

Genealogy Gems: News from the Allen County Public Library at Fort Wayne, No. 270,
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Curiosity May Be the Most Overlooked Aspect of Genealogy
by Curt B. Witcher

A few of us have been musing lately about the attributes and traits that one might have to make a truly good genealogist, a noteworthy historical detective, and an amazingly fine family storyteller. One can come up with quite a nice list of the best conferences, seminars, webinars, and continuing education opportunities one should attend, and further, spend too much time deciding the winner of the "absolute best" designation. And some debate which is the most impressive credential to seek. Such exercises certainly remind me of the question asked on a genealogy listserv many years ago regarding the best book for a novice, a very beginning genealogist, to read and devour. My recollection is that the top choices were profoundly disappointing and rather inappropriate for a beginner.

A colleague and I were discussing this very topic of curiosity last weekend. We both agreed that sometimes many may simply overthink things. We both came to the conclusion that curiosity may be the most overlooked aspect of genealogy or family history. It truly could be that simple--curiosity! Yes, I know it sounds quite simplistic, nearly to a fault. Certainly, though, to be an amazing genealogist one must be more than a little curious, right? I suggest that if one is genuinely curious and acts responsibly on those curiosities, one would welcome reasonably exhaustive searches; one would want to know the origin of a particular so-called fact or whose mouth uttered eloquent and substantive statements; analysis and correlation would be the triple-scoop ice cream cone on a hot and muggy summer afternoon; and writing one's long-sought conclusions in a cohesive way would be a highly coveted activity of great reward.

Wouldn't that be an amazing genealogist?!

Foundational curiosity in the family history space would make one forever ask "why?" when encountering a potential ancestor on an enumeration. Why are they listed where they are on the census schedule? Why are those particular individuals living next to them? Why do they have a real estate value of \$500 and a personal value of \$1,500? Why are those items listed in a potential ancestor's estate inventory? Why did my territorial ancestor in Indiana receive a squirrel-pelt bounty?

This embrace of fierce curiosity reminds me of an organization or management practice I read about many years ago. It was called the "Five Whys." The "Five Whys" is a simple analysis technique used to identify the underlying cause of a problem. How it works is when a problem occurs, simply state the problem and then ask why it happened. For each answer, ask why again. If one continues the process roughly five times, one often arrives at the root cause of the problem or challenge. It makes me wonder if that same kind of intellectual rigor and curiosity was applied to our genealogical endeavors how much more information and insights we might have. Answering those "why" questions may lead to more than we think.

So as we prepare for the Harvest Moon later in September, let's embrace our curiosity about our families' stories. Who knows what kind of ancestral harvest that might bring.

"Ireland: Mapping the Island"--A Review of Joseph Brady's and Paul Ferguson's Work
[GC 941.5 B72IR]
by Elizabeth Hodges

For genealogists, maps are more than tools for finding a place on the modern landscape. They can help us understand how our ancestors experienced that place—and why the records they left behind may be found where they are. Ireland: Mapping the Island, by geographer Joseph Brady and Trinity College Library map librarian Paul Ferguson, offers an especially useful way to strengthen that geographic thinking.

Published in 2025, this richly illustrated volume brings together maps spanning centuries of Irish history. Rather than serving as a conventional genealogy guide, it explores what maps can reveal about Ireland's changing landscape, boundaries, economy, transportation networks, towns, political divisions, and the ways the island has been represented over time.

That perspective is particularly valuable for Irish family history. Irish research is intensely place-based. Knowing that an ancestor came from "County Mayo" or "County Cork" is rarely enough; successful research often depends on identifying a much smaller locality and understanding the jurisdictions connected to it. Townlands, civil parishes, baronies, poor law unions, counties, and other geographic units can determine how records are organized and where researchers need to look. Ireland's official genealogy resources themselves point researchers toward maps of civil

parishes, Roman Catholic parishes, poor law unions, baronies, and townlands when identifying ancestral places.

“Ireland: Mapping the Island” also encourages us to treat maps as historical sources in their own right. A map may reveal the growth of a town, the development of roads and railways, changes in political boundaries, or patterns of land use and settlement. Those details can add context to a family story even when an ancestor is never named on the map itself. Why did a family relocate? Which market town was nearest? What route might someone have taken to a port or neighboring county? A map can suggest new questions that a census return or church register alone cannot answer.

For researchers working with Irish ancestors, “Ireland: Mapping the Island” is best approached as both a visual history and an invitation to think geographically. It reminds us that finding our ancestors is only part of the task. Understanding the places around them can bring us closer to understanding their lives.

South Africa Collection

by Sara Allen

While the Genealogy Center is known for its strong U.S. genealogy and local history collection, it also houses an international collection that includes a growing number of South African genealogical materials, thanks to a generous and interested benefactor. This collection consists of approximately 350 print family history books for South African families; almost 600 print local history or genealogical volumes; more than thirty digital volumes available freely on our website; and more than 180 digital volumes that are available on-site on library computers only.

Let’s explore some examples of the print items. An example of a family history is the “Jourdan/Jordan Familie in Suid Afrika” by Marthinus Johannes Steyn Jordaan. This 2-volume work focuses on a French Huguenot family and its descendants who emigrated to South Africa. A typical geographical history is “Overberg Outspan: A Chronicle of Peoples and Places in the South Western Districts of the Cape” by Edmund Burrows. An ethnic history example is “Jewish Life in the South African Country Communities,” a multivolume work in English that features photos, maps, and family names of those who settled there. A biographical dictionary example is “British Settlers in Natal 1824-1857,” edited by Shelagh O’Byrne Spencer. This multivolume work is arranged by surname and provides biographical and genealogical sketches of those settlers. These volumes represent just a small selection of the almost 1,000 physical South African items in our collection.

Let’s turn now to the digitized volumes freely available online on our website. For example, we have a digital copy of inscriptions from Durban West Street Cemetery (partial), and some religious cemeteries under the church register indexes page. We also have digital copies of the Natal Church Register indices from Anglican, Catholic, Dutch Reformed, Presbyterian, and other denominations in Natal, South Africa. In the

newspapers category, we have digital copies of the “Natal Witness” newspaper indices from 1846 to 1864. And finally, we have Sue Mackay’s digitized South African Settlers Project, which deals mostly with an effort to send United Kingdom residents to South Africa around 1820. Also included in her records are newspaper indexes and abstracts from nineteenth century newspapers spanning from 1824 to 1892 for Cape Town, Grahamstown, and Port Elizabeth. To access these free online resources, use the following URL: <https://www.genealogycenter.info/southafrica/>

Finally, let’s explore some of the library-only digital items that come from DVD collections that are still under copyright. A large collection of data from the Genealogical Society of South Africa, includes family files for different surnames that the society has assembled. These records are cataloged in our online catalog under the title: “Suid-Afrikaanse familieregisters = South Africa family registers.” Other library-only digital records include such local history items as “Dynamite and Daisies: The Story of Barberton;” transcribed cemetery listings; and church records such as “Palmkronieke: annale van die N G Moederkerk Stellenbosch.” All these items linked from our library catalog will take you to the digital item if you are physically inside the library.

If you have South African roots, check out our collection, both online and in person; and be sure to tell your friends. Happy hunting!

PERSI Gems: Duel!

by Adam Barrone and Mike Hudson

Conflict fuels drama in fiction, in legend, and in local and family history. Animosity boiled, tempers were triggered, and assorted available weapons were brought to the ready. Then came the terrible and inevitable consequences of one-on-one violence.

Those of a certain age will remember a certain Spielbergian Duel, a road-rage-fueled stalking of a red Plymouth Valiant by a tailgating Peterbilt tanker. The view in a rearview mirror induced anxiety, a radiator boiled over, a venomous snake was weaponized, a perfectly good phone booth was abruptly taken out of service, and railroad crossing safety tips were flagrantly disregarded. A dispute over a single passing maneuver on a California highway ended in a duelist careening over a cliff, destroyed in a ball of fire.

Tales cited in the Periodical Source Index reveal likewise horrifying duel outcomes involving explosions, injured juvenile bystanders, broken noses, disfigured faces, dozens of stitches, and death. Ill feelings, satirical slander, competition for a woman’s affection, sibling rivalry, and even wayward swine motivated the weaponization of pistols, shotguns, rapiers, and bovine excrement, both solid and steaming fresh.

We at the Periodical Source Index always advocate for learning from history. If you are steaming mad and tempted to reach for a cow pie, take a not-so-deep breath, cool off, and try a PERSI search here:

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

Connection between Abraham Lincoln's marriage and aborted duel with James Shields, 1842

For the People (Abraham Lincoln Association), Vol. 1, Issue 4 (Win 1999)

Duel on the marsh, William Yazel and Michael Hickman shot each other with shotguns, 1911

Muskingum (Muskingum County Chapter, Ohio Genealogical Society), Vol. 40, Issue 3 (Aug 2016)

Larry Thomas brother Jerry, duel using Bessie the cow's droppings, family photo, 1946-1949

Reminisce, Vol. 32, Issue 3 (Apr 2022)

Leslie Barton, mysterious cadet at University of Alabama, was killed in duel, was a woman, c. 1880

Old Southern Times and Mercantile Advertiser, Issue 20 (Feb 2006)

Louise Razor and husband used razors in duel, 28 stitches, Daily Notes, Feb. 13, 1928
Keyhole (Genealogical Society of Southwestern Pennsylvania), Issue 2 (Sum 2017)

Mattie Silks-Kate Fulton duel legend perhaps fueled by Bayard painting of topless rapier duel, 1877

Colorado Heritage, Sum 2006

Pigs owned by Mr. Weld had ears and tails cut off by Mr. Bagnal, duel note, 1788, England

Kith & Kin (Cape Banks Family History Society, Australia), Issue 106 (Sep 2012)

Romanian employees at the Rolling Mills engage in duel over fair maiden, news item, 1907

Allen County Lines (Allen County Genealogical Society of Indiana), Vol. 40, Issue 1 (Sep 2015)

Preservation Tips: Preserving Blueprints
by Christina Clary, C.A.

Blueprints are a separate category when it comes to preservation. They evolved from the cyanotype, an early type of photograph developed in 1842. This form of photograph is printed directly onto paper. The paper was chemically treated with two types of iron salts, exposed to sunlight, and then washed in water to get rid of the unexposed salts. This resulted in an image entirely Prussian blue in tone.

In the 1870s, engineers began using a modified version of the cyanotype to duplicate

architectural drawings. Before the advent of blueprints, all copies were painstakingly drawn by hand from the original. With blueprints, thin, translucent tracing paper was placed on top of cyanotype paper and placed in sunlight. The dark ink acted as a covering, resulting in "tan lines" that were left white as the rest of the paper turned Prussian blue. The original tracing paper served as the master copy and could be placed on the cyanotype paper whenever a copy was needed.

In the 1940s & 1950s, blueprints were slowly phased out in favor of diazo prints. Diazo prints were chemically treated to bring out blue, purple, or black lines on white paper. As a result, they were easier to read. Eventually, the advent of computers rendered chemically treated reproductions obsolete. Today, the word blueprint is colloquially used for any type of building plans, regardless of the actual medium.

Blueprints made from cyanotypes should be stored separately from other types of records and documents. The alkaline buffered archival materials normally used in preservation cannot be used for blueprints. The distinctive blue color comes from an iron compound called ferric ferrocyanide, or what we know as Prussian blue. Iron is vulnerable to alkaline-based compounds, such as baking soda or bleach. The alkaline will break down the iron compounds, causing the blueprint to lose its blue tone and fade away. Because of this, buffered materials should never be used to store blueprints or any type of document containing Prussian blue.

For blueprint storage, look for acid-free and lignin-free unbuffered materials. Once a blueprint has been fully processed, it becomes susceptible to fading from sunlight. Keeping it in a dark room can help reverse fading caused by sun exposure, but it will not reverse other types of damage.

If a blueprint is already flattened, it can be stored in unbuffered archival folders. Depending on the size you may have to custom make the folders using larger sheets of archival card stock. Blueprints should be stored one per folder if possible. If not, unbuffered tissue should be placed entirely covering each one. They can then be stored horizontally in a map-sized archival box or in shallow drawers, preferably made of heavy-gauge steel.

Blueprints that are tightly rolled up should be left that way unless they can be safely flattened. That is usually something that needs to be done by a conservator. They should be rolled around an unbuffered archival tube, wrapped in tissue paper on the outside, and secured with cotton ties or tying tape. Do not store them vertically, as gravity will pull the paper down and create pleats. Most archival vendors also have specific boxes to store the tubes.

History Tidbits: Medaling in Painting--The Story of Art at the Olympics
by Logan Knight

Every four years, athletes gather from around the world, to compete in the world's

greatest sporting extravaganza, the Olympic Games. The games showcase the finest in international competition and sportsmanship (usually). However, while today we think of the games as purely athletic competitions, did you know that medals were awarded for competitions in the realm of art? Strange but true! Read on to discover this fascinating history.

The Ancient Greeks had held competitions in the world of art as well as sport. So, it is no surprise that the founders of the modern games wished to emulate them in this arena as well. Even so, it took a while for the art contests to get off the ground. Not until the 1912 games in Stockholm, Sweden, would they first be held, many years after the first modern games in 1894.

There were five distinct categories for the contests: sculpture, literature, music, painting, and architecture. All five were to concern themselves with the theme of "sport." Many fascinating artists competed over the years.

Sculptor Paul Landowski managed to take home the gold for his statue "The Boxer" at the 1928 Games. He would later acquire international fame as the designer of the famed Christ the Redeemer statue that towers high above Rio De Janeiro.

Ireland's very first medal winner (in any category) was W.B. Yeats's brother, Jack Yeats, for his painting, "Natation" (Swimming) in 1924. Yes, W.B. Yeats would go on to be a literary giant, but he never won a medal, did he?

A few Renaissance-style competitors managed to medal in both athletic and artistic contests. American Walter Winans was able to achieve lasting greatness by achieving medals in shooting at both the 1908 and 1912 games. At the latter games, Winans also took home the gold for his sculpture, "An American Trotter."

Great Britain's John Copley won silver at the 1948 event for his engraving, "Polo Players." Copley accomplished this feat at the tender age of seventy-three, making him history's oldest Olympian.

Interestingly, the reason that competitive art would no longer be part of the Olympics came not due to a lack of popularity, but rather internal politics in both the International Olympic Committee and the art world. These were the days when all participants were supposed to be strictly amateurs and not professionals. The idea was that the noble ideal of the Olympics would be sullied by filthy payment. Now, many countries bent this rule to the breaking point, finding many ways to have professionals classified as amateurs, but the ideal remained important. In turn, many artists worried that entering the contests could damage their reputations. It was also hard to find good, popular artists who weren't professional. Judging also remained a contentious issue. Deciding it was more trouble than it was worth, the IOC ended the art competitions by 1952. Even so, the fascinating legacy of these contests remains alive and well for all of those who prefer their competitions in the world of expression rather than athleticism.

Genealogy Center's September 2026 Programs

September's engaging programs are listed below. Take a look and register for programs today!

September 1, 2026, 2:30 PM ET, "Genealogical Myths: Legends, Lies, and Lineage" with Michael Traynor - <https://acpl.libnet.info/event/17120821>

September 8, 2026, 2:30 PM ET, "Getting Started with FamilySearch" with Allison DePrey - <https://acpl.libnet.info/event/17132339>

September 9, 2026, 7 PM ET, "Using Full-Text Search at FamilySearch" with Michael John Neill This in-person and virtual (hybrid) program is sponsored by the Allen County Genealogical Society of Indiana. To attend in person, come to The Genealogy Center's Discovery Center. To attend virtually: https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_Ur4FvET-R_WleaU0Vp-swA

September 15, 2026, 2:30 PM ET, "Beyond the Wayback Machine: Using Internet Archive for Genealogy" with Allison DePrey - <https://acpl.libnet.info/event/17206023>

September 22, 2026, 2:30 PM ET, "Beyond the Name: Discovering Records with FamilySearch" with Christina Clary - <https://acpl.libnet.info/event/17206153>

September 29, 2026-- THE LIBRARY IS CLOSED FOR STAFF DEVELOPMENT DAY.

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 current parking system started on November 3, 2025, and may still be new to some. 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](tel: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.

To subscribe to "Genealogy Gems," simply use your browser to go to the website: www.GenealogyCenter.org. Scroll to the bottom, click on E-zine, and fill out the form. You will be notified with a confirmation email.

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 Genealogy@acpl.lib.in.us with "unsubscribe e-zine" in the subject line.

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

To unsubscribe or modify your subscription options, please visit:

<https://lists.genealogycenter.info/mailman/options/genealogygems/genieclub2002%40gmail.com>