

Genealogy Gems: News from the Allen County Public Library at Fort Wayne
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Writing through the Holidays
by Curt B. Witcher

We're just finishing a Thanksgiving weekend--I hope you found many things for which to be thankful while enjoying the warm company of family and those you hold close. Additional aspirations I have for you include many great conversations, many memories recalled with details and smiles, and the enjoyment of a few legacy dishes that graced your holiday dining tables as well as your ancestors' tables generations ago.

If there was anything close to a perfect time to record family stories and recollections of yesteryear, it is certainly this time of year. Indeed, I would offer that recalling and writing family stories is the near perfect way to bring 2025 to a close while welcoming 2026. There are so many ways to make the impending end-of-the-year holidays your time to begin writing or your time to write anew. A few of those ways are listed below.

Just before Thanksgiving, the editors of "The New York Times" offered their readers an opportunity to describe something they are grateful for in just six words--gratitude in six words. The writer Larry Smith popularized this form of writing: the six-word memoir. www.sixwordmemoirs.com While certainly not proficient at this style, it was enjoyable writing a few six-word memories from my 2025.

Second granddaughter as beautiful as first.
Remembering with another losses always present.
Heavy snow, all safe, snowmen dreams.
Good stories brought wet, smiling eyes.
Done so soon, more to do.

You could use this style as a prompt to write more and fuller stories. It is such an easy way to start, and something that can quickly and easily be shared so others can do the same, and maybe even help you with your six-word-memoirs.

Did you serve a legacy dish this Thanksgiving? Write about it in detail, including who you believe first handed down the recipe, how you came to possess it, and what changes you made to the recipe. Did it turn out the way you planned? Did others recall it from past years?

Begin the important task of writing-up your research. It can result in the creation of some wonderfully engaging stories. As stated numerous times before, the benefits of such an activity are numerous including providing our descendants with something they will understand and cherish rather than leaving them mountains of paper tossed about and filed in an order that only makes sense to the gatherer--an order that will all too quickly relegate the papers to the recycle bin.

Pick an ancestor and write her/his story from the data on the documents you have gathered. Go to your RootsMagic or similar family tree program; or, go to your online FamilySearch or similar tree, and evaluate all the attached documents for a particular ancestor and then write the story.

Find your favorite photo album, choose a photograph about which you have fond memories, and write about that photograph. And really, truly, completely write about the photograph you have chosen. List all those who can be identified in the picture as well as where it was taken. Include everything about the occasion for the picture being taken, being sure to record your recollections about how it makes you feel. Who is your favorite person in the photograph? Closest to you in ago or interests? If, as the old saying goes, a picture is worth a thousand words, then we should be able to gather together at least a couple of hundred words for each of our family's treasured photographs. And why not shoot for a thousand words--it's easier than you think.

I cannot say enough good things about the great work Rick Voight and his Vivid-Pix team are doing around photo reminiscence therapy. Simply stated (and Joshua Freitas, Ph.D. does a much better job than I do!), photo reminiscence therapy involves talking about experiences from the past with the aid of a tangible object such as a photograph. The Vivid-Pix team is discovering and sharing the science behind the power of such storytelling for individuals' wellbeing. Engaging in Vivid-Pix's easy-to-create memory cards, www.vivid-pix.com/memorycards, one can quickly create numerous stories that can be immediately shared, and even enlarged and embellished at a later time. If our minds are turning toward holiday gifts, there truly can be no better gift than the gift of stories.

Once we get into the habit (or back into the habit) of continuously writing specific, short, detailed stories, we can weave those vignettes like colorful variegated threads into a magnificent story that is our family's history.

Review of the Researcher's Guide to Virginia's Historical Records
by John D. Beatty, CG, FASG

Among the best new guidebooks published in 2025 is the long-awaited "Researcher's Guide to Virginia's Historical Records" by Barbara Vines Little (Orange, VA: Virginia Genealogical Society, 2025), GC 975,5 L72re. For a state whose best guide has long been Carol McGinnis's "Virginia Genealogy: Sources and Resources" (2005), Little's new book represents a most welcome addition to the field.

As the long-time editor of the "Magazine of Virginia Genealogy" and a recognized leading authority on Virginia genealogy, Little lends her formidable expertise to this new guide. It is a complex work that is perhaps best geared to the intermediate and advanced genealogist, rather than the beginner. It begins with a review of Virginia's geography and transportation features and continues with an astute view of the commonwealth's governmental structures with a heavy emphasis on the colonial period. There are in-depth discussions of records generated by those governments, most of which are available at the Library of Virginia in Richmond.

Little is at her best in discussing Virginia's complex legal system and how it evolved over time. She provides an extensive glossary of obscure legal terms found in colonial records as well as a history of the court system and the types of records it generated. There is an excellent overview of Virginia's birth, marriage, and death registrations, divorce records, and the complex records of probate and inheritance. Virginia's land system, including the headright system, the Colonial Land Office, the Land Companies, the Northern Neck Proprietary, and the post-colonial records, occupy a large portion of the volume. There are also chapters on tax records, military records, school records, migration patterns, African and Native American records, and religious records. Little offers extensive bibliographies of pertinent secondary sources throughout the book.

This is a masterful guide that deserves to be read and consulted by every serious Virginia genealogist. Perhaps it is not as accessible to the beginner as Helen Leary's "North Carolina Research," (1996), which spent considerable space on research techniques and how to evaluate records. Users of Little's guide should be well grounded in research skills and knowledgeable of the counties in Virginia where their ancestors lived and the eras of their historical interest. The guide will give a considerable boost to those studying original land, probate, and court records online, given the author's extensive legal expertise. It will also assist those examining original archival records in Richmond. The "Researcher's Guide to Virginia's Historical Records" is a magnificent work that will enhance one's knowledge especially of colonial Virginia, and there is nothing comparable in print.

Print Indexes
by Sara Allen

Most genealogical researchers are familiar with online research techniques and using online databases to find records about their ancestors. Those of us who have been around for longer remember the days before computers when we used print indexes and microfilms to view original records such as censuses. This was time-consuming and sometimes difficult work. Today the online database search capabilities are much speedier and convenient. However, when records about your family remain elusive in online databases, you might want to know how to use the print indexes. Those indexes were compiled by different indexers, and they may have read and transcribed the names on microfilm more accurately, allowing you to find your family in the records. In this article, we will talk about some standard print indexes for US censuses, passenger lists, and military records.

Let's focus on print census indexes first. For the 1790 through 1850 U.S. federal censuses, there are print indexes for each census compiled by state, and then internally arranged alphabetically by the head of households' surname. For the 1860 through 1880 censuses, there are print indexes for many states that feature the name of every person listed on the census. Few print census indexes were created for the censuses from 1900 to 1950. Some special censuses such as mortality schedules, slave schedules, and state censuses also have print indexes. If you cannot find your family in the online database census indexes at Ancestry, FamilySearch, Findmypast, or MyHeritage, it may be worthwhile to look in a print census index for the family. Once you find the family in the print census index, you will want to note the county and the page number so that you can find that same family on the online databases and view the original census record.

For ships passenger lists to the United States from the mid to late 19th century, there are several sets of books that were published that can provide another method of finding that all-important record of your relative's first arrival in this country. "Germans to America" (also indexed on Ancestry) is one of the premier sets of books covering the period from 1850 to 1897 (GC 929.13 G315). Also consult the "Germans to America Series II," which covers 1840 to 1849. For other ethnicities, try "The Famine Immigrants: Lists of Irish Immigrants Arriving at the Port of New York, 1846-1851" (GC 929.121 F21); "Emigration from the United Kingdom to America: Lists of Passengers Arriving at U.S. Ports," covering 1870 to 1880 (GC 929.12 G469e); "Migration from the Russian Empire: Lists of Passengers Arriving at the Port of New York," covering 1875 to 1891 (GC 929.19 M588) and "Italians to America: Lists of Passengers Arriving at U.S. Ports," covering 1880 to 1905 (GC 929.15 It1). Each of the book sets is arranged by date, so you can see which boats came on which dates, along with a list of passengers on that ship, and an index at the back of each volume. If you find an entry of interest, be sure to note the date of arrival, port, name of the ship, and name of the passenger. With this information, you can find the original passenger list referenced in this index in one of the online databases. With foreign names that have a variety of spelling variations and irregularities, these indexes can really help to find that elusive ancestor.

Finally, there are some excellent print indexes for U.S. military records, mostly for pre-

twentieth century wars. For the American Revolution, try the "Index to Revolutionary War Service Records," transcribed by Virgil D. White (GC 973.34 Aa1whv); "Genealogical Abstracts of Revolutionary War Pension Files," abstracted by Virgil D. White (GC 973.34 Aa1whi); and "Forgotten Patriots: African American and American Indian Patriots in the Revolutionary War" by Eric Grundset (GC 973.34 AA1gru). For other early wars, try the "Index to War of 1812 Pension Files," transcribed by Virgil D. White (GC 973.524 Aa1v); "Index to Mexican War Pension Files," transcribed by Virgil D. White (GC 973.6241 Aa1wh) and "Index to Indian Wars Pension Files, 1892-1926," transcribed by Virgil D. White (GC 973.001 Aa1i). Once you find an entry in the index, finding the actual military records depends on the conflict. Revolutionary War full pension files are on the Fold3 database, while abstracts are also online at Ancestry.com. The majority of War of 1812 pension files (88%) are online at Fold3, while the rest are available only at the National Archives. Revolutionary Service records are online at both Fold3 and Ancestry. Later service records and pension files (including Civil War) must be viewed at or ordered from the National Archives and are not online.

Not only can using these print indexes help you overcome indexing errors on the online databases, but the ability to read through the pages of names can show you unusually spelled names and names that "sound like" but are spelled differently than your family spelled the names. These differently spelled names can be investigated to see if they are your person. Looking at all the people of a certain surname can also be helpful as you seek out possible extended family members such as siblings of your ancestors. In summary, the print indexes can be an additional tool to add to your toolbox and use when your online database searches fail in finding the records you seek.

Happy hunting!

PERSI Gems: Sauerkraut
by Adam Barrone and Mike Hudson

For Thanksgiving, our family drove 120 miles west across northern Indiana to visit my wife's sister's family in the city of Hobart. We were greeted with a huge spread of food with many of the usual Thanksgiving suspects. In addition, our brother-in-law prepared something a bit more ethnic that warmed my heart and belly. An electric roaster was filled to the brim with sauerkraut, mild pork sausage, baby carrots, and new potatoes. My son, a college sophomore, was in front of me in line. He took a sizable helping, gave old Dad one look of approval, and handed over the dipper. The cook is of Swedish and Polish descent, but his roaster of goodness was most welcome by this author whose grandmothers each cooked with German and Swiss influence.

Sweet or sour, we at PERSI hope you'll find traces of your family's past on the table this holiday season.

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

Anne Okrajek Bjork re sauerkraut and smoked sausages, c. 1913, WI
Wisconsin Slovak, Vol. 24, Issue 11 (Aut 2004)

Bill Taff recalls winter of peas and sauerkraut, 1931-1932, AR
Echoes (Scott County, AR, Historical & Genealogical Society), Issue 2 (Apr 2005)

Christmas in Sauerkraut town
Old West Side News (Ann Arbor, MI), Vol. 25, Issue 7 (Nov 1995)

Corn husking and sauerkraut, Mennonite settlers, 18th C.+
MHEP Quarterly (Mennonite Heritage Center, Harleysville, PA), Vol. 17, Issue 3 (Fal 2014)

Ione Supplee recalls family sauerkraut crock, c. 1792, OH
Ancestry Trails (Trumbull County Chapter, Ohio Genealogical Society), Vol. 29, Issue 7-8 (Jul 2004)

Joe Bilski sale of cabbage to Robert Felscher, sauerkraut use, July 1903
Polish Footprints (Polish Genealogical Society of Texas), Vol. 35, Issue 2 (2018)

Louise Weitzel poem regarding sauerkraut, 1985, PA
Blumenbaum, Der (Sacramento German Genealogical Society), Vol. 25, Issue 3 (Jan 2008)

Postmaster Josiah Phillips found can of sauerkraut opened, spilled on mail, 1913
History Notes (Downingtown, PA, Area Historical Society), Vol. 1, Issue 5 (Mar 2018)

Sauerkraut investigation at Fort Leavenworth, 1864
Fulton County (IL) Historical & Genealogical Society Newsletter, Spr 2011

Sauerkraut pizza sponsored by German Dept. of Agriculture, note, 2003
Vereinsnachrichten (German Society of Maryland), Vol. 1, Issue 42 (Nov 2003)

Preservation Tips: First Do No Harm
by Logan Knight

The founder of western medicine was an ancient Greek by the name of Hippocrates. Those medical professionals who follow in his footsteps swear an oath to: "first, do no harm." While this applies to patients, the underlying principle must also apply to the budding archivist. When it comes to our family heirlooms, no matter if they are digital or paper or whatever, it is very difficult to undo mistakes. Fortunately, today we are offering a few basic tips that can help a preserver navigate this potential minefield.

1. Digitize, Digitize, Digitize. When it comes to physical documents, they are inevitably created out of materials that can eventually degrade to the point of uselessness. In

addition, they are often at the mercy of events out of our control. Most genealogists know the tremendous loss of the 1890 Federal Census in a fire, or the 1973 Fire in St. Louis, which destroyed much of the Army's Second World War records. Those are the big ones, but, on a minor scale, how many courthouses in the country have been the victims of fire, earthquakes or floods? The mind reels at the consequences. Fortunately, with the widespread availability of digital scanners (check your local library), it has never been easier to scan a digital backup of your family documents.

2. Plastic is the enemy. Most don't think too much when it comes to what kinds of things they are storing their family documents in. What's wrong with a nice big plastic tub? It keeps out the moisture and varmints and is usually see-through (just in case). The problem is that plastic can often chemically react with items and degrade them over time. They can cause papers to turn yellow, brittle, and other problems that could potentially ruin them. When in doubt, make sure your storage materials are up to snuff.

3. Storage is a priority. Often, people don't think too much about where they store their family documents. If it is under cover, then what's the big worry? The answer is that your choice of storage space could well determine what kind of family history legacy you are going to leave behind. There have been many sad tales of documents left underneath a water pipe or roasting in a garage. I can remember one unfortunate situation where some of my old baseball cards had been kept next to a hot water heater for a few years, which led them to be covered completely in mold. I had to throw them out. Those were just baseball cards. How much worse could it have been if it was something truly irreplaceable? So, when storing your family research, remember to think about just where you are putting it.

Now, I know many folks would say that this is all simple common sense. That's true, as far as it goes, but common sense has never been that common. Even for those blessed with sense, it never hurts to have a refresher course. So, just remember, when it comes to your family documents, first do no harm.

History Tidbits: Idaho Means Nothing
by Logan Knight

The meaning behind the names of the fifty states is as diverse as the states themselves. Virginia takes her name from Queen Elizabeth I, who famously never married. Arizona comes from a native word, Arizonic, which probably means "small spring." California comes from an early Spanish novel, "Las Sergas de Esplandián/The Adventures of Esplandián." In the book, California is a mythical island of Black Amazonian women, ruled by their queen, Calafia. Yet, none are as strange as the origin of Idaho.

That is because Idaho is a made-up word. That's right, there is nothing behind the phrase at all. So, how on earth did the land of potatoes get its name? Well, in the 1860s, settlers were beginning to pour into the mountain west. As more Americans

came in, there became a need to name these new settlements. A delegate from the region named George M. Willing suggested the name "Idaho." George told everyone that the word derived from a native language and meant something like "Gem of the Mountains." It seemed like a perfect name for the Colorado Territory. Yes, originally the name Idaho was marked for what is today Colorado. It seems the settlers there were interested in a native based name, not a Spanish one like Colorado (colored red). Congress liked the name and decided to name the Colorado Territory "Idaho" instead. Within a few days of agreeing to the change, Congress found out that Willing had been pulling their leg and that the name was as phony as a three-dollar bill and voted to switch the name back to Colorado, which remains to this day.

So, if Colorado rejected the name Idaho, then how did it get to its present state? Well, the name seems to have just taken off. Today, we would call it going viral. Before you knew it, many things had adopted the name. Within a few years, there was a steamboat called the "Idaho." The steamboat, in turn, gave its name to mines that had sprung up. Finally, there was the city of Idaho Springs in Colorado. People just liked the name. The fact that it had been made up by a local booster/huckster was just forgotten. Folks kept telling everyone it meant "Gem of the Mountains," and it caught on.

By 1863, a new mining territory needed a name, and Idaho was chosen. With the origin forgotten, the name fit hand in glove. As time moved on, people tried to deduce what native language the name could have sprung from. Nez Perce, Shoshoni, Yakima, and Arapaho languages were all examined in the hopes of discovering the truth. Unsurprisingly, none of these efforts delivered success.

Despite its false origins, Idahoans remain proud of their state. The name has been there for over one hundred and sixty years, and it seems that it's good for another hundred and sixty or so.

Genealogy Center's December 2025 Programs

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

Tuesday, December 2, 2025 at 2:30 p.m. ET "Develop and Digitize Your Family History Archives with Anderson Archival" with Marcia Spicer
- <https://acpl.libnet.info/event/15111164>

Thursday, December 4, 2025 at 6:30 p.m. ET "IN-PERSON DNA & Genealogy Interest Group" with Sara Allen - <https://acpl.libnet.info/event/15069303>

Tuesday, December 9, 2025 at 2:30 p.m. ET "Finding My Way: Researching Your Ancestor in the City" with Jessica Fontana - <https://acpl.libnet.info/event/15069311>

Thursday, December 11, 2025 at 6:30 p.m. ET "Researching Your Swedish Ancestry"

with Cynthia Grostick - <https://acpl.libnet.info/event/15069332>

Tuesday, December 16, 2025 at 2:30 p.m. ET "Beginning Genealogy 101: Little-Known Resources at the Delaware Public Archives" with Leah Greer
- <https://acpl.libnet.info/event/15069339>

Thursday, December 18, 2025 at 6:30 p.m. ET "The Goodwin Family of Hell's Kitchen" with Kevin Cassidy - <https://acpl.libnet.info/event/15069484>

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/THcV0wAabB>.

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. Just added: some holiday ornaments! <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 into downtown. Library Plaza will be on the right.

Parking at the Library

The library's new parking system started 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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Curt B. Witcher and John D. Beatty, CG, FASG co-editors

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