Genealogy Gems: News from the Fort Wayne Library
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Musings on Conferences and the Kind of Research We Are Doing
by Curt B. Witcher
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Over this past weekend, more than two hundred genealogists converged on the Genealogy Center to enjoy the 6 pm to 12 midnight extended research hours on Friday and attend the Indiana Genealogical Society's annual conference on Saturday. It was a fantastic time! Access to a great collection and knowledgeable staff, an excellent program of expert speakers, and exhibitors sharing information on all kinds of products and services available to nearly every level and type of genealogical interest--what else could one want?! More than a few times over the weekend I thought that if one day is this much fun, just think what four days will be like in August of this year at the Federation of Genealogical Societies' Conference the 15th through the 18th! Now would be a good time to register at <www.FGSConference.org> or request a brochure to register through the mail.

It has been both interesting and enlightening to watch the genealogy field from a number of vantage points over recent years. The continued deployment of contemporary technologies assuredly has changed the face of family history forever. And that is a very good thing! This deployment has welcomed millions of individuals to actively engage in exploring their past. It has allowed those with the busiest of schedules or living in the remotest of places to access indices, find records, view copies of actual documents, and connect with family members anywhere in the world. It has encouraged more publication activities and more sharing of data.

From my vantage point as an information professional, though, more individuals posting and connecting to more online data--while a very good thing--has caused some almost completely to become "stuff gatherers" rather than truly genealogists or family historians. Stuff gatherers do a tremendous amount of surfing, downloading anything that looks even remotely close for inspection later. And there's the rub, as they say. I don't think we commit to making that "later" time to evaluate exactly what it is we have gathered. Do we have an abstract or an image of the real document? Are we engaging in a lot of "close enough" analysis in putting the pieces of our family history together? Do we really know how to analyze and evaluate the data we find in books, microtext, serials, and searchable databases?

Interestingly enough, one of the most frequently asked types of questions numerous genealogical librarians answer is the where-do-I-go-from-here questions. After gathering data, it is so consequential to take a few moments to understand the records we're using to evidence our ancestors. That helps us determine what our next research steps are. It is vital to understand why our ancestors were living in a particular geographic area during a specific time period or engaged in a particular activity. Establishing and understanding contexts will lead us to even more record discoveries and assist us in more fully and completely analyzing those new records.

Since opening in our new facility in January of this year, the Genealogy Center has committed to providing librarians who are out from behind the reference kiosks and on the floor to assist in answering those where-do-I-go-from-here questions. We want to meet you where you're doing your research to ensure that you are not only gathering great stuff when you visit our facility but that you are also successful in analyzing that data to determine appropriate future research steps. I like to think of it as another important reason to make Fort Wayne and the Genealogy Center your research destination.

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Trace Your Roots with DNA: Using Genetic Tests to Explore Your Family Tree
by Mary D. Kraeszig

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"Trace Your Roots with DNA: Using Genetic Tests to Explore Your Family Tree" (GC 929 SM77TA) by Megan S. Smolenyak and Ann Turner is an easy to use guide for genealogists interested in adding DNA studies to their arsenal of family information. Written primarily for experienced genealogists without a background in genetics, this book uses straightforward language and detailed examples to explain the concepts, practices, and interpretation of genealogical DNA testing.

Part I discusses the fundamentals of both genealogy (for new researchers) and genetics. In Part II, the authors explain the variety of DNA tests of interest to genealogists: Y-chromosome testing for the straight male line, mitochondrial DNA (mtDNA) for the straight female line, autosomal DNA testing to determine your geographic origins, and finally, next-of-kin relationships such as paternity testing. It is important for genealogists to understand what these different types of tests can— and cannot—do to help establish your "deep" genealogy. The authors wisely provide examples of how DNA results can be disappointing, e.g., reunions of long-lost family members who turn out not to be genetically related, or learning that you are not related to anyone else in your surname project (perhaps because of an unknown adoption or extramarital liaison in the past). In Part III, the authors discuss how an individual can establish and run a family DNA project, from finding prospective cousins to participate, to interpreting and sharing genetic results. They also explain that the genetic markers currently being used for testing are "junk" DNA that is not used by our bodies to encode proteins, so genealogical genetic testing does not provide information to you (or perhaps more importantly, to anyone else) about any genetic diseases or predispositions you may have.

Helpful appendices provide the reader with links to major genealogical societies, magazines, bookstores, forms, software, and websites. A list of DNA testing companies and their products are also provided. Finally, a glossary of terms and complete index are also included to assist the reader.

Smolenyak and Turner predict that within 10-15 years, most genealogists will participate in some form of DNA testing to support (or sometimes to refute) traditional genealogical research. Their guide, "Trace Your Roots with DNA: Using Genetic Tests to Explore Your Family Tree," should be on the reading list of anyone interested in participating in a genealogical DNA test as an individual or as part of a surname or group project.

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Veterans Administration Pension Payment Cards, 1907-1933
by Steven W. Myers
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This National Archives microfilm publication (M850) reproduces cards recording pension payments made to Army and Navy veterans and their widows from 1907 through 1933. Although this set excludes records for World War I service, it can be useful for uncovering details about other pensioners during the period and for identifying specific records that are difficult to locate in the more commonly used "General Index to Pension Files, 1861-1934." Since these pension payment cards are not yet available in any online database, it is especially important for researchers to be aware of their availability on microfilm.

The Bureau of Pensions and later the Veterans Administration originally maintained the approximately two million cards reproduced in this microfilm publication. The cards have been filmed in alphabetical order by the surname of the Army or Navy invalid or widow, except that those with Indian names have been filmed alphabetically at the beginning of the respective letter of the alphabet. The form of the card is almost identical for the four classes: Army Invalid, Navy Invalid, Army Widow and Navy Widow.

Cards can provide the veteran's name, rank, unit or branch of Service, certificate number, the disability for which pensioned, the law or laws under which pensioned, the class of pension or certificate, the rate of pension, the effective date of pension, the date of the certificate, any fees paid, the name of the pension agency or group transferred from (if applicable), the date of death, the date the Bureau was notified, the widow's name, the former roll number and place of residence. Sometimes a specific street address is supplied. The back of the cards include a record of the individual quarterly pension payments. Beginning in 1923, these payments were made monthly. On the widow cards, the widow's name replaces the veteran's, and the veteran's name replaces the information about the disability for which pensioned. A block is also available on the widow card for recording payments made to minors, who can be named.

Of course, there is always the possibility of finding additional unexpected details. Remarks may mention dates that payments were suspended or discontinued, or provide additional service details such as "served as a cabin steward for 20 years." In the few instances where correspondence was attached to a card, that has also been filmed. This source is worth a look.

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Countdown to Conference 2007!
by Elaine M. Kuhn
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In these times of rising prices, it's nice to know that national conferences such as the FGS/ACPL

Conference being held in Ft. Wayne on August 15th-18th are still some of the best deals for your genealogy dollars. Where else can you see, all in one place, some of the top experts in the fields of genealogy and local history research? Where else will you have the opportunity to visit dozens of vendors of software, books, and related items under one roof? Where else will you be able to mingle with fellow researchers from all across North America and beyond? Nowhere else, but at a national genealogy conference!

For the price of a conference registration, you get access to dozens of fascinating programs on nearly every genealogical topic. For example, this year's conference will bring presenters such as Gary Mokotoff, the 2006 recipient of the Rabbi Malcolm H. Stern Humanitarian Award, who will speak on Jewish genealogy and researching in Central and Eastern Europe. Also speaking at this year's conference is Diane VanSkiver Gagel, immediate past president of the Ohio Genealogical Society and author of two books, who will speak on women and the law, researching in Ohio, and orphanages and children's homes. And the list goes on and on!

In addition to having dozens of experts at your fingertips, your conference registration allows you entrance into another highlight of an annual conference -- the Exhibit Hall! This year's conference will draw vendors of all sorts ranging from the producers of Ancestry.com to Brookhaven Press to Fun Stuff for Genealogists. And did you know that many of the vendors hold drawings for door prizes? The chance to win free stuff – what a bargain!

Attending national conference luncheons and banquets offers you the opportunity not only to partake of delicious meals, but also to dine with fellow genealogists from many different places. You can swap stories about amusing experiences and challenges you've encountered. You can also share your excitement about finding an elusive ancestor with people who will know exactly what that excitement feels like (have you ever tried to explain that moment to a non-genealogist? It's just not the same!)

Here's one final incentive for attending the conference – you can save thirty dollars on your registration costs simply by signing up before June 1st! Go to the conference website at www.FGSConference.org to register online, or to print out a registration form for mailing in. Your purse or wallet will thank you!

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Preservation Tip of the Month
by Becky Schipper
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The tip this month is a little different than usual. It is a "Virtual Exhibition of the Ravages of Dust, Water, Molds, Fungi, Bookworms, and other Pests." It is from the European Commission on Preservation and Access. <www.knaw.nl/ecpa/expo.htm> It details what materials can look like and the damage that can be done when they are not properly cared for.

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Area Calendar of Events
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Allen County Genealogical Society of Indiana (ACGSI)

Refreshments at 6:30, meeting at 7:00. Questions: contact Katie Bloom
kathrynabloom@verizon.net
Wednesday, May 9, 2007, Main Library at 900 Library Plaza: Delia Bourne will present "New Ways to Use Newspapers In Genealogical Research." [As this program will involve the use of online databases, those who typically attend the Computer Users Group Meeting on the third Wednesday of the month are invited to attend this meeting. The Computer Users Group does not meet in May.]

Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) "First Wednesday" program of lineage assistance is Wednesday, May 2nd from 9A – 7pm. Expert help from members of the DAR on becoming a member of that organization.

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Driving Directions to the Library
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Wondering how to get to the library? Our location is 900 Library Plaza, Fort Wayne, Indiana, on the block bordered on the south by Washington Boulevard, the west by Ewing Street, the north by Webster Street, and the east by the Library Plaza, formerly Webster Street. We would enjoy having you visit the Genealogy Department.

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 Road. Coming up to an angled street (State Street.) make an angled left turn. 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.

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Parking at the Library
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At the Library, underground parking can be accessed off of 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 card holders may use their cards validate the parking ticket in 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 $65.

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.

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Genealogy Center Queries
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The Historical Genealogy Department 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.

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PUBLISHING NOTE:
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This electronic newsletter is published by the Allen County Public Library's Historical Genealogy Department, and is intended to enlighten readers about genealogical research methods as well as inform them about the vast resources of the Allen County Public Library. We welcome the wide distribution of this newsletter and encourage readers to forward it to their friends and societies. All precautions have been made to avoid errors. However, the publisher does not assume any liability to any party for any loss or damage caused by errors or omissions, no matter the cause.

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Curt Witcher, editor pro-tem