

Genealogy Gems: News from the Allen County Public Library at Fort Wayne
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In this issue:

- *LEAP into the New Year!
- *The German Immigrants from Veszprem County, Hungary: A Review
- *Indigenous Slavery
- *PERSI Gems: 250
- *Preservation Tips: Using Gemini AI to Restore Old Photographs
- *History Tidbits: The Other Christmas Truce--Przemysl 1914/1915
- *Genealogy Center's January 2026 Programs
- *Genealogy Center Bits-o'-News
- *Staying Informed about Genealogy Center Programming
- *Genealogy Center Social Media
- *Driving Directions to the Library
- *Parking at the Library
- *Genealogy Center Queries
- *Publishing Note

LEAP into the New Year!

by Curt B. Witcher

In the waning moments of 2025, and as many anticipate with excitement great genealogical connections and discoveries in 2026, I want to take this opportunity to encourage all to LEAP into the New Year!

In a family history context, LEAP is often known to stand for Locate, Evaluate, Analyze, and Prove. This fits nicely with the Genealogical Proof Standard (GPS) and may be a bit easier to remember than all five (!) points of the GPS. I would like to suggest marrying another set of "leap words" to the ones just mentioned.

Family historians appreciate as much as most the importance of locating as many records as possible that document their families' lives and stories. They understand that to find all the stories of your families' lives, you need to strive to locate as close to all the records as possible. And as Steve Rockwood, CEO of FamilySearch, said emphatically at a recent RootsTech conference, all means ALL(!).

I offer that to locate the maximum number of records, one needs to commit to lifelong learning. How are you going to find all the records without leveraging the expertise and experience of others and building on your own? There are so many amazing educational opportunities, both online and in-person. Explore some new educational offerings for the geographic areas where you are conducting research and look for new sources of information for the ethnic origins of your ancestors. Again, there is a rich bounty of opportunities.

An amazing locating-and-learning opportunity in the first half of 2026 is the National Genealogical Society's Annual Conference being held in Fort Wayne, Indiana May 27-30, 2026. Over those last days of May, you will have access to some of the best presenters in the genealogy and family history space; an exhibit hall full of societies, publishers, technology companies, and other vendors; and extended-hours access to the Allen County Public Library's Genealogy Center. Definitely place this on your must-do list for 2026! More information can be found

at: <https://conference.ngsgenealogy.org/>. Registration is already open

at: <https://conference.ngsgenealogy.org/2026registration/>. Why not register this holiday weekend, and then immediately begin your preparations for an amazing experience at NGS Fort Wayne! I can guarantee you this will be the family history experience of the year!

So we should embrace that the "L" in LEAP can stand for locate and lifelong learning. When considering the "E" in leap, I like the idea of paying much more attention to the concept of evaluating. We all know we should; and so many among us claim that they regularly do. My perspective, though, is a bit different and is based on experience and observation. Truth be told, most of us truly aren't researchers at our core. We are actually hunters and gatherers. We locate a piece of data, capture a copy of said piece of data through some technology, and then we're off pursuing the next record. We miss so many opportunities to identify better locations for other pertinent records and so many opportunities to have our research guided by a thorough understanding of what a particular document is telling us and what that document is not telling us.

Yes, please, let's commit to evaluating what we find. A sign we aren't evaluating with appropriate rigor or frequency is if our offices, kitchen tables, and studies where we keep our family history documents look more like archaeological digs than filing systems. Embracing such a commitment might bring a second important "E" to our symbolic LEAP, and that is entice. Nearly innumerable times over the course of my career I have listened to so many talk about how no one in their families is interested in their research, and further, there is no one to whom the research can be given after their demise. As harsh as it might sound, that is mostly our faults collectively. We don't make enough of an effort to entice our family members, and particularly our descendants, into being interested. When we find and evaluate documents, let's share such findings and evaluations with children and grandchildren, nephews and nieces. Let's talk about the information on the documents and computer screens, and the stories they weave. Let's actively use our research evaluation to entice family members to care and embrace our stories. That will ensure those stories are carried on. I don't believe in magic, but this is the next best thing in getting seemingly disinterested individuals to be our wisdom-keepers and storytellers.

Shoulder to shoulder with evaluate is analyze, the "A" in LEAP. The online Britannica Dictionary defines analyze as to "break down into its component parts, examine them closely, and understand how they work together to create the whole, revealing its meaning, structure, or function. It's a methodical process of studying something carefully to discover its essential features, causes, relationships, and overall

significance, going beyond surface-level understanding to form deeper insights or conclusions.” Isn’t that a WOW for us as genealogists? Looking closer to understand beyond a surface-level so we have deeper understandings and more robust stories of our ancestors.

To the concept of analyzing we should marry action. Let’s intentionally take meaningful actions to find more of our families’ stories in the new year. Let’s go to the NGS conference in 2026. Let’s draft a chapter (or more!) of great-great’s life and share it with family for refinement and clarity. Let’s also take action to involve family, young and old, in the discoveries of those stories and the telling of the stories. When individuals are actively involved rather than passively observing, they will have a greater affinity for taking on the role of wisdom-keepers.

“P,” the final letter in LEAP, has often meant prove to genealogists. It is fitting that prove is the last word in the lineup as proving something involves locating as much pertinent data as possible, and then evaluating and analyzing what has been found. And to prove, we can couple publish. One of the best ways of determining if all the records have been found and the correct evaluation and analysis has been done is to put your work out in the world for others to provide fresh eyes and different perspectives. It is one of the older types of crowdsourcing. In addition, publishing forces us to get much more organized and assists in assuring our research is available to future generations of our families.

LEAP into 2026!

L: Locate & Lifelong Learning

E: Evaluate & Entice

A: Analyze & Action

P: Prove & Publish

All good wishes for a fantastic 2026!

The German Immigrants from Veszprem County, Hungary: A Review
by Logan Knight

There are Germans, and then there are Germans. The central European country is still the biggest in Europe, despite losing large amounts of territory after the Second World War. Even before that, there were millions of ethnic Germans who lived far afield in states that were never under German control. Many of these Volksdeutsche (Ethnic Germans) would eventually cross the Atlantic to new homes in America.

Somewhere between 200,000 to 300,000 Americans can trace their Germanic roots to this one county in the former Kingdom of Hungary. So, to do genealogy research, if your roots run in this direction, you must have special skills and tools that even an experienced German researcher might not possess. That is what makes so valuable a work like “The German Immigrants from Veszprem County, Hungary” by Ernest

Chrisbacher (Baltimore: Gateway Press, 2005), GC 929.13 C46ge.

This book is chock full of fantastic information. It starts with a detailed history of how so many Germans ended up in Veszprem County (located in the west of today's Hungary, near the border with Austria). The book then gives a detailed breakdown of life for these German immigrants: how they made their living, social and folk traditions, and so on, until this community's German heritage was wiped from the map in the aftermath of the Second World War. This is one of the work's real strengths as it makes the reader really understand the lives of these people.

Then the book transitions to an excellent breakdown of the individual settlements/villages. It gives a short historical synopsis with population figures and a religious breakdown (Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, etc.) When possible, the book notes where in America many of these Germans would immigrate. For example, the work notes that people from the village of Pula/Pulau (population: six hundred) ended up immigrating to New York City and Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. This kind of information is as good as gold to the eager researcher.

Finally, the book concludes with a surname index of German immigrants from Veszprem County. The index draws on records from Roman Catholic churches in the United States and tries to include as much detail as possible. Included when possible are the name, parents, baptism date, event date (marriage etc.), their birth village, and the church source from where it was retrieved. The index alone is worth the price of the book.

Frankly, I wish we had similar books for all the counties of the Kingdom of Hungary. It would make it easier for people to trace their German heritage in this area. If you think your family might have a connection to this area, then this book is simply a must-read. The German Immigrants from Veszprem County, Hungary is available physically here at the Genealogy Center.

Indigenous Slavery

by Allison DePrey Singleton

Native Bound Unbound (nativeboundunbound.org) is an important and useful website for genealogists, especially those researching Indigenous ancestry or trying to understand Native American experiences within family history. The project focuses on documenting the history of the enslavement of native peoples (a story not well understood by many Americans) and bringing attention to individuals and families whose stories have often been overlooked or erased in traditional records.

For genealogists, the value of this site comes from its gathering of many familiar types of historical sources in one place. These include court and legal records, censuses, church records such as baptisms and marriages, newspapers, letters, photographs, and other archival materials. These kinds of records are often essential for tracing family

lines, identifying relationships, and understanding where people lived and how they moved over time. Native Bound Unbound helps researchers see how these records fit together within a larger historical context.

The website is organized around four main areas: people, places, stories, and archives. This structure allows genealogists to approach their research from different angles. Some may begin with a name, while others may start with a place connected to their family or a historical event. The stories shared on the site add depth to the records by helping users understand the lived experiences behind the documents, not just the names and dates.

Native Bound Unbound also places a strong emphasis on respectful and community-centered research. It recognizes that many historical records were created by colonial systems that ignored, misunderstood, or misrepresented Indigenous people. By acknowledging these limitations, the site encourages genealogists to read records carefully, ask thoughtful questions, and consider what may be missing from the written record.

In addition, the project provides opportunities for collaboration and ongoing discovery. As new information is uncovered or shared by participating families and communities, the site continues to grow. This makes it a living resource rather than a static database.

For genealogists who want to build a fuller, more honest understanding of their family history--especially when Indigenous ancestors or communities may be involved--Native Bound Unbound offers access to valuable records, historical background, and thoughtful guidance. It reminds researchers that genealogy is not only about finding ancestors, but also about understanding their experiences and honoring their stories.

PERSI Gems: 250

by Adam Barrone and Mike Hudson

Is age just a number? Round House Chronicles of Milan, Missouri, tells us about a bachelor, age 37, who advertised for a bride in 1896 and received 250 replies from women offering love and devotion for the remainder of his life. The catch? The typesetter inadvertently reported his age as 87.

Our nation has a big birthday coming in 2026, and our age, now nearly 250, is no typographical error. During this important anniversary, we will contemplate our long history, celebrate each other, and acknowledge the past events and people which have shaped us.

Just as one counts the passing years, the Periodical Source Index (PERSI) counts children, neighbors, those in need, and those we remember. It counts dollars transacted, given, and taken. It counts roads, wires, and communications which bridge gaps between us. It, too, counts promises of love and devotion.

In the new year and throughout the United States Semiquincentennial, we hope you will count PERSI among the resources you consult as you reflect upon our nation's past, present, and future.

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

<https://america250.org/>

Boys and Girls Club membership signs 250 members, Janesville Daily Gazette, Jan. 1925

Luther Valley (WI) News (The), Vol. 16, Issue 4 (Oct 2016)

City to install floodlights and patrol cemeteries after vandals toppled 250 stones, 2008

VOCA Newsletter (Vermont Old Cemetery Association), Vol. 50, Issue 4 (Oct 2008)

Jed Maher sells two Holstein heffers to L. P. Doyle for \$250.00

Lewis County (NY) Historical Society Journal, Nov 2012

Mason-Dixon survey at 250 years, recent investigations, 1763+

Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography, Vol. 140, Issue 1 (Jan 2016)

O. V. Showerman burned out of house, subscription raised \$250 from neighborhood, 1875

Ionia County (MI) Genealogical Society Newsletter, Vol. 15, Issue 4 (Oct 2010)

Paulding Furnace employs 250 men, our neighbors, Fort Wayne Daily Gazette, Jul. 22, 1881

Paulding (OH) Pathways, Vol. 28, Issue 3 (Aug 2014)

Propagation Tree photo, marriages held under its branches, middle of State Road 250, c. 1934

Outdoor Indiana, Vol. 1, Issue 5 (Jun 1934)

Property on canal sells at \$250 per foot, 1872

Indiana Canals, Vol. 11, Issue 2 (Spr 2000)

Taylor County Rural Electric Cooperative and 250 farms wired, Taylor Co. Star News,

Sep. 1937

Log Cabin News (Taylor County Historical Society, WI), Vol. 25, Issue 3 (Jun 2019)

Tornado causes 250 to become homeless, names list, June 1955 (sel.)

Roger Mills (OK) Journal, Jan 2004

Tornado strike at Reeve, 250 dead in Omaha, Hampton Chronicle article, Mar. 1913

Franklin County (IA) Historical Society Newsletter, Vol. 28, Issue 3 (Sep 2012)

Unionville bachelor ad for wife generates 250 applications despite typo, 1896

Round House Chronicles (Sullivan County Historical Society, MO), Vol. 3, Issue 4 (Nov 2007)

Preservation Tips: Using Gemini AI to Restore Old Photographs
by Christina Clary, C.A.

Gemini AI from Google launched its new image-editing model, Gemini 2.5 Flash Image (also known as Nano Banana) this fall. Compared to ChatGPT, images restored through Gemini look more realistic overall. People's faces seem to be well restored. The restored images, however, may not be what the actual photograph looks like. Gemini is not actually restoring the image but instead reconstructing the image based on the uploaded photograph.

It uses restoration tools to fix scratches, remove unwanted spots, and sharpen blurred images. It then fills in the gaps left by these modifications using data from the images used to train the software. The new image may have significant changes from the original if the prompts are too vague. For example, someone who is originally looking down to the side may be looking straight at the camera in the new image.

I tested the free version of Gemini's restoration capabilities on four photographs dating back to the 1860s. Two of them were already clear and in relatively good condition. The restored images for these looked more polished with no major changes. A third photograph of a female ancestor was blurry and more pixelated, most likely because the physical photograph is small and was scanned using low DPI settings. Gemini produced a startlingly realistic face in its copy.

On closer comparison, the facial features do not seem to quite match the original. A Google image search with the new image brought up dozens of results for activist Susan B. Anthony. Gemini uses statistically common facial features learned through training to fill in gaps of detail in the original photograph. This can sometimes lead to a likeness for well-known individuals.

The last photograph was a tintype of a male ancestor with facial hair. Gemini's copy came back as a lithograph-style sketch. Despite repeated requests to make the image photographic and not a drawing, it remained the same. It also did not register the facial hair. Other colleagues have mentioned some issues with facial hair and beards not being accurately depicted in the restored version.

The wording of the prompts used might not have been specific enough for the desired results. Using the correct prompt, or request, is very important when using AI. The more detailed and specific the prompt is, the more accurate the result will be. Phrases such as "restore photograph" or "enhance photograph" are too vague and may result in significant unwanted changes to the photograph due to the model using its own interpretation. Specify exactly what needs to be done, such as adjusting contrast, fixing tears or scratches, or focusing only on one specific area of the photograph.

It is important to note that Gemini currently does not process images of minors, even if the photograph is 100 years old. If a photograph contains children, another AI model must be used to restore them.

Preservation standards emphasize that the untouched original should be kept, not discarded after making changes. If using an AI-restored image for anything, make sure to cite that it has been modified with AI and give the prompt that was used. When possible, use both the original and the AI-restored image so that others can see what changes have been made.

History Tidbits: The Other Christmas Truce--Przemysl 1914/1915 by Logan Knight

Nineteen-fourteen is one of those dates in human history that sends a shiver up the spine. Given that the year marked the beginning of a maelstrom that saw the loss of somewhere between thirty-seven and forty million people, the complete collapse of the old order, and the origins of an even worse conflict, it is only natural that people seek a glimmer of hope in such horror. That is why one of the most popular topics of the First World War is the famed truce between British and German soldiers on Christmas Eve and Day.

This article is not about that truce. No, we are setting our sights far to the east in what is now southern Poland and was then the northern bastion of Austria-Hungary: the fortress city of Przemysl (roughly pronounced Shem-Sul in English). The Eastern Front has no hold over the popular imagination as its western counterpart does. Yet for years, ethnic Germans, Russians, Hungarians, and the various minorities of their empires fought and died in the thousands.

Unlike the West, the distances involved were so great that trench warfare was only a part of the fighting. Armies swung back and forth across hundreds of miles of territory.

In this instance, the Austro-Hungarians met disaster in Galicia in 1914 and were wheeling back to their great fortress of Przemyśl, which held the gateway through the Carpathian Mountains and into the heartlands of the Dual Monarchy. By the end of September, the city was under siege.

While the city was relieved for about a week, it was retaken quickly by the Russians, who reinvested the city. A siege of six months began, and conditions became grim when the 110,000 soldiers faced the prospect of eating their horses or starving. The armies of the Tsar were in scarcely better shape, since they were exposed to the harsh weather and enemy fire. The casualties began to mount, and what has been called Austria-Hungary's Stalingrad dragged into the frozen winter.

In the middle of this frozen hell, Christmas Day still came. The Hapsburg troops were ordered to not fire unless fired upon. As the day wore on, a curious truce sprung up, as the Tsar's forces also did not shell the embattled fortress. Then the Austro-Hungarians noted that the Russians had left three Christmas Trees in the middle of no man's land with a note that read: "We wish you, the heroes of Przemyśl, a Merry Christmas and hope that we can come to a peaceful agreement as soon as possible".

Slowly, the troops filtered out of their positions and met in the middle. They met and exchanged Austrian tobacco and schnapps for Russian bread and meat before eventually going back to their respective positions and resuming combat the next day. However, there was a sequel to this event. The Russians, being Orthodox, did not celebrate Christmas on December 25th but on January 7th, since they go by the old Julian Calendar. Aware of this, the Hapsburg armies observed the same truce on January 7th, 1915, to allow their enemies to celebrate Christmas.

Sadly, a peaceful agreement was years away. Even when that agreement came in 1918, the bloodshed had only started for Eastern Europe. The Siege of Przemyśl dragged on for over six months and eventually, the Austro-Hungarians capitulated. Despite this great victory, the Russians were smashed elsewhere by the Germans and were forced to retreat. So, the Austro-Hungarians took the city back. Even so, they never recovered from their defeat there. The rest of the war was one long slow decline, until the Dual Monarchy was finally consigned to the dustbin of history at the end of the conflict.

Genealogy Center's January 2026 Programs

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

Tuesday, January 6, 2026 at 2:30 p.m. ET "Tracing Southern Families Through Brick Walls with Kelsey Kirby - <https://acpl.libnet.info/event/15260093>

Thursday, January 8, 2026 at 6:30 p.m. ET "IN-PERSON DNA & Genealogy Interest

Group” with Sara Allen - <https://acpl.libnet.info/event/15259950>

Tuesday, January 13, 2026 at 2:30 p.m. ET “Researching Your Enslaver Ancestors” with Martha Runnette - <https://acpl.libnet.info/event/15357802>

Wednesday, January 14, 2026 at 7 p.m. ET “Research Reports for Ourselves” with Paula Stuart Warren – A program of the Allen County Genealogical Society of Indiana - https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_mB8vj815RUqWvs-Gr5c3WA#/registration

Thursday, January 15, 2026 at 6:30 p.m. ET “Food of My Forefathers: Applied Genealogy: The Cultural Context of Traditional & Ethnic Foods” with Peg Kapustiak - <https://acpl.libnet.info/event/15260199>

Tuesday, January 20, 2026 at 2:30 p.m. ET “Preserving the Greatest Generation: World War II Genealogy” with Courtney Carr - <https://acpl.libnet.info/event/15260280>

Thursday, January 22, 2026 at 6:30 p.m. ET “Local History and Genealogy Collections at the Columbus Metropolitan Library” with Nicole Sutton and Eugene Rutigliano - <https://acpl.libnet.info/event/15260412>

Tuesday, January 27, 2026 at 2:30 p.m. ET “Gone but Not Forgotten - Military Records and Genealogy with Dr. Kristen Bailey - <https://acpl.libnet.info/event/15260880>

Thursday, January 29, 2026 at 6:30 p.m. ET “No Documentation, No Problem! Leveraging Context, Relationships, and DNA to find Harry’s Father” with Linda McCracken - <https://acpl.libnet.info/event/15266087>

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.

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

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