



Imperial Polk Genealogical Society

Summer 2026 Newsletter

We're not slowing down for the summer!



You can keep tuned in with IPGS all summer! We continue, **2nd**

Saturdays at 1 p.m. We're keeping the pot stirred through the summer with good learning and great company. We'll meet at the Lakeland

Public Library history center. Members, watch your inbox for a Zoom link. Guests are welcome. Away? Request a link from news@ipgs.org.

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**Janice Sellers of
Ancestral Discoveries**

June 13:

Reconstructing family information when you start with almost nothing

June IPGS program speaker Janice Sellers is an indefatigable family history blogger with genealogical credentials up one arm and down the other. She loves a challenge, be it forensic genealogy, transcribing colonial handwriting, dual citizenship or family secrets.

Our speaker caught the genealogy bug as a teen. She has developed riveting presentations with research techniques made clear through her own colorful family stories. You **MUST** stay to find out the ending!

Sellers will join us online from Oregon, where she has multiple professional roles, including president of the Jewish Genealogical Society of Oregon and coordinator of the African-American SIG of the Genealogical Forum of Oregon. In San Francisco, she directed programs and publicity and edited genealogy journals. Come hear her wealth of information.

Aug 8:

Grandchildren aren't interested in their ancestors: Ideas for competing with videos & super heroes

It nags at some of us: Who will appreciate, and hopefully carry on, all we've accumulated about our ancestry? Here's your chance to explore answers with an expert.

Margo Fariss Brewer is a genealogical instructor, consultant, and lecturer who lives in North Carolina. She said leading genealogy trips to the Family History Library in Salt Lake City" strengthened her research and teaching skills.

Brewer started teaching in 2004 at Duke University's OSHER Lifelong Learning Institute. Her six

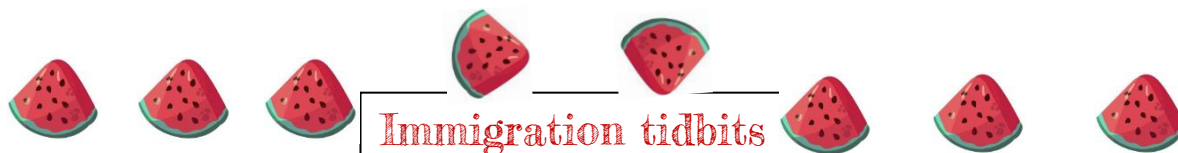
genealogy courses are for beginners through advanced, including Telling the Rest of Your Family's Story.

Brewer's specialties are methodology, military, land records, and courthouse research, with focus on records in the continental United States.

IPGS programs fall on the second Saturday each month at 1 p.m. at the Lakeland History and Culture Center of Lakeland Public Library. Those unable to attend may participate via Zoom.



*Margo Fariss Brewer of the
Genealogical Speakers*



Sailing ship or steamer?

Early steam ships were still outfitted with sails, and more often than not needed the sails to supplement locomotion by steam-driven paddles. These ships couldn't carry enough coal to power a whole ocean crossing, so they used free wind as backup power. In fact, at first the steam was just an accessory.

As was the case on America's rivers, the early boilers powering ocean-going ships were prone to break down or even explode. It took most of the 19th century to develop the efficiency and fueling stations that allowed steamers to cross the Atlantic without sails.

This hybrid version predominated between 1815 and the 1870s.

Where oh where?

You might have to search farther than you first thought to track down records for ancestors becoming U.S. citizens.

Until the 1940s, local courts handled naturalizations. Immigrants might enter one place, file intent to naturalize in another, and file the final application yet elsewhere.

The local courts used their own formats. When the U.S. standardized the process in 1906, copies of all records had to be sent to the federal government.

Local courts continued to administer oaths and issue certificates to new citizens until passage of the Immigration Act of 1990.

President's message:

Building technology, moving forward

As we finish the first half of 2026, we need to evaluate what we have done that seems to be working and how we can change what is not. We have gained new members but have lost a few.

Our technology committee has been hard at work trying to get a website up and running to meet the objectives of our society. Our social media as it stands now does not meet our needs. All the technology seems to be related to ownership, of domains and names, that have not been properly transferred.

We think we have it under control and should have a website, data storage, and social media that will meet our needs for several years to come.

Moving forward, we should focus on family history and storytelling, connecting them more effectively with our genealogy work. This approach can make the "science" more engaging. Local history and events may help explain brick walls in your research. Was there an epidemic, flood, or severe weather event? Tracing land grant ownership may also help prove a previously uncertain relationship. Sharing your story with

supporting facts and photos, when available, can make it more meaningful and complete.

We may be making slight adjustments in our programs and forums after our current schedule has been completed. We ask for your patience and support as we keep going without lowering our standards or increasing our dues.

Keep digging,
Lynn Hice, President of IPGS



Lynn Hice

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 TBA

Look again at those probate 'scraps'

Does it seem untidy to find old probate records with loose scraps of paper listing individual debts? Here's why.

Before hard currency was widely available in the 19th century, farmers and townsfolk alike did a lot of bartering. Besides trading, they commonly wrote notes equivalent to IOUs, known as "ledger notes." The notes were legal in a court of law, and the holder of one could sell it to someone else, usually at a discount to fill a need that couldn't wait.

Those in business might keep comprehensive ledgers, but most residents just kept track of what was owed to themselves. It wasn't unusual for their own debts to be paid off when they died, as part of probate.

That's why such notes appear when you find them in estate records associated with a will.

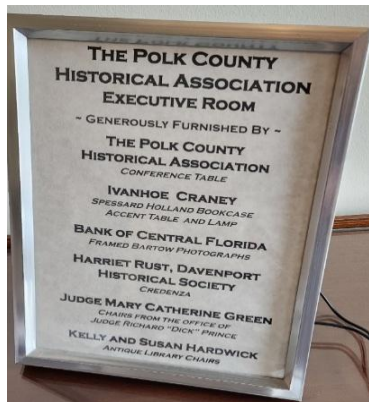
- From Eilene Lyon, author of *Fortune's Frenzy: A California Gold Rush Odyssey*



Groups align for mutual support

IPGS Joins Polk Heritage Partners

Thanks to IPGS member **Harriet Rust**, IPGS is now a member of Heritage Partners, a committee of the Polk County Historical Association best known for its Polk Pioneers program. Rust, co-founder and past president of the Davenport Historical Society, has also been co-chair for Heritage Partners. One of its goals is mutual



Evidence of Historical Association support for the Polk Genealogical and History Center

support among local organizations interested in historical preservation and education.

Pres. Lynn Hice represented IPGS last month at one of six annual Heritage Partners meetings. The group shared ideas for collective patronage and described ongoing

projects. Other attendees represented historical groups and museums from Davenport, Kathleen, Bartow, Frostproof, Plant City, Haines City, Lake Alfred, Winter Haven and Eagle Lake.

Rust is an appointed board member of the Polk County Historical Commission. The Commission is a nine-member advisory board to the county commission. The Association is the independent, non-profit, volunteer group that is open to public membership.

They work in tandem to support the Polk County History Center that houses the Polk County Historical and Genealogical Library, one of the largest such collections in the Southeastern U.S. While a quarter of its resources are in-depth local records, it's also a rich resource for ancestral tracking throughout Eastern and Southeastern U.S., and a Family Search Affiliate Library.

Member profile: Harriet Rust

"I joined IPGS as a Lifetime Member after I discovered they researched and published the Cemetery volumes of Polk County," said Harriet Rust. She has since extended IPGS influence in Polk's broad community of history lovers. A lifelong resident of Polk County, she was honored as 2021 Pioneer of the Year by the county historical association.

Her volunteerism in civic and community service spans dozens of organizations embracing church, history, art, culture, and preservation in Florida, Virginia and North Carolina. The latter includes cemetery restoration on behalf of her husband's family.



Harriet Rust



For four decades Rust was floral designer and then owner of Azalea Hill Ltd., a floral shop in Davenport that reached nationwide clients. She is state certified in Tourism and Marketing, another avenue of her civic service. As of 2020, she was named to its Hall of Fame by the Northeast Polk County Chamber of Commerce.

A graduate of Haines City High School, she attended Florida State and Florida Southern colleges. Among her additional awards are 2025 National Historic Preservation medalist from DAR, and 2023 Polk Arts and Culture Hall of Fame. Married 55 years, she has three grown children and three grandchildren.

Allen County Library visit: 'They want our research to be a success'

By Gale Pinkston

Much has been said among genealogy enthusiasts about the treasures located in the genealogy center of the Allen County Public Library located in Fort Wayne, Indiana. It is true! The library hosts the largest *public* collection of genealogy-related materials in the world.

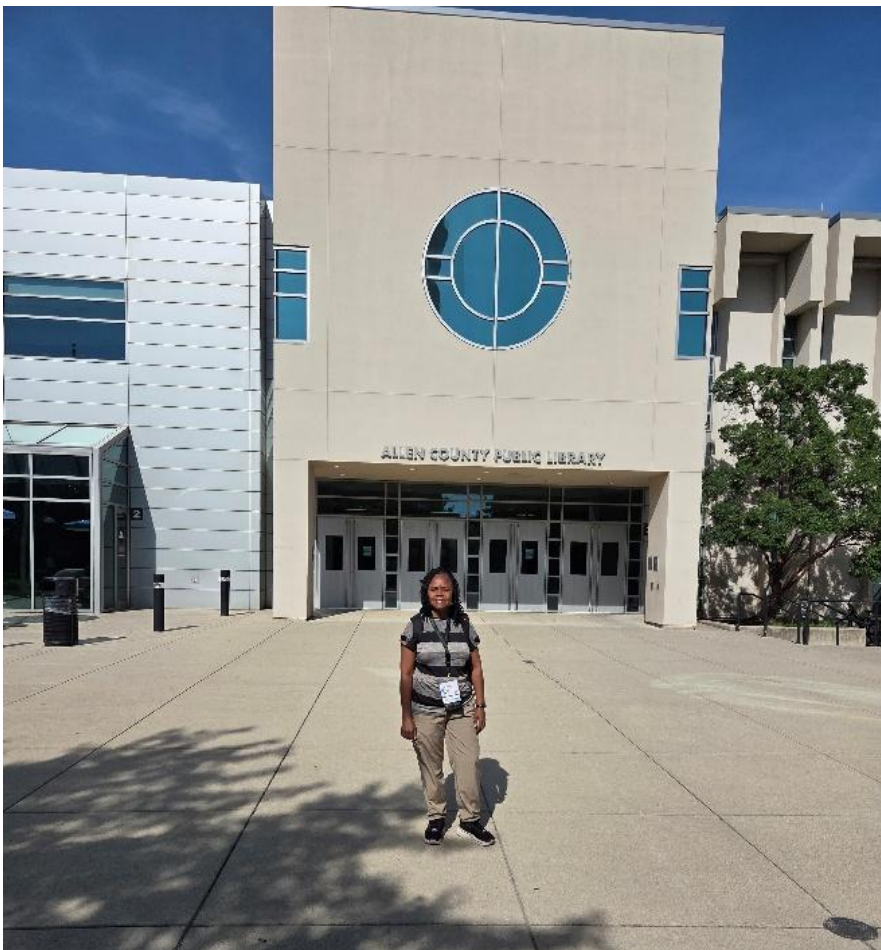
The National Genealogical Society recently hosted its annual Family History Conference, partly in recognition of the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. The 2026 conference theme was "America at 250." Attendees participated virtually or in-person. Dozens of specialized lectures and workshops focused on genealogy-related records, methodology, DNA, and technological advances to enhance research.

Genealogical and historical societies participated as vendors in an extensive Expo Hall. What a wonderful

environment and event for networking and learning! If I were to share a few take-aways from my experience they are as follows:

- The research experience is not overstated. I was able to freely walk the corridors of the Genealogy Center and stacks of books to research geographic locations, family histories, etc. at will. There is so much ease of access. There are no inspections of back packs entering or leaving the library. Use of lockers/keys is not required. I was informed that if any of their materials leaves the library improperly, they will know it. The Genealogy Center staff are fabulous! Not only did they host and assist us in the library, they attended NGS functions as attendees and speakers. Reshelving of books by the staff was at lightning speed. Staff continuously reminded us that they want our research to be a success.
- There were two types of book carts. One for staff and another for patrons. We were invited to access as many publications as we wish and take them to a table. They reshelved them once we returned the books to one of their carts. How convenient!
- Attendees were encouraged to visit the library on-line at the conclusion of the conference to continue research.
- Regarding family history materials one may wish to donate to the library, whether they will accept the materials depends upon what they already have in their collections. For example, if you have a couple of self-published books you would like to donate, feel free to mail them. They will try to find a place for them if they are not duplications. When it comes to boxes of papers and larger amounts of materials, they prefer that you send an email describing what you have, first.

I certainly encourage others to visit the Genealogy Center in Fort Wayne when the opportunity presents itself!



Our own Gale Pinkston at the Allen County Public Library in Ft. Wayne, Indiana, housing one of the nation's largest genealogical collections.

Neat web sites to explore:

Genealogy librarian offers rich site with zero fees



Suzanne Malek

Online access from home to a wealth of library databases, a variety of genealogy topics on video presentations, weekly collaborative speakers and mutual help classes—it's a complete package!

Join genealogy librarian **Suzanne Malek** for free Friday webinars on genealogy sources and strategies at 2:30 p.m. ET, courtesy of Truckee Meadows Community College (Reno, Nevada). Email smalek@tmcc.edu to receive announcements and links. It's that easy!

For example, [John Harrison](#), a college instructor of Family History and member of the Utah Storytelling Guild, is lined up for "Finding Your Identity" July 10. He will return to address Forensic Investigative Genetic Genealogy on August 7. From the Genealogy page, click "[Getting Started](#)" and scroll down to find the 2026 schedule.



John Harrison

Recently Malek shared a link to the U.S. government Information Services online, searchable [census of Revolutionary War pensioners](#) as of 1840. You can search by location to find a Revolutionary ancestor who was still living in 1840.

Here's how to make your virtual visit

Ask by email at smalek@tmcc.edu and

Malek will send you a guest user name and password for the library's databases.

She says just email again when you need to renew, as guest credentials expire about each 30 days.

This editor's favorite is the fabulous JSTOR collection, short for Journal Storage, a digital library for academic journals, books, and



Start with the library's [Open Genealogy Lab](#) web page. It is extensive! Browse everything from the abc's of land records to writing family history. It's an ideal source to introduce a novice to genealogy, but also will stretch you and entertain. It includes the [YouTube recordings of past speakers](#). Gosh, this could fill your summer!

RootsTech session teaches full-text searches

A RootsTech presentation on full text searches, [linked here](#), comes highly recommended. It is presented by David Ouimette, a senior program manager at Family

Search. He covers four slightly different methods to use full text search—and expands with some details on the use of "simple search" in the Family Search experiment lab.



David Ouimette



Endless podcasts and videos:

Conference Keeper collections worthy of exploring

Did you know that besides listing webinars, Conference Keeper logs dozens of genealogy-oriented podcasts? You can subscribe to regular offerings about anything from ethnic specialties to family scribing, genealogical crime solving and author interviews.

It may take a while for you to explore offerings on the [Genealogy Podcasts](#) page! I'm a regular at Ohio Roots, from the Ohio Genealogical Society. If you discover a favorite (or three or five), why not recommend them at the next Ancestry Forum? Inquiring minds want to know!

Meanwhile, the Conference Keeper's [Genealogy YouTube Channels](#) page is a good central place to find a lot in a short time. This alone could be another afternoon's entertainment just checking out the array. For example, the Ancestry channel posts episodes of "Finding Your Roots," which it sponsors. Or replay episodes from "Who Do You Think You Are."

All the stalwarts are here in one list—Family Search, Allen County Public Library, Family Tree Magazine—plus all your favorite speakers, and many more you have yet to discover.

Don't miss Ancestry Forum camaraderie

Upcoming programs formatted as Ancestry Forums are scheduled **July 11** and **Sept. 12**. In September, Gale Pinkston has promised to answer questions about her recent experience at the National Genealogical Society conference at the genealogist "mecca" in the Midwest, the Allen County Public Library in Fort Wayne, Indiana.

Also, we enjoy taking time to tackle puzzling challenges in individual research. These always lead to fun stories. Don't miss it! As are all IPGS programs, these are in-person or virtual.



More free classes

Brigham Young University library videos and webinars

The BYU Library hosts online webinars, both live and on-demand, at no cost and requiring no registration. Just pull up the [BYU Library Webinars page](#), peruse the menu, and click the "join" button.

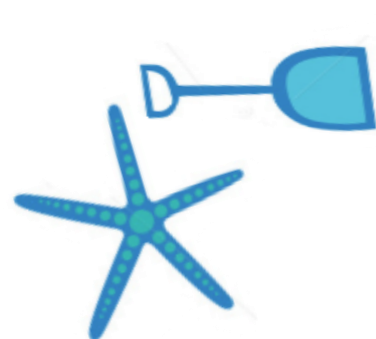
technology use in genealogy, and research in foreign countries. Also, keep in mind the university is in Utah, so to watch from the Eastern time zone, add two hours to the posted class time. (I.e. if a class is listed to start at 2 p.m. Mountain time, that translates to 4 p.m. in Florida.)

This is a good place to find information about Family Search, various beginner-level classes,

Show and tell

It's not too soon to think about our next newsletter. One of our members has issued a challenge:

"Share a newspaper article you found about your ancestor."
We always enjoy sharing these treasures!



Here's some trivia to sparkle your day

Those funny S's and the not-Y

The "long s" used in early texts looks like an "f" with an absent or left-side-only crossbar. The convention was to use the "round S" for upper case and "small s" at the end of a word. The long s usually appeared at the beginning of a word, in the middle, sometimes twice in a row for double s, sometimes as the first of the two.

It was abandoned past the mid-1800s as printing became more common than script. Can you read these?

small islands and sand banks,
small fishes.

The chart to the right shows how script letters appeared as far back as the first colonial days in America, each column showing samples from one of the last four centuries.

- From Dominish Marie Miller of Preserving the History of Newberrytown (PA).

This letter is called a "thorn." It stands for "th." So, thorn followed by an "e" isn't "ye" but "the."



Easy AI tips

In just 15 minutes a week, if you are available at 5 p.m. (Eastern time) each Wednesday, you can pick up some painless tips to help navigate artificial intelligence as it is readily used in genealogy.

The sessions are presented free on Zoom by Jared Weaver of the **Oakland (CA) Family Search Center**. No registration is required; just hold down "control" and click on the page [here](#) for the Zoom link.

Better yet, on that page if you click on the calendar, and then an individual listing, it has a link to the handouts. And if you look at previous handouts, by Kelvin Brewer, there are step-by-step guides to create individualized timelines, locality guides, research plans and more. Enjoy!

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