The Census is coming! ‹repeat›

By Richard Rands

Why is the 1940 U.S. Census so important?

If your family history research long ago moved back before the 20th century, you may be wondering why interest is so high in a census as recent as 1940. The census will be released by the National Archives on 2 April 2012 at 9 A.M. Eastern Time. We should prepare now to delve into the records as soon as they are released to the public.

Foremost among reasons the census is valuable to family historians is the impact of the Depression years on the unity of families. Husbands left to seek work in distant places and sometimes were never heard from again. Wives separated from or divorced husbands who had given up looking for work. Older children left home to join the military, merchant marines, or conservation corps. These ancestors could turn up in the 1940 census.

The population of the country had not been that mobile since the mid-nineteenth century, when the westward movement carried whole families across the continent to open the frontiers. But the decade of the 1930s saw vast numbers of families uprooted by crop failure, climate change, economic crises, and industrial migration. More than ever before, some families found it advantageous to break up rather than to migrate together. Clearly, the 1940 census will offer a portrait of the time as well as a chance to trace lost or unknown family members.

It is not uncommon for family historians to discover that their parents left behind nothing about their own parents. Finding a parent in the 1940 census might provide a missing clue to grandparents and a link to previous censuses.

Finally, the depth of information collected in this census will be priceless in validating family lore, filling in gaps in stories, or better pinpointing where ancestors were born. It is highly likely that time spent searching for your family in the 1940 census will reveal plenty of new information for your family history.

Citrus workers' camp, c. 1940
(National Archives photo)

However, unlike the earlier U.S. censuses since 1850, which have online indexes allowing us to search an entire census for an individual's name, the digitized images of the 1940 U.S. Census enumeration pages will be released unindexed in April; no one will have a searchable index yet — not even the National Archives.

To address the need for an index, the LDS FamilySearch.org, along with Findmypast, Archives.com, and other groups, have formed the 1940 U.S. Census Community Project (the1940census.com) to coordinate efforts to generate an index as quickly as possible. But with a 1940 population of 132 million people in 48 states, the name index will take some time. The Indexing project leaders reportedly are

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estimating that the project could take at least six months.

How long will the indexing take?

The National Archives tells us there are 3.9 million images. Based on earlier indexing projects, we estimate that it takes an experienced indexer about 20 minutes to complete an image. Each page will be indexed by two different volunteers. That amounts to about 2.6 million hours of indexing. Any discrepancies must be reviewed by an arbitrator. Assuming that about 15% of the individual entries could require arbitration, approximately 20 million entries will have to be reviewed. Arbitration takes roughly twice the time that the initial transcription takes, adding another 330,000 hours to the project. If we include the amount of time necessary to process the index data and make it available online, we easily can imagine a project of more than 3 million hours. If 150,000 volunteer indexers average 5 hours per month, we certainly will not see the complete index online before August 2012. Project leaders estimate 12 months.

Those who would rather not wait for the index might be able to avoid browsing through the 3.9 million images to find an ancestor. All it takes is a little knowledge about how the census is organized, coupled with some information about where your ancestors were living on 1 April 1940.

What's in the 1940 Census?

Before we get into the how-to of searching without an index, let's consider some of the unique aspects of the 1940 census, as well as the vagaries we might expect. The census includes the customary questions about address, household ownership, individual's name, relationship to the head of household, age, sex, marital status, education, place of birth, and citizenship.

Enumerators were instructed to specify whether household members lived on a farm, but it is uncertain what constituted a farm, or just a backyard vege-

1929	Wall Street crash launches worldwide depression
1939	World War II begins
1940	Selective Service U.S. peacetime draft; census
1941	Commercial television broadcasting launches
1941	Attack on Pearl Harbor, U.S. enters World War II

table garden and a few fruit trees. It will be interesting to see how my grandparents' home is listed in urban Ogden, Utah. As a child, I loved to climb their four apple trees, pick raspberries from one very large bush, and savor the fresh beans, tomatoes, and corn from a few rows of vegetables. I did not enjoy gathering eggs from the chicken coop. Was that a farm?

The instructions were to list the names of each individual whose "usual place of residence" on 1 April 1940 was in the household. But nowhere is there an explanation of what *usual* meant. Did it include those in the military? Or students residing on campus? What about traveling salesmen? How many days per week or month did *usual* constitute? Will there be an unusual number of individuals double counted? My grandfather was a truck driver who was usually on the road. Will he be listed in the household with his family? And if not, where will he show up?

Since enumerators were allowed up to two weeks to complete their tally in urban areas and up to one month in rural areas, an infant born on or after 1 April 1940 was not supposed to be enumerated. Yet I read that for the purposes of the census, the 2 April 1940 did not actually begin until 12:01 A.M. that morning, so a newborn had 60 seconds of leeway after midnight to be included in the census. (This is reminiscent of the confusion in the year 2000 over when the new century actually began, 2000 or 2001.)

One of the most useful items for genealogists was the designation of a small circled *x* after the name of the person furnishing the information to the enumerator. However, there are no instructions for cases where only part of the information was offered by someone in the household, or where the information came from someone outside the household. An *x* after the name of a six-year-old child will have us wondering about the information. In any case, we will have some inkling about the accuracy of the information for a household. In addition, genealogists will appreciate the items listing each individual's place of

1940 U.S. Census *(continued)*

residence on 1 April 1935, five years earlier. What better way to follow your family's migration after the 1930 census?

The section for employment status is far more comprehensive than that in earlier censuses but is limited to those 14 years and older. A new employment category was added for nonemergency government work, vs. public emergency work. The form also accounts for household members working without pay in work that contributes to household income. Does that include my mother as a teenager picking apples, weeding the garden, and gathering eggs on my grandparents' urban farm? We'll see.

On the other hand, most disappointing is the omission of the parents' birth place, except for two individuals on each enumeration sheet. This form of sampling was the first ever for a U.S. census and was accomplished by asking 15 supplementary questions for whoever was listed on lines 14 and 29 of each 40-line sheet. In addition to parents' birth place, supplementary items inquired about language spoken, military service, Social Security, occupation, and, for women, the number of marriages, age at first marriage, and number of children born.

That means we will only have the supplementary information for about one in 20 individuals. Needless to say, it is important to keep in mind that the census involved more than 120,000 enumerators, who no doubt interpreted instructions with some inconsistency. As with any record collection of this magnitude, genealogists will have to accommodate variations and idiosyncrasies in the data.

For more detailed information about the contents of the census, see the site the1940census.com and select the link *Read detailed enumerator instructions*. To view or print a copy of the enumeration form, see archives.gov/research/census/1940/ and follow the link for the 1940 census forms. The most informative form is the 1940 census template, which gives you a readable printout along with symbols and explanatory notes for many of the questions.

Searching without an index

Waiting for months until the searchable name index is available may be the only option for many, particularly those who have little or no information about an ancestor who might be in the census. But for those

with some knowledge about an ancestor, searching the digital images might be feasible, once the images are released on April 2. As with previous censuses, the 1940 census was organized into geographical districts called enumeration districts (EDs). Each ED had a unique number within its state, consisting of two parts, a region number (typically a county) and a district number within the region. The size of the district was determined by the amount of territory an enumerator could cover in two weeks in urban areas or in one month in rural areas.

The technique for searching the census without an index involves determining the ED in which your ancestor resided on 1 April 1940. In some circumstances, the information known about the individual may point to several possible adjacent EDs, making it

Find your ancestors in the 1940 U.S. Census — wherever they were. (National Archives photo)

necessary to browse through the images of each one. In previous censuses, an enumeration district had anywhere from 20 to 120 pages. Once you have determined the ED or EDs, you will be able to go to the National Archives site and link to the first image for the ED. Then you will be able to browse each image associated with the ED, image by image, and line by line, to discover what you are looking for. Until the census is indexed, there is no other way!

The boundaries of every ED for the 1940 census have been available for some time, as have the official maps for each ED. As such, at least two organizations have developed online tools to make it possible to

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help identify the ED where your ancestor lived. One such organization is the National Archives (see archives.gov/research/census/1940/), and the other is the One-Step Web pages team under the direction of Stephen P. Morse at stevemorse.org/census/. Both groups advocate that we start immediately to identify the enumeration districts we will be browsing, because beginning April 2, the servers for each group are likely to be inundated with requests. The remainder of this article will explain how to use these resources.

Finding Aids at the National Archives

The site archives.gov/research/census/1940/ will give you a six-part list of highly useful information about the census. Part 2 is a link to recommendations for preparing to access the census, including tips on how to find addresses and identify the ED. The list consists of the following:

- List the people you want to look for in the 1940 census.
- Collect an address for each of them.
- Identify the ED.

When making your list of people to research, "think broadly" by including ancestors, their siblings, cousins, and anybody else to whom you are related. Step two offers four possible sources where addresses might be found, including city directories, the 1930 U.S. Census, World War II draft records, and naturalization petitions or declarations of intent files that were submitted close to 1940. Additional sources include voter registration records, vital statistics, and local newspapers.

Remember that finding someone who lived in an urban area will require a more specific address, since larger towns and cities had multiple EDs. Finding those living in rural areas may require only the name of the town or village, where one ED may have covered a large area containing an entire town or multiple small towns.

For each address on your list, step three requires identifying the corresponding enumeration district. The site lists two methods to find an ED. The first is to search the census maps; instructions are given on the site. The second method is to search the ED boundary descriptions, as explained on the site.

These two methods are easier said than done. Peo-

ple who have examined the census maps report that many are unreadable. Furthermore, boundary descriptions specify only the names of the roads, streets, or other geographical designations around the perimeter of the district. If your person's address is a road or street inside the boundaries, you may need to find street maps dating to about 1940 to determine which ED encompasses that address. Having tried this process for earlier censuses, I can readily say that it is slow and tedious, even when a reasonable street map is available.

But hold on! At the very bottom of the National Archives' instructions is one further suggestion — to use the search utilities at stevemorse.org. Apparently the National Archives has had to admit that someone else has a better solution.

Finding aids at SteveMorse.org

Anyone who has used any of the many finding aids at Stephen Morse's One-Step Web pages will know that he has a wealth of unique tools ranging from searching Ellis Island records to bidding on eBay. True to form, he has added several clever tools aimed at locating EDs for the 1940 U.S. Census, along with a tutorial (tutorial quiz) on how best to use them.

The first tool is the Unified 1940 ED Tool. This tool consists of a simple search engine linked to a table created by Steve's team and volunteers, containing virtually every road and street in every U.S. city with a population of at least 25,000, along with the corresponding enumeration district. In fact, the volunteers are continuing to add streets for smaller cities as well.

If you believe the city where your target address is located had a population larger than 25,000, click on the link to the Unified 1940 Census ED Finder page. Select the state, county, and city from the lists provided. If you know the street name and house number, enter them. Then click on the bar titled *Get 1940 ED number(s).* The ED or EDs whose boundaries encompass the street you selected will be listed with a link to a present-day map of the neighborhood and a description of the ED's boundaries. If more than one ED is listed, you may be able to narrow the list down by entering a nearby cross street.

In addition, if you have found this person in the 1930 U.S. Census and thus know the 1930 census ED, you can enter that into the Unified Tool in place of the address and get the 1940 ED. If the city for your address is not listed in the selection list, you can select

1940 U.S. Census *(continued)*

Other (specify), and type in the city's name. You also can leave the city blank to get all the EDs in the county. If the ED(s) for the city have been entered in the table, they will be displayed.

For a trial run, I entered from memory the address of my grandparents' home that I often visited as a child in Ogden, Weber County, Utah. Ogden is the only city listed in Weber county, indicating that in 1940 none of the other towns in the county had more than 25,000 inhabitants.

When I entered the street name and house number and clicked on the search bar, five EDs appeared. That made sense, because that street ran for many blocks and would have been within the boundaries of multiple EDs. At that point, I was asked to enter a cross street or back street from a list. I remembered that the cross street on the block was 14th Street. When I entered that detail, the five EDs went down to one. When I tried the address for my other grandparents' home in Los Angeles, two EDs were listed, and it took two cross streets to narrow the list to a single ED.

A nice feature of the Unified ED Finder is that once you have pinpointed a 1940 ED for a household, you can find out the corresponding ED(s) for the 1930 U.S. Census.

What if the address you have is located in a city or town with less than 25,000 inhabitants in 1940 and is not in the table for the Unified ED Finder? For such a case, the One-Step solution is to use either the 1930/1940 ED Converter utility or the ED Description utility. The latter is also the best solution for institutions such as hospitals or for large housing facilities. The 1930/1940 ED Converter requires that you know the ED for one or the other census and allows you to convert from one to the other. For the 1940 census, this utility will only be useful if you know the ED where the address is located in the 1930 census.

If the only information known about an address is the name of a small rural town, the ED Description utility is the last resort. For this tool, select the state and county from the lists. If you have some idea of which ED might be correct, you can select it from the list of all EDs in the country. Otherwise, enter the name of the town in the Keywords box and click the Search button. A table will appear, containing the 1940 ED numbers for every ED in the town, an abbreviated description for each one, and a link to view the detailed descriptions from the T1224 series of 1940 NARA films. If the abbreviated description doesn't help pinpoint the correct ED, perhaps the detailed description will. At most, you will have to browse the images for every ED in the town.

For example, my parents-in-law were married in 1938 while attending the University of Idaho in Moscow. Their residences in 1930 will not be of any use in finding them in the 1940 Census. The only meaningful detail is that they probably lived near the university in 1940, suggesting that we need to use the One-Step ED Description utility. Selecting Idaho and Latah county, then entering *Moscow* as a keyword resulted in a table of 13 EDs. The only mention of the university in the abbreviated descriptions was the University Infirmary. Clicking on the View link for each ED did not help identify the EDs encompassing the University, but at least I narrowed the list to thirteen.

Comparing a present-day map of Moscow, Idaho, with the boundary descriptions of the 13 EDs, I see that in 1940 the university probably was outside the town bounda-

The author's in-laws, married two years before the 1940 U.S. Census, will appear as a couple in northern Idaho.

How I found it: Finding Jacob* Mand* in Mississippi

By Lesly Klippel

One of my students brought her pedigree problem to me after class a few weeks ago. She had found her ancestor, Porter Jacob, living with his widowed mother in Harrison County, Mississippi, in the 1900 U.S. Census. She wanted to trace the family back further but didn't know the deceased father's first name or the mother's maiden name. The index had listed the mother as Maudy Jacob, but when we looked at the original census image, the name could have been either Maudy or Mandy Jacob. Neither name was familiar to my student. Seven children are listed with this young widow, one of whom was Portivient (actually Porter) with the right birth date to be my student's ancestor.

The 1910 Harrison County, Mississippi, census showed her name clearly as Manda Dedo, living with her second husband, Joe Dedo, and having three Jacob children living in the household. Porter Jacob was listed as Peter Jacob, living next door with the correct wife, Celina. So we knew, despite the misspellings, that we had the right family.

After stumbling around a bit, we came across the Mississippi marriage records on Ancestry.com and entered *Jacob** (with a wild card, since the name could be Jacobs) in the Last Name field, and *Mand** in the Spouse First Name field. The marriage of Emmitt Jacobs and Mandy Peters on 22 February 1877 in Hancock County, Mississippi, appeared in the results list. The oldest child of the widowed Mandy Jacob was Emmet — a good clue that we had the right family. The son Emmet's birth date was listed as March

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(Continued from page 5)

ries, toward the west. This corresponds to an ED described as the West Moscow Election Precinct — that part outside Moscow City. This is the ED we will search first.

As you can see, the One-Step tools can be a significant help as you prepare to search the 1940 census — and they are available now. With genealogy software, you can list everyone in your database who was alive in the United States in 1940. The tools will help you set a search plan that will put you well along the way toward a successful project come April. ⌐⊏⊐

Earth Point's overlay on Google Earth

1878, which fit the marriage date perfectly. Also, my student believed that Harrison County was created from Hancock County, a fact that we verified by checking William Dollarhide's handy book *Map Guide to the U.S. Federal Censuses, 1790-1920*, which shows the county boundary changes through the years. Another clue that we had the right marriage was the fact that two Peters families were living next door to the widow Mandy Jacob in the 1900 U.S. Census.

My student knew that the family had acquired land, and she wondered how they got it. I entered *Emmet* Jacob** and *ms* (for Mississippi) into the main search fields on the Ancestry.com home page and got only three hits: the son Emmet Jacob in the 1900 census and two named Emmet Jacobs in Mississippi land records. The image of Emmet Jacobs' patent from the General Land Office showed the description of the land as SW1/4 S24 T7S R13W of St. Stephens Meridian. So I pulled up the EarthPoint web site at www.earthpoint.us and clicked on Township and Range grid on Google Earth, and then Search by Description. I entered the land description into the search fields and clicked on Fly To On Google Earth. As we looked at the SW1/4 of Section 24, my student recognized the property, since it still belongs to the family and has been subdivided into lots on which family members have built homes.

Now we need to find the elusive Mandy Peters with her family. She doesn't show up in the Mississippi census index, so the next step is to look page-by-page through the 1880 and 1870 Mississippi censuses for that area, in hope that the family wasn't missed but was only misspelled or mis-indexed. ⌐⊏⊐

Help! *The census is coming — so how can I help?*

By Richard Rands

Come April 2nd, a lot of researchers are going to be frustrated to discover that the digital images for the 1940 Census cannot be searched by individual names. When they discover that they will have to browse through the images one-by-one, and that there are 3.9 million images, a few choice thoughts may be directed at the National Archives (which is not to blame!).

We have become so accustomed to having every-name indexes for previous U.S. censuses, we are spoiled, and few of us likely comprehend the amount of time and effort required to build the computer files necessary for making census searching easy.

First, the original enumeration sheets must be photographed with a digital camera. The 1940 Census originals were photographed first with a microfilm camera, and then the images on the rolls of microfilm were photographed again with digital cameras — a process that reportedly took several years. Once each frame of the digital copy was separated and any image enhancement completed, the frames were categorized into enumeration districts within states. At this point, each of the 3.9 million images had a unique identification key consisting of the state, an enumeration district, and a frame number. All the digital images then were stored on a central computer server, ready to be accessed by researchers.

However, to streamline the ability to search the records by individual names, a searchable index must be generated linking each name to one of the images. At that point, the images were ready to be sent out for

indexing by volunteers who have loaded special computer software onto their desktop or laptop computers. The software divides the monitor screen into an upper portion that displays a single image from the census, and a bottom grid where details from the image are entered.

After the indexer has transcribed each individual's details from the image, the completed grid is transmitted back to the server, where it is added to the every-name table, and the entries are linked to the corresponding census image.

Every image from the 1940 U.S. Census will be transcribed by two independent indexers. The two grids will be compared by computer software, and any discrepancies will be flagged, so that the differences can be reviewed by a third, perhaps more experienced, indexer called an arbitrator. If the arbitrator cannot determine the correct information, it is sent on to a panel of professional handwriting experts.
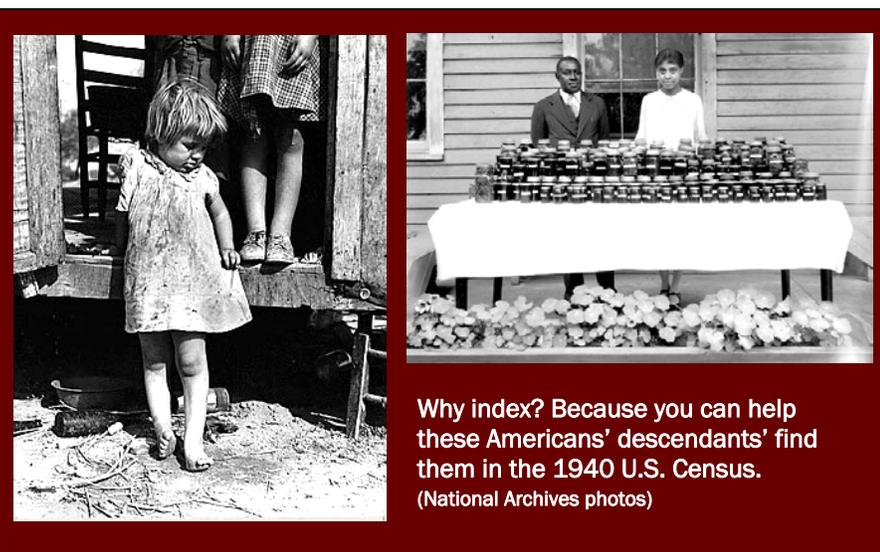
It is difficult to predict ahead of time how long this process will take. We are told that completed portions of the census will be made available for name searching as they are completed. In an accompanying article in this issue, I estimate that the entire 1940 Census could take at least four months if everything goes well, and could take considerably longer, perhaps not until the end of 2012.

The LDS Church's FamilySearch already has a large number of volunteer indexers who have been doing transcriptions on other projects for years. For the census, FamilySearch has put out a call for another 100,000 volunteers in anticipation that this will speed up the project. Every indexer can make a difference.

Indexing is interesting and fun. It helps you become a better researcher by giving you perspective on socioeconomic history. Some of the names you encounter may be people you remember. In the 1940 census, you might come across your parents, your aunts and uncles, your cousins, or yourself.

A census is an easy type of record to index. Also, you do not need to commit to more than the 20 minutes or so it will take to transcribe an image.

Why index? Because you can help these Americans' descendants' find them in the 1940 U.S. Census.
(National Archives photos)

Help! Index the 1940 U.S. Census

Joining our SVCGG indexing team is a simple matter of creating a FamilySearch login account and downloading the indexing software to your PC or Mac. To register, go to FamilySearch.org and click on the Sign-in link at the top right corner of the page. If you already have an account, sign in. If not, click on the bar labeled Create New Account. (You *do not* need to be LDS to register at FamilySearch.org.) You can specify that you want to be part of the Silicon Valley Genealogy Group. If that option is missing, email your user ID to me (rrands@earthlink.net), and I will move you onto our team.

Once you're registered, go to familysearch.org and click the Indexing link at the top of the screen.

Upcoming meetings

The group meets monthly except December, on the second Saturday of the month from 9 to 11 A.M. at The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 875 Quince Ave., Santa Clara, California (see map at right). The group is not affiliated with any church.

10 March 14, 2012, 9–11 A.M.
- Civil War pension files (Janet Brigham)
- 1940 U. S. Census (Richard Rands)
- Transpersonal genealogy workshop (Kristin Rivers)
- Reunion for the Mac (Judd Stiff and Deb Callan)
- Getting started with Reunion (Pat Solomon)
- Getting started (Gloria Christine)

14 April 2012, 9–11 A.M.
- FamilySearch (Lesly Klippel)
- How to do stuff in Windows, Part 1 (Richard Rands)
- Reunion for the Mac
- Getting started with Reunion
- Getting started in genealogy

If this is your first time to index, click on the Get Started bar. You will be able to download the indexing program. Follow the instructions on the screen. Once the program has been downloaded and installed, an icon for FamilySearch Indexing, containing a tree on a background of an old document, will appear on your home page.

When you want to spend some time indexing, simply double-click on the icon, and you will be off and running. On the indexing home page click on Download Batch and select a Project Name from the list. The projects are categorized by level of difficulty—beginning, intermediate, and advanced. You can download from one to ten batches at a time, but it is best to download only as many as you can handle during a single indexing session. If a downloaded batch is not completed within a few days, it is cancelled and given to another indexer.

Finally, let me make a sincere plea to everyone reading this article. Remember that we are part of a larger community, and all of us benefit from each other's efforts. Remember all the indexes you've used, and please take this opportunity to volunteer as an indexer. This is the time to join and get set up to help. You will not regret it.

Please.

Meeting site has ample free off-street parking, with an accessible entrance near the front of the building.

About the Silicon Valley Computer Genealogy Group

SVCGG is the former Silicon Valley PAF Users Group, a nonprofit group of some 600 genealogy enthusiasts. The group is based in Silicon Valley in the Bay Area of northern California, but members live all over the world.
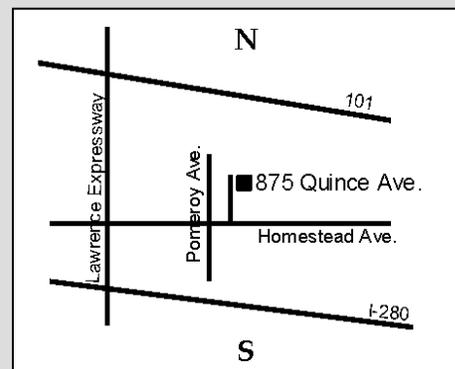
PastFinder is the official publication of the Silicon Valley Computer Genealogy Group. Published monthly except December, *PastFinder* is distributed at meetings to members in attendance and mailed to others after the meetings. Members can receive the newsletter by e-mail containing a download link.

Membership dues are US$15 per household per year; $20, Canada; and $25, other international.