

Connecticut Ancestry eNews – delivered February 27, 2012

Hello Genealogy fans,

Our next meeting is Saturday, March 3, at the Danbury Public Library. We begin registration at 10 a. m. and our program begins at 10:30. This month Harlan Jessup is presenting information on how to research Civil War records—what records are available and how to find them. Since we are now in the 150th anniversary of that conflict, many people are curious about ancestors who fought. Harlan's presentation is sure to be informative.

On a different topic, one of the important record sets used by genealogists nationwide is under threat. Both the House of Representatives and the Senate, have introduced bills which supposedly are aimed at curbing identity theft. However, they contain incorrect information about the role that the Social Security Master Death File (known to genealogists as the Social Security Death Index or SSDI) is playing in identity theft. The Subcommittee for Social Security of the Committee for Ways and Means of the House of Representatives held a hearing in early February on the subject. The committee allowed testimony at the hearing only from people they invited to speak. Every single speaker declared, with no documentation, that the SSDI was a major cause of identify theft and that it needs to be closed to the public. Not a single voice was permitted to state the facts: the SSDI was created to *prevent* identity theft, that the financial institutions and the Internal Revenue Service are not using it properly, that proper use (comparing SSNs for tax returns or new bank accounts to the SSDI will identify SSNs that have already been used) will prevent fraud, that these institutions must follow the rules that are already in place and the misuse of SSNs will no longer be a problem.

We in Connecticut know that having open records does not contribute to crimes of identity theft. The rate of such crimes is no higher here than elsewhere in the country. It is very important that we, the genealogy community, express our opinions about this outrageously skewed idea of where the problem actually lies. The Records Preservation and Access Committee (RPAC) has created a kit to help us understand the problem and take action to prevent restrictions on open records. You can find the information here. <http://www.fgs.org/rpac/sddi-call-to-action-kit/>

This is extremely important. If this database is closed, I believe it will be just the beginning of closing multiple resources to us. We cannot let it happen. Please sign the petition (which would take the matter out of the hand of Congress and put it into the hands of the Executive Branch). The deadline is March 8, so please act immediately. I have heard reports of some technical difficulties with the petition, but please be persistent. Also, contact your congress member and your senators.

We should not be persuaded by Congress's incorrect information. The SSDI is not a major tool for identity theft, and any few incidents could be prevented by tightening the rules. We, and all the members of the public, have a right to use this resource as it was originally intended.

Happy researching,

Nora Galvin
President, CAS