More Than Just Mrs.: The Importance of Women in Family History

Dr. Karen Guenther  
Mansfield University

Often people researching their family history focus on male relatives or see female ancestors as appendages to their husbands. This presentation will discuss how researching the women in your family tree - mothers, aunts, grandmothers, etc. - can help you better understand your family's heritage.

Dr. Karen Guenther is a native of Berks County and currently is Professor of History at Mansfield University. She earned a B.A. in History and Spanish at Stephen F. Austin State University in Nacogdoches, Texas, M.A. in History at Penn State, and Ph.D. in History at the University of Houston. She focuses on Reading’s and Berks County’s religious history in her research and publications. Her dissertation on Exeter Monthly Meeting during the 18th century was published by Susquehanna University Press in 2005. She is currently researching the immigration and naturalization policy of the British Empire and its effect on the settlement of Berks County in the 18th century.
### SCHEDULE

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<th>Time</th>
<th>Session</th>
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<tr>
<td>8:30</td>
<td>Registration (tea and coffee will be served)</td>
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<tr>
<td>9:00</td>
<td>Women Jurors in Berks</td>
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<td>Brian Engelhardt</td>
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<td>10:00</td>
<td>Break</td>
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<td>10:15</td>
<td>Ahead of Her Time</td>
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<td>L.T. James</td>
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<td>11:15</td>
<td>Break &amp; Refreshments</td>
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<td>11:30</td>
<td>Berks Suffragists</td>
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<td>Mary Ellen Heckman</td>
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<td>12:30</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
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<td>1:15</td>
<td>More Than Just Mrs.</td>
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<td>Karen Guenther</td>
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<td>2:15</td>
<td>Closing</td>
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### Problems That Confronted the First Women Jurors in Berks County

Brian Engelhardt, Esq.  
Author & Retired Attorney

Although passage of the 19th Amendment granted women the right to vote, the “suffrage” granted was not universally viewed as including the right of women to serve on juries. This presentation will discuss the legislation in Pennsylvania that guaranteed jury service as a right held by both women and men. It will also explore the problems that arose in the implementation of this right, beginning with getting women’s names on the jury roll, plus addressing the monumental problem of the total absence of rest rooms for women in the Berks County Courthouse as it existed at the time. The presentation will generally revisit the difficult path that confronted the women jurors—pioneers in that important facet of Berks County’s judicial system.

Brian Engelhardt is a native of Reading and is a regular contributor to the Berks County Historical Review on various matters concerning local history, including local baseball history. A graduate of Dickinson College and the University of Pittsburgh School of Law, he is a retired attorney who also regularly contributes to the Berks Barrister, published by the Bar Association. He has written about the problems confronting women jurors in the wake of the 19th Amendment both in the Historical Review as well as the Barrister. He also is the author of the book, “Reading’s Big League Exhibition Games,” a great work of western literature.

### Ahead of Her Time: Story of a Berks Code Girl Discovered 75 Years Later

Linda Thompson Thomas aka L.T. James  
Writer & Consultant

Mary Jane Painter Thompson was a WWII veteran of the US Office of Strategic Services, which is now known as the CIA. Uncover her experiences serving for three years as a top secret cryptographer in North Africa and Italy from 1943-45 with a visual journey featuring artifacts that her daughter discovered almost 75 years later in the attic of the family home. After serving her country, Thompson became involved with the League of Women Voters in her hometown, Reading, PA.

Linda Thompson Thomas aka L.T. James is a Berks County native who has lived, worked and traveled around the world. Linda graduated as Vice President of her nursing class in California while raising her three children. Linda has been the Coordinator of the Pagoda Writers group since 2010 and continues to serve as a Youth Aid Panel Volunteer with the Juvenile Probation Office for the last ten years. She is also a graduate of RACC and studied Psychology at Albright along with numerous other institutions of learning in the United States and abroad.

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☐ Chicken Salad
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Cancellation Policy: Cancellations must be received by March 27, 2020. A $25.00 administration fee will be charged for refunds.

Send Registration Form with Payment to:

The Berks History Center
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