



Kansas Council of Genealogical Societies

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Newsletter

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First, it is my sad duty to inform you all of the recent death of William (Bill) Ballard. You can find his obituary on our website as well as on that of the Emporia Gazette. Bill was to have served as president of the Kansas Council of Genealogical Societies for the year 2017-18. Our Vice President elect Ruth Filbert will now be filling that position. All of our board members were shocked and saddened by the news of his passing.

Bill has been a hard working member of this society for many years and he leaves a big hole on our board. He served for a long time as our treasurer and then expressed a desire to serve as president, to which office you have elected him more than once. Bill has been our logistics man as far as securing a site for our board meetings in Emporia. He, along with Ruth Filbert and me, served on the committee to revise our bylaws and bring them up to date. In fact, the re-typing of the revisions was done by him. His mother provided the place for that committee to work at her home.

We often heard his stories of his funny experiences in every day life and laughed along with him at our board meetings. Those of us who live a distance from Emporia were very glad to find his suggestions for our traveling to an upcoming board meeting, waiting in our emails, after a big storm which had flooded and/or made our regular routes inadvisable.

He was often able and willing to lend a hand to any one of us who were unable to fulfill our board obligations.

Conference attendees have often been greeted by Bill at the registration table. He has presided over our general meetings on several occasions. We relied on him and we will miss him very much. Rest In Peace, Bill.



July is sometimes the month when families sneak in a week's vacation before school gets started again. The last weeks of July see the end of summer ball games and organized activities for the children and enrollment for the next year of school falls in the midst of August so their best chance of a short get-away is now. As hot as it has been all over this state, I hope most of them have a traveled to northern climes for a little respite.

Family vacations are a wonderful opportunity to visit ancestral homes and perhaps introduce family members to more of their family history. Family reunions take place during this time also and those are opportunities not to be missed by a genealogy researcher. I hope some of you are getting just such a chance.

From Sherry Stocking Kline and Wellington Genealogical Society

JLY 24, 2017

Wellington Public Library receives Kansas Humanities Council grant

TOPEKA – The Kansas Humanities Council (KHC) recently awarded the Wellington Public Library a \$3,500.00 grant for the project, “Digitizing, Preserving, and making Fragile Records Available for Reading and Research.”

Jo Plumb, Director, Wellington Public Library serves as the project director. Sherry Kline, Vice-President of the Sumner County Historical and Genealogical Society served as grant writer.

Plumb said that the Kansas Humanities Council grant will assist with digitizing several one-of-a-kind historic documents that contain Wellington and Sumner County history, some of which is from former Wellington historian, Dorothy Dey’s collection, as well as several old, fragile, and out-of-print books that are not currently available to the public. “This grant is important to help us get our digitization project started,” Plumb said, adding that the library had previously received a grant for the digitization equipment necessary for the project.

“Once digitized, many of these documents and books will be available online,” Plumb said, “It brings this library up to this century.”

“We are grateful to Annarose White, Wellington Chamber of Commerce Director and Shelley Hansel, Mayor of Wellington, for their support and assistance with this project,” Plumb said.

“KHC Heritage grants encourage the preservation of local historical and cultural resources,” said Julie Mulvihill, executive director of the Kansas Humanities Council. “This project makes sure that the stories and photographs of early Sumner County residents are carefully maintained for the generations to come.”

The Kansas Humanities Council is a nonprofit organization that supports community-based cultural programs, serves as a financial resource through an active grant-making program, and encourages Kansans to

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engage in the civic and cultural life of their communities. For more information, visit

www.kansashumanities.org.

New Zealand Expeditionary Force Records

July 19, 2017 from /Fold 3|

Do you have any relatives who served as officers in the New Zealand Expeditionary Force (NZEF) during World War I? Learn more about them in Fold3’s [New Zealand Expeditionary Force Records](#).

This title is a facsimile reprint of Lt. Colonel John Studholme’s book *New Zealand Expeditionary Force Record of Personal Service During the War*, published in 1928. Though the book is not technically an official New Zealand government publication, it is based on official records and endorsed by the New Zealand Defence Department, making it official in all but name.

The book mainly covers the careers of officers in the NZEF during World War I and includes information like name, regiment, rank, and appointment or discharge date. It also documents the honors and decorations awarded to NZEF personnel. In addition to officers of the NZEF, the book contains information on nurses, first-class warrant officers, and officers and others who served in a subsidiary capacity to the NZEF. Other topics covered include:

Composition of the NZEF

Units and formation of NZEF

Strength of NZEF

Regulations of NZEF

Embarkations of NZEF

Demobilization embarkations of NZEF

New Zealand’s war effort (as regards personnel)

Operations in which NZEF took part

Casualties

Prisoners of War

The NZEF was created in August 1914 and was part of the British forces. Nearly 99,000 people served in New Zealand units overseas during the war, with an additional 7,000 serving within New Zealand; more than 2,000 served in Maori units. The majority of people who served in the NZEF were volunteers, and the NZEF was not limited to those born in New Zealand; any British subject could join. By the end of the war, about 18,000 people in the NZEF had died, including those who were killed in the Gallipoli campaign, Somme offensive, Messines offensive, and Passchendaele offensive.

If you have any relatives who served you might be interested in this book.

Look what Bernard Strasser sent me:



Would you expect to find this home just north of Voda, Kansas.

Bernard said he was given the picture by Andy Oldham whom he had met at a wedding in Dodge City.

Now I suppose some of you are wondering where Voda is. Hm? Bernard and I know because our mothers were born there.

It is a little railroad town just west of Wakeeney, KS.

I certainly did not expect to see a house built in this style way out there on the prairie. I will have to drive by the next time I am out there.

Here is a little Lithuanian history for you:

The 19th-Century Lithuanians Who Smuggled Books to Save Their Language

They banded together against book burnings to fight an empire.

BY MICHAEL WATERS JULY 19, 2017



Jurgis Bielinis (1846-1918).

In 1899, a pair of smugglers were crossing the border between Lithuania and East Prussia. Clutching their packs, they lay on a bank along the Prussian part of the river Šešupe, and for hours they studied the movements of the guards on the other side. They could not afford to get caught.

When it was dark, they pushed across the Šešupe and ran 10 miles to a distribution center in the Lithuanian village of Pilviškiai. There they discovered that Russian authorities were searching for them.

Soon they would return to Prussia, where they would hide out for several weeks be-

fore deciding to abandon the region entirely. Within a year, they would be on a boat to Scotland, smuggling goods—the very reason that authorities were after them. They opened their packs, and out poured books.



Map of Lithuania under Russian control.

In 2004, a Lithuanian man named Jonas Stepšis recounted this story. The two smugglers were his father and uncle, and they had joined what became a nationwide book-smuggling movement as a part of their opposition to the Russian Empire.

Tsarist Russia had dominated Lithuania after Poland-Lithuania, a Commonwealth formed in 1569, was annexed and divided up among Prussia, Austria, and Russia in 1795. The majority of Lithuania fell under Russian control.

Tsars tried early on to enforce loyalty, finding a particular target in the Roman Catholic Church—an historic Lithuanian institution that Russia saw as a threat to its power. Russian authorities demolished numerous chapels and prohibited the construction of wayside shrines, which were essentially omnipresent throughout Lithuania (there were roughly two shrines per kilometer). Not

prepared to give up their culture, Lithuanians built new shrines anyway.

In 1863, a massive insurrection: some 66,000 Lithuanians serfs, traders, and clergy took up arms against the Russian government. Soon after their rebellion was crushed, leaving thousands dead or exiled to Siberia, Tsar Alexander II issued a harsh crackdown.

In 1864, the Governor General of Lithuania, Mikhail Muravyov, forbade the use of Latin Lithuanian language primers—a proclamation that, two years later, led to a total ban on the Lithuanian press.

Language had long been a point of contention in Tsarist Lithuania. In the middle of the 19th century, in order to assimilate the peasant class, the Russian scholar Alexander Hilferding proposed that the Lithuanian language, which uses a Latin alphabet, be converted to a Russian Cyrillic alphabet.

The Lithuanian press ban was therefore an attempt to eradicate the Lithuanian language and promote loyalty to the Russian cause. Lithuanian children were also required to attend Russian state schools, where they would learn the Cyrillic alphabet through books printed by the Russian government.

Almost immediately, individuals sprung up to spread Lithuanian writing. Since they couldn't publish books in their homeland, many Lithuanians began printing them abroad and smuggling them back into their own country.

Thus appeared the first of the *knygnešiai*—or book-carriers—who, in a desperate bid to save their language, transported

books across the border and illegally disseminated them throughout Lithuania. Initially, the knygnešiai worked alone. They carried books in sacks or covered wagons, delivering them to stations set up throughout Lithuania. They performed most of their operations at night, when the fewest guards were stationed along the border. Winter months—especially during blizzards—were popular crossing times.

Lithuanians went to great lengths to conceal their illegal books. *The Forty Years of Darkness* by Juozas Vaišnora reports of female smugglers who dressed as beggars and hid books in sacks of cheese, eggs, or bread. Some even strapped tool belts to their waists and pretended to be craftsmen, disguising newspapers under their thick clothes.

Bishop Motiejus Valančius, a historian and author of religious and secular works who later earned the label “the greatest Lithuanian personality in the 19th century,” organized the first large-scale attempt to smuggle books across the Lithuanian border. In a bid to publish more prayer books, he sent money to neighboring Prussia to construct a printing press there. Beginning in 1867, he tasked a number of priests with bringing the books back into Lithuania and distributing them to locals.

Though at first Valančius only published Latin reprints of religious texts, as his operation grew, so did his ambitions. He began to commission original works, including many he had written, and his burgeoning team shuttled them across the border....smuggling books was fraught with danger as the borders were guarded by Russian soldiers.

The patriots continued with their work despite the danger and eventually Russian au-

thorities declared they no longer would ban the Lithuanian language from their people.

If any of you have Lithuanian ancestry your people may very well have assisted these brave heroes in days gone by.

*Just thinking out loud
til next time -
Janeice*