

MEDIA RELEASE

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GENEALOGISTS CONFERENCE SERVES UP RICHES FOR FAMILY HISTORIANS

Gold, the stuff dreams are made of, was covered by historian and archivist Graham Langton in his presentation *The Pot of Gold* to the New Zealand Genealogists Society's Conference in Christchurch on Queen's Birthday Weekend.

Langton, who works for Archives New Zealand in Wellington, says his talk was an overview of the discovery of gold and the gold rushes of 19th century South Island. While researching for his topic, he says it was often hard to find information on miners because of their transient lifestyle. It was through determination and rigorous researching that he found most information in three types of records – Warden's court records, naturalisation and coroner's inquest records.

On a more personal note, he unearthed details of his wife's great grandfather, George Sawden Harper, the first Methodist minister to be appointed to Hokitika in the gold rush there, where he was trusted to weigh gold accurately and fairly for the miners.

Langton said the Reverend Harper came to New Zealand in 1864 and was appointed to Hokitika in 1865. He moved on in May 1866 and eventually ended up as a minister in Thames, when its gold boom began in 1867-68.

Archives New Zealand's Christchurch Regional Archivist, Chris Adam, also spoke at the conference. His topic focuses on records of Canterbury Provincial Government from 1853 to 1876 and their importance as a source of family history information. He says the archives of Canterbury's provincial government provide an important record of many aspects of life in the region during this period and are therefore, an important source of family history information.

Adam says the provincial records are important for three reasons. First, the small size of the provincial population – in 1853 the population of Canterbury was only 3895, and this grew to 58,752 in 1866 (including the West Coast goldfields) and was over 84,000 by 1876. Second, that until local government was established, the provincial government fulfilled that role as well; and third, through

necessity, 19th century colonial administration collected information about people that its British counterparts did not. "With a small population and a broad ambit of responsibilities there are more chances of discovering family information among records created by the provincial government and its institutions," he said.

Over 300 genealogists attended the conference, from 30 May to 2 June, at St Bede's College, 210 Main North Road, Redwood, Christchurch.

Keynote speakers are Sharon De Bartolo Carmack and Jim Warren, renowned genealogy researchers and published authors from the USA. They gave three lectures each. There were also 26 other presentations on the conference theme of *From Coast to Coast*. Some of them were practical, "how-to" lessons on family research, using examples from Canterbury and West Coast history, and some were based more on the social history of those provinces.

Details about the conference programme are on the following website <http://www.genealogy.org.nz/>.

Background Information

Keynote Speakers at the NZ Society of Genealogists Conference, 30 May to 2 June 2008, Christchurch

Sharon DeBartolo Carmack is the author of 16 books and hundreds of articles and columns that have appeared in nearly every major genealogical journal and publication. As executive editor of Family Tree Books (formerly Betterway Books) she has acquired and edited more than 40 titles, making Family Tree Books and Betterway Books America's best-selling guides to genealogy. Sharon is also the host of Roots Books, a talk-show that airs on Roots Television and also teaches non-fiction writing classes for Writers Online Workshops, She is a member of the Association of Personal Historians and of the Association of Professional Genealogists. Her awards and honours include the APG's Grahame Thomas Smallwood Jr. Award of Merit and the Federation of Genealogical Societies' Award of Merit (twice).

In 1988 Sharon was made a Fellow of the Utah Genealogical Association for her "outstanding contributions to the genealogical community and for the production of articles, books, and lectures that are an exemplary blend of her expertise in history and genealogy."

Sharon's lectures are



'Flesh on the Bones: Putting your ancestors into historical perspective

'Love Letters, Diaries, and Autobiographies: Let's Leave 'em Somethin' to Talk About

'From Yawner to Page Turner: writing a Compelling Family History

Jim Warren has been a full-time professional genealogical researcher for the last 15 years and spends several weeks each year at both the Family History Library in Salt Lake City and at the National Archives in Washington, DC.

His warm and humorous style has made him a popular seminar and after-dinner speaker and he has lectured at every annual conference of both the National Genealogical Society and the Federation of Genealogical Societies since 1993.

The author and co-author of several books, Jim was for seven years the course co-ordinator of the annual Salt Lake Institute of Genealogy's American Genealogy Records and Resources Course, where classroom instruction is combined with hands-on assistance to students in the Family History Library.

Jim has also served as a trustee of the Association of Professional Genealogists and was a director of the Federation of Genealogical Societies for 11 years, including four as its vice-president of administration. He is currently a member of the National Genealogical Society's Health and Heredity Committee.

He has also been a recipient of the APG's Smallwood Award of merit as well as the David S. Vogels Award for career contributions to the FGS and its 600 member societies.

Jim's topics are

'If only our Ancestors had email

'The Most Priceless Heritage: Practical Family History Health Steps

'Resources of the Family History Library