

Black River Falls Public Library

SB 393

Jackson County History Room
Mary I. Murray-Woods, Historian
222 Fillmore Street
Black River Falls, WI 54615

Telephone 715/284-4112

January 21, 1998

Rep. John Dobyms
State Capitol PO Box 8952
Madison, WI 53708

Dear Rep. Dobyms:

As the historian in the Black River Falls Public Library-Jackson County History Room, I am writing to ask you to support SB 393 (Senate Bill/AB 709 (Assembly Bill), Legislation relating to the issuance of uncertified copies of vital records for events occurring before October 1, 1907.

This bill is important to me and to thousand of genealogists in Wisconsin. It restores our right to make copies of vital records for events before October 1, 1907. Since 1981 we have been permitted to make copies from microfilm prepared by the Genealogical Society of Utah. However, in March of this year we learned that the 1985 law governing vital records made it illegal for anyone other than the State Bureau of Vital Records or Register of Deeds to make any copies of vital records. Even though we have been making copies from the microfilm ever since 1981, without anyone ever objecting, the State Historical Society and the Area Research Centers have now decided they must comply with the law. I don't know why this didn't happen in 1985 when the law was passed but apparently it was never intended to apply to these particular records.

What makes the current situation very unfair to Wisconsin genealogist is that there are copies of the microfilm at the Family History Library in Salt Lake City and available at Family History Centers throughout the country. Anyone with access to the film outside of Wisconsin can make copies without any problems. Only those of us in Wisconsin are prohibited from making copies of our records. SB393/AB709 would correct this inequity. Because the records involved are all at least 90 years old and the copies are not certified there is virtually no possibility for fraudulent use.

I strongly urge you to vote for SB 393/AB709.

Sincerely,

Mary I. Murray-Woods

Mary I. Murray Woods
Historian

January 22, 1998

Hon. John P. Dolynas, Chairman
Assembly Standing Committee on Govt. Operations
P.O. Box 89552

Mason, W. 53708

Dear Mr. Dolynas,

I am writing in support of SB 393 - legislation relating to the issuance of uncertified copies of vital records for events occurring before Oct 1 1907.

I am a volunteer in the microfilm room of the State Historical Society and am proud and highly impressed by the facility and the work done there. It provides a great service to the people all over this country seeking information about their ancestry. It seems a shame to have its work made difficult by prohibitions not found elsewhere.

I strongly urge the passage of this bill.

Sincerely
Emilia Bremer
N 22 60 Hwy 69
Mason, W.

MONROE COUNTY HISTORY ROOM MUSEUM & LIBRARY

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

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200 West Main Street

P O Box 419

Sparta WI 54656-0419

(608) 269-8680

Fax (608) 269-8921



January 23, 1998

Hon. John P. Dobyms, Chairperson
Assembly Standing Committee on
Government Operations
PO Box 8952
Madison, WI 53708

Dear Chairman Dobyms

Re: SB393/AB709 Copies of Vital Records Pre 1907 in Wisconsin

The Monroe County Local History Room is very much in favor of this bill. We at the History Room have a legal copy of these records on microfilm, and I have been very cautious about who has permission to use them. I am a librarian, not a policeman. We have the restrictions on copying posted and are very careful but it is possible an unauthorized copy could be made. That would make me a criminal.

The fact that legal copies can be made at any library holding the films outside of Wisconsin, but not be made in Wisconsin should be relevant to this discussion.

Please change this unworkable situation. Please vote for SB393/AB709.

Very truly yours

Audrey Johnson, County Historian
Monroe County Local History Room

cc - Rep. Terry Musser
Sen. Rod Moen

Volz, David

From: Larry Lynch[SMTP:lynchld@uwec.edu]
Sent: Monday, January 26, 1998 9:54 AM
To: Rep.Plouff; Sen.Clausing; Rep.Dobyns; Rep.Wieckert; Rep.Ott; Rep.Urban; Rep.Kelso;
Rep.Ziegelbauer; Rep.Schneider; Rep.Plale; rep.young@legis.state.wi.us
Cc: Cleo J Powers
Subject: AB709/SB393 (vital records copying)

Dear members of the Assy Govt Operations Committee and Sen. Clausing,

I urge you to support AB709 and SB393 regarding copying of pre-1907 vital records. From 1981 until 1997 the State Historical Society of Wisconsin and affiliated Area Research Centers made printed copies from microfilmed birth, death, and marriage records recorded before 1 October 1907 for genealogists and other historical researchers. However, a 1985 law that established Chapter 69 of the State Statutes technically made it legal for only the State Registrar in the Bureau of Vital Records and the local Registrars of Deeds to copy such records. It appears that, through an oversight, making uncertified copies of the pre-1907 records for historical purposes was not exempted. As of March 1997, the State Historical Society of Wisconsin and the Area Research Centers were forced to declare a moratorium on copying these records, creating a great inconvenience for genealogists, students, and other scholars. Your support of AB709 and SB393 will correct this unfortunate situation and remove the ambiguity in the current laws.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Larry Lynch
Curator, Eau Claire Area Research Center

Larry Lynch, University Archivist
Special Collections, McIntyre Library
University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire
Eau Claire, WI 54702-5010
(715) 836-3873

"I'M AN ARCHIVIST--
THAT'S WHO I AM,
THAT'S WHAT I DO!"

FAX: (715) 836-2949 Email: lynchld@uwec.edu

309 N. Brearly Street
Madison, WI 53703
26 January 1998

The Hon. John P. Dobyms, Chair
Assembly Standing Committee
on Government Operations
PO Box 8952
Madison, WI 53708

Dear Rep. Dobyms,

As a professional genealogist, I want to add my vote to those who are in favor of SB 393/AB 709, lifting the ban on the making of uncertified photocopies from microfilms of pre-1907 Wisconsin vital records by the public in Wisconsin.


My reasons for this are:

- 1) The records are now over 100 years old, so there is no possibility that uncertified copies could be used to construct false identities or for other fraudulent purposes.
- 2) The present restriction unfairly penalizes those who do research at the State Historical Society and its Area Research Centers, when the same records are available at numerous repositories outside of Wisconsin, where the limitation cannot apply. In fact, copies of these microfilms may be borrowed at any L.D.S. Family History Center throughout the United States (including those in Wisconsin). This restriction, in effect, taxes residents of Wisconsin for copying "their own" records, when everyone else is allowed to do so (although many out-of-state visiting researchers are also affected).
- 3) I believe that it was never the intention of the drafters of the original law that the public be prohibited from making photocopies of these old vital records, or else the letter of the law would have been enforced before now. Belatedly demanding compliance with this law is like trying to make a cat stay inside the house after its owner, knowing that he shouldn't, has let the cat run free outside - it is unreasonable and makes the cat pretty angry. In this case, it makes the State Vital Records Office and the County Registers of Deeds look greedy and foolish. It also makes Wisconsin taxpayers resentful twice: when they aren't allowed to make copies like they used to and when they know that legislative time is being wasted to retract this nonsensical law.

I know you are a cosponsor of the bill to rectify this situation, so of course the above criticism is not aimed at you personally. I hope that letters like this, as well as the testimonies of the public at the hearing on January 28, will convince the members of your committee to recommend the speedy passage of both SB 393 and AB 709.

Thank you for your efforts to correct this legislative *faux pas*.

Sincerely,


Dee Anna Grimsrud

January 26, 1998

The Honorable John P. Dobyms
Chairperson
Assembly Standing Committee on Government Operations
Box 8952
Madison, WI 53708

Dear Representative Dobyms

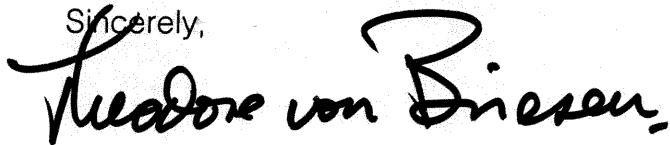
Re: AB709/SB393

I was very pleased to hear that Assembly Bill 709 has been introduced and that your committee will be holding an early public hearing on it.

I am a practicing genealogist -- who happens to have many relatives who were pioneers in Wisconsin -- in Columbus, Stevens Point, Omro, Milwaukee, Boscobel, and other areas of the state. The restrictions on making uncertified copies of their early (pre 1907) vital records has been a hardship on me and I will be very happy when this restriction is removed.

Your support, and that of the other members of the committee will help the Legislature pass a very useful bill, and one that will not cost tax money to implement. I hope that you agree with me, and will support passage of AB 709. Thank you very much.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Theodore von Briesen". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Theodore von Briesen

501 E. Freistadt Road
Thiensville, WI 53092-1754

January 26, 1998
913 Mohican Pass
Madison, Wi., 53711-2837

Honorable John P. Dobyns
Chairperson, Assembly Standing
Committee on Government Operations
State of Wisconsin, State Capitol Bldg.
P.O. Box 8952
Madison, Wi., 53708

Dear Representative John Dobyns:

We are writing to ask for your support of Assenbly Bill AB 709 {Senate Bill SB 393}, legislation relating to the issuance of uncertified copies of vital records for events occurring before October 1, 1907.

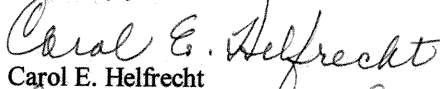
This legislation is important to us and to literally thousands of genealogists in Wisconsin. It restores our right to make copies of vital records for events before October 1, 1907. Since 1981 we have been permitted to make copies from a microfilm prepared by the Genealogical Society of Utah, but in March of last year it was learned that a 1985 law governing vital records, made it illegal for anyone, other than the State Bureau of Vital Records or Registers of Deeds, to make copies of these vital records. Even though we have been making copies from the microfilm for many years without anyone ever objecting, the State Historical Society and the Area Research Centers have now decided they must comply with the law. We do not know why this didn't happen in 1985 when the law was passed. In our opinion, it was never intended to apply to these particular records.

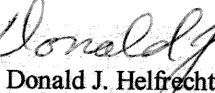
What makes the current situation very unfair to Wisconsin genealogists is that there are copies of the microfilm at the Family History Library in Salt Lake City and available at Family History Centers throughout the country. Anyone with access to the film outside of Wisconsin can make copies without any problem. Only those of us in Wisconsin are prohibited from making copies of our records. AB 709/SB 393 would correct this inequity. Because the records involved are all at least 90 years old and the copies are not certified ther is virtually no possibility for fraudulent use.

We strongly urge you to vote for AB 709/ SB 393. We have been doing genealogy research on our families here in Wisconsin and several other states for over 25 years. Any work we do is for family historical purposes only. We have no intention of using these records for any fraudulent or illegal purpose.

Thank you for your consideration.

Very truly yours,


Carol E. Helfrecht


Donald J. Helfrecht

cc. Sen. Fred A Risser
Rep. Rebecca Young

File Bill #3
Date 1/27/98

Volz, David

From: Lawrence F. Green[SMTP:lgreen@acronet.net]
Sent: Monday, January 26, 1998 6:07 PM
To: Rep.Dobyns
Subject: Vote in Favor

Sir

Please vote in favor of the bill that would allow Genealists and researchers access to photocopie the pre1907 vital records. Uncertified copies help link the past to the present.

Thank you

Larry Green

January 26, 1998

THE HON. JOHN P. DOBYNS, CHAIR
Assembly Standing Committee on Government Operations
P. O. Box 8952
Madison, WI 53708

RE: Issuance of uncertified copies of vital records occurring before Oct. 1, 1907; (SB 393 and AB709.)

PLEASE VOTE IN FAVOR OF THIS BILL, allowing the public to make uncertified copies of their ancestors' vital records.

Each of us has a family history that strengthens family ties and pride. Each generation will find it increasingly difficult to maintain its own history.

I think of this genealogy information as mine, and my descendants.

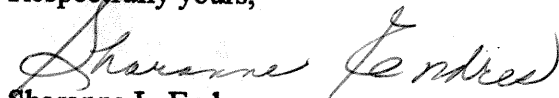
These vital records are the verifications of happenings in my family history.

It is sometimes difficult enough finding the correct records, much less to be told you cannot have a copy of them.

These are records almost 100 years old. Almost antiques! They are valuable to us. There isn't one person in America that doesn't have an immigrant ancestor of EXTRAORDINARY COURAGE AND FORTITUDE, just to have decided to journey across the sea to an unknown land. The fearful and weak stayed behind. Our ancestral genealogies are truly worth knowing about, and worth the trouble of researching.

Is there even one good reason to not have records of their births, deaths and marriages?

Respectfully yours,



Sharanne L. Endres
2221 Hollister Avenue
Madison, WI 53705

272 N. Fremont Street
Whitewater, WI 53190-1323
26 January 1998

The Hon. John P. Dobyms
Chairperson, Assembly Standing Committee on Government
Operations
P. O. Box 8952
Madison, WI 53708

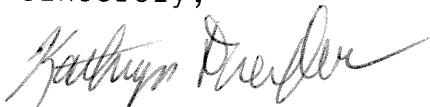
Dear Representative Dobyms,

As an active genealogist I am writing to show my strong support for the proposed legislation SB393/AB 709. I urge the Assembly Standing Committee on Government Operations to report the bill for passage as introduced.

I do genealogical research for people in other states, as I know how hard it is when you live at a distance. It is hard to explain to these people that Wisconsin residents can't copy the pre-1907 records, that they need to do it themselves through their local Family History Center of the Mormon Church.

Since these records are all 90 years old, and the copies are not certified, they can't be used for fraud. It is wrong to deny citizens of Wisconsin the chance to copy these records, when someone 30 miles from me in Illinois can do so.

Sincerely,



Kathryn Drexler

*Membership Chairperson
Walworth Co (WI) Genealogical Society*

Home: 608/238-8797
Office: 608/263-2737

Richard and Lois Rossmiller
5806 Cable Ave.
Madison, WI 53705

Fax: 608/265-3135
e-mail: rarossmi@facstaff.wisc.edu

Jan. 27, 1998

Hon. John Dobyms
State Capitol, Room 10-W
P.O. Box 8952
Madison, WI 53708

File AB 709
Date 1/28/98

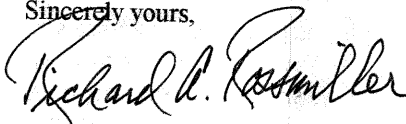
Dear Assemblyman Dobyms,

We recently became aware that AB 709 (Senate Bill 393) will be given a public hearing before the Assembly Committee on Government Operations on Jan. 28. This bill deals with the issuance of uncertified copies of vital records for events occurring before Oct. 1, 1907. I strongly urge your support of this bill.

My wife and I have become interested in genealogy since my retirement in 1993 and this bill will restore the right to make copies of vital records for events prior to Oct. 1, 1907. We have, since 1981, been able to make copies from a microfilm prepared by the Genealogical Society of Utah, but in March of 1997 we learned that a 1985 law governing vital records made it illegal for anyone other than the State Bureau of Vital Records or Registers of Deeds to make any copies of vital records. The State Historical Society and the Area Research Centers have decided they must comply with the law (although from the time the bill was passed in 1985 until now they have permitted such copying to be done).

The current situation is especially ironic and unfair to Wisconsin genealogists because there are copies of the microfilm at the Family History Library in Salt Lake City and copies also are available at Family History Centers throughout the country. Anyone with access to the microfilm outside Wisconsin can make copies with no problem; **only those of us here in Wisconsin are denied the right to make copies of our own state's records.** AB309/SB393 would correct this inequity. The records involved are all more than 90 years old and, since the copies are not certified, there is virtually no possibility for fraudulent use. Therefore, I urge your support of AB 709/SB 393.

Sincerely yours,


Richard A. Rossmiller


Lois K. Rossmiller

5897 Whalen Road
Fitchburg WI 53711
February 6, 1998

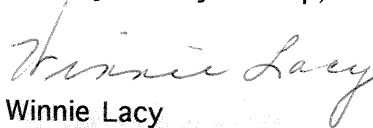
The Hon. John P. Dobyms
Chair, Committee on Government Operations
Wisconsin State Assembly
P.O. Box 8952
Madison WI 53708

Dear Rep. Dobyms:

I understand your committee is considering a bill to change the State Statutes to allow genealogists to legally make uncertified copies of pre-1907 vital records at various research centers within the limits of the state of Wisconsin. I am writing to encourage your committee to approve this bill.

As you know this can be done legally at other sites and it does not make sense for it to be banned in Wisconsin. An uncertified copy cannot be used for any devious purpose and genealogists are mature enough not to invade someone's privacy.

Thank you for your help,


Winnie Lacy

Volz, David

From: Evelyn Straka[SMTP:estraka@grant.tds.net]
Sent: Wednesday, February 11, 1998 3:31 PM
To: Rep.Dobyns
Subject: SB393/AB709

February 11, 1998

Committee on Government Operations

Dear Rep. John Dobyns,

I am writing to ask you to support SB 393 (Senate Bill) and AB 709(Assembly Bill), Legislation relating to the issuance of uncertified copies of vital records for events occuring before October 1, 1907.

This bill is important to me and to thousands of genealogists in Wisconsin. It restores our right to make copies of vital records for events before October 1, 1907. Since 1981 we have been permitted to make copies from a microfilm prepared by the Genealogical Society of Utah, but in March of 1997 we learned that the 1985 law goverening vital records made it illegal for anyone ever objecting the State Historical Society and the Area Research Centers have now decided they must comply with the law. I don't know why this didn't happen in 1985 when the law was passed but apparently it was never intended to apply to these particular records.

What makes the current situation very unfair to Wisconsin genealogists is that there are copies of the microfilm at the Family History Library in Salt Lake City and available at Family History Centers throughout the country. Anyone with access to the film outside Wisconsin can make copies without any problem. Only those of us in Wisconsin are prohibited from making of copies of our records. SB 393/AB 709 would correct this inequity. Beause the records involved are all at least 90 years old and the copies are not certified there is virtually no possibility for fraudulent use/

I strongly urge you to vote for SB 393/AB 709. I appreciate your interest in this bill.

Sincerely,

Evelyn Straka
555-11th St
Fennimore, WI 53809

Bernita B. Jenkins
1504 Jack Oak Rd
Cassville, WI 53806
February 23, 1998

The Hon. John P. Dobyms, Chairperson
Assembly Standing Committee on Government Operations
P.O. Box 8952
Madison, WI 53708

Dear Mr. Dobyms,

I am writing to ask you to support Assembly Bill 709 and Senate Bill 393, Legislation relating to the issuance of uncertified copies of vital records for events occurring before October 1, 1907.

I am a charter member of the Grant County Genealogical Society, a member of the Grant County Historical Society and a member of the Wisconsin State Genealogical Society, as well as a member of some other states societies. This bill is very important to me and to thousands of genealogists and historians in Wisconsin. It restores our right to make copies of vital records for events before October 1, 1907. Since 1981 we have been permitted to make copies from a microfilm prepared by the Genealogical Society of Utah, but in March of 1997 we learned that the 1985 law governing vital records made it illegal for anyone other than the State Bureau of Vital Records or Registers of Deeds to make any copies of vital records. Even though we have been making copies from the microfilm ever since 1981 without anyone ever objecting the State Historical Society and the Area Research Centers have now decided they must comply with the law. I don't know why this didn't happen in 1985 when the law was passed but apparently it was never intended to apply to these particular records.

What makes the current situation very unfair to Wisconsin genealogists and historians is that there are copies of the microfilm at the Family History Library in Salt Lake City and available at Family History Centers throughout the country. Anyone with access to the film outside Wisconsin can make copies without any problem. Only those of us in Wisconsin are prohibited from making copies of our records. Assembly Bill 709 and Senate Bill 393 would correct this inequity. Because the records involved are all at least 90 years old and the copies are not certified there is virtually no possibility for fraudulent use.

I strongly urge you and your Committee to report the bill for passage as introduced. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Bernita B. Jenkins

SAMPLE LETTER
Please Modify and Personalize

Dear Senator/Representative _____:

**I am writing to ask you to support SB 393 (Senate Bill /AB 709 (Assembly Bill),
Legislation relating to the issuance of uncertified copies of vital records for events
occurring before October 1, 1907.**

This bill is important to me and to thousands of genealogists in Wisconsin. It restores our right to make copies of vital records for events before October 1, 1907. Since 1981 we have been permitted to make copies from a microfilm prepared by the Genealogical Society of Utah, but in March of this year we learned that the 1985 law governing vital records made it illegal for anyone other than the State Bureau of Vital Records or Registers of Deeds to make any copies of vital records. Even though we have been making copies from the microfilm ever since 1981 without anyone ever objecting the State Historical Society and the Area Research Centers have now decided they must comply with the law. I don't know why this didn't happen in 1985 when the law was passed but apparently it was never intended to apply to these particular records.

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I strongly urge you to vote for SB 393/AB709.

Thank you
Mary E. Anderson

Dear Representative Frank Urban,

I am writing to ask you to support SB 393 (Senate Bill) / AB 709 (Assembly Bill) Legislation relating to the issuance of uncertified copies of vital records for events occurring before Oct. 1, 1907.

This bill is important to me and thousands of genealogists in Wisconsin. It restores our right to make copies of vital records for events before Oct. 1, 1907. Since 1981 we have been permitted to make copies from a microfilm prepared by the Genealogical Society of Utah, but in March of this year we learned that the 1985 law governing vital records made it illegal for anyone to make any copies of vital records. Even though we have been making copies from the microfilm ever since 1981, without anyone ever objecting, the State Historical Society & the Area Research centers have now decided they must comply with the law. I don't know why this didn't

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Sincerely,
Jean Lee