

PRESERVING
OUR PAST
SINCE 1988

SEARCHERS

INSIDE THIS
ISSUE:

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SPRING

2016, ISSUE 1

PGSNYS:
For Your
Information 2

President's
Message &
Potpourri 3

2016 PGSNYS
Fundraising
Projects 4

Brief History of
Constitution Day 5

Grieving for
Your Ancestors 6

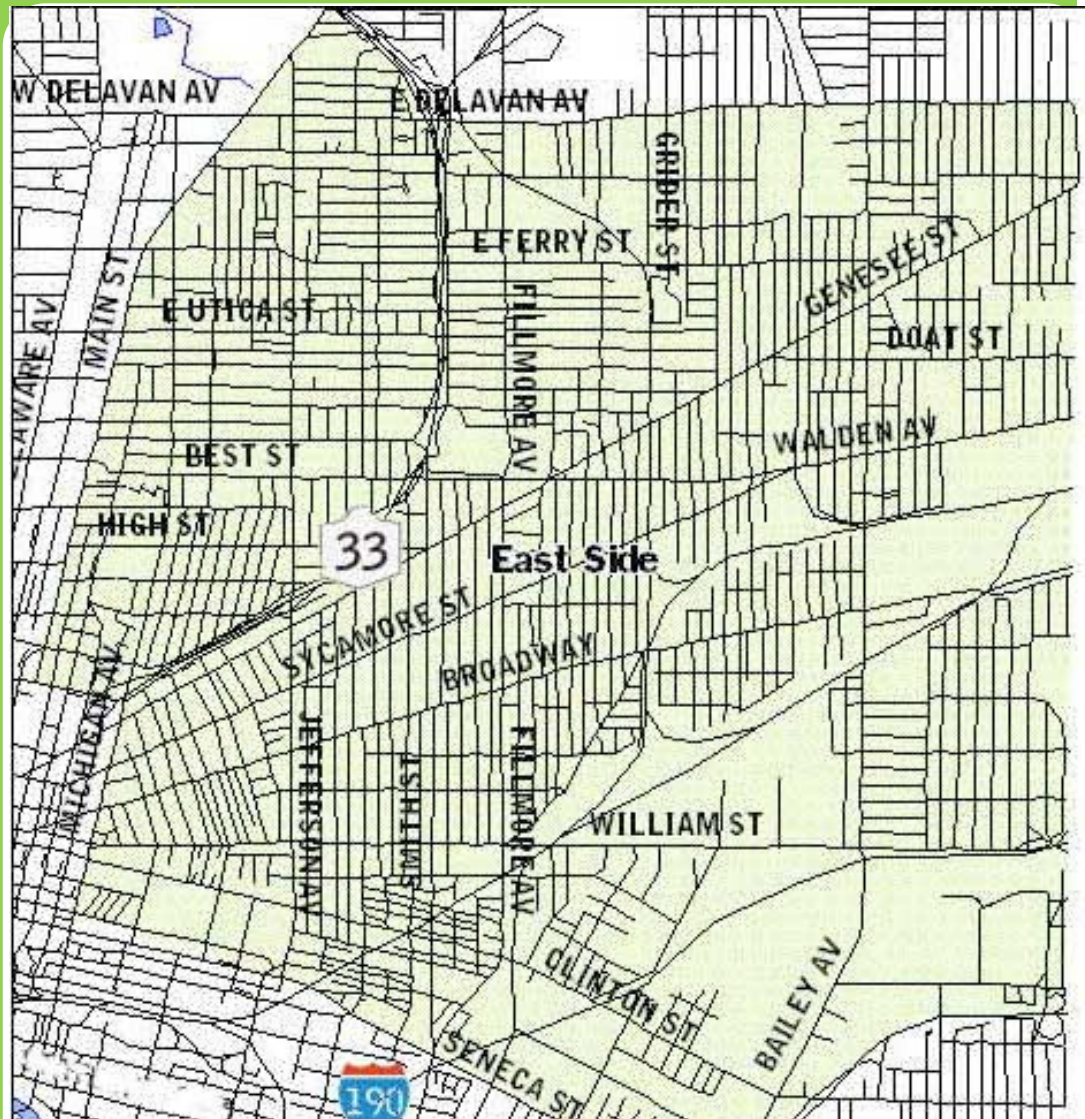
My Dedication
to Ancestral
Research 7

I Can't Find It 8

Organizing by
Place 11

Bringing
Genealogy to
the Younger Set 13

Olde Photo
Album 16



Buffalo's East Side

In this issue, Michael John Neill's article, 'Organizing by Place' reminds us that, "Maps can provide a picture which no amount of words can convey. Using maps to plot your ancestor's moves, his residence, and his neighbors may cause you to notice things that have been overlooked for years."

See page 11 in this issue for the article.

The above map is from
http://www.wikitree.com/wiki/Space:Buffalo_Eastside_Neighborhood#Maps

PGSNYS - FOR YOUR INFORMATION

**FOUNDED BY
MICHAEL
DRABIK
(1950-2001)**

**In May 2015, the
PGSNYS became a
non-profit in New
York State and also
received Federal
501(c)(3) tax status**

**Postal Address:
PGSNYS
P.O. Box 984
Cheektowaga, NY
14225**

The PGSNYS meets the second Thursday of each month* in the Villa Maria College cafeteria, 240 Pine Ridge Road, Cheektowaga, New York, at 7:00 p.m.

Annual dues are \$20 (\$30 Canada, \$35 other countries), and membership entitles you to three issues of the *Searchers* and participation in the PGSNYS Yahoo Group. As a new member you will receive an information packet to help you get started. The expiration date of your membership is on the mailing label of the *Searchers* and coincides with the anniversary date of when you joined the Society.

Please remit your membership dues by check or money order to:

PGSNYS
c/o Membership Chair
P.O. Box 984
Cheektowaga, NY 14225

Please send any changes to your postal or E-mail address to PGSNYS at the above address or E-mail: membership@pgsnys.org

If you are a member, but not receiving E-mail from the PGSNYS mailing list, please send an E-mail to membership@pgsnys.org

*Exceptions: July (annual picnic) and December (Christmas party for members & guests)

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THE SEARCHERS NEWSLETTER

For submissions to the Searchers newsletter, deadlines are as follows:

1st issue (Spring) - due March 1st for April mailing

2nd issue (Summer) - due July 1st for August mailing

3rd issue (Winter) - due November 1st for December mailing

Submissions to the *Searchers* (articles as MS Word doc; photos as .jpg) should be sent via e-mail to: denise.oliansky@gmail.com

PGSNYS PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Dear Members,

We tend to hibernate during the winter months, but with the coming of Spring, we look forward to getting out into the community and meeting people who are interested in learning about their family histories. We got an earlier start than usual this year since a number of groups contacted us asking for a session on Polish Genealogical Research for their members. Dave Newman does a great presentation at these events. The first was in March at Mt. Calvary Cemetery, and coming up are those in Jamestown, NY in May and in Erie, PA and Lockport, NY in June. Then there is the annual Polish Arts Festival in Cheektowaga in July. 2016 marks the 25th year the PGSNYS has participated at this event, and it's a big favorite. And, of course, when September rolls around, we have our own annual Genealogy Fair at St. Gabriel's Church in Elma. We have also been asked to return to Erie, PA in October to participate in a genealogy fair there as well. All of these events give us the opportunity to help people learn about their Polish (or non-Polish) ancestors, where to find genealogical resources, and how to go about doing research on their own. It is also a great opportunity for PGSNYS members to get involved and to share what they've learned with others.

In the midst of all these events, the PGSNYS is also in fundraising mode this year. The first half of the *Dziennik dla Wszystkich* microfilms have been digitized and the images are in our possession. Now we need to raise funds to pay for the digitization of the second half. We are bringing back Adopt-A-Roll, plus we will be hosting a Polish dinner in October at Potts Deli. You can read more about these fundraising efforts on pages 4-5 in this issue. We will be looking for volunteers, especially to help with the dinner.

So here's to a busy, fun, productive year filled with genealogical adventures. We hope you come along and enjoy the ride!

~ Sincerely, Denise Oliansky

POTPOURRI

WITAMY! NEW PGSNYS MEMBERS

Julie Kasper Wash Saratoga Springs, NY	Sharon Kimaid Hamburg, NY	Valerie Baginski Stone Mountain, GA	Lorraine Proctor Old Lyme, CT
Mary Ann Voorhees Buffalo, NY	Joseph R Orłowski East Aurora, NY	Carole F Orłowski East Aurora, NY	Debbie Toth East Amherst, NY

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The dates for upcoming 2016 PGSNYS monthly membership meetings at 7 PM in the Villa Maria College cafeteria are Thursday, May 12, June 9, July (no meeting), and August 11.

Congratulations to member and Trustee, Maureen Gleason, for receiving an *Am-Pol Eagle* 2015 Citizen of the Year award for Heritage. Thank you, Maureen, for your ongoing PGSNYS contributions, cemetery labors, and many other endeavors on behalf of Buffalo's Polonia. A richly deserved award!

The latest PGSNYS Membership Directory is being emailed this month to all members who have provided an email address. Those who have not provided an email address will receive the Directory with this *Searchers*. If you do not receive a copy of the list by either email or with your *Searchers*, please contact membership@pgsnys.com to update your contact information.

Please note that annual dues were increased for Canada and other countries, but remain the same for the United States. You may now renew your membership online through our website (pgsnys.org) using PayPal. If you are unsure of when your membership expires, check the mailing label on your *Searchers*.

2016 PGSNYS Fundraising Efforts to Complete the Digitization of the *Dziennik dla Wszystkich* Newspaper

The PGSNYS has been working for several years to get all the microfilm rolls of the *Dziennik dla Wszystkich* (*Everybody's Daily*) Polish language newspaper digitized by Biels. Once completed, this database will be a valuable, searchable resource for everyone with Polish ancestors in the Buffalo area. In 2015, we finally received the first forty-two rolls of microfilm, containing over 51,000 images and covering the years 1911-1927. An OCR program will be selected soon that will enable searching of all the issues of the paper for surname requests. In the meantime, we need to raise funds to finance the second half of this project. Two fundraising strategies will be our focus this year: a Polish Dinner at Pott's Deli & Grille and the Adopt-A-Roll program.

Polish Dinner

Member Maria Slomczewski is chairing this effort. With the Board's approval, she has arranged for the dinner to be held on Sunday, October 23, 2016, at Pott's Deli & Grille. It will be a sit-down, plated dinner, tentatively consisting of pierogi, sausage, rolled steak, and cabbage. Tickets will be \$15 presale, \$17 at the door. We will hold a Chinese Auction, a 50-50 Split, and a raffle if we can get some larger ticket items donated. We have numerous events coming up this summer where we can sell tickets for the



dinner. Members will be needed to help with ticket sales, creating baskets for the auction, and other tasks as the event is being organized. And, of course, we hope many members will support this fundraiser by attending the dinner. Please speak with Maria at a monthly meeting or contact her by email at slomczewsk@aol.com to volunteer to help with this event. Stay tuned for more details as they become known.

Adopt-A-Roll

In 2012, we initiated the Adopt-A-Roll program to raise money for the *Dziennik* project, and we are resurrecting the idea this year. Individuals can donate the price of digitizing a full or partial roll of microfilm. Your donation can be made in memory of a loved one or simply to help make this endeavor a reality. A full roll may be purchased at \$55.00 or a partial roll at \$27.50; however, any contribution is greatly appreciated. Donations



can be made by using PayPal on our website (pgsnys.org) or by a check payable to PGSNYS and mailed to PGSNYS, P.O. Box 984, Cheektowaga, NY 14225, or given to Chuck Pyrak at a meeting. Now that the PGSNYS has 501(c)(3) status, donations are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law. A receipt will be provided if requested. We thank you for your support of this important project!

We are truly grateful to those who have already donated to the Adopt-A-Roll Program. Their contributions covered a large part of the cost for the first half of the *Dziennik* digitized images.

Daniel Domino

The late Dr. Leonard Amborski

Marie Dolores Hausch

James Borowczyk (In Memory of Joseph & Mary Borowczyk and
Joseph & Bernice Smolinski)

Kathleen F. Cortes (In honor of her Grandparents and Parents)

Stanley H. Cieslar

Mrs. Alice Drabik

Ted Smardz

Arthur Thrun

Robert Lukaszewski

Karen Duffy

A Brief History of Poland's Constitution Day

On 3 May 1791, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth's Constitution was adopted. This was the first constitution in modern Europe and the second in the world, following America's in 1788. May 3rd was established as a holiday by the Polish Parliament within days of the Constitution being adopted. In Polish, it is known as 'Swieto Trzeciego Maja', which means 'National Third of May Day.' Even though the Constitution was annulled just 19 months later, it is still regarded as a key event in the history of Poland. Constitution Day was suspended for many years during the Partitions, but was reinstated after Poland regained its freedom in 1918. In 1946, communist authorities banned the holiday's public celebration, and the holiday was officially cancelled in 1951. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, the holiday was restored by the Act of 6 April 1990, and the first celebration took place in Warsaw's Castle Square on 3 May 1990. These days, schools, banks, government offices, and most private businesses are closed on Constitution Day. It is celebrated with military parades, concerts, and family picnics. Many people also gather at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier at the Piłsudski Square in Warsaw to honor the soldiers who gave their lives for Poland.



Tomb of the Unknown Soldier

Member Moments

Grieving for Your Ancestors

by Nicole Pohancsek

It is sometimes hard when researching your ancestors, because often you come across the heartaches that they encountered. It's hard for you not to grieve for them, even though these events may have happened over a hundred years ago. When I come across these hardships, I often think about a story my great-grandmother, Anna Rogala, (nee Mikolajek) told. When Anna was a young girl, her sister passed away. She was heartbroken and spent several days in her bed crying. One night she was awakened by a feeling that her recently deceased sister was telling her to stop crying. Her sister told her that all of those tears she was crying go in a bucket and Anna's sister had to carry that bucket of tears in Heaven, and it was getting too heavy.

Recently, I started researching my Łodyga ancestors from Kłeczek Poland (near Poznan). My 2nd great-grandfather, Jan Łodyga, was born in Kłeczek in 1850. He had a very traumatic life, one that I didn't fully realize until I began going through the Kłeczek church records on microfilm at the Family History Center and researching the Łodyga family on BaSIA (<http://www.basia.famula.pl/en/>). When Jan was four years old, his father, Stanislaus, passed away. Two years later his younger sister, Katarzyna, passed away. These deaths had to be a huge burden on Jan's mother, Marianna (nee Zygaj), who never remarried. From what I have found so far, it looks as though Jan and Katarzyna were the only two children of Stanislaus and Marianna. To add to this heartache, Jan's mother passed away in 1868, when Jan was 18 years old.

Jan married Petronella (nee Krawczak) in Kłeczek on August 1, 1880. They had six children in Poland. Only one, Adam, survived infancy. Jan, Petronella, and Adam left for the United States in search of a better life in 1889. Jan and Petronella had two more children in Buffalo, NY before Petronella passed away in 1896. Later that year, Jan married my 2nd great-grandmother, Maryanne (nee Matuszak). Maryanne and Jan had four additional children, one of whom was my great-grandfather, Ignatius Łodyga. In the early 1900s, Jan began working for Pierce Arrow as an interior upholsterer, and he worked there until he passed away in 1921. The following year, his oldest son Adam passed away from tuberculosis. Jan and Adam are buried next to each other at Holy Mother of the Rosary Cemetery in Cheektowaga, NY.

The further I dig into the history of my ancestors, the greater hardships I discover. Life was not easy in Poland in the 1800's. Our ancestors had to survive

“The further I dig into the history of my ancestors, the greater hardships I discover.”

wars, epidemics, and poor living conditions. They left Poland because they had no country, no money, and no future. We are here because our ancestors persevered. It is impossible not to mourn their losses, for they gave so much so we could be here today.

My Dedication to Ancestral Research

by Edward Prabucki

In the past twenty years or so, what I attempted, as many thousands have done, was to do ancestral family research so I could be in the know of that which, for far too long, was unknown. I have obtained what I thought was unobtainable, the statistics about my ancestors of centuries past. So I continued to research more facts about my ancestors, but I was disappointed as some of it was still unobtainable. Their daily lives remain a mystery to me.

My ancestors were too burdened, too busy to record their daily activities – certainly very trivial for any future needs, though I see it now as very meaningful to my present needs. It would be difficult at best to access facts from fiction relative to our ancestors' daily life during the turbulent times and lack of medical needs in the 10th through 15th centuries.

Nevertheless, as I am presently recording my ancestors' statistics, I am certain it was their Christian faith that had much to do with their survival. My proof is that the records I obtained of my ancestors' statistics were kept in the Roman Catholic Church of Sw. Trojcy, where they must have been parishioners.

May I add that without the efforts of the Polish Genealogical Society of NYS members who helped me, I would never have obtained ten generations of my family statistics.

The following are the statistics of my family's ten generations, initiating with my father:

- 1 – Father – Jan Prabucki – 1892
- 2 – Grandfather – Piotr Prabucki – 1864
- 3 – Great Grandfather – Michal Prabucki – 1836
- 4 – 2nd Great Grandfather – Roch Prabucki – 1804
- 5 – 3rd Great Grandfather – Jozef Prabucki – 1764
- 6 – 4th Great Grandfather – Kazimierz Prabucki – 1730
- 7 – 5th Great Grandfather – Andrzej Prabucki – 1705
- 8 – 6th Great Grandfather – Tomasz Prabucki – 1674
- 9 – 7th Great Grandfather – Gregorz Prabucki – 1645
- 10 – 8th Great Grandfather – Albertous Prabucki – 1620

O Lord – Let the Light shine upon my ancestors in the Kingdom of Heaven.



Anna (Prabucka) Zawistowska is my Father's sister
John Prabucki from Grandy, Poland.
Also in photo my Father's Nieces and Nephews.

Lessons from Michael John Neill

Editor's Note: Michael John Neill is a noted genealogy researcher, writer, blogger, and speaker. His very popular blogs that you may have heard about include Rootdig.com, Genealogy Tip of the Day, and Search Tip of the Day. He has authored many, many how-to articles and created a vast library of webinars on the basics of good genealogical research. He has made available many of his older articles from his column in the Ancestry Daily News for genealogy Societies to use free of charge in their newsletters. We are benefiting from his generosity in this issue of the Searchers. These articles provide interesting perspectives on genealogy research and practical tips that we hope you find useful.

Credit: The following three articles are from the Ancestry Daily News and are ©MyFamily.com. They are republished here with the permission of the author. Information about the Ancestry Daily News is available at <http://www.ancestry.com>.

I Can't Find It

by Michael John Neill

(From the *Ancestry Daily News*, 3/22/2006)

In the seven and a half years that I have been writing this column, readers have followed me through searches for people who changed their name, lied about their age, moved for no reason, disappeared without a trace, appeared from a UFO, left no records, left too many records, and a variety of other situations. Part of the difficulty in locating these people centered on locating various records. This week we look at some ways that our searches of records can be stymied.

Handwriting

Have you considered how the letters might appear on the page of the original document? This is especially a concern when using indexes and other finding aids. If the word starts with a fancy "T" was it read as an "F"? Can the writer's "u" and "n" be easily confused? These and a myriad of other handwriting issues may cause the genealogist to have difficulty locating the record. Think "how it might look" instead of "how it should look."



Pronunciation

How your ancestor pronounced his name impacts how it gets spelled, particularly if your relative is illiterate or is not asked how to spell the name himself. Southern drawls, Irish brogues, and Eastern European accents can easily make a name be heard such that a creative spelling approach is used. Taliaferro may be said in a way that sounds like "Tolliver," Gibson like "Gepson," and Goldenstein like "Goldstein."

What Is Your Finding Aid?

Are you using a handwritten index compiled by the records office? Then typographical errors are not so likely. Are you using an index (either printed or online) that was created by keying the information? Then typographical errors are possible and must be considered when searching. If you are searching an online database, are you able to perform Soundex and wildcard searches? Have you considered all reasonable spelling variants and determined what Soundex and wildcard searches are necessary in order to catch all variant spellings?

Wrong Information Provided

Did your ancestor fib about his age to the census taker or records clerk? Perhaps that is why he eludes your searches. If you are using an online database (such as a census index) consider not including any age information in your search or using a wider range of dates. Your ancestor could have easily lied about his name as well. Or perhaps a neighbor provided the information in your ancestor's census enumeration, a neighbor who had little first-hand knowledge of your relative.

Wrong Location

Do you really know where your ancestor lived for the time period you are searching? Are you positive it was not in the next town up the road or down the river? Have you considered adjacent counties and nearby towns, perhaps where a job was easier to get?

Lack of Knowledge Regarding Records

If I don't understand the records being searched, I may spend hours fruitlessly searching. As an example, the Bureau of Land Management has an excellent site for land patents in federal land states. Yet there is little chance that an 1870s era immigrant to Chicago appears in this database, even though Illinois is a federal land state. Why? Because the Bureau of Land Management site indexes federal land patents, those "first deeds" where ownership was transferred from the federal government to private hands. There is little chance of this happening in the Chicago area in the 1870s.

The first time a specific record group is being used it is an excellent idea to learn about how the records were created, stored, and indexed. As another example, indexes to court and land records are rarely every-name indexes and search approaches of these records need to keep this fact in mind. On a website, always be certain to read the FAQ for information about the records and ways in which the database can be searched. For county or local records, consult Red Book or the Family History Library's research guides to learn more information about these records.

Incorrect Assumptions

We all have to make assumptions to begin our research. The problem comes when we forget our assumptions are assumptions and treat them as facts. Some examples might be:

- that a man and wife are both the parents of all the children in their household in the 1850 census;
- that a couple married near where their first child was born;
- or that a female was in her late teens or early twenties at the time of her first marriage.

When records cannot be located to support these assumptions, or when the records found fly in the face of the assumptions, it is time to re-evaluate.

Underlying Personal Problems

Is our ancestor difficult to find because he was constantly running one step ahead of the law? Did a family members' alcoholism or depression cause the family to remain in turmoil for decades? Some of our ancestors had personal issues, many of which cannot be documented. And yet these problems may explain why it is difficult to find our ancestors or explain their unusual behavior.

Unable To See the Big Picture

Are you trying a variety of data organization techniques to help you in your search? Chronologies, timelines, and relationship charts are excellent ways to see the information in a different way that may make something "click." Placing locations on a map in chronological order and considering nearby geographic features and political boundaries may also result in realizations. Words and text alone are not always sufficient. I once had a geometry student who absolutely refused to draw a diagram or picture throughout the entire class, despite being advised numerous times that even crude renderings could be helpful. Her performance suffered. There are also times in genealogy where even a crude chart is extremely helpful.

Unable To Let Go

Are you holding on to some dear family tradition? It may be time to let go. My ancestor supposedly "sold sandwiches." It turned out that she actually ran a tavern. Another relative was said to have died by "drowning," when he accidentally shot himself. Tradition may have to be put aside in order to get past that brick wall in your research.

In Summary

Learn, keep an open mind, and keep looking. This is general advice to be certain, but still worth heeding.



“Tradition may have to be put aside in order to get past that brick wall in your research.”

Organizing by Place

by Michael John Neill

(From the *Ancestry Daily News*, 6/29/2005)

Geographic clues can be significant to the family historian. One of the best ways to notice these clues is through the use of maps. Using maps though requires more than simply making a copy and sticking it in a folder. With some thought, some analysis, and some time, a map may help you notice more than you expect about your ancestor and his family.

A Map Over Time

Create a map that documents each residence of your ancestor over their entire lifetime. It will give you a different perspective on your ancestor and may bring additional questions to your mind. Do you know when your ancestor crossed certain geographic features (the Mississippi River, the Rocky Mountains, etc.)? Was he a child or an adult at the time when most of the travel in his life took place? Consider the routes he mostly likely would have taken. Are there places he might have stopped along the way?

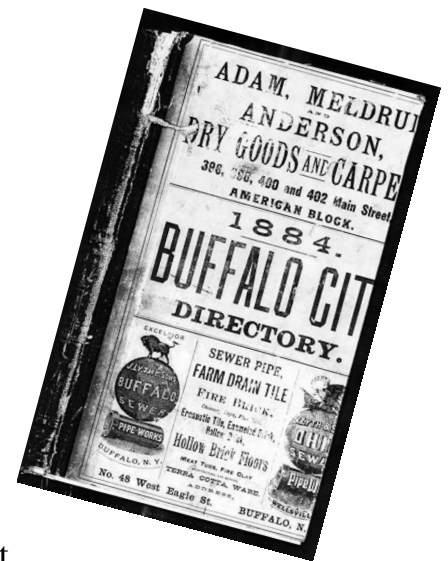
Look at the times when your ancestor moved. Were there other events also going on in his life that might have caused him to move? Had his wife or parent died? Had he just gotten married? Were there regional or national events that might have been the impetus for him to relocate? Had the economy taken a downswing? Had new lands been opened for settlement? Your ancestor may have moved on a whim or he may have not.

Map Your Ancestor's Neighborhood

If your ancestor was an urban dweller, use city directories to determine where he lived at a specific point in time. Find out where nearby churches, cemeteries and places of employment were around at that time using city and county histories, directories, and other sources. If the time period is appropriate, consider the use of fire insurance maps to get a better view of the neighborhood and to assist in locating nearby landmarks and other institutions that may have played a role in your ancestor's life.

If your ancestor lived in a rural area, find his farm on plat maps, if these publications are available. Plat maps indicate the size and location of every farm in the area, usually an entire county and usually with one township per page. This reference would allow you to determine precisely where your ancestor's farm was located and how the size of his farm compared to that of his neighbors. Bear in mind that if your ancestor was a tenant farmer his name will not appear in this reference. Plat maps typically list owners and not renters. This information (coupled with census and other records) can also help in determining what kind of ethnic neighborhood in which your ancestor lived. Attention should be paid to locations of nearby churches, cemeteries, and schools.

If your ancestor was an early colonial settler, mapping his neighborhood may be an even more onerous task, but the benefits may be well worth it. Properties in the colonial era were described in metes and bounds, basically indicating the length each side of the parcel and the angle of each corner. Those who have worked with such properties know that squares and rectangles had yet to be discovered! Platting such properties is not for the faint of heart, but there is software to assist and some neighborhoods have already been recreated. In a time period when many records are non-existent,



plating property over time may answer questions not specifically mentioned in the records.

Put the Location in Context

Does the residence of your ancestor seem a little bit strange? I wondered why a French-Canadian woman and her Greek immigrant husband are living on Chicago's north side in 1920, a fair distance from her Chicago area family and in an area with apparently no other ethnic Greeks. Further research explained the likely reason for the anomaly. This couple was living on the north side a distance from family and friends as the wife was not yet divorced from her first husband and already living with her second husband. It is probably an understatement to say that the second husband's Greek Orthodox relatives and her Roman Catholic family most likely did not look favorably upon the situation.

Without a map and with no knowledge of the Chicago area, this oddity would not have been noticed and might not have been explored. Maps are crucial in helping genealogists notice such details, especially in areas with which they are not personally familiar. It can be difficult for text alone to convey a geographic message.

Put the Locations All on One Map

Nine of my ancestral families immigrated to the United States from Osfriesland, Germany, over a twenty year time period. When I marked their place of origin on a map, they were clustered in three areas. Two of these clusters were within a few miles of each other while the third was over ten miles away. There were many different small villages from which they originated. Mapping the locations all at once helped me to notice which ones might have been neighbors in the homeland.

Putting all the names on one map can be a helpful tool with urban research too. A city directory may contain three references to a William Apgar. One way to eliminate some from consideration is to consider the neighborhood where each one is from. An easy way to do this is to map the residence of each one. Compare these residences to known residences for the family under study. People did move, but moves into an upscale neighborhood from a lower middle-class working neighborhood are unusual without an accompanying change in economic status.

Maps Provide a Picture

Maps can provide a picture which no amount of words can convey. Using maps to plot your ancestor's moves, his residence, and his neighbors may cause you to notice things that have been overlooked for years. Your ancestor probably was familiar with his neighborhood. You should be too.



To Pass it On: Bringing Genealogy To the Younger Set

by Michael John Neill

(From the *Ancestry Daily News*, 11/23/1998)

Just as there's more to genealogy than family group charts, there's more to discussing genealogy with young children than having them look at pedigree charts or fill out worksheets. What follows are some suggestions for bringing about an interest in family history in young children. If it doesn't create an interest, it at least provides some suggestions for family activities. Readers should feel free to incorporate these ideas into their own activities or to create their own. Don't feel bound by the suggestions offered here--there are plenty of other ideas as well.

Tell Stories

Are there stories from your own past that could be told to your children? Not stories dripping morals and tales of walking to school through three feet of snow, but stories that a child can understand, appreciate, and that are appropriate for their age. Stories about ancestors when they were the same age as the child are more likely to make a connection.

Bits and pieces of my own great-grandmother's life formed the basis for a story I told my own children. The story was first told one night when the children wanted "one more story" and Dad's eyes were too bleary to look at another printed word.

The story started something like this:

"Once upon a time, a long time ago, in a place called Nebraska, there lived a little girl named Tjode. She lived in a dirt house with her mother, father, and three little brothers."

When I first began telling the story my oldest child was six years old, the same age as Tjode was when the story begins. The story continues with details of animals walking on the roof of the house and Indians coming to the door. Later, additional age-appropriate details were obtained about sod-houses from several books on the subject and added color to the story and to the children's interest (especially the part about the outhouse). Dirt walls and a dirt floor were quite a concept.

The story continues with the Tjode's return to Illinois and her seeing her grandparents for the first time when she was eight years old. There weren't many details about Tjode's life until she began "working out" for a family in a local town (it had to be explained that "working out" meant cleaning and taking care of a house and not exercising). It was in that town where she met her future husband at the local church. On a cold Christmas Eve, Tjode marries Mimke (this was frequently referred to by the children as the "marrying part" and usually resulted in one child pretending to wear a bridal veil). Within several years, the family had seven children, one of whom is the great-grandmother of my children.

Tjode grew older and before long had several grandchildren of her own. The story continues with one of her granddaughters coming to visit. Tjode would give the child one piece of pink candy from her bureau drawer. "Do you know who that little girl was?" I would ask the kids. They would squeal with delight when they remembered the little girl is now grown and is their own grandmother. Tjode gets older and eventually dies. Her husband Mimke gets really old and the granddaughter has now grown up. One day she visits her grandpa Mimka with a little package wrapped in a blanket.

“Do you know what was in that blanket?” the girls are asked. “It was your Dad!” A few more squeals of delight, occasionally followed by questions (“Were you really that small?” etc.). “Your grandma has a picture of Mimke holding that little baby. We’ll have to get her to show it to you someday.”

The story was especially poignant when the girls' grandmother (Tjode's daughter) stayed the night and heard the story herself. As she listened, she added more details about her childhood visits to her grandmother. A few of which I had never heard before (the genealogist is ALWAYS on the move for additional facts!). Telling the story provided the children with a connection to their past.

If your own children are too old, are there grandchildren or other young relatives who might be interested in such stories? Write the story and send it to the child (making certain its wording and vocabulary are appropriate). Perhaps the child can even make illustrations for the story and send those to you, creating a new memento based upon an old story. It's not important that the story be ‘literary’ or written for publication. What is important is that it is shared with future generations.

Are your stories lacking details? While it's important not to make up details up entirely, a certain amount of liberty may have to be taken. There are many historical books and sources that may provide additional details about the immigrant's journey, pioneer life, etc. Maybe your grandfather did not speak English until he went to school, maybe your grandmother always made a special kind of cookies at Christmas, etc. There are many possibilities.



When using such stories make certain they are age-appropriate and do not frighten the child. It's okay for the story to have a moral, but don't overdo it. I have another ancestor who accidentally shot himself when his oldest daughter was five and the youngest was three. Telling my children this story at too young an age will cause them to worry the same thing will happen to their father. Scaring or causing needless anxiety in the children defeats the purpose of telling the story.

Omitting certain details from the stories you tell children may be necessary. It's probably not crucial to mention to a small child the fact that great-great-great-grandmother's first husband accidentally killed himself, her second husband left her after three months, and that her third and fourth husbands were the same man (and she divorced them both!). Omitting details from a story you would tell a child is entirely different from your Great Aunt Myrtle who refuses to tell you as an adult anything about your relatives.

Are there no ‘good’ stories in your family? Perhaps you have no stories of your ancestors, or the memories that you do have are unpleasant and not things you want to tell your younger relatives. See if there are some pleasant memories, if not learn about pioneer life and extract appropriate

details around your ancestor's lives. If this is not possible, learn about early holiday customs for your area or ethnic group and incorporate these into stories.

Use Pictures

Children respond well to pictures, especially when a connection can be made to them. My great-grandfather had a sister who had the same first and last name as my daughter. A picture of the entire family taken ca. 1890 includes this lady as an eight-year-old child. We have another picture of this same lady at the age of approximately eighty sitting in a chair with me at the age of three standing next to her. This picture helped to connect my Sarah with the Sarah in the 1890 picture.

Are there events taking place that have some connection to your family or ethnic background? One year around St. Patrick's Day, the children were showed the pictures of their Irish ancestors. When Dad wouldn't let the kids take the original pictures to school, my daughter asked if she could draw their picture. And so her kindergarten teacher got to see a child's renderings of her two Irish ancestors (complete with their names written underneath).

Take Vacations

Genealogists love to take research vacations. While genealogical vacations are difficult with a spouse, they are even more problematic with small children. Aside from children's pizza parlors, there aren't often places for children to visit when parents travel to do research (it seems like all my ancestors lived in remote places that are now fifty miles from a McDonalds or a motel). When we visited Nebraska, a major stop on our trip was a 'dirt house' because great-great-grandma Tjode had lived in one as a child. Since a connection between the house and the kids was already established (by the bedtime story), they were more interested in it than if I had simply told them about it on the morning of the trip.

See if there are any historical spots near where you will be doing research. Children can also look at tombstones, noticing the different types of stones and engravings. Care should be taken with small children at cemeteries, however. Old stones, on unstable mountings, have been known to topple and in at least one instance a child was killed by a tombstone as it fell to the ground.

Signatures

Children love to write their name. Do you have any of your ancestor's signatures? Make copies for the kids to look at. You can even discuss how the ancestor made his or her letters. This can be especially interesting if the child has a relative who has the same first name as the child.

But I Don't Have Anything

What if you don't have stories, photos, or other mementos upon which to base a story or activity? While making them up is not really an option (after all, you don't like it when relatives make up answers to your genealogy questions), there might be possibilities. It may be possible to learn details about the time in which your ancestors lived by reading and studying the era. There are books on history and everyday life that may provide relevant details. I wish I had stories about my other great-grand- mothers beside Tjode, but I don't. I can't tell the kids a similar story about great-grandma Fannie, or Ida, or Trientje. I wish I could. Telling such stories or creating other activities can bring a sense of connection and be a way to pass the information on to future generations. Maybe that's why you should encourage your relatives to tell you such stories and why you should write down such stories yourself. So that your kids, if they are so inclined, will be able to tell them to their own children. After all, don't we all wish our great-grandparents had done that?

Olde Photo Album



Wedding of John Gebura and Veronica

**Wedding of
John Gebura
&
Veronica
Garniewski**

**July 24, 1917
Buffalo, NY**

**SEARCHERS NEWSLETTER
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