

Genealogy Gems: News from the Fort Wayne Library
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The Importance of Context

by Curt B. Witcher

We are still basking in the afterglow of our first Fort Wayne Ancestry Day that took place just eight days ago. Nearly one thousand genealogists enjoyed a day of genealogy presentations, networking, and researching in The Genealogy Center. Some came early, and some stayed late—even several days late! The Ancestry.com experts and Genealogy Center staff combined to offer four presentations and an ask-the-experts panel that filled the day with super ideas and engaging answers. So many attendees submitted amazingly good questions that there wasn't close to enough time to answer them all. The staff of The Genealogy Center have committed to answering all of the hundreds of submitted questions on our blog over the next several weeks. If you don't already regularly read our blog, you may want to put that on your to-do list. You can find our blog linked off our website or directly at www.genealogycenter.org/Community/Blog.aspx.

One of a number of things that impressed me about this Ancestry Day event was the number of questions that could be answered, and the number of "brick-wall" problems that could begin to be resolved, if one's research was put in a broader, more robust context. Understandably, a crucial part of our research focuses on names. However, the continual hunt for the identities of ancestors can easily entice one to increasingly focus solely on names. A phrase to remember is "doing the history eliminates the mystery." Faced with the question of "where can I find this person?" and the failure to locate him or her on a census or in other mainstream records, one should put that individual in as many contexts as possible.

First, if you're looking for a person in a particular time period, you must suspect he or she is alive, so ask yourself some basic questions. How do you suspect that person made a living? Are there records generated from this kind of work? For example, farmers must have land to farm. Are there deeds or other land records to explore? Have you looked for evidence of seeds, supplies and other

necessities being purchased in daybooks and journals of the area? Have you explored for records of crops being sold? Have you checked tax records; indeed, have you looked for all possible tax records not just those related to property? Have you examined records of licenses individuals may have needed in particular communities during specific time periods, for example, licenses for inn-keepers, dentists, physicians, mid-wives, traders, merchants, and even those for dogs or other animals. Are there bounty records to be explored--squirrel bounties, wolf bounties, etc.?

Second, try to discern the reason the person is living in the location you suspect. Was the area predominately settled by a particular ethnic group? Was it close to river transportation, overland trails, or rail lines so goods could be more easily purchased and sold? Does it appear that members of a particular religious group are clustered in the area of interest? Make a conscientious effort to get answers to the questions reporters are trained to ask: who, what, where, when, why, and how.

Finally, be aware of what is happening in the local, state and national arena and ask yourself if these events could have generated records documenting your ancestor's life or affected the local records that were generated and where they might be found. Was a war being fought? Are you looking for an ancestor during an economic recession or depression? Was your ancestor homesteading? Could he have been involved in any of the "gold excitement" that took place in Colorado and California? If you're thinking "I can't find anything on this ancestor--where do I go from here," it's likely you need to spend some time putting your ancestor of interest into the most robust context possible.

Early Pennsylvania Will Abstracts
by Steven W. Myers

Research in early Pennsylvania is hampered by the lack of general civil vital records registration until 1885 (for marriages) and 1893 (for births and deaths). In their absence, probate records, including published will abstracts, constitute an important source for establishing generational links. One useful series of abstracts is that compiled under the auspices of the Genealogical Society of Pennsylvania between 1893 and 1911. Originally produced as clear, handwritten manuscripts, excepting those typed for Montgomery County, the thirty-one volumes of abstracts were reprinted by the society in the 1980s.

Sets in The Genealogy Center's collection are shelved by county under the call number 974.801 and cover the following nine counties and years: Berks (1752-1825), Bucks (1685-1825), Chester (1714-1825), Cumberland (1750-1825), Delaware (1789-1835), Lancaster (1721-1820), Montgomery (1784-1850), Philadelphia (1682-1825), and York (1749-1820). Two volumes, by different abstractors, were produced for Delaware County. One, covering 1789-1805, includes abstracts of administrations, as do the volumes for Berks, Chester and Montgomery counties, although none of them indicate that by their title. Every-name indexes provide access to the valuable genealogical information these books contain.

The full abstracts feature a wealth of details including: name of the testator, their residence and occupation; dates the will was made and proved; names, relationships and sometimes residences of surviving next of kin, including step children and grandchildren by deceased children; provisions of the will in brief, sometimes referring to other persons from whom land was purchased; names of

executors and their relationship to the deceased; the names of witnesses; and the book and page reference to the original record. The brief abstracts of the much shorter intestate administrations usually provide the name and residence of the deceased, the date letters of administration were granted, the name of the administrator, and their relationship, if any, to the deceased. Sometimes a bonus is provided, as in the abstract of the 1783 Cumberland County will of James Elliott, merchant, which mentions his "Freehold estate in [a] town called Maguire's Bridge, County of Fermanagh, Ireland," as well as relatives, including cousins, on both sides of the Atlantic.

Researchers with ancestors in any of the counties covered will find these abstracts invaluable. Since the series covers the bulk of southeastern Pennsylvania, those having western Pennsylvania forebears with unknown origins elsewhere in the state would do well to check these volumes for a possible family connection.

Missouri Military Discharges

by Delia Bourne

Twentieth century military records are in great demand by researchers, but that demand far exceeds the current availability of those records. Although service records for veterans of the last century's conflicts are difficult to obtain, many counties throughout the country do have discharge records of local soldiers. For example, The Genealogy Center holds a collection of military discharges from fifty-nine counties in Missouri on 161 reels of microfilm (cabinet 75). They are organized by county, and the dates covered vary.

To determine the time periods covered by discharges for a specific county, as well as to identify the reel numbers you need, go to the Microtext Catalog on our website's Free Databases list (at <GenealogyCenter.org>). Select "States" and then select "Missouri." Scroll to the county, or click on "Missouri County Military Records" in the list of statewide Missouri sources, to learn the complete contents of each reel. Many of the microfilms also include other types of records. These vary by county, but include deeds, mortgages, real estate and circuit court records, declarations of intent and naturalizations, inquests, and federal liens, as well as enlistments, soldiers' biographies, and military support petitions from the Civil War. The soldiers' biographies may include information similar to that found on a discharge record, as well as parents' names, occupation and battles in which the soldier fought.

Preceding each county's discharge books is a chronological index, arranged by first letter of the last name, which includes address, branch of service, date of discharge, when and where it was recorded and a citation for book and page. Information in discharge records varies. Those from the World War I era provide name, rank and regiment, birth date and place, age, occupation, marital status, physical description at the time of enlistment, qualifications (for example, marksmanship), battles and physical condition when discharged. World War II discharges include discharge date and place, rank and regiment, citations, enlistment record with physical description and age, but no birth date and birthplace. By the Vietnam War era, service and Social Security numbers are included, as well as dates and places of birth and enlistment, home address, rank, medals and awards, and blood type.

These Missouri records are an excellent example of what may be available in other states and counties. When calling or visiting a county office to inquire about the availability of discharge records, consider asking to speak to an experienced employee who may be more likely to know what office or court has jurisdiction for these records in that specific county.

Technology Tip of the Month--The Ribbon by Kay Spears

The "ribbon" is the new command interface for all applications of the 2010 version of Microsoft Office, including Word, Excel, Access, PowerPoint, and Publisher. When I first opened Word 2010, my immediate thought was "what have they done to my taskbar?" Having spent decades with standard taskbars, the "ribbon" came as quite a surprise, and has required a bit of a learning curve. Let's review basic features of "the ribbon" and some of the things I've discovered.

The ribbon is composed of Tabs and each one contains groups of related commands. In many groups there are small Dialog Box Launchers located in the lower right hand corner. If you click on one it will show you more options in that command group. Most of the features that you were familiar with in older versions of Microsoft Office are still present, but are just in different locations.

The "ribbon" will vary depending on which application you are using. When you open Word, for example, you will see the following tabs: File, Home, Insert, Page Layout, References, Mailings, Review, and View. According to Microsoft, these are laid out in "logical" order - those most used are first. You can customize the "ribbon," but I suggest you become familiar with the one that Microsoft has created before you make any changes.

There is one thing, however, that you may want to customize right away - the Quick Access Toolbar, located above the "ribbon" in the left hand corner of your screen. The Quick Access Toolbar commands are always visible. So, if there is a command that you use all the time, this is the place to put it. For example, I do tons of mail merges, so I put my mail merge command button there. It's always at my fingertips. This is how you add to the toolbar: click the drop-down arrow next to the Quick Access Toolbar. Choose a command from the short list that appears, or select More Commands if you don't see the one you want to add. A large dialog box entitled Word Options will open. On the left hand side, you will see a list of dozens of commands in the Popular Commands group. Above that list, a drop down arrow will allow you to change command groups or to see All Commands on one list. Take time to explore all the options. Once you find the command you want, click the Add button in the middle of the dialog box. The command you chose will now appear in the list on the right. Click OK and your command will appear on the Quick Access Toolbar. Another way to add to the Quick Access Toolbar is by right clicking on the "ribbon" tab where the command appears and choosing Customize Quick Access Toolbar. Then repeat the steps described above.

P.S. A correction for last month's article: the default line space setting for Word 2010 is 1.15 instead of 1.5.

Next month: Exploring the Ribbon: Home tab

Quick-Tip of the Month for Preservation--Dealing With Water Damage
by Curt B. Witcher

"Heritage Preservation--The National Institute for Conservation" has an excellent video online devoted to dealing with a water emergency. It can be found at the following website.

www.heritagepreservation.org/PROGRAMS/WaterSegmentFG.HTM

While this video is primarily geared toward museums and other heritage organizations, there is much for the individual to learn and use. The techniques and every-day, household products that can be used to dry water damaged books and photographs are particularly relevant. Also, the proper way to air-dry materials is universally applicable.

August Tree Talks: Kentucky Research

Our Tree Talks offering for August, "Beginning Kentucky Research at The Genealogy Center," will be presented by Delia Bourne on Saturday, August 27, 2011, from 10 a.m. to 11 a.m. in Meeting Room A. Many of our ancestral families passed through Kentucky, staying for a generation or two before moving on to points north, south and west. This lecture provides an overview of records and collections that will aid one in best utilizing The Genealogy Center's Kentucky sources. For more information, or to register for this free program, call 260-421-1225, or send us an email at Genealogy@ACPL.Info.

Family History: Beyond the Basics Mini-Course

It's time to register! The popular mini-course, "Family History: Beyond the Basics," is being offered September 30 & October 1, 2011. Instructors Margery Graham and Steve Myers will share their knowledge, guide tours of The Genealogy Center, and provide assisted research and personal consultations. "Family History: Beyond the Basics" will cover the following topics.

Day One:

Session 1: Problem Solving: Breaking through Brick Walls in Your Research - Every family historian eventually encounters obstacles in their research that seem insurmountable. Learn some basic strategies for tackling these so-called "brick walls" that can lead you to genealogical breakthroughs.

Session 2: Probate Records - Learn how to find and use wills, administrations and guardianships, as well as the other "goodies" contained in probate records.

Session 3: Land Records and Tax Lists - Learn the basics of land descriptions and how deed and land grant records, as well as associated tax lists, can all help advance your research.

Day Two:

Session 4: Military Records - Following an overview of military record sources, learn the basics of researching ancestors who served in the American Civil War (1861-1865) and in the American Revolutionary War (1775-1783).

Session 5: Church Records - Learn how to identify, locate and use these important sources of early birth, marriage and death information for a time period that pre-dates government registration of so-called "vital records."

Session 6: Tracing Your Ancestors Across the Atlantic - Learn how to find and use the many sources that bear on this crucial research step. Naturalization records, passenger lists, European emigration records and other sources will be discussed.

This course will be in Rooms A & B of the Main Library, 900 Library Plaza, Fort Wayne, Indiana. The registration fee for the "Family History: Beyond the Basics" mini-course is \$50. Checks should be made payable to "ACPL Foundation" and mailed to: The Genealogy Center, Allen County Public Library, P.O. Box 2270, Fort Wayne, IN 46801-2270. Mini-course attendance will be limited, so register early to avoid disappointment. In the past this mini-course has filled very quickly so act today! Additional information and a workshop schedule will be posted soon on our Web site at <http://www.genealogycenter.org/Events.aspx>.

Family History Month 2011

October is coming and so is The Genealogy Center's annual Family History Month celebration. As usual, we have 31 days packed with genealogy educational opportunities, starting with our Family History: Beyond the Basics mini-course. Other sessions will cover Family Tree Maker, Blogging, Microsoft Word, and Adobe Elements. One-on-One Consultations will take place by appointment every Tuesday, as well as on the fourth Wednesday. The month will also feature the National Black Genealogy Summit, an outstanding three-day event for researchers of African American family history and heritage. See the calendar http://www.genealogycenter.org/Libraries/Brochures/FHM_Calendar.sflb.ashx for dates, times and other information. For more information or to register for most events, call 260-421-1225, or send us an email at Genealogy@ACPL.Info.

National Black Genealogy Summit

The National Black Genealogy Summit will take place in Fort Wayne, Indiana, October 20-22, 2011, at the Allen County Public Library and the Grand Wayne Convention Center. It quite likely will be the best event for those interested in exploring African American family history since a similar summit took place in Fort Wayne in October of 2009. An information-rich website, continually being updated with the very latest information about the event, can be found at the following address.

www.BlackGenealogyConference.Info

Hosted by the Allen County Public Library and its Foundation, as well as the African American

Genealogical Society of Fort Wayne, this event has so many outstanding features that it simply begs one to participate.

October 20th is the pre-conference day, and is open to all at no charge. The programs on this day will focus on the foundations of genealogical research, family health history, and a librarians' track. If you're new to genealogical research, you really will want to take advantage of this free day. If you're a more experienced researcher, you may find great value in learning different approaches, discovering new sources, and networking with those working in the same geographic area and time period as you.

Friday and Saturday, October 21st and 22nd, some of the very best presenters and researchers of African American genealogy will give engaging, information-rich lectures on timely topics. Tony Burroughs will be speaking on the use of land records and genealogy in the electronic age; Tim Pinnick will present four sessions over the two days including African Americans in the GAR, studying the family history of an African American community, and a couple on "tips and strategies;" and Angela Walton-Raji will offer sessions on finding Native Americans in African American families, using the records of secret societies, documenting soldiers and those still enslaved during the Civil War, and reconstruction era research. And those are just three of the presenters! We will highlight another group of presenters in next month's ezine, but you can see all the speakers and all the sessions right now at www.BlackGenealogyConference.Info.

The plenary sessions, on Friday and Saturday of the Summit, are definitely events you do not want to miss. Friday's plenary session, sponsored by ProQuest, Inc. (the creators of "Heritage Quest Online" and "African American Heritage"), features Carla Peterson, author of the award-winning book "Black Gotham, A Family History of African Americans in Nineteenth-Century New York City." Her talk, "What's Under the Dust? Recovering Family History from the Archives," will emphasize the importance of not just collecting the names, dates, and places relating to our ancestors but really getting the stories of their lives. Ms. Peterson is an engaging speaker, as well as a brilliant writer. Saturday's plenary session, sponsored by the Friends of the Allen County Public Library, features an amazing artist, Michele Wood, sharing "Not To Be Forgotten: One Artist's Journey of 'Going Back Home.'" Ms. Wood has won numerous awards for her illustrations of children's books. Her work will immediately draw you in with its color, life, and symbolism. A large number of her best pieces will be on display during the Summit in the library's Jeffrey R. Krull gallery. Her presentation is a must-hear; her exhibit is a must-see.

All three days of the Summit will feature health screenings and opportunities to do research in The Genealogy Center. Register today, and bring a friend with you. The registration form is linked directly at: www.BlackGenealogyConference.info/sites/default/files/nbgs-registration-form.pdf

Area Calendar of Events

Allen County Genealogical Society of Indiana (ACGSI)

There are no society meetings during the summer months. Meetings resume in September. September 14, 2011--Allen County Public Library, 900 Library Plaza, Fort Wayne, Indiana. 6:30 p.m. refreshments and social time, 7 p.m. program. Curt Witcher will present: "America's Second

Revolution: Records & Resources for War of 1812 Research."

Allen County-Fort Wayne Historical Society, 302 East Berry, Ft. Wayne, IN
The George R. Mather Sunday Lecture Series will resume again in September.

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 102. 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 112. 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

At the Library, underground parking can be accessed from Wayne Street. Other library parking lots are at Washington and Webster, and Wayne and Webster. Hourly parking is \$1 per hour with a \$7 maximum. ACPL library card holders may use their cards to validate the parking ticket at the west end of the Great Hall of the Library. Out of county residents may purchase a subscription card with proof of identification and residence. The current fee for an Individual Subscription Card is \$70.

Public lots are located at the corner of Ewing and Wayne Streets (\$1 each for the first two half-hours, \$1 per hour after, with a \$4 per day maximum) and the corner of Jefferson Boulevard and Harrison Street (\$3 per day).

Street (metered) parking on Ewing and Wayne Streets. On the street you plug the meters 8am - 5pm, weekdays only. It is free to park on the street after 5pm and on the weekends.

Visitor center/Grand Wayne Center garage at Washington and Clinton Streets. This is the Hilton Hotel parking lot that also serves as a day parking garage. For hourly parking, 7am - 11 pm, charges are .50 for the first 45 minutes, then \$1.00 per hour. There is a flat \$2.00 fee between 5pm and 11pm.

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

Steve Myers & Curt Witcher, co-editors