

Bristol County Chapter MSOG History

The first president of Bristol Chapter was William Wilkie.

My knowledge of the chapter began when Robert Trim, Rehoboth town historian served as president. He gave a lecture on the use of Probate Records. It was held in the evening in the Genealogy Room at the New Bedford Library. A room at the Blanding Library in Rehoboth was named in Mr. Trim's honor. (Sept 17, 1989)

The first Annual Meeting took place at St. Anthony School in New Bedford and was arranged by Fr. Clarence d'Entremont, an eminent Acadian scholar and lecturer. Upon retirement he lived in Canada where he had two trailers, one to live in and the other to house his extensive library.

Donald Farrington, the third president was meticulous in recording his family history. He gave a detailed talk on record keeping using an alphabet system to designate each family member. As a long time genealogist he shared so much with us.

Joan Cheney served as president for eight years. A Fall River resident, she chaired the meetings which were all held in the New Bedford Library where it was possible to do extensive research before and after meetings. The chapter hosted the Annual Meeting Oct 17, 1987 at the New Bedford Whaling Museum. Members were encouraged to tour the museum during free time.

After Mrs. Cheney's untimely death in June, 1987, the vice presidents or secretary conducted the meetings for several years until 1995 when John McKinnon was elected. Because of his job, he knew the state well and was helpful when the state society established its library. He transported our chapter books and file cabinet to the state library as it was felt the small collection would be more useful housed in one place. Although not many Bristol members used the MSOG library, we contributed many important books. The chapter hosted the Annual Meeting Nov. 11, 1995 which took place at the Pilgrim Congregational Church in Taunton. John held the office for seven years. To our delight, one December meeting he arrived as Santa Claus.

Robert Simmons was vice president when the 24th Annual Meeting was held in Taunton October 16, 1999 at the American Legion Hall.

Arthur Wood served as president for three years during which time he and fellow members planned another successful Annual Meeting in New Bedford at the First Congregational Church, Oct 18, 2003. A New Bedford resource and research booklet was compiled by Alfred Fonteneau and given to each person who attended.

After he retired as athletic coach and teacher in Dartmouth, Robert Simmons was able to serve as president. Under his direction the chapter realized that in order to exist new members must be recruited. As interest was shown in the Swansea/Somerset area it was agreed to meet at the Somerset Library. New members offered to become officers of the chapter. In addition to his work at track meets and Boy Scout activities he felt he had to resign his duties in February, 2010.

Gale Fletcher stepped into the void and is the president of the chapter now.

Saturday afternoons proved to be the most suitable time to meet for members in this county. While the first gatherings were held mostly in the downtown New Bedford Library we toured Historical Societies in Acushnet, Mattapoisett, Fall River, Berkley, Dighton, Somerset, Taunton and the Rotch, Jones Duff Museum in New Bedford. When the New Bedford Library was undergoing a three year renovation we were welcomed at the Somerset Library. Many times it was more convenient to meet at the secretary's home and for four years a Christmas gathering was held at a private home in Dartmouth.

Several members wrote articles for MASSOG and published books. Three of the group got so involved in their family research that they contacted relatives in England and traveled there and visits to America were arranged in return. We offered beginning genealogy courses several times.

When the chapter hosted the annual meetings the members helped with their various talents, always generous in providing refreshments and making everyone welcome. We also answered queries received not only from our out of state members but those who noted our address as a Genealogical Society.

We learned so much from one another and the speakers helped to further our research. Because of our interest in genealogy we have honored our ancestors and in turn our descendants will bless us for preserving family history. The best part of joining this chapter was meeting new people who shared the same interests and in time became dear friends. It is not possible to name all the names of those who gave of their time and knowledge. Many have passed on but still their faces appear and their voices heard when a particular thought comes to mind. Let us hope that we can find answers to many genealogy puzzles to pass on to our children. May our interest in a Family Tree make us treasure our relationships with relatives and friends.

Submitted by Jeanne W. Swiszc

1975 First President: William Wilkie

1976-77: Robert S. Trim, two years

1978 Donald Farrington

1979-1986: Joan Cheney

From 1987-1994 Officers chaired meetings

1995-2001 John McKinnon

2002 Officers served

2003-2005 Arthur Wood

2006-2010 Robert Simmons

2010 Gaile Fletcher

Vice presidents: Larry Bliss, Robert Simmons

Treasurers: Arthur Cushing, William Letton, Jean McAllister

Gail Gosson

Secretaries: Marton Gardner, Jeanne W Swiszc, Staci Berube, Kathleen

Rubano.