

Outstanding OGS Chapter Award for 2008

Warren County Chapter of Ohio Genealogical Society has a very energetic society of local and out of state members numbering a total about 300 (as of December 2008). 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). During the summer months we offer daytime genealogy workshop classes in lieu of our regularly scheduled monthly evening meetings. 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 9 AM to 4 PM Monday through Friday 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. Our master indexes that are searchable by surname online, in our library, and in book format continue to expand. Our website currently has over 534,693 entries for records from these Warren County indexes. Some of the indexes we have completed include: births 1867-1925; marriage records and returns 1803-1907; deaths 1867-1930; obituaries 1810 to current date; military records for all the wars; deed records; court records; will and estate records 1803-1936; probate records 1803-1936; funeral home records, tax records; coroner's records; and cemeteries.

This year we have been busy compiling and gathering information to publish a book about how to research in Warren County. This project has taken most of the year and will soon be released as one of our publications. It includes information on every repository in the county and information on how to find various records. Libraries, historical society and county offices have been visited or contacted for their inventories and what is unique to each. A complete and accurate listing of our county elected officials and the court structure is included as well as historical information such as maps and township boundaries and their changes over time. To aid searching land records, a list of road name changes is included. Detailed information and maps about our cemeteries are included as well as information about interment records and funeral homes. Church, school and other miscellaneous information has also been gathered. This will be a great asset to any one searching in our county.

WCGS has many other small but new projects this year. One of these new projects include indexing school records from 1925-1930. This information on each student includes the student's name, birth date and parents' names. Lebanon and Franklin are not in this index but most of the other schools in the county are included. Indexing started on early tax lists from 1816-1820 will help researchers wanting to join our First Families society. Marriage records from 1902 to 1907 have been abstracted and will soon appear as one of our new publications. We have also started abstracting information from death records from 1931-1935. We have completed abstracting information for will and estate records boxes 301-350, which is one of our new publications. Will and Estate Boxes 351-400 is also very near completion.

Our cemetery preservation project is progressing with more than 7,000 new entries this year for a total of 69,068 names to date. Some townships are almost completely digitized and about half of the 69,068 entries are currently loaded online to the Warren County USGenWeb site, which we also maintain. These images are also available on the computers in our library and indexes on our website.

This year in addition to working toward obtaining digital pictures of every headstone in each cemetery of our county, we have been obtaining copies of interment records. Our goal is to obtain copies of all the funeral home records in the county. This year we have copied Stubbs-Conner Funeral Home providing information for about 7000 new entries. We plan on copying and indexing the remainder of the Oswald Funeral Home soon. Information gathered from headstone readings, interment books, and notations from other various records about burials in our cemeteries will eventually be republished in our series of cemetery books and abbreviated information included on our website. This information provides a more accurate description of exactly who is buried in each cemetery whether or not they have a tombstone and will be invaluable to researchers with Warren County roots. To date we have 37,961 interment records from various funeral homes and an index to these records published as a three volume set. By having multiple copies of these records, we insure that if some natural disaster or theft occurs, that at least one copy of these records will survive.

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 in the binder on which the actual obituary appears. 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. This year we have added more than 12,172 new obituaries, making a total of 79,489 obituaries in our collection.

Our will and estate records project is slowly progressing due to the time it takes to verify the abstracts against the original pouches for accuracy. We completed a new Will and Estate book this year covering boxes 300-351, 1883-1888. We have quite a few other Will and Estate abstract books in various stages of completion, which we hope to publish in the next few years.

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.

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*.

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 \$3374, an increase from last year, and we sold \$7036 worth of publications in 2008. These funds were put back into purchasing new books, microfilms and equipment to further the preservation of Warren County records.

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 2008 included: Irish Genealogy by Dave Vickers, Reading German Church & Civil Records by Bob Rau, Census Research by Dana Palmer, Canadian Research by Patrick Kennedy, and Genetics & Genealogy Research by Mary Jo Neyer. Our First Families and Early Settlers of Warren County Banquet was well attended. We recognized five new inductees, four for First Families and one for Early Settler of Warren County, Ohio, with new certificates. We now have 97 First Families and 11 Early Settlers of Warren County members. We encourage members to qualify for this recognition.

During the summer months, we offer daytime genealogy workshop classes at our library instead of monthly meetings. The classes are free and open to the public. In 2008 we had on average 17 people at each class. The classes were held weekly and included a variety of topics starting with beginner topics. Handouts for the classes in the form of a workshop booklet are provided to all those who attend. 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. 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. 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. We appeal to this committee to please consider Warren County as the Outstanding Chapter of 2008.