Nancy Groo who also served as coordinator of the Library Patron Volunteers and Carolyn Smith who handled library acquisitions. The library collection continues to expand with additions of CD-Rom databases and other material to supplement the growing genealogical reference book collection. Memorial funds which are used to add to special genealogical subjects are now established as appropriate to remember long time members.

We now moved into a new electronic age with the establishment of our homepage and the many advances in technology. A computer interest group had been formed within the GSBC by Dick Hahn to help members in utilizing this technology. Also, specialized computer use classes were started using the Ridgewood Library's Technology Training Center on subjects such as on-line research (using Ancestry.com), using Computer genealogy programs (such as Family Tree Maker), using CD-Roms and other technology to research census records at the Ridgewood Public Library. The GSBC web page was established by Lucille Siebold, and later, Arnold Lang assumed the duties of webmaster.

2001 - Revised Organization to Accommodate the Larger Organization

With the increasing membership and changes in the interests of the organization, a committee was formed with Geri Mola as chairman to review the organization structure and bylaws. The result was a revision to the organization of the Society, adding additional Trustees and establishing three vice-president positions which address major Society interests; Programs, Library and Membership. Simultaneously, the bylaws were updated to reflect these changes and to include other clarifications and improvements. The revised bylaws were approved at the September 24, 2001 meeting.

This year, two long time members passed away and memorial funds were established to procure genealogical references in subjects in which they were greatly interested. Dutch genealogy books are being purchased with the Alfred Brower Memorial Fund, while German books are being procured with the Frank Poole Memorial Funds. Additionally, Frank Poole's personal collection of 75 reference books concentrating on German research were donated to the library, resulting in a significant collection of these resources.

Ken and Edna Franz, with help from other members, continued to teach the genealogy course at the Adult Education program in Ridgewood until 2001.

The GSBC has now grown to about 400 memberships. Many single members or families are from the far reaches of the U.S.A., while two are living in Canada and one in England. *The Archivist* is also sent to 28 genealogical based organizations and libraries.

After 2001 -

Joe and Patty Boyle then continued to organize and lead the class at the Ridgewood Adult Program in the following years. Previously taught by Frank Poole, in 2003 Ken and Edna Franz, with help from other members, also continued to organize and lead a 5-week introductory genealogy course at the Bergen Community College in Paramus. This is one of a number of classes provided at the Bergen Community College by the Institute for Learning in Retirement (ILR), an Affiliate of Elderhostel.

Past Presidents

- Spence Newman, 1973
- Dot Moos, 1974
- Joe Svenson, 1975
- Ted Obal, 1976, 77
- Gloria Wanamaker, 1978, 79
- Maria Hopper, 1980, 81
- Ed Maszalic, 1982, 83, 85
- Joe Suplicki, 1984
- Louisa Lavelle, 1986, 87, 88, 89
- Tom Wicks, 1990, 91
- Barbara Flurchick, 1992, 93
- Frank Poole 1994, 95, 96, 97
- Lucille Siebold 1998, 99, 00, 01
- Arnold Lang 2002, 03, 04, 05
- Geraldina Mola 2006, 07, 08, 09

This history was originally written by Marcella Lavorgna and it appeared in the November 1992 issue of *The Archivist*. It was edited and updated by Arnold Lang for publication in the February 1998 *Archivist*. Recent revisions have been added.