

Geauga County Genealogical Society of Ohio, Inc.

A Chapter of the Ohio Genealogical Society

Est. 1973

HISTORY OF THE GEAUGA COUNTY GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY

by Jan Began (Oct 2012)

This is a brief history based on the information that remains in our archives and with a telephone conversation I had with Emilie Esmonde in 2008.

Emilie Esmonde and Alice Ferris were members of the Lake County Genealogical Society. Since both women lived in Geauga County, it was suggested by some of their friends at the Lake County Chapter that they should think about starting a group in Geauga County. And they did.

“Seek to Organize Genealogical Unit” was the heading of a newspaper article published 25 February 1970 (unknown newspaper). “A meeting of interested persons is set for Feb. 27 in the library of Geauga County Academic Center of Kent State University. Purpose is to promote organization of genealogical society in Geauga County. Mrs. Alice Ferris of Burton invites anyone interested to attend. The meeting will begin at 10 a.m.”

“June 3, a group of women in Burton and surrounding areas got together for a meeting which was to form the first seminar of the Geauga County Genealogical [sic] Society. Mrs. Duane Ferris of Burton was instrumental in bringing the Genealogical [sic] Society from Lake County to talk to interested persons who wanted to research their family trees.Mrs. Ferris said the turn out for the meeting [39 persons] far surpassed her expectations. ‘I’m thrilled to know there are so many interested people in Geauga County,’ she said.The Geauga Genealogical [sic] Society will begin meeting regularly at the Burton Library sometime in September, and if there is a demand, evening classes will be conducted in January.” (The Times Leader, Chardon, Ohio, Sat., July 24, 1971, page 5.)

“Gauga genealogical society formed”

“Burton – Fifteen persons interested in organizing a Geauga County Genealogical Society met on Sept. 23 in the community room at the Burton Public Library.election of officers for the new Society which resulted as follows: president, Mrs. Duane Ferris of Burton; vice-president Mrs. Emilie M. Esmonde of Chardon; and secretary treasurer, Mrs. Kenneth Reddell [sic] of Burton. The purpose of the society is to inspire people to do their own digging into family genealogy and to inform members about sources of information which are available.” (The Times Leader, Chardon, Ohio, Sept. 30, 1971)

Having attained the requirements for becoming a Chapter of the Ohio Genealogical Society, the Geauga County Genealogical Society (GCGS) received its Charter on 5 May 1973 (per Thomas Neel, OGS Library Director, 19 March 2008, telephone conversation with Jan Began).

With reference to an OGS article with a picture of four members accepting the Charter in 1973, Charter Members named were:

Catherine Bushnell
Beatrice DeMars
Mrs. Kenneth Duering
Emilie Esmonde, *Vice President*
Alice Ferris, *President*
Jeanette Grossman
Jeannette Grosvenor
Ella Hadden
Margaret 'Peg' Hetrick
Mrs. William Slack
Mrs. Roy Mace
Dora Riddell, *Treasurer*
Franklin Smith
Mrs. Franklin Smith
Park W. Stafford
Thelma Stafford, *Secretary*
Mildred Steed
Gertrude Thayer
Violet Warren

By 1973 the GCGS had in its possession a number of books, census records, microfilms, and other documents that were being held in the homes of various members. The Society appealed to Burton Library for space. "Permission for the Geauga County Genealogical Society to use aforementioned basement room granted at the regular December meeting of the Burton Public Library Board of Trustees on December 13, 1973 with the following requirements: Contract to be renewed each December; Rent of \$20.00 a year; and Genealogical Society to carry insurance on its materials." Signed by Frank E Samuel, President, Burton Public Library Board of Trustees and Patsy P. Brigham, Clerk.

As the holdings increased in size, there was discussion of finding more space and Chardon Public Library was chosen. This caused unhappy feelings with some of the members. But with the move to Chardon and the efforts of the late Anderson Allyn, many more Geauga County documents were obtained in the early 1980s. By 1988 GCGS had its own room, the Anderson Allyn Room, in the recently renovated Chardon Library.

Over the years our Chapter has held seminars and hosted many wonderful speakers. It has also had its ups and downs. More than once membership declined and discussion of disbanding or least withdrawing from the Ohio Genealogical Society was held. In the 1990s the Chapter was inactive. Starting in 2007 the Society reorganized and new officers were elected. We're glad to be a vital Chapter again!

One last note, the Chapter's newsletter, *Raconteur*, was first published in January 1978 with Jeannette Grosvenor as Editor. Sandy Malitz, former Genealogy Specialist for the Geauga County Public Library System, took over in 2000 as Editor. Society member Jan Began took over in 2009 and the *Raconteur* continues to be published on a quarterly basis.