

Genealogy Gems: News from the Allen County Public Library at Fort Wayne  
No. 249, November 30, 2024

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Giving . . . and Giving Again: Thoughts from a Previous Column Mixed with Thoughts from Today

by Curt B. Witcher

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So, are you stuffed? No, not with turkey, stuffing, and all the legacy dishes and other fixings that may have covered your wonderful Thanksgiving-day tables; rather, is your mind stuffed to overflowing with stories, old and new, you shared at those Thanksgiving Day get-togethers? Are you filled with joy and wonder from sharing with family and friends on the National Day of Listening the Friday after Thanksgiving? Are you excited all over again about the power of story?

The time from December into the New Year is always exciting for me because of the numerous wonderful opportunities to discover new stories and renew our recollections of old stories and items of family lore that exist in each of our families. In the coming weeks, collectively we will have many thousands of opportunities to enjoy stories. Give of your time to listen and tell—listen to stories from family members young and old (all have so much to share) and share your memories and stories. There is no better gift, no more

appreciated gift, than the giving of your time for stories.

There are so many opportunities, and even pressures, to give that I frequently muse that we may not be giving the best--that the best may get lost in the hustle and bustle of the season, and the compulsion to spend more dollars and cents to the detriment of sending some of our most valuable possessions: our time. This coming Tuesday is another Giving Tuesday event, a day founded to give back, a day dedicated to coming together to give something more. This giving Tuesday, I challenge all of us to give a memory. That simply can be texting someone close to you a memory of earlier times, sharing a photograph of a yester-generation moment you have in common, or remembering in some special way loved ones no longer here to share their memories. Yes, I am fully aware that Tuesday is not part of a weekend or at the end of the week; however, if we can find a moment on a "regular" day to share part of a memory, share a story, it might just demonstrate how easy and enjoyable it is. And then we can make it a regular part of our days and weeks.

If you are as passionate as I am about the critical importance of family history and story in our lives, our communities, and our country, you likely will be looking for opportunities in the genealogy space to do something that makes a difference. Making a significant difference could be not only sharing our stories and memories with friends and loved ones, it also could be compiling those stories and sharing them electronically or in print with libraries and other organizations that might be interested in both preserving those stories and making them accessible to future generations of family historians and story seekers.

There are so many ways of organizing our stories to share and preserve them. They can be organized by family groups, areas of settlement, areas of emigration, occupations, church communities, military engagements, or favorite ancestors. We typically know more than we think we do, and actually setting about compiling what we know and what we have discovered soon can become really enjoyable. Before we know it, we have something unique to share and preserve. Join me in creating a new giving tradition, a tradition of giving stories--all kinds of stories in all kinds of ways. Let's give of our time to both listen to and tell our family stories during these holiday weeks and into the New Year.

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New York State Archives Guide Review

by John D. Beatty, CG

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The New York Genealogical and Biographical Society has earned an excellent reputation for compiling first-rate guidebooks for research in the Empire State. Its latest offering by Jane

Wilcox is no exception: the “New York State Archives Guide: For Family Historians, Biographers, and Historical Researchers” (New York: New York Genealogical and Biographical Society, 2024), GC 974.7 W643ne. As its title implies, this book is a detailed guide to the use and holdings of the New York State Archives, located at 222 Madison Avenue in Albany.

New York has a well-deserved reputation for being among the most challenging eastern states for doing genealogical research. The state was a major crossroads for new immigrants entering the port of New York as well as early settlers from New England moving westward after the Revolutionary War. It did not keep vital records until late in the nineteenth century; significant numbers of early church and cemetery records remain unpublished. Its colonial era manorial land system was complex and unlike that of any other colony. To have any hope of overcoming these challenges, genealogists must study and master the various archival sources in New York and find records that may not be in print or online. The State Archives is key to that effort.

Jane Wilcox, the guide’s compiler, has the ambitious agenda of describing in detail the diverse collections housed there. She begins with a primer on using the Archives itself with an overview of its history and record losses that occurred in a State Capitol fire of 1911. She discusses its cataloging systems and online finding aids and shows how to access and request records in-person and remotely.

For the remainder of the book, Wilcox shines a spotlight on the great variety of records housed in the Archives collection. New York’s history can be divided into four eras: the Dutch Colonial or New Netherland era from 1624 to 1674; the English/British Colonial era from 1664 to 1783; the Provisional Government or American Revolutionary era from 1775 to 1777; and the State era from 1777 to the present. Detailed chapters are presented in alphabetical order by record type, not chronologically. Chapter headings include: Appointment and Elected Official Records; British Colonial Records; Canal Records; Census Records; Citizenship and Naturalization and Resident Alien Records; Court Records; Criminal Justice Records; Dutch Colonial Records; Educational Records; Financial Records; Indigenous People Records; Institutional Records; Land Records (with various sub-chapters); Legislative Records; Local Records; Loyalist Records; Military Records; Miscellaneous Records; Probate and Estate Records; State Employee and Occupational Records; Vital Records and Matrimonial Actions; and appendices on records from the Archives available digitally at Ancestry and FamilySearch. After the main Table of Contents, a secondary Table of Spotlights highlights specific sub-categories within each chapter.

This is a complex work – the most comprehensive guide ever attempted for the State Archives. It is chock full of valuable, detailed descriptions of an immense variety of records. It features full-color illustrations of select record types; tables that break down specific record groups along with their series numbers; and an index that allows the user find specific records of interest. Readers should plan to use the index in conjunction with the Table of Spotlights. The Land Record subchapters are particularly well-written and useful.

With so many records of New York still only available in archival format, researchers with hard-to-find ancestors would do well to become familiar with this guide. The immense variety of records that it discusses may either lead you to visit Albany, contact the archives remotely, or hire a researcher there to do further research.

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### Voter Registration Records Online by Sara Allen

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Voter registration records can provide valuable information about current and historical family members. These records can place a specific named person at a particular place and particular date in time, thus verifying residence and even acting as a census substitute in years for which census records are not available. Sometimes voter registration records may provide birth dates or birth years for individuals, which can be helpful when this information is unknown. When tracing modern-day persons of interest, voter registration records can help you locate a current address for a birth parent, former classmate, or long-lost friend that you are trying to reconnect with. Finally, locating voter registration records for our ancestors provides insights into the importance of voting rights to our ancestors and illuminates valuable social context about our family and their every-day lives. Many historical and modern voting registration records are being added to online genealogical databases and to state and local government websites.

Ancestry.com (Home and Library editions) and FamilySearch.org (free) have recently added United States voter registration information to their online databases. Various states are available for various years, and more are being added all the time, so keep checking back. For example, in the Ancestry collection, “Ohio, U.S., Voter Registration Records, 1900-2023,” I was able to access the recent voting registration records of a friend, her ex-husband, and her twenty-something aged children rather easily. I found their complete

names (first, middle, last), birth dates, addresses at the time of the voter registration, and years of voter registration. At FamilySearch, the records appear to be more historical in nature. In Georgia for example, I find in the collection, "Georgia, County Voter Registrations, 1856-1941," a voter registration for the year 1900 in Hancock County, which gives the voter's name, age, district, race, and occupation.

I did not find any voter registration records for Indiana online at the genealogy websites. I did find that you can search the current voting registration records at the State website here: <https://indianavoters.in.gov/>. You must know the name, date of birth, and county of registration for the person you seek. If the person's registration is found, you can see their address, their poll location, which elections they voted in, and the election districts that they live in.

Voter registration information for some foreign countries is also available online on genealogical databases. United Kingdom voter registration information has been online for some time at Ancestry.com and FindMyPast. On Ancestry, there are several collections for the UK with the words "Electoral Registers" in the title of the collection. You can search the Ancestry Card Catalog by title under the Search tab at Ancestry. The earlier lists include name and address only, while some of the more recent lists will also include an age range for the person, which can help narrow down possibilities. New Zealand and Australia voting registrations are also online at Ancestry and FindMyPast. Those rolls will often give the occupation of the voter on the document, and can be found using the title "Electoral Rolls." Finally, Canadian voter registration records can be found by searching the title "Voters Lists" at Ancestry.

Voting registration records can be a boon to filling in interesting details about the lives of our ancestors and finding the current location of modern-day persons. Happy hunting!

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PERSI Gems: Moonlight

by Adam Barrone and Mike Hudson

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On the Banks of the Wabash, tonight, the moonlight is absent, the hay is in, and the sycamores have dropped most of their leaves. We've gathered with family and mourned those, now missing, who once made us feel complete.

Paul Dresser's song, "On the Banks of the Wabash, Far Away", reminds us of our Hoosier home with fair moonlight over waving cornfields, candlelight in the woodlands, visions of

Mother in the doorway, strolls along the river, and visits to the cemetery. Dresser takes us on a reflective, melancholy, and emotional journey to his Indiana childhood.

While our days are cut short and the moon is now dark, gleaming Indiana skies will return and we may once again gather in the moonlight to make new memories.

Memories new and old are abundant in the Periodical Source Index (PERSI). Try a search here:

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

Cora Wilson Stewart account of Moonlight Schools for adults, Southern Agriculturist, c. 1920  
Kentucky Explorer, Vol. 32, Issue 10 (Apr 2018)

Furphies in Cardinia area, false rumor example, moonlight rodeo affected milk prices, n.d.  
Spreading Branches (Narre Warren & District Family History Group, Australia), Issue 130 (Nov 2021)

Gold bars in the moonlight, Leroy Rogers, 7th Cavalry memories, 1951-1952  
Graybeards (Korean War Veterans Association), Vol. 29, Issue 2 (Mar 2015)

Moonlight sail on Barnegat Bay, sailing and fishing recreation described, 1880  
History Term Paper (Point Pleasant Historical Society, NJ), (Oct 2005)

Moonlight straw ride, Edgefield Advertiser excerpt, 1901  
Quill (Old Edgefield District Chapter, South Carolina Genealogical Society), Vol. 30, Issue 6 (Nov 2014)

Moonlight, liquor, and rum, a history of moonshine  
Genealogy Friends News (Genealogy Friends of Plano Libraries, Inc., TX), (Jan 2008)

Uncle Asbury Smith and Ferdie Gilland moonlight corn reaping, news note, Nov. 1922  
Meigs (OH) Historian, Vol. 33, Issue 1 (Spr 2013)

White Lights and Moonlight dining experiences by Michelle Strom and Derek Berkes, 2018  
Fort Wayne (IN) Magazine, Vol. 16, Issue 2 (Feb 2018)

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## Preservation Tips: Checking in with Your Family Archives

by Christina Clary

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With the end of the near year drawing near, now is a great time to check in on your family archives and assess its storage environment and condition. This does not have to be a time-consuming project to add to a full holiday calendar. You can break it into smaller tasks or include family members to make it more of a family event.

The first thing to check is the climate. Archivists tend to focus on warning against hot and humid areas, as this does the most damage and leads to mold. But cold, dry temperatures and indoor heating can be damaging as well. The drier air can sap moisture from paper, making it brittle. Fluctuating temperatures are also another concern, as people adjust their thermostats between various degrees of heat. Check the area where your collection is stored to ensure that the temperature does not drastically change when the heat is turned on or off.

The next step is to assess the condition of your collection. If it has been kept in a climate-controlled area and in archival quality storage, a quick look to check for new damage or mold is probably sufficient. If it has not had mold previously, a more thorough examination may be needed. The main concerns are whether any mold has developed after several months of heat and humidity or if any rodents and pests have damaged the materials. The Northeast Document Conservation Center ([nedcc.org](http://nedcc.org)) has some leaflets on their website on identifying and handling mold.

You could also use this assessment time to find records or photographs that you might want to display or share with family during holiday gatherings. Maybe you found some photographs of some ancestors hidden in a box, or you had a family Bible restored. Make sure they are handled carefully and are kept away from any food. Check for any crumbs or residue before placing them back in storage.

Encapsulation pockets are a great way to protect frequently handled items. These are essentially sheet protectors that are made from Polypropylene, an archival-safe plastic. If you plan on bringing items out of storage frequently, these would be a good investment. Archival vendors such as Gaylord and University Products have encapsulated pockets that meet archival standards. Using pockets that you can easily slide materials in and out of instead of completely enclosing an item will allow you to swap out photographs and documents to be viewed.

After making your assessments, you can make any preservation plans that are needed for the upcoming year. This can range from digitization projects to periodic check-ins on materials. Other plans include improved organization, updating storage enclosures, repairs or restoration, or safely displaying items. Ask around at family gatherings to see if others want to get involved with your preservation plans or collaborate on joint projects. Taking the time to care for your family archives through tasks both big and small, not only preserves your history for future generations but also creates an opportunity to connect with loved ones through shared stories and meaningful memories.

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### History Tidbits: Yearning for Home--The expulsion of the Sephardic Jews from Spain by Logan Knight

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The year 1492 was one of the most important in world history. Everyone knows that this was the year Columbus first glimpsed the New World, inaugurating our modern age for both good and ill. However, it was far from the only momentous event that year. On July 30th, Spain's ancient Jewish community spent its last night under Spanish stars.

Jewish people had been in Spain ever since the time of the Romans. In the aftermath of the Reconquista, the conquest of the Iberian Peninsula by the Christian Kingdoms at the expense of the Islamic kingdoms, that simply no longer mattered. The newly unified kingdom of Spain, ruled by King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella, was in the grip of paranoia, obsessed with enemies inside and out. They determined on a brutal solution to ensure that Spain would be an entirely Catholic country: they issued the infamous Alhambra Decree which stated all subjects must convert or be expelled from the kingdom.

Most of Spain's Jewish population had converted to Catholicism after the past few decades, often forced to baptism at the point of a sword. Pogroms and threats had done terrible work and ensured that the once thriving Jewish population had been shrunk to no more than four hundred thousand souls. Not only were they forced to convert or leave but they had to sell their property at knockdown prices. The Jewish community had to pay for the ships to carry them away. Many unscrupulous people took advantage of their distress and plundered them of what little they had. Some ship captains even turned pirate and murdered their charges.

No one knows the exact number of people who chose to leave. We do know that the majority ended up converting rather than abandoning their homes. Some historians think

as few as forty thousand people left Spain to ensure they could continue in their religious beliefs.

The world, as so often in human history, was cold and uncaring to the Jewish plight. The few areas where they fled were often hostile, barely tolerating them and loading them down with penalties and degradation. The main areas of refuge were Portugal, Italy, North Africa, and the Ottoman Empire. Those who fled to Portugal were safe only for a few years when the King of Portugal issued his own convert or leave policy. The vast majority of Portuguese Jews would be converted. The same would happen in large parts of Italy as Spain's empire expanded. North Africa was little better as many Jewish refugees were plundered upon arrival. Their treatment in such places were so abominable that many returned to Spain and converted rather than endure such treatment. Only one place seemed to actually welcome them.

This was the Ottoman Empire, then ruling much of the Balkans, Middle East and North Africa. The Sultan, Bayezid II, was moved by their suffering and gave orders for the refugees to be welcomed throughout the empire. He even sent an Ottoman fleet across the Mediterranean to bring them safely to their new homes. Bayezid supposedly said "'You venture to call Ferdinand a wise ruler," he said to his courtiers, "he who has impoverished his own country and enriched mine!" The refugees would spread throughout the empire, greatly strengthening it. Many would settle in the cities of Thessaloniki and Smyrna (today's Izmir), establishing long-lived Jewish communities.

Thus, the Sephardic Jewish community was born in the fires of displacement and oppression. They never forgot their Spanish homeland, bringing their culture and language (Ladino) with them throughout the Ottoman Empire. Their numbers and influence saw them become the dominant cultural strain of Judaism in the Mediterranean world. In fact, Sephard is simply Medieval Hebrew for Spain. In 1924, a royal decree presented the first consideration that Sephardic Jews might be allowed Spanish citizenship. The odious Alhambra Degree would not be totally revoked until 1968. Finally, in 2012, a law was passed that allowed Sephardic Jews full Spanish citizenship. While the vast majority of Sephardim live in Israel, about forty to fifty thousand Jews now live in Spain just as their ancestors did.

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Genealogy Center's December 2024 Programs

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Join us for another month of free, virtual and in-person programs!

Tuesday, December 3, 2024 at 2:30 p.m. ET “Did Grandpa Work in the Tree Army?” with Ron Darrah - <https://acpl.libnet.info/event/12188917>

Thursday, December 5, 2024 at 6:30 p.m. ET “IN-PERSON DNA & Genealogy Interest Group” with Sara Allen - <https://acpl.libnet.info/event/12191629>

Tuesday, December 10, 2024 at 2:30 p.m. ET “Presentation about German Genealogy” with Till Fehmer - <https://acpl.libnet.info/event/12189303>

Wednesday, December 11, 2024 at 7 p.m. ET “Restless Nation: How and Why Did Our Ancestors Travel West with Diane VanSiver Gagel, both an online and an in-person program in the Genealogy Center of the Main Library  
- [https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_qv6ySwfUTOWn01M3b5-Ehw#/registration](https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_qv6ySwfUTOWn01M3b5-Ehw#/registration) An Allen County Genealogical Society of Indiana program.

Thursday, December 12, 2024 at 6:30 p.m. ET “Breaking Down Irish Brick Walls: Successful Case Studies In Identifying Your Place of Origin” with Kerri Tannenbaum  
- <https://acpl.libnet.info/event/12189466>

Saturday, December 14, 2024 at 2 p.m. ET “Hands on Genealogy Research” with the African American Genealogical Society of Fort Wayne - An in-person program in the Genealogy Center of the Main Library.

Tuesday, December 17, 2024 at 2:30 p.m. ET “Finding and Using Alien Registrations for 20th Century US Immigrants” with Ryan Johnson - <https://acpl.libnet.info/event/12190831>

Wednesday, December 18, 2024 at 2 p.m. ET “Spiritualism and the Tragedy of Mary Lincoln” with Jessie Cortesi  
- <https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZ0qcuCrpj4pGNaJ2sBPWF53eMnmaUXQymI3#/registration>

Thursday, December 19, 2024 at 6:30 p.m. ET “The Widow Won, the Barkeep Lost: Using Historical Context and the FAN Club to Enrich Your Family Stories” with Candace Marx  
- <https://acpl.libnet.info/event/12190839>

Please register in advance for these engaging programs.

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## Staying Informed about Genealogy Center Programming

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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>.

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## Genealogy Center Bits-o'-News

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Have you visited the Allen County Public Library's online merchandise store? You really need to check it out--we think you will enjoy the offerings! There is a special Genealogy Center section of the store with some pretty cool items. The end-of-the-year holidays will soon be upon us! Family, friends, and acquaintances would all enjoy some Genealogy Center merch! <http://acpl.dkmlogo.online/shop/category/4726261?c=4726261> An added benefit is that your purchases support the Friends of the Allen County Public Library, and they in turn support the Genealogy Center.

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## Genealogy Center Social Media

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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>

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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, 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.

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Parking at the Library

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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 \$90.

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. The meters take credit cards and charge at a rate of \$1/hour. Street parking is free after 5 p.m. 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 5 p.m. and 11 p.m.

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#### Genealogy Center Queries

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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](mailto: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 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](http://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](mailto:sspearswells@acpl.lib.in.us) with "unsubscribe e-zine" in the subject line.

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