The VGS
The Villages Genealogical Society

New Member Welcome Packet

Genealogy Education Community
Welcome to our Society!

As a new member of The Villages Genealogical Society, you are now part of the largest genealogical society in the State of Florida, and one of the largest local societies in the United States. Founded in 1993, the society began with about 15 members. Today our membership numbers over 1,000 genealogists with varying degrees of proficiency, from “Newbies” to Intermediate to Professionals. Due to the fact that Villagers come from all over the United States and Canada, as well as Europe and other continents, they bring with them a collectively diverse ancestry. Their interests are equally diverse. The VGS offers well over a dozen Special Interest Groups to address a wide range of genealogy related topics.

The purpose of our Society is “to promote and stimulate knowledge and interest in the study of genealogy; to provide for exchange of information among members; and to provide educational programs and workshops that will assist our members in their genealogical research.”

This Welcome Packet provides an overview of important VGS information for new members, but it only scratches the surface. For more information about the society and its activities, please visit our Internationally acclaimed website at VGSFL.org. As a new member, you will receive a welcoming email, with a username and password for the “Members Only” section of the site. The website is your resource for information about ongoing events of the society and organizations with which we are affiliated. It also has back copies of the VGS Newsletter, which is emailed to all members on the 15th of each month. The Newsletter is also archived in the genealogical publications collection of the Allen County Public Library in Fort Wayne, Indiana.

Whenever you have questions about The VGS, please ask an officer, board member, SIG Leader or one of our helpful volunteers at the monthly General Membership Meetings. You will find contact information for most of them on our website on the “About VGS” page or on sub-pages of the “Special Interest Group” page.

Our Society has many opportunities for members to serve. The future of the VGS depends upon its members. It is our sincerest wish that you will become an active member and bring your unique and valuable perspective to contribute to the benefit of The Villages Genealogical Society and all of its members.
VGS Governance

The Villages Genealogical Society is organized as a non-profit organization under section 501(c)(3) of the US Internal Revenue code. Its membership is restricted to residents of The Villages, Florida. It is governed by four elected Officers and a Board of Directors. The Officers serve on the Board along with the Directors. The President and Vice President are elected in even numbered years. The Treasurer and Secretary are elected in odd numbered years. The Directors are appointed by the President. Some of the Director positions are established in the By-Laws. Others are established by the President as the need for them arises.

Communication

The President and the Board communicate with the Membership via the Website and Newsletter, and in person, at the General Membership Meetings of the Society.

VGS Documents

Several Documents have been created to enable the VGS to function fairly and smoothly. They include:

- The By-Laws
- Policies and Procedures Manual
- This VGS New Member Welcome Packet
- The archived documents of historical value to The Villages Genealogical Society which can be found in the Scrapbooks section of the Photo Gallery on The VGS Website VGSFL.org.

Societies With Which We Are Affiliated

- Federation of Genealogical Societies
- Florida State Genealogical Society
- National Genealogical Society

The Federation of Genealogical Societies does not have individual memberships, but individuals belonging to member societies may attend FGS Conferences. The VGS pays annual dues to FGS.

The Florida State Genealogical Society gives complimentary organizational memberships to Societies operating within Florida. Only Individual and family members pay dues and have voting rights. VGS members are encouraged to join FSGS, as it is our State Society. Their monthly webinars alone make the annual dues a bargain.

The National Genealogical Society is just that, our National Society. The 2016 NGS Conference was held in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida. At least twelve of our members attended. The VGS pays annual dues to NGS as an organizational member with limited benefits. Full benefits accrue to individual members of NGS.

General Membership Meetings

The Villages Genealogical Society holds monthly membership meetings with guest speakers except in December. Each February, the meeting is replaced with our VGS Annual Seminar, featuring four presentations given by a nationally known guest speaker brought in especially for the event. Our list of past speakers reads like a Who’s Who in the field of Genealogy. Speakers from all over the United States want to speak to the Villages Genealogical Society. All meeting times and locations are listed on our website.
The Villages Genealogical Society gives its members a real “bang for the buck” through its Special Interest Groups. SIGs can be organized around various topics, including country of origin, ethnicity, region of the United States, or even scientific or technological aids for genealogy such as computer software or DNA testing. The number of groups fluctuates, with some groups shutting down only to be reincarnated by a new volunteer SIG leader. These are the currently active SIGs including some in formation:

- **Adoption & Mystery Kin SIG** - Educate and guide members in their search for unknown family members.
- **African American SIG** - To assist members with research of African American ancestors.
- **Brick Wall Solutions SIG** - Get help from others to solve your problem!
- **British Genealogy SIG** - Join our round table discussions and more for help with your UK research.
- **Eastern European SIG** - Discuss problems & share your knowledge on Eastern European Ancestors.
- **Family Tree Marker Users SIG** - Ask questions about using this software.
- **French Canadian Genealogy SIG** - Discuss problems & share your knowledge on French Canadians.
- **Genetic Genealogy SIG** - Join this discussion group to better understand DNA and DNA Test Results
- **German Genealogy SIG** - Get help from others who research German records.
- **Irish Genealogy SIG** - Join a free flowing question and answer session on Irish research
- **Italian Genealogy SIG** - Get help in this informal group to connect with your Italian roots.
- **Jewish Genealogy SIG** - Meets monthly for those with Jewish genealogy interests.
- **Mid-Atlantic States SIG** - This is an informal group researching the Mid-Atlantic states.
- **Midwest SIG** - This is an informal group researching the Midwest states.
- **New England Genealogy SIG** - Join this group to help you research New England records.
- **New to Genealogy SIG** - Get help to start researching your family history!
- **Preserving Family History SIG** - Assistance in helping to preserve your family history.
- **Roots Magic SIG** - Ask questions about using this software.
- **Scandinavian Genealogy SIG** - Connect with others who research Scandinavian records.
- **Technology SIG** - Understanding technology to help in your genealogy research.
The VGS Websites Publications and Social Media Pages

As a new member of The Villages Genealogical Society, you now have the opportunity to become acquainted with the Internet presence of the Society. The communications of the society are largely digital, as are our important documents, which are available for members to print for their own personal reference and use. The following is a general list of our Internet activities.

The VGS Website - www.VGSFL.org

The VGS Website provides information about the society including news, coming events, meeting schedules, Board of Directors, member list, historical photo gallery, Newsletter archives, Surname database, the Members Only section, and much more, including links to our various other sites. These include websites for some of our SIGs (5 at the latest count).

The VGS Blog - http://vgsflorg.blogspot.com/

The VGS Blog contains posts on genealogical news, technical issues affecting genealogists, items of historical interest and other tidbits. Some articles are unique to The VGS, some are re-postings from other blogs, but they are always interesting. The VGS Blog is published each Saturday.

The VGS Newsletter

The VGS Newsletter is published monthly and delivered electronically to the membership via email. It includes news of the society, a message from the President, and other items of general interest. Back issues are on the Website. The newsletter is published the 15th of each month.

VGS Social Media - Facebook, Google Plus and Twitter

The VGS has active pages on Facebook, and Twitter, with many followers both in the society and in the greater world of genealogy. Additionally, most of our Special Interest Groups have their own closed Facebook Group pages, to
The VGS New Member Checklist

Okay, you have paid your first membership dues... now what?

1. Sign in to the website VGSFL.org - look for the date of the next monthly meeting - put it on your calendar.
2. While you are on the website - poke around!
   3. Sign up for the VGS blog, available on various social media platforms - facebook, google+, twitter, or email. A great way to keep up with the world of genealogy!
   4. Look at coming events and Special Interest Group (SIG) offerings - try those that fit your areas of interest (more additions to your calendar)
   5. Follow the links to information about local libraries, online resources, tips and tricks
   6. Peruse some of the recent newsletters
7. When you receive the email with member log-in information, head to the website's members only section.
   There you can:
   8. Add your family surnames
   9. Update your profile and communication preferences
   10. Download files of handouts and other research material.
11. Go to a General Membership Meeting - for admission, you will need your Villages ID with the VGS membership sticker on the back.
   12. At the meeting, look for the nametag table and order a nametag ($5) - pick up at the next meeting.
   13. Congratulate yourself for joining a great genealogy society and ENJOY!
# Information for New Members

*For more information and online resources for new members of The Villages Genealogical Society, visit:*

[vgsfl.org](http://www.vgsfl.org)

## The VGS Members’ Only Website

(VGSFL.org/members.php (password protected))

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For Further Information

Send your questions to:

Info@VGSFL.org
Welcome Packet

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Group Photo on 2015 VGS Genealogy Cruise to the Bahamas

J. Mark Lowe Speaking at the 2016 VGS Annual Seminar

VGS Members Attended the NEHGS Road Show in April 2016

217 VGS Members Listen to George Morgan in April 2016

Over 1,000 Residents of The Villages Filled the 2016 Genealogy Expo

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