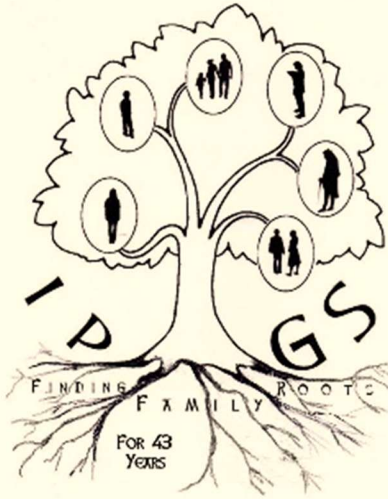




Imperial Polk Genealogical Society

Newsletter

Summer Supplement 2025



Collaborative Trees: Making Them Work for You

With Drew Smith

Don't miss your opportunity at our October 11 meeting to interact with nationally known genealogist and author Drew Smith. He will join us at the Lakeland Public Library

Smith is an associate librarian emeritus at the University of South Florida Libraries in Tampa, specializing in genealogical research. He is co-host of The Genealogy Guys Podcast and the host of the Genealogy Connection podcast.

He is a founder and administrator of The Genealogy Squad Facebook Group, with over 72,000 members.

He writes a regular productivity column for the Association of Professional Genealogists Quarterly. Smith co-authored the book *Advanced Genealogy Research Techniques* and is the author of *Organize Your Genealogy: Strategies and Solutions for Every Researcher*.

His latest book, *Generation by Generation: A Modern Approach to the Basics of Genealogy*, was published in 2023. (See the review in this newsletter.)

Smith is the 2024 recipient of the Lloyd DeWitt Bockstruck Distinguished Service Award, presented annually by the Dallas Genealogical Society for outstanding contributions to the genealogical community on a national level.

The program is free and no registration is required. All ages are welcome.

NOTE: For Drew Smith program only, time change to 10 a.m.

*Sponsored by Imperial Polk Genealogical Society
and Lakeland History and Culture Center*

September brings bylaws referendum

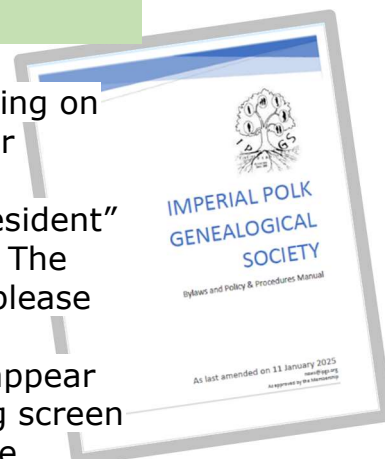
Members will be voting at the September 13 meeting on an update to our bylaws. Changes are being made to our programs and meeting schedule for 2026. The Board of Directors has removed all references to "second vice president" and made other changes to conform with our operation. The proposal was emailed to members. If you need a copy, please ask at info@ipgs.org.

Programs will be "hybrid," meaning speakers will appear via Zoom video conferencing. It will be shown on the big screen at the History Room of the Lakeland Public Library on the second Saturday at 1:00 p.m. as usual. We will still visit with each other. You also can watch the program at home on your computer.

Since there is a cost to bring in excellent speakers, we will go to a schedule of every other month beginning in February 2026. Meetings will be held in February, April, June, August, October and the Christmas get-together in December. There will be no meeting in January 2026.

Many other genealogy organizations are transitioning to this type of programming—the Polk County History Library in Bartow and the Florida Genealogical Society in Tampa, among others.

There is current monthly programming for the balance of 2025 with the Christmas get-together already planned.



September 13 Program

Activities of state-level Florida genealogists

Our member **John Laurent** who serves as vice president of the Florida State Genealogical Society, will be our September speaker. He will tell us more about that organization and our partnership with them.

He will cover the records at-risk program, and the preservation program of the FSGS.

Laurent is a retired attorney and cattleman. He served in the Florida House of Representatives from 1990 to 1998 and the Senate from 1998 to 2002. He was elected circuit judge in 2002, and served on the bench 10 years before retiring.

He is a Florida native from a pioneer family and earned a Boston University certificate in genealogy in 2015.

November 8 Program

Find a Grave in Polk enhanced by IPGS

IPGS officers **Peter Dufresne** and **Neil Brown** are coordinating the means for our members to answer requests for grave marker photos.

This follows up our 2000-2010 project that documented Polk cemeteries. They also will update us on this year's cemetery clean-up at a historic treasure for Polk.

Join Us!

Monthly program meetings and chat sessions are 1-2:30 p.m. Eastern each second Saturday.

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All programs are both in person and online. (Watch your member email or request a link from news@ipgs.org.) Join us at the Lakeland History & Culture Center, at the Lakeland Public Library, [100 Lake Morton Drive, Lakeland, FL 33801](#). (Ph: [863.834.4280](tel:863.834.4280))

Terrific Timelines from History

For a fun online foray, try the clever web site you can check out for fun: <http://www.ourtimelines.com/>. Plug in your ancestor's lifespan, and delve into the news of the times. You can also look up famous peers. For example, my first immigrant ancestor with my father's surname was born the same year as the Revolutionary John Hancock.

I can personally remember one great-grandmother. Her mother, Sarah Ann, had several relatives in the Civil War. I learned that when she was born, Andrew Jackson was president. The battle of the Alamo soon followed, and she was nine when the first ever telegraph message was sent, from Washington to New York. (Mind you, I gathered all this in about two clicks!)

Sarah Ann's children were all grown and gone by the time Custer died at Little Big Horn, and well into middle age when Thomas Edison finally arrived at the successful filament for an electric lightbulb. And, most fascinating to me, Halley's comet came just after her birth, and again before she died.



Ah! A door to draw my son into some family history. Halley's comet last came when he was in kindergarten. He had a favorite t-shirt depicting the bright, swishing tail. And, chances are he will get to see Halley's Comet for a second time—an experience to echo that of his 3rd Great-grandma Sarah Ann!

BOOK REVIEW: *Generation by Generation: A Modern Approach to the Basics of Genealogy*

by Drew Smith, 2023, 170 pages

How much farther along would I be if I had this book at the start? That was my first impression as I got into its pages. My second thought about reading *Generation to Generation* was that of course author Drew Smith is a librarian. He knows where to find *everything*—or at least where to look.

Smith presents a clear, systematic and gratifying path of strategies to develop family histories. Gratifying because it builds your understanding, step by step. Things will keep changing, Smith promises, so rather than fretting, we will just keep learning. The book may be designed to help budding genealogists, but I wager any reader will find new ground.

The title describes working backwards in time. You shove off into this adventure not by source type, but by time frame—parents, grandparents, great-grandparents, and on.

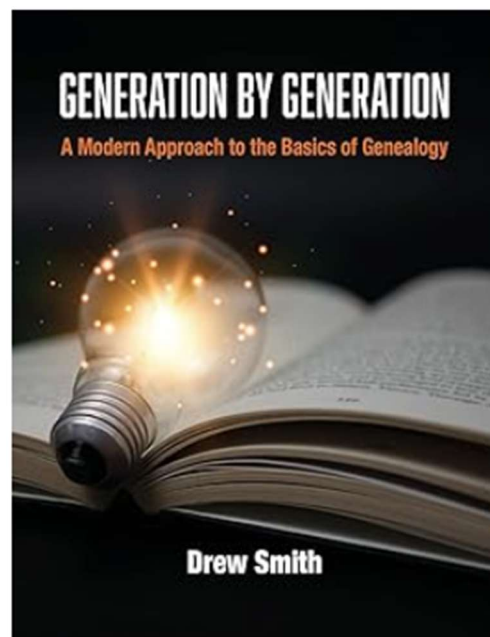
It's engaging. Instead of birth, marriage and death, we wade into contextualizing events through name, place and date. It's not so different from collecting the who, where and when of news, Smith writes. And it's discovery.

For example, early on, surnames changed with each generation through patronymics—naming after one's father (Johnson, Williamson, Ericson). "Daughtering out" means there are no more male descendants to carry on the family surname. His lucid description of the Julian vs. Gregorian calendars is better than the usual. And did you know the International Dateline actually *moved* when the U.S. bought Alaska from Russia in 1867?

Smith includes just enough humor to keep us light. He issues permission to choose your own favorite between "great-aunt" and "grandaunt," "with or without hyphens." He adds, "Don't let anyone tell you different (and trust me, they will try)." He distinguishes between "one generation removed" and "one relative you'd like to remove!" And he skips through "5th cousin" vs. "distant cousin" vs. "double cousin" vs. "kissing cousin!"

Subsequent chapters are just as inviting as they introduce research process and tools. I took tons of notes, with ideas I can't wait to try. For example, instead of compiling a location guide, I might try a surname guide, citing potential source books and periodicals.

It will surely keep me on a more direct path moving forward. Smith promises, "we'll go carefully through each of the steps, and you'll be fine!" And he delivers.



Member tidbits

Distant and prolific

Neil Brown was updating a branch of his family history and discovered that a distant cousin was an early member of the LDS Church and was in leadership with Brigham Young. His name was Heber Kimball. He had 66 children by 17 wives.

Try and figure out that family tree!!



The rest of the story is that he had 43 wives but fathered children with "only" 17 of them. You can read more about Heber Kimball at [wikipedia.org](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Heber_Kimball).

The one who counted

In our July program, we learned DAR provides helpers to confirm your relationship with at least one Revolutionary War participant.

But after learning research tools from IPGS, **Susan Eickhoff** was able to find her patriot on her own. It wasn't the first person she traced to that era, however.

Most were Tories. Then she found the one patriot who counted, and was able to sign up her mother in DAR—at age 98!



Creative searches and Artificial Intelligence

Did you ever look for all the siblings in a family by leaving the "name" fields empty, instead searching by both "father" and "mother"?

Do you know how to find the original image of a document for which a search just produces an index card?

*It helps with your
"reasonably
exhaustive" best!*

Learn how in this great video from Family Search, **"I Didn't Know You Could Search Like That!"** recorded in early June. It helps you corral the new AI global search.

This video is dense with information, but nicely spells out baby steps to master sophisticated searches. It promises to help you feel you have done your "reasonably exhaustive" best.

Fortunately, you can pause and repeat, to hear something again and try a little practice.

Check it out at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0q5CTXo0jiY>

Introducing the IPGS virtual SIG (special interest group)



Ancestry Forum: *pick your own topic*

Who Should Join? Anyone with an interest in family history! This **forum** is designed as a **public meeting place for discussion, learning, and idea exchange.**

The IPGS Ancestry Forum will meet virtually on the third Monday evening each month, 7:00-8:30 p.m.

**No need to register.
Just watch your
email for the link,
and show up!**

Call an officer if you want help using Zoom on your computer. Everyone's voice matters—your insights may be just what someone needs to break through their toughest research roadblock! Sometimes we just enjoy each other's company, so don't miss out.

Join the conversation, discover new perspectives, and deepen your family history journey with **Ancestry Forum**! No need to register, just show up. The Zoom link will be distributed to all current IPGS Members via email and on the website: www.ipgs.org. Guests are welcome.

Here's what to expect:

- **Collaborative Problem-Solving:** Bring your toughest genealogy challenges, and let's brainstorm solutions together.
- **Q&A Sessions:** Got questions? Experts and hobbyists alike will share insights to help you move forward.
- **Trending Topics & New Techniques:** Stay updated with the latest genealogy tools, DNA discoveries, and research methods.
- **Brick Wall Breakers:** Learn new approaches for tackling elusive ancestors and missing historical records.
- **Sharing Family Stories:** Whether uncovering lost relatives or preserving family traditions, every discovery matters.
 - **Networking & Support:** Connect with genealogists of all levels, from beginners to seasoned researchers.



We are the chosen...

In each family there is one who seems called to find the ancestors – to put flesh on their bones and make them live again, to tell the family story and to feel that somehow, they know and approve.

To me, doing genealogy is not a cold gathering of facts but, instead, breathing life into all who have gone before.

We are the story tellers of the tribe. All tribes have one!

We have been called by our genes.

Those who have gone before cry out to us, tell our story.

So, we do!!

In finding them we somehow find ourselves.

It goes beyond just documenting facts. It goes to who I am and why do I do the things I do. It goes to pride in what our ancestors were able to accomplish. How they contributed to what we are today. It goes to respecting their hardships and losses, their never giving in or giving up, their resoluteness to go and build a life. It goes to a deep and immense understanding that they were doing it for us.

That we might remember them.

So, we do.

With love and caring and scribing the facts of their existence, because we are them and they are us.

It is up to the one called in the next generation to answer the call and take their place in the long line of family storytellers.



Shared by **Karen Wolzanski** from the family papers of Wendy Blood, a fellow member of Piscataqua Pioneers, a pre-1776 hereditary society from settlers of the Piscataqua River watershed, now the southern boundary between NH and ME.