

Genealogy Gems: News from the Allen County Public Library at Fort Wayne
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Family History Month 2025--It's a Wrap!

by Curt B. Witcher

It is among my greatest aspirations that Family History Month 2025 was a fantastic time of exploration for you--learning new things and renewing your understandings of doing better research, telling better stories, compiling better histories, and listening to what our family members living and deceased have to share with us. And while the month concludes in just a few moments, we can continue to embrace learning and finding more of our families' stories. A commitment to lifelong learning continues to make us better at everything we do.

This Family History Month started with a great presentation on the Ghost Army of World War II. Not only did Rich Beyer document an amazing story with interviews, documents, and new research, many were inspired all over again to find those hidden stories of their loved ones' activities in defending our freedoms and liberties over generations. Later in the month, Genealogy Center senior librarian Logan Knight walked attendees through Fold3, a site full of military records for most all U.S. military engagements from the Revolutionary War to near present day (and much more besides). Though Family History Month has waned, your access to the Fold3 database in the Genealogy Center (and many libraries throughout the country!) has

not.

On the first Friday of this month, we had an amazing day of learning that was brought to us by Vivid-Pix. The highlights of the Friday program included the following. Dr. Josh Freitas presenting on understanding gerontology and aging neuroscience as well as special initiatives in dementia care through innovative research and photo reminiscence therapy. Dr. Charlotte Yeh inspired attendees about how we can age well, and help our family members age well, too. Because of her vast and deep experience in the aging-well arena, she was able to provide many practical tips and meaningful insights. And Rick Voight wowed us again with all he and his colleagues at Vivid-Pix are doing. From memory stations and memory cards to family activities and librarian classes, one could spend hours exploring and engaging at his website.

If you missed attending that day, the videos of the various presentations should be available in the very near future on the Vivid-Pix website. www.vivid-pix.com In addition to looking for the videos, just about everyone could benefit from walking around the Vivid-Pix website if you have never been there, or if you haven't in a while. Explore the details of a memory station, and actively wonder if you, your local library, or your genealogical society shouldn't be using one in your family and your community. There are so many takeaways on the site for anyone wanting to assist a loved one in thriving (rather than just surviving) in their retirement years as well as anyone wanting to better preserve their families' memories. Be sure to check out how they are honoring National Family Caregivers' & Alzheimer's Awareness Month in November.

Here in Allen County during Family History Month we walked "history!"--walking through a historic neighborhood and a historic cemetery as well as taking four virtual tours through our Catholic cemetery. While it's true you couldn't participate in those particular events that were physically walking in a space if you didn't live near Fort Wayne, what we did can be replicated anywhere across the entire country. I challenge you to take the lead in doing something similar in your area of the country. Individuals of all ages and walks of life love appreciating cemeteries, and that appreciation can take the form of tours, picnics, reenactments of famous and infamous deceased, and learning about tombstone art and iconography. Just today on the CBS early morning news program there was a segment on just that--enjoying time in cemeteries.

Telling stories, writing better narratives, understanding different languages and cultures to put our ancestors in better context, and documenting one's sources ably filled other programs slots this month. We joined a nationwide network of top-shelf genealogy programming offered through libraries--a third-Friday-in-October event for a good number of years. Why not put a pin in your calendar now to join us next year? It's available to you no matter where you live in the world!

Though the calendar shows October is over, I hope this month is either a start or a jump-start for your quest to find, tell, and preserve more of your families' stories.

Unlocking Catholic History: A Closer Look at The Catholic News Archive by Kate McKenzie

In the digital age, access to historic newspapers transforms how researchers explore faith, immigration, and local community narratives. Among these, “The Catholic News Archive” stands out as a powerful resource, offering free, full-text access to decades of Catholic newspaper coverage across the United States. Developed through partnerships with diocesan archives and scholarly organizations, it’s a vital bridge between ecclesiastical recordkeeping and public historical research.

“The Catholic News Archive” is available at thecatholicnewsarchive.org and it is a digital repository that gathers historical Catholic newspapers from U.S. dioceses and religious publishers into a searchable online collection. It was launched in 2016 by the Catholic Research Resources Alliance (CRRA) and is now maintained through Atla’s CRRA Program.

Its scope spans more than a century and a half, with materials dating from 1831 to 2024 (and growing). The archive is fully text-searchable, meaning that you can search not only headlines but editorial content, advertisements, parish notices, and announcements.

For genealogists, “The Catholic News Archive” offers a wealth of material that goes far beyond traditional record sources. Many diocesan newspapers published parish notices, death announcements, confirmations, and transfer records—details that can sometimes provide the only surviving evidence for individuals not otherwise documented in municipal or civil archives. Catholic newspapers also capture the broader cultural landscape of immigrant life, reflecting language transitions, parish disputes, and community celebrations in ways secular papers rarely did. For example, German-speaking parishes and other ethnic Catholic communities often appear more vividly and consistently in diocesan publications than in general local press.

In addition, the archive helps bridge gaps where parish registers or diocesan archives may be incomplete or inaccessible. When newspapers have survived and been digitized, they offer a complementary layer of evidence that can fill in missing chapters of family or parish history. Perhaps most valuable of all, the archive’s full-text search makes discovery remarkably efficient—allowing researchers to locate names, places, or topics across multiple dioceses in

seconds, without the need to travel between repositories or sift through reels of microfilm.

Currently, more than fifteen dioceses are represented, including Atlanta, Georgia; Baton Rouge, Louisiana; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; and St. Paul and Minneapolis, Minnesota, among others. You can search by keyword or browse by title or date. While exploring "The Catholic Telegraph," a publication of the Archdiocese of Cincinnati, I came across a mention of my 2nd great-aunt, Josephine Minten, participating as a cast member in a play at St. Paul's Church. The drama, titled Remember, was performed in the church hall. You never know what fascinating details you might uncover!

"The Catholic News Archive" fills an important niche between church archives and public historical resources. For genealogists researching Catholic ancestors it provides a searchable glimpse into aspects of religious and community life that are often hard to find in other records.

Map Guide to German Parish Records by Logan Knight

When genealogists discover the village of their immigrant ancestor, there are few more rewarding moments in this field. Of course, the inevitable next question is, what comes next? Well, if your family story leads to Germany, the answer is church parish records.

It should be understood that Germany was an idea or a geographic expression rather than a country until 1871. It wouldn't be until 1876 that Reich Civil Registry Law (Personenstandsgesetz) went into effect. This date marks the official nationwide start of state-run civil registration in Germany. Many of these records are not available here in the United States, though some civil records can be found on Ancestry and FamilySearch. For earlier and often more complete records, we must turn to those kept by the German Kirches (churches).

Parishes are formal territorial divisions of the Church, each under the care of a parish priest. This is true for both the Catholic Church in Germany and the Evangelical Church (Lutheran, Reformed, and United). Ever since the Council of Trent (1545-1563), the Catholic Church has mandated the keeping of records, by every parish priest, of baptisms, marriages, and burials, within their respective parishes. Many Protestants followed suit. Obviously, these records are valuable genealogically. The challenge, of course, is figuring out what parish and where to go to get the records.

Fortunately, the noted genealogist Kevan M. Hansen has assembled a series of books (sixty-

eight volumes and counting) that break down the parishes for the various states that made up Imperial Germany (1871-1918) and gives their equivalent Family History Library microfilm number. The scope includes large amounts of territory that are no longer German (Prussia, Silesia, Posen etc.) but are parts of other eastern European countries, such as Poland. These books offer a guide on how they are to be used, historical background on the Germanic state, list other records of use, and provide contact information for archives within the current state.

How does this process work? The first thing you need to know is your immigrant ancestor's religious denomination. For Germany, this almost always means Catholic or Evangelical (Protestant). This is important because the denomination's parishes will have a different area of coverage, especially in areas that are dominated by one denomination. The smaller religion's parish will be much larger to gather enough adherents to form an effective unit.

Then you need to know the town/village/city. Almost all European records were generated at a local level. So, trying to research your family in Baden or Prussia, without knowing the town, is a nearly hopeless exercise. This brutal fact cannot be overemphasized.

Once you have those two key pieces of information, you are ready to dive into the books. Let us say that my ancestor was a Catholic from a village called Sparrenberg in what was then the Grand Duchy of Baden. I go to the appropriate volume (Volume 2, Grand Duchy of Baden) and look for Sparrenberg in the alphabetical index in the back. Once found, I then go to the page number for the Catholic parishes of the town. Once I have the appropriate page number, I go to it where I am greeted by a map of the local district (usually based around a district or "Amt") within a larger Kreis (circle). Kreis are probably best understood as similar to counties in America.

In this case, we are looking at Amt Bonndorf inside Kreis Waldshut. In turn, Sparrenberg is located within the parish of Brenden. When I look at the parish key on those pages, I find that it tells me these records can be found on the Family History Library Microfilm #1046727. From here, I can check FamilySearch to see if this microfilm has been digitized and indexed. Even if it hasn't, I have taken a gigantic step in finding out more about my ancestors.

Why is the key for Family History Library microfilm? Because FamilySearch, in its days as the Genealogical Society of Utah, provided free microfilming for many of these records and were thus able to obtain agreements with state and church archives to make copies available, first on microfilm and then digitally. Two other important sources of digitized German records are Archion <https://www.archion.de/en/> for Lutheran records and Matricula Online <https://data.matricula-online.eu/en/> for Catholic records. Both collections have church

registers for towns not available on FamilySearch. Sometimes FamilySearch will have digital locks on certain records that can be accessed readily from these other sources.

Hansen's magnificent set of books is a key resource for anyone interested in doing German family research. All sixty-eight volumes, plus revisions, are available here at the Genealogy Center.

PERSI Gems: Hustle, Bustle, and Side Hustles

by Adam Barrone and Mike Hudson

Debi Boughton tells us, through her article in the "Adair Historian," that her grandfather, Charles L. Adams (1909-1972), was a master of the side hustle. The son and grandson of Missouri coal miners, he graduated high school in hope of a brighter future. He had a 31-year career as a shipping clerk and automotive-department manager for Montgomery Ward. Charlie supplemented this income with a multitude of projects over the years. He and his family ran a gas station, a roadhouse, and a stock-car racetrack. He worked as a residential landlord and an auctioneer. His "jolly laugh and round middle section" qualified him for a rather special annual gig during the hustle and bustle of the holiday season: Montgomery Ward's Santa Claus.

We at the Periodical Source Index (PERSI) wish you a productive and busy season of hustle and bustle.

<https://www.genealogycenter.info/persi/>

Abraham Lincoln misquoted about those who wait and hustle
For the People (Abraham Lincoln Association), Vol. 5, Issue 3 (Aut 2003)

Australia women, modernity and the hustle of New York, travel accounts, 1910-1960
Pacific Historical Review, Vol. 86, Issue 4 (Nov 2017)

Bustle, women's dresses in Victorian America, 19th C.
Finial (The) (Rock County Historical Society, WI), Sum 2017

Charles Layton Grandpa Charlie Adams bio. and the side hustle, 1909-1972
Adair (MO) Historian, Vol. 18, Issue 2 (Apr 2021)

River babble, river bustle, Coast Mail publication history, excerpts, 1878-1906

Millicoma (OR) Ripples (Oct 2016)

Robbie Bakanec recalls the hustle and bustle of Christmas, Arthur Godfrey on the radio, c. 1945+

Lifestory (Letter Rock Publications, KS), Issue 132 (Dec 2012)

Young lady should adjust her bustle before her next promenade, Somerset Bugle excerpt, Jun. 1883

Family Branches (Wabash County Genealogical Society, IN), Vol. 24, Issue 3 (Nov 2018)

Preservation Tips: Preserving Our Family Stories—Caring for Genealogical Books and Records
by Allison DePrey Singleton

Genealogical materials—family histories, local records, diaries, and community publications—are priceless connections to our past. Each document tells a story, and preserving these materials ensures that future generations can discover and celebrate their heritage.

Environment matters. Keep genealogical books and papers in a stable, cool, and dry environment—ideally around 65–70°F with moderate humidity (40–50%). Avoid basements, attics, and direct sunlight, which can cause paper to fade, warp, or deteriorate. Store items upright on shelves or in acid-free boxes, allowing for good air circulation.

Handle with care. Family Bibles, fragile scrapbooks, and handwritten journals should be handled with clean, dry hands. Use gentle pressure when turning pages and avoid using tape, staples, or paper clips to make repairs or mark places. Instead, use acid-free bookmarks or folders.

Think long-term. Digitizing your family records is one of the best ways to ensure their survival while making them easier to share. Scanning old photographs, letters, and documents preserves their content even if the originals fade with time. Be sure to label digital files clearly and back them up in multiple locations.

Preserving genealogical materials is an act of love and stewardship. By protecting the records of our ancestors, we ensure that their stories—and ours—remain accessible for generations to come.

History Tidbits: Chicken Feed--The Story of Candy Corn

by Logan Knight

As the leaves begin to fall, and the days begin to grow short, everyone can tell that Autumn is in the air. Ghosts, pumpkins, and hay bales begin to pop up, almost out of nowhere. This made me think of one of most common signifiers of fall, albeit one I never cared much for: Candy Corn.

While it may be my least favorite candy, it is impossible to deny Candy Corn's status as a Halloween favorite. The confection is simply everywhere. In fact, over thirty-five million pounds of Candy Corn are sold each year, which equals about nine billion individual pieces!

Candy Corn feels like it's always been there and, indeed, it is one of America's oldest sweets. The corn came out at some point in the 1880s along with a wide variety of other farm-themed candy. In a nation where most people were still "down on the farm," it only made sense to market to that crowd. This meant that Candy Corn also came with mellow creme pumpkins (still sold today) as well as much more surprising variants such as turnips and chestnuts. Candy Corn contains many ingredients including wax (carnauba wax, which gives it its creamy texture) and actual corn syrup. Wunderle Candy Company in Philadelphia was the first company to sell them but far from the last.

In 1898, sales of the candy really took off, when the Goerlitz Candy Company (now known as Jelly Belly) began marketing its version as "Chicken Feed." In fact, this was Candy Corn's official name for decades as most Americans associated real corn with food for animals not people food. The official mascot was a rooster and the tagline read: "King of the Candy Corn Fields."

Early Candy Corn wasn't associated with Halloween or even autumn. It was just another cheap candy that kids bought all year long. Things began to change on that point in the 1950s. As more and more Americans moved to the suburbs, new versions of ancient traditions began to take hold. One of the most popular was Trick R' Treating from door to door in the neighborhood. In the past, many different items had been the "treat" in the ritual. These initially included soul cakes but had expanded to coins, toys, nuts, apples, popcorn balls, etc. In a more hygienic age, individually wrapped candy (or factory produced, in Candy Corn's case) became much more appealing and, hence, dominant.

Finally, candy manufacturers saw the possibilities of Halloween for their product. As such, advertising during the month of October skyrocketed. With the decline of the number of people working on farms, it no longer made sense to market extensively to that group. Candy Corn transitioned away from being a "farm candy" and increasingly became a "Halloween Candy,"

where it maintains its dominance to this day. So, the next time you are munching on a bunch of Candy Corn, think of this extensive history and tip your hat to the “King of the Candy Corn Fields.”

Genealogy Center’s November 2025 Programs

November’s robust program offerings are below. One might be surprised about what can be learned if you register for all of them!

Tuesday, November 4, 2025 at 2:30 p.m. ET “Artificial Intelligence & Ancestry: Navigating the Future of Genealogy” with Lori Samuelson - <https://acpl.libnet.info/event/14845244>

Thursday, November 6, 2025 at 6:30 p.m. ET “IN-PERSON DNA & Genealogy Interest Group” with Sara Allen - <https://acpl.libnet.info/event/14742824>

Tuesday, November 11, 2025 at 2:30 p.m. ET “Pennsylvania German Passenger Lists 1727-1808: A Users Guide” with Logan Knight - <https://acpl.libnet.info/event/14744940>

Thursday, November, 13, 2025 at 6:30 p.m. ET “Effective Use of Ancestry.com” with Scott Lee - <https://acpl.libnet.info/event/14654802>

Tuesday, November 18, 2025 at 2:30 p.m. ET “Pathways to Belonging: Citizenship, Rights, and Records through History with Allison DePrey Singleton and Elizabeth Hodges - <https://acpl.libnet.info/event/13814757>

Thursday, November 20, 2025 at 6:30 p.m. ET “Discovering Your Pennsylvania Dutch Ancestors” with Jeanie Glaser - <https://acpl.libnet.info/event/14742734>

Tuesday, November 25, 2025 at 2:30 p.m. ET “Mayflower Genealogy” with John D. Beatty - <https://acpl.libnet.info/event/14743092>

Staying Informed about Genealogy Center Programming

Do you want to know what we have planned? Are you interested in one of our events, but forget? We offer email updates for The Genealogy Center’s programming schedule. Don’t miss out! Sign up at <http://goo.gl/forms/THcVOwAabB>.

Genealogy Center Bits-o'-News

Look for the Genealogy Center merch! You really should check it out! The special Genealogy Center section of the store with some pretty cool items. <http://acpl.dkmlogo.online/shop/category/4726261?c=4726261> Please remember that your purchases support the Friends of the Allen County Public Library, and they in turn support the Genealogy Center. As much as ever, this support is so very important.

Genealogy Center Social Media

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/GenealogyCenter/>

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/genealogycenter/>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/ACPLGenealogy>

Blog: <http://www.genealogycenter.org/Community/Blog.aspx>

YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/user/askacpl>

Driving Directions to the Library

Wondering how to get to the library? Our location is 900 Library Plaza, Fort Wayne, Indiana, in the block bordered on the south by Washington Boulevard, the west by Ewing Street, the north by Wayne Street, and the east by the Library Plaza, formerly Webster Street. We would enjoy having you visit the Genealogy Center.

To get directions from your exact location to 900 Library Plaza, Fort Wayne, Indiana, visit this link at MapQuest:

<http://www.mapquest.com/maps/map.adp?formtype=address&addtohistory=&address=900%20Webster%20St&city=Fort%20Wayne&state=IN&zipcode=46802%2d3602&country=US&geodiff=1>

>From the South

Exit Interstate 69 at exit 302. Drive east on Jefferson Boulevard into downtown. Turn left on Ewing Street. The Library is one block north, at Ewing Street and Washington Boulevard.

Using US 27:

US 27 turns into Lafayette Street. Drive north into downtown. Turn left at Washington Boulevard and go five blocks. The Library will be on the right.

>From the North

Exit Interstate 69 at exit 312. Drive south on Coldwater Road, which merges into Clinton Street. Continue south on Clinton to Washington Boulevard. Turn right on Washington and go three blocks. The Library will be on the right.

>From the West

Using US 30:

Drive into town on US 30. US 30 turns into Goshen Ave. which dead-ends at West State Blvd. Make an angled left turn onto West State Blvd. Turn right on Wells Street. Go south on Wells to Wayne Street. Turn left on Wayne Street. The Library will be in the second block on the right.

Using US 24:

After crossing under Interstate 69, follow the same directions as from the South.

>From the East

Follow US 30/then 930 into and through New Haven, under an overpass into downtown Fort Wayne. You will be on Washington Blvd. when you get downtown. Library Plaza will be on the right.

Parking at the Library

The library's new parking system starts on November 3, 2025. It is a real advantage for those using the Genealogy Center because the first three hours of parking are free. Then, as before, it is \$1 per hour up to a maximum of \$7 per day.

One can read all about the new system at www.acpl.lib.in.us/parking-at-main. There is a great FAQ section that will answer many questions one may have. And of course, one can always reach out to your friends in the Genealogy Center.

Genealogy Center Queries

The Genealogy Center hopes you find this newsletter interesting. Thank you for subscribing. We

cannot, however, answer personal research emails written to the e-zine address. The department houses a Research Center that makes photocopies and conducts research for a fee.

If you have a general question about our collection, or are interested in the Research Center, please telephone the library and speak to a librarian who will be glad to answer your general questions or send you a research center form. Our telephone number is 260-421-1225. If you'd like to email a general information question about the department, please email: Genealogy@ACPL.Info.

Publishing Note

This electronic newsletter is published by the Allen County Public Library's Genealogy Center, and is intended to enlighten readers about genealogical research methods as well as inform them about the vast resources of the Allen County Public Library. We welcome the wide distribution of this newsletter and encourage readers to forward it to their friends and societies. All precautions have been made to avoid errors. However, the publisher does not assume any liability to any party for any loss or damage caused by errors or omissions, no matter the cause.

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If you do not want to receive this e-zine, please follow the link at the very bottom of the issue of Genealogy Gems you just received or send an email to sspearswells@acpl.lib.in.us with "unsubscribe e-zine" in the subject line.

Curt B. Witcher and John D. Beatty, CG, FASG co-editors