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"The Past Makes a Great Present"

by Curt B. Witcher

Earlier this week a flier from the Wisconsin Historical Society came across my desk. The featured phrase was "The Past Makes a Great Present." I laud this distinguished historical society for their clever marketing, and I offer to you that it is indeed true. In this season of giving and festivities, the very best gift we can give is a piece of our shared past, a piece of our families' stories that other family members with whom we are going to gather likely don't know. In addition, providing a subscription or membership to a historical or genealogical society in an area of an individual's interest normally is more meaningful than traditional expected gifts of clothes and trinkets.

How can we easily do that in the few days remaining before the holidays? First, I would offer that we tend to overcomplicate things. Simple is usually best; indeed, the best parts of life are lived in the small places. Did you find an unusual record this year describing a well-known, well-loved ancestor? Or did you find a document describing a completely unknown ancestor? Make a really nice copy of the document, and provide your narrative and description of the item. In no time at all you have made a neat present of the past.

I believe we should pay way more attention to "writing-up" our research. I know that I have mentioned this a lot in the recent past. We spend nearly all of our time researching and almost zero time creating a narrative about what we have found. I suggest that we temporarily stop researching right now and spend the days before year's end picking particular information, documents and artifacts we have discovered and write a narrative about them. Let's review a couple of examples.

Pick any military-related document: service or pension record, a photograph of a relative with

comrades, a discharge document, a letter(s) to or from the home-front, or a diary entry. Describe what the artifact tells one about the ancestor. Use one or more of the many websites that offer copyright clear images to find photographs of the unit, the engagement, etc. Find images that are similar to what is being described or documented in the artifact. Compile a document including the artifact image, your narrative, and related images as well as some general history that provides context and color to your ancestor. You've just made a gift of a part of your past. And I just bet it will be a coveted holiday gift.

Pick any document or photograph evidencing an ancestor's farm or business. Describe what the document is evidencing or what the photograph is showing. Find and describe any ownership documents relative to the property. What does the deed detail about the acquisition of the property? Who were the first owners of the property after the indigenous peoples? Describe what is detailed on land ownership maps and Sanborn Fire Insurance maps about the property and nearby properties. Take images of those maps. What did the farm produce or business make in any given year(s)? Show examples of those products. Explore historical society and public library image collections for more photographs of the specific farm or business, or farms and businesses representative of the time period and the geographic area. After compiling and illustrating that data I would offer that you again have made a present of your past.

One can take nearly any single aspect of an ancestor's life, create a narrative around what was discovered, and illustrate that narrative with other documents and photographs. Schooling, religion, occupation, sports, hobbies, community involvement--all of these topics and more could be crafted into a gift of your past to share with a family member this holiday season. You may just start a tradition.

Best wishes for a terrific holiday season and year end!

Metryki GenBaza: A Great Website for Polish and Eastern German Research
by John D. Beatty, CG

Doing research in Poland, as well as on the former Germans who lived in parts of Pomerania and Posen that are now part of Poland, presents many challenges to modern genealogists. Many records are not available on FamilySearch, on Ancestry, on Archion (the principal Lutheran German church book website www.archion.de), or on Matricula Online (the principal Catholic church book website <https://data.matricula-online.eu/en/>). A website titled *Metryki GenBaza* <https://metryki.genbaza.pl/> comes to the rescue for these gaps and provides digital access to many church and vital record registers that are not available on these other websites. In some cases, certain church records that are locked to users on FamilySearch can be found available without restrictions on this website.

Established by Damian Murawski, *Metryki GenBaza* has been around for nineteen years but has not received a lot of exposure in the United States. It is free, does not require a login, and relies on donations to keep running. The website can be read and searched in English, German, or Polish. Users can initiate a search by clicking on "ENTRY" on the left side of the main page. Theoretically, both the current Polish and the older German names are searchable, but I have found it best to

search for a town or parish under the current Polish name.

Files of records that include both church registers and civil records, with corresponding dates, will appear in a column on the left. When a file is selected, an "Album Contents" selection of digitized images will appear on the right. When you click on the number, images of original records will then appear, often in full color, allowing one to scroll and browse. Like Archion and Matricula, they are not indexed or name searchable, though some church registers have original indexes that can be searched for specific names.

As a German researcher, I have found Metryki GenBaza to be a highly useful website. For some of my ancestors who lived in the eastern parts of Pomerania, I discovered digitized church registers that I have long been seeking and not finding on other German websites. I was able to download and save images with ease, and the images are of excellent quality.

Effective use of this website may require some additional geographical digging on the user's part. I have found the Kevan Hansen books, "Map Guide to German Parish Registers," (GC 943 H98m) to be effective in identifying parishes associated with certain villages. Whether those parishes have surviving records will take additional work. When using Hansen, take special note of the volumes that cover Pomerania, East and West Prussia, and Posen. Hansen provides FamilySearch file numbers, but because these are often locked to users outside LDS Branch libraries, researchers will want to search other websites for these records, where they are often more easily accessible.

Pomerania poses special challenges for genealogists. At the end of World War II, many German church registers were lost or intentionally destroyed. For some areas, only about 15 percent of the Lutheran or Evangelisch registers survive. This fact can be frustrating for descendants seeking German ancestors in these areas. Websites such as My Pomerania <https://mypomerania.com/> as well as the Pommern Regional Group website <https://prgmn.org/> and the Pommerscher Verein Freistadt website <https://pommerscher.org/> offer detailed lists of what church records survive for different parishes and counties (Kreis). The record inventories and descriptions, arranged by Kreis, are usually complete and well done. However, I have found some of the references to digitized church records have not always been updated to reflect the many offered now on the Metryki GenBaza website. The My Pomerania website will sometimes locate and post additional record books found in Polish archives not available elsewhere, so be sure to check it carefully for parishes of interest.

We live in some of the best genealogical times. As more records get digitized, perhaps we can also hope that more will get indexed and made searchable in aggregate formats. In the meantime, Metryki GenBaza is a great addition to the other websites available for German research.

Adoption Research Basics
by Sara Allen

Persons who were adopted often have many questions concerning their identity, background, health history, ethnicity, circumstances, and biological family. Many of these questions can be answered through a combination of historical and genealogical research, adoption records, and DNA testing

(both medical testing and genealogical testing).

When, where, and under what circumstances did the adoption take place? In the United States, each state has different starting dates for requiring civil birth certificates to be issued, different laws about who can access those birth records, and different laws about who can access adoption records. Research the locality of interest to determine its laws surrounding adoption records. Most states in the United States and most US adoption agencies will release non-identifying information about the biological family to the adoptee or lineal descendants; some will release identifying information; and some will provide a confidential intermediary to help contact the birth family. Check out the American Adoption Congress website for a statewide overview with links to official state websites (<https://americanadoptioncongress.org/state.php>).

Modern adoptions: Types of modern adoption-related records may include pre-adoption birth certificates, adoption decrees, official adoption files, social services files, foster care records, adoption agency records, non-identifying information, reunion matching registries, and more. Generally speaking in the US, the state or county vital records office would house the birth certificate, the county court would have the court records/adoption decree, the state vital records office might have the official adoption file, the adoption agency would also have a file, and the local or state department of child services would typically have foster care or ward of state records. Each state or locality may have slightly different storage and access for these types of records.

Historical adoptions: Prior to the twentieth century, formal adoptions through the legal system rarely occurred, but many children were informally taken in by other families. Orphans, wards, foster children, home children, juvenile delinquents, apprentices, and indentured servants were all terms that could be used to describe adoptable children in that time period. Records that one might find regarding these children include institutional records for orphanages; poor farms; children's homes; industrial schools; religious agencies; newspaper articles; and county or state records such as bastardy bonds, deeds (contracts or sales of indentures), apprenticeship records, probate records, and various miscellaneous court records.

What is the historical background of the adoption? To get the historical background in general, there are a number of books and articles written about the history of adoption and adoption processes in various locations. One of these is "Adoption in America: Historical Perspectives," edited by E. Wayne Carp. Persons researching the historical background of a specific adoption might consult local resources such as city directories, local history books, newspapers, and maps to provide background on the hospital where the adoptee was born, the adoption agency used, the names of the doctors, and the medical personnel involved in the birth, or the religious institution involved in the adoption. Another strategy would be to seek out the births listed in the local newspaper as occurring on that day.

What is the biographical and genealogical background of the birth family? Once the birth family's identification has occurred, background information on the biological family can be found in city directories, school yearbooks, phone books, church or occupational directories and newsletters, census records, obituaries, newspaper articles, online people finder sites, social media, and much more.

What can be learned if adoption records cannot be viewed? How can DNA testing help? In some localities, adoption records remain closed to the adopted person or their family. In these cases, DNA testing of the adoptee or of their closest living relative at one of the big four direct-to-consumer DNA testing companies can provide some answers. Taking an autosomal DNA test with AncestryDNA, Family Tree DNA (Family Finder test), MyHeritageDNA, or 23andme will provide general ethnic background as well as genetic cousin matches to others in the DNA company database. One can analyze his or her own DNA matches to determine the biological family, or there are a number of DNA search angel groups online such as Facebook's DNA Detectives that will assist in identifying the birth family. Two books written about this process are "The DNA Guide for Adoptees" by Brianne Kirkpatrick and Shannon Combs-Bennett, and "The Adoptee's Guide to DNA Testing" by Tamar Weinburg. The Genealogy Center has a DNA specialist available for consultations in person or online to advise patrons about their DNA results. Email us at Genealogy@ACPL.Info.

What is the health history of the adoptee? 23andme DNA testing company will provide one with a list of health reports, predispositions, and carrier status for some genes. Promethease.com (\$) is an online website where one can upload the raw data file from the autosomal testing companies to receive a report of gene mutations or variants. If one's medical doctor suspects a genetic condition, they can order medical genetic testing through their office.

The complex topic of adoption raises many questions. Be sure to ask those questions and start the journey of finding out more.

Technology Tip of the Month: The Journey Continues--Adobe Elements 2019, Tool Box - Modify Group - Straighten Tool
by Kay Spears

The Straighten Tool - it is what it says it is. It straightens images...sort of. I'm not sure what the icon for this tool is supposed to be. It looks like a ruler, but I'm not sure. Anyway, this tool straightens images, not necessarily images that were scanned crooked. And, this tool also has a slight problem with the white border that some photographs have. But let's say Uncle Mortimer takes a picture of the fireplace all decked out in holiday décor. The problem with Mortimer's photo is that the fireplace is sloping to the right. It seems that Uncle Mortimer doesn't do perspective very well. So, here is what we do. We click on the Straighten Tool.

There are 5 options available when we do: Grow or Shrink Canvas to Fit, Crop to Remove Background, Crop to Original Size, Rotate All Layers, and Autofill Edges. Let's take a look at these options. After you have clicked on the tool, move your cursor over your image and notice that your cursor changes to a Crosshair. Drag that Crosshair/Cursor along the crooked fireplace mantle. Release the Cursor. Your photograph should straighten before your eyes. Depending on which option you pick, you may see a number of things. The edges of the photograph may be crooked, or you might see a space along the edges. If you select Autofill when doing this process, Adobe will fill those areas in for you. If you select the Crop options, Adobe will crop that area off for you. And that's it. A very simple tool.

I will be honest with you, the Straighten Tool worked better on some photographs than others. It

seemed to have an issue with photographs that had a border or from the 19th century. It worked really well on landscapes. Also, remember this isn't the only Rotate Tool in Adobe Elements. There is another located in the Top Menu under Image>Rotate. And as with other tools in Adobe Elements: play.

Next article is the last in the Adobe Elements Tool Bar series: The Color Palette.

PERSI Gems: A Bit of Green this Season

by Adam Barrone and Mike Hudson

"... Ed Nabb started a Christmas tradition in 1968 when he airlifted mistletoe and holly to the remote little island of Tangier in the Chesapeake Bay... After the official briefing, we cheerfully saluted and grabbed our bags of Christmas greenery that children from the Dorchester 4H had collected from the farm of a local citizen. We loaded our precious cargo, and then two dozen pilots checked their aircraft and started the engines. Nabb ordered all slower aircraft to depart first so we all would descend on the small airstrip at Tangier at about the same time... Of course, as it should be, Santa Claus piloted the first and fastest plane loaded with toys and gifts for the children on Tangier."

Vaughn Baker shared this story in the Jan. 2006 edition of the Shoreline newsletter of the Nabb Research Center for Demarva History and Culture in Maryland. We present it here acknowledging that a bit of green during our cold season reminds us of the life around us.

The Periodical Source Index (PERSI) offers clues about the lives around us and those from winter's past. Try a search here:

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

Ambassador Joel Roberts Poinsett, America's patriotic meddler, poinsettia namesake, 1810s+
American History Illustrated, Vol. 8, Issue 9 (Jan 1974)

Bill and Virginia Rose Boughnou of St. Louis eat poisonous plant snow on the mountain, 1934, AR
Craighead County (AR) Historical Quarterly, Vol. 43, Issue 1 (Jan 2005)

Christmas trees from state forests decorate Hoosier homes this year, 1942-1943
Outdoor Indiana, Vol. 9, Issue 12 (Jan 1943)

David Flory and the origins of winter banana-apple trees, 1870s+
Miami County (IN) History Bulletin, Issue 109 (Sep 2012)

Ed Nabb airlifts mistletoe and holly, 1968+
Shoreline (Nabb Research Center for Delmarva, MD), Vol. 13, Issue 1 (Jan 2006)

Jeannette Denning re Jehoshaphat, a Christmas cactus family legacy, 1948-2001, MA
Fall River (MA) Historical Society Report, Vol. 14, Issue 3 (Fal 2002)

Wassailing the apple tree Christmas tradition, pre-1 A.D.+
History Magazine, Vol. 12, Issue 2 (Dec 2010)

Winterberry, *Ilex verticillata*, plant feature, n.d.
Outdoor Indiana, Vol. 86, Issue 1 (Jan 2021)

Witch-hazel and mistletoe bloom in wintertime, description and range, 1939
Outdoor Indiana, Vol. 5, Issue 12 (Jan 1939)

History Tidbits: Tio de Nadal

By Allison DePrey Singleton

Christmas will soon be upon us. As many of us prepare with decorations, gifts, and traditions, it is important to remember that our Christmas traditions vary worldwide. Past History Tidbits articles have covered some American Christmas traditions, variations on Santa Claus across the world, and even the specific tradition of having children sit on Santa's lap. One Christmas tradition that is specific to a particular region of Spain, Catalonia, is Tio de Nadal. There are other regions of Spain that have a similar tradition with name variations.

Tio de Nadal, or Christmas Log, is a tradition that is meant to teach children responsibility during the Christmas season in order to be rewarded with some candy. The log used in this tradition is decorated with a face, legs, and in more modern times, accessories like a hat. The log is set up on the Feast of the Immaculate Conception and the children begin their care of it. They are charged with feeding it every day and keeping it covered by a blanket to keep warm.

Once the children have cared for the log until Christmas Day or Christmas Eve, depending on the household, the log will defecate candy for the household. Initially, the tradition called for the log to be placed in the fire to defecate. As time has gone by and many homes no longer have fireplaces, a new tradition arose. The children now beat the log while singing in order to encourage the log to defecate. The children first go to another room to warm their beating stick or pray for gifts. After the adults put the candy under the log's blanket, the children called back in to beat the log. Once the song has been sung and the log beaten, the children reach under the blanket to retrieve the candy that the log "defecated."

If people are unfamiliar with this tradition, many might not understand its appeal. It is important to note that it serves as a teaching moment like Elf on the Shelf or the concept that Santa sees all. Everyone has a tradition that might seem strange or outlandish to another culture. It is important for us to look at them through the lens of someone who might not be familiar with the tradition. The logs are actually kind of cute if you want to buy one for someone in your life:
<https://denadal.cat/comprar/tio-de-nadal/>.

Further Reading and Sources (Use Google Chrome to Translate):

<https://www.pinedademar.cat/el-municipi/noticies/3253>

<https://totnens.cat/tio-de-nadal/>

https://bibliotecavirtual.diba.cat/es/detall-guia/-/detall/7D2o/GUIA_LLECTURA/10934/9878811/9878900
<https://larepublicacheca.cat/el-tio-un-dels-costums-mes-arrelats-del-nadal-a-catalunya/>
<https://www.barcelona.cat/culturapopular/ca/festes-i-tradicions/personatges-i-elements-festius/tio>
<https://www.vilaweb.cat/noticies/tio-evolucio-historia-cacar-tions/>
<https://farelleditors.cat/producte/el-tio-de-nadal-origens-i-tradicio/>
<https://www.turismodearagon.com/2019/12/24/conoces-la-tronca-de-navidad/>

Genealogy Center's December Programs

Join us for another month of free, virtual programs.

December 1, 2022, 6:30 p.m. EST "Forensic Genealogy: Law and Order Meets Family History" with Michael Brophy - <https://acpl.libnet.info/event/7574742>

December 6, 2022, 2:30 p.m. EST "Vintage Aerial: Historic Photography of Rural U.S. Farms and Homesteads" with Alexis Petrie, Nathan Lewis, Lance Roper, and Fritz Byers - <https://acpl.libnet.info/event/7602435>

December 8, 2022, 6:30 p.m. EST "A Killing in Capone's Playground: The True Story of the Hunt for the Most Dangerous Man Alive" with Chriss Lyon - <https://acpl.libnet.info/event/7569855>

December 13, 2022, 2:30 p.m. EST "Indiana Church Records" with John Beatty - <https://acpl.libnet.info/event/7603569>

December 14, 2022, 7 p.m. EST "How to Organize All of this Genealogy Stuff!" ACGSI Hybrid Program with Lisa Louise Cooke - <https://acpl.libnet.info/event/7574694>

December 15, 2022, 6:30 p.m. EST "Let's Talk: Holiday Traditions" with the Indiana Historical Society and the Genealogy Center's Senior Librarians - <https://acpl.libnet.info/event/7570135>

December 17, 2022, 1:00 p.m. EST "Research Tools & Tips: Navigating Your Ancestry Using DNA" with the African American Genealogical Society of Fort Wayne - https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZ0pc-yhrT8vGtUQuXrEeUdq2ws3cHtpye_C

December 20, 2022, 2:30 p.m. EST "New York State Genealogy" with Sara Allen - <https://acpl.libnet.info/event/7602962>

December 22, 2022, 6:30 p.m. EST "Resources for Oregon Research" with Dawn Carlile - <https://acpl.libnet.info/event/7571433>

December 27, 2022, 2:30 p.m. EST "Ask the Experts: Genealogy Software" with Cynthia Theusch and Allison DePrey Singleton - <https://acpl.libnet.info/event/7603482>

December 29, 2022, 6:30 p.m. EST "Virtual Tour of the *Genealogy Center*" with Allison Singleton - <https://acpl.libnet.info/event/7572085>

Please register in advance for the engaging programs and participate in the Facebook activities.

Staying Informed about *Genealogy Center* Programming

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/THcVOwAabB>.

Genealogy Center Social Media

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>

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 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 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 \$85.

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.

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.

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