

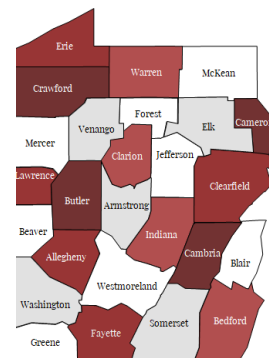


Jots from Western Pennsylvania

The newsletter of the Western Pennsylvania Genealogical Society

Winner of the 2023 National Genealogical Society's
Newsletter Award For A Large Society

May-June, 2025, Volume 51, Number 6



A Message from the President

This is a very exciting time for WPGS, and the next several months are shaping up to be very busy!

First, we are pleased to announce that we are starting a new monthly Special Interest Group (SIG). These sessions will be interactive and allow participants to help shape the topics for future sessions. The first virtual meeting will be held on May 7th, so look for additional information in this newsletter and watch for an email announcing registration details.



We are also excited to announce that WPGS is helping Dr. Roger Minert in locating Pennsylvania church records that contain genealogical information about German immigrants for his next volume of published records. Our digitization committee has already been hard at work locating records and digitizing microfilm for Dr. Minert and his team to review. If you have German ancestors, please be sure to attend the WPGS Program on May 10th to learn more about this important project.

Our annual meeting will be held on June 14, 2025, which includes our annual election. We have a nomination slate of experienced members who will serve the organization well. For the first time in several years, we have more candidates than open board positions. This is very exciting and a sign of the strength and involvement of our members! Please be sure to review and submit the enclosed ballot by mail to be received by June 13, or email it to be accepted by 10:00 AM the day of the annual meeting.

I'm also sure many of you have heard that the GRIP Genealogy Institute is moving to Pitt's Oakland campus this year, from July 13th to 18th. We are gearing up to host researchers from around the country as they spend some of their free time at WPGS and the Pennsylvania Room of the Carnegie Library. Keep watch for additional information in the upcoming months.

We will be posting our next installment of the Quarterly soon, and I am happy to share that our Facebook Group now has over 5,000 members! We continue to identify new ways to benefit our members and the public. At this time, I would like to thank

each board member, committee chair, and volunteer for all the time and dedication you give WPGS and for making these exciting announcements possible!

All the best!

Megan Clark Young
President, 2024–2025

WPGS Officers & Board of Directors 2025-2026 Election Ballot



WPGS elects four officers and three Board positions at the June meeting each year. This year, that meeting is set for Saturday, June 14th, and we

encourage every member to cast their ballot for these essential positions. Your society depends on it!

Please see your ballot in this edition of the Jots, located on the reverse side of the membership renewal form. You may mail it in via USPS or email it to nominations@wpgs.org to be received before June 14th at 10:30 am. Remember to leave extra time for USPS mailing so we receive it by June 13th.

If you need assistance, please email nominations@wpgs.org.

Respectfully submitted;

Lois Salvatora, convener of the WPGS Nominating Committee,
Pamela Israel, and Kathy Kenna

WPGS 2025-2026 Scholarship

<https://wpgs.org/about-page/scholarship/>

Remember to apply for the 2026 Suzanne Johnston Memorial Scholarship, a yearly award of up to \$250 to a current WPGS member to assist with the cost of attendance at a local, regional, national, or virtual genealogy conference.

Please make your response readable, using proper grammar, punctuation, and sentence structure, and stay within the required word limit.

Download the application form. The deadline for receipt of this Application is December 31, 2025.



About WPGS

Mission Statement: The **Western Pennsylvania Genealogical Society (WPGS)** is a 501(c)(3) non-profit educational organization of amateur and professional

family historians and genealogists dedicated to the study and preservation of family history. WPGS was founded in 1974 to perpetuate the rich heritage of Western Pennsylvania's 26 counties.

The Society strives to foster an interest in genealogy through meetings, workshops, record examinations, and study sources and methods of genealogical research. WPGS collects, preserves, and safeguards manuscripts, books, artifacts, family, church, and public records, as well as other materials relating to genealogy, and it encourages others to do likewise. Society members increase genealogical resources in the Western Pennsylvania region by compiling and publishing original research.

President: Megan Clark Young	Director 2023-25: Amy Welch
President-Elect: Lindsay Downs	Director 2023-25: Lois Salvatora
(President in 2025-2026)	Director 2023-25: Kristin Britanik
Recording Secretary: Vacant	Director 2024-26: Pamela Israel
Treasurer: David Salvatora	Director 2024-26: Rebecca Miller
Corres. Secretary: Kelsea Collins	Director 2024-26: Robert Hague

The Society's operational year begins on July 1 and continues through June 30 of the following year. During this time, the Society publishes six issues of the award-winning newsletter *Jots from Western Pennsylvania*® and periodic issues of the *Quarterly* journal. WPGS is based in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and maintains a non-circulating library and offices in the Local History and Genealogy Department (LHGD) on the third floor of the Main Branch of the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh. The WPGS Library Collection is augmented by the LHGD's vast holdings of local and family history information. There are extensive onsite resources for both in-library research and out-of-town queries.

WPGS considers your data (name, address, email, phone, etc.) highly confidential and will not release it to any merchant, agent, or other organization under any circumstances.

For details on Society membership or general information, see the Society's webpage at www.wpgs.org or contact WPGS at:

4400 Forbes Avenue, Pittsburgh, PA 15213-4007

Voicemail: 412-687-6811

General Information: info@wpgs.org

General Correspondence: corresec@wpgs.org

Research Services: research@wpgs.org

Website/Login Questions: website@wpgs.org

WPGS Quarterly®: Quarterly@wpgs.org

Jots from Western Pennsylvania®: Jots@wpgs.org

Facebook Group: [facebook@wpgs.org](https://www.facebook.com/groups/1024613077636340)

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1024613077636340>

Contributions to the *Jots*, *Quarterly*, and Facebook Group are encouraged. Contributors must provide attribution/contact details for submissions before publication. We will not publish copyrighted material without the express permission of the author/owner.

All suggestions for future issues of the *Jots* or *Quarterly* can be sent to the addresses listed above. Deadlines for receipt of submissions to *Jots* are the 10th of June, August, October, December, February, and April, unless extended. The *Quarterly* deadlines are published on the WPGS website and in the *Jots*.

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SOCIETY NEWS

WPGS Website

Kristin Britanik, Chairperson, website@wpgs.org

A current maintenance project concerns the digitized church records on our "Members Only" section of the website. Some of these records are difficult to search: some links don't work, some are incorrectly labeled, and some are completely missing on the website. We will begin working to correct and rename the files, comparing them with the original microfilm. Watch for a significant update in the coming months.

Book Sales

Rebecca Kichta Miller, Chairperson, booksales@wpgs.org

Currently, 240 used books, 20 printed publications, and 24 digital downloads are available online. Go to <https://wpgs.org/product-category/book-sales/> for complete descriptions and pricing of these volumes.

Featured Publications

Atlas of the City of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, 1911. In 1906, Allegheny City was annexed to Pittsburgh, and two years later, the pattern of wards was modified, and many street names were changed because of duplication. The 11" x 17" maps show old and new street names and old and new ward boundaries. This 50-page atlas is necessary for census and city directory research. \$ 24.00 for members.

Warrantee Atlas of Allegheny County, PA. This 11" X 17" atlas contains 49 plates that depict the original land grants that settlers of present-day Allegheny County received from the Commonwealth after William Penn and his descendants vested the land to the legislature. It gives the names, dates, acreage amount, and township location. 44 pages. \$25.00 for members

Jots from Western Pennsylvania

Rebecca Kichta Miller, Chairperson, jots@wpgs.org
Susan Rogers, Judy Robertson, and Jay Shock, Editors

The March-April *Jots* were delivered via USPS to 333 members and emailed to 493. The April Mid-Issue was delivered to 493 member accounts via email only.

If you have a genealogy/history-related announcement, such as a meeting, workshop, publication, or family reunion information, please send it to jots@wpgs.org, and we'll post it.

Are you interested in helping compile upcoming newsletters? Email jots@wpgs.org for details. All work on this newsletter can be done virtually, from research to writing, printing, and mailing. **Don't hesitate to consider assisting with the production.**

WPGS Digital Archives

WPGS has been archiving records since 1985 and began microfilming in 1989. Please see the contacts listed here for information on how to help with our continuing efforts. Some can be done online at home; others require coming into the office.

ARCHIVES RETRIEVAL AND PRESERVATION

Pamela Israel, Chairperson, archives@wpgs.org

Find out how to help with upcoming projects by contacting Pamela Israel at the email address above.

DIGITIZING

Kathy Kenna, digitize@wpgs.org

Editing of the McAvoy Funeral Home records is almost complete.

We received the flash drive of the microfilms recently sent out for digitization and are currently reviewing the records, with particular interest paid to the churches that will be of interest to Roger Minert for his GIACR project.

We continue to edit and sort the church records on the website. We have found all the missing records and hope to have them better organized soon.



The WPGS Digitizing Committee is looking for volunteers to digitize material. The position involves scanning old records and editing the images. The volunteer will be trained on our equipment in the WPGS office at the Carnegie Library, Main

Branch, on the third floor. If interested, please contact Kathy Kenna at kkinplum@aol.com.

Finally, if you know of an organization with a collection of records it no longer wants to store but would be willing to have digitized and added to our collection, don't hesitate to contact Kathy Kenna with details.

INDEXING

Nancy Marsh, Indexing Chairperson, indexing@wpgs.org

Thank you to Betsy Morris and Chuck Grubbs for volunteering to index church records. Betsy has been indexing The First English Evangelical Lutheran Church in Pittsburgh, Allegheny County. Chuck will work on the First Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church, Pittsburgh (Shadyside), Allegheny County images.

If you have any questions about indexing the digitized online records or would like to volunteer to help remotely, don't hesitate to get in touch with Nancy Marsh. This rewarding project is fully *Work-at-Your-Own-Pace*.

Library Research Services

Lois Salvatora, Chairperson, research@wpgs.org

<https://wpgs.org/research/library-research-services/>

Happy Springtime! It's a good time to begin a new research project.

New Benefit for Members Announced

Beginning in May, the WPGS Library Research Committee is launching a monthly virtual Special Interest Group (SIG), focused on group discussions to assist attendees in locating and using resources available in Western Pennsylvania repositories and local online websites to solve their family history challenges.

Each month, the group will address a different type of record set or resource and enjoy input from local genealogical professionals. From WPGS library resources to governmental vital records to state and local land records and hard-to-find family records, we will look to WPGS members for direction about your goals for family history research.

The first meeting on Zoom will be Wednesday night, May 7th, at 7:00 PM EDT. All members will receive an email invitation to this event with a link for registration. During this initial meeting, we will

get to know one another and our research goals and make plans for future topics. We will plan on wrapping the meeting up around 8:30 PM. Please watch your email and the WPGS event page for the registration link. We look forward to meeting you in May for this new member benefit.

Index of the WPGS Family Files

The new index for our family files is proceeding with volunteer support. We look forward to the day later this year when we can have this valuable index uploaded to the WPGS website. Remember that you can request a search of the files for your surname of interest anytime at <https://wpgs.org/product/wpgs-file-search-service/>.

FFWPA Lineage Society

Megan Clark Young, Chairperson, firstfamilies@wpgs.org
David Egelston and Trish Buben, Committee Members

Do you have an ancestor who resided in Western Pennsylvania before the end of 1810? Consider applying to the First Families of Western Pennsylvania to honor your pioneer ancestor.

The Application and Rules of Evidence are available on the website, and WPGS members can search for previously approved ancestors. Log in to the website, then go to *Research*, then *WPGS Ancestor Directories*, then *First Families of Western Pennsylvania*, where you'll find the *Rules of Evidence* and *Application*. This is also where you can search the *First Families Index*, even just to see if your ancestors have been added there.

Contact Megan Clark Young with any questions.

WPGS Library Collection

Library Chairperson (vacant) library@wpgs.org

In other library activities, we continue the library book inventory and update the online catalog. Check out the library catalog at <https://www.librarycat.org/lib/wpgslibrary/>

Membership News

Lois Salvatora, Chairperson
Nancy Marsh, Kristin Britanik, Committee Members.

CURRENT ACTIVE WPGS MEMBERSHIPS As of March 1, 2025	
Membership Type	Active
Individual	728
Joint	71
Institutional	6
Honorary Lifetime	6
Total Active Memberships	811

Within this edition of the WPGS Jots, you will find a separate flyer that contains the *Membership Renewal Form*. On the reverse side of this form, you will find the ballot for the upcoming WPGS annual meeting and election of officers and board members.

As for your membership renewal, please remember that as of July 1, 2024, we shifted to a 365-day membership year. This means that if you joined or renewed after June 30, 2024, your renewal date is one year from that date. Example: You paid on July 15, 2024. Your renewal date is now July 15 every year. For those who joined or renewed before June 30, 2024, your renewal date will be June 30, 2025.

A few weeks before your membership expiration date, you will receive an email from our system encouraging you to renew. Please check your account and past payments so that you renew on time and not too early. You may reach out to Lois Salvatora via email at membership@wpgs.org with any questions or concerns.

Welcome New Members

We welcome all new members who have joined WPGS since March 15, 2025. We hope you will find all of your WPGS member benefits helpful to your family history research goals.

California Cathy L. Lampshire	Ohio Carla Cegielski Linda Gribble
Colorado Jean Maguire	Pennsylvania Jill Berardi Mark Christie Greg Danyo Krystle Granite Susan Horvat Patricia Ireland Eric and Johanna Patton Cheryl Ruffner Mary Sleppy Louise Bradley Stanzione Terrence Tague Elizabeth Tussey
Florida Ann Rataj	Virginia Susan Wasek
Illinois Annie Collins Bruce E. Reppert	Washington, D.C. Susan Beal
Kansas Rowland Gosling	West Virginia Janice L. Glover Swain
Kentucky Linda Denton	
Maryland Candace Buchanan Colleen Rafferty	
Massachusetts Jean Byrne	
New Mexico Patricia McClure	
New York Connie Marshall	

WPGS Sponsored Programs

Amy Welch, Chairperson, and Kelsea Collins, Co-Chair,
programs@wpgs.org
<https://wpgs.org/events/>

If you missed the April 12 program, *Using Public Documents to Trace the Lackey/Leech Family Migration from Northern Ireland to the Valley of Virginia*, the handout is now available in the [Program Handout Archive](#) on the WPGS website.

Western Pennsylvania Research Special Interest Group (SIG). May 7, 7:00 – 8:30 PM. Please join us for the inaugural session of this newly created SIG! Our first meeting will allow everyone to discuss

the research challenges related to Western PA research and get to know each other. This session will be open to all, but future SIG sessions will be open only to WPGS members. (Not a member yet? [Click here to see a complete list of member benefits.](#))

Future meeting topics will be based on your suggestions and questions frequently asked by the moderators. Please [click here](#) to register for the May 7 session.

German Immigrants in American Church Records, May 10, 10:30 AM - 12:00 PM Virtual only. One of the biggest challenges in family history research is locating an immigrant ancestor's hometown. Dr. Roger Minert is attempting to find a solution for researchers of German descent by sponsoring a group of students to read German church records and collect genealogical information. Dr. Minert has published 38 volumes of these records — and Pennsylvania is next! Please join WPGS to learn more about the project and how to help Dr. Minert and his team find records to include in the project. Please [click here](#) to register for this program.

Roger P. Minert has a background in German language study and has published reference books for genealogy work on German immigrants and guides on performing German genealogy research. He frequently presents on German family history topics at genealogy conferences.

Western PA Q&A: Erie County. June 14, 10:30 AM - 12:00 Noon. This will be a virtual-only program, free and open to all. Please [click here](#) to register. Join WPGS and genealogists from Erie County to get answers to your questions about research and records. Questions about genealogy research in Erie County should be submitted before the program, so please send them to programs@wpgs.org by May 1, 2025, so we can share them with the local experts.

WPGS Quarterly

A collection of scholarly articles related to Western Pennsylvania genealogy.
Erica Curtis, Editor, Quarterly@wpgs.org

The *Quarterly* Committee continues to prepare for our next issue. The committee is committed to publishing submissions that meet the genealogical standards outlined in *Genealogy Standards, Second Edition Revised*. The WPGS *Quarterly* currently accepts two types of articles: case studies and family narratives.

Please review our Guideline for Submission at <https://wpgs.org/research/quarterlies/quarterly-indexes/>. We welcome your submissions for publication!

Publicity

Administrators: Lindsay Downs and Pamela Israel
facebook@wpgs.org

See <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1024613077636340>

We are so grateful to all who contribute to our very active genealogy community. If you are interested in volunteering to create social media content or have genealogy-related news to publicize, please reach out to publicity@wpgs.org

Private Facebook Group

The WPGS Publicity Committee is thrilled to announce that our Facebook page has surpassed 5,000 members, with 3,352 active members! Our top cities for members are Pittsburgh, Erie, Washington, Bethel Park, Johnstown, Greensburg, and Indiana.

The Baltzer Meyer Historical Society, the Fort Ligonier Chapter, NSDAR, and the Jewish Genealogical Society of Pittsburgh regularly post their activities on the WPGS Facebook page.

Recent Postings

By Darren LaMarr, March 11: If there is anyone in the Lawrence County area inclined to spend a lovely weekend afternoon roaming a graveyard (what a pickup line, eh?), there's a pretty decent list of requests for photos on FindAGrave for the Hopewell Cemetery in New Bedford. Some of us non-local researchers would be eternally grateful to you. *Response by Megan Clark Young:* You had me at "roaming a graveyard.." I live about 10 minutes from there and will go Sunday afternoon and see what I can find to photograph. *Response by Rob Whiting:* I live close by, too. I'll go look too.

Lindsay Nicole shared a chart titled "*Genealogical Research Process: How to Conduct Research Using the GPS*" on April 6 and March 25, "Genealogy" image.

Responses to the "Genealogy" image:

By Tom Goodwin: I don't agree.

Genealogy is like doing a puzzle with a lot of pieces missing. You know they are there, but you can't find them no matter where you look. *Response by Lindsay Nicole:* Good point! *Response by Marian Kingdon:* Varmint! True! | *Response by Jennifer Erdmann:* I do puzzles all the time and never look at

the box top. You have to love being a detective and an expert puzzler to really thrive in genealogy! | *Response by Holly B. Metzger:* I say it is like eating potato chips. You can't stop at one (ancestor) | *Response by Pam Camacho:* Very true! | *Response by Kim Williams:* Definitely.

By Angela Bass-Brenner, April 4: I am researching the family history line of George Fowler and Theresa (Possibly Catherine Theresa) Miller. I don't have a lot of information about the Miller side and I was wondering if anyone has studied them. These are the facts that I know. Theresa was born in Allegheny County, possibly in Baldwin Township in 1875. Her family was likely from the Butler, Pennsylvania, area. She married George Fowler (also born in Allegheny County in 1879) around 1906 or 1907. They had 4 children Marie (or Mary), Caroline, George, and Katherine. They lived in Pennsylvania until around 1908 when George took a job in an auto factory in Detroit, Michigan. I think I have the right family for George but I can't find any concrete information on Teresa's parentage even after scouring Ancestry and Family Search. I have a lead that her parents may be Michael Miller, a German immigrant, and Mary Baldauf, but there are inconsistencies. I am just taking a shot in the dark so that someone else might be studying this family.



WPGS Chairperson posted *Break Through Those Brick Walls. Share your favorite research tip that helped you solve a family history mystery!* [Response from Sandra Brandon](#): FamilySearch Labs, Experiments, Full Text Search has been an amazing resource for Pennsylvania Deeds and Wills. The AI-generated transcription can be a bit confusing but for a quick overview it is beneficial. It can be tedious and at times unproductive until you find the right search terms to add or delete. Sometimes less is better! This is a wonderful tool for documents that are not indexed. [Response by Sandra Brandon](#): It's helped me with 3 brick walls. [Response by Dee Danner](#): Check newspapers. Also remember that many wives are known by their husband's name for example "Mrs. James Jones". Or sometimes listed as "the wife of... or the consort of". Check out newspapers in neighboring counties or states as sometimes there could be a reference to your ancestors visiting another relative or a reference to them being previous residents. [Response by Stephanie Hill](#): New records are being put online all the time. Keep revisiting your brick walls every few months. [Response by Cynthia Baxter](#). Do not dismiss a particular research tool because you got a bad answer a time or two. The purpose of tools is to provide pieces of a very big puzzle, pieces which need to be evaluated for their truth. [Response by Electra Bellizzi Aliganga](#): If you end up locating a more valuable than average image or document in any unindexed source, keep browsing in both directions for a while. [Response by Ruth Braucher](#): Accept the fact that maybe your ancestors were never officially married. Out on the frontier the couples had to wait months for a circuit preacher to arrive. AND Maps!!! Borders are just lines drawn on maps which change over time. Plus, could not find ggg-grandfather's place of burial for years. Knew which county he died in but took years to find his grave because the church he attended & its graveyard were just over the next county line! [Response by Tj Kitch](#): When searching for a person you might want to open up the dates by 3 years and include surrounding counties. Also consider swapping first & middle names along with just using initial. Many family & Bible records were written well after the event and things could of been sketchy at the time.

Posted by Colleen O'Loughlin, March 30: [This](#) posting (*Kinkeed, Munroe push DNA privacy bill 23andMe bankruptcy. Legislation would strengthen genetic data protections for Pennsylvanians*) may interest PA residents who have had their DNA tested.

Posted by Judy Sgambati, March 26: I am trying to untangle the Byers family that moved from PA to NE Ohio in the early 1800s. Frederick Byers (1768-1854) is buried in a small farm cemetery in Milton Township, Mahoning County, OH (Reichard Farm Cemetery Project). Buried with him is his wife Catharine (abt 1768-1844) and son Andrew (1801-1843). Another son, Frederick, married Anna Maria Reichard. Also buried there are surnames Stump, Crays, Grimes, Porter, Armitage and Starret. Shoemaker, although not buried there, appear on census records as neighbors, in PA to Columbiana County, Trumbull/Mahoning county and Ashland County, all in Ohio. Frederick founded the town of Frederick in Milton Township, Trumbull County in 1830. In the 1840s, that part of Trumbull became Mahoning County. His father was Frederick Byers Sr of Antrim, according to various Ohio history books. I know that around 1810, Fred Jr sold his property in Guilford and appears in Columbiana County, OH around 1816, via the Pittsburgh area.

After Frederick died in 1854, his son Frederick sold the land in Milton Township and moved to Portage County, OH. At least two families of Byers, both with a Fred, Catharine and Andrew, are in Ohio at the same time, in the same towns and census records. I'm certain they are related, but can't figure out how. Any help related to the Byer(s) or known associates would be of great help to me in untangling all of this. Thank you!

If anyone can help with these requests or any other postings, you can join the WPGS Facebook group and respond to the postings.

Member Necrology

With deepest sympathy

WPGS is saddened to hear of the death of these two members:

Jack C. Braun, of McKean, PA, died on February 5, 2025, at 94. He had been a member since 1983 and an occasional volunteer.

John P. Walsh, 60, of Brighton Heights, Pittsburgh, PA, passed away on November 20, 2024. He had been a member since 2018.

Upcoming Genealogical Events

PLEASE CHECK DIRECTLY WITH SPONSORING ORGANIZATIONS FOR ANY EVENT UPDATES AND/OR CANCELLATIONS.

(F) Free | (\$) Fee Required | (L) Live | (V) Virtual | (L/V) Live and Virtual | All times are in Eastern Standard Time (EST) unless otherwise specified.

(F) (V) May 7, 7:00 – 8:30 PM: **Western Pennsylvania Research Special Interest Group (SIG)**. Register at <https://wpgs.org/events/>

(F) (V) May 10, 10:30 AM - 12:00 Noon: **German Immigrants in American Church Records**. Details and registration at <https://wpgs.org/events/>

(F/\$) (L) May 14, 7:00 PM: **Local Murders & Mysteries**, a lecture by Dr. Jennifer Gmuca, presented for the Cambria County Historical Society at the EBG Boro Building. More info [here](#).

(\$)(L/V) May 23-25: **NGS 2025 Family History Conference Tales & Trails**, Galt House Hotel, Louisville, Kentucky, presented by the National Genealogical Society. Save the date! Watch the website for details as they become available. The Conference will primarily be in-person, with lecture recordings available to paid registrants. For details, see www.ngsgenealogy.org/.

(\$)(L/V) June 1, 11:00 AM – 5:00 PM: **Italian Genealogy Workshop** at the Heinz History Center, 1212 Smallman Street, Pittsburgh, PA, with genealogist Rich Venezia. Details & registration [here](#).

(\$)(L) June 1-2: **Preservation Pennsylvania Mini Conference** in Johnstown, PA. Stay tuned for all the details at ["Save the date!"](#)

(F/\$) (L) June 4, 7:00 PM: A lecture on the book **Charles M. Schwab, President of Carnegie Steel, U.S. Steel, and Bethlehem Steel**, for the Cambria County Historical Society at the EBG Boro Building. More info [here](#).

(\$)(V) June 7, 10:00 AM – 12:00 PM: **Top 10 Resources for Mid-Atlantic Genealogy**, presented by Michelle Chubenko for the Bucks

County Genealogical Society. Visit [here](#) for complete information and registration.

(\$)(L) June 13-15: **Ohio International German Genealogy Partnership (IGGP) Conference 2025**, Columbus, Ohio, hosted by the Palatines to America German Genealogy Society. Celebrate your German-speaking ancestors. Learn from experts from the US, Germany, Austria, and Israel about how to conduct research in these areas. Information about speakers and programs, including the registration link and hotel accommodation options, is [here](#).

(F)(V) June 14, 10:30 AM – 12:00 Noon: **Western PA Q&A: Erie County**. June 14, 10:30 AM - 12:00 Noon. This will be a virtual-only program, free and open to all. Please click [here](#) to register. Join WPGS and genealogists from Erie County to get answers to your questions about research and records. Questions about genealogy research in Erie County should be submitted before the program, so please send them to programs@wpgs.org by May 1, 2025, so we can share them with the local experts.

(\$)(V) June 22-27: **Genealogical Institute of Pittsburgh (GRIP) Virtual Courses**. Nine courses are offered. Course details and registration are [here](#).

(\$)(L) June 29, 10:00 AM—4:00 PM: **Czech and Slovak Genealogy Workshop** at the Heinz History Center. This workshop will be a tour de force of genealogical records relevant to individuals with Czech, Carpatho-Rusyn, and Slovak ancestors. It will feature nationally recognized speakers, including Michal Razus, Jim Hudec, and Rich Custer. Attendees will develop skills in locating European records available online and genealogical resources in Western Pennsylvania to identify ancestral towns of origin. Details and registrations are [here](#).

(\$)(L) July 13-18: **Genealogical Institute of Pittsburgh (GRIP) In-Person Courses**, Pittsburgh, PA. Eight courses are offered. Course details and registration are [here](#).

(F)(L) July 14, 2025: **SAVE THE DATE: WPGS is sponsoring an evening program for GRIP**. Details will follow when finalized.

(\$)(L) August 10-14: **SAVE THE DATE - 45th International Association of Jewish Genealogical Societies (IAJGS) 2025 Conference**, Fort Wayne, Indiana, presented by IAJGS and Northeast Indiana Jewish Genealogical Society (JGS). Details are [here](#).

(\$)(L) September 5, 6, 7: **SAVE THE DATE – 34TH Annual Pittsburgh Irish Festival**, 801 Carrie Furnace Boulevard (Swissvale), Pittsburgh, PA. Tickets and information are [here](#).

(\$)(L) September 13: **SAVE THE DATE – Ligonier Highland Games** at Idlewild Park, U.S. Route 30, Ligonier, PA. Tickets and information are [here](#).

FREE Guide To Researching Loyalist Ancestors During the American Revolution

Get the FREE [Getting Started With Researching Loyalist Ancestors During the American Revolution Guide/](#) [here](#).

Free Online Records

HOW MANY FREE RECORDS CAN I REALLY FIND ONLINE? THE ANSWER IS BILLIONS.

Subscription sites like Ancestry are not the only way to find your ancestors online. Billions of records can be accessed at no cost through government, religious, and volunteer-based not-for-profit entities worldwide. Millions of hours have been spent making these records available online, so why not take advantage of them? You can also [download](#) this list of free sites from *Family History Daily*, where you can get beginner help, online courses, and additional expert guides. *Family History Daily* offers a list of the following no-cost sites when you need them.

Access to Archival Databases: This section of the US National

Archives contains over 50 million searchable records for civilians, including extensive immigration records, military personnel, prisoners of war, and other relevant individuals.

ArchiveGrid: Search for and locate offline genealogy records in this convenient online database. You can learn how to use it and discover why [offline records are vital here](#).

Avotaynu: The leading publisher of books on Jewish genealogy offers the Consolidated Jewish Surname Index (CJSI). CJSI has information on nearly 700,000 predominantly Jewish surnames, which appear in 42 databases containing over 7.3 million records.

BillionGraves: Headstone records from around the world, similar to Find a Grave but less extensive.

BIRLS Database: The primary index to the Veterans Administration's records of veteran benefits files.

BLM General Office Land Records: The Bureau of Land Management has free records that include over 5 million land titles for public lands dating back to 1820.

Chinese Immigration Database: The Berkeley Bancroft Library resource offers early arrival records for Chinese immigrants in Hawaii and San Francisco from 1884 to 1944 and a beginner's guide.

Chronicling America: A giant database of archived US newspapers from the Library of Congress. This site offers actual scanned newspapers and a user-friendly search function.

Civil War Soldiers and Sailors System: Extensive Civil War records from the National Park Service.

Dawes Rolls: Could you be a descendant of one of the five civilized tribes (Cherokee, Chickasaw, Choctaw, Creek, or Seminole)? Search for other tidbits from the Oklahoma Historical Society.

Dead Fred: A popular and searchable genealogy photo archive.

Digital Public Library of America: A portal to hundreds of U.S. repositories. Find birth, death, marriage, military records, family books, and more. A helpful tutorial on using the DPLA is [here](#).

Ellis Island: This is the immigration record for those people who traveled through Ellis Island. The records are available for free viewing, but a fee applies for downloading copies.

FamilySearch: The most extensive collection of online family history records (requires free registration), with billions of records available across the United States and the world. Learn how to

effectively utilize FamilySearch in our comprehensive guide, part of the [Master Family History Course](#).

Find a Grave: Locate your ancestors in cemeteries worldwide. [Read more about using gravesites in your research here](#).

Freedmen's Bureau Records: The Freedmen's Bureau was organized near the end of the American Civil War to assist newly freed slaves in 15 states and the District of Columbia. [Please refer to their guide on African American research for additional assistance](#).

Guild of One-Name Studies: Extensive surname research site. Please read [this brief article](#) to understand how one-name studies can benefit your research.

Hathitrust: A free resource library with more than 13 million records from around the globe, including many from the US. Their walk-through of this site, with search tips, can be found [here](#).

Hispanic Genealogy: An excellent list of resources for researching Hispanic ancestry.

Immigrant Ancestors Project: This is a free resource from Brigham Young University that uses emigration registers to find the birthplaces of immigrants in their native countries. It is a small but growing database.

Internet Archive: This site provides valuable genealogist resources, including Bibles, pedigree charts, county-based biographies of local potential ancestors, and other relevant materials. You'll need to dig to find what you need. They offer a tutorial [here](#).

Japanese Immigrant Database: Presented by BYU Idaho, this resource offers a free, searchable database of Japanese immigrants to the United States between 1887 and 1924.

Library of Virginia: This is a direct link to the Library of Virginia's online catalog. It contains various records, including manuscripts, service records, land grants, and early colonial documents. Many are online, although others must be accessed through the library itself.

Mayflower History: Full Mayflower passenger list and lists for other early ships to the Plymouth Colony. This source includes genealogies, [history](#), [source record links](#), and [more](#). [Discover more about researching Mayflower ancestors in this article](#).

NativeWeb Genealogy: A helpful list of Native American genealogy resources and searchable databases.

North American Slave Narratives: This collection comprises all existing autobiographical narratives of fugitive and former slaves, published as broadsides, pamphlets, or books in English, up to 1920.

Patriot and Grave Index: A Revolutionary War graves registry and a patriot index from the National Society, Sons of the American Revolution.

Preserve the Pensions: Access to War of 1812 Pension Records.

Register of Indentured Servants: The Virtual Jamestown database offers over 10,000 indenture listings. This article provides more information and free search resources.

USGenWeb Project: This massive, free genealogy resource is organized by state and county and offers numerous helpful how-to guides, resources, and records. Additionally, visit the USGenWeb Archives, a collection of primarily volunteer—and user-submitted family history data and resources for the U.S.

In March 2023, WPGS presented the program *Genealogy On A Shoestring: Free Resources* by Pam Israel. When you log into the WPGS website, you have access to this and other previous program handouts at <https://wpgs.org/program-handout-archive/>.

Allegheny County Death Records, 1893-1905

Have you reviewed the recently added *Registration of Deaths Index, 1893-1905, for Allegheny County* on the WPGS website at <https://wpgs.org/allegheny-county-death-records-1893-to-1905/> yet? Statewide registration of deaths in Pennsylvania began in January 1906. Individual counties or cities maintained records before 1906 under various laws and periods. The death registrations in this publication are based on legislation approved by the Pennsylvania General Assembly on June 6, 1893. The Act required each county's Clerk of the Orphans' Court to keep a separate record of deaths occurring within their county.

The assessors of the townships, boroughs, and wards were required to record such deaths on a preprinted form semi-annually (see example). This law did not apply to cities where a system for registering deaths had already been established. These include [Pittsburgh](#), [Allegheny City](#), and [McKeesport](#), which FamilySearch has separately scanned and made available online.

In 1986, WPGS developed an index of death records available at WPGS.org. The source of the information for each death is shown by the document number assigned by Allegheny County. Document numbers are provided for each entry except for a few surnames.

Many of the ledger pages were torn and contained missing pieces. Abstractors working on this project attempted to ascertain the deceased's name, year of death, and place, but this was sometimes impossible. These entries are listed at the end of the book. Questionable entries are contained within brackets [].

Most original registrations include the deceased's name, color, sex, age, marital status, place of birth, occupation, date of death, place of death, cause of death, duration of last illness, place of interment, and date of interment. If the deceased was a minor, the father and mother's names are provided (in most cases). In cases where the child's surname was not offered, the parents' surname was used, followed by the notation "(P)".

The available scans are currently organized by township or borough, following Allegheny County's original classification. To view the death records, click on the map or select a municipality from the list. Many of these record files can be viewed directly or downloaded for viewing later. However, many jurisdictions are too large to preview and must be downloaded first.

The scanning initiative was a 2023-24 project of the Western Pennsylvania Genealogical Society with the support of Allegheny County, Pennsylvania. Volunteers include Kristin Britanik, Pamela Israel, David McNelis, Rebecca Kichta Miller, Paul Campbell-Trimbur, and Amy Welch.

Preservation Pennsylvania Statewide Conference Is Back!

The Preservation Pennsylvania statewide conference is back—in mini form! As they plan for a better-than-ever full conference in 2026, they didn't want to waste any time bringing together preservationists from across the state to learn, share, and connect.



Mark your calendar and plan to join us ...

Sunday, June 1 – Monday, June 2
Heritage Discovery Center,
Johnstown, PA

This conference will immediately precede the Pennsylvania State Historic Preservation Office's (SHPO) meetings, so plan on staying for both. They will explore the future of historic preservation in Pennsylvania, focusing on actionable steps and innovative ideas to advance preservation outcomes throughout the Commonwealth.

While an abbreviated event, there will be no shortage of enlightening sessions, dynamic speakers, and invaluable engagement opportunities.

Registration fee: \$85 | \$75 (current Preservation Pennsylvania members). Details can be found at <https://www.preservationpa.org/conference/>.

Hidden Meanings of Grave Marker Symbols

Have you ever met a genealogist who didn't love visiting cemeteries? Cemeteries are on most family historians' lists of favorite haunts—alongside libraries, courthouses, and archives. We love visiting historic places that provide clues to the mysteries of



our ancestors' lives. Cemeteries are full of history and mystery, including fascinating clues and hidden messages in grave marker symbols waiting to be deciphered.

The fascinating clues and hidden messages in grave marker symbols can help you better understand your ancestors' stories. Although most symbols can be traced back to a person's endeavors, personality, or beliefs, some may

indicate what was common only during specific eras.

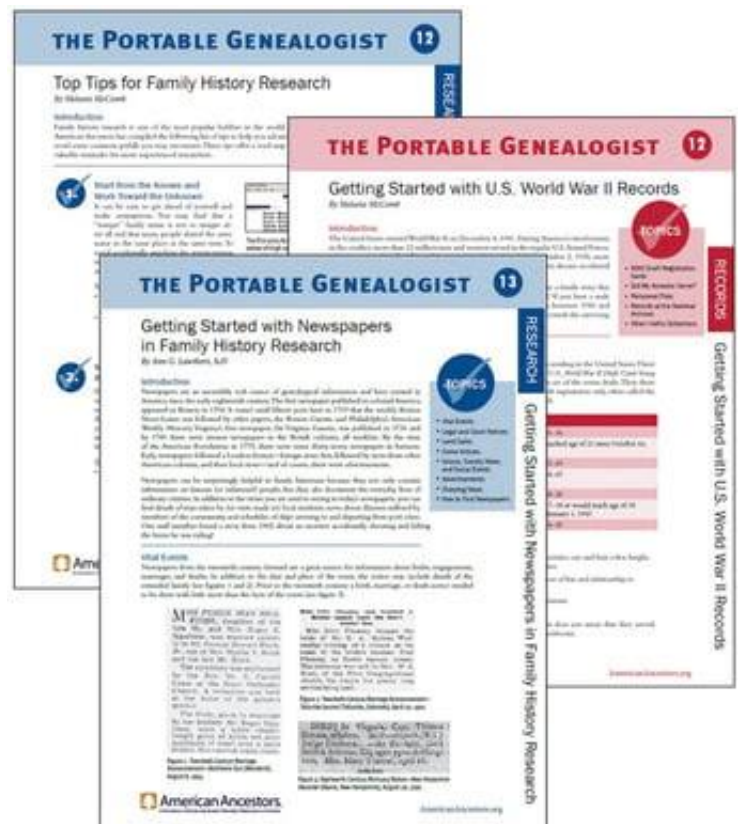
Others, in contrast, have endured and are still used today. But what do these commonly found images mean?

Family History Daily offers a FREE guide to help you decipher them at <https://familyhistorydaily.com/genealogy-resources/grave-marker-symbols/>.

From the Bookstore at American Ancestors: New Portable Genealogists

American Ancestors is pleased to announce the release of five new Portable Genealogist guides: *Getting Started with Revolutionary War Records*, *Getting Started with WWI Records*, *Getting Started with WWII Records*, *Getting Started with Newspapers in Family History Research*, and *Top Tips for Family History Research*.

Their popular Portable Genealogist series provides expert guidance in a convenient format for researchers of all levels. Each guide offers essential strategies, resources, and tips to help uncover your ancestors' stories. [Shop Now](#).



New Irish Census Website

On February 22, Ireland announced a new Census

website, which Claire Bradley, MA, Director of Irish Records, shared online.

She focused on an overview of the new site, detailed explanations, and a demonstration of how the new search page works. She also discussed some important things you must do to preserve your past research.

Go to <https://blog.genealogicalstudies.com/2025/03/new-irish-website/>. You can also watch this on YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Goo-e4OUPiE>.

What Really Happened To the 1890 U.S. Census?

The 1890 census was the most extensive to date, capturing data on nearly 63 million people, including regular population schedules and special schedules documenting manufacturing, mortality, imprisonment, poverty, and more.

On January 10, 1921, a fire was reported in the late afternoon at the Commerce Building in Washington, D.C., where the population schedules of the 1890 census were stored in the basement. The fire quickly turned from smoldering to raging. To salvage the building, gallons of water were poured into the basement where the fire originated. Within the basement was a fireproof vault where many of the Nation's census records were stored. Unfortunately, the 1890 census records were stacked outside the fireproof vault. According to T.J. Fitzgerald, the Chief Clerk of the Census Bureau, the census records "were totally destroyed by both fire and water." The combination of smoke, fire, and water damage to the 1890 census and other documents stored in this area was considered devastating.

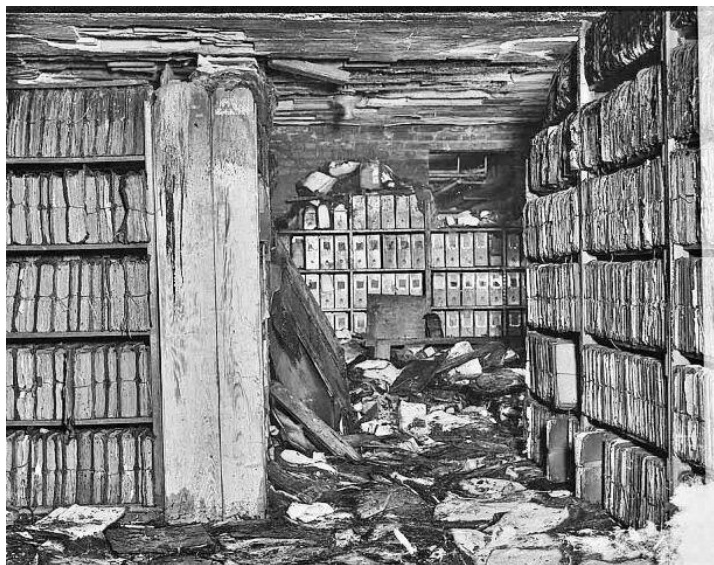


Photo of the destruction in the 1920 Commerce Building Fire

Varying reports on the extent of the damage to the 1890 population schedules of the census have caused some hearsay about what actually happened to the population census during and after the fire. Most often, you will hear in the genealogical community that the 1890 census was destroyed by fire in 1921 and is unavailable for genealogical research. However, this narrative is not entirely accurate. The morning after the fire, Samuel L. Rogers, the Census Director, reported that the 1890 census was about "25 percent destroyed with 50 percent of the remainder damaged by water, smoke and fire." He also indicated that salvage work on the 1890 census would be paused until after the insurance companies could assess the damage.

However, after painstaking and time-consuming efforts, the water-damaged records were thought to be salvageable. A later report estimated that 41,000 enumeration district records remained from

the census. Both reports suggested that a significant amount of the 1890 census remained unscathed or was damaged but salvageable.

Shortly after the fire, there was a movement within the Census Bureau to obtain permission from Congress to get rid of the damaged 1890 census by burning the records. The response to the protests of well-known lawyers and historians was a denial by Congress that the records would be destroyed.

From 1932 to 1934, a series of events unfolded that determined the fate of the surviving 1890 census records. Based on these events, it seemed that the destruction of the census, technically approved by Congress in February 1933, was halted, and that the 1890 census would finally be reviewed with information salvaged. However, sometime after January 1934 and before the end of the year, the Department of Commerce destroyed the remaining original 1890 census schedules.

As you can imagine, the loss of the 1890 population schedules has created serious roadblocks for many family researchers when locating ancestors who lived between the enumeration of the 1880 and 1900 censuses. Most states and counties did not begin recording births and deaths until after 1900, leaving few resources to piece together families and identify generational linkages. However, all hope is not lost! Below are some tips for breaking through your 1890 census brick walls.

- Check to see if the county where your ancestor lived was part of the 1890 census schedules acquired by the National Archives.
- Check to see if the county or counties where your ancestors might have lived kept records of births, marriages, and deaths between 1880 and 1900.
- Depending on the age of the ancestors you are researching and if they might have served in the Civil War, you can check the 1890 Veterans schedule, which is searchable online for free at FamilySearch.org.
- If your ancestor lived in Manhattan, it is worth examining the New York City Police Census of 1890, which is searchable online at FamilySearch.org.
- Check to see if the state your ancestor lived in held State censuses between 1880 and 1900.
- Some states have undergone reconstructions of the 1890 census, and it could be worth searching for these reconstructions online.
- Search for City Directories in the major cities in or near where your ancestor lived.
- Explore the tax records for the county or town where your ancestor likely lived. These tax records can act as a census providing the names of individuals, primarily males, who were of taxable age with taxable property.
- Dig into land, mortgage, and probate records to determine if your ancestor lived in an area or died in a given region between 1880 and 1900.
- Most counties kept marriage records before 1900, so it would be worth looking for marriage records to place your ancestor in a specific location.

Sources: National Archives and Records Administration, Hathitrust.org, and newspapers.com.

Jewish Genealogy Society of Pittsburgh Becomes Fully Independent



PITTSBURGH—Feb 27, 2025. The Jewish Genealogy Society of Pittsburgh (JGSP) announces that it has become fully independent following a five-year partnership with the Rauh Jewish Archives (RJA).

Through a partnership launched in January 2020, the JGS organized an ambitious Jewish

genealogical programming calendar using the RJA's administrative support and financial backing from the William M. Lowenstein Genealogical Education Fund.

The purpose of the partnership was to improve the genealogical resources available to the local Jewish community by helping the JGSP improve operations, increase membership, and become fiscally sustainable. With the start of the pandemic, the JGS became one of the first Jewish genealogy societies in the country to adapt to online programming, hosting monthly programs on a diverse array of topics. They included: Jewish genealogy from specific regions of Europe, Sephardic genealogy, using genealogy websites, understanding the role of DNA and other new technologies, understanding Jewish name changes, genealogical ethics, and of course, Western Pennsylvania Jewish history.

Through the partnership, the JGSP has:

- hosted 55 programs with more than 4,400 registrants from around the world,
- published more than 50 issues of its monthly newsletter *Z'chor*,
- started holding regular in-person membership meetings in Squirrel Hill,
- increased membership from 22 people in 2019 to 318 people today,
- become financially and administratively self-sufficient.

The JGSP/RJA partnership showed how organizations can leverage their respective strengths to provide services greater than either one could alone. Now that the JGS has attained a solid footing, it is sufficiently strong to move ahead independently of support from the RJA and its administration. The JGS and RJA will continue to partner by cross-promoting programming and providing in-person events at the Heinz History Center.

Julian Falk started the JGSP in 1981, publishing the newsletter *Z'chor* and hosting programming in the community. Activities dwindled through the 2010s. Enormous changes have happened in the genealogy world since 1981. Steve Jaron revived the organization in 2017. With the introduction of at-home DNA testing, digital records availability, and internet resources, it is now easier to trace one's family history and gain insight into one's origins.

"We restarted JGS Pittsburgh in 2017 to improve the resources available to Jewish genealogists in our region. We are now stronger and more sustainable than ever in our history, and we're excited to enter our next growth phase in the years to come," said JGSP President Steve Jaron.

Upcoming programs on the schedule are:

- Michael Moritz: *Romanian Records Go Online*. Michael is the Director of JewishGen's Romania Research Division.
- Gil Bardige: *Help, I got my DNA Results and I'm Confused*. Understanding your DNA matches and ethnicity estimates, and prioritizing your DNA matches to increase the chances of finding common relatives. (2 parts)
- Dan Rottenberg, journalist and author of *Finding Our Fathers* (1977), the first English-language book on tracing Jewish ancestors that launched the modern Jewish genealogy movement.

Our national and international membership shows that you need not be present in Southwestern Pennsylvania to pursue your genealogical interests. That said, the group still wants to engage the "local" Southwestern Pennsylvania membership at meetups and with personal interactions to utilize the collective wealth of information about Jewish history in the area.

Anyone interested in attending JGS Pittsburgh programs or starting family research can contact the organization at info@pghigs.org or visit <http://www.pghigs.org>.

The Movie, "A Stranger Quest"

Documentary / Art Film about David Rumsey (90 minutes)

For David Rumsey, maps constitute the fabric of memory. They carry images of boundless worlds and the people who live there — past, present, and even the future. In this 2023 documentary/art film, *A Stranger Quest* by [Andrea Gatopoulos](#), David takes us on a journey through time and space as he recalls why he started collecting. In many ways, the collection is itself a map of his past life, a poem in physical and virtual dimensions that can be read in endless ways.



A Stranger Quest, a documentary and art film combined, premiered at the Torino Film Festival on November 30, 2023, and was shown at over 20 film festivals worldwide. Click [here](#) to watch the whole film. Browse the David Rumsey Map Collection [here](#).

International German Genealogy Partnership News



The March-April issue of Partner Zeitung is now available. [View or download](#) it for your use. Feel free to share it with others who are interested in German genealogy.

This special issue presents a collection of research tips and resources that our partners and others have shared in recent months. You may find new information to help in your research!

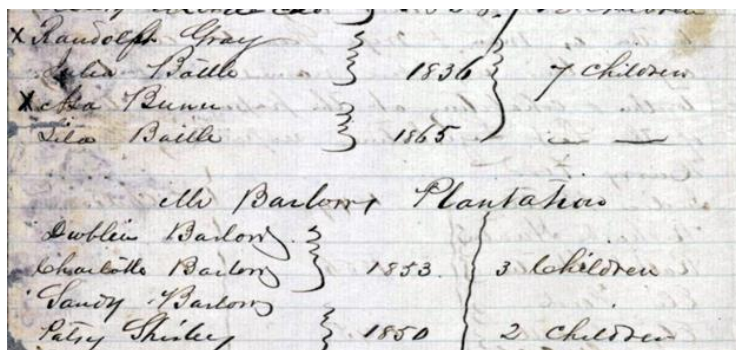
Registration for the 2025 IGGP conference in Columbus, Ohio, is ongoing. You can register by mail or [online](#).

If you're still undecided about attending, remember that the schedule, list of [speakers](#), and their programs are all available on the IGGP website. The conference home page also links to hotel information, videos, and details about sponsors and vendors.

Questions or comments may be sent to info@iggp.org.

North Carolina Cohabitation Records

The Great Migration saw millions of African Americans move out of the southern states from 1910 until 1970. Many came to larger cities, including Philadelphia, or industrial areas in the 26 counties of Western Pennsylvania. Tracing the southern roots of those people can be difficult, and genealogists often assume that things like marriage records don't exist, especially for formerly enslaved individuals. However, there are some exceptions.



One often overlooked source is the North Carolina Cohabitation Records. They are contained in the North Carolina, U.S. Marriage Records, 1741-2011 on Ancestry <https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/60548/> and the Cohabitation Records in the North Carolina Digital Collections <https://digital.ncdcr.gov/collections/cohabitation-records>.

These records were created in 1866 to legitimize the marriage of formerly enslaved couples.

The amount of information varies from county to county, with some registers including only the couple's names. In contrast, others list the enslaver, the couple's ages, the number of children, etc. This can be an excellent resource for anyone who thinks that their ancestors in the North came from the South.

Citizen Archivist Transcription Missions At NARA

Ready to start tagging and transcribing? The National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) has curated topical missions to help you jump in and contribute! Click on a topic that interests you, and it will bring you right to those historical records in the NARA Catalog. Tagging and transcribing make these records more accessible to everyone. New missions are added and updated regularly, so check back often to see what's new.



New to NARA's Citizen Archivist program?

Learn how to [register](#), [get started](#), and view the video [How to Transcribe in the National Archives Catalog](#).

Looking for a previous mission? Visit [Mission History](#). Pennsylvania records are found [here](#).

NARA has changed the contribution panel, so check out the [Get Started Transcribing](#) and how-to videos on the [Resources](#) page. Users need to log in and out of their Catalog accounts each day so that if our developers make any code changes to the Catalog overnight, their account and Citizen Archivist experience will work properly.

Example: *Revolutionary War Pension Files Transcription and Tagging Missions*. The stories of over 80,000 men and women who lived through the American Revolution are waiting to be told. Will you help?

[Join the transcription mission!](#) [Join the tagging mission!](#)

West Jefferson Hills Historical Society Celebrates 25 Years

The WJHS was the brainchild of Pleasant Hills Middle School librarian Joyce Schmidt. As early as October 1998, an article in *The Jeffersonian* reported that a Jefferson Historical Society was being formed.

After a year or so of collecting the names of those interested in joining the Jefferson Historical Society, local newspapers announced that the first meeting would occur on



February 23, 2000. The thirty-six participants at that meeting varied from young couples new to the area who wanted to know more about their community to older lifelong residents looking to donate artifacts and photographs.

Although the society was originally to be called the Jefferson Historical Society, one of the first orders of business was to change its name and jurisdiction to include West Elizabeth and Pleasant Hills. It was decided that a small Pleasant Hills Historical Society, which had already completed the paperwork to become a nonprofit, would join the Jefferson group. This idea ruffled a few feathers, but most of those present voted for the name change. Thus, the new society was now dubbed the West Jefferson Hills Historical Society.

After that first ambitious year, the West Jefferson Hills Historical Society continued growing and progressing. The Society's mission to locate, document, chronicle, and preserve the stories, sites, documents, photographs, and artifacts of historical significance in the West Elizabeth, Jefferson Hills, and Pleasant Hills areas has driven the society's work for 25 years.

During its first year, the historical society boasted 102 charter members. Since then, membership has been up and down, but lately it has had a noticeable increase. In 2024, WJHHS membership reached 174. Considering the very active archive work, the detailed newsletters, the increase in members, and the excellent programs, the West Jefferson Hills Historical Society is not merely achieving its mission, but it has become an asset to the West Jefferson Hills area.

Over the years, the WJHHS has had determined and industrious members who have written books about the West Jefferson Hills area. These publications were self-published in booklet form, and they are available for sale at

<https://sites.google.com/view/wjhhs15025>

Ancestry "Location Traps"

Excerpts from *Family History Daily*, January 10, 2025. When we enter information into one of Ancestry's search forms, we often include a location. This information is vital to narrowing down your results and helping locate records most likely relevant to the person in question. You have probably noticed that Ancestry begins to autocomplete for you as you start typing a location into a location box.

Keyword

London, England

☒ Exact

This is very convenient because it can help ensure that the location's name is spelled correctly, add a county to a city search, and help us locate places we may not remember the names of ourselves. It also shows us possible related locations. However, autocomplete can also mislead us and cause us to miss relevant records.

This can happen when we begin a search for a name and **lean too much on the autocomplete** to find an answer for us, when we use the autocomplete to assume a location without verifying our sources carefully, or when we are not cautious in making sure that the place we are choosing is the place we intend. For instance, if

we were in a hurry, it would not be difficult to confuse Walnut Grove, North Carolina, with Walnut Grove, South Carolina. However, the more significant concern stems from how record collections format their locations and how Ancestry autocompletes our exact locations.

We will research Johnson Worton in the 1910 Census collection in this example. We suspect Johnson lived in Saint Louis, Missouri, during this time and would like to see if we can locate him. Let's see what happens when we search for him in this city in the 1910 census. We type in Johnson Worton, leaving the searches inexact, and then type in the city. Ancestry now begins to autocomplete our

Location

London

London, London, England
London, Middlesex, Ontario, Canada
Londonderry, Londonderry, Northern Ireland
London, England
Londonderry, Northern Ireland
Londonderry, Rockingham, New Hampshire, USA
Londonderry, Windham, Vermont, USA
Londonderry, Bedford, Pennsylvania, USA
London Britain, Chester, Pennsylvania, USA
London Grove, Chester, Pennsylvania, USA

search. In the 1910 Census Records on Ancestry, we select Saint Louis, Missouri, USA – the first option – leave it inexact and conduct our search. What we get are about 1,000 results. But as we scroll through them, we notice that most appear NOT to be from Saint Louis.

You can now see how easy it would have been to miss this record if we had not

taken the time to figure out what was happening with the location. We may have easily assumed that there were **no results** in that location and missed this record entirely.

This example illustrates the importance of understanding the record collections you are searching, the limitations of Ancestry's autocomplete and search algorithm, and the importance of flexibility in your search. When searching a record collection, whether you are using exact or inexact locations (or other fields), take the time to make sure your locations match those in the collection you are targeting. **Don't count** on Ancestry's autocomplete; use the keyword box to get an exact match.

This is a good time to note that using the correct search field is essential, especially with locations. Ancestry often offers several related location fields (such as Lived In and Any Event), but each has benefits and limitations that will change your results.

Researching Records in Germany

Several sources exist for searching German origins, some old, more user-friendly, and some newer and more robust. They include:

1. **GeoGen.** The surname mapping site GeoGen has two versions: the older version and Version 4.0. Geogen is the short form for "geographical genealogy," which means location-based ancestor research. On this website, you can create maps showing the distribution of surnames in Germany. Significant concentrations can point to a local root of the family or of the family name. Enter your surname in the upper input field and click the *Research* button. German special characters (ä, ö, ü, and ß) will be normalized. This means Müller is the same as Mueller. The maps generated on this site are licensed

under the [Creative Common License Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International](#) (CC BY-SA 4.0).

2. **CompGen Surname Distribution Map.** While GeoGen provides current data on surnames in Germany, this resource allows you to toggle between historical (ca. 1890) and modern (ca. 1996) maps. This map goes beyond the boundaries of contemporary Germany and includes regions that were part of the German Empire in 1914. Through collaborative project work by our members and other volunteers and numerous collaborations, we have built up genealogical databases that we make freely available for public and non-commercial use in the spirit of "open access"—to everyone, even non-members!
3. **The Digital Dictionary of Surnames in Germany.** While not strictly a mapping tool, this resource is another excellent resource for learning about German origins. The introduction page is available in German and English, but most of the site is in German (use a browser plug-in for a translation). The site aims to include all surnames in the current German phonebook with 10 or more entries. [Searching for a surname](#) in the dictionary gives its frequency, overall rank, language of origin, etymology, meaning, and maps showing its distribution. However, the surname maps don't provide any boundaries or place names. Their strength lies in the details they give about the meaning and etymology of a name rather than in the maps they provide.
4. **Verwandt.de** used to be a good source for German surnames, but it now redirects you to the subscription site MyHeritage.

For the Next-of-Kin, the process (and cost) for replacing medals differs among the service branches and depends upon who requests the medal, particularly if the request involves an archival record. Click [here](#) for details.

For the General Public, if the service member separated from military service **62 (or more) years ago**, a member of the public may [purchase a copy of the veteran's Official Military Personnel File \(OMPF\)](#) to determine the awards due and obtain the medals from a commercial source. Suppose the service member separated less than 62 years ago. In that case, a member of the public may request such information from the OMPF via the Freedom of Information Act ([see Access to OMPFs by the General Public](#)).

For more information on where to contact for the
Army, Air Force, Navy,
Marine Corps, Coast Guard, and
Other Agencies go to

<https://www.archives.gov/veterans/military-service-records>

Please note: All requests must be in writing, signed,
and mailed to the National Personnel Records Center
1 Archives Drive, St. Louis, Missouri 63138

Important Note: Users are required to verify their identity
through the third-party service, **ID.me**, when submitting new
requests and retrieving electronic responses.

Who is the Next-of-Kin (NOK)?

For the Air Force, Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard, the NOK is defined as the unmarried widow or widower, son, daughter, father, mother, brother, or sister. For the Army, the NOK is defined as the surviving spouse, eldest child, father or mother, eldest sibling, or eldest grandchild.

If you do not meet the definition of NOK, you are considered a member of the general public.

How does the type of record (archival or non-archival) affect NOK requests for medals?

The Official Military Personnel File (OMPF) verifies awards to which a veteran may be entitled. OMPFs are accessed in the National Archives and become archival 62 years after the service member's separation from the military.

Separation from service is defined as discharge, retirement, or death in service based on a rolling date. (To calculate this, take the current year and subtract 62.) Records with a discharge date 62 (or more) years ago are archival and are open to the public.

Records with a discharge date less than 62 years ago are non-archival and are maintained under the Federal Records Center program. Non-archival records are subject to access restrictions. As such, the veteran's date of separation (separation is defined as discharge, retirement or death in service) will affect how the request is processed.

For more information, see

<https://www.archives.gov/veterans/replace-medals>.

U. S. Military Awards and Decorations



Replace Lost Medals and Awards

The National Personnel Records Center (NPRC) does not issue service medals. That is a function of each military service department.

Requests for the issuance or replacement of military service medals, decorations,

and awards should be directed to the specific branch of the military in which the veteran served.

However, for cases involving Air Force and Army personnel (click [here](#) for exceptions), the NPRC will verify the awards to which a veteran is entitled and forward the request along with the records verification to the appropriate service department for issuance of the medals. Use the addresses listed below and mail your request accordingly.

How Do I Request Military Awards and Decorations?

For the Veteran: Military services generally process replacement medal requests for veterans at no cost. This includes family members with the veteran's signed authorization.

10 Million Names Project

Mission

10 Million Names is a collaborative project dedicated to recovering the names of the estimated 10 million men, women, and children of African descent who were enslaved in pre- and post-colonial America (precisely, the territory that would become the United States) between the 1500s and 1865.

The project seeks to amplify the voices of people who have been telling their family stories for centuries, connect researchers and data partners with people seeking answers to family history questions, and expand access to data, resources, and information about enslaved African Americans.

Projects

- [Making America: Records of Enslaved Laborers Within and Beyond the Plantation](#)
- [Journeys to Liberation: Records of Mariners, Migrants, and Freedom Seekers](#)
- [On the Battlefield: Records of Soldiers, Veterans, and Refugees](#)
- [Community Building: Records of Black Institutions](#)
- [Remembering Slavery: Testimonials After Emancipation](#)

Stories

- [Common Myths](#)
- [African American Research Stories](#)
- [PBS's Kenyatta Berry: How I Found My Ancestors](#)

Renowned as top experts in the field, the Genealogists' Council furnishes the 10 Million Names project with unparalleled expertise. It offers professional insight and keeps staff abreast of emerging advancements in technology and datasets.

This information and much more can be found on the New England Historic Genealogical Society's American Ancestors website at <https://10millionnames.org/pilot-projects>.

17th-Century English Research Seminar

Since many of our early Western Pennsylvania ancestors came to America from England, the American Ancestors seminar on 17th-century English research may be helpful. It offers a special five-week course with Genealogist Else Churchill of the Society of Genealogists—the UK's premier and largest genealogical society—and explores English roots before 1700.



Else will provide practical research strategies, an overview of essential and lesser-known resources, and illustrative case studies to take your research to the next level. She has appeared on the UK and American television show, *Who Do You Think You Are?* She has written many articles for the British genealogical press, national media, and the Society's *Genealogists' Magazine*. Else composed the modules on advanced genealogy techniques and sources for the BBC History Family History website and has acted as a genealogical consultant for the BBC's web-based genealogical inquiries and newsgroup. She lectures regularly for the Society of Genealogists, the National Archives, and local groups around the UK, Canada, New Zealand, and the US. Her main interests lie in the 17th century and sources for people who lived through the English Civil Wars.

This course includes five 90-minute classes; exclusive access to handouts and recordings of each presentation; and in-depth Q&A sessions with the instructor. The classes will be offered on Tuesdays, June 3, 10, 17, 24, and July 1, from 2:00 to 3:30 p.m. (ET).

The Course Agenda

- June 3—Class 1: *Hopping the Pond: Some Ideas and Sources for Americans Researching Their British Ancestors Before 1700*. This first session will provide an overview of the chronology and key factors that led to British migration to the Americas, as well as some resources and techniques for answering common questions
- June 10 - Class 2: *Researching Before 1700*. This talk will look at go-to 17th-century sources, including parish registers and records and those pertaining to tax and religion, i.e., Protestant nonconformity and recusancy, immigration, tax lists, and loyalty oaths. The class will use case studies and source examples to illustrate what might be found.
- June 17 - Class 3: *Sin, Sex, & Probate*. Often described as the "bawdy courts" or "court of scolds," ecclesiastical court records illustrate the moral and religious constraints that governed communities in the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries. Such records also contain wills and marriage licenses. This talk will explore what information and colorful stories these records may provide about your ancestors.
- June 24—Class 4: *17th-Century Towns and Cities*. Town and city records were an essential source of information for English ancestors in the 17th century. This lecture will examine London guilds and livery companies, provincial "outwith" guilds, local borough records, mayor or corporation courts, and freemen records.
- July 1 - June Class 5: *17th Century Problems*. This final session will examine other possible sources and strategies that might help extend research back in England. We will discuss the "Commonwealth Gap," state papers, civil war, other petitions, and future research possibilities.

Learn more and register for \$125 at <https://my.americanancestors.org/2458/2597>. American Ancestors members receive a 10% discount.

DNA News

Four Main Types of DNA Testing

Autosomal DNA for everyone: provides DNA matches for all ancestral lineages, generally through the 4th generation, but sometimes further back in time.

Y-DNA for males: a specific test for the direct paternal (surname) lineage.

Mitochondrial DNA (mtDNA) for everyone: a specific test for your direct matrilineal line – your mother’s mother’s mother’s direct line up your tree through all females.

X-DNA: The 23rd chromosome determines sex and is inherited similarly to autosomal DNA, but with a unique and specific inheritance path that helps determine the ancestors who contributed matching X segments of DNA.

DNA testing companies include AncestryDNA, 23andMe, FamilyTreeDNA, MyHeritage, Living DNA, Futura Genetics, and Gene by Gene. Each has its specialty. Although GEDmatch is not a testing company, it is a public online service where individuals can upload their raw DNA data from ancestry DNA testing companies and compare their DNA to others in the GEDMatch database.

Discover Your Ancient Origins with DNA

Have you ever wondered where your deep ancestral roots lie beyond the last few centuries? MyHeritage has introduced an exciting new DNA feature: **Ancient Origins**. This tool offers a fascinating glimpse into your genetic connections to ancient civilizations, providing insight into where your ancestors lived thousands of years ago.

The Ancient Origins feature analyzes your MyHeritage DNA results and compares them to DNA found in archaeological remains from different historical populations. By doing this, MyHeritage can estimate which ancient groups your ancestors were connected to—helping you see how your lineage may have traveled and evolved.

How Does It Work?

Compares Your DNA to Ancient Samples – MyHeritage uses genetic data from ancient human remains discovered at archaeological sites worldwide.

1. **Identifies Your Ancient Populations** – You’ll receive an estimate of which ancient groups are most closely related to your DNA, such as Vikings, Neolithic farmers, or indigenous groups from various regions.
2. **Maps Your Deep Ancestry** – Your results will be displayed on a map, showing where your ancient ancestors may have lived and migrated.

What You’ll Get in Your Ancient Origins Report

This feature goes beyond just showing you ancient populations—it offers multiple reports to help you better understand your deep ancestry:

- **Ancient Origins Breakdown** – Provides a percentage-based breakdown of your DNA origins across different historical eras, from the Bronze Age to the Middle Ages. You’ll also receive AI-generated videos of avatars representing the populations in your results, adding an interactive and engaging element to your discoveries.
- **Hunter-Gatherer and Farmer Breakdown** – Gives insight into how much of your DNA comes from ancient hunter-gatherers versus early farming populations.
- **Genetic Similarities** – Show which ancient populations or combinations of populations are genetically most similar to you.
- **Genetic Distance Maps**—These maps display your genetic proximity to various ancient groups, helping you visualize how your DNA connects to the past.

Why This Feature Is Exciting

- **Goes Beyond Ethnicity Estimates** – While ethnicity estimates provide insight into recent ancestry, Ancient Origins delves deeper into thousands of years of migration and history.
- **Connects You to History** – You can see how your ancestors may have been linked to significant civilizations, from early European settlers to indigenous groups in the Americas and beyond.
- **Engaging and Interactive** – With downloadable videos of AI avatars representing your ancestral populations, you can see history come to life in a completely new way.
- **Adds Another Layer to Your Genealogy Research** – While this isn’t a replacement for traditional family history research, it’s a fun and informative tool to complement your existing knowledge.

Things to Keep in Mind

- **This is an Estimate, not a Definitive Answer.** Ancient DNA comparisons are based on available archaeological samples, meaning results may evolve as discoveries are made.
- **It Won’t Trace Specific Named Ancestors** – This feature provides insight into deep ancestry rather than individual people in your family tree.
- **Results May Be Surprising** – You may uncover unexpected genetic connections to regions or civilizations you hadn’t previously considered.
- **No Printable Report (Yet!)** – Unlike MyHeritage’s ethnicity estimates, Ancient Origins’ results currently can’t be printed—something to keep in mind if you prefer to save hard copies of your findings.

Final Thoughts

The Ancient Origins feature is a fascinating way to explore your ancestry’s distant past. If you’ve already taken a MyHeritage DNA test, review your results to discover where your ancient ancestors may have lived. If you haven’t yet, now is the perfect time. It’s just one more way to bring history and family heritage together!

Source: *February 23, 2025. Know Who Wears the Genes in Your Family: Family History and Genealogy Blog*



Consumer Alert for 23andMe Customers

On March 21, 2025, a consumer alert was issued for customers of 23andMe, a genetic testing and information company. The California-based company publicly reported that it is in financial distress and stated in its securities filings that there is substantial doubt about its ability to continue as a going concern. Due to the trove of sensitive consumer data 23andMe has amassed, consumers were reminded by many experts of their right to direct the deletion of their genetic data. Given 23andMe's reported financial distress, California's Attorney General reminded everyone to consider invoking their rights and directing 23andMe to delete their data and destroy any samples of genetic material held by the company." The following is copied from the California Consumer Alert:

To Delete Genetic Data from 23andMe: Consumers can delete their account and personal information by taking the following steps:

1. Log in to your 23andMe account on their website.
2. Go to the "Settings" section of your profile.
3. Scroll to a section labeled "23andMe Data" at the bottom of the page.
4. Click "View" next to "23andMe Data"
5. Download your data: Before proceeding, select the option to download a copy of your genetic data to your device for personal storage.
6. Scroll to the "Delete Data" section.
7. Click "Permanently Delete Data."
8. Confirm your request: You'll receive an email from 23andMe; follow the link in the email to confirm your deletion request.

To Destroy Your 23andMe Test Sample: If you previously opted to have your saliva sample and DNA stored by 23andMe but want to change that preference, you can do so from your account settings page, under "Preferences."

To Revoke Permission for Your Genetic Data to be used for Research: If you previously consented to 23andMe and third-party researchers using your genetic data and sample for research, you can withdraw your consent from the account settings page, under "Research and Product Consents."

If you have submitted a genetic sample to another DNA testing company, you may also want to review your personal permission selections with them. If you've already received your complete report, why do they need to keep your test sample? Do you want them selling your DNA results to another company for advertising opportunities, e.g., drug companies? Do you want your sample to be used for research if they don't specify what kind of research they're doing?

In addition to 23andMe, I have tested with five other companies, two of which have already gone out of business. I have requested that my samples be destroyed and my data not be shared by any of the remaining companies. The reason why I tested with so many companies is a long story for another day. Rebecca Miller, Editor

Legislation in Pennsylvania Proposed to Push DNA Privacy Bill

As concerns grow over what will happen to personal data held by 23andMe, that filed for bankruptcy, Pennsylvania state Reps. Emily Kinkead and Brian Munroe announced legislation to establish new protections for genetic data. Details from the March 27, 2025, proposal can be found at https://www.pahouse.com/InTheNews/NewsRelease/?id=137866&fbclid=IwY2xjawJYDC1eHRuA2FlbQlXMQABHYm9KIOGJxFjD10UxXp7oVu-q5QC3S3JYffAWjNq0eZu4Om6e9mGKgaH_Q_aem_HU7a_iZfLv5nk7ayBvDFtA

Memo details can be found at <https://www.palegis.us/house/co-sponsorship/memo?memoID=46213>



Why is DNA Testing Illegal in France?

In France, DNA testing, including paternity tests, is generally illegal unless ordered by a court for legal purposes. This ban stems from concerns about preserving family stability and preventing the misuse of genetic information, prioritizing social and legal paternity over biological paternity. The French government also aims to protect individual privacy and avoid commercializing DNA tests. Here is a more detailed breakdown:

Family Stability: The ban is partly rooted in the belief that DNA tests can disrupt family dynamics, potentially leading to conflict or even the abandonment of children.

Legal Priority: French law prioritizes the social and legal relationship of fatherhood, as determined by family status, over biological paternity.

Privacy and Misuse: Concerns exist about the potential misuse or exploitation of genetic data, especially by foreign companies.

Lack of Regulation: The French government takes a more cautious approach to direct-to-consumer DNA testing, wanting to avoid potential panic or misuse of results and ensure proper medical supervision.

Alternative Legal Processes: While direct DNA tests are banned, individuals can initiate legal proceedings to determine paternity, which may involve court-ordered DNA testing.

Some other European countries with DNA testing limits:

- **Switzerland.** Banned for non-medical purposes.
- **Germany.** Direct-to-consumer (DTC) genetic testing, particularly paternity testing, is illegal..
- **Luxembourg and Poland.** Regulates DTC testing through patient rights laws.
- **Spain.** Certain types of DNA testing, such as paternity tests, are illegal without a court order.
- **Italy.** DNA testing for ancestry purposes is not regulated.

On the flip side of this, apparently Kuwait made DNA testing mandatory for all residents in 2015. This includes foreign residents. This came on the heels of a suicide bomber so, there's that.

TECHNOLOGY FOR GENEALOGY

Roadblock to Finding Living Relatives In The European Union

Brussels, 05 March—The European Data Protection Board (EDPB) has launched its Coordinated Enforcement Framework (CEF) action for 2025. Following a year-long coordinated action on the Right of Access in 2024, the CEF will focus on implementing another data protection right, namely the right to erasure or the “**right to be forgotten**” (Art.17 GDPR). The Board selected this topic during its October 2024 plenary as it is one of the most frequently exercised GDPR rights and one about which DPAs often receive individual complaints. In 2025, 32 Data Protection Authorities (DPAs) across Europe will participate in this initiative.

Participating DPAs will soon contact several controllers from different European sectors by opening new formal investigations or conducting fact-finding exercises. The results of these national actions will be aggregated and analyzed to generate more profound insight into the topic, allowing for targeted follow-ups on both national and EU levels.

The “right to be forgotten” law, also known as the “right to erasure,” is a legal concept that allows individuals to request that organizations, particularly search engines, remove personal information about them from online platforms if that information is deemed outdated, irrelevant, or excessively intrusive. Thus, individuals can control how their data appears in online searches.

This means for family historians that if your “cousin” in the EU doesn’t want to be found and/or contacted, you may not be able to find them.

New 2025 Innovations and Tech

Many new tools were announced at [RootsTech 2025: World’s Largest Family History Event Wrap-up](#).

Adobe: Learn how Lightroom, Adobe Express, and Photoshop can enhance your family history by organizing, improving, and restoring your family history photographs, using their newest, powerful AI-generated tool to generate lost features authentically and more!

Ancestry: They just announced their new **photo tagging** feature that can recognize faces and can group all your uploaded photos; **Image Transcript** feature (in BETA), that can take journals, diaries, and letters that are uploaded to your tree (other documents coming soon) and transcribe them automatically with AI; and **Networks** feature (in BETA for Pro Tools users), that can group people by community, records, etc. and add them to your ancestor’s network!

MyHeritage: They just announced their new feature/ tool, **Cousin Finder**, which helps you find your DNA matches without a DNA test so you can collaborate with them! They also announced



their recently released Ancient Origins, which traces your origins up to 10,000 years and shows you your ancient populations, and an updated ethnicity model that helps pinpoint your geographic regions even more!

FamilySearch: New experiments in the **FamilySearch Lab** are using **Generative AI**, such as their new **AI Research Assistant**, where you can discover new insights and possibly new ancestors in a way that has never been possible. It even scans the web for info! Last year’s announced **Full-Text Search** has tons of records available worldwide now! Last year’s **Together** feature, just in the Lab, has been officially released! Also, they have added new tools for the tree integrity experiment in the Lab, such as **Guided Merge** and an updated, clearer change log, record search and finding help, “Family Group Trees,” the new “Together” app, and family tree “Profile Quality Score.”

Storied: I heard about Storied two years ago at RootsTech, a platform dedicated to sharing and preserving your family history, where you can build family trees with historical records and bring them to life with vibrant, collaborative ancestor stories using Generative AI while also integrating with FamilySearch. This year, they just announced their new **Storied Assistant**, which makes it easier to preserve your family history, memories, and recipes into a shareable story, even by just using your voice to do it all.

Soar.com: This company uses AI in “uplifting ways across all areas of life.” It includes tools and features such as Family Scribe that transform, transcribe, translate, and more. It also uploads videos, interviews, recordings, etc., into a book and adds pages of context, like importing genealogical research, insights, etc.

Remento: Preserves your family history with life story books that write themselves using AI-powered speech-to-text technology. These books transform recorded reflections into beautifully written stories with photos, stories, and voice recordings.

Are You Tired of Hearing About AI?

Yes, many people feel overwhelmed and fatigued by the constant barrage of AI news and discussion, leading to what's been called "AI fatigue." This fatigue stems from the feeling of being constantly bombarded with new AI technologies and the pressure to keep up. Some feel that AI is being overused and overhyped, with its applications sometimes feeling irrelevant or detracting from creative processes. Below is a more detailed look at the reasons behind this fatigue.



- 1. Overwhelming Information:**
The sheer volume of information about AI can be daunting. Constant updates, new AI tools, and discussions about its potential impact can leave people feeling overwhelmed and unable to keep up.
- 2. Overuse and Overhyping:** Many feel that AI is being used in ways that are not genuinely beneficial to your family history research or that the hype surrounding it doesn't match its capabilities.
- 3. Fear of Being Left Behind:** Rapid advancements in AI can lead to a fear of being left behind or that many resources will be replaced by AI, contributing to anxiety and stress.
- 4. Lack of Practical Application:** Some feel that AI is being pushed into areas where it's not particularly useful or its applications are not yet mature enough to be relied upon.
- 5. Negative Impact on Creativity:** There are concerns that AI tools might stifle creativity or replace human intuition and research capabilities.

Dealing with AI Fatigue:

- *Stay Informed, but Don't Overwhelm Yourself.* Focus on understanding the core AI concepts and applications relevant to your genealogical interests.
- *Practice Critical Thinking.* Don't blindly accept every AI claim you hear. Be discerning about its value and potential impact on our research.
- *Set Boundaries.* Limit your exposure to AI news and discussions to avoid feeling overwhelmed.
- *Focus on the Positive.* Look for ways AI can benefit you or your research rather than focusing on its negative aspects.
- *Talk it Out:* Discuss your concerns with others who share your genealogical interests and share your perspective in newsletters, podcasts, and webinars.

In September 2024, WPGS presented *AI and the Future of Genealogy Research* by Kristin Britanik. Members logged into the WPGS website can access the handout at <https://wpgs.org/program-handout-archive/>

Learn more about AI at the Legacy Family Tree Webinar Library (\$)

<https://familytreewebinars.com/webinar-library/>

June 27, 2:00 PM: *Handwritten Text Recognition: Harnessing the Power of Artificial Intelligence to Transcribe and Search* by Yvette Hoitink, MLitt, CG, QG

Archived

- Using Artificial Intelligence Tools to Expand Your Genealogy Research Universe* by James Tanner.
- Artificial Intelligence & Family History: An Introduction and 10 Practical Uses of AI for Family History* by Andrew Redfern
- From Research to Writing: AI Tools for Genealogists* by Nicole Elder Dyer
- GPTs for Family History: Unlocking the Potential of AI* by Andrew Redfern
- Picture the Past: An Introduction to AI Images for Family Historians* by Steve Little
- Streamlining Genealogical Research Plans with AI: A Step-by-Step Guide* by Diana Elder, AG, AGL
- Genealogy Meets AI: Panel Discussion*, moderated by Geoff Rasmussen
- Artificial Intelligence and Genealogy: New Beginnings in 2024 and Reflecting on AI in Genealogy: 2024's Lessons and 2025's Pathways* by Steve Little
- Machine Translation: What is it, and how do you use it effectively in your genealogy research?* by Bryna O'Sullivan.

Online Record Set News

Ancestry.com

<https://www.ancestry.com/cs/recent-collections>

FamilySearch.org

<https://www.familysearch.org/en/blog/tag/about-familysearch/whats-new-at-familysearch>

MyHeritage

<https://blog.myheritage.com/category/announcements/>

FindMyPast

<https://www.findmypast.com/articles/new-records>

U. S. National Archives & Records Administration

<https://www.archives.gov/research/catalog/whats-new>

The National Archives of Britain

<https://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/>

Pennsylvania Historical & Museum Commission

<https://www.phmc.pa.gov/Archives/Research-Online/Pages/default.aspx>

Allen County Public Library Research Resources

<https://www.acpl.lib.in.us/genealogy/research-resources>

Ulster Historical Foundation

<https://ulsterhistoricalfoundation.com/genealogy-databases/list>



Online at www.wpgs.org



[Research](#) ▾ [Events](#) [Shop](#) [Library](#) ▾ [Resources](#) [About](#) ▾

As a WPGS member, you can access many website resources that are available only to members (indicated in **bold**).

RESEARCH

Library Research Services, Newsletters, WPGS Quarterlies

WPGS Ancestor Directories

Surnames, First Families of Western Pennsylvania,
Member Ancestor Charts

Regional Records

Death & Burial Records Allegheny County Morgue Book Index, **Allegheny County Veterans Burial Records Index**, Registration of Deaths, Allegheny County, Pennsylvania, 1893-1905, **Unindexed Cemetery Records for Little Beaver Cemetery**, Deaths & Missing During Native American Conflicts Before 1812, **Index of the Registration of Deaths, Allegheny County, Pennsylvania, 1893-1905**, South Hills, Pittsburgh, PA, Indexed Cemetery Records, Funeral Home Records

Church Records: North Liberty United Presbyterian Church, Grove City, Pennsylvania, **Digitized (Western PA) Church Records**

Military Records: GAR Post Membership, **Allegheny County's Civil War Roll of Honor**, **Allegheny County Veterans Burial Records Index**, Civil War: Regimental Roster for the 103rd Pennsylvania Volunteers Infantry: A-L and M-Z

Miscellaneous Records: Family Histories & Archives, Photos and Memorabilia, **Family Bible Pages**, **Member Family Archives**, Miscellaneous Dockets of Quarter Sessions in Allegheny County, **Allegheny County Naturalizations**, **Index of the Tax Rolls for Middlesex Township, Butler County for 1839 and 1855**, Western Pennsylvania Historical Publications)

EVENTS

Upcoming Event Registration, Description of Past Events

SHOP

Book Sales (Used, WPGS Publications, Digital Downloads), Digital Quarterlies, Donations, Research Services, Order Forms, FAQ

LIBRARY

Visiting the WPGS Library, Library Catalog, Library Donations, Uncatalogued Resources (at the WPGS Library only)

RESOURCES

Program Handouts, WPGS Video Resources, Public Video Resources, Western Pennsylvania Churches, Research Links

ABOUT

About WPGS, Contact, Membership Info and Join, Get Involved, Suzanne Johnston Memorial Scholarship Info, Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ): Joining and Renewing, Shop, and Donations

WPGS Membership Registration/Renewal Form

Member Benefits as of 1 July 2025



- ★ Eight informative monthly meetings per year, free and open to the public.
- ★ Six issues of our newsletter, *Jots from Western Pennsylvania* newsletter, plus access to all the back issues, 1974 to Present.
- ★ Eligibility for the Suzanne Johnston Memorial Scholarship.
- ★ Discounts on WPGS Publications, Library Research, and the Online Bookstore.
- ★ Access to the First Families of Western Pennsylvania ancestors list (searchable)
 - ⇒ This includes over 700 family names of residents of WPA before December 30, 1810.
- ★ Surname Research Project, a database of surnames being researched by members.
- ★ Two free queries in each edition of the *Jots*.
- ★ Access to online Members-Only databases and documents. Currently, these include:
 - ⇒ Many church records from Western PA
 - ⇒ Allegheny County's Civil War Roll of Honor
 - ⇒ Allegheny County Grand Army of the Republic (GAR) Members (a partial list)
 - ⇒ List of Immigrants Who Applied for Naturalization Papers in the District Courts of Allegheny County, Pennsylvania, Volumes 1-7

- ⇒ 1853 and 1889 Allegheny County Tax Rolls
- ⇒ Allegheny County Morgue Book Index (1900-1953)
- ⇒ WPGS *Quarterly*, all volumes (1975-Present) including indexes
- ⇒ Digitized copies of previous Monthly Program Handouts (1983-Present)
- ⇒ Member Family Archives Documents
- ⇒ Family Bible Pages
- ⇒ Family Histories
- ⇒ Ancestor Chart Project, 150,000+ names, more than 2,500 members in Ancestor Charts.

Many other online files are available on www.wpgs.org, including the *Allegheny County Death Registrations, 1893-1905*

Mail this application/renewal form with your check, payable to WPGS or Western Pennsylvania Genealogical Society, to
WPGS, Membership Committee
4400 Forbes Avenue, Third Floor,
Pittsburgh, PA 15213-4007

Online application/renewal can conveniently be made via PayPal at
<https://wpgs.org/membership/join/>
PayPal allows secure transactions using a debit or credit card without having a PayPal account.

Memberships

- ☐ Individual Membership \$25.00 ☐ Joint Membership \$31.00 (*Two names at the same address*)
☐ Individual Membership outside USA \$32.00 ☐ Institutional Membership \$25.00 (*No online access*)

Donations

- ☐ Resources Fund \$ _____ ☐ Suzanne Johnston Memorial Scholarship Fund \$ _____

TOTAL ENCLOSED: \$ _____

Member Information

Full Name		User Name	
Home Address			
City	State (two-letter)	9-digit Zip Code	
Phone	Email		
Communications from WPGS			
<input type="checkbox"/> All communication by email	<input type="checkbox"/> Only publications by email	<input type="checkbox"/> All Publications by email & USPS	<input type="checkbox"/> All communication by USPS

Please consider receiving communications via email to save postage and printing cost. For Joint Memberships, Member #1 first needs to have an active membership and then needs to invite the second member to join them. See the <https://wpgs.org/frequently-asked-questions/> for more details.



2025 – 2026 Membership Year

Board of Directors Ballot

These are the positions that require a membership vote this year. Please check the boxes to vote for each position. You can return this ballot via USPS with your renewal form, and it will be counted if it is received by June 13, 2025, the day before the Annual Meeting. It can also be emailed to nominating@wpgs.org before 10:00 AM on June 14. Thank you.

☐ **President-Elect, 2025-2026: Kristin Britanik** is the WPGS Website Committee Chair and has been a director at large since 2021. She is a Senior Researcher at Legacy Tree Genealogists and has over a decade of experience working as a professional genealogist on projects across North America. She previously worked in Archival Digitization at the University of Pittsburgh, the Andy Warhol Museum, and Ancestry.com.

☐ **Recording Secretary, 2025-2026: Pam Ferkett** has been a WPGS member since 2012 and serves as the WPGS Recording Secretary. Professionally, she is a librarian and cataloger at the Pleasant Hills Library. She volunteered with the 50th Anniversary Conference last year and has been helping to update the WPGS Library catalog. Her family history includes ancestors from the Netherlands and England, some of whom settled in Armstrong and Clarion counties. In addition to doing genealogical research, Pam enjoys reading, knitting, jigsaw puzzles, and spending time outdoors, especially walking her three beagles.

☐ **Treasurer, 2025-2026: David Salvatora** has served as WPGS Treasurer since 2020 and enjoys anything with numbers! His heritage includes immigrants from Italy, England, and Ukraine. Dave enjoys spending his free time outdoors and riding the trails in Pittsburgh on his bike.

☐ **Corresponding Secretary, 2025-2026: Kelsea Collins** works as a librarian in the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh's Local History and Genealogy Department. She has been working on her family's genealogy since 2018. Kelsea was first introduced to genealogy in middle school when a distant relative found information on her grandmother's family at an estate sale and shared a photo album with her, which included a wedding announcement. Her great-great-grandmother's family hails from West Virginia, where Kelsea has visited for on-site research in the past.

The officer positions above are running unopposed. However, we have four (4) nominees for the three (3) open positions on the Board of Directors.

Please vote for only three (3) Directors.

☐ **Director, 2025-2027: Paul Campbell-Trimbur** is a retired U.S. Postal Inspector. Always intrigued by his heritage, Paul began doing genealogical research about his immediate family history (all eight of his great-grandparents are buried in the City of Pittsburgh). It quickly became clear that he had a passion for the subject and began doing research and DNA analysis for extended family members and friends. Paul then became the owner/researcher of Stone Barn Research. After purchasing a 1700s barn converted into a home in the 1970s, Paul branched into house histories as part of his research expertise. Since Paul moved back home to his birthplace in Pittsburgh, he has relearned his knowledge of the Pittsburgh area, his records, and his research. Paul Campbell-Trimbur has been a member of WPGS for over 20 years and a member of the Association of Professional Genealogists for five years.

☐ **Director, 2025-2027: Nancy Marsh** has been a WPGS member for over 20 years and is currently chairing the Indexing Committee. Since she does not live in the Pittsburgh area, she became active in the Society after Covid, when she could participate in Programs and Board Meetings remotely. Nancy is the genealogy researcher for her and her husband's families, focusing on Pittsburgh, Western Pennsylvania, Germany, and Italy.

☐ **Director, 2025-2027: David Egelston** was born in Washington State, grew up in Idaho and Southern California, and moved to Pittsburgh after college to work with Westinghouse Electric Co. He has been retired for 13 years. Genealogy has been a hobby for him for over 45 years, and he and his wife have been WPGS members for almost that long. David has traced the migration of several branches of his family over four centuries from eastern Massachusetts to the West Coast (he being a retrograde, having never been east of Denver until after graduating from college). David has also been active in the North Hills Genealogists, previously serving as president. David is a First Families of Western Pennsylvania (FFWPA) Member serving on the FFWPA Committee as well.

☐ **Director, 2025-2027: Megan Clark Young** is a forensic genealogist for a land development company, specializing in heirship research for mineral rights. She has been chairing the WPGS First Families of Western Pennsylvania lineage society since 2020. She has been on the WPGS Board of Directors since 2021, most recently serving as President for the 2024-2025 membership year. Megan is a member of the Association of Professional Genealogists and the Genealogical Speakers Guild. She is looking forward to continuing to serve WPGS.

Member Name: _____

Member Number: _____