

Tip of the Month --- Research News

By Howard Maynard Faulkner

Recently several 'announcements' from major archives, libraries and independent organizations, helpful to genealogists and family historians alike, must be cheered! Most of what I write about here today is GOOD NEWS. Unfortunately there is sad news as well.

Nearly two years ago the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) announced substantial cuts in their operating budget that caused widespread reduction in the hours of operation at all NARA sites. In the past couple of months I am happy to report that most all of those cuts in hours of operation have been re-established. Somehow Congress and NARA 'found' funding that made genealogists smile, for tens of thousands of folks like us who wrote rational letters to both Congress and the Administration of NARA. And NARA has recently announced they will make available substantially more of their records online most notably through private sources like FOOTNOTE.org (see below) and ANCESTRY.COM. While these two organizations are 'fee' based some of what has been released will be FREE for all to use. Go to their websites for updates.

Many of us who research the early years in the eastern counties of Massachusetts have long known of the *Special Collections Department* of the Haverhill Public Library, Haverhill, Massachusetts. Over a year ago the Curator of that Program became seriously ill while in India and because he was the backbone of that organization, staffed by mostly volunteers, the Library Director found it necessary to close that wonderful collection to the public. Sadly, Greg Laing, City Historian and Curator of the Special Collections passed away and the Collections remained closed until just this month. The new hours are posted at their website at: www.haverhillpl.org/Departments/special.html. It will be impossible to replace "Greg" as he was known to so many historians for so many years. *He was larger than life* a close friend told me this week.

FOOTNOTE.org and NARA have jointly launched a wonderful resource, free of charge. The entire Vietnam War Memorial (know as *THE WALL*), is now interactively available online. Complete details here: <http://go.footnote.com/>. Take a little time to become familiar with this resource. I believe we will see more of this kind of "database presentation" from FOOTNOTE and ANCESTRY in the future.

In late December, Familysearch.org and The Generations Network, Inc., (parent company of Ancestry.com), signed an agreement that provides free access of Ancestry.com to patrons of the Family History Library in Salt Lake City and the 13 largest regional family history centers. You may read the full press release at:

http://www.familysearch.org/Eng/Home/News/frameset_news.asp.

This is a welcome start Ancestry but there are still over 4,500 centers that will not participate in this program, including all those in Maine!!

TOM April 2008