

## Outstanding OGS Chapter Award for 2006

Warren County Genealogical Society Chapter of Ohio Genealogical Society has a very energetic society of local and out of state members numbering a total of 270 (as of December 2006). 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). We welcome all interested in genealogy. We also have a resource center library located in the Warren County Administration building. Our address is 406 Justice Dr., Lebanon, OH 45036; phone (513) 695-1144. Our library is staffed 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](http://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 accomplish this many ways. They 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. We have created master indexes for many records searchable by surname. These databases are available in our library on our computers, in book format, or online at our website. Our website currently has over 310,000 entries for records in Warren County from these indexes. Some of the master indexes we have completed include: births 1867-1925; marriage records and returns 1803-1901; deaths 1867-1930; obituaries 1810 (start date) to current date; military records for all the wars; deed records; court records; will and estate records 1803-1936 (abstracted from 1803-1914); probate records (1803-1936, working on index to 1996); tax records; coroner's records; and cemeteries.

Some projects underway include digitizing all the tombstones in our county; obtaining copies of cemetery ledgers and funeral home records; copying and indexing obituaries from our local newspapers, and abstracting will and estate records, guardianships, adoptions, etc from the probate court records. Some future projects include indexing and publishing more of the vital records available at Archives and the Health Department, and creating a master index for Warren County census records searchable by surname for all census years.

Our cemetery preservation project is massive and is dependent upon a lot of volunteers. We have been fortunate to have many society members and local Boy Scout troops help us with this project. It will take a few more years to complete. In addition to obtaining digital pictures of every headstone in each cemetery of our county, we are also obtaining copies of the cemetery plat (or creating one if it doesn't exist), and obtaining copies of the cemetery ledger books. This way we have a more complete listing of who is buried in each cemetery whether or not they have a stone. We have been already completed some of abandoned or inactive cemeteries. A few of these have recently been seriously vandalized and now we have the only record and images of those tombstones. The information gained from this project will be organized into our master cemetery database, and sources for the data noted as from the tombstone, ledger, obituary or will record. This information will eventually be republished in our series of cemetery books and abbreviated information included on our website. We are working in conjunction with the US Gen Web Site for Warren County, Ohio. All our digital images have been loaded on that site. These images are also available on the computers in our library.

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. A master 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 the actual obituary appears in our binders. Researchers can search for their surnames and request copies of obituaries, then receive a photocopy. Our master 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.

Our funeral home record project started this past year (2006). We are trying to obtain copies of all the funeral home records in our county. To participate, a funeral home loans us their record books while we photocopy each page. The photocopies are organized into large binders and indexed. The funeral home receives a copy of the binders and index when we return their original record books. A copy of these binders is placed on the shelf in our library. By having multiple copies of these records, we insure that if some natural disaster or theft occurs, that at least one copy will survive. Our indexes will eventually be published in books making these records more accessible to both the funeral homes and researchers.

WCGS has obtained the copyrights and abstracts records for wills and estate records from boxes 251-700 (~1883-1914) from Cardinal Research, a research group started by two members of our society. This past year as part of our probate record project, we have been actively organizing this information into publication format, verifying their research, and continuing it to box 912 (~1931). In the meantime we have also been creating a master principles index for the will and estate records from the beginning of record creation 1803 to 1931; which will be added to our website in the spring of 2007. A master probate index searchable by surname, docket book reference or box number that covers 1803-1936 (up to docket book 18) will be completed soon. We plan on finishing the index through docket book 57 (~1996) sometime in late 2007 / early 2008. We will load an abbreviated version of this master index to our website and have more extensive records available on the computers in our library and in book form.

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 \$2,977.16 and we sold \$6,851.88 worth of publications in 2006. These funds were put back into purchasing new books, microfilms and equipment to further the preservation of Warren County records.

Our society 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 91 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*.

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 our 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 2006 included: cemetery research; military research; township histories for the first four townships of Warren County; German research taught by Kenny Burck of OGS and Hamilton County Genealogical Society; and a program about Warren County one-room schools. We celebrated our 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary at our First Families and Early Settlers of Warren County Banquet. It was well attended. We recognized five new inductees, four for First Families and one for Early Settlers of Warren County, Ohio, with new pins and a certificate. We now have a total of 88 First Families and 8 Early Settlers of Warren County, Ohio members. We encourage members to qualify for this recognition. After the banquet and inductee presentation, the program featured the Heritage Triangle Re-enactors, who presented re-enactments of the lives of a few prominent settlers of Warren County. We have exciting programs scheduled for 2007 such as Roots-Magic by Dave Vickers of Montgomery County Genealogical Society, a presentation by Alison Stacy of Family Tree Magazine for our First Families and Early Settlers Banquet; Probate Research; Obtaining Military Histories by Rob Young of the Wright Patterson AFB; and Researching in County Archives by Pam Schwartz of the Warren County Archives.

We offer daytime genealogy workshop classes at our library each summer instead of monthly meetings. The classes are free and open to the public. In 2006 we had on average 10-12 people at each class in our library. The classes were held every other week and included a variety of topics starting with beginner topics. 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 specific family lines and organize it so they can publish it into a well-documented family book when they are completed. Some of the daytime genealogy workshop topics taught in 2006 included: getting started, census research, online sources, local sources, emigration / naturalization, and using technology such as MS Word and Adobe Photoshop to create biographies. More advanced topics were chosen at the class's request, on German research and U.K. research. 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 and Leadership Management Meetings. 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. We also have had several articles written up in the OGS publications and newsletters. The most recent article appeared in *OGS Genealogy News* January/March 2006 issue on page 5 in the "Places to Go" category. We appeal to this committee to consider Warren County as the Outstanding Chapter of 2006.