



GENIE BYTES

Volume 7, Issue 2

Grand Strand Genealogy Club

May 2026

Message from the Editor

Bonnie Kishpaugh

Editor, Genie Bytes, GSGC Member of the Board

This issue Jean Brennan reveals the journey she took discovering a missionary monk ancestor in Italy to moonshining ancestors in the Ozark Mountains. Next, Nancy Engle reveals the oral history handed down regarding an ancestor who could read tea leaves. Our final story is one of a Club member reuniting with his son who was given up for adoption.

Anne Laymon has again contributed a book review for us. She loves to read! I also have recommended a few books, websites and other information to help you with your research.

Don't forget to submit your genealogy research questions and topic ideas for the July Round Table to Charlene Carson.

As you can see, our club members have many stories to tell. When will **you** be revealing one of your ancestor's stories in one of our future newsletters? Why not start now? We could really use your help! You can send these directly to me or to our club email address with *Newsletter* in the subject. Let us hear from you! ♦

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From Saint to Sinner

Jean Brennan

Vice President, GSGC Officer of the Board

Researching my family history has always been a meaningful journey for me, especially finding out that I am a descendant of the North Carolina Yothers line through Conrad Yoder, Patriot of the Battle of Kings Mountain through their son Adam. The Yoder family, from who I descend, is believed to have roots reaching back to the Joder community in Bern Switzerland as early as 1260 where Saint Joder, a missionary monk, crossed the Alps from Italy in the fourth century to bring the gospel to Southern Switzerland. In Switzerland and Germany, the family name was recorded as Joder. Over time, as families migrated and languages shifted, the name evolved: The English translation became Yoder and Yother.

I have combined traditional genealogy with DNA research to strengthen the branches of my family tree. Using my DNA matches as a guide, I turned to "Newspaper.com" to uncover stories, obituaries, and local news articles that connected me to relatives who shared my genetic heritage. Seeing familiar surnames appear in print brought my research to life in a way that census records, birth and death indexes and land records alone never could.

"Newspaper.com" became an invaluable tool in confirming relationships suggested by my DNA results. When a DNA match listed a common ancestor or a familiar Tennessee connection, I searched historical newspapers for those individuals and their extended families. Obituaries were especially helpful, often listing siblings, parents, and migration patterns. Through the process, I discovered that some of my DNA matches descending from Adam Yother eventually settled in Arkansas. During Prohibition, a few members of the extended family became involved in moonshining in the

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Ozark Mountains. Mountain life at that time was often marked by poverty, isolation and limited economic opportunities. When the manufacture and sale of alcohol became illegal under the Eighteenth Amendment, many in rural communities turned to distilling spirits to survive. Newspaper accounts revealed that these activities sometimes went beyond making illegal liquor. In certain cases, family members were implicated not only in producing moonshine but also in violent disputes including murder and theft.

To trace a line from believers of a revered missionary bishop and Revolutionary War Patriot, to descendants entangled in moonshining and crime in the Ozark Mountains presents a powerful narrative of “saints to sinners.” Yet, it also reflects the broader human story—how families evolve across centuries, shaped by faith, hardship, opportunity, and circumstance. In embracing both the honorable and the difficult chapters, I have gained a fuller, more honest understanding of the legacy that flows through my DNA. ♦

Tea Leaves and A Schuylkill County Mine Disaster: *Bernard Gerrity's Story*

Nancy Engle
Member, GSGC

On the morning of December 3, 1918, nineteen-year-old Bernard Gerrity—my maternal grandmother’s brother—rose before dawn and prepared to walk to the Bast Colliery in Schuylkill County, Pennsylvania, just north of Ashland. He lived with his parents, his fourteen-year-old sister Helen, and several extended family members in a modest two to two-and-a-half-story home on Walnut Street. The houses there were part of the town grid, occupied by working-class families. Though the Gerrity family was not affluent, they were not among the very poorest.

According to family accounts passed down through generations, this was no ordinary morning. Helen had risen early, before the men left for the mines, and was visibly unsettled. She could not explain the source of her unease. In the Gerrity household, Helen was known for reading tea leaves—a practice she had learned from an elderly woman who lived nearby. Though most of the family regarded it skeptically, Helen firmly believed she could discern meaning in the patterns left behind in a teacup.

That morning, her sense of foreboding was overwhelming. She prepared a cup of tea, drank it, and studied the leaves intently. When Bernard, his father, and uncle entered the kitchen for breakfast, Helen remained fixed on the cup. When her father realized what she was doing, he reacted sharply, knocking the cup from her hands and ending the ritual.

Distressed, Helen pleaded with the men not to go to work that day. She insisted that something terrible was about to happen. Though everyone in the household knew the inherent dangers of coal mining, her mother attempted to calm her, reassuring her that all would be well. Helen’s warnings grew more urgent, but they could not alter the routine of the day. Work in the coal mines was not optional; either face the dangers and go to work, or have no money to feed your family.

Outside, the early December morning was cold. Temperatures likely hovered between 26- and 32-degrees Fahrenheit; the ground would have been frozen, with possible patches of snow or ice. In the darkness before dawn, Bernard, his father, and his uncle set out on foot toward the colliery. At some point along the way, they parted, each heading to his assigned work.

Before long, Bernard arrived at the Bast Colliery, known for its massive coal breaker—a towering structure situated along the slope where raw coal was processed. Deep underground, coal was extracted and loaded into small mine cars, which were then hoisted to the surface. At the breaker, the coal was dumped at the head of the structure and allowed to move downward by gravity through a series of crushers, screens, and picking tables. It was then sorted and cleaned of slate and other debris by “breaker boys,” primarily children ages 8 to 12. The prepared coal was then loaded into cars and sent down an inclined plane by cable to a trestle, where it would be transferred into railroad cars for shipment.

On that day, a trip of coal cars was sent down the outside plane from the breaker, carrying Bernard and four other young men. As the cars descended toward the trestle, the hoisting rope that controlled their movement suddenly parted. The 1918 annual mine report does not record the cause of the failure, though such incidents were often attributed to wear, overloading, or inadequate maintenance.

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Freed from the hoisting system's control, the cars accelerated rapidly down the steep grade. Faced with a runaway descent, the young men attempted to jump clear. In the chaos, Bernard did not escape. He fell onto the track, and the uncontrolled cars overtook him, pinning him beneath them and causing fatal injuries.

The official report recorded the incident in stark terms: William Reid, *Annual Report of the Inspector of Mines of the Twenty-Second Anthracite District (Schuylkill, Northumberland and Columbia Counties)*, for the year ending December 31, 1918 (Centralia, PA: Pennsylvania Department of Mines, February 21, 1919).

“Gerrity was instantly killed and Llewellyn was fatally injured when the rope broke on a trip of cars while they were riding down the plane to trestle. Outside.”

News of the accident spread quickly through the town. Before long, word reached Bernard's mother that there had been an accident at the colliery and that her son was dead. In communities built around the mines, such tragedies were an ever-present risk, yet no family was ever prepared when the news arrived at their own door.

Helen was inconsolable. She insisted to anyone who would listen that the tea leaves had foretold the tragedy. In the years that followed, this moment would become part of the family's oral history, remembered as both an unheeded warning and a reflection of the deep anxieties that accompanied life in the coal region.

Family tradition holds that Bernard's death had lasting consequences. His father, deeply affected by the loss, is said to have become increasingly involved in efforts to organize and advocate for miners' rights. According to accounts passed down through Bernard's nephew, Robert, the family eventually left the region for Philadelphia after tensions with mine management intensified. Though decades had passed since the Molly Maguire hangings, their legacy continued to cast a long shadow over our family and the anthracite fields, where labor disputes and fears of retaliation were never far from mind.

Bernard's death was one of many that occurred in the Pennsylvania anthracite region during a period marked by both high demand for coal and persistent danger in

its extraction. For the families who lived and worked in towns like Ashland, the risks were woven into the fabric of daily life—accepted, endured, and, too often, tragically realized. ♦

A Life Reconnected: An Account of a Father and Son Reunited After 57 Years

Clair Fleming & Richard Maclary

Members, GSGC

In the early 1960's, during the final year of high school, I experienced a formative relationship that would leave a lasting imprint on my life. During that time, the relationship resulted in the birth of a son. Although I was able to briefly visit and hold the child shortly after birth, circumstances soon changed. The child's mother and her family relocated, and all contact was lost.

In the years that followed, I carried the memory of that brief encounter while moving forward with my life. By the mid 1970's, I developed an interest in genealogy and made attempts to locate my son. These efforts, however, were unsuccessful due to the limited access to adoption records and identifying information available at the time.

Decades passed without resolution.

In 2020, at the suggestion of a family member I participated in a direct-to consumer DNA testing service. What began as a casual exploration of family history soon led to a significant and unexpected development. Within a short time, I was contacted by an individual seeking biological connections on behalf of a close relative who had been adopted at birth.

This inquiry indicated a strong genetic match to my DNA, suggesting a close familial relationship. Based on the background information provided, including birth date and location, it became clear that this individual could be the son I had not seen in more than half a century.

Through advances in genetic technology, a connection once thought permanently lost was reestablished. After 57 years, Richard and his son James were brought back into contact, demonstrating the profound impact of modern DNA analysis in resolving long standing questions of identity and family history.

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To review the reunion of Richard Maclary and his son, you can either Google “Myrtle Beach man meets son after 57 years.” or click on this [link](#) to view the video.

The original article was edited by Jean Brennan with the assistance of ChatGPT ♦

Book Review

Anne Laymon

Treasurer GSGC Member of the Board

Kuehn, Christine. *Family of Spies: A World War II Story of Nazi Espionage, Betrayal, and the Secret History Behind Pearl Harbor*. Celadon Books, 2025.

Your dad grew up in Hawaii, but never talked about it. One day you receive a letter suggesting your relatives were involved in the bombing of Pearl Harbor? What do you do? The first reaction is disbelief, then denial, then research.

Though this is not a “genealogy” book, the story is intriguing. The author spent 30 years plundering through government archives, redacted FBI reports, newspapers and interviews. Then she made the decision not to hide her family’s story any longer.

For World War II buffs, and genealogists who have that family story that sounds farfetched, this book might interest you. ♦

Featured Books

Schober, Katherine. *Tips and Tricks of Deciphering German Handwriting: A Translator’s Tricks of the Trade for Transcribing German Genealogy Documents*. Independently Published, 2018. According to one Amazon reviewer: “This book is essential for anyone struggling with deciphering old German records. I have

learned so much and have become more confident in my translations. It is a valuable reference for my work and research projects!” ♦

Family Tree Magazine. *Genealogy Brick Wall Busters: Practical Solutions for Family History Problems*. Yankee Publishing Inc., 2026. This book will guide you through some of the most common genealogy problems, from missing vital records to hidden hometowns. Each article provides practical tips and strategies for overcoming research woes and developing better, more efficient searches. ♦

Featured Websites

Jean Brennan has had a lot of luck finding church records for many of her German ancestors on [Matricula Online](#). According to the [FamilySearch Wiki](#), Matricula Online is a free portal for online images of European church records. The *Wiki* shows you how to access the records. Jean hopes you have as much luck as she has had finding your Eastern European ancestors. ♦

Cheri Passey recommends using [Linkpendium](#) for your genealogy research. This site has links to more than 2 million genealogy websites which can be searched by location or surname. ♦

At [GeneaNet](#) find your French families with this site’s guides to archives, a genealogy encyclopedia, uploaded trees and *beaucoup* links. Click on the “?” (Help) to the left of the “Sign in box” at the top right for additional info regarding the site. ♦

Did You Know?

The 1926 Census of Ireland was released in April 2026 which can reveal a good bit of information about your Irish ancestors. The Census can be accessed for free online at the [National Archives of Ireland](#). Happy hunting and “Go n-éirí libh,” meaning “may you (all) succeed!” ♦

[The Midwest Genealogy Center](#) at the Mid-Continent Public Library has Family History Forms designed as fillable PDFs including a Six-Generation Chart, Family Unit Chart, Individual Worksheet, and more. These may be helpful in organizing your research. ♦

**Have a tip/tidbit you’d like to share? Please submit it to genieclub2002@gmail.com – Subject: “Newsletter Tip/Tidbit.” We’d love to hear from you. **

Commemorating America's 250th

Christine Davis, Ed.D.

Member, GSGC

May/June/July Revolutionary War Events

- **10 May 1775** – Ethan Allen and Benedict Arnold's Green Mountain Boys seized Fort Ticonderoga, gaining crucial artillery for the Continental Army.
- **10 May 1775** – **The Second Continental Congress convened** in Philadelphia to organize the war effort.
- **17 May 1775** - The Continental Congress banned trade with Canada.
- **20 May 1775** - Citizens in Mecklenburg County, North Carolina, declared independence from Great Britain.
- **21 May 1775** - The Grape Island Skirmish resulted in an American militia victory over British troops in Boston Harbor.
- **22 May 1775** - The New Jersey Provincial Congress was formed in Trenton.
- **24 May 1775** - John Hancock was elected President of the Continental Congress.
- **25 May 1775** - British Generals Howe, Burgoyne, and Clinton arrived in Boston to assist in suppressing the rebellion.
- **22 May – 18 June 1781** - General Nathanael Greene initiated the siege of the British garrison at Ninety-Six, South Carolina, ending one of the longest sieges of the war.
- **The Key Theme of May** was one of **Shifting Sentiment**: Local colonial governments began taking formal, organized control against British authority.
- **17 June 1775** - Battle of Bunker Hill (Breed's Hill) - The bloodiest day of the war, where British forces took the hill but suffered massive casualties.
- **28 June 1776** - Battle of Sullivan's Island - A major victory for the colonies in South Carolina, preventing the British from capturing Charleston.
- **18 June 1779** - Sullivan Expedition - American troops attacked Native American villages in New York.
- **20 June 1779** - Battle of Stono Ferry - A British victory in South Carolina.
- **21 June 1779** - Spain declared war on Great Britain, aiding the American cause.
- **28 June 1778** - Battle of Monmouth - A key battle in New Jersey showcasing Washington's better-trained army, leading to a tactical draw. Event made Mary Hays a Revolutionary War icon when

she took over her injured husband's cannon duties and remained to carry water to thirsty soldiers on the Monmouth battlefield, which earned her the name "Molly Pitcher."

- **2 July 1775** - George Washington arrived in Cambridge, MA, to take command of the Continental Army.
- **4 July 1776** - The Continental Congress approved the final draft of the **Declaration of Independence**.
- **7 July 1777** - Battle of Hubbardton - Although a British victory, the battle at Hubbardton is an American victory in the Campaign of 1777 [totaling five hours, it was the only battle fought in Vermont].
- **7 July 1779** - The Burning of Fairfield - An estimated 2,000 British troops, under General William Tryon, burned Fairfield, CT. By the end of the day, 97 homes, 67 barns, 48 stores, two schools, a courthouse, two meetinghouses and the county jail had been destroyed.
- **11 July 1779** - The Burning of Norwalk, CT - British forces raided and burned Norwalk to crush colonial resistance and take supplies. The attack destroyed 130 homes, 40 shops, 100 barns, and two churches, leaving only six homes standing: making it the worst raid in the state.
- **12 July 1780** - Battle of Williamson's Plantation, SC - where patriots defeated Loyalists thanks to patriot sharpshooter Capt. Christian Huck.
- **16 July 1779** - Americans captured Stony Point, NY in a daring midnight raid.
- **24 July 1779** - The Penobscot Bay Expedition, ME was a total fiasco. All American vessels were captured [11], scuttled, or burned [29]. American sailors fled into the woods without food or supplies and endured a six-week march through wilderness back to Boston. British claimed 474 American casualties, against 70.
- **28 July 1779** - Battle of Fort Freeland, PA - A force of 100 British soldiers and 300 Seneca warriors overtake a patriot fort. The battle is known for patriot bravery [they fought until their ammunition ran out]. ♦

Call for Genie Jar Donations

Members of the GSGC last met solely in person in March of 2020. Expenses such as maintenance of our website and Zoom subscriptions as well as payment of speakers and the *Ancestry* subscription for Chapin Library continue. Please help us. Mail your check or money order to Grand Strand Genealogy Club, 6529 Valene Court, Myrtle Beach, SC, 29572. Thank you, in advance, for continuing to support YOUR GSGC! ♦

State Guides

Arizona

(Source: State Guide Arizona by Fryxell, D. A. Originally published in the Nov/Dec 2025/Vol.26, Issue 6, P. 33 of *Family Tree Magazine*)

Statehood: 1912

First federal census: 1860 (as territory); 1920 (as state)

Birth and death records begin: varies (county); 1909 (state)

Marriage records begin: 1864 (county); never statewide

Contact for vital records:

AZ Dept of Health Services, Bureau of Vital Records. ♦

Pennsylvania

(Source: State Guide Pennsylvania by Beidler, J. M. and Bodenhorn, K. Originally published in the Nov/Dec 2025/Vol.26, Issue 6, P.37 of *Family Tree Magazine*)

Statehood: 1787

First federal census: 1790

Birth and death records begin: 1852/1893 (county); 1906 (state)

Marriage records begin: 1852 (county); never statewide

Contact for vital records:

PA Dept. of Health, Division of Vital Records. ♦

Dear Miss Genie

No questions received this quarter. ♦

**Do you have a question for Miss Genie? Why not send it to her at genieclub2002@gmail.com – Subject: "Miss Genie." She would love to hear from you. **

SOUTH CAROLINA GRAND STRAND GENEALOGY CLUB (SCGSGC)

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► Become involved. Shadow a Board member. We welcome you. ◀

Lanyards (\$5 ID Badge Holder + 2 Ribbons. Additional Ribbons \$.25 each) – See Marie Peacock or email the Club at genieclub2002@gmail.com to order

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

GSGC MONTHLY MEETINGS

PLACE: CHAPIN MEMORIAL LIBRARY/VIA ZOOM

TIME: 10 A.M.

PRESENTATIONS: (SUBJECT TO CHANGE)

- June 13: DAR — Celebrating America's 250 — Corrine Hoch
- July 11: Round Table — Member Participation
- August 8: Ancestry — Additional Searching Tools — Bob Dahlin

GENEALOGY MEETINGS/CONFERENCES

Institute of Genealogy & Historical Research (IGHR) – July 27-31, 2026. Virtual educational forum for the discovery, critical evaluation, and use of genealogical sources and methodology of intensive study. ♦

Midwest Genealogy Center at Mid-Continent Public Library (Hybrid/MO) – August 4, 2026. Learn how to search thousands of resources, from history books to Revolutionary War records, with *HeritageQuest* Online. This beginner-level class requires basic computer literacy. Click on the above link for details, registration and other programs which may be of interest to you. (*HeritageQuest* Online can be accessed in-a library or remotely through the library portal. Many libraries participate throughout the country including Waccamaw Neck Branch Library and Chapin Memorial Library.) ♦

** Please visit **ConferenceKeeper** for the most complete "Calendar and Collection of Genealogy Events" on the Internet. This is your chance to attend a meeting virtually you may have been unable to attend onsite because of its distance or cost. **

MEETINGS

2nd Saturday of each month at 10:00 a.m. at:

Chapin Memorial Library (*FamilySearch* Affiliate Library)
400 14th Avenue North, Myrtle Beach, SC 29577

* Meetings held both at Chapin Library and via ZOOM*

Email - genieclub2002@gmail.com

Website - www.scgsgc.org

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