

The Bolger Heritage Center for Local History and Genealogy at the Ridgewood Public Library

By Bolger Heritage Center and Ridgewood Public Library Librarians Sarah Kiefer and Peggy W. Norris (Retired), and GSBC Archivist Editor, Michelle D. Novak

The Bolger Heritage Center for Local History and Genealogy is a library and archives located within the Ridgewood Public Library (RPL) in Bergen County, NJ.

In 1999, the Genealogical Society of Bergen County, NJ, (GSBC) and the Ridgewood Public Library formed a partnership — merging their collections, collaborating on programs, offering research assistance, managing indexing projects, conducting classes, and more. In 2010, with funding from philanthropist David F. Bolger and the Ridgewood Library Foundation, the RPL opened the Bolger Heritage Center to house the growing print and digital resources and provide a quiet space for researchers to explore the collections.

The Bolger Heritage Center offers resources on New Jersey history including: Bergen and Rockland County (NY) church and cemetery records; local and national periodicals and newsletters; manuscripts; ephemera; photos; maps; bible records; newspapers; abstracts of vital records; genealogical resources and reference books; city directories; yearbooks; hard to find town histories; and numerous, family files and published compiled genealogies. In addition to the print and microfilm collections, the Center also offers indexes and assets compiled on CD-ROM, access to online subscription genealogical databases (i.e., Ancestry LE, AmericanAncestors), and a state-of-the-art digital scanner to help you organize your family ephemera and photos for future generations. It's a great resource — close to home.

Like many specialized collections, the Bolger Heritage Center's resources are both broad — offering great 'how-to' advice — and incredibly specific — containing unique resources on specific locations, events, and families.

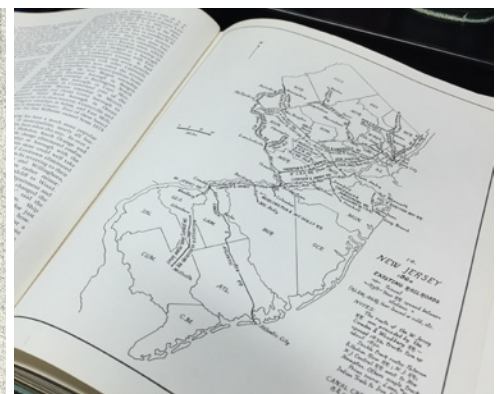
We're confident that each time you visit us, you'll find something new for your research.

WHAT ARE THE MUST-SEE RESOURCES FOR GENEALOGISTS?

The Bolger Heritage Center is an exciting and growing resource for those interested in genealogy and Bergen County history. Under the direction of the Bolger Heritage Center Librarian and the GSBC Librarian Chair, the collection is regularly added to and pruned to meet the needs of researchers. In addition, under the direction of the GSBC's Indexing and Patron Assistance Chairs, the GSBC indexes materials in the collection and provides complementary research support for those who cannot visit the collection in person.

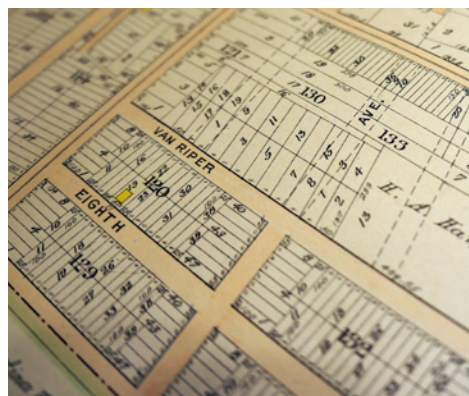
- **GSBC-RPL Local Newspaper Collection (on Microfilm) and GSBC Newspaper Indexes (Online)** — The RPL contains several thousand microfilm reels (located adjacent to the Center) of local newspapers that span the 1800s to present day. These publications contain countless articles about the goings-on of the day and many report far more than just the news, including: births, deaths, accidents, anniversaries, fires, injuries, court

cases, social and school events, elections, rallies, protests, transfers of property, bankruptcies, birthday parties, weather, announcements, and even some gossip and divorces! The GSBC has been name-indexing many of these publications so that genealogists may more easily find their ancestors in these publications. For publications where name-indexes do not yet exist, view the edition (usually published weekly) closest to the



life event you are looking for. And, if you can't make it to the Bolger Heritage Center, GSBC Patron Assistance researchers will look up newspaper reported events for you. (Four free lookups are included in your GSBC Membership. Small fee for additional lookups past the four complimentary ones and for all non-member lookups. See www.njgsbc.org/library/patron-assistance for information). See the GSBC website (www.njgsbc.org) > Library > Newspaper Collections for GSBC compiled indexes for some microfilm titles. See the Ridgewood Library's website for a complete list of microfilm titles (www.ridgewoodlibrary.org/localhistory/pdf/Newspapers.pdf).

- **GSBC Family Files and Digital Family Files** — The GSBC family files (located in file cabinets and with some records scanned to digital files) contain research notes, clippings, photos, and other ephemera collected by GSBC Members since our founding in 1973. Organized by surname, the collection is a hodge-podge of treasures waiting to be explored. Some documents, such as research notes and lineage trees, may help you with a particular research stumper. Other items, such as copies of photos, documents, and bible records, might help you replace the ephemera that may have been long lost to your branch of the family. And, if your family does not have a folder in the collection, why not start one by contributing copies of your research materials, electronic preferred, to the collection?
 - A general name-index of **GSBC Family Files** and a description of most of the folder contents is located on the GSBC website (www.njgsbc.org) > Indexes > GSBC Family Files.
 - The **paper GSBC Family Files** are located in the file cabinets near the main RPL Reference Desk. (See the RPL Reference Desk for the key.)
 - The Center also has a **Family File Computer Database** (on-site only) that contains scans of many family file records not found in the paper files. Note that the GSBC family files are being digitized and many records, copies, and transcripts, are now only available in the on-site electronic database.
- **NJ Historical State and County Maps** — Bergen County evolved from having only two named settlements, in an area nearly twice the size of today's boundaries, to 70 municipalities today! During this evolution, the County saw numerous municipal boundary shifts, divisions, and disputes between families, states, and towns. As a result, those with Bergen ancestors may find them "moving" to a new county or town without ever leaving their home. Finding them on censuses, tax, and land records involves a knowledge of Bergen geography as much as knowing where the records are held. To help you navigate these geographic changes, the Center contains a wonderful collection of materials, including:
 - original and facsimile maps of local and state milestone surveys, including: the oversized 1861 Corey-Hopkins map of Bergen County which contains the location and names of hundreds of families (currently being name-indexed by the GSBC); the Walker (1876) and Bromley (1912-1913) Atlases for Bergen County; the recently published *Maps of Claire K. Tholl; Historical Maps of Rockland County and Towns in Northwest Bergen County*; 1867 Hughes map Palisades to Paterson; and the 1902 Robinson Map of Bergen County,
 - Snyder's *The Story of New Jersey's Civil Boundaries, 1606-1968* (1968), which traces municipality developments and provides a gazetteer of NJ towns,
 - Lurie and Wacker's *Mapping New Jersey, an Evolving Landscape* (2009), an informative historical and data atlas,
 - Delaney's *Nova Casarea, A Cartographic Record of the Garden State, 1666-1888* (2014), which provides historical maps of New Jersey, and
 - various statistic and data titles, most compiled by the US Census Bureau, including the *Historical Statistics of the US, Colonial Times to 1970*, and *County and City Data Book*
- **Local Church and Cemetery Records** — Perhaps the most heavily used part of the collection are transcribed church and cemetery records from throughout Bergen and Rockland Counties, with special emphasis on the Dutch Reformed Churches. These sources are critical to local genealogical research and are complemented by published family genealogies. Most of the collection is contained in three-ring binders and has never been commercially published. Records may be searched at the Bolger Heritage Center (open stacks) or, for those who cannot make it to the Center, copies of records may be requested via email through the GSBC's Patron Assistance Lookup Program (www.njgsbc.org/library/patron-assistance).
- **Atlases and Gazetteers** — Many of the atlases and gazetteers in the Center's collection are specifically written to help genealogists with their research. Some are broad while others focus on specific geographic regions and specific points in time. Titles include (only a small sampling):



- *The Columbia Gazetteer of the World*
- *Topographical Dictionary of Scotland; Topographical Dictionary of Ireland; Topographical Dictionary of England*
- *Genealogical Gazetteer of England*
- *Map Guide to German Parish Registers, Vol 1-47*
- *Genealogical Gazetteer of Hungary*
- *New England Gazetteer*
- *A Book of Old Maps*

- **Genealogical “How-To” Resources** — Genealogical research throws us unexpectedly into many different ethnicities and nationalities. A substantial part of the Center’s collection, the “how-to” section contains many quality publications such as:
 - **Genealogical Research: World & Ethnicities** — Canadian, English, German, Hispanic, Irish, Italian, Japanese, Jewish, Polish, Slavic, Swedish, Welsh, etc.
 - **Genealogical Research: United States** — adoption, immigration, Native American research, US state research guides, slavery and post-emancipation migration, etc.
 - **Languages, Handwriting, and Transcription Guides**

- **Genealogical Process and Problem-Solving** — brick-wall strategies, citation, digitization, DNA, old photo identification, etc.),
- **Professional Genealogy Practices** — professional guides, citation, research organization, etc.
- and many, many more topics.

Note: See the GSBC website (www.njgsbc.org) > The Bolger Heritage Center > Library Collections for a list of subject categories and sample titles. Please keep in mind that many topics span multiple categories and if, for example, you are interested in Irish research check the topic in multiple categories (i.e., atlases and gazetteers, how-to, newsletters, social histories) or just browse the Center’s stacks for ideas.

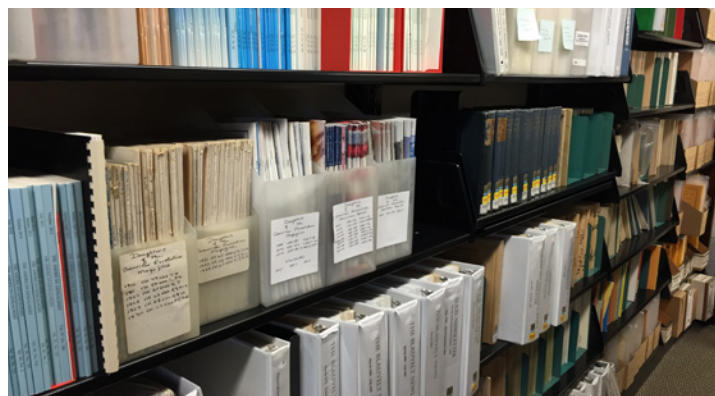
Most titles in this collection are searchable through BCCLS system (www.bccls.org , restrict results to “Ridgewood”) or HeritageCATalog (<http://ridgewood.pastperfectonline.com>) which focuses on the Center’s archive materials.

Don’t forget to consult the Bolger Heritage Center Librarian or a GSBC Patron Assistance volunteer. If you are planning your visit from out-of-town, contact the Center ahead of time to better plan your visit and get more out of your time there.

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE UNDERUSED RESOURCES?

As tempting as it is to think that “everything is online,” a quick trip through the Bolger Heritage Center’s stacks will convince you otherwise. The strength of a local-history library is to be *local*: providing materials and resources that are so specific as to fall through the cracks of the large online databases. Some items at the Center that you won’t easily find online are:

- **Genealogical Periodicals and Journals** — The Bolger Heritage Center contains an expansive collection of local and national genealogical publications and local newsletters. A number of these are acquired via the Library’s institutional exchange program and are hard, sometimes nearly impossible, to find otherwise. The Center also holds a large collection of back issues of local, regional, and national journals that span decades. Note that periodicals and journals are organized alphabetically by *publication title*. The collection is in the open stacks and many have published and/or online indexes to names and topics. The collection includes publications on topics such as:
 - **ethnicities** (e.g., Huguenot, Irish, German),
 - **families** (e.g., David Ackerman Descendants, Van Voorhees Family Association)
 - **historical** (e.g., Bergen County Historical Society, DAR *American Spirit*, New Netherland Institute)
 - **lineage and social societies** (e.g., DAR, Holland Society, Mayflower Society)
 - **location** (e.g., New England, New Jersey, New York City, South Mountain in Rockland County, Westchester County),
 - **municipalities** (e.g., Allendale, Glen Rock, Paramus),
 - **professional standards** (e.g., *The American Genealogist*, Association of Promotion of Scholarship in Genealogy),
 - and many more unique topics and titles!
- **Local Histories** — In addition to periodicals and journals, the Bolger Heritage Center also actively collects histories about congregations, organizations, towns, and local historical topics. Some of these titles are commercially printed publications while others are locally printed, sometimes photocopied or mimeographed, and may not be found anywhere else! Many of these titles are donated by authors, town committees, and researchers



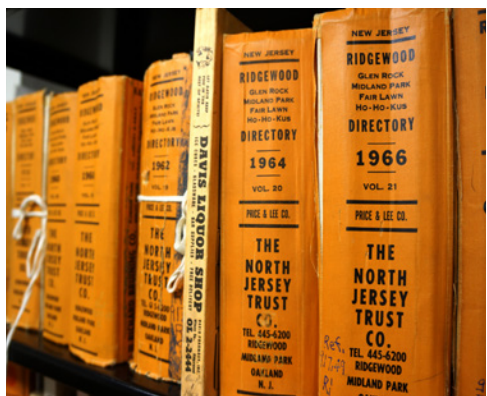
to preserve their history for future generations. Most are available in the stacks for easy and open access and browsing.

- **City Directories (Microfilm; Restricted Access Originals)** — In an age where a printed phone directory is nearly impossible to come by, the Bolger Heritage Center holds numerous directories for Ridgewood and immediate vicinity as well as some county-wide phone books from the 1980s and 1990s. Older directories, many published annually, can help you trace your ancestors' movements and fill the gaps between official censuses. Some directories even include minor biographical details such as profession, name of spouse, relationships in a household, and the marital status of women. And if your ancestor owned a business, make sure to check the corresponding business listings and keep an eye out for advertisements! Remember that directories were paid for by inexpensive, local ads from local businesses.
 - **City directories on microfilm** are located just outside the Center.
 - **Original directories are housed in the Bolger Heritage Center Archive** and access can be arranged through the Bolger Heritage Center Librarian.

- **Ridgewood School Yearbooks** — The Bolger Heritage Center houses an impressive collection of yearbooks from Ridgewood schools. The Library accepts donations of books for missing years as they're a great record of people, interests, culture, fashion and styles of their times.
- **Ridgewood Historical Archives (Restricted Access)** — The Bolger Heritage Center also houses the Ridgewood Historical Archives which includes original maps, photographs, newspapers, family bibles, event programs, and original documents. Some highlights of the collection are:
 - the original 1698 Van Emburgh deed, recording the first land transactions in Ridgewood,
 - the minutes of the [Ridgewood] Village Improvement Association, founded in 1898,
 - glass plate negatives of photographs documenting downtown Ridgewood from 1915-1935,
 - early photographs of Ridgewood and vicinity including gatherings, parades, war rallies, street-scapes, portraits, and events, and
 - Ridgewood tax maps from 1908-1925.

WHAT ARE THE HOURS, FEES, LOCATION, AND OTHER INFORMATION I NEED TO KNOW?

- The Bolger Heritage Center is located within the Ridgewood Public Library, 125 N. Maple Ave, Ridgewood, NJ 07450, 201-670-5600 (main) x135 (Bolger Heritage Center).
- The Center is located just inside the N. Main Street entrance (old Library entrance) which has free street parking.
- Handicapped parking and additional free parking is located in the lower parking lot of the Ridgewood Municipal Complex which abuts the Library and recreation fields. Elevator access, handicapped restrooms, and a magnifying table are all available right outside the Center.
- There is no fee to use the collection, but the RPL and Center asks that researchers sign in.
- Publications in the Bolger Heritage Center are not part of the circulating collection and must be used on-site. A few titles located on the shelf right outside of the Center can circulate.
- The Bolger Heritage Center is a climate-controlled environment and is kept on the cool side to best preserve the older books.
- Operating hours for the Center follows the normal schedule of the Library (<http://www.ridgewoodlibrary.org>).
- The RPL is open seven days a week. Normal Library hours are Mondays-Thursdays, 9 am–9 pm; Fridays, 9 am–6 pm; Saturdays, 9 am–5 pm; and Sundays, 1 pm–5 pm. (The Library has extra closing days in the summer, please check the website before your visit.)
- Sarah Kiefer, Bolger Heritage Center Librarian, 201-670-5600 x.135, skiefer@ridgewoodlibrary.org for her schedule or for any questions about the collections.
- The Archives are open by appointment only.
- Ink pens are not allowed. Pencils, a sharpener, and scratch paper are provided for your use.
- The Center offers free on-site access to Ancestry LE (Library Edition), AmericanAncestors (New England Genealogical Society), and Newspaper Archives, among others. Databases are supported, in part, by GSBC Membership dues. In addition to these staples, the Library takes part in trials and may add new databases requested by researchers.
- The scanner at the Center scans both flat items as well as slides, negatives, and transparencies. USBs may be used to copy images



that have been scanned (also available for purchase at the RPL Reference Desk). If you are unfamiliar with scanning, please make sure to visit when the Bolger Heritage Center Librarian or a GSBC Patron Assistance volunteer is available for a quick overview of using the scanner.

- One Microfilm reader has the ability to scan the image to a USB drive. All microfilm readers have laser print capability.
- Laser prints are 25 cents per page. Photocopies are 15 cents a page. Copy and print fees are paid at the Main Reference Desk.
- The Library provides free Wi-Fi access for patrons' use.

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- Donations of genealogical books and newsletters, original historical ephemera, photographs, yearbooks, directories, monetary donations, or other materials related to Bergen County and its families to the GSBC library are always welcome. See the Bolger Heritage Center Librarian before donating to verify that the Center is the right place for your donation.
- The cafe on the lower level is generally open during Library hours. No food or drink is allowed in the Center.

WHAT ARE SOME "PRO" TIPS?

- **GSBC On-Site Patron Assistance (PA)** — Check the calendar at the GSBC's website (www.njgsbc.org) to make a complimentary appointment with a skilled volunteer researcher. Patron Assistance researchers have deep experience with using the collection and many have areas of particular expertise (e.g., German, Irish, and Jewish Research; city directories and maps; languages; NYC research, areas of expertise are listed on the website). In addition to helping you break through your brick walls, GSBC PAs can help you get familiar with the resources at the Bolger Heritage Center that can further your research.
- **GSBC Patron Assistance Lookup Services** — If you can't make it to the Bolger Heritage Center in person, you can order copies of some records in the Center's collection via email. GSBC Members are entitled to four free lookups per year. See the GSBC website (www.njgsbc.org/library/patron-assistance) for description of the Lookup Program and to download an order form.
- **Visit and Browse Often** — The Bolger Heritage Center is a small, highly-focused collection and there are sure to be surprises in store for you. Looking for information on New Jersey clock-makers? The history of your borough? A cyclopedia of nineteenth century social leaders? A how-to on reading German scripts and handwriting? the stacks — you may be surprised what you find.
- **Attend GSBC Events and RPL-GSBC Classes** — The GSBC's programming offers topics on NJ-focused research, genealogical process, and ethnic-specific research of interest to Bergen County and NJ researchers. Classes, workshops, and Heritage Roundtables (held in conjunction with the RPL in the Tech Room or at the Bolger Heritage Center) are small group sessions where we make the time to dive deeper into topics. All our programming is designed to reflect our Members' interests. And if you have a topic you would like to see covered, just let us know!

HOW CAN I CONTACT A RESEARCH SPECIALIST OR LEARN MORE?

- Contact the **Bolger Heritage Center Librarian, Sarah Kiefer**, at 201-670-5600 x.135 or skiefer@ridgewoodlibrary.org, who can assist with using the collection and arrange access to Archive materials at the Center.
- Visit the **Ridgewood Public Library's online catalogs**:
 - **BCCLS System**, which includes most publications at the Bolger Heritage Center (www.bccls.org, restrict results to "Ridgewood")
 - **HeritageCATalog**, which catalogs the Bolger Heritage Center's Archival collection (www.ridgewoodlibrary.org/localhistory/ or <http://ridgewood.pastperfectonline.com>).
- Contact or arrange a visit with a **GSBC Patron Assistance researcher** (www.njgsbc.org/library/patron-assistance), who can assist with using the collection, respond to questions about specific research topics, and fulfill look-ups via mail or email. On-site consultation is complimentary. GSBC Members receive four complimentary lookups per membership year (\$5 per lookup afterwards); \$5 per lookup for non-members.

