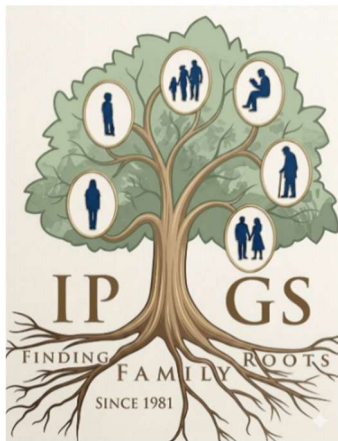




Imperial Polk Genealogy Society

Fall 2026 Newsletter

Page 2	Member profile: Neil Brown
Page 2	IPGS Ancestry Forum dates
Page 3	Heritage Partners: Polk Pioneers
Page 4	Great IPGS program lineup for 2027
Page 5	Ancestral story in news – Karen Wolzanski

Program October 10:

Comparing the Genealogy Big Four: Ancestry, FamilySearch, FindMyPast, and MyHeritage



*Caron Brennan of Your Cousin
Caron, yourcousincaron.com*

Ancestry may be the most publicized, but there are additional genealogy research sites not to be overlooked. They share search capabilities, but have their own unique merits. Learn “the good, the bad and the ugly” about the Big Four—Ancestry, FamilySearch, FindMyPast and MyHeritage. Learning about these databases will help you target your research. All of them have Library editions (free access) in addition to their subscriptions.

Caron Primas Brennan sees history, biography, puzzles, and mystery all contained in genealogy research. She is an affiliated Professional Genealogist and is a former registrar for the national Daughters of the American Revolution. She is a certified Guided Autobiography instructor and a popular teacher at the Newberry Library in Chicago.

IPGS programs are the second Saturday of the month at 1 p.m. Eastern. Join us at the Lakeland Public Library. If you can't join us in person, ask news@ipgs.org for the Zoom link.

We have a new web site address

To reach our web page, the former ipgs.org is now the PolkGenealogy.net. The site remains under construction.

Change can be exhilarating, and IPGS is in the midst of rebranding. We refer to networking in terms of outreach and helpfulness, especially with today's digital capacity to reach people and discoveries at the touch of a keyboard. The board of directors has been working on ways to increase customer comfort. You will want to bookmark the new site and watch for members-only benefits.





Member profile: Neil Brown

Neil Brown serves as vice president and chair of the IPGS Education/Programs Committee.

Neil and wife Marie are natives of Maine, reside in Auburndale and have a son and a daughter with three grandboys. Neil is retired from a career as a manager in the manufactured housing industry while Marie was a lifelong nurse. Their careers took them to North Carolina, Mississippi and Florida.

Neil is only a second-generation U.S. citizen since both sets of grandparents immigrated to the U.S. from the province of New Brunswick, Canada in the early 1900s. He has more Canadian relatives than U.S. relatives as a result.

Neil's faith is an important part of his life as he attempts to live out the commands of Jesus in Matthew chapter 25. He has been active, at one time or another, in the Honorable Order of Kentucky Colonels, the United Methodist Church/United Methodist Men, Ruritan civic clubs, disaster response, men's ministry and prison ministry. He has been involved with mission building teams in Costa Rica and Guatemala.

Besides arranging program speakers with rich lessons, and serving as a presenter himself, Neil has been a countywide ambassador for IPGS. He visited venues and distributed our brochures in 13 local Polk County libraries, eight historical societies and/or museums, and the four Latter Day Saints Family History Centers in Polk and Sebring.

He has been researching his family history for over 45 years and has amassed a database of over 110,000 of his closest family members. He is descended from seven Mayflower

passengers, is a 23rd great-grandson of British King Edward I, a first cousin of William Shakespeare, a cousin of Benedict Arnold and a 6th great grandmother was hanged as a witch in the Salem Witch Trials on 22 September 1692 in front of her husband and eight children.

In addition to membership in the Imperial Polk Genealogical Society, he is a member of the Florida Genealogical Society, 23 and Me, My Heritage, the General Society of Mayflower Descendants, The Sons and Daughters of the Pilgrims, Son of a Witch, The National Society of Sons of the American Colonists, the Global Goodwill Ambassadors Foundation, American Ancestors, The William Brewster Society, and the Warren Cousins, among others.

Neil's accolades include being named as a John Wesley Fellow, a Tom Downing Fellow, a certified Men's Ministry Specialist, a commissioned Kentucky Colonel and a Certified Nonprofit Consultant (CNC). He is a veteran of the US Coast Guard.



Ancestry Forum for challenges, camaraderie

The open-ended conversations of the IPGS Ancestry Forum have proven varied and productive. Discussion topics are emailed to members prior to each meeting. IPGS programs are the second Saturday of the month at 1 p.m. Eastern. Join us at the Lakeland Public Library. If you can't join us in person, ask news@ipgs.org for the Zoom link.

Nov. 14, 2026

Jan 9, 2027

Mar. 13, 2027

May 8, 2027

July 10, 2027

Sept. 11, 2027

Nov. 13, 2027

Heritage Partners induct Polk Pioneers



IPGS member LuAnn Mims addresses the annual Polk Pioneer Luncheon as a presenter for the Polk Historical Association. She is flanked by Sheila Tindle, vice president, and Lloyd Harris, president of the association.



Lynn Hice, Harriet Rust and LuAnn Mims at the annual luncheon at Lakeland's Bonnet Springs Park.

Polk Pioneer inductees are nominated by member organizations and recognized at an annual luncheon.

Each is age 75+, a Polk resident for at least 50 years, honored for contributions to local heritage, and asked to preserve memories in the form of oral histories.



Enjoying the festivities are Marcia Ford, Mel Sellers and Pres. Lynn Hice.

Recording stories of various aspects of Polk County heritage through these outstanding citizens is an initiative of the Polk County History Center. 2026 inductees are Sue Bowen Clements of Davenport, Robin Gibson and Sharon Horton Kurschner of Lake Wales, and Annie Bryant Phyll of Lakeland.

Save the dates for a great program lineup

Dec. 12 Holiday luncheon

It's pumpkin spice season already, and next thing you know, we'll be making merry for the winter holidays.

We will have a catered event at the recreation hall of McLeod Memorial Presbyterian Church, Bartow. Watch for announcements!



Feb. 13, 2027

One Approach to Publishing Your Family History, by David Appleton



Apr. 10, 2027

Cemetery Crowdsourcing, by Michael Cassara



June 12, 2027

Family History Resources at the Library of Congress, by Tina Beaird



Aug. 14, 2027

Criminals, Convicts and Outlaws, How to Find Your Black Sheep Ancestors, by Ronda Casler



Oct. 9, 2027

Break Down Those Genealogy Brick Walls, by Diane Henriks



Davenport Celebrates

Pres. Lynn Hice chats with George Washington at the Davenport Historical Society America 250 Community Celebration. The society's Museum is free to the public Wednesdays through Saturdays. Newsletters are available to peruse online.

An ancestry story discovered through newspapers

By Karen Hand Wolzanski



I was looking at ancestors one Memorial Day and couldn't find a direct ancestor who fought in the American Civil War. I finally found that my paternal great-great-grandfather's brother Alonzo Hand was a corporal in Company I, 37th New Jersey Infantry Regiment from May 1864 to October 1864.

Alonzo was born in New Jersey in 1845 and was the postmaster at Highlands, NJ. In 1887 he married Anna Norcross. On Christmas Day 1901 he was involved in a hunting accident that was reported in the *Monmouth Democrat*.

Two People Injured by Gun Wounds.

Alonzo Hand, postmaster at Seaside, was accidentally shot on Christmas day, while hunting with a friend on Sandy Hook. The latter, a man named Crawley, was carrying his gun under his arm when it was discharged. The charge entered Mr. Hand's right leg. The wounded man was taken to the hospital at Fort Hancock. He will probably lose the injured leg.

Louis Maps, the 14-year-old son of J. Howard Maps, of Long Branch, was accidentally shot in the face last Thursday afternoon and seriously if not fatally wounded. Louis Finnegan held the fire-arm when it was discharged, he having just cleaned it. The trigger caught in his clothing and was discharged.

The bullet entered the Maps boy's right cheek and pierced the roof of his mouth. The Finnegan boy was exonerated.

While anesthesia was available then, antibiotics were not, so the surgery must have been risky. Fortunately, he survived and his condition was reported in the *The Standard*.

In May of 1902 he applied for a military pension. Alonzo died on 11 Nov 1918, the day that the armistice was signed that ended WWI.

NEWS OF THE COUNTY.

Postmaster Alonzo Hand of the Highlands, who has been confined in the Fort Hancock hospital since his leg was amputated there several week ago as the result of a gun shot wound, has been removed to his home. He is recovering rapidly.



Polk County's Heritage Trail series at your fingertips

Visitors travel to Bartow to tour the historic L.B.Brown House (pictured below), but you can get a preview from your own home. This is where IPGS provides volunteers to the Florida State Genealogical Society to preserve records of Bartow's Neighborhood Improvement Council. The council is a local, nonprofit group that restored the 1892 landmark and won recognition by the Florida Department of State, the National Historic Register, and the Smithsonian Institute.

[Here is the link](#) is to a six-minute video produced for the Polk History Center. It is part of the county's Heritage Trail series. You might enjoy other virtual tours on the Heritage Trail as well.

Imperial Polk Genealogical Society

P.O. Box 92154
Lakeland FL
33804-2154

President
Lynn Hice

Vice Pres.
Neil Brown

Past Pres.
Gale Pinkston

Secretary
Marilyn Tucker

Treasurer
Jim Bowers

Trustee
Marcia Ford



Visiting genealogists

IPGS arranged a tour for a sister genealogy society, Pastfinders of south Lake County, at our county's outstanding genealogy library in the old courthouse in Bartow. From left, Shannon Graham, Lynn Hice and Marilyn Tucker host visitors Carol Landry-Fiske, the Pastfinders publications chair, and President Anjanette Mercer.

